



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

You may have heard me mention in February that I was giving up planning for Lent. This wasn't a joke; it was a spiritual discipline I wanted to commit to seriously. I managed to resist planning throughout Lent, although it's challenging since I tend to overdo it. Given the decline in church attendance in the Northeast and Mainline Churches throughout the country, I often feel pressured to devise creative ways to maintain our faith and promote church growth.

However, nonstop planning leaves little room for the Holy Spirit's work, so pausing seemed like a good practice for Lent. It turned out to be fruitful, yielding three fairly well-formed and compelling initiatives by its end. I'm now working on these initiatives and would like to share them with you.

First, we plan to launch a new podcast called "Next Station to Heaven."

Encouraged by the positive response to our daily Lenten podcast, we aim to offer year-round faith-centered episodes. Starting in early June, the weekly podcast will delve into the intersection of faith and daily living. Our "Faith Basics" summer series will explore core Christian beliefs and practices.

Second, we are seeking to expand our Raymond Preaching Fellowship Program. Thanks to the Raymond Trust, we've trained numerous seminarians to provide pulpit supply for churches in need. We have learned through our efforts that there is a far greater need for preachers and sermons than we have Fellows to offer. Therefore, we're seeking a grant to double the program's size in the next two years, helping our church promote the gospel across Connecticut.

Lastly, we're reworking our Quest Program. Initially, we focused on a design that prepared our youth for a spiritual journey to the Holy Land. However, due to current Middle Eastern events, we've shifted the focus to Jesus' practice of Table Fellowship and Desert Spirituality. We're developing a youth program that connects faith and food, culminating in a summer retreat exploring Jesus' life and teachings through immersion in the ancient Christian tradition of desert spirituality.

These three initiatives emerged from a Lent without plans and will hopefully progress well. I look forward to updating you as they evolve. Remember, these initiatives are possible because of your generous support. Your giving fuels our mission and ministry. Thank you so very much, and praise be to God!

Yours in Christ,
Chapin



GOTTA GET SOME GOATS

MAASAI 2024



Maasai 2024: Gotta Get Some Goats

As the April showers subside, we look forward to May's renewal. In May, we also honor our African brothers and sisters in Kenya. Our Church has supported the Maasai through our partner, the Simba Maasai Outreach Organization (SIMOO), for many years. We have provided funding to install solar panels for community wells, and last year, we gave funds that allowed the women of the tribe to tend beehives. As the Maasai move forward from a catastrophic years-long drought, they are slowly acquiring livestock to care for. This year, our SIMOO partners have requested funds (\$22,000) to purchase 400 goats for over 200 families in the tribe. These goats will be tended by the women of the tribe as they identify new income sources.

Before the drought, the Maasai women sold cow's milk and beads to earn money to support their families. The drought wiped out the cattle population. As the men slowly begin to herd again, there is an immediate need for women's economic opportunities. Goat keeping is a sustainable livelihood that will provide women with goat's milk to sell in the Kenyan market; goat milk sells for twice the price of cow's milk.

The women who will benefit from the goats this year are primarily widows and single mothers. Each woman will be given two goats to tend.

We ask that you support our Maasai partners in purchasing the goats to further economic development. Each goat costs \$55, and with your help, we will quickly be able to reach our goal of purchasing 400 goats! ASHE OLENG! (Thank You!)



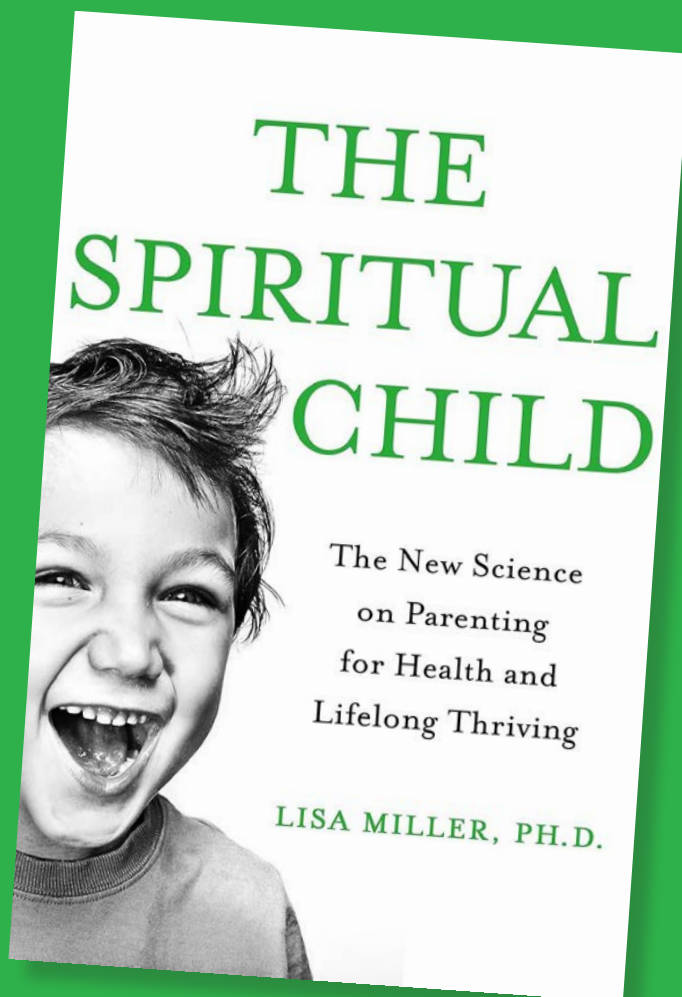
The Spiritual Child Upcoming Event with Lisa Miller



**Tuesday, May 21
7:00-8:00pm**

On Tuesday, May 21, from 7:00-8:00pm, we are delighted to welcome back Lisa Miller, PhD, to discuss her bestselling book, "The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Learning." Dr. Miller is a professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers' College, Columbia University, and Founder of the Spirituality, Mind, and Body Institute. In "The Spiritual Child," psychologist Lisa Miller presents the next big idea in psychology: the science and the power of spirituality. She explains the clear, scientific link between spirituality and health and shows that children who have a positive, active relationship to spirituality:

- are 40% less likely to use and abuse substances
- are 60% less likely to be depressed as teenagers
- are 80% less likely to have dangerous or unprotected sex
- have significantly more positive markers for thriving including an increased sense of meaning and purpose, and high levels of academic success.



Combining cutting-edge research with broad anecdotal evidence from her work as a clinical psychologist to illustrate just how invaluable spirituality is to a child's mental and physical health, Miller translates these findings into practical advice for parents, giving them concrete ways to develop and encourage their children's – as well as their own – well-being. In this provocative, conversation-starting book, Dr. Miller presents us with a pioneering new way to think about parenting our modern youth. Contact Marianna Kilbride at marianna@godsacre.org to learn more.

The Gift of Deep Listening

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

– James 1:19 (NIV)

This verse from the Book of James is a great message for all of us living in this fast-paced world. It reminds us of the importance of listening attentively before we respond. It encourages us to approach interactions with patience, humility, and a willingness to understand.

To listen and be fully present is perhaps one of the most precious gifts we can give one another. Real and honest deep listening is sacred work. When we engage in a conversation with someone, or anyone really, we must be ready to ask an open-ended question and then allow silence. Words, body language, and focus all play important parts in a conversation. The emotions of both people lay the important groundwork for honesty and authenticity.

Deep listening is more than just hearing words; it's about fully engaging with others, understanding their emotions, and showing empathy. It involves being present in the moment, setting aside distractions, and offering our undivided attention to those who are speaking. In this way, we foster trust, build relationships, and promote understanding. By practicing deep listening with others, we honor their experiences and validate their feelings, creating a sacred space where people feel loved, valued, and supported. Deep listening is yet another way we can fulfill Jesus' commandment to love one another as he loves us.



Love Thy Neighbor

*Stephen
Ministry*

*Card Writing
Ministry*

*Prayer Chain
Ministry*

*Flower
Ministry*

*Prayer Shawl
Ministry*



Contact Beth Baker at beth@godsacre.org
or Barb Clayton at barb@godsacre.org
to get involved.

Heart communication happens when we slow down, when we quiet down, look, and listen. Stop to take a breath. Become fully present with the person we're with. Listen with all of our being. At this point, communication can occur without words. Being present is a gift that fills our hearts and spirits. We are in communion.

– Kay Lindahl,
The Sacred Art of Listening

New Rooms for New Life

Join us on Saturday, May 18, to continue our partnership with Recovery Community Development of Bridgeport in prepping sober living spaces for men transitioning from substance abuse treatment to new lives in a newly refurbished home. We will meet in the church circle at 9:00am to carpool to Bridgeport and work a half day. Wear sloppy clothes and sturdy shoes. Bring a hat and gloves, goggles if you have them, and an open heart! Contact Marianna Kilbride at marianna@godsacre.org.



Vacation Bible School 2024

Registration is now Open

We are excited to return with another fun-filled week of Vacation Bible School this summer. Registration is open for VBS 2024: Carrying the Torch. We will explore bible stories about light and spreading God's abundant love through a summer Olympics theme. Join us for a week of faith formation, fellowship, art, games, and fun! VBS will run the week of August 19-22 from 9:00am-12:00pm. We invite children aged 4 through 4th grade to participate as campers and children in 5-8th grade to participate as junior counselors. High schoolers are encouraged to reach out to us for more information about senior counselor positions. Contact Sarah Haddad at churchschool@godsacre.org to learn more.



4th Grade First Communion: Sunday, June 2

Fourth Graders are invited to partake in their First Communion on Sunday, June 2, at the 10:00am service. In order to participate in this spiritual milestone, all fourth graders must attend a communion workshop. We will offer this workshop on May 19 at Church School during the 10:00am service. Please look for an email regarding sign-up details from churchschool@godsacre.org.



May Church School Calendar

Sunday, May 5

Church School
Chapel Service for grades 1-4,
grades 5-7 remain in the Meeting House

Sunday, May 12

Church School (PreK-7th grade)

Sunday, May 19

Church School (PreK-7th grade)
Children's Musical Performance
4th grade Communion Workshop

Sunday, May 26

Combined Church School Class (PreK-4th grade)
Memorial Day Weekend



Save the date for Sunday, June 9, for Celebration Sunday at our 10:00am service!

To honor the culmination of our program year, we will celebrate our Church School Spiritual Milestones, including the presentation of Bibles to our third graders. Children in preschool through 8th grade will be featured in this service that highlights the spiritual formation and growth of our youngest church members. Following our service, join us for fun and fellowship on the church lawn with food, inflatables, face painting and Old Faithful rides! We can't wait to celebrate a wonderful year with all of you.





Fellowship All-Church Picnic

Join us for the All-Church Picnic on Sunday, June 9.

The picnic will follow the 10:00am worship service. Families with the last names A-M, please bring a salad, fruit, or side dish for 10. Families with last names N-Z, please bring dessert for 10. Church School will provide activities for the children, and the Fellowship Team will provide sandwiches and Kona Ice for all! We hope you clear your calendars and stay for the celebration.

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Music in May

Celebrate the Risen Lord with music! After the wonderful music of Palm Sunday and Easter, the musical offerings will continue to bring joy and inspiration to our worship life with a variety of styles and genres, starting with Maasai Sunday, May 5. On May 12, the Joyful Ringers will lift our spirits as we celebrate Mother's Day. The children's musical, "Fruit of the Spirit," will be presented on May 19, Pentecost Sunday. (We will forgo the monthly Hymn Sing this day in order to focus on our youngest singers.) And on May 26, the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, we will honor the US Armed Services with a medley of the songs for each branch.



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|--------|---|
| May 5 | Maasai Sunday |
| May 12 | Mother's Day Joyful Ringers |
| May 19 | Pentecost Sunday "Fruit of the Spirit" Children's Musical |
| May 26 | Memorial Day weekend US Armed Services honored |



Mark Your Calendars for the Children's Musical: The Fruit of the Spirit!

This month, Children's Music is heralding the first Sunday in Pentecost, May 19, with music and teaching! Please join us at the 10:00am worship service to learn about the Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-26. Our children have been hard at work preparing memory verses and songs to help us better understand how to love and serve God fruitfully! This special occasion will be a joyful celebration of faith. We invite families to participate in this enriching experience, where children can engage with scripture and music in a welcoming and supportive environment. As most of our preparation is in Church School and Choir, any children who are interested may still join. Contact Greer Lyle at greer@godsacre.org for more information.



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
Galatians 5:22-26



Fruit of the Spirit



Welcome to our new Youth Director!

Dear Youth Families,

As many of you know, Emma Garner graciously stepped in to support our youth programs for a transitional year while we searched for a more permanent Youth Director. Emma has been a wonderful addition and has contributed to the faith formation of our youth in ways we couldn't have imagined. For her leadership and faith, we are so grateful! Emma concluded her time with us at the end of April. Please join me in praying for Emma as she embarks on her journey beyond God's Acre.

With that being said, I am delighted to introduce Jemuel, affectionately known as Jem, who will be stepping into the role of Youth Director with us this Fall of 2024. Jem's journey with our church community began in September 2023 when he graciously accepted the Youth Group (YG) advisor role. Since then, his dedication and enthusiasm have touched the hearts of many, as he actively engaged with various age groups, including Minnows, Guppies, Junior Youth Group (JYG), and Youth Group (YG).

Jem brings with him a wealth of experience and a deep-rooted passion for serving others and nurturing spiritual growth. He is a proud member of the Class of 2017 at Fairfield Prep and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from St. John's University. Throughout his educational journey, Jem discovered a profound calling to serve his community and strengthen his relationship with God. His commitment to both has been unwavering, evident in his leadership roles in numerous retreats and his current position as Vice President for Youth Ministries at the French-speaking Baptist Church in Norwalk. These experiences have equipped him with the skills and knowledge necessary to lead our youth programs.

With a heart dedicated to youth, Jem has actively engaged in various roles aimed at empowering and guiding young minds. He spent three years at Side-by-Side Charter School, where he served as a Paraprofessional for one year and later transitioned into the role of Assistant Science Teacher for two years. Additionally, Jem has dedicated his summers to the Carver Program, where he served as a Boys Counselor for ages 10-13, After Camp Coordinator, and 7-9 Boys Supervisor for two consecutive years. His involvement in their after-school program at Side-by-Side further underscores his commitment to the holistic development of young individuals.

Jem is eagerly anticipating this new chapter in his journey with us, and I am excited to begin working alongside him. His vision for the youth ministry is rooted in building strong relationships with God and one another, fostering a sense of community, and deepening their faith as a collective group.

Please join me in extending a warm welcome to Jem as he steps into his new role as Youth Director. With his experience, dedication, and passion for youth, I have no doubt that he will make a profound difference in the lives of your children and our community. Should you wish to welcome Jem personally, please feel free to reach out to him at jem@godsacre.org. Thank you for your continued support as we embark on this exciting journey together.

Yours in Christ,
Kelly



MSYG Bake Sale and Commissioning

On Sunday, May 12, our MSYG Mountainside participants will be commissioned by our congregation for the important work they will do on their June trip. Immediately following the 10:00am service, MSYGers will host a Mother's Day Bake Sale in Smith Hall. We hope to see you there!



MSYG Car Wash

Please join us on Saturday, May 11, for our annual MSYG Car Wash from 10:00am-2:00pm. Stop by God's Acre to get your car washed by our Middle School Youth Group and help them raise money for their mission trip to Mountainside this June. \$20 per car includes a wash and parking for the May Fair!

SAVE THE DATE

Beacon of Light Celebration!
Sunday, June 2, 5:00-7:00pm



Join us as we celebrate all that God made possible in the lives of our youth this year! We are thrilled to send off our Seniors into the world with prayers and love from our congregation. All youth, parents, and siblings are welcome!

\$20 per person Register now: <https://godsacre.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/189/responses/new>



Youth & Choir Program Times 2024-2025

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | THURSDAY |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Church School (Nursery-7th grade) 10:00 – 11:00am</p> | <p>Minnows (grades K-1) 3:30 – 4:30pm</p> | <p>Spirit Singers (grades 2 & 3) 3:30 – 4:30pm</p> | <p>Cherubs (ages 4–grade 1) 3:30 – 4:00pm</p> |
| <p>MSYG (grades 6, 7, 8) 4:00 – 5:30pm</p> | | <p>Guppies (grades 2 & 3) 4:30 – 5:30pm</p> | <p>Joyful Noise (grades 4 & 5) 4:00 – 5:00pm</p> |
| <p>YG (grades 9-12) 7:00 – 8:30pm</p> | | | <p>JYG (grades 4 & 5) 5:00 – 6:00pm</p> |
| | | | <p>Quest (grades 9–12) TBD</p> |

Dear Church Families,

We hope this message finds you well and filled with anticipation for the upcoming program year! We're thrilled to unveil the schedule for our Youth/Children offerings for 2024-2025.

In light of the changes in school start and release times within the New Canaan Public Schools and how we have seen said changes affect our youth schedules, we've adjusted our groupings and meeting times to better accommodate the needs of our fish and program goals! Please take a moment to review the day and time when your child's programs will meet and mark it as a special space in their week dedicated to Christian Formation.

We can't wait to embark on this journey with your children and witness their growth and exploration in faith. Here's to a year filled with joy, discovery, and deepening connections within our church community!

A registration form for the 2024-2025 program year will be sent in the coming weeks! Contact Kelly Antonson at leather@godsacre.org to learn more.



OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

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

Lonnie deMarco, **x116**
Operations Assistant

Tracy Goldman, **x109**
Community Life Coordinator

Sarah Haddad, **x113**
Church School Coordinator

Anthony Jones
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

Jem St. Jean, **x111**
Youth Director

Maria Stadnik, **x108**
Director of Finance

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

Church Lay Leadership

Lonnie deMarco
Chair, Personnel

Amy Werner
Chair, Board of Trustees

Peter Wilson
Chair, Nominating and Governance

Dionna Carlson
Chair, Board of Deacons



The Congregational Church
of New Canaan

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(203) 966-2651
www.godsacre.org

We are a Stephen Minister Church

Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the June newsletter, please submit by May19.
Email submissions to: 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
2. Go to 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

