



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

One of the most satisfying epiphanies of the (COVID-19) pandemic for me came during my Sabbatical in New Mexico in the summer of 2021. Tammie and I were searching for a church to attend on Sunday mornings. While most churches had reopened in Connecticut, every church we contacted in New Mexico was still closed. I turned to Tammie and asked, "What service should we watch online?" But as soon as I said it, I inwardly cringed. After a year of screen fatigue, I had no interest in watching worship on a computer.

On a whim, we tuned into WBUR (Boston's NPR station) to listen to the worship service from Marsh Chapel at Boston University, which airs live every Sunday morning. That morning, we sat outside with breakfast and a panoramic view of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. However, what we heard was not a live-streamed video service but an audio worship experience, essentially, a worship podcast. It was beautiful, intimate, and refreshingly screen-free.

When I returned from Sabbatical, we began offering our own version, "God's Acre On the Go," a 20-25-minute worship podcast with a welcome, anthem, scripture, sermon, prayer, and benediction. It's perfect for traveling, walking, driving, or simply

on Sunday mornings when you can't get out the door in time for church! Many of you have told me how much you enjoy the offering. College students, seniors, and everyone in between have found this simple offering to be a meaningful way to stay connected to God through worship.



Now, from Epiphany through Easter, we're going to experiment with sharing "On the Go" more widely. Each week, 60-80 individuals and families listen as part of their devotional rhythm. While that number isn't viral by any means, it is important. We believe the world needs more screen-free worship options, especially for those who are traveling or need to access worship from home.

To widen our reach, we're partnering with a firm to create short, engaging reels based on our worship podcast. In this new year, something of a resolution, we'll make a more

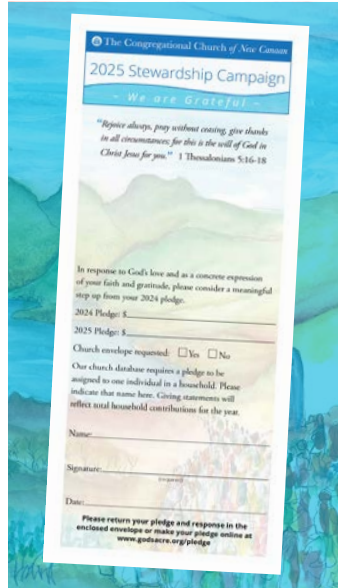
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STEWARDSHIP

2025 Stewardship Campaign

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

This stewardship season, 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.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Continued from page one

concerted effort to extend our ministry's reach, sharing the Word of the Lord from God's Acre with a broader audience. It's an experiment, but one we believe is worth the effort.

When you see one of our "On the Go" reels, please share it. Spread the word. And when you're traveling, commuting, or simply needing a few moments of grounding, take 20-25 minutes to listen to "God's Acre On the Go" for yourself.

Yours in Christ,
Chapin

ADULT FORMATION

Genesis Winter Bible Study



Join us on January 27 to begin with the magisterial six-day creation through Adam and Eve, the flood, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the Joseph story. Genesis contains many of the most well-known and beloved passages in the whole Bible. These texts have grounded beliefs and shaped faith communities for over two millennia.

Where do these stories come from? How do they relate to similar traditions from Israel's neighboring cultures, and how have they grown over time until reaching the form we now have them in? How have our modern interpretations obscured what the texts might have originally meant? This study provides new perspectives for appreciating some of the most famous biblical stories.

We meet on Mondays from 7:00-8:00am and the Women's group meets from 9:15-10:15am with Zoom options available. Contact Marianna at marianna@godsacre.org.

FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship Chili Paddle Party

Friday, January 31 | 7:00-10:00pm

Our annual Church Chili Paddle Party, held in late January, is a fun-filled social event that brings together church members and friends for an evening of friendly competition and delicious chili. The evening kicks off with exciting round-robin paddle play, where players of all skill levels can enjoy the fast-paced action in the crisp winter air. Meanwhile, inside the Waveny Paddle Hut, the aroma of simmering chili fills the air as congregants showcase their culinary talents in the highly anticipated chili cookoff. Participants and attendees get to sample a variety of unique chili recipes, from classic to creative, and vote for their favorites. It's a perfect blend of outdoor fun and comfort food, with plenty of camaraderie and community spirit. Invites will be in your inbox in early January. Contact Liz McClave at lizmcclave@gmail.com with questions or to enter your chili in the cookoff.



January Church School Schedule

JANUARY 5 Chapel Sunday for grades Preschool through 3rd grade, 4-7th grades remain in the Meeting House for communion.

JANUARY 12 Regular Church School

JANUARY 19 Regular Church School

JANUARY 26 Regular Church School

Movies for a Mission

Two more dates remain to take advantage of a night out while you support our YG mission trip with Movies for a Mission! High School YGers will host a fun-filled kid's night featuring movies, crafts, and dinner at the church. We invite you to drop off your children 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.

Saturday, January 25
from 7:00-9:00pm

Saturday, February 1
from 7:00-9:00pm



CHILDREN'S MUSIC AND DRAMA

Christmas Cheer Week was an Overwhelming Success!

This past month, Youth and Children's Music ministries teamed up to sing and ring in our community. Our children sang Christmas carols at the Village at Waveny and ran into some dear church members! Then, they headed to Main Street to ring bells for the Salvation Army. We are grateful to the Village for welcoming us so graciously!



PASTORAL CARE

Stephen Ministry Training Begins January 21

Are you feeling called to bring Christ's love and care to others during times of need? If so, please consider joining our Stephen Ministry Team. Stephen Ministry training begins Tuesday, January 21, from 7:00 to 8:30pm. Classes meet weekly on Tuesdays through April 1. Commissioning will take place at the 10:00am worship service on Sunday, April 6.



Our Stephen Ministry Team currently includes 21 people who meet monthly on the third Monday from 7:00 -8:30pm.

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

For more information, please contact one of our Stephen Leaders:

Beth Baker: beth@godsacre.org

Maria Hemmings: mariahemmings@hotmail.com

Ann Whittaker: ahwhittaker@yahoo.com








Stephen Ministry was Founded in 1975 by Kenneth C. Haugk, a pastor and clinical psychologist. It 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, divorce, and loneliness.

December Reflections

Happy 2025 everyone! We are so excited about the wonderful year to come and are so grateful for your continued involvement with our programming. We had a very cheerful December filled with holiday activities, from our K-5 Christmas party to bell ringing as a group. We made ornaments, baked cookies, and learned more about the Christmas story. We rang bells for the Salvation Army as individual youth groups, and our middle school cohort did a great job raising money and spreading Christmas cheer. YG celebrated the end of another year with our annual Progressive Supper, pictured below. We finished with a fantastic Christmas Concert led by our music team, a wonderful way to cherish the Christmas season together. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for another year of blessed community, service, and worship together. We are so lucky to have the love and participation that we do in all of our youth programs.



January Youth Ministry Highlights

<p>YG </p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Comissioning Sunday (covenant event) on Sunday, 1/12 from 9:30-11:30am. FUNDing the mission Sunday, 1/25 from 7:00-8:30pm. There is a mandatory parent meeting for all parents of traveling fish as well. Two movies for a mission events: Saturday, January 25 from 5:00-7:00pm and Saturday, February 1 from 5:00-7:00pm. Various dates will be sent via email to your specific team for (2) team night gatherings and (1) mandatory Inspirica cooking night. Details to follow! Save the Date: Rachels Challenge on Sunday, February 2 from 6:00-8:30pm. 	<p>Quest </p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contemporary worship on January 5 from 6:00-7:00pm. Thursday, January 16 is our monthly Quest dinner from 6:30-8:00pm.
<p>MSYG </p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/5 is Team Reveal from 4:00-5:30pm 1/12 is MSYG Serves from 4:00-5:30pm, details to follow! Friday, 1/24 to Sunday 1/26 is Winter Weekend! Travel upstate with us as we enjoy the snow with this beloved MSYG weekend trip! 	<p>Minnows </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minnows on Monday 1/13 & 1/27 from 3:30-4:30pm. Youth Worship 1/8 at 6:30pm <p>Guppies & JYG </p> <p>Important Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Worship on Wednesday 1/8 from 6:30-8:00pm Guppies will meet on Tuesdays: 1/14, 1/21 and 1/28 from 4:30-5:30pm. JYG will meet on Thursdays: 1/16, 1/23 and 1/30 from 5:00-6:00pm.
<p>Youth Worship  </p> <p>An offering for all our youth ministries! We will meet at 6:30pm in smith hall for dinner and move to the meetinghouse for worship from 7:00-8:00pm.</p>	

January is filled with important programming for all of our fish, including two separate covenant events for YG and a weekend trip for MSYG! YG Commissioning Sunday is on January 12, where we will commission all our traveling fish and talk more about the projects and our partner organization. This kicks off our Mission Sponsor campaign. More details will follow on how to support our trip! MSYG has its team reveal on January 5, and a fun service project on Sunday, January 12. We will ask all families to donate a canned good or box of granola bars to help build 'snack packs' for Filling in the Blanks. MSYG will travel to Camp Silver Lake on Friday, January 24 for a weekend of games, fellowship, team building, and fun in the snow. We have a youth-wide youth worship on January 8 from 6:30-8:00pm, where all youth are invited to eat dinner beforehand and come into the meetinghouse to worship as a collective. Our Minnows, Guppies, and JYG friends have exciting plans to learn more about Jesus' baptism and the disciples through crafts, games and a fun pajama party!

We also have two more opportunities to bring your children to our 'Movies for a Mission' event on Saturday, January 25, from 5:00-7:00pm and Saturday, February 1 from 5:00-7:00pm. This event will help us to fundraise our YG Mission Trip! As always, reach out with any questions to kimmie@godsacre.org, and happy January!

Will You Be a Mission Sponsor?

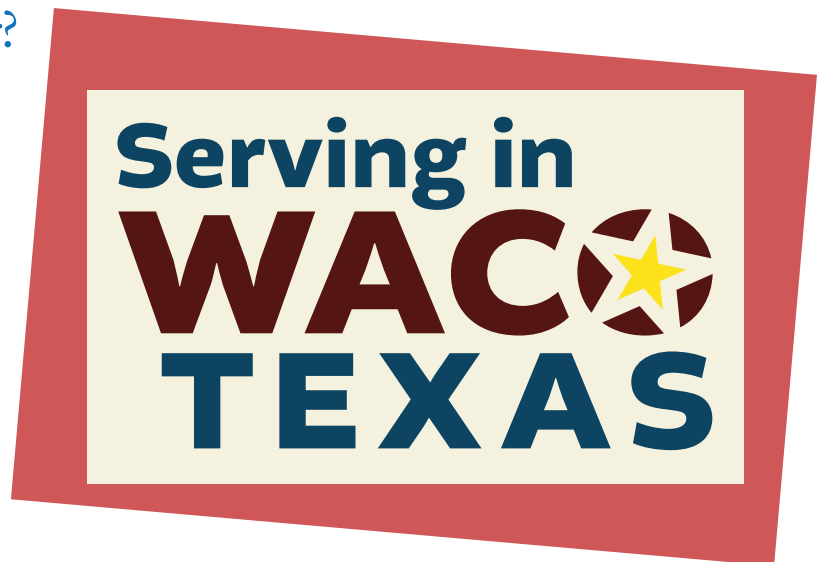
For 33 years, The Congregational Church of New Canaan has continued our mission to create a community where youth can experience and share the love of God. All year, we have proceeded to lead with Christ to create a community for our youth marked by love, covenant, and participation.

This February, 109 of our YG fish will embark on a truly life-changing pilgrimage to Waco, Texas, to work with our partner, Mission Waco/World, to serve those brothers and sisters in need. Mission Waco is an organization with three main objectives: to empower the poor and marginalized, to equip and motivate the middle class to become more involved with those in need, and to engage in the systemic issues of social injustice. They began in 1978 and have grown to include separate partner organizations, including Grassroots and CUB (Church Under the Bridge). These nonprofits have brought economic development and community engagement to Waco and are cornerstones for those in need in the area. Within the past ten years, Mission Waco has expanded to include Mission World and is partnering with multiple countries to develop similar projects of economic and social enhancement to areas in need.

Their newest venture, Creekside Community Village, seeks to build tiny homes for permanent residents of Waco who are currently homeless. At full capacity, they hope to provide homes for over 300 formerly homeless individuals. They will provide wrap-around services with existing Mission Waco programs and partners to keep them off the streets and in the community. Each tiny home costs 50,000, and YG will be partnering with Mission Waco to build as many as we can with the help of our community, as well as help to improve the buildings run by Mission Waco.

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, we 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, help fundraise the money needed to build these tiny homes.

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?



Thank You For The Gift of Music

The Advent and Christmas seasons were exceptionally beautiful because of the music. We appreciate all the singers, ringers, and musicians who dedicated countless hours preparing for our services. Your talents, time, and devotion to the church are deeply admired, and we are grateful for your contributions!



New Year's 2025 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.

Chancel Choir

(high school through adults)
resumes Thursday,
January 2, 7:30 – 9:00pm

Joyful Ringers

(high school through adults)
resumes Thursday,
January 9; 6:30 – 7:15pm

Spirit Singers

(grades 2-3)
resumes Tuesday,
January 14; 3:30 – 4:30pm

Cherubs

(ages 4 -grade 1)
resumes Thursday,
January 16, 3:30 – 4:00pm

Joyful Noise

(grades 4-5)
resumes Thursday,
January 16, 4:00 – 5:00pm

Youth Worship Teams

(grades 6-12)
rehearse as youth
schedule allows



Nerva Altino



Greer Lyle

For more information, please contact Nerva Altino, Director of Music Ministries at (203) 966-2651 x104 or nerva@godsacre.org or Greer Lyle at greer@godsacre.org

MISSIONS & OUTREACH

Beyond Grateful! *"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for." – Ephesians 1:11-12*

Because of YOU, we have touched lives and made a difference. Whether you rang bells for the Salvation Army, purchased an Inspirica Angel Gift for a homeless child, or made a Dove Donation to Person-to-Person to provide food to those who need it most, you showed the true meaning of Christmas!

All proceeds from our Salvation Army Bell Ringing go to those most in need in our local community, and over 2,000 children received toys thanks to the efforts of our church and surrounding communities.

We're so grateful for each and every one of you!

If you are interested in more Missions & Outreach work, please reach out to Marianna Kilbride at marianna@godsacre.org.



• WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP • PACKING EVENT •

Filling in the Blanks Packing Event

Please join us for a wonderful opportunity to help Filling in the Blanks. On Tuesday, January 21, we will meet at the Filling in the Blanks warehouse in Norwalk and help pack backpacks for food insecure in our area. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Lesley Cousley at lcousley@gmail.com to register or with questions. Advance registration through the Filling in the Blanks website is required.



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men's Fellowship - January 2025



Pivot Breakfast

The Men's Fellowship Group (MG) will host our brothers from Pivot Ministries for our annual Winter Breakfast on Saturday, January 25, at 8:00am in Smith Hall. Come join us for fellowship, reflection, and a fantastic break-

fast! The suggested contribution is \$10, and you'll have the opportunity to sponsor guests. An invitation to attend will be sent by email soon. Contact Don Moyle at donmoyle@gmail.com or Steve Antonson at antonson.steven@gmail.com to volunteer to set up, cook, and clean up or with questions.



M4 Breakfast and Men's Small Groups

Dirk Dunlap dirkdunlap@hotmail.com will host a monthly M4 breakfast at his Grove Street office on Friday, January 10, at 7:30am.

The monthly Men's Small Group meeting will be held on Monday, January 27, at 7:30pm in the Chapel. Contact Steve Case at scase135@outlook.com for information.



FLOWER MINISTRY

Gratitude

In this blissfully quiet first month of the calendar year, what a joy to glance back with gratitude at the past twelve months. Gratitude that the floral ministry has grown to have twenty-two creative members, each lending their individual talent. Gratitude for the fellowship we have with each other. Gratitude for the deacons who, on Sunday afternoons, deliver small arrangements made from the altar flowers to members of our church community. Gratitude to our congregation, whose generosity supports the flower ministry. Lovely, also, to look forward to the upcoming year and all the joy that lies ahead. Happy New Year!



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

23 Park Street
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 February newsletter, please submit by January 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