



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

I so love the seasons of Advent and Christmas on God's Acre. For me, it isn't just about the Norman Rockwell-like experience on our hill as people near and far gather to sing Christmas carols with the Town Band around our illuminated tree. It is the transition from Thanksgiving to Advent when Anthony Jones, Juliet Howe, and the other members of the Flower Ministry Team come together to adorn our meeting house and church property with wreaths, lights, and crèche scenes. I don't think there is a place more beautiful in the world than our Meeting House on a Sunday morning in Advent or during worship on Christmas Eve when we gather together amid all the seasonal adornments. I know that our God inhabits far more than an acre infinite time and space, but it is hard not to sense the presence of the Divine on our little patch of New Canaan real estate this time of year.

Advent and Christmas are a wonderful reminder of what a gift it is to serve as your pastor in this place and time. I continue to give thanks to God for you all and for our shared life together!

One of the particular gifts of this season that we will be sharing with you is somewhat unexpected — delightfully so. As I mentioned in a message over the summer, Tammie and I had

the opportunity to visit with a Naples, NY artist whose work we had admired for years. Darryl Abraham has a very distinct style, and he is known for his wonderful and whimsical Finger Lakes vineyard landscapes and artistic depictions of local institutions and landmarks. One day, while browsing his website, I noticed that he had a tab dedicated to Holy Land art, which seemed like an unusual departure from the work for which he is known. I contacted Darryl and arranged for Tammie and me to visit his studio to see some of his Middle Eastern collection.

When we arrived, Darryl had hung his entire gallery with much of his Holy Land art just for our viewing pleasure. We learned that he is a deeply committed person of faith and had spent all but four years of his life in the town of Naples. Those four years away from his hometown were spent in Israel, where his wife undertook a teaching sojourn.



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Advent on God's Acre



Adult Formation

Advent Bible Study The Lucan Nativity Stories

Mondays, December 9 & 16
7:00am Monday Morning
Bible Study

9:15am Women's Bible Study
Contact Marianna Kilbride at
marianna@godsacre.org

Children and Families

Christmas Craft Fair

Saturday, December 14,
9:30-11:00am, Smith Hall
RSVP to

churchschool@godsacre.org

Children's Music and Drama

Children's Choirs Caroling

New Canaan Inn &
The Village at Waveny

Children's Choirs Sing Christmas Celebration Concert

Sunday, December 15,
5:00pm, Meeting House

Fellowship

Men's Fellowship Christmas Dinner

Wednesday, December 11,
6:00pm, Waveny House
Contact Andy Parkin at
andyparkin7@gmail.com

Women's Fellowship Christmas Gathering

Thursday, December 12,
5:00pm, Ponus Ridge Chapel
Contact Lesley Cousley at
lacousley@gmail.com

Christmas Concert Reception

Sunday, December 15,
6:15pm, Smith Hall
Contact Nancy Burges at
nburges@gmail.com

Music

Advent Musical Moments

Wednesdays,
December 11 & 18
12:30pm, Meeting House
Featuring Greer Lyle
and Shyheim Hinnan

A Season of Joy Christmas Celebration Concert

Sunday, December 15,
5:00pm, Meeting House
Free admission,
all are welcome

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 22,
10:00am Worship Service

Youth

YG Progressive Supper

Sunday, December 8,
6:45-9:00pm

Salvation Army Bell Ringing

MSYG Sunday, December 8,
3:30-5:30pm

Guppies Tuesday, December 10,
5:00-6:30pm

JYG Thursday, December 12,
5:00-6:30pm

MSYG & YG Christmas Worship

Sunday, December 15,
4:30-6:15pm

Minnows Christmas Worship
Monday, December 16,
3:30-4:30pm

Guppies & JYG Christmas Worship

Tuesday, December 17,
4:30-5:30pm

Christmas Eve

on God's Acre



Tuesday, December 24

Family Service with Nativity Pageant – 4:00pm

Join us for a family-friendly service featuring the children of our church as they share our annual nativity pageant. Nursery care for children under three is available.

Worship Service – 6:00pm & 7:00pm

Celebrate Christ's birth at these 30-minute services featuring Christmas scripture and classic hymns.

Caroling on God's Acre – 6:30pm

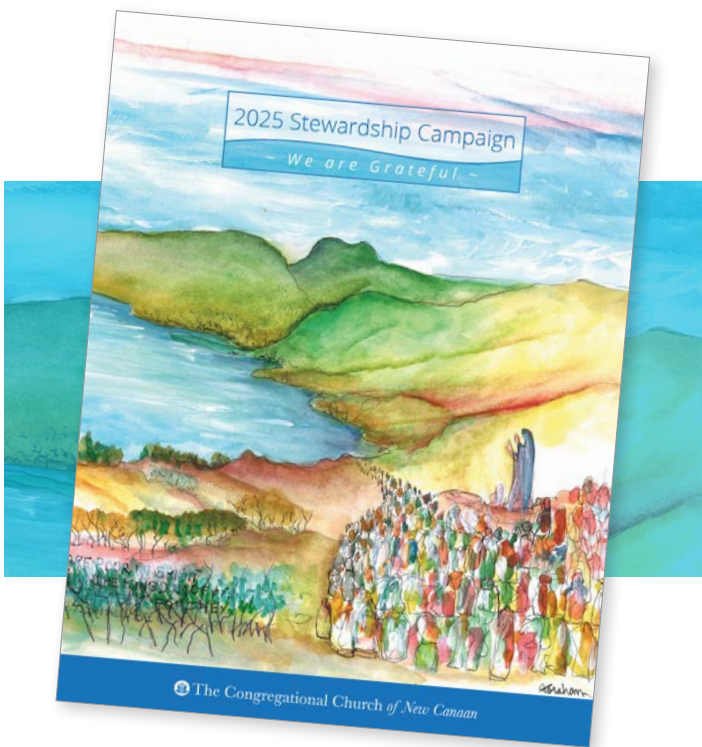
Join your family, friends, and neighbors for caroling on God's Acre.

Candlelight Service – 11:00pm

Pause and experience a contemplative candlelight service featuring scripture, sermon, and music. Communion will be served. Usher in Christmas morning surrounded by the peace of God's Acre.

2025 Stewardship Campaign

On November 17, we kicked off our 2025 Stewardship Campaign. As we enter stewardship season on God's Acre, we are reminded of the blessings we've shared as a church community and the importance of gratitude in inspiring our generosity. Our church has a proud tradition of uniting to support our mission, making a significant difference in the lives of so many. This collective commitment makes a profound impact, enabling us to be a beacon of faith and service in our community. We hope and pray that 400 individuals and families will participate in our campaign as we strive to reach our financial goal of 2.5 million. With hearts united in gratitude, we look forward to what we can achieve together on God's Acre. Please return your pledge card to the church by mail or pledge online at www.godsacre.org/pledge by December 31.



Continued from page one

During those years, Darryl captured scene after scene of the people and places he frequented, from Israel to the West Bank to the country of Jordan. He mentioned that he loved the work he was able to engage in during those years, but in Naples, people didn't have much interest in his Holy Land pieces. He was delighted by our interest, and through his generosity, we have been able to acquire most of his collection for our church. Much of the online images and artwork you have seen in our various publications are his work. We have also commissioned Darryl to create a few additional pieces to fulfill our liturgical needs. Darryl has even produced his own variation of our beloved Christmas Eve caroling tradition.

It is our hope that a tableau of his work will be formally displayed (graciously presented by our own Nathalie Schubert) in our Narthex on the First Sunday of Advent, or shortly thereafter. In a season of gift-giving and receiving, it is wonderful to have and share Darryl's work as a community.

I trust that you share my fondness for our New Canaan faith home, particularly at this time of year. I hope you and those you love will make your way to our church for one of our many Advent and Christmas programs or services. And when you have a moment, please pass through the Narthex that leads into our Meeting House and admire the gift of Holy Land images that have been generously produced and shared with our church by a very gifted artist, a fine human being, and an insightful person of faith: Darryl Abraham.

Yours in Christ,
Chapin

Engage and Enjoy

The Nominating and Governance Committee begins to really gear up this time of year as we approach the March 2025 Church Annual Meeting. If you have an interest in serving on a committee, please connect with one of the committee leaders and let them know. You can also reach out directly to Nominating & Governance by email at pbwilsonjr@yahoo.com.

To promote overall engagement and help everyone find a place to contribute to the life of our amazing church, you will find an information board in Smith Hall near the kitchen wall. The collage of information shows many of the ways to engage

and who to contact. Godsacre.org also contains a myriad of ways to explore getting involved.

Engage

It may have been a long and glorious fall, but winter will be here soon, and there are tons of warm and meaningful ways to meet up with like-minded people doing God's great works for our church and the community beyond..... ENGAGE!

Musical Moments This Advent Season

Music Ministries will present two Advent midday recitals on Wednesdays, December 11 and 18, at 12:30pm. The recitals will feature Shyheim Hinnant on December 11 and Greer Lyle on December 18.



Shyheim Hinnant

Greer Lyle

Sunday
December 22
10:00am
Worship Service



Lessons and Carols

Christmas Concert Fellowship

The Fellowship Team invites you to Smith Hall after our Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 15, from 6:15-7:00pm, for some Christmas cheer. Enjoy festive mocktails and appetizers while mingling with church friends and choir members. All are welcome, so invite friends and neighbors to join you for our evening of joy and gladness! Contact Nancy Burges at nnburges@gmail.com with questions or if you would like to help.

*"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice,
O righteous, and shout for joy,
all you upright in heart."*

Psalm 32:11



The Congregational Church of New Canaan
presents

A Season of Joy

Christmas Celebration Concert



Sunday, December 15, 5:00 PM

FREE ADMISSION, ALL ARE WELCOME!

Featuring:

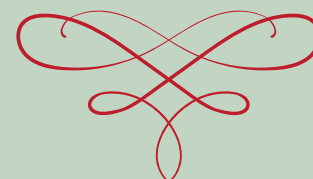
Chancel Choir

Children and Youth Music Ministries

Guest soloists and instrumentalists

Nerva Altino, *Director of Music Ministries*

Robenson Altino, *Guest Conductor*



Advent Mission Projects

Families in need have hard choices at Christmas.

Paying for food and winter utilities often leaves no room in the budget for gifts.

In working with local partners, our three annual Christmas projects target that issue.



Bell Ringing

The Salvation Army Bell Ringing funds provide help with heat and electricity needs of local residents through our Health and Human Services Department.

Be a Bell Ringer!

Each year, we ring the Salvation Army Bells at Walter Stewart's Market to raise funds for our local neighbors in need. Bell ringing is an excellent service opportunity for all. To sign up, contact Tracy Goldman at office@godsacre.org, and she will send you a link to the available time slots.

Our Angel Gifts

Every December, we partner with Inspirica on their Holiday Wishes initiative.

The Angel gifts we buy are for children in the homeless or working poor communities. You can either buy a gift online and have it shipped directly to Inspirica or shop in-store and return your gift to Smith Hall by December 15. Contact Beth Picard at bpicard44@gmail.com with any questions.

Our Dove Donations

Similar to our Angel gifts, every year, we partner with Person-to-Person on their Dove program. Food insecurity has increased substantially for local families, and the Dove dollars we donate are a true blessing.

Our Dove donations provide food for an entire day for a family or individual in need. A suggested donation of \$50.00 to Person-to-Person will go towards grocery gift cards to buy a day's worth of food for Christmas. Contact Debbie Simpson at debcsimpson24@gmail.com to learn more.

Christmas Flowers

"Hallelujah!" The celebration of Christmas 2024 is about to come alive in the Meeting House. The tradition and beauty of our annual floral display will be created by the Flower Ministry Team. Church members are invited to contribute to this living tribute to our love of the season, our families and friends, and for the pure joy of being together. Donations and bulletin listings should be sent to Tracy Goldman at office@godsacre.org by Monday, December 16.



Stephen Ministers, Gail Banigan, and Michel Cornier visiting loved ones in the Memorial Garden.

Stephen Ministry Training Class Begins this January

We are thrilled to offer Stephen Ministry Training beginning in January. Classes will be held online on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30pm and run from January 21 through April 1. We will kick things off with an in-person meeting on Sunday, January 19, with additional opportunities to gather in person throughout the course.

This training equips participants with vital skills, including active listening, empathy, compassion, Christian caregiving principles, and grief care.

If you feel called to serve our church family in this meaningful way, please contact one of our Stephen Leaders:

Beth Baker: beth@godsacre.org

Maria Hemmings: mariahemmings@hotmail.com

Ann Whittaker: ahwhittaker@yahoo.com

What is Stephen Ministry?

Founded in 1975 by Kenneth C. Haugk, a pastor and clinical psychologist, Stephen Ministry is a Christian caregiving ministry that empowers congregation members to provide one-on-one, confidential care to those navigating life's challenges, such as grief, illness, job loss, or loneliness. It is a global ministry, active in over 13,000 churches across many denominations.



Our church has had an active Stephen Ministry program since 2006. Over the years, we've trained more than 50 Stephen Ministers, and our current ministry team includes 21 dedicated members.

Stephen Ministry can be described as "Christ Caring for People through People."

We invite you to prayerfully consider joining this meaningful ministry!

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

Women's Fellowship Christmas Open House

Please join us for our Annual Christmas Open House on Thursday, December 12, from 5:00-8:00pm for an evening of festive fellowship and yummy hors d'oeuvres at the Ponus Ridge Chapel. Ainsley Hayes is our gracious host. Please register by December 8; the cost is \$25 per person. Parking for the event will be at the New Canaan Country School, 585 Ponus Ridge Road. Please be sure to access the parking only from the Ponus Ridge entrance. A shuttle will run continuously throughout the evening. Please contact Lesley Cousley at lacousley@gmail.com with any questions.



• WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP • SAVE THE DATE •

Filling in the Blanks Packing Event

Please save the date for a wonderful opportunity to help Filling in the Blanks! Tuesday, January 21 from 1:00-3:00pm we will meet at the Filling in the Blanks warehouse in Norwalk and help pack backpacks for food-insecure youth in our area. Interested in joining? Contact Lesley Cousley at lacousley@gmail.com for registration details.

**(filling in
the blanks)**



Men's Fellowship Christmas Dinner

It's time to reserve your place at the table for our annual Men's Fellowship Christmas Dinner at 6:00pm on Wednesday, December 11, at Waveny House.

This year will be different, with Charles no longer with us, but let's celebrate his life through our fellowship, sharing a meal, and singing out loud and proud!

Our dinner is a cherished tradition of Christmas camaraderie and the grand finale of our calendar year. The evening starts with drinks and fellowship in front of a roaring fire, followed by a candlelit dinner in the main hall at Waveny House. Our guests include ten members from Pivot House, who typically perform a few 'not to be missed' songs. They are swiftly followed by what, for many, is the highlight of the evening - robust carol singing from the assembled throng led by Brother Burges! Brother Heron will again take the lead on the raffle.

The price is \$75 per person, and for anyone who wishes to do so, there is an opportunity to sponsor a Pivot House guest for an additional \$25 (or increments thereof).

[Click here to register](#)

Due to number restrictions, we encourage you to sign up as soon as possible, which also helps us plan. Feel free to contact Andy Parkin at andyparkin7@gmail.com with any questions. We hope to see you there!



ADULT FORMATION



Advent Bible Study - The Lucan Nativity Stories

Please join us on December 9 and 16 for our Monday Morning Bible Studies, 7:00-8:00am or 9:15-10:15am (Women's). We will take a deep dive into the nativity stories of Jesus and John the Baptist as told to us in Luke. Luke is a wonderful teller of stories, and his poetic canticles comment on their significance and have been used in worship through the ages. Zoom is available at either session. Contact Marianna Kilbride at marianna@godsacre.org.



December with Youth Ministries!

We had such a wonderful previous month as a collective youth group between our various service projects, fellowship hours, and craft nights. We created boxes for our alumni high school fish in college, planted some fall-themed herbs, and of course carved and decorated pumpkins for Halloween. We worshipped together in our Gratitude Youth Worship and served our community in various ways, from creating cards and soup for those in need to heading into Manhattan to serve those currently without a home. Check out our YG seniors and freshman smiling outside our breakfast run location in New York City!



Senior Freshman Retreat

Our youth ministries worked together the week leading up to our Thanksgiving Service Project, where we made hot chocolate jars, cards, and cookie mix to put into the boxes we created after worship on Sunday! Our MSYGers worked alongside church school to put the boxes together, and our YGers helped to sort, distribute, and donate the boxes throughout the day. We are so proud of our youth for all their hard work!

December is going to be filled with lots of holiday cheer and celebration. We have our Salvation Bell Ringing service project, where MSYG, Guppies, and JYG will all be heading into town to help collect donations for the Salvation Army during their normal programming time. YG will celebrate with our annual Progressive Supper on 12/8, where we head to different locations for appetizers, dinner, and dessert to sing and cherish time together. The Church Christmas Concert is on Sunday, 12/15, and we hope all our youth joins us to sing and worship together. Finally, Quest has a contemporary worship service on Sunday, 12/1, at 6:00pm and a dinner on Thursday, 12/19, from 7:00-8:30pm. We are finishing this year with so many incredible opportunities to serve our community, give thanks for each other and celebrate the wonderful holiday season!

A final note of thanks to the parent volunteers who make all our ministries possible: thank you for donating your time and energy to our many different events and program times. We appreciate your support and we couldn't do it without you!

<p>YG </p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contemporary Worship Service on Sunday, 12/1 from 6:00-7:00pm. 2. Progressive Supper (covenant event) on Sunday, 12/8 from 6:45-9:00pm. 3. Christmas Craft fair (a covenant volunteer opportunity for traveling YG fish) on Saturday, 12/13 from 9:00-11:00am. 4. Annual Christmas Concert with YG fellowship before on Sunday, 12/15 from 4:30-6:30pm. 5. For those traveling with us on the Mission Trip in February, be on the lookout mid-December for your special Extravaganza box with our location enclosed! 	<p>Quest </p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary worship on December 1 from 6:00-7:00pm. • Thursday, December 19 is our monthly Quest dinner from 7:00-8:30pm.
	<p>Minnows </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minnows on Monday 12/2 & 12/16 from 3:30 - 4:30pm. • Christmas worship 12/17.
<p>MSYG </p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/1 from 3:30-5:30pm is Salvation Army Bell Ringing in town- a covenant event! • 12/8 from 4:00-5:30pm is Team Reveal. • 12/15 from 5:00-6:30pm is the annual Christmas Concert. 	<p> </p> <p>Guppies & JYG</p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guppies 12/3 from 4:30-5:30pm & JYG 12/5 from 5:00-6:00pm. • Extended Event: Salvation Army Bell Ringing Event for Guppies on Tuesday 12/10 and JYG on Thursday 12/12 runs from 5:00-6:30pm where we will ring bells in town and eat at Pinnochios afterwards! • Combined Minnows, Guppies & JYG Christmas worship on Tuesday, 12/17 from 4:30-5:30pm!



Minnows

Children's Christmas Craft Fair

We invite all children and their families to join us on Saturday, December 14, from 9:30-11:00am for our beloved Christmas Craft Fair. Come visit our Holiday Workshop in Smith Hall to create and wrap presents for your loved ones in time for Christmas. We will have several stations set up with an assortment of crafts and presents to create. We will have ornaments, candles, and more! This is a drop-off event for children ages four and up; however, parents are welcome to stay with their children. Please RSVP if you plan to attend so we will be sure to have enough supplies for everyone. We hope your family will come and experience the magic of giving during the Christmas season!



December Church School Schedule

-  **December 1:**
Combined Church School for PreK-3rd grade.
4-7th grades remain in the service. Nursery Available.
-  **December 8:**
Regular Church School
-  **December 15:**
Regular Church School
-  **December 22 at 10am:**
Nursery available, Combined Church School Class
-  **December 24 at 4:00pm:**
Christmas Family Service, Nativity Pageant
-  **December 29 at 10am:**
Nursery available, no Church School
(all children attend worship with families)



- SAVE THE DATE -

Movies for a Mission Parent's Night Out 2025!

Youth Ministries and Children and Family Ministries invite you to participate in this school mission trip fundraiser. High School YGers will host Movies for a Mission- a fun-filled kid's night at the church featuring movies, crafts, and snacks/dinner. We invite you to drop off 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. More details and an email with a registration link to come.

Saturday, January 25, 5:00-7:00pm

Saturday, February 1, 5:00-7:00pm



OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

Minister

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

Pastoral Care Emergency, **x103**

Staff

Nerva Altino, **x104**
Director of Music Ministries

Kelly Antonson, **x110**
Senior Youth Director

Beth Baker, **x102**
Pastoral Care Minister

Laurel Carr, **x107**
Director of Communications

Barb Clayton, **x102**
Pastoral Care Minister

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

Lonnie deMarco, **x116**
Interim Operations and Finance Resource

Kimmie Dyrvik, **x111**
Interim Senior Youth Director

Tracy Goldman, **x109**
Community Life Coordinator

Sarah Haddad, **x113**
Church School Coordinator

Anthony Jones
Sexton

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

Caroline 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

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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New Canaan, CT 06840
(203) 966-2651
www.godsacre.org

We are a Stephen Minister Church

Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the December newsletter, please submit by November 19.
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