



## community

*So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*Acts 1:6-8*



### FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

I want to share some good news with you—news I offer with both hope and humility, because while it is encouraging, I know how fragile it remains. Since our visit to Taybeh in the West Bank—and in no small part due to the advocacy efforts that followed, including our outreach to Ambassador Huckabee—the town has experienced a meaningful decrease in settler attacks. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in awareness of this small Christian community among leaders in Washington. Not long after our visit, approximately 120 members of Congress sent a letter to Secretary Rubio advocating for the peace, safety, and security of Taybeh.

The people of Taybeh have been generous in expressing their gratitude to our church for helping raise awareness and advocate on their behalf. While they may give us more credit than we deserve, it is deeply meaningful to know that our engagement has had a tangible impact.

I will say this: in all my years of ministry, this is one of the few moments when I have felt that we may have contributed, in some small way, to the safety of an entire community. And I am keenly aware that any impact we have had is the result of our shared commitment as a church.

Even so, I hold this good news with a sense of caution. Each day, I find myself hoping that the calm has held, knowing how quickly circumstances can change. This is, after all, a small sign of peace in a region that continues to endure profound tension, conflict, and hardship. But it is a sign nonetheless—and it feels good to be part of something that is life-giving and protective.



I am also deeply grateful for our Missions & Social Action team, whose continued support of the Jerusalem Patriarchate is helping to create and sustain safe spaces for the children of Taybeh. Most recently, that support is helping to complete a youth center—a place where young people can gather, recreate, and simply be together in safety.

Looking ahead, we have been invited into a potentially significant new opportunity to deepen our partnership with this community. The Jerusalem Patriarchate has asked us to consider helping fund the construction of a turf soccer field

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# Let's Talk, New Canaan A Community Conversation Across Differences

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 an 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.



Rev. Dr. Allen Hilton

### 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.

# LET'S TALK NEW CANAAN

A Community  
Conversation  
Across Political  
Differences



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. Registration is available via the QR code or through this link:



<https://godsacre.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/318/responses/new>

# Celebration Sunday and All-Church Picnic Mark your calendars for Celebration Sunday on June 14.

It's one of the most joyful days of our church year! Together, we will welcome our confirmands into the life of the congregation, celebrate meaningful spiritual milestones, honor our dedicated teachers, and joyfully mark the close of our program year.

After the 10:00am worship service, the celebration continues with our All-Church Picnic, hosted by the Fellowship Team. It is a wonderful time to relax, connect, and enjoy being together as a church family. Look for a sign-up in your inbox in late May with ways you can help make the day even more special.

Come hungry and ready for fun! Alongside a delicious lunch and an ice cream truck, there will be inflatables, face painting, and everyone's favorite Old Faithful rides.

Make a day of it, bring your friends, and plan to stay. This is a celebration you won't want to miss! Contact Laurel Carr at [laurel@godsacre.org](mailto:laurel@godsacre.org) if you have questions.



## Love in Action: Small Acts, Big Impact

In the life of a church, it's often the quiet, everyday moments that carry the greatest meaning. A kind word after worship, a handwritten note, a meal dropped off during a difficult week, or simply taking the time to truly listen—these small acts of kindness are the threads that weave us together as a community of faith.



We are called not only to gather and worship, but to care for one another in ways both seen and unseen. Scripture reminds us clearly: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:31). This isn't just a grand ideal—it's a daily invitation—an invitation to notice one another, to reach out, and to act with compassion.

Each Sunday, we are given a beautiful and meaningful opportunity to live this out during the passing of the peace. In that simple moment—offering a handshake, a smile, or a few kind words—we share Christ's peace with one another. What if we carried that moment just a little further? What if we made an effort to remember the names, the stories, and the needs of those we greet? And then, during Fellowship Hour, we took the time to reconnect, to check in, and to deepen those small but important connections.

Random acts of kindness within our church family can be surprisingly powerful. A quick phone call to check in, offering a ride, remembering a birthday, or sitting beside someone who may feel alone—these simple gestures reflect God's love in tangible ways. They remind us that no one walks this journey alone.

Kindness doesn't require perfection or planning. It simply requires openness—a willingness to see others as God sees them: worthy of care, attention, and love. When we step beyond our routines and make space for these small but meaningful actions, we begin to embody the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

As we move through the coming weeks, let us be intentional about extending kindness within our church family. Look for opportunities, however small, to brighten someone's day. Remember the faces you greet, the names you hear, and the stories you share. In doing so, we not only bless others—we deepen our own faith and strengthen the bonds that make our church a true home.

Because in the end, it is love in action—simple, sincere, and shared—that reflects God's presence most clearly among us.

*Continued from page one*

near the town center. Because Patriarchate properties have not been targeted in the same way, expanding their footprint could offer an added measure of protection and stability for the community.

The vision is to create a space—something they have suggested naming "God's Acre Taybeh"—where children from Taybeh and the surrounding area can gather, play, and build community without fear of harassment or intrusion.

As we now enter a third month of relative calm, I wanted to share this update with you—not only because it is hopeful news, but because you are very much a part of it. Your care, your engagement, and your willingness to stand in solidarity have mattered.

We also have before us an opportunity to continue that witness—to help nurture not only safety, but a sense of shared life and possibility for this small Christian community.

In a region where peace can be fleeting, nothing is guaranteed. But I do believe that through faithful presence and partnership, we can make a meaningful difference.

This is, in every sense, an expression of our calling as followers of Christ—and I am grateful to be part of it with you.

Yours in Christ,  
Chapin

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

# MAASAI 2026

## BUILDING CLASSROOMS BUILDING HOPE

Please help us raise \$30,000 to build two new, desperately needed classrooms for our Maasai friends. Education is one of the three pillars of our partnership, along with water and food sustenance. Your support will help provide safe, inspiring learning spaces, increase access for local students (especially girls and children with disabilities), and increase enrollment. Every contribution, big or small, brings us closer to giving these children the chance for a brighter future through education.

Last March, a group of church members visited the Maasai community in rural Kenya with whom we have partnered for over twenty years. They participated in the construction of a medical center and made improvements to the local girls' shelter. We saw firsthand how each of these projects and our past projects, from beekeeping to solar panels to drought-resistant goats, are positively impacting the community.

While we were there, we had the opportunity to visit the local schools where our congregants have supported students through scholarships. The teachers and children welcomed us and showed us what they were working on and their facilities. At one school, some of our group "taught" for a day and saw firsthand how classrooms were filled beyond capacity. Two new classrooms will help provide much-needed space for the children in the village to get the education they need and deserve.

Please contact Beth Picard at [bpicard44@gmail.com](mailto:bpicard44@gmail.com) for more information. To donate, click here: <https://godsacre.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/318/responses/new>



## The Resurrection of a Christmas Cactus: *A Story of Faith, Friendship and Flowers*

One sunny April afternoon, Rodney Chabot introduced me to his rebellious Christmas cactus, which was, of course, in full bloom. Any Christmas cactus that has the gumption to bloom in April immediately earns my friendship, as does anyone who owns and loves a quirky cactus. Friendship, like those flowers, often arrives unexpectedly. Each year, Rodney dedicates a blue and yellow altar arrangement on the anniversary of his late wife Marianne's passing. That day, I came by to deliver a bouquet made from these flowers and ended up leaving with a new friendship.

After that, I became Rodney's chief plant consultant, which mostly involved being asked, "Is this plant dead or should I keep watering it?" My answer, "keep watering." It turns out, the cactus was the last remaining plant from a sunroom once full of plants lovingly tended by Marianne. Rodney watered his Christmas cactus faithfully every Sunday afternoon when he returned home from church.

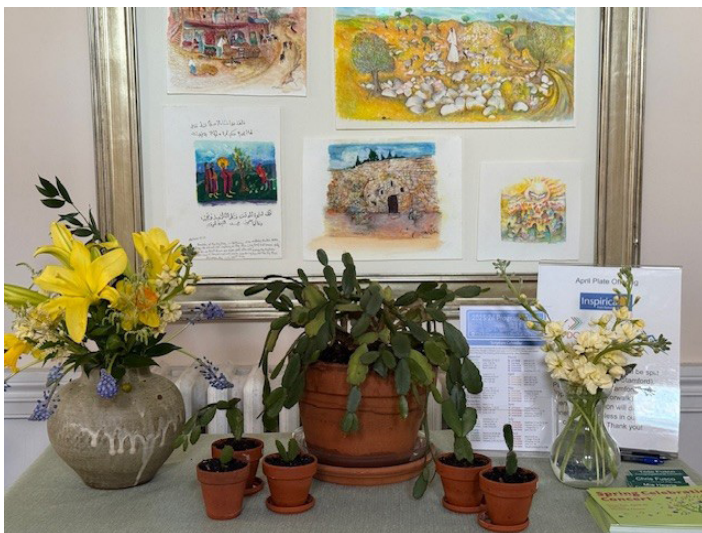


But faith, like friendship, and cactus flowers, has a way of showing up when we most need it. The cactus came home with me. It was grayish-brown and hard as a rock. In fact, it seemed almost petrified. As I removed the original plastic nursery pot it had lived in since the 1980's or earlier, I was struck by this plant's resilience, how it had managed to survive all these years. I washed all the old soil off the roots. Marianne's cactus was re-potted with fresh cactus soil, then placed in my "plant hospital."

Like a miracle, tiny bits of green began to appear. At first, the plant's base was too weak to support the new growth, and emerging segments would fall off. I kept watering. Little by little, new segments grew and held on. I kept watering. Two years later, a green noggin of cactus, so wild Einstein himself would envy it, has sprouted. Occasionally, the stem segments still fall off. I potted five of them in their own little pots. It was time for the cactus to go home.

This April, when Rodney once again sponsored Marianne's altar arrangement, there was a surprise waiting. That Sunday morning, Rodney's old friend, the Christmas cactus, was waiting in the Narthex along with five small cacti, two for his children and three for his grandchildren. It hasn't bloomed yet, but now that the Christmas cactus is home, I have complete faith that it will.

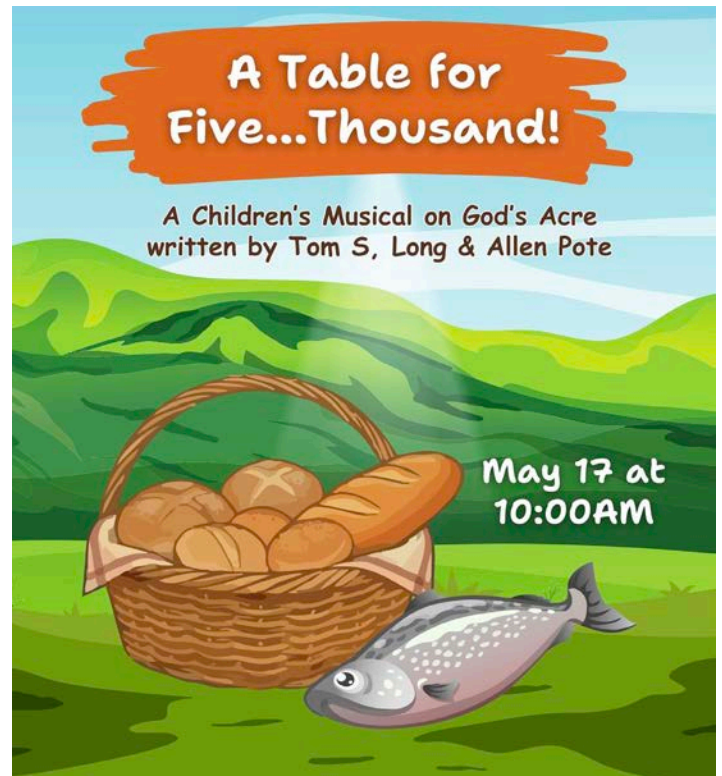
– Juliet Howe, Flower Ministry Chair



Each Sunday morning, I joined my friend Rodney in a pew on the far right, about halfway down the aisle. Rodney, always early; I, always late. Then, two years ago, Rodney went missing. What began as a holiday of a few weeks expanded into months due to illness and hospitalization. We all prayed. His home sat empty, the cactus un-watered that long summer and fall. Joyfully, our prayers were answered, and he returned. I paid him a visit and was asked, "Is the cactus dead?" I didn't answer right away.

## Mark Your Calendars for the Children's Musical: *A Table for Five...Thousand!*

This month, Children's Music celebrates the beautiful retelling of the miracle of Jesus from the perspective of a humble child in the musical, *A Table for Five...Thousand!* The Children's Musical will be on May 17, during the 10:00am service. Our children have been hard at work preparing lines and songs to show how God can take even the smallest of offerings and make a miracle. This special occasion will be a joyful celebration! 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.



## May Church School Calendar

### May 3

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

### May 10

Church School (PreK-7th grade)

### May 17

Church School (PreK-7th grade)  
\*Children's Musical Performance

### May 24

Memorial Day Weekend.  
Combined Church School Class (PreK-3rd grade)

### May 31

Church School (PreK-7th grade)



## Vacation Bible School Registration

Registration is open for Vacation Bible School Camp!

Come join us for "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 or senior counselors. We look forward to having you join us for another memorable VBS experience of faith-building, fellowship, and fun! Registration closes on May 15. Contact Sarah Haddad at [churchschool@godsacre.org](mailto:churchschool@godsacre.org) for the registration link.



## Everyone Needs a Car Wash! Come Support MSYG!

Church family, please bring all your cars to the church driveway on Saturday, May 9, for our annual MSYG Car Wash from 10:00am-2:00pm. Once your car is washed, you can conveniently park in the back parking lot for the May Fair down the road. Please support our Middle School Youth Group and help them raise money for their mission trip to Mountainside this June. \$20 per car. We hope to see you there! Please note this is a covenant event for all fish attending Mountainside.

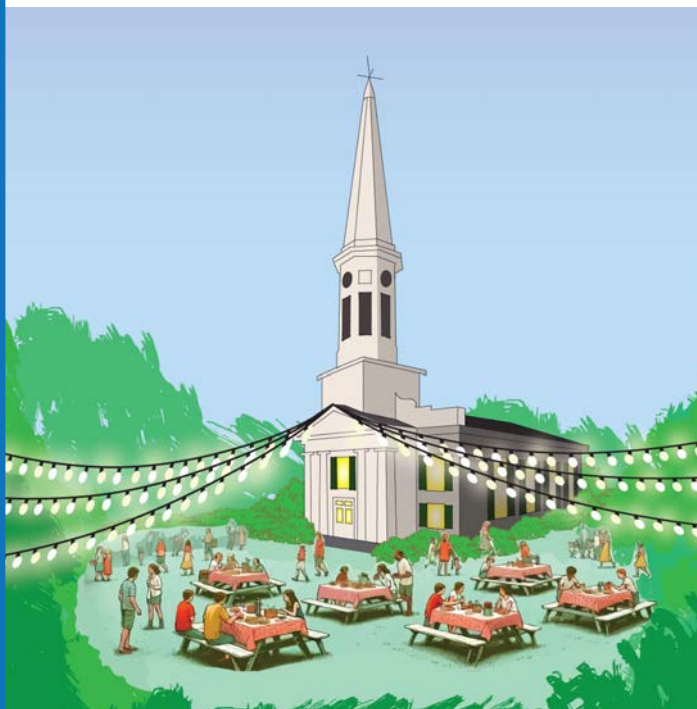
A graphic for the MSYG Car Wash & May Fair Parking event. It features a green background with bubbles and a bucket of water with a sponge. The text reads: "MSYG CAR WASH & MAY FAIR PARKING". A yellow tag says "\$20 CAR". A green box says "SATURDAY, MAY 9 10 AM - 2 PM". At the bottom, it says "THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR MISSION TRIP!".

A graphic for the MSYG Mountainside Retreat. It features a red background with a tent and trees. The text reads: "MSYG MOUNTAINSIDE RETREAT". A white box says "Friday June 5 to Sunday June 7, 2026". A QR code is present. At the bottom, it says "sign up here!".

## SAVE THE DATE!

### YG End of Year Celebration:

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!



A graphic for the YG End of Year Celebration. It features a light blue background with a stylized fish logo. The text reads: "YG End Of Year Celebration!". Below that, it says "Sunday, May 17 5:00 to 6:30pm dinner, senior celebrations, photo booths and more!". At the bottom, it says "sign up below!" and includes a QR code.

## 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**  
Director of Special Projects

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

Diane Bailey  
Chair, Personnel

Derrek Metz  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Lesley Cousley  
Chair, Nominating and Governance

Dawn Doak  
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 June newsletter, please submit by May 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)