



## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for a wonderful and affirming celebration on Sunday. As I mentioned, it is such a gift to be able to be in ministry together. Upon my arrival on God's Acre 10 years ago, I was very clear about what my hopes were... I had no particular agenda, just to try to live a life pleasing to the Lord and craft a life together that would give glory to God. I trust that, somehow, by God's grace, we are doing our best to faithfully pursue that path.



The most recent chapter of our journey together is starting to take shape. So after 10 years together, and after 22 months without an Associate Pastor, I want to share with you the good news that David Beck, who chairs the Associate Minister Search Team, shared with our congregation this past Sunday as well.

Yours in Christ,  
Chapin

## UPDATE FROM DAVID BECK

Associate Minister Search Team Chair

### Thank You

Before sharing the details of our process, I'd like to express gratitude to Barb Clayton, Lonnie deMarco, Martha Palmer, Diane Bailey, Steve Case, and Kirk Carr for their tireless efforts and support over the past seven months. Their diverse skills, unique perspectives, and decades of devoted service to our church were invaluable.

### Our Process

Our goal was to remain open to God's plan for our church, allowing His word to guide us in selecting our new Associate Minister for Children, Youth, and Families. Here's an overview of our process:

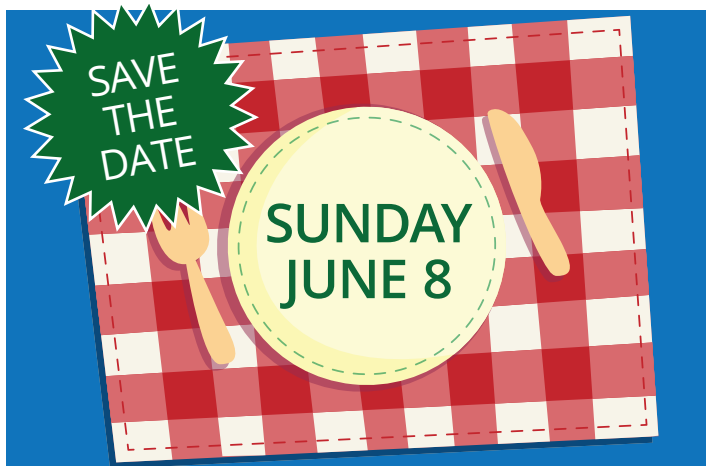
- 1. Job Description and Profile:** We finalized the job description and updated our church's UCC profile, which was reviewed and approved by Chapin, Dionna Carlson, and Amy Werner.
- 2. Job Posting:** We posted the Associate Minister role at UCC seminary schools, including Yale Divinity School and Chicago Theological Seminary, as well as on job boards at the UCC, Methodist, and Presbyterian sites.
- 3. Résumé Collection and Vetting:** We collected and vetted résumés between January and March, reaching out to church members and friends for advice, including UCC church ministers Kent Saladi, Skip Masback, Allen Hilton,

*Continued on page two*

## Celebration Sunday All-Church Picnic

Join us for Celebration Sunday on June 8  
A day not to be missed!

On Celebration Sunday, we will welcome our confirmands into the congregation, celebrate spiritual milestones, honor our teachers, and commence our program year. The All-Church Picnic will follow the 10:00am worship service on Sunday, June 8. Families with last names A-M please bring fruit or dessert for 10. Families with last names N-Z please bring a salad or side dish for 10. In addition to a delicious lunch, we will have inflatables, face painting and Old Faithful rides for the kids. We hope you will clear your calendars and stay for the celebration.



The Associate Minister Search Committee is pleased to announce that it unanimously recommends Kelly Antonson as our Associate Minister for Children, Youth, and Families.

Please save the date **Sunday, June 1,** for a Candidate Call Sermon at 10:00am, followed by a Special Meeting of the Congregation.



*Continued from page one*

and Eric Dupee. The Search Committee also conducted two in-person and one Zoom session with about thirty church members interested in providing feedback and getting more information on our search.

**4. Interviews:** We conducted introductory interviews with four applicants, followed by in-depth individual interviews with the top two candidates.

### Recommendation

After careful consideration, we recommend Kelly Antonson for the Associate Minister position due to her:

- Unmatched experience, passion, and talents for leading our youth programming
- Deep commitment to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- Trusted colleague with our church leadership
- Ability to step in and sustain our youth and children's programs during unexpected leadership transitions
- Demonstrated leadership in all aspects of our Sunday services, including preaching, communion, and prayers for the congregation

### Conclusion

Congratulations to Kelly, and thank you, Chapin, for the opportunity to serve and for the trust placed in our committee.

## NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING



The Congregational Church  
of New Canaan

**Sunday, June 1, 2025 at 11:00am  
in the Meeting House**

The Congregational Church of New Canaan announces a call sermon by a candidate for the Associate Minister for Children, Youth, and Families on Sunday, June 1, at the 10:00am worship service, to be followed immediately by a Special Meeting of the Congregation to discern God's Will regarding a call. All members of the church are encouraged to attend.



# REPORT ON THE MAASAI MISSION TRIP

By Lindsay Tucker, MSA Liaison to the Maasai

*“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’”*  
 – John 20:21

In September 2024, I sat in the Parlor at church meeting speaking with fellow congregants who were interested in traveling to Kenya for the AMO annual mission trip. We were planning to travel to Kenya to work with our Maasai brothers and sisters on a much needed maternal and child health clinic in the village of Iingarooj. To my surprise and joy 23 people signed up for the mission trip and we spent the next six months preparing for our adventure. We were a diverse group – five men, eighteen women and we ranged in age from 45-89! Six in our group had previously traveled to Kenya to meet and work with our SIMOO (Simba Maasai Outreach Organization) partners but for the rest of us – it was our first time traveling to Kenya. As our departure date approached, we were all a little nervous, but we were ready to serve.

We arrived in Nairobi on a lovely Sunday afternoon and while we were all a little bleary eyed, we were excited about the week ahead. We gathered our baggage and started to make our way out the customs area at the airport. We had packed an extra 17 bags to bring with us on the trip – these bags contained 170 pairs of donated sneakers (thank you!), sweatshirts, t-shirts, school supplies, candy and MORE!

Our home for the week in Nairobi was the Methodist Guest House in Lavington. Our first afternoon there we met as a group and laid out a plan for the week ahead. Each day we were going to divide the group up into three teams. One group would be painting at the Girls Rescue Center, one group would travel to the clinic site and work with the Maasai artisans, and the third group would travel around the seven villages SIMOO served to visit past projects our church funded.



Our days were spent working at the health clinic alongside a lovely group of Maasai artisans. They patiently taught us how to mix cement, build walls, put together rebar, plaster the walls of the clinic (a very unique technique), and so much more. All who worked at the clinic site formed lasting bonds with men who we worked alongside. By the end of the week, we were all telling our new friends that we would see them again!

The women that painted at the Girls Rescue Center each day were able to complete their project by mid-week. They repainted one of the girls’ dormitories that was in need of freshening up! The women at the Girls Rescue Center also spent a lot of time with the children and girls living there – they were always around for hugs and love. They also went to a local schools and taught English one day.

Everyone in our group was fortunate enough to take an afternoon off from work and visit past projects that our church has supported. We visited the solar panels we installed to run a well that services four of the villages. We visited women who benefited from new goats last year and we also saw the hundreds of beehives that we supported two years ago. Our funds





# AMO MAASAI MISSION TRIP REFLECTIONS

## A Masaai Teaching

*Friend: a person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard, a person who gives assistance, a person who is not hostile.*

We brought resources, kindness, and willingness to work to our Kenya mission. The Masaai shared their wisdom, culture, friendship, and laughter.

I asked the woman who oversees the rescue center and the 128 children our church supports why the kids are so friendly – they wave when we arrive for the day, come up and hold our hands, like to be picked up - and the older ones talk and ask questions. She said, “We told them you are friends.” We were not just older, (mostly) white, Americans. We were friends.

The 23 of us became friends on this trip. We made friends with the craftsmen on the worksite, the women who run their own businesses because of our support, the children who embraced us, the young adults who found a path in life, the elders who laughed with us, the drivers who took us on our journey, and each other.

I wonder, when we see these people who have so few resources but such richness in their lives - what can we learn from them? Many of us – and our children – have so many resources – and yet are sad and isolated and disconnected. Have we lost the lesson Jesus taught us – that we belong to each other? That we should feel affection, provide assistance, and be kind to one another? This is surely an antidote to fear, isolation, and sadness. And if we see friends in one another in spite of what we think are our great differences, maybe we can become closer to the world God has envisioned for us. This is one of many Masaai gifts we were given on this journey.

– Julia Portale

have helped many women in the tribe gain economic opportunities that they would not have otherwise had.

Our days were long but so rewarding and as our time with SIMOO came to an end they celebrated our friendship and partnership with a lovely celebration. There were speeches, dances, music, FOOD, and many photos! As we prepared to leave the Girls Rescue Center for the last time, we all said we would see them again soon – there were no goodbyes!”





# AMO MAASAI MISSION TRIP REFLECTIONS continued

## ALL SMILES!

An hour west of Nairobi, in the foothills of the Ngong range lives a community of Maasai people spread across 7 villages. Twenty-some years ago, their women and girls would spend hours each day walking several miles to go fetch water for their basic needs. There was no time for schooling. After dark at 6 pm, there would be no light by which to read or study. During the frequent periods of drought, food would be hard to come by as livestock and crops withered. The very young daughters of impoverished families, so poor that they could not afford to take care of their children, would be married off.

Since 2003, when we began our relationship with our Maasai friends, and thanks to enlightened and charismatic leaders like Francis Ole Sakuda, the modest help we and others provided has been put to good use.

When we visited them this past month we experienced the enormously beneficial mutual impact of this relationship.

On the one hand, thanks to the water pipeline, pumps, and cisterns that we funded, water is readily available and sourcing it need no longer take up anyone's entire day. There was plenty of healthy livestock, including many drought-resistant goats. One hundred buzzing hives, protected by wire mesh from the local honey badgers, were providing honey and funds for their women owners. Solar panels were providing energy for water pumps to irrigate fields which were being cultivated. Girls at the refuge, rescued from child marriage, were receiving an education. Orphaned toddlers rescued from a life on the street, were healthy and lovingly cared for. Lives and opportunities to flourish had been unleashed.

And on the other hand, the mission fish who traveled from New Canaan to Olosho Oibor and the surrounding area also experienced opportunities to flourish. We spent entire days smiling. Not with smiles of amusement or of 'making nice', but with smiles of joy and awe. At every step of our journey, we were warmly greeted. We were gifted with blankets, bead jewelry and acacia staffs by people who radiated love and joy. We got a taste of the richness of their simple lives and pondered on the frequent meagerness of our abundance.



This relationship between the Congregational Church of New Canaan and the Maasai people of the Ngong valley was forged out of a desire for unity in a world assailed by the events of 9-11. All these years later, much good has come of it. Even more importantly, the love out of which it was born keeps on nourishing the lives of Maasai and Connecticut brothers and sisters. There is still plenty of need in Maasailand. And there are also plenty of spirits to be kindled in Connecticut. We were blessed to be brought together and blessed still today to have one-another for many years to come.

– William Picard



# AMO MAASAI MISSION TRIP REFLECTIONS continued

## Learning in Progress

I wonder when we see these people who have so few resources but such richness in their lives - what can we learn from them? This was my second Mission Trip to Kenya. For me, the Kenyan people whom we encountered are warm, welcoming and always seem to be smiling. They have little in the way of material possessions but they exude an inner joy which I covet.

This time I had an unexpected and humbling experience. I was privileged to spend time with Timothy. We shared pictures of our families. Amongst his pictures were some of him with older women in a rural setting. In explanation, he then shared the following with me and has given me permission to share it with you:

“Way back in my childhood I happen to come from a very humble background in the sense that at times I slept on an empty stomach not once but several occasions thus I recall my illiterate mother struggling beyond words to fend for us. Thus I worked humanly hard in school so that at a point a change my mother’s story. As the good Lord would have it when I finally got employed here in early 20’s I endeavoured to take care of my mother which I know I did. Well, came year 2016 I lost my job here at the Methodist on flimsy grounds and it was during that turbulent times that I couldn’t support my mom like I used to.....indeed I sought God seriously so that it was during that troubled moment of lack that He God laid a question in my heart that it’s true am concerned abt my mother but what about those vulnerable widows who have nobody to cater for them I want you to remember but am jobless God? The little that comes to your hands you become my hands to feed

them. Initially I had thought of street children but it became resoundingly clear widows and NOT in Nairobi setting but in the village. You can see most of those pics the background is the rural folks needy of the needy....in short that how I have been the Lord God’s hands in reaching the widows and exercise I do once a year especially during Christmas season the scope of reach based on the funds available. In general that’s my humble calling in this life. When I was reinstated back to work after 7yrs I committed one month salary to the course, but how do you explain being reinstated after 7yrs I don’t find it normal occurrence. I rest my case for now, much blessings much blessings.”

I am beyond humbled at the faith and generosity of this humble man. Growing up in poverty, when he had the least, he prayed for guidance to give back and with answered prayers, he gives back. There is a lesson for me here and I am praying for the Lord to lead me where I belong. and our children – have so many resources – and yet are sad and isolated and disconnected. Have we lost the lesson Jesus taught us – that we belong to each other? That we should feel affection, provide assistance, and be kind to one another? This is surely an antidote to fear, isolation, and sadness. And if we see friends in one another in spite of what we think are our great differences, maybe we can become closer to the world God has envisioned for us. This is one of many Masai gifts we were given on this journey.

– Maria Hemmings



# AMO MAASAI MISSION TRIP REFLECTIONS continued



## Work That Changes Lives

The partnership that our church has built with a Maasai community in Kenya over more than 20 years is changing lives for the better.

Working with the Simba Maasai Outreach Organization (SIMOO), we have provided funding for solar power and wells that gave them access to water, addressed food security issues with goats and bee hives, and provided scholarships for teenage girls to prevent them from being sold off as wives and giving them an education to be able to meet their true potential.

I was privileged to be a part of our most recent mission trip to help build a clinic that will provide health services to four Maasai villages, with a primary focus on maternal and child health.

Loading wheelbarrows full of sand and gravel and pushing them up a ramp to dump them on a concrete floor brought me great joy. The work was not easy, but our Maasai partners helped us to make concrete for mortar to build concrete block walls. It's harder than it sounds, but our Maasai partners were patient and encouraging as we learned the techniques.

The Maasai people are perhaps the most loving, welcoming, open and happy people I have ever known. We were greeted with smiles, laughter and love. Even the orphans in the rescue center radiated love and joy.

One morning when we arrived at the site, I got out of our truck and hugged a group of the little children at the rescue center, who waved to us as we drove up and ran toward us with their arms open wide. One of them, a little boy named David, came over and reached up to hold my hand. He wouldn't let go for 10 minutes – one of the most touching and joyful experiences of my life.

One of the biggest dividends of the trip was the deepening of relationships with my fellow congregants. I know that all of us are grateful for the opportunity to spend such quality time together in service to our Maasai partners, and grateful also for the love and understanding that we shared with each other.

Special thanks to Marianna Kilbride, the director of spiritual formation for CCNC, for her leadership in the partnership with SIMOO over many years, and to the many members of our group who have partnered with her to make this work so impactful.

– Roger Bolton”



## Spring Bible Study

*The Book of the Twelve*, or the *Minor Prophets*, is a collection of prophetic material that spans 400 years of history, featuring prophets writing from different geographical, political, and social contexts. It functions as a microcosm of the Hebrew Bible and speaks to the nature of prophets, prophecy, and the ways in which God relates to God's people. Join us Mondays 7:00-8:00am, or 9:15-10:15am (Women's) in the Library. Zoom link is available. Contact Marianna Kilbride at [marianna@godsacre.org](mailto:marianna@godsacre.org) to learn more.



## FLOWER MINISTRY

### Gratitude and Joy

The most heartfelt thanks to our church community for so wonderfully and kindly supporting this Easter's floral display. First, through truly your generous donations. Your gifts are at the roots of this sanctuary garden. Another generous blessing our community provides is the breaking down and sharing of the display. All of the plants in the display are delivered, with letters written by our pastoral care team, to members of our community. Quickly and easily, our Congregation steps up, volunteering to deliver these Easter gifts. Of course, great thanks to our floral ministry team, who support our church week after week, creating floral displays and then breaking them down for the deacons to deliver. Ultimately, it is the joy that our Congregation itself brings to the Easter services and all the others throughout the year that creates the beauty of the display. There is so much gratitude for all this joy.



## Wellness and Watercolors What Fun!

Thank you to Holly Kennedy and all those who participated in the Wellness and Watercolors class last month. It was a perfect afternoon of art and fellowship!



## New Stephen Ministers Commissioned!

We joyfully commissioned eleven new Stephen Ministers on Sunday, April 6: Diane Bailey, Wes Fredericks, Susan Garofoli, Katrina Hering, Hope Hetherington, Ryan Lindner, Sharon MacLachlan, Don Moyle, Mike Rodgers, and Beth Simon.

These church members have faithfully completed a 10-week training program focused on providing distinctively Christian care to those navigating difficult life experiences. Throughout the training, they learned the art of active listening, offering compassionate presence rather than advice, and supporting others with empathy, faith, and prayer. The program also highlights the importance of confidentiality and trustworthiness.

They now join our current team of Stephen Ministers - each bringing their own unique gifts and life experiences. We are truly blessed to have such a committed group serving our congregation. Together, they help us fulfill Jesus' commandment to love one another as He has loved us.



## LIFE EVENTS

### *Big Birthday Celebrations*

Jim D'Acosta's 98th Birthday



Bill Malone's 89th Birthday





Save the date for Sunday, June 8, 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.



## May Church School Calendar

**MAY 4**  
**Church School**  
 Chapel Service for grades K-3, grades 4-7 remain in Meeting House

**MAY 18\***  
**Church School**  
 PreK-7th grade  
*\*Children's Musical Performance*

**MAY 11**  
**Church School**  
 PreK-7th grade

**MAY 25**  
**Combined Church School Class**  
 PreK-3rd grade  
 Memorial Day Weekend



## Mark Your Calendars for the Children's Musical: Faith is a Rainbow!

This month, Children's Music celebrates the many colors of faith on **May 18**, with music, art, and teaching! Please join us at the 10:00am worship service to learn about the Liturgical Calendar and how color is symbolic to Christian life. Our children have been hard at work preparing memory verses and songs to "paint a picture" of how to love and serve God faithfully. This special occasion will be a joyful celebration, with live painting involved! 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 interested children may still join. Contact Greer Lyle at [greer@godsacre.org](mailto:greer@godsacre.org) for more information.



## Upcoming Events



A graphic for the MSYG Car Wash & Mayfair Parking event. It features the text "MSYG" in large green letters, "CAR WASH & MAYFAIR PARKING" in large black letters, and "SATURDAY, MAY 10 10 AM - 2 PM" in a green oval. There is an illustration of a bucket with a sponge and a yellow sign that says "\$20 CAR".

### MSYG Car Wash

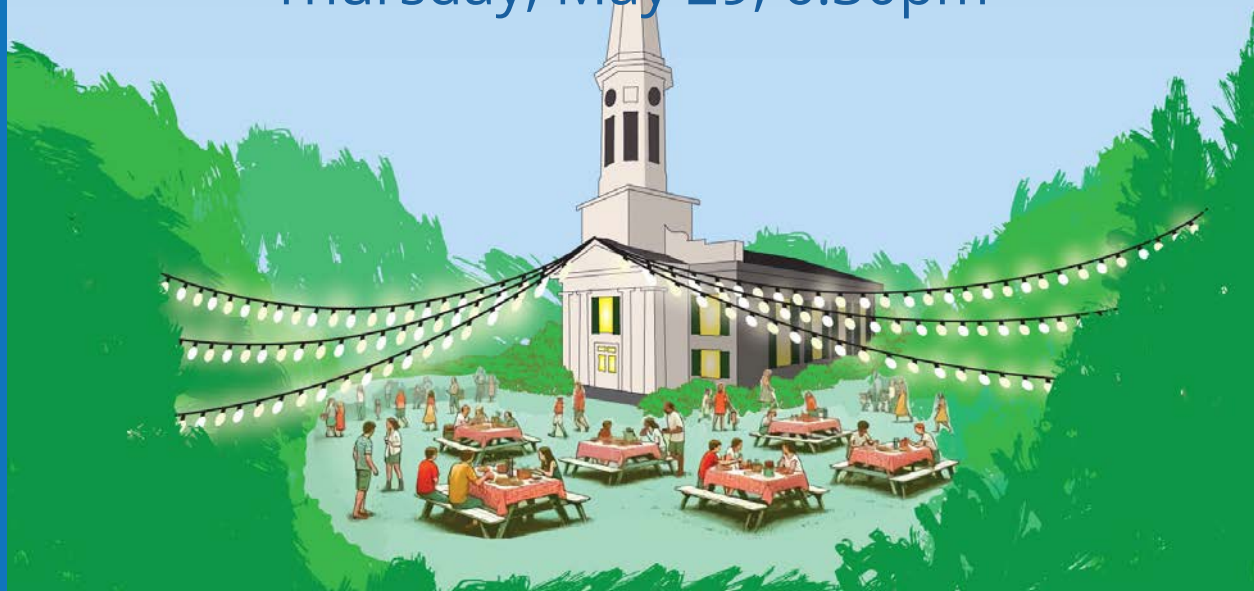
Please join us on **Saturday, May 10**, for our annual MSYG Car Wash from 10:00am-2:00pm. Stop by God's Acre to get your car washed by our Middle School Youth Group and help them raise money for their mission trip to Mountainside this June. \$20 per car includes a wash and parking for the May Fair!

### MSYG Commissioning

On Sunday, May 11, our MSYG Mountainside participants will be commissioned by our congregation for the important work they will do on their trip to Mountainside. We hope to see you there!

## Beacon of Light Celebration!

Thursday, May 29, 6:30pm



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!

<https://godsacre.cbchurch.com/goto/forms/251/responses/new>

## 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

Dawn Doak  
Chair, Board of Deacons



The Congregational Church  
of New Canaan

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*We are a Stephen Minister Church*

## Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the June newsletter, please submit by May 28.

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)