



## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

Even though we find ourselves in the early weeks of Lent, with Easter still a ways off, I want to draw your attention to a timely and important program we'll be offering in May.

In response to numerous conversations following last November's elections, it has become clear that we, as a church and as a town, are hungry for greater empathy and understanding across lines of difference. In several gatherings I attended last fall, I heard people lament the vitriol that surfaced even in our local elections. At one of our October men's group meetings, when asked what concerned them most in life right now, the dominant answer was "the division in our country."

While we can all point to the reality of that division, the question of what to do about it can feel elusive. In response to both the concern and the uncertainty, I reached out to our friend Rev. Allen Hilton, founder of the House United Movement, to explore whether we might pilot a process of dialogue here in New Canaan, something that could help us better understand each other's lived experiences, convictions, and perspectives.

Allen recommended a simple but powerful practice: a structured, respectful conversation designed to deepen understanding rather than change opinions. It's not about finding common ground on issues, but about seeing the person across from us more clearly understanding how they came to be who

they are and what they value. It's about building empathy through listening and, perhaps, even friendship through shared humanity.

With support from local clergy, elected leaders from both sides of the aisle, and other community partners, we will host an event on Thursday, May 16, at the Lapham Center called "Let's Talk, New Canaan."

Our goal is to gather individuals from across the political spectrum, Republican, Democrat, Independent, unsure, and everything in between, for a facilitated morning of listening, learning, and mutual respect.

This initiative isn't about taking a side or winning an argument. It's about being faithful to our calling as followers of Christ to be peacemakers in the places we live. At its heart, this is an act of spiritual hospitality—inviting others to share their story and committing ourselves to listen well. If successful, this effort



*Continued on page three*

# Lent on God's Acre

As we enter the season of Lent, you are invited to prayerfully consider adopting a Lenten practice that deepens your faith and draws you closer to God, whether through prayer, reflection, service, or acts of generosity. This sacred season offers a meaningful opportunity to slow down, re-center, and grow spiritually alongside one another. We also encourage you to take part in one of the many Lenten offerings available in our church community, designed to support and enrich your journey.

<b>Wed</b> February 25	<b>7:00</b> PM	<b>Lenten Workshop:</b> A Journey of Connection & Purpose	<b>Wed</b> March 25	<b>12:00</b> PM	<b>Lenten Musical Moments</b>
<b>Tue</b> March 3	<b>9:30</b> AM	<b>Women's Fellowship</b> Cake and Coffee	<b>Wed</b> March 25	<b>7:00</b> PM	<b>Lenten Workshop:</b> A Journey of Connection & Purpose
<b>Wed</b> March 4	<b>7:00</b> PM	<b>Lenten Workshop:</b> A Journey of Connection & Purpose	<b>Wed</b> March 25	<b>7:00-9:00PM</b>	<b>New Member</b> Faith Sharing Class
<b>Fri</b> March 6	<b>5:00</b> PM	<b>Family Bingo</b>	<b>Sat</b> March 28	<b>6:00</b> PM	<b>Fellowship Dinner Parties</b>
<b>Wed</b> March 11	<b>7:00</b> PM	<b>Lenten Workshop:</b> A Journey of Connection & Purpose	<b>Sun</b> March 29	<b>9:00-11:00AM</b>	<b>New Member Sunday</b>
<b>Wed</b> March 18	<b>12:00</b> PM	<b>Lenten Musical Moments</b>	<b>Mon</b> March 30	<b>7:00AM-9:15AM</b>	<b>Lenten Bible Study</b>
<b>Sun</b> March 22	<b>11:15AM-1:15PM</b>	<b>New Member</b> Orientation Class	<b>Wed</b> April 1	<b>12:00</b> PM	<b>Lenten Musical Moments</b>
<b>Mon</b> March 23	<b>7:00AM-9:15AM</b>	<b>Lenten Bible Study</b>			

# Holy Week and Easter on God's Acre

## Palm Sunday

Sunday, March 29

8:00am Worship Service, Chapel

10:00am Worship Service, Meeting House

## Maundy Thursday

Thursday, April 2, 8:00pm

Tenebrae Service featuring the Chancel Choir, Meeting House

## Easter Sunday

Sunday, April 5

6:15am 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



## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

*Continued from page one*

could not only become a source of healing for our town but also an example for other communities longing for something better.

If you are interested in participating, please reach out to either me at [chapin@godsacre.org](mailto:chapin@godsacre.org) or Marianna Kilbride at [marianna@godsacre.org](mailto:marianna@godsacre.org). We would love to talk with you about it.

Finally, I believe that every so often it falls to the church to gently say to the wider community: this is something we need to do. I'm grateful that we have the chance to say that now.

I hope you'll consider joining us.  
Yours in Christ,  
Chapin

## Easter Egg Hunt and Family Fellowship Sunday, April 5, 10:00am

Please join us at 10:00am between the 9:00am and 11:00am Easter Sunday services for our annual Easter Egg Hunt on the church lawn. We will have different egg hunting sections for each age group, several golden eggs with mystery prizes inside, and a visit from the Easter Bunny! We invite you to [sign up](#) to bring a baked good or drink to our family fellowship that will also take place outside during the egg hunt. We look forward to a special Easter morning with all of you! Contact Lindsey Daly at [lindsey@godsacre.org](mailto:lindsey@godsacre.org).



## 2025-2026 Artist-in-Residence Stephanie Joyce

Stephanie Joyce is our liturgical artist-in-residence this year. She has been a member of our congregation since her children, Sam and Sophie, were in school. She now spends her time in Sag Harbor in her artist's studio as well as in Brooklyn. Stephanie has been active in the church, serving as a Stephen Minister and participating in women's fellowship, retreats, Bible study, and mission trips. She has led groups in painting, yoga, meditation in the salt caves, and sound healing. Stephanie also traveled to Israel and Africa with the church. She worked with the children in Africa and the OG group to create murals inspired by the landscape and culture, as well as worked on building a shelter for the Beloved Daughters of the Maasai. Her membership with the Church has been a meaningful and enriching part of her life.

In creating her art, a connection to the natural world is made, and the subtle realms are revealed. We are all invited to enter and surrender to the mystery. The landscapes, symbols, and organic forms that emerge in Stephanie's work mirror life and call for reflection and nurturing of the soul.

Growing up in the countryside of Virginia, her mother was an artist, and her father fostered a love of community and the natural world. She has been a lifelong artist, earning a BFA from Parsons School of Design in NY. After a career in design, her focus now is on painting, printmaking, and assemblage. Stephanie's art has been exhibited throughout the country, in Europe, and in Asia. She studied yoga, meditation, and sound healing in India as well as attended an artist residency there. She also taught art to children at Ramana's Garden orphanage in Rishikesh, India. In the community, Stephanie served as a Hospice volunteer. She is also a guild member of Silvermine Arts Center and served on the board. Her creative focus is art as a vehicle for collaboration, connection, exploring diverse cultures, and healing.



PASTORAL CARE

# Flower Ministry-Easter Flowers

We invite you to make contributions to our Easter flower display. Your contributions can be made in celebration of the season or in memory of loved ones to be listed in our Easter Sunday bulletin. Please make your contributions by Monday, March 30. You can donate online and designate Easter Flowers or use the envelopes provided in the March 22 and March 29 bulletins.

Contact Tracy Goldman at [office@godsacre.org](mailto:office@godsacre.org) with any questions.

*"Every flower is a soul blossoming in nature."  
— Gérard de Nerval*



ADULT FORMATION

# Jerusalem, the Passion and Resurrection

Join us for Bible study on Mondays 7:00-8:00am, or 9:15-10:15am (Women's), March 23 and 30, to read and discuss the last days of Jesus' life, his death, and his resurrection as recounted in the Gospel of Luke. If you have yet to add a Lenten practice in 2026, this is a great way to do so. Zoom option is available. Contact Marianna Kilbride at [marianna@godsacre.org](mailto:marianna@godsacre.org).



WELCOMING MINISTRY



## SPRING 2026 New Member Class

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 learn about the religious beliefs and traditions that have been hallmarks of our congregational life on God's Acre. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Anna Rogers at [welcoming@godsacre.org](mailto:welcoming@godsacre.org) by Sunday, March 15.

**New Member Orientation Class**  
Sunday, March 22  
11:15am-1:15pm

**New Member Faith Sharing Class**  
Wednesday, March 25  
7:00-9:00pm

**New Member Sunday**  
Sunday, March 29  
9:00-11:00am

Register Here





-SAVE THE DATE-  
**Spring Celebration  
 Concert**

Music Ministries invites you to our Spring Celebration Concert on Saturday, April 25, at 5:00pm. Join us for an evening of inspiring music, community, and gratitude, as we gather in support of the Mary Bradley Clarke Fund.

## *Births*



Alex and Charlie Craigle joyfully welcomed their newest addition, **Henry Rhodes Craigle**, born on February 4, 2026. Siblings, Wells and Sully, are thrilled to embrace their roles as big brothers.

## 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 March 18, March 25 and April 1 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



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

# Join us for YOUTH SUNDAY 2026!

Sunday, March 8  
10:00am Worship Service

THANK YOU, MISSION  
SPONSORS, FOR YOUR  
SUPPORT OF OUR  
MISSION TO THE DELTA!



## 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 on Sunday, March 8, at 10:00am to hear reflections from our YG mission fish, followed by a lovely fellowship coffee hour and a preview of our YG Mission Trip video.

## 2026 YG Mission Trip to Arkansas!

With the grace of God and the unwavering support of our Mission Sponsors and church community, YG had the incredible opportunity to travel to Helena–West Helena, Arkansas, during the February break for our 2026 Mission Trip. 108 mission fish gathered at the church for a joyful send-off dinner before boarding an early-morning flight, hearts ready for a week that would challenge, stretch, and inspire us.

Our trip was guided by the powerful words of Amos 5:24: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.” This verse became more than a theme — it became our call to action as we reflected on what justice means for us and the work that we do as a community.

We began the weekend in Memphis, partnering with Second Baptist Church and visiting the National Civil Rights Museum. Standing in a place so deeply rooted in the ongoing fight for justice grounded our hearts in the deeper “why” behind our service. From there, we traveled to Helena–West Helena, where we partnered with Together for Hope Arkansas and were housed by Delta Circles, an extraordinary nonprofit dedicated to creating opportunities and long-term support for children and families in the Delta region. Delta Circles welcomed us with warmth and generosity, and it quickly became clear that this community is built on resilience, hope, and deep love for its people.



## YOUTH MINISTRIES

Throughout the week, our mission fish poured themselves into projects that serve as true cornerstones of the community. Teams worked diligently to repair and restore a domestic violence women's shelter, creating safer and more dignified spaces for women and children in vulnerable moments. Others revitalized a beloved community pool — a place of gathering and joy — ensuring it can continue to serve families for years to come. Another group partnered with the local Boys & Girls Club, strengthening a space where children learn, grow, and feel known. Our students worked with humility and gratitude, understanding that justice is not always loud — sometimes it looks like steady faithfulness, showing up for communities, and honoring the dignity of every neighbor.

We ended the week filled with Christ's love — love that we witnessed in our partners, in the leaders at Delta Circles, in the congregants at Second Baptist Church, and in the resilient spirit of the Helena-West Helena community. We are overwhelmingly proud of our mission fish and the strength, maturity, and tenderness they displayed. Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, will forever hold a sacred place in our YG story.



## MISSIONS & OUTREACH

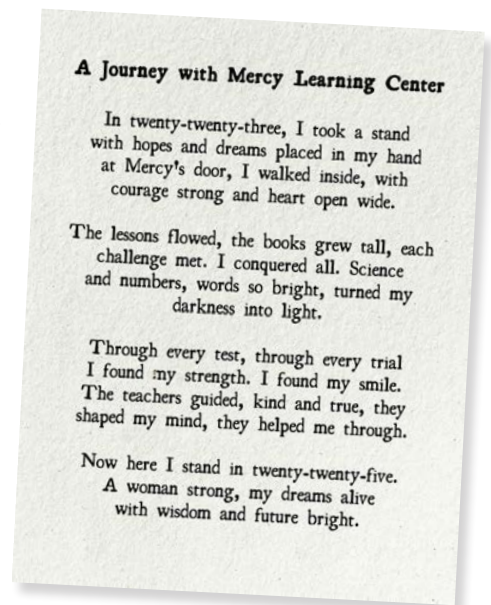
### MSA Spotlight – Mercy Learning Center



Mercy Learning Center is a Bridgeport-based nonprofit organization that “transforms women’s lives through education.” In 2024, our Missions and Social Action Committee (MSA) sought to partner with an organization that focused on helping the most vulnerable women in our area. Mercy Learning Center offers a supportive, and compassionate environment where mothers and children (from 3 months to 5 years) can thrive. MLC was founded in 1987 to provide free literacy and life skill education to low-income women. In the first 10 years, MLC added a full-time literacy program, childcare, access to a social worker, a learning specialist, and an on-site clothing store. The past 2 decades have continued to enrich the student experience with English as a second language and GED programs, a food pantry, and a fully accredited mother/toddler literacy

program. The programs provided enable the graduating women to become skilled employees and assist their children to become better learners, as they can stay confidently engaged in their child’s education. Their motto is “educate a woman, educate a family,” and they have educated over 13,000 women thus far.

MSA has provided funding for MLC to purchase textbooks and workbooks for its English Learning, ABE, and GED instruction, and life skills programming. Our funds in 2025 helped install a security and PA system that covers the entire building and the playground, enabling school-wide communication. 600 women and 75 children are currently enrolled at Mercy Learning Center. As a church community, we can engage as tutors, lending a hand in the childcare program, or support a diaper or food drive for the pantry. Keep an eye out for more information about MLC in 2026! Contact Karen Wilson at [karenpwilson3@gmail.com](mailto:karenpwilson3@gmail.com) to learn more.



## MARCH Church School Calendar

### March 1

Church School  
Chapel Service for grades 1-3  
Grades 4-7 remain in Meeting House

### March 6

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

### March 8

Church School  
PreK-7th grade

### March 15

Church School  
PreK-7th grade

### March 22

Church School  
PreK-7th grade

### March 29

Church School  
PreK-7th grade



## Children and Family Ministries BINGO Night

Families are encouraged to sign up and join us for a night of family fellowship and BINGO fun. On Friday, March 6, 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!



### SAVE THE DATE

## Vacation Bible School 2026

Save the Date for our annual Vacation Bible School Camp "God Squad: Adventures in Faith" on August 17-20 (Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am-12:00pm) at the church. We will have an action-packed week exploring Bible Superhero stories through games, activities, songs, crafts, and more. Children ages 4 through 4th grade are invited to participate as campers, while middle and high school students can register as 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!



## Children's Choir Sings on Palm Sunday

Be sure to come early on Palm Sunday, March 29, to listen to our Children's Choir serenade us during the prelude then process in with palms and joyful singing! If you would like your child to participate in this time-honored church tradition, please be sure to bring your child to Children's Choir and/or Church School to learn the songs this month. For more information, contact [greer@godsacre.org](mailto:greer@godsacre.org).



## FELLOWSHIP

### A Mediterranean-Inspired Evening Fellowship Dinner Parties Save the Date: March 28

Congregants are invited to gather for a Mediterranean-inspired evening of fellowship, celebrating the joy of shared meals, warm hospitality, and meaningful connection. Join us on Saturday, March 28, at 6:00pm, as small dinner parties meet in homes across our community, united by good food and conversation.

Each gathering will include 8–10 guests. Participants will be assigned a simple Mediterranean-inspired dish to bring, along with a beverage to share; no culinary expertise is required. Dishes can be homemade or store-bought. New this year, the main course will be provided by Simply Delicious, courtesy of the church, and delivered to each host on the evening of the event, making it even easier to participate.

Hosts are needed to make this evening possible! If you're willing to open your home, please contact Liz Keogh at [lizfoxkeogh@gmail.com](mailto:lizfoxkeogh@gmail.com).

Invitations will be sent in early March. Guests are asked to RSVP by Sunday, March 22, and dinner assignments will be shared on Tuesday, March 24.



## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

### SAVE THE DATE Women's Fellowship Spring Luncheon

All women of the church are warmly invited to gather for a Spring Luncheon on **Friday, May 1 at 12:00pm** at The Country Club of New Canaan.

Join us for a joyful afternoon of fellowship, connection, and community. We hope you'll mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Contact Liz McClave at [lizmcllave@yahoo.com](mailto:lizmcllave@yahoo.com) to learn more.



### Filling in the Blanks Packing Event *Many Hands Make Light Work!*

On February 3, Women's Fellowship and Missions & Outreach joined together to pack 723 weekend meal bags for food insecure youth in our area. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who took part in this meaningful event!



## Stephen Ministers Weekend 2026 Retreat

*"Every day I want to speak with you. And every day something more important calls for my attention...Why do I flee from you?... Help me."*

— Prayer by Marie Howe

Sixteen of our Stephen Ministers recently braved record cold temperatures and snowy roads to return to Trinity Retreat Center in northern Connecticut for rest, quiet, prayer, reflection, and connection. Resident retreat leader, Rev. Mark Bozzuti-Jones, welcomed us warmly, guided us through a deep breathing exercise, and then invited each of us to speak about our own faith journey. Members shared honestly, inspiring the rest to do the same. We all felt "heard, respected, trusted, and encouraged by everyone," as one participant commented.

During the rest of the day, we explored what it means to listen fully to others and to God, and the importance of silence in order to hear God. Rev. Mark pointed out the paradox of opposites being true at the same time (e.g., nothing happens by accident, yet life is random), and our need to embrace change and challenges as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of faith and resilience. He reminded us that God does not "blame & shame," that we shouldn't allow others to do that to us, and we shouldn't do that to others. He suggested we silently consider how we can change to become closer to God, and to ask God what He can do for us. Challenging us to be the ones who see the light and live life abundantly, he also dared us to become one of the few who become the light for others. Two of the spiritual methods he shared were *lectio divina* (reflecting on what we as individuals felt was important in a specific scripture or poem), and *visio divina* (meditating on art or an image to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through it).



Front row, left to right: Kathy Johnston, Katrina Hering, Rev. Mark Bozzuti-Jones, Lyn Chivvis, Hope Hetherington, Penny Mardoian. Second row: Martha Palmer, Gail Banigan, Twee Haffner. Back row: Wes Fredericks, Jeanne Fredericks, Ann Whittaker, Fatou Niang, Courtney Flynn, Tom Robey, Lindsay Tucker, and Diane Bailey

Before some participants needed to leave Saturday afternoon, Rev. Mark invited us to reach into a basket of polished stones without looking and let a stone with a word on it choose us. The printed mantras such as “seek,” “heal,” “pray,” “courage,” and “love,” became inspiring mementos of a special day. Those who stayed overnight enjoyed another farm-to-table delicious meal, then spent an hour alone with a selection of poems and writings, and journaled what these sparked in them. We eased into the slower rhythm of a spiritual community with evening and morning services in the charming, candle-lit stone chapel.

All of us returned rested and refreshed, hoping that our time in retreat would help us to be even more compassionate caregivers to those in our church facing challenging times in their lives.

With you on the journey,  
Gail Banigan, Jeanne Fredericks, and Kathy Johnston  
(retreat organizers)

*“There’s a thread you follow .. While you hold  
it you can’t get lost. Tragedies happen; people  
get hurt or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time’s unfolding.  
You don’t ever let go of the thread.”*  
— *The Way It Is* by William Stafford



Left to right: Fatou Niang, Lyn Chivvis, Gail Banigan, Tom Robey, Hope Hetherington, Martha Palmer, Diane Bailey



Left to right: Courtney Flynn, Katrina Hering, Penny Mardoian, Ann Whittaker, Jeanne Fredericks, Twee Haffner, Lindsay Tucker, Wes Fredericks



## OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

### Ministers

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

Kelly Antonson, **x110**  
Associate Minister for Children, Youth,  
and Families

Pastoral Care Emergency, **x103**

### Staff

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

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**  
Youth Director, Co-Lead

Tracy Goldman, **x109**  
Community Life Coordinator

Sarah Haddad, **x113**  
Church School Coordinator

Anthony Jones  
Sexton

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

Khanisha Denise Moore, **x111**  
Youth Director, Co-Lead

Caroline Smittle, **x106**  
Director of Operations

Greer Lyle, **x115**  
Director of Youth Ministries  
and Children's Music

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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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)