



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

It is good to be home—it is great to be back!

Over the past number of months, I've had the blessing of participating in four different mission experiences: helping lead our delegation to the West Bank, traveling with Tammie for our "Fellowship to Florida," joining YG in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, and, most recently, journeying to Honduras with our AMO team to visit World Vision and our sponsor child.

Each of these experiences was deeply meaningful and felt central to both my faith and my calling as a pastor. Our time in the West Bank was particularly powerful, and I am grateful for a team that sought to bring some measure of hope and presence in the midst of very real hardship. Being with members of our church family in Florida was a joy—there is simply no substitute for being together in person. Traveling with our youth to the Delta was equally moving; while I sometimes joke that our kids know how to use lacrosse sticks better than hammers, what they do know how to offer is their time, their presence, and their compassion. And in Honduras, visiting Nelly Camila in Colomocagua—a place rarely seen by North Americans—was a gift beyond words.

These have been sacred experiences, and I am deeply grateful for each one. And yet, as meaningful as they were, it is always a gift to return home.

It is a joy to live and serve here in New Canaan. I love our church family, and I do not take the privilege of serving on God's Acre lightly. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't give thanks to God for this calling.

And what a gift it is to return in this season—not only to celebrate Easter, but to live into it.

Easter is not just a day. It is a season. A way of life. A movement of the Spirit that continues to unfold in us and among us. We gather to proclaim that Christ is risen—but we remain together to discover what that resurrection means for how we live, how we love, and how we are bound to one another as a community of faith.

One of the clearest signs of that shared life is the way we connect—with one another in worship, in fellowship, and in service. Not simply greeting one another on a Sunday morning, but truly coming to know one another—sharing meals,



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Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service

Please join us for a meaningful Holy Week service on Thursday, April 2, at 8:00pm in the Meeting House. Tenebrae is an ancient service of Shadows and Light that dramatizes the departure and desertion of Jesus' disciples shortly after their Last Supper.

Children's Easter Happenings



On Easter Sunday, April 5, Children's Chapel will be offered at our 9:00am service. Nursery Care will be provided at both services. Between services, we hope all children will join us for our annual Easter Egg Hunt at 10:00am on the church lawn. We will have separate egg-hunting sections for each age group, and several golden eggs with mystery prizes inside! There may even be a visit from the Easter Bunny. We look forward to a special Easter morning with all of you!

JOIN US FOR
Easter on God's Acre
 Sunday, April 5

6:15am Sunrise Service, Church Steps
 9:00am* Traditional Worship Service Meeting House
 10:00am Easter Egg Hunt and Fellowship Church Lawn
 11:00am Traditional Worship Service Meeting House

*Church School Chapel is offered at the 9:00am service. Nursery Care is available at both the 9:00 and 11:00am services.



Easter Music

Easter Day, April 5 at 9:00am and 11:00am

Voices, guest instrumentalists, and the organ will unite to celebrate the glorious resurrection of Jesus. Arrive early to secure your seat and enjoy the prelude, which begins 10 minutes prior to each service.



Women's Fellowship Spring Luncheon

Ladies, you are warmly invited to a delightful afternoon at our Women's Fellowship Spring Luncheon, a time to relax, reconnect, and be inspired. Savor a delicious meal, enjoy meaningful fellowship, and hear words of wisdom from cherished members of our church community.

We'll gather at The Country Club of New Canaan on Friday, May 1, from 12:00-2:00pm. The cost is \$40.

Kindly RSVP by Friday, April 17, to Liz McClave at lizmcclave@yahoo.com. We would love to share this special time with you! If you need assistance with the cost, please reach out to Laurel Carr at laurel@godsacre.org.



Continued from page one

stories, laughter, and faith. In a world that can feel increasingly disconnected, these moments of genuine connection are not optional to the Christian life—they are essential.

In the weeks ahead, there will be many ways to step more deeply into that life together. Through our fellowship gatherings and small group ministries for both men and women. Through the simple but meaningful rhythm of worship each Sunday. Through music that lifts our hearts, like our upcoming Spring Celebration Concert. And through opportunities to serve—whether with our local partners like Open Doors, Pacific House, and Meals on Wheels, or through broader ministries like Inspirica and our Maasai partnership.

Each of these is an invitation—not just to participate in something, but to belong more fully to one another.

Like many of you, I carry deep gratitude for this church and for the ways we show up for each other—in worship, in service, and in friendship. And for me, one of the deepest expressions of that shared life is the privilege of stepping behind the pulpit, opening the Word, and continuing to reflect together on the Easter promise that defines us:

That Jesus Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed.

And because he is risen, we are called—not only to believe—but to live as a people shaped by that resurrection... together.

Yours in Christ,
Chapin

Annual Meeting and Stewardship Update

On March 1, the church held its Annual Meeting both in person and via Zoom. We had high attendance and a successful meeting. The 2026 Stewardship Campaign continues to track well. To date, we have 364 pledges totaling \$2,477,665. Thanks to all of you who have given so generously this year!





Spring Celebration Concert

Saturday, April 25
5:00pm
Meeting House

Join us for an evening of inspiring music, community, and gratitude, as we gather in support of the Mary Bradley Clarke Fund.



Flowers and Children!

This month, the flower ministry had a wonderful time joining forces with the youth group. Together, we arranged beautiful bouquets, sharing laughter, creativity, and a spirit of service.

Once the flowers were prepared, the children and their parents delivered the arrangements to members of our church community. These simple gifts brought smiles and connection, reminding us all of the power of kindness and fellowship.

A wonderful experience for everyone involved and a beautiful example of the joy of working together.





APRIL

Church School Calendar

April 5

Easter Sunday Children's Easter Chapel at the 9:00am service. Nursery Care provided at both the 9:00 and 11:00am services. Children begin in the Meeting House.

Easter Egg Hunt at 10:00am between the services.

April 12

Combined Class for PreK-3rd grade.
4th -7th grades remain in Meeting House.
Nursery Care will be provided.

April 19

Church School
PreK-7th grade

April 26

Church School
PreK-7th grade



Vacation Bible School 2026

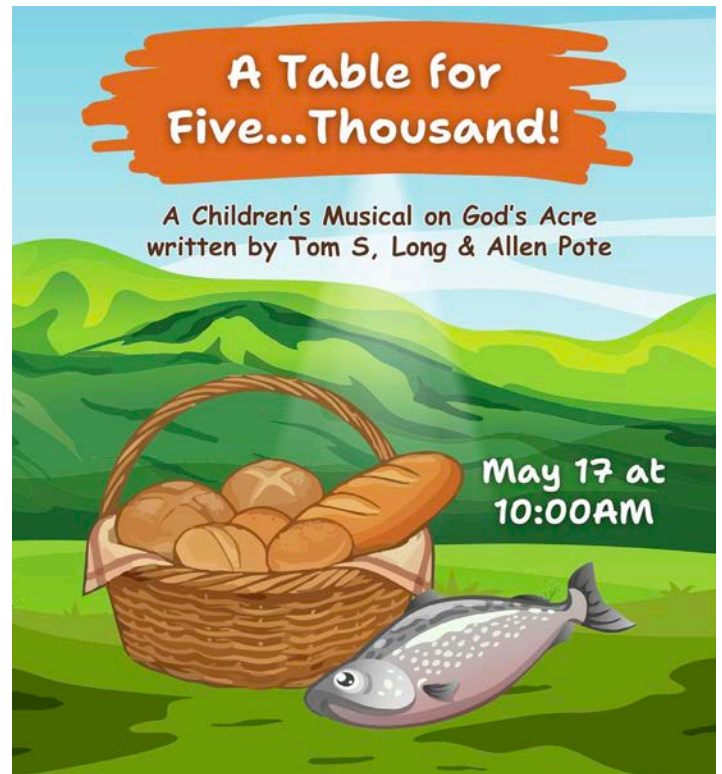
Registration for VBS will open on April 15

We are excited to soon open registration for Vacation Bible School Camp "God Squad: Adventures in Faith" on August 17-20 (Monday through Thursday from 9:00am-12:00pm) at the church. We will have an action-packed week exploring Bible Superhero stories through games, activities, songs, crafts, and more. Children aged 4 through 4th grade are invited to participate as campers, while middle and high school students can register as junior and senior counselors. Registration will open on April 15. Look for an email with registration forms. We look forward to having you join us for another memorable VBS experience of faith-building, fellowship, and fun!



Children's Musical: Save the Date!

This year, our children have an exciting opportunity to learn more about the miracles Jesus performed through the exciting musical, A Table for Five...Thousand! Children will sing, dance, act, and tell the story of a young child who to witnessed this miraculous event. Musical projects are an excellent opportunity for your child to learn more about God's love in a fun way that will resonate throughout their whole lives. The spring children's musical will take place on May 17 during the 10:00am service and is open to children ages 4- grade 5. Grades 6-8 are welcome to join as junior directors. Rehearsals will take place during Children's Choir and Church School, with only three group rehearsals outside regular children's programming. For more information, contact Greer Lyle at greer@godsacre.org.





Spring with Youth Ministries

Spring Fun with Our Youth!

March was a full and joy-filled month as we celebrated fellowship, faith, and fun with our youth of all ages! Our theme this spring was belief, and we saw that come to life through every gathering and event we shared.

The highlight in March for our Youth Group (YG) was Youth Sunday, where we celebrated the 2026 Mission Trip to Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, and recognized all our amazing sponsors who made that experience possible. Three of our senior YG members shared heartfelt reflections about how the trip shaped their faith and friendships—it was truly inspiring to hear! The rest of March was filled with meaningful connections through team nights and vespers, helping us grow even closer as a group. Keep an eye out for an invitation to our end-of-year YG Banquet on Sunday, May 17 where we will celebrate all of our amazing seniors and fish!

Our Middle School Youth Group (MSYG) kept the energy going with a series of fellowship and service events in preparation for their Mountainside Retreat in May. Events like Dinner on a Dime, a St. Patrick's Day Celebration, and a Spring Flower Service Project gave our middle schoolers a chance to grow together, serve others, and have plenty of fun along the way.

Our younger youth also came together for our Spring Youth Worship, where we focused on the theme of transformation and created a beautiful collaborative glass window to symbolize new beginnings. It's always such a blessing to worship together with children and teens from kindergarten through high school—seeing their energy and faith light up the room is truly special!

We hope you'll all join us for our beloved Sunrise Easter Service at 6:00am on the Church Steps on April 5—a cherished YG/MSYG tradition that brings our whole community together to celebrate resurrection and renewal.

Thanks be to Go d for the many blessings He continues to pour out on our youth and our church family this spring!





Upcoming MSYG Mountainside Retreat!

Join our Middle School Youth Group (MSYG) as we answer God's call to serve others on our mission trip to Mountainside Treatment Center! From June 5-7, our MSYG fish will embark on this meaningful journey. They will engage in faith exploration as we work alongside selected residents in recovery to restore and improve the Mountainside facility. We have had a longstanding partnership with Mountainside for over 30 years, and this has been a transformative journey for so many MSYG fish. Secure your child's spot on the trip by signing up by April 30. If you have additional questions about the trip, please contact Greer at greer@godsacre.org.





Spring Bible Study

Please join us beginning on Monday, April 13, in reading the story of the early church. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read of the arrival of the Holy Spirit, the formation of the early church, and the conversion of Paul. It is an exciting journey into the past that continues to inform our present and future. We meet on Mondays, 7:00-8:00am and 9:15-10:15am (Women's). Zoom participation is available. Contact Marianna Kilbride at marianna@godsacre.org to sign up.



Let's Talk, New Canaan!

A Community Conversation Across Differences

Let's Talk, New Canaan, May 16 with the Reverend Doctor Allen Hilton, 9:00am-12:00pm

Moderated by our longtime friend and onetime pastor, Allen Hilton, "Let's Talk" is a Christian-led outreach designed to strengthen community life in New Canaan. Our country and town face two major barriers to a healthy community: rising loneliness and deep political division. Research and common experience both show that real connection and understanding are essential to thriving communities.



To help rebuild those bonds, our church along with the New Canaan Clergy Association will host "Let's Talk", bringing politically opposite neighbors together for a structured conversation that goes beyond partisan labels.

The Obstacle

Americans increasingly avoid meaningful relationships across political lines. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed, people fear and dislike those they do not know. Today, as we cluster into partisan groups, we develop exaggerated and negative assumptions about "the other side," which fuels distrust and weakens community life.



The Solution

Connection cures separation. On Saturday, May 16, participants will take part in a simple practice called the Life Swap – a guided, face-to-face conversation between political opposites. They will discuss:

- 1) What political convictions matter most to you?
- 2) What life experiences shaped those convictions?

Then, in small groups, each partner will introduce the other in the first person, a powerful exercise that builds empathy and understanding.

To join or learn more about this community-building event, contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org.



Caring for Ourselves as We Care for One Another

In every season of church life, we talk about caring for our neighbors, supporting those who are struggling, and showing up for our community. But one of the most important—and often most overlooked—parts of a healthy spiritual life is caring for ourselves. Self-care is not selfish; it is a way of honoring the bodies, minds, and spirits God has entrusted to us.

Many of us move through our days at a pace that leaves little room to breathe. Yet even small moments of rest can restore us in meaningful ways. Self-care might look like taking ten quiet minutes with a book, stepping outside for fresh air, practicing yoga or gentle stretching, or even allowing yourself a much-needed nap. These simple acts help us reconnect with God's peace and with our own humanity.

Self-care can also be shared. Sometimes what we need most is companionship—a reminder that we are not walking our path alone. Our Pastoral Care Ministers - Kelly Antonson or Barb Clayton - would be glad to meet you for a walk or sit down over a cup of coffee or tea. A listening ear and a caring presence can be a powerful source of healing.

Another meaningful form of self-care is joining one of our ministry teams. Serving alongside others not only strengthens our church community but also nourishes our own spirits. Whether it's with Helping Hands, Flower Ministry, Prayer Shawl Knitting,

Card Writing, Stephen Ministry, or our Church Prayer Ministry, shared ministry gives us purpose, connection, and joy.

As we continue to care for one another, may we also remember to care for ourselves—with gentleness, intention, and gratitude for the God who renews us daily.

Contact our Pastoral Care Ministers - Kelly Antonson at kelly@godsacre.org and Barb Clayton at barb@godsacre.org.



*Take a moment for yourself today.
Breathe. Pray. Be Still.*

"Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

— Matthew 11:28–30



Welcome Spring 2026 New Members!



Sam & Courtney Coupe
Weed Street
Charlie

Bobby & Brianna Erickson
Seminary Street
Ella

Tilde Fusco
Ponus Ridge Road
Charlie & James

Wynne & Chelsea Holden
Smith Ridge Road
Ford

Robert & Cara Ott
Hillsley Road, Darien
Bobby & Emma

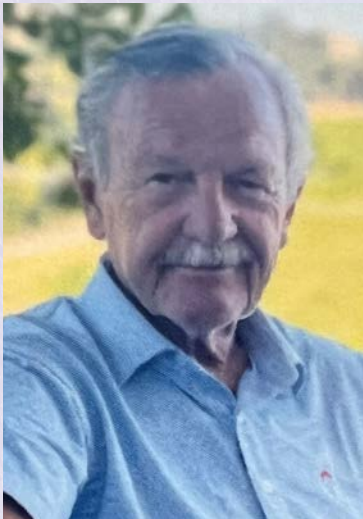
Ed & Emily Panko
Oenoke Ridge Road
Ward

Ben & Carrie Sanders
Sharp Hill Road, Wilton
Ryland, Halsey, Charlotte

Brian & Francesca Treacher
Woodridge Circle
Grayson & Beckett



In Loving Memory



Paul E. Weaver

November 3, 1945 - March 12, 2026





MSA Spotlight - Pacific House

Pacific House is a Stamford-based nonprofit whose mission is simple and urgent: to prevent and end homelessness in Fairfield County. The organization traces its roots to 1982, when an emergency shelter first opened in the basement of the First Congregational Church in Stamford. What began as a makeshift oasis of warmth on cold nights has grown, over more than four decades, into one of lower Fairfield County's most essential human services organizations and a long-time partner of our own Congregational Church of New Canaan.

Pacific House serves men and young adults experiencing homelessness across a five-town region, including Stamford, Greenwich, Darien, New Canaan, and Norwalk. The emergency shelter operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and provides breakfast and dinner daily. In the most recent fiscal year, the shelter housed 215 individuals for more than 21,000 nights and provided nearly 43,000 meals.

But Pacific House is far more than a place to sleep. The organization wraps its shelter services with case management, street outreach to individuals living in encampments and under bridges, and a shelter diversion program that helped 321 people avoid emergency placement altogether last year by connecting them with housing alternatives and financial resources. Pacific House also develops and manages permanent supportive housing, with 14 properties today serving over 140 formerly homeless tenants in Stamford and Norwalk, reflecting a deep commitment to the idea that ending homelessness means finding people real homes, not just temporary beds. For additional information, see <https://www.pacifichouse.org/about> for an informative video on Pacific House's wide-ranging platform.



Our congregation has been part of this mission for many years, with dedicated volunteers regularly preparing and serving meals at the shelter. Andy Parkin and Stephanie Douglas-Parkin lead a monthly dinner service through which our church feeds the residents of the Pacific House shelter in Stamford, and they welcome others who wish to join.

If you would like to get involved, whether through the monthly dinner, donations, or other volunteer opportunities, reach out to Starling Cousley at starling.cousley@gmail.com to learn more. There is always a place at the table.



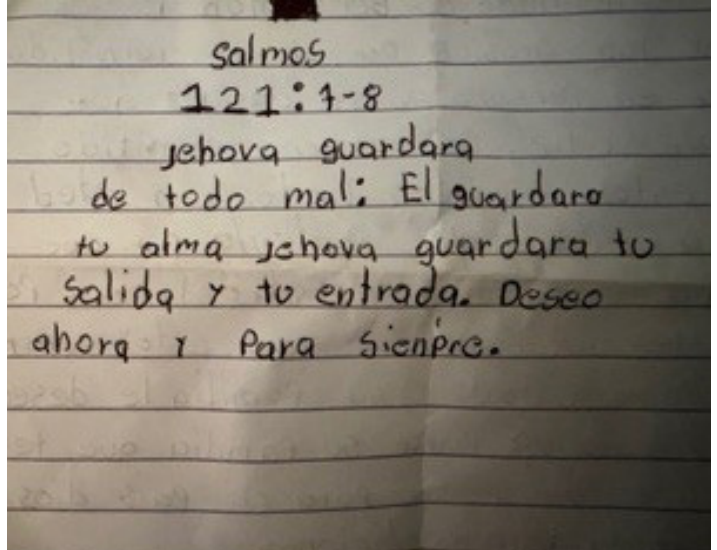


¡HONDURAS! AMO TRIP REFLECTIONS

Beth Simon

The dusty worn photo of a small smiling hopeful boy, now a young man, has been attached to my frig by a tiny porcelain angel magnet for the last ten years accompanied by the caption "I believe David Gustavo is full of potential." And now, with God's encouragement and the guidance of World Vision, I had the opportunity to join my first mission trip to see just that.

A quick backstory: When I went to the mission trip meeting admittedly, I had no idea our church was already sponsoring children in Honduras. What an incredible coincidence when I learned that they would be visiting Colomancagua, the same community where David lived. Much more than coincidence I thought.



Fast forward to our six-day mission trip. Each day we drove hours over rugged terrain to visit a smattering of villages aided by World Vision which illustrated the five stages of poverty and how their methods, dedication, and faith can help make a community more sustainable and self-sufficient.

Sneakers on the ground, dust in our faces, we brought our open hearts and a curiosity to learn. It all begins with clean water. We visited a village undergoing this transformation where their only water source was a dirty spring located down a very steep hill which adults and children shared the burden of climbing numerous times daily to replenish their needs. With the help of World Vision, this village is on the precipice of a vital change.

We next visited a village further along in the World Vision process which has the profound benefit of a rustic yet fully functioning school with dedicated teachers, and modest classrooms with students eager to learn reading, math, music and art, even robotics. A lightbulb had definitely been switched on in this community. And it was bright.

Another community had benefited from WV's introduction of farming by providing seeds and nutrition for their soil, so the people could sustain themselves with their own food source, to eat and to trade.



¡HONDURAS! AMO TRIP REFLECTIONS

Finally, WV shared with us a glimpse into the ugly world of intercity poverty as we listened to the fragile stories of five young men and women challenged by broken homes, addiction, attempted suicide, living on the streets and unloved. WV provides programs that can help the youth and young adults overcome these circumstances and stabilize their lives so they can dream and realize a better future.

These are only some of the highlights of a trip packed with memories to last and linger for a lifetime. The main takeaway? World Vision does not simply dole out the fish. It teaches each community to fish, each person to be a fisherman. To build and be a part of their community's success, to share the resources to meet their goals, to find creative solutions that will carry forward the next generation.

Each village invited us in with smiles, hopeful eyes, and prayers. They were encouraged that someone was listening and witnessing their needs.

Wherever we are in our own communities, our villages, we can hear the birds singing, we witness trees majestically swaying in the wind, the rise of the moon, the strength of the sun. But each day as we traveled back to our hotel and I grasped my water bottle between my fingers; I couldn't stop thinking that it all begins with water. Transformation. Faith.

Seeing David was a true blessing. To hug him, to see that he was healthy, and hear about the positive impact sponsorship has had on his and his family's lives. I gifted him a Cristiano Ronaldo jersey, he gifted me Psalm 121:1-8 handwritten in Spanish on a small, folded piece of paper he retrieved from his back pocket. Worlds collide.

Seeing the poverty and the positive transformation World Vision has on communities, however, was forever life changing.

Life. Changing. Life.

William Picard

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."
Acts 2:17 / Joel 2:28

Five years have passed since our Church decided to unite in sponsoring, through World Vision, children in Colomoncagua, Honduras. Earlier this month, eight of us had the chance to meet 'our' children. After visiting Colomoncagua, which is nearing the end of its World Vision tutelage, we visited a community about to begin its own journey with World Vision. In the contrast, we witnessed first-hand the enormously beneficial impact World Vision has on the communities it partners with.

As in most impoverished communities, the root causes include a lack of access to water, basic sanitation, food sources, and education. World Vision partners with entire communities to train and equip them for sustainable access and practices in all these fields.





¡HONDURAS! AMO TRIP REFLECTIONS

Just as importantly however, World Vision focuses on encouraging individuals in the community to see themselves as beloved by God and gifted by God with purpose, and talents to be developed for their personal flourishing and that of the community they live in. This was particularly evident when we met our sponsored children. They all had plans and aspirations for their future. This may sound elementary, but it is a sense of hope that was palpably absent in the community we visited that was yet to begin its partnership with World Vision.

We were inspired by what we witnessed and experienced in Colomoncagua. It felt good to know that our very modest \$39 monthly contribution had made such a positive difference in the lives of children that are, but for the vagaries of geography, no different from the ones we cherish at home. We found ourselves dreaming of a time when perhaps each one of our CCNC families would provide hope and opportunity to another of God's children.



Meeting Fredy

Hope in the Hills of Honduras

By Roger Bolton

Last week in the rural hills of Honduras, I finally met Fredy — the 10-year-old boy I have been sponsoring for the past five years.



Fredy is 10 years old, and he loves soccer and school, where his favorite subject is social studies. He also likes math and aspires to be a mechanic because he loves cars. I tried to help Fredy to see that with his wide range of interests, he can pursue anything he wants. The sky is the limit.

I'm not sure what I was expecting from a child growing up in a remote and impoverished rural community, but I came away inspired by the opportunity Fredy has to grow up to be a man who fulfills his potential and lives a purposeful life.



¡HONDURAS! AMO TRIP *REFLECTIONS*

This is possible in large part because of the work funded by our church and delivered by World Vision. The Colomoncagua communities we sponsor are remote and impoverished. To reach them, we drove for many hours through extremely dry mountainous terrain over deeply rutted winding roads.

We saw homes receiving running water for the first time, with new irrigation systems for fields that had long been dry, and schools offering students opportunities that would be unimaginable in most rural villages.

We also went to Tegucigalpa to get a view into the challenges of urban poverty, including gang violence and alcohol and drug addiction. There, we met five young adults who have gone through World Vision's RISE program, which helps young people to build confidence, life skills and opportunities for a better future.

They told their stories with joy and tears, moving us to tears as we heard how they had journeyed from hopelessness and suicidal thoughts to determination to live with purpose, highly motivated to help others.

At the end of my time with Fredy, the shy boy's eyes filled with tears, and I gave him a big hug. I will never forget the feeling of connection and satisfaction that I felt after finally meeting him and catching a glimpse into his potential for a bright future.

Every child has God-given talents and deserves the opportunity to discover them and to find his or her purpose. What I saw in Honduras reminded me how transformative that can be — and how humbling and awe-inspiring it is to play even a small part in helping to make it possible.





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 Director of Operations

Kimmie Dyrvik, **x111**
Youth Director, Co-Lead

Tracy Goldman, **x109**
Community Life Coordinator

Sarah Haddad, **x113**
Church School Coordinator

Tighe Hoey, **x111**
Director of Youth Ministries

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

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Chair, Personnel

Derrek Metz
Chair, Board of Trustees

Lesley Cousley
Chair, Nominating and Governance

Dawn Doak
Chair, Board of Deacons



Newsletter Submissions

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