



## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

This newsletter is due a week before Christmas, so I am writing about a season I have yet to experience but one I am thoroughly looking forward to. I suspect I will mention this as I likely have before at the candlelight service, and it will probably come in the form of a recommendation.

*Take advantage of the twelve days of Christmas as a time for deep reflection on your life, your faith, and the work the Lord is calling you to participate in during the coming year.*

Whether you realize it or not, you will be on at least day eight when you read this. So, I am making a suggestion that is perhaps a bit too late for this year, but because it is so much on my mind and heart, I want to share it with you in the hope that perhaps you will remember the idea next year and plan accordingly.



So, I actually love resolutions. I have so many little notes to myself tucked in special books and the different Bibles that remind me of how I have previously resolved to try to live. Each year, I attempt to further hone and further commit to the goals I have about how I want to live, work, eat, exercise, serve, learn, and play. The challenge is finding the time to really reflect each year. I have never really enjoyed being prompted by a new year and the changing of a date. As a person of faith, I really want to be led by some religious season or event. Advent and Lent are really fine candidates, but for me, they are seasons so busy I don't always feel like I can do my best personal praying and thinking.

However, a few years ago, I stumbled on this idea — I don't know how it came to me — that the twelve days that exist between Christmas Eve and Epiphany are an ideal time for life evaluation and faith reflection. I always seem to be in search of the next spiritual epiphany, so why not align it with the actual Epiphany? It is also a fairly restful and quiet time in the church and in our work and family lives. Once the craziness of Christmas has passed, although we do get some New Year's Resolution nudges in the middle of the stretch of days, we end with Wise Men arriving at their destination, having kept their eyes and attention trained on a star that led them to a Savior.

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Twelve days of personal discernment, framed by significant Christian events, birth, and discovery, have been a true gift. This year, I will again pray for vocational clarity; where does the Lord want me to focus my efforts in the coming year? I will consider anew matters of health and wellness and how to live a more well-balanced life. I will take time to think deeply about what I want to learn this year and how I might be called to serve in ways I may have overlooked previously. And, by Epiphany, I will have created a new list of aspirational and spiritual goals and resolutions, if you will, for myself for the coming year.

That is what I am currently doing as you read this. Perhaps you are, too, if you caught my encouragement on Christmas Eve. If not, you could take the next four days to do a little special soul work yourself. Or, put a note in your calendar for next year to spend the Twelve Days of Christmas as a time of prayer and reflection that can offer some direction and definition for the coming year. And, perhaps, if you are willing, you might offer a prayer for me as I look forward to where the Lord's illuminating presence might lead me as your pastor this coming year.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and Blessed Epiphany for All!

Yours in Christ,  
Chapin

## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

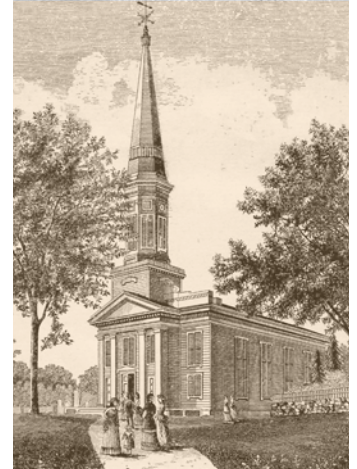
### Filling in the Blanks Packing Event



The women of the church are invited to participate in a rewarding packing event at Filling in the Blanks on January 9, from 1:00-3:00pm. Located in Norwalk, Filling in the Blanks fights childhood hunger by providing children in need with meals on the weekends. Advanced registration is required for all participants. Please contact Lesley Cousley at [lacousley@gmail.com](mailto:lacousley@gmail.com) if you are interested in joining this fun and meaningful event.

## January Ministry Team Update

The History Ministry team is continuing to make progress in uncovering the longstanding history of our church. Please consider getting involved. We need many people to help focus on the many historical documents we uncover. You can contact Steve Case at [scase135@outlook.com](mailto:scase135@outlook.com) or (203) 434-0617 to learn more. Alternatively, attend our regular monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at 4:00 in the Library (January 4).



## MEN'S MINISTRIES

### January Men's Group Events

MG has several events planned for January.

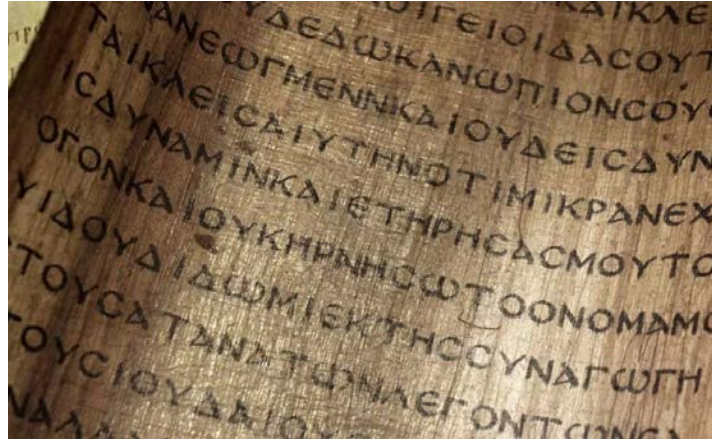


- Sunday evening, January 7, there is an MG Book Group meeting planned at Jim Clayton's home. We are reviewing Elon Musk's biography by Walter Isaacson. Contact Jim at [jcnc339@gmail.com](mailto:jcnc339@gmail.com) if you are interested.
- Friday morning, January 12, our regular M4 Small Group meeting will focus on faith and one's career. Please contact Dirk Dunlap at [dirkdunlap@hotmail.com](mailto:dirkdunlap@hotmail.com) if interested.
- Saturday morning, January 20, MG is hosting an annual Pivot Breakfast in Smith Hall. This has become an annual favorite for sharing faith stories with our Pivot brothers. Please contact Don Moyle at [donmoyle@gmail.com](mailto:donmoyle@gmail.com) if interested. An invitation will go out after the first of the year.
- Monday evening, January 29, there will be a regular Men's Small Group gathering in the Chapel. Please contact Steve Case at [scase135@outlook.com](mailto:scase135@outlook.com) if you are interested or have questions.

Please plan to attend one or all events if you can.

# The Epistles - Six Week Bible Study

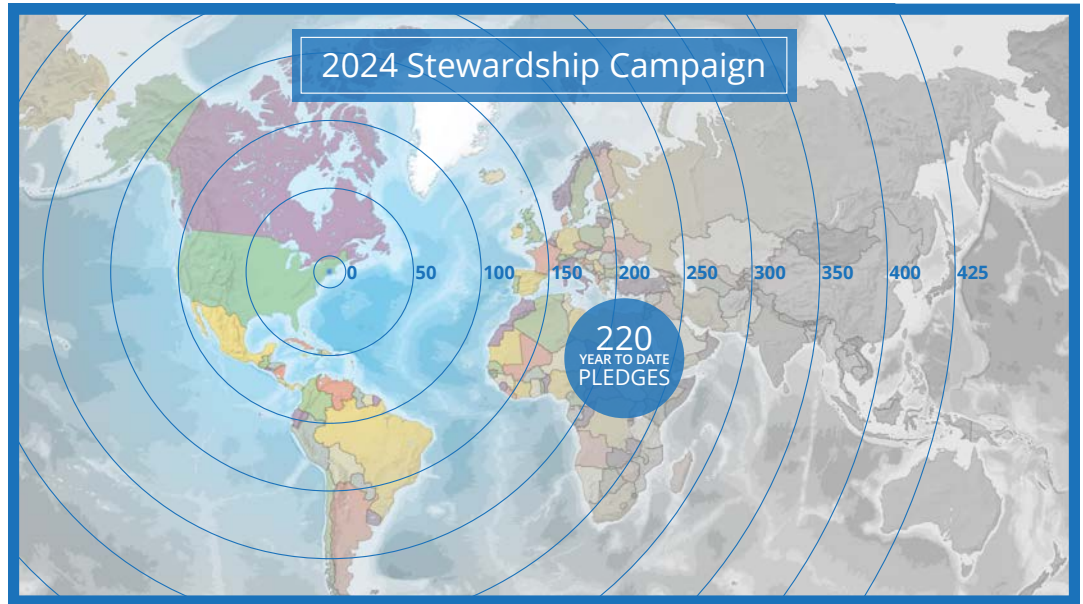
Beginning January 22 and 23, join us in reading The Epistles. In the New Testament there are 11 of these short epistles or letters that often don't get our attention. In biblical order, they include: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. These short texts tend not to be read in church, or privately, and are not as well known as Paul's epistles or the Epistle to the Hebrews. In this study, we'll explore these letters, sermons, or other kinds of teaching materials to see what they have to show us about their authors, their audiences, and how we can learn from them today. Mondays 7:00-8:00am in the Library and Tuesdays (women's) 9:30-10:30am in the Parlor. Zoom links available. Contact Marianna Kilbride, [marianna@godsacre.org](mailto:marianna@godsacre.org).



# Stewardship Update

Thank you to all who have already generously pledged to the Stewardship Campaign. We have had a healthy start and are hopeful that our community will continue to come together to support our church.

***Jesus conveyed that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will accomplish "even greater works than these" - John 14:12.***



Currently, we are at 220 pledge cards (52% of goal) for a total of \$1,138,566 pledged (52% of our goal).

This year, we have aspired to reach 425 financial pledges. Beyond financial pledges, we invite you to envision what "greater works than these" the Holy Spirit is calling us to in the years ahead.

We've navigated through the challenges of a pandemic, witnessing the expansion of our ministries, all through the grace and goodness of God. But what lies ahead? What "greater work" is the Lord calling us to embark upon in this next chapter of our church's journey? This scripture in John isn't merely a stewardship slogan; it's a call to envision, act, and collectively discern the path the Lord sets before us.

Currently, we are at 220 pledge cards (52% of goal) for a total of \$1,138,566 pledged (52% of our goal). We are very grateful for the blessings of this community. If you have not yet pledged, please consider making a pledge to the Stewardship Campaign, and if possible, please consider increasing your commitment. Beyond pledging, we hope that you will also encourage others to participate in this year's campaign

Together with the Holy Spirit, there is much to accomplish to the glory of God!

## Movies for a Mission!

### Save the Date(s) for Kid's Nights at the Church and Parent's Nights Out in 2024!

Youth Ministries and Children and Family Ministries invite you to participate in this brand-new high school mission trip fundraiser. High School YGers will host Movies for a Mission- a fun-filled kid's night featuring movies, crafts, and snacks/dinner at the church. We invite you to drop off some or all of your children at the following dates/times to enjoy a date night/solo time/one-on-one kid time/etc. They will be well cared for by YG kids and advisors and enjoy fellowship with other church kids. We will ask for a minimum \$25 contribution per family for each date and ALL proceeds will go towards the YG February Mission Trip.

Register here:

<https://godsacre.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/167/responses/new>



**MOVIES FOR A MISSION**

**Friday, January 5, 2024**  
6:00-8:00pm

**Saturday, January 20, 2024**  
5:00-7:00pm

**Saturday, February 3, 2024**  
5:00-7:00pm

### January Church School Schedule

#### January 7

Children's New Year Chapel, 5-7th grade remain in Meeting House for Communion, Storytelling with Mrs. Grogan for Preschool and Kindergarten

#### January 14

Regular Church School

#### January 21

Regular Church School, Storytelling with Mrs. Grogan for Preschool and Kindergarten

#### January 28

Regular Church School

## Join us for YG Commissioning Sunday!

On Sunday, January 7, we will commission 108 YG Mission Fish to serve over their February break with our mission partner, First Baptist Church of Río Piedras, in San Juan, Puerto Rico! We invite you to join us for this special worship service as we pray for the people of Puerto Rico, our YG Fish, and the relationships to come, which can only be fostered through God's unconditional love! For 33 years, our congregation has supported YG in their efforts to be agents of change in our world; we look forward to sharing this Sunday with you.



# Will you be a Mission Sponsor?



For 32 years, The Congregational Church of New Canaan has had a mission to create a community where youth can experience and share the love of God. We have continued to walk with Christ all year to create a community for our youth marked by love, covenant, and participation.

This February, 108 of our YG fish will embark on a truly life-changing pilgrimage to San Juan, Puerto Rico, to work with our partner, *First Baptist Church of Río Piedras*, to serve those brothers and sisters in need. In 2017, the Caribbean Island of Puerto Rico was devastated by Hurricane Maria. Over 40,000 families lost their roofs, their feeling of safety, their investment and security, and their homes. Estimates vary, but there are still more than 25,000 families that need help rebuilding and going on with their lives. For the past few years, our partners, *First Baptist Church of Río Piedras*, have hosted teams that have completed over 354 roofs and eight houses. In addition to past and current hurricane damage, there are elderly people in the area who need help with home repairs. Our trip this year will continue the work our

adults began last year with these wonderful partners as they work their way through the storm damage and poverty in Puerto Rico.

Their vital work and mission can only be accomplished with the help of volunteer groups like YG.

YG provides a space for the spirit to move and allows our youth the opportunity to foster a greater relationship with God and one another. Today, I ask you to join us as a mission sponsor. Our YG families pay a fee to participate, but that fee covers only about half the actual cost of this trip. Your donation will not only help provide housing, food, and other needs but, more importantly, make this trip possible for our Mission Fish in need of scholarships.

God's work can only be accomplished with the help of volunteer groups like YG. And we can't do it without sponsors like you! Will you be a Mission Sponsor?

## December Reflections

As we step into the new year, let's take a moment to reflect on the heartwarming events that made December a month to remember. From heartfelt worship to team-building and giving back to the community, our December was filled with joy, love, and the true spirit of the season.

Our Youth Christmas Worship service was a testament to the faith and spirit of all our fish. YG and MSYG worshipped together, singing carols and engaging in fellowship. Our K-6 graders participated in their own worship service and created Christmas crafts together.

Our commitment to giving back to the community was evident in our participation in the Salvation Army Bell Ringing campaign. Members joined forces to spread holiday cheer, raise funds, and make a positive impact on the lives of those in need. The sound of the bells ringing echoed the generosity and compassion that define our community, and we are proud to have played a role in supporting the Salvation Army's mission.

As we look towards the new year, let's carry the spirit of love, unity, and service with us. May the lessons learned and memories created in December inspire us to make a

**PLEASE ALSO MARK THE FOLLOWING DATES IN YOUR CALENDARS FOR THIS MONTH:**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 7**

YG Commissioning Service & Meet the Advisors  
Coffee Hour @ 9:30am-12:00pm

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10**

Youth Worship @ 6:30-8:00pm

**FRIDAY - SUNDAY, JANUARY 19-21**

MSYG Winter Weekend

positive difference in our community and beyond. This January, our youth will be introducing a new fundraising campaign called "Movies for a Mission." These events will take place on Fridays and Saturdays throughout January and February. Parents will be able to drop their young kids off at the church while our YG fish babysit them for an hour. All donations will go towards funding our mission trip!

We are looking forward to the many events that our program has to offer this month. But most of all, we are grateful for our youth and families who make these programs so special!



A NOTE FROM

Dr. Jo Deen Blaine Davis,  
 Director of Music Ministries Emerita



Dear Friends of The Congregational Church,

What an honor it has been to serve as Director of Music Ministries for the past 18 years. I am humbled and grateful for your presence at my Recognition Sunday, December 10. The choir was a musical delight, and the smiles and best wishes at the reception were so thoughtful. The lovely Richards' picture of the church hangs in our home, reflecting wonderful memories we hold so dear. Thank you, especially, for the incredible honor of the Emerita title. I will carry it with great pride as I enter retirement. Ray and I look forward to a special travel adventure to explore new places, thanks to your gift: I'm thinking of Vienna and Salzburg to hear the music of the masters! Know that you are in our hearts, filled with love and gratitude. We look forward to seeing you in New Canaan.

With love and gratitude,  
 Jody

Thank You For The Gift of Music

The Advent and Christmas seasons were especially beautiful because of the music. Thank you to all the singers and ringers who worked many hours to present lovely music for our services. Your talents, time, and devotion to the church are so admired, and we are grateful. You inspire us when you lead in worship.



EPIPHANY SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

The Chancel Choir will celebrate Epiphany Sunday with the Kings' procession and special music at the 10:00am service. They will sing Behold the Star!, The Lamb, and Go, Tell It on the Mountain.



NEW YEAR'S 2024 RESOLUTION!

You Are Invited To  
 Sing Or Ring In A Choir

Start the New Year in a Church Choir.  
 There's a choir family for YOU.

**Cherubs (ages 3 and 4)**

resumes Tuesday, January 9; 3:00 – 3:30pm

**Spirit Singers (grades K-2)**

resumes Tuesday, January 9; 3:30 – 4:30pm

**Joyful Noise (grades 3 and 4)**

resumes Tuesday, January 9; 4:30 – 5:30pm

**Joyful Ringers**

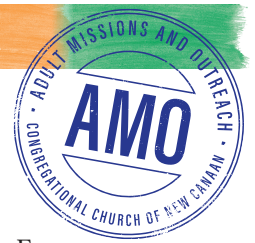
resumes Thursday, January 11; 6:30 – 7:15pm

**Chancel Choir (high school through adults)**

resumes Thursday, January 11, 7:30 – 9:00pm

For more information, please contact Michael Burnette, Interim Director of Music Ministries at (203) 966-2651 x104 or [michael@godacre.org](mailto:michael@godacre.org) or Greer Lyle at [greer@godsacre.org](mailto:greer@godsacre.org)





## Beyond Grateful!

Thank you so very much for your magnificent Christmas love. Because of your generosity, we gave 89 Dove meals, and more than 50 children who would not have otherwise received gifts. About \$3,700 was raised by ringing the Salvation Army Bells to support community families in need this winter with heat, electricity, and food.

*If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will be like the noonday.*  
- Isaiah 58:10”



## Pacific House Dinner Service

Serve with us on January 18

During the winter months, Pacific House Emergency Homeless Shelter in Stamford feeds about 100 men every night. Our church takes responsibility for one dinner per month. Along with other churches and organizations, we help to offset the approximately \$250,000 per year that would cost.

Volunteering can be as simple as dropping off a bunch of grapes or as involved as making baked ziti and serving a hot meal to the men at the shelter. Their warm applause after that meal speaks volumes. Please contact Andy Parkin at [andyparkin7@gmail.com](mailto:andyparkin7@gmail.com) for details on how to help.

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink...*  
- Matthew 25:35



Andy, Stephanie, Martha, Marmee and Frank!

## Resuming of OPEN DOORS Lunch Service

Beginning January 23, our Open Doors lunch service will resume. An Open Doors Ministry Team is in the process of being reformed. Up to four team members will help make and serve lunch on the 4th Tuesday of each month to the unhoused and underserved community in Norwalk. The first service will be on January 23 at 11:30am. For more information and to sign up, please contact Susie Swindell at [susies1@optonline.net](mailto:susies1@optonline.net).





## Fellowship Chili Paddle

Friday, January 19

7:00-10:00pm



All (adults) are invited to the 11th Annual Fellowship Chili Paddle Party on Friday, January 19 at Waveny Lodge from 7:00- 10:00pm. Please RSVP by January 13. Guests are asked to BYOB and bring a side or dessert that compliments chili! If you would like to be a contestant in the chili cookoff, contact Laurel Carr at [laurel@godsacre.org](mailto:laurel@godsacre.org).

There is no need to play paddle to attend – we have plenty of seasoned players willing to teach new players, or if you prefer, just come for the chili and the fellowship.

## Men's Fellowship Pivot Breakfast

The Men's Fellowship Group (MG) will host our brothers from Pivot Ministries for our annual Winter Breakfast on Saturday, January 20, at 8:00am in Smith Hall. Come join us for fellowship, reflection, and a fantastic breakfast! The cost is \$10. Invitations will be sent by email soon.

Volunteers are needed for setup, cooking, and clean up; please sign up if you can. Contact Don Moyle at [donmoyle@gmail.com](mailto:donmoyle@gmail.com) with questions.

### MG Pivot Breakfast

Saturday, January 20  
8:00am, Smith Hall



# Love Thy Neighbor

*Stephen  
Ministry*

*Card Writing  
Ministry*

*Prayer Chain  
Ministry*

*Flower  
Ministry*

*Prayer Shawl  
Ministry*

Contact Beth Baker at [beth@godsacre.org](mailto:beth@godsacre.org)  
or Barb Clayton at [barb@godsacre.org](mailto:barb@godsacre.org)  
to get involved.

## Pastoral Care Team Delivers Christmas Flowers

Our pastoral care team delivered over 40 Christmas plants to our church family members who lost loved ones this year or faced other sorrows. We are thankful to our incredible Flower Ministry Team and leader, Juliet Howe, for making the Meeting House glorious this Christmas season; and we sincerely appreciate those who graciously delivered the flowers to our members.



We are a warm and  
welcoming family of faith,  
bound together in  
compassion and love.

## Prayer Shawl Ministry Christmas Tea

The Prayer Shawl Ministry team hosted its Annual Christmas Tea on December 11. It was a wonderful gathering with homemade baked goods, tea sandwiches, and good cheer. 2023 marked another productive and meaningful year for our knitters. The team enjoyed each other's fellowship while making prayer shawls to provide warmth and comfort for others. Please consider joining this ministry! It meets in the Parlor on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 10:00am. No experience is needed – we have plenty of knitting teachers! If you are interested, contact Twee Haffner at [tweehaffner@gmail.com](mailto:tweehaffner@gmail.com) or (203) 917-7374.



## Ministers

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Chapin Garner, **x101**  
Senior Minister

Pastoral Care Emergency, **x103**

## Staff

Kelly Leather-Antonson, **x110**  
Senior Youth Director

Beth Baker, **x102**  
Interim Minister of Pastoral Care

Dr. Michael Burnette, **x104**  
Interim Director of Music Ministries

Laurel Carr, **x107**  
Director of Communications

Barb Clayton, **x102**  
Interim Minister of Pastoral Care

Lindsey Daly, **x112**  
Director of Children's Ministries

Emma Garner, **x111**  
Youth Director

Tracy Goldman, **x109**  
Administrative Assistant

Sarah Haddad, **x113**  
Church School Coordinator

Anthony Jones, **x116**  
Sexton

Marianna Kilbride, **x105**  
Director of Spiritual Formation

Caroline Leather-Smittle, **x106**  
Director of Operations

Greer Lyle, **x115**  
Director of Children's Music and Drama

Maria Stadnik, **x108**  
Director of Finance

Allison Wolter, **x114**  
Youth Ministries Administrative Assistant

## Church Lay Leadership

Diane Bailey  
Chair, Personnel

Chris Baker  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Barbara Clayton  
Chair, Nominating and Governance

Dionna Carlson  
Chair, Board of Deacons



The Congregational Church  
of New Canaan

23 Park Street  
New Canaan, CT 06840  
(203) 966-2651  
[www.godsacre.org](http://www.godsacre.org)

*We are a Stephen Minister Church*

## Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the February newsletter, please submit by January 19.  
Email submissions to: [laurel@godsacre.org](mailto:laurel@godsacre.org).

## myConnect Corner

Become part of myConnect, our online church community!

Within myConnect you can:

- view an online directory
- interact with groups
- set up and manage your online giving
- view giving statements
- register for events
- find ways to volunteer

Two ways to login:

1. Visit [www.godsacre.org/myconnect](http://www.godsacre.org/myconnect)
2. Go to [www.godsacre.org](http://www.godsacre.org) and click "myConnect@God's Acre" in the upper left corner.

Need an Account?

Click "Sign Up Here" on the login page, enter your info, and look for our email to get started.

Questions?

Contact [laurel@godsacre.org](mailto:laurel@godsacre.org)