

## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

As we head into March, I want to highlight three important events:

First, we will gather for our 292nd Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 2, after our 10:00am worship service. You can participate in our meeting in person or online. Thanks be to God and to your amazing efforts and support; we have a very good news story to tell! Beyond our regular reporting, we'll launch a new Music Committee, provide updates on our two search processes, and discuss the establishment of the Preschool at God's Acre. We also have exciting developments to share about our Raymond Preaching Fellowships. The Annual Meeting provides a chance to learn about our remarkable ministries from the past year and to offer your input and direction for our future.

Next, our stewardship efforts have once again met with great success — thanks to God's goodness and your generosity. We are very close to our goal of having 400 members and friends participate in this campaign, with only 16 more commitments needed! In my ten years here, we've never been this close to meeting our goal by the Annual Meeting. Typically, our campaign runs until June, but this year, we have a real opportunity to close it out this weekend. If you have yet to pledge, please consider doing so at [www.godsacre.org/pledge](http://www.godsacre.org/pledge) to help us

reach this milestone in time for the Annual Meeting!

Finally, next Wednesday, March 5, marks the beginning of the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. Lent has become one of my favorite liturgical seasons because it offers a meaningful time to focus on spiritual disciplines that often get overlooked. It's an opportunity to challenge ourselves, with the Lord's support, to live out our faith in more intentional ways. We'll begin this journey with our Ash Wednesday Communion Service at 8:00pm on March 5 in the Chapel.

I hope you will take part in these opportunities: join us for our Annual Meeting to help guide our future, consider making a financial pledge if you haven't already, and join us for Ash Wednesday as we deepen our faith and renew our walk with the Lord.

Yours in Christ,  
Chapin





# Lent on God's Acre

## ADULT FORMATION

### Lenten Workshop

### Faith@Work Foundations: Discovering Your Gifts and Talents

Wednesdays, March 12-April 16  
7:30-8:45pm

Contact Tammie Garner at  
[tcgarner1010@msn.com](mailto:tcgarner1010@msn.com)

### Lenten Bible Study

The Lucan Road to Resurrection  
Mondays, 7:00-8:00am, and  
9:15-10:15am (Women's), Library  
Contact Marianna Kilbride at  
[marianna@godsacre.org](mailto:marianna@godsacre.org)

## CHILDREN & YOUTH

### Family Bingo

Friday, March 28, 5:00-6:30pm, Smith Hall  
Contact Sarah Haddad at  
[churchschool@godsacre.org](mailto:churchschool@godsacre.org)

### Easter Egg Hunt and Family Fellowship

Sunday, April 20, 10:00 am  
between services, Front Lawn

## FELLOWSHIP

### Fellowship Dance Lesson

Saturday, March 22,  
5:00-7:00pm

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

### Fellowship Dinner Parties

Saturday, April 5, 6:00pm  
Contact Nancy Burges at

[nnburges@gmail.com](mailto:nnburges@gmail.com)

## MUSIC

### Lenten Musical Moments

Wednesdays, April 2, 9 & 16  
12:00pm, Meeting House  
Contact Nerva Altino at  
[nerva@godsacre.org](mailto:nerva@godsacre.org)

## MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

### Maasai Medical Clinic – Fundraising Mission

March 1-31

Contact Marianna Kilbride at  
[marianna@godsacre.org](mailto:marianna@godsacre.org)

## NEW MEMBER CLASS

### Introduction

Sunday, March 23, 11:15am

### Faith Sharing

Wednesday, March 26, 7:00pm

### New Member Social (Parsonage)

Saturday, March 29, 4:00pm

### New Member Sunday

Sunday, March 30, 9:15am

Contact Anna Rogers at  
[welcoming@godsacre.org](mailto:welcoming@godsacre.org)

## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

### Cake and Coffee

Tuesday, April 8, 9:30-11:00am

Contact Lesley Cousley at  
[lcousley@gmail.com](mailto:lcousley@gmail.com)

## WORSHIP

### Ash Wednesday Traditional Service

Wednesday, March 5, 8:00pm  
Chapel

### Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service

Thursday, April 17, 8:00pm  
Meeting House

# Holy Week God's Acre

## PALM SUNDAY

Sunday, April 13

### 8:00am Worship Service

Chapel

### 10:00am Worship Service

Meeting House

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

Thursday, April 17, 8:00pm

### Tenebrae Service

featuring the Chancel Choir  
Meeting House

## EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday, April 20

### 6:00am Contemporary Sunrise Worship Service

Church Steps

*A light breakfast follows in the Parlor*

### 9:00am Traditional Worship Service

Meeting House

*Church School Chapel Service and Nursery Care available*

### 10:00am Easter Egg Hunt and Family Fellowship

Church Lawn

### 11:00am Traditional Worship Service

Meeting House

*Church School Chapel Service and Nursery Care available*



## Stewardship Update

Thank you to all who have already generously pledged to the Stewardship Campaign. We are close to reaching our goal of 400 participants pledging 2.5 million. Currently, we have 384 pledge cards (96% of our goal) totaling \$2.36 (95% of our goal). With 16 pledges to go to reach our participation goal, we hope and pray that our community will continue to come together

to support our church. 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. If you wish to pledge, you can make your pledge today online at [www.godsacre.org/pledge](http://www.godsacre.org/pledge).



## MUSIC MINISTRY

### SAVE THE DATES

## Lenten Musical Moments

On select Wednesdays this Lent, you are invited to hear our gifted musicians sing Lenten contemplative music in the Meeting House. Join us on April 2, 9, and 16 at noon. These 30-minute services will include scripture, prayer, and music. We hope you will encourage friends and family to attend. Contact Nerva Altino at [nerva@godsacre.org](mailto:nerva@godsacre.org) with questions.





## Children and Family Ministries BINGO Night

Children and families of all ages are encouraged to sign up and join us for a night of family fellowship and BINGO fun. On Friday, March 28, we will gather from 5:00-6:30pm in Smith Hall for some friendly BINGO competition. Pizza will be served, and amazing prizes will be available for all to win. This is a beloved annual church event, and we hope to have you there!



## March Church School Calendar

### MARCH 2

Church School (Chapel Service for grades 1-3, grades 4-7 remain in Meeting House)

### MARCH 9

Church School PreK-7th grade

### MARCH 16

Church School PreK-7th grade  
Christian Camps visit

### MARCH 23

Church School PreK-7th grade

### MARCH 28

Family BINGO night  
5:00-6:30pm in Smith Hall

### MARCH 30

Church School PreK-7th grade



## Vacation Bible School 2025: Save the Date

Save the Date for **"Camp VBS: Trust in God!"** at the church on **June 18-20 (Wednesday through Friday from 9:30 am-12:30pm)**.

We will explore adventurous bible stories that touch upon this theme of "trust" while engaging in classic camp songs, games, activities, and crafts. Children ages 4 through 4th grade are invited to participate as campers, while middle and high school students can register to be junior and senior counselors.

Registration information will be shared via email in the coming weeks. We look forward to having you join us for another memorable VBS experience of faith-building, fellowship, and fun!

\*Please note that should the NCPS calendar require an extension beyond June 17, we will adjust our camp dates accordingly and extend to Saturday, 6/21, and Sunday, 6/22, if needed.





## MSYG Winter Weekend Review!

Our Middle School Youth Group (MSYG) gathered for a much-needed Winter Weekend retreat at Camp Silverlake in Sharon, CT, this winter. Nestled in the beauty of creation, our sixth through eighth graders took a break from the busyness of their daily lives to reconnect—with each other, with themselves, and with God!

Throughout the weekend, we embraced the gift of slowing down. From snow-covered trails to fellowship moments by the fire, our time together was filled with laughter, reflection, and thoughtful conversations about where we see God's Light in the world. Worship, small group discussions, and shared meals strengthened our bonds and reminded us that God's presence is always near, shining in both the ordinary and extraordinary moments of our lives.

A highlight of the retreat was the incredible leadership of our high school junior advisors, who served as mentors and role models, guiding our middle schoolers with grace and enthusiasm. Their presence was a true reflection of God's love in action. We are also deeply grateful for our dedicated MSYG adult advisors, whose care and wisdom made this weekend possible! Their presence was a true reflection of God's love in action.

Take a look at some photos of our time together!

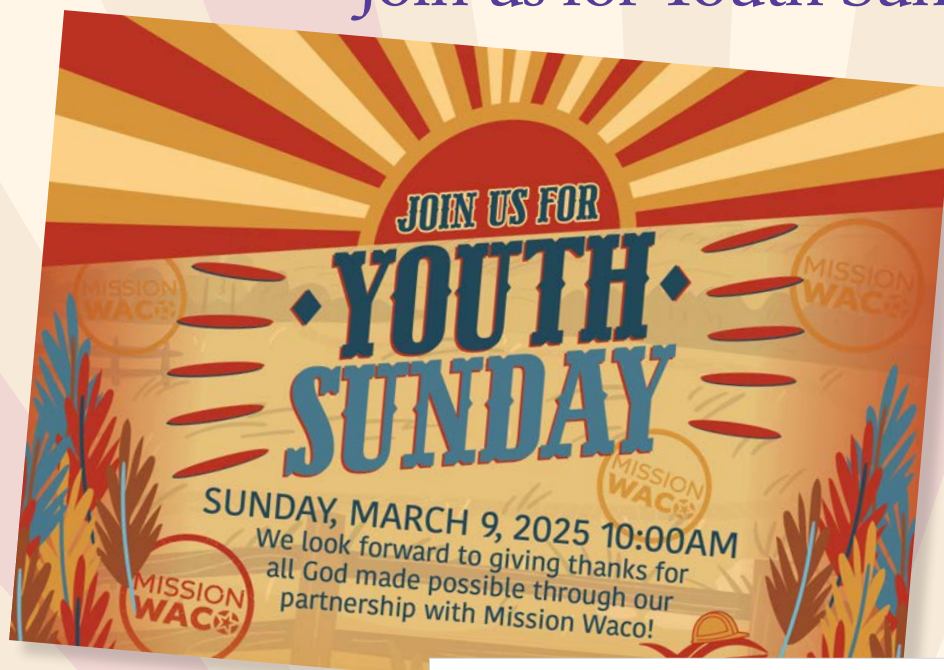




# Join us for Youth Sunday

## Thank You Mission Sponsors!

Our mission would not have been possible without the prayers, love, and gifts from our Mission Sponsors! Please join us for our Youth Worship Service to hear reflections from our YG mission fish, followed by a lovely fellowship coffee hour and a preview of our YG Mission Trip video.



*"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'  
And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'"*  
Isaiah 6:8

Please join us Sunday, March 9, 2025 at 10:00am for Youth Sunday as our Senior Leaders reflect upon the opportunity to serve with Mission Waco! We are incredibly grateful to our congregation and the community at large for your support of our Mission Fish. Following the 10:00am service please join us for a special Mission Sponsor coffee hour!



The Congregational Church  
of New Canaan  
23 Park Street, New Canaan, CT 06840





## YG Mission Trip to Waco, Texas

With the grace of God and the unwavering support of our Mission Sponsors and church community, YG had the incredible opportunity to travel to Waco, Texas, this February break to serve alongside an organization called Mission Waco. 103 mission fish gathered at the church Thursday night for a send-off dinner, ready to hop on an early morning flight to Dallas, Texas, to begin this life-changing journey. Mission Waco is an incredible organization that serves the community of Waco, Texas at large. It has proven to be an invaluable mission partner in how they cared for and supported our YG fish all week.

We spent the weekend in fellowship with one another and worshipping alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ at a Church under the I-75 bridge. This was an incredible once-in-a-lifetime experience for many of our fish, and it was clear that the experience of worshipping alongside those who are homeless or home-impaired was meaningful for both our YG Fish and adult staff. We finished the weekend learning more about homelessness through a poverty simulation, which helped focus our fish's mindsets on the work we had ahead of us.

Our goal coming into the trip was to raise 100,000 to support building three individual tiny homes, which would be the first three homes in Mission Waco's Creekside Community Village project. This village was founded to house those most in need while simultaneously creating a place where they feel they belong. Our fish worked diligently all week measuring, sawing, nailing, hammering, and piecing together these tiny homes that are pictured below. In addition, other teams worked on a halfway home supported by Mission Waco, repainted a Mission Waco shelter, and built a porch and ramp for a community member in need.

All of these projects, done in the bitter cold winter temperatures, were done with smiles and gratitude as our fish worked, laughed, and prayed together. We are eternally grateful for the work done this week, and we ended this week filled with Christ's love. We found His love in the amazing mission partner of Mission Waco, and we saw how God's love shined through all of their staff onto our mission fish. We are so proud of them and the strength, love, and compassion they showed throughout this week. Waco, Texas, will be a mission trip to remember, and we will continue to pray for the brothers and sisters we met while serving.





## The Lucan Road to Resurrection

**April 7 & 14**

Our Bible Studies meet on Mondays at 7:00-8:00am and 9:15-10:15am (Women's). Please join us in following the steps of Jesus and the disciples through Jerusalem to the last supper, to Jesus' death and resurrection as relayed in the gospel of Luke. Similar to Mark and Matthew, Luke has distinctive nuances and focuses on compassionate forgiveness as a central feature of the Christian life. A Zoom link is available, and everyone is always welcome. Contact Marianna Kilbride at [marianna@godsacre.org](mailto:marianna@godsacre.org) to learn more.



## Faith@Work Foundations: Discovering Your Gifts & Talents

**Dates: March 12 - April 16**  
**Wednesdays, 7:30-8:45pm**

Join us for a transformative 6-week journey this Lent led by Tammie Garner. We will explore your unique gifts and talents and discover where God may desire you to invest them in the world so that you can begin to live out your God-given purpose in life and find greater meaning in the work that God is calling us to do as people of faith.



This class is open to all those who are interested in deepening their understanding of their God-given gifts and seeking guidance on how to use them in meaningful ways. Whether you're new to this journey or looking to build on previous experiences, this course will lay a strong foundation for future classes focusing on faith at work, educational and career transitions, and seeing your whole life as ministry.

### Sign Up Today

Don't miss this opportunity to embark on a path of self-discovery and spiritual growth. Sign up today and take the first step towards uncovering the purpose and potential God has placed within you. For more information contact Tammie Garner at [tcgarner1010@msn.com](mailto:tcgarner1010@msn.com).



## Spring New Member Class

Are you or someone you know interested in joining our family of faith? Please plan to attend our new member sessions this spring. These sessions provide an opportunity to meet our leaders and to learn about the religious beliefs and traditions that have been the hallmarks of our congregational life on God's Acre since 1733.

### Dates for the Spring 2025 New Members classes:

#### New Member Orientation Class

Sunday, March 23, 11:15am-1:15pm

#### New Member Faith Sharing Class

Wednesday, March 26, 7:00-9:00pm

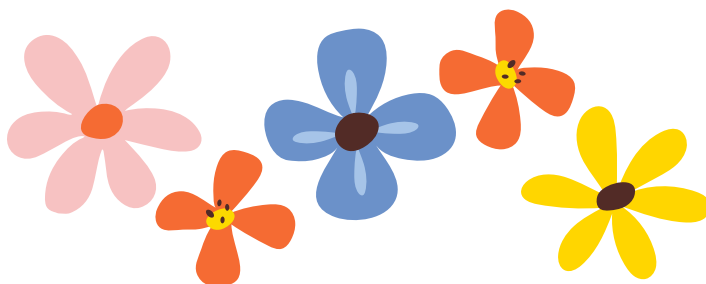
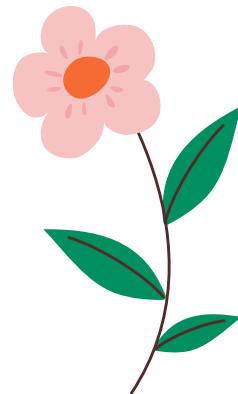
#### New Member Social

Saturday, March 29, 4:00-6:00pm

#### New Member Sunday

Sunday, March 30, 9:00-11:00am

If you are interested in joining our church please contact Anna Rogers at [welcoming@godsacre.org](mailto:welcoming@godsacre.org).



## LIFE EVENTS

### *In Loving Memory*



**Suzanne (Susie) Schlumpf**

January 5, 1930 - February 6, 2025



## Building a Clinic for the Maasai Village of Ilingarooj

This month we will be honoring 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, food insecurity, beekeeping, and last year we raised money to buy 400 goats.

This year, our SIMOO partners have requested funds (\$35,000) to construct a community health clinic. This request is exciting for our church as 23 individuals in our congregation have volunteered to travel to Kenya later this month to help construct the health clinic!

The clinic will be built in Ilingarooj village. It will provide health services for four of the surrounding villages and the primary focus will be on maternal and child health. The villages that will be served by the clinic are some of the remotest in the tribal lands and women and children have very limited access to health services. The clinic will provide vaccinations, prenatal care, delivery services, infant and pediatric care, and family planning support. In addition, infectious disease outbreaks will be managed.

We ask that you support our Maasai partners this year to build this life saving health clinic. ASHE OLENG! Donate today using the **GIVE** button at [www.godsacre.org](http://www.godsacre.org) and select **"Maasai Donation"** as your designation.



## Upcoming Annual Meeting

The Trustees are reviewing the financial results for 2024. Last year's results and the budget for 2025 will be presented at the upcoming Annual Meeting on March 2, 2025. Please join us for a full update from our Deacons and Trustees, nominating recommendations, and a review of our Raymond Trust. Contact Caroline Smittle at [caroline@godsacre.org](mailto:caroline@godsacre.org) to RSVP and receive the Zoom link.



## Fellowship Dance Lessons at Fred Astaire Socialize, Dance, and be Entertained!

**Date & Time:** Saturday, March 22 - 5:00-7:00pm

**Location:** Fred Astaire, 111 Main Street, New Canaan

**RSVP:** Laurel Carr at [laurel@godsacre.org](mailto:laurel@godsacre.org)

Looking for a fun evening out with your partner? Don't miss our exciting new fellowship event featuring a perfect blend of social time, learning, and entertainment.



The night begins with a relaxed social time (5:00-5:30pm), where you can mingle with fellow attendees while enjoying a little prosecco and charcuterie. It's the perfect opportunity to catch up, make new connections, and set the tone for the fun ahead.

Next, get ready to hit the dance floor with our dance lessons! Whether you're a seasoned dancer or a beginner, our talented instructors will guide you through easy-to-follow steps, teaching you a variety of dance styles. It's a chance to learn new moves, laugh together, and connect with your partner in a lively and supportive environment.

Enjoy a stunning performance by our expert instructors to top off the evening. Watch as they showcase their incredible skill, bringing to life the dances you've just learned and inspiring you with their energy and artistry.

The studio is new to town, and they have invited us to be their guests - the evening is free of charge! So, grab your dancing shoes and join us for an evening of celebration and connection you won't want to miss!

## Fellowship Small Dinner Parties *Spring Awakening - A Seasonal Supper*

**Save the Date: April 5**

Congregants are invited to join in a seasonal celebration of faith at our spring-inspired dinner parties on Saturday, April 5, at 6:00pm. The small dinner parties will be scattered across various homes bound by the unifying thread of fellowship on a single evening.

Each dinner party will have 8-10 people in attendance, and guests will be assigned a dish to prepare and bring a beverage to share. No need to be a gourmet cook; the recipes are all easy to make and can even be purchased!

**Hosts are needed to make this evening a success!**

Please contact Nancy Burges at [nnburges@gmail.com](mailto:nnburges@gmail.com) if you would like to host.

Invites will be in your inbox in early March. Guests RSVP by Sunday, March 30. Dinner assignments will be emailed from Liz Keogh at [lizfoxkeogh@gmail.com](mailto:lizfoxkeogh@gmail.com) on Tuesday, April 1.



## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

### Women's Fellowship Cake and Coffee

Please join us for cake, coffee, and camaraderie at the delightful home of church member Eileen Thomas (33 Woods End Rd.) on Tuesday, April 8, at 9:30am. We will serve coffee and light refreshments. Let's enjoy some fellowship time together. Contact Lesley Cousley at [lacousley@gmail.com](mailto:lacousley@gmail.com) with questions or if you would like to bake. Rides are available contact Tracy Goldman at [office@godsacre.org](mailto:office@godsacre.org).





## Stephen Ministers Winter Retreat

Early on February 8, thirteen Stephen Ministers, Chapin and Tammie, gathered at the Trinity Retreat Center in West Cornwall, CT, despite the forecast of a big snowstorm arriving that evening. Aiming to unplug from obligations and technology and to have the opportunity to renew their connection with God and with one another, these intrepid individuals arose in the dark and carpooled so that the hour-and-a-half drive could deepen friendships. The long-distance award went to Beth Baker, a co-leader of our Stephen Ministers, who flew from Florida the night before so she could drive a large group to the site.



Front Row: Tom Robey, Beth Baker, Lyn Chivvis, Shawn Gardner, Courtney Flynn, Penny Mardoian, Jeanne Fredericks, Tammie Garner, Chapin Garner

Second Row: Twee Haffner, Martha Palmer, Kathy Johnston, Kim Hall, Gail Banigan, Maria Hemmings

Trinity Retreat Center is a secluded, recently renovated campus on the banks of the Housatonic and surrounded by wooded hills. Open to all denominations, it is associated with New York City's Trinity Church and offers spiritual retreats arranged independently or conducted by its own clergy.

Attendees met mostly in a room with views over the snow-clad landscape and quickly launched into Bible readings, reflections, and icebreaker questions led by Chapin that paired the participants randomly and facilitated getting to know each other. Small groups set out to answer provocative questions and then reassembled for a recap before an hour of solo reflection and prayer. After a farm-to-table lunch, participants could have free time or tour the farm, where they could feel the naturally silky, dark crosses on the backs of the rescue donkeys. Afternoon sessions focused on being known by God and what prevents and encourages us to be known by others. As trust built in small groups, heartfelt discussions ensued, and highlights were shared in the large group.

While about half of the participants returned home that afternoon to avoid the snowstorm and to return to obligations, the rest savored more time to renew and reflect. A recorded

*"Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while."*

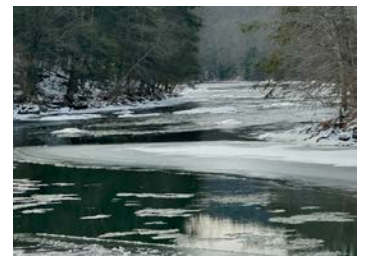
Mark 6:31

guided meditation fostered deeper relaxation and an uncluttered mind. Most attended a serene candlelit service in the stone chapel. Afterward, some ventured out to walk the labyrinth and view the retreat center and its glowing chapel as the snowstorm began to swirl. They then rejoined the rest, sitting by the living room's crackling fire. Early Sunday morning, Gail offered a beginner-level yoga session, followed by an intimate communion service in the chapel. The retreat concluded with participants exploring how renewal arises from time with God, how they have faced personal challenges, and what strategies might be used to put into practice what they learned at the retreat. The roads were clear by late morning for an easy, beautiful ride home.

The peace of being away with uninterrupted time to pray, reflect, and be closer to God and each other is likely to resonate in them as individuals and as Stephen Ministers, and be the catalyst for the next retreat.

Love and Blessings,

Gail Banigan, Kathy Johnston, and Jeanne Fredericks  
(retreat organizers)



*"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."*

Mark 1:35



## 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](http://www.godsacre.org)

*We are a Stephen Minister Church*

## Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the April newsletter, please submit by March 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)