



From the Pastor's Study

Greetings Members and Friends,

I once attended worship at the Harvard University chapel in early November. I went to hear a marvelous preacher named Peter Gomes. In his opening remarks he mentioned being in a department store and hearing Christmas music. He said, "I heard Christmas music playing and I knew it could only mean one thing. Thanksgiving is just around the corner."

As I write this message, it is just prior to Thanksgiving and it seems like a strange time to be thinking about Christmas but the season of Advent begins on December 2. How are you entering into Advent this year? Are you full of joy? Are you sad or worried about the state of the world or some event in your life? Are you grieving an important loss? Perhaps you bring to Advent a combination of feelings and thoughts.

As you enter into Advent; I hope you will take advantage of our many Advent offerings. Participate in one of our service activities, come to a deacon led prayer service, engage in Bible study, or enjoy Advent Musical Moments during the week. Whatever you choose, it is sure to enhance your Advent season. Please read through this newsletter to see all of the offerings on God's Acre this Advent season.



There is a past, present, and future element of Advent. We relive ancient Israel's hope of a savior, celebrate God's goodness in our time, and look to the future fulfillment of God's reign of peace. The following comes from the book we are using at the Sunday morning 9:00am study, *The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach about Jesus' Birth* by Marcus Borg & John Crossan:

Advent as a reliving in the present of Ancient Israel's hope and yearning is expressed in an Advent hymn more than a thousand years old. Its first verse is very familiar:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.*

The language is evocative and powerful. We are Israel – in exile, captive, mourning, lonely, longing. Israel's longing is an epiphany of human longing.

The seventh verse explicitly universalizes the yearning: it is the desire of nations:

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For over 280 years, we have gathered as a family of God's children in order to experience His presence, learn Christ's ways, and serve our neighbors – all to make faith a way of life.



Advent and Christmas on God's Acre

We invite you to join your church family to celebrate the season through prayer, worship, music, fellowship, and Scripture.

**Advent Prayer Service: Weekdays at 9:00am,
Communion Served on Wednesdays**

**Advent Musical Moments: Wednesdays,
December 5, 12 and 19**

Join us at 12:00pm in the Meeting House for scripture, prayer, and featured soloists Antonio Abate, Jenny D'Alba, and Anne Maguire

First Sunday of Advent: December 2

Worship Services at 8:00 and 10:00am

- The Chancel Choir will sing Advent anthems during the 10:00am service
- Advent Bible Study, 9:00am

Second Sunday of Advent: December 9

Worship Services at 8:00 and 10:00am

- At the 10:00am Worship Service, the Chancel Choir and Joyful Noise will sing Z. Randall Stroope's "Hodie" with brass quintet, organ and percussionists.
- Advent Bible Study, 9:00am

Third Sunday of Advent: December 16

Worship Services at 8:00 and 10:00am

- The Chancel Choir and Children's Choirs will sing Advent and Christmas anthems during the 10:00am service
- Advent Bible Study, 9:00am
- A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols, 5:00pm in the Meeting House

Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 23

Worship Services at 8:00 and 10:00am

- Joy Plaisted, harpist, will join the Chancel Choir at the 10:00am service
- Advent Bible Study, 9:00am

Christmas Eve: Monday, December 24

4:00pm Family Worship Service

With Nativity Pageant, procession of lights and all children's choirs singing at this Family Service.

6:00 and 7:00pm Worship Services

Hear section leaders Anne Maguire and Antonio Abate singing "O Holy Night"

6:30pm Caroling on God's Acre

11:00pm Contemplative Candlelight Service

String Quartet prelude begins at 10:45pm

Hear the string quartet, led by Mariusz Skula, play a contemplative prelude of Christmas carols before the candlelight service. Singing anthems of the season will be Diana Benton, Anne Maguire, Antonio Abate, and Dimitrie Lazich. Communion will be served.



Salvation Army Bell Ringing at Walter Stewart's: Help Our Nearest Neighbors

Hourly time slots:

- Fridays 3:00–6:00pm
- Saturdays 9:00am–4:00pm on December 7, 8, 14, 15, 21 & 22.



Those in our community struggling with financial difficulties, addiction, mental health issues, and all life stressors turn to our New Canaan Health and Human Services for help. Especially at Christmastime, families in need are stretched. The funds we raise by Bell Ringing at Walter Stewart's go towards helping these very local neighbors, through Health and Human Services, primarily with heat and electricity aid in winter months. This is not only a wonderful way to help those in need but a great way for children to actively participate in and learn about caring for others through the gift of our time.

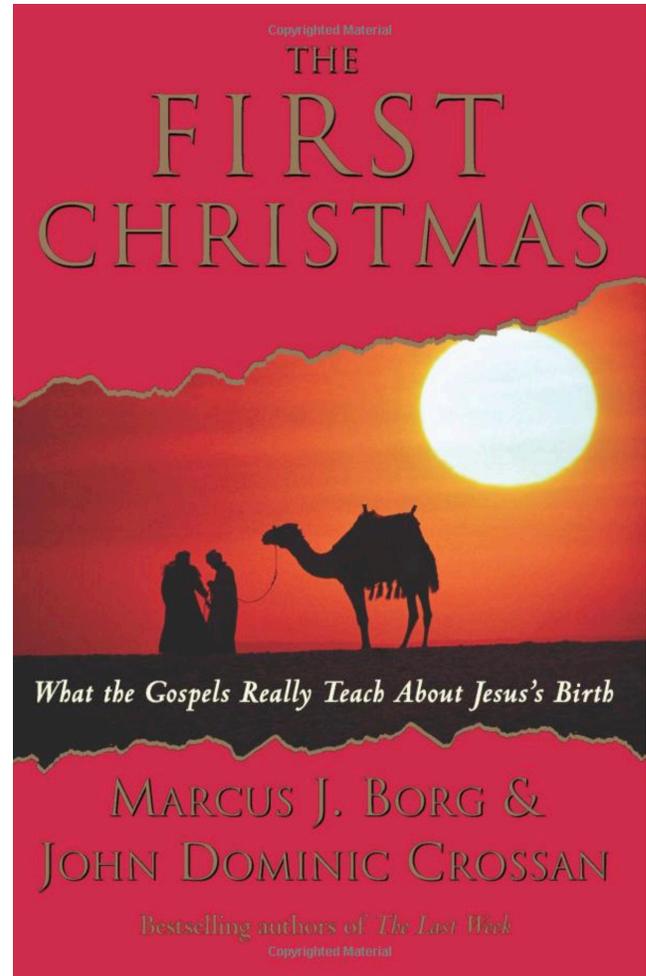
- 12/3 Angel Gifts Due Smith Hall
- 12/12 Dove Boxes Due Smith Hall
- 12/16 Dove Box Delivery 11:15am Smith Hall
- 12/20 Pacific House 4:30pm

Please Join Us! Contact Marianna Kilbride at marianna@godsacre.org to signup.



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

Advent Book Study



The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Birth by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan

The study will meet December 2, 9, 16, 23 from 9:00-9:45am in the Parlor and be led by Eric.

In *The First Christmas*, two Jesus scholars explore the beginning of the life of Christ by peeling away the sentimentalism that has built up over the last two thousand years around the most well-known of all stories. What unique contribution does each of the four Gospels make to our celebration of Christmas? The authors help us to see this well-known narrative afresh by answering the question, "What do these stories mean?" in the context of both the first century and the twenty-first century. They show that the Christmas story is far richer and more challenging than people imagine. If you can get the book in advance, read the first chapter prior to December 2.

Music News

Advent Musical Moments

Wednesdays, December 5, 12 & 19

On Wednesdays at 12:00pm during Advent, The Congregational Church in New Canaan will be open for a time of musical meditation. This is a program featuring vocal, piano, and organ music to refresh the spirit and revive the soul. The Advent Musical Moments will be offered each Wednesday for thirty minutes.

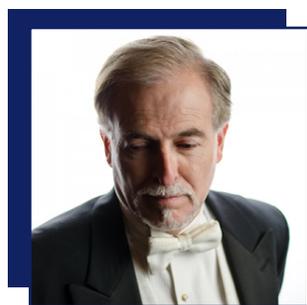
- December 5, Antonio Abate, tenor
- December 12, Jenny D'Alba, soprano
- December 19, Anne Maguire, mezzo-soprano

Director of Music Ministries, Jody Blaine Davis, organ and piano

Everyone is welcome to this free program.

Come and invite your friends to join you during this season of expecting, waiting, and preparing for the joy and celebration of Christmas.

For more information, please contact music@godsacre.org or (203)966-2651 x4.



Hodie!

by Z. Randall Stroope

Sunday, December 9

Prelude begins at 9:50am

The Chancel Choir sings Z. Randall Stroope's three-movement work, *Hodie!* They will be accompanied by a brass quintet, two percussionists,

and organist, with guest conductor Scott Cranston. Instrumentalists are provided through the generosity of the Mary Bradley Clarke Fund.

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 16

You are invited to A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols presented by the Chancel Choir and readers from the church. This candlelight service of scripture, carols, and anthems is a tradition in our church and around the world. The entire family will enjoy this Christmas service. Childcare is provided. For more information please contact Jody Blaine Davis at music@godsacre.org or (203)966-2651 x4.

Monday, December 24

4:00pm - Family Worship Service

Grace Notes, Cherubs, Spirit Singers, Joyful Noise, and Sunshine Singers will sing at the Family Christmas Eve Service.

6:00 and 7:00pm - Informal 30 Minute Services

Hear section leaders Anne Maguire and Antonio Abate sing "O Holy Night" as they lead in Christmas carols.

11:00pm - Contemplative Candlelight Service with Communion
String Quartet prelude begins at 10:45am

Hear the string quartet, led by Mariusz Skula, play a contemplative prelude of Christmas carols before this candlelight service. Diana Benton, Anne Maguire, Antonio Abate, and Dimitrie Lazich will be singing anthems of the season.

ALL CHOIRS WILL RESUME IN 2019

Cherubs: Monday, January 7 at 4:00pm
Grace Notes: Monday, January 7 at 4:30pm
Spirit Singers: Wednesday, January 9 at 4:00pm
Joyful Noise: Wednesday, January 9 at 5:00pm
Chancel Choir: Thursday, January 10 at 7:30pm
Sunshine Singers: Sunday, January 13 at 11:15am



The Children's Music Corner

You will be blessed with children's voices in December!

- Sunday, December 2, the children will sing the opening hymn at the 10:00am service.
- Wednesday, December 5, the Spirit Singers, Joyful Noise, and Sonshine Singers sing at the New Canaan Inn.
- Our very own Joyful Noise will be singing "Hodie" on December 9th with the Chancel Choir and guest instrumentalists.
- Sunday, December 16, the children will sing during the 10:00am service.
- Monday, December 24, Family Christmas Eve service at 4:00pm.



Christmas Pageant News

- Sunday, Dec. 2, 11:15am – 11:45am in the Meeting House, rehearse **Scene 4**.
- Sunday, Dec. 9, 11:15am – 11:45am in the Meeting House, rehearse **Scene 5**.
- Sunday, Dec. 16, 11:15am – 12:00pm in the Meeting House, **rehearse all scenes with no animals**.
- Saturday, Dec. 22, 11:00am – 12:15pm in the Meeting House, **rehearse all scenes with animals**. There will be no scripts and we will use microphones.
- Sunday, Dec. 23, 11:15am – 12:30pm in the Meeting House, we will have a **final dress rehearsal** with everyone involved in the pageant. This is photo day!
- Monday, Dec. 24, **3:00pm meet in Room 7** to get ready for the 4pm Christmas Eve Service!

The full calendar is available on the Children's Music bulletin board.

God's Blessings!

-Mrs. Mya

From the Pastor's Study

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*O come Desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid thou our sad divisions cease,
And be thyself our King of Peace.*

At the end of each verse of this long hymn, a joyful chorus confidently proclaims fulfillment: "Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel." Longing and rejoicing meet.

Past, present, and future are brought together in Advent. It is a season of expectant anticipation, of anticipatory joy. It is also a season of repentant preparation for a future that is yet to come.

May you find comfort and joy this Advent and Christmas.
Blessings,
Eric

Faith and Finance

"Most people live their lives by an eight day week. They have Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Someday. Many people plan to do noble things – like adequately support the church – on the Someday. Good stewards know the truth. The fact is the Someday is not a day in the week, and Someday never comes."

[Stewardship, October 2005]



First Fruits – 2019 Stewardship Campaign

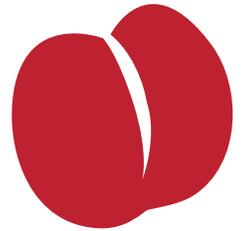
What if our financial life is a spiritual matter? What if we viewed regular giving in the form of a financial pledge as a spiritual discipline? What if our giving is an important way to put God first in our lives? We believe a financial pledge to the church is a means of spiritual growth.

Join us in this season of gratitude by making your 2019 Stewardship Pledge this month. Read the materials, have a conversation about what God has made possible in your lives, and make a commitment to give of your First Fruits this year. You can submit a pledge card via mail or pledge and/or pay online by going to www.godsacre.org/give.

If you have questions or would like to speak with someone about this year's stewardship campaign, please don't hesitate to contact Peg Davidson at peghome@optonline.net or (203) 249-1070 or Laura Doscher at lauradepersis@gmail.com or (203) 273-3465.

Year-End Giving

And don't forget to think about the church as you consider your year-end giving! These additional gifts help to make care, support and transformative experiences possible for our congregation and beyond!



The Joy of Flowers

Christmas comes alive each year in the Meeting House with a beautiful floral display organized by the Flower Ministry Team. The congregation is invited to make contributions to create a living tribute to our love of the season, our families, and friends. Contributions and bulletin listings should be sent to Debbie Chapman in the church office by end of day on Tuesday, December 11. The flowers will be on display beginning on the third Sunday of Advent, December 16.



Christmas Flower Delivery

Deacons and members of the Pastoral Ministry Team deliver the flowers on Christmas Day or the day after. Extra help is needed to make all the deliveries, if you can help please contact Debbie Chapman, debbie@godsacre.org, by Tuesday, December 18. Debbie will have the list of recipients and it's possible that someone may live very close to you!

Stay Tuned

Planning for the End of Life, Part II: Program for Procrastinators

Those of you who participated in Part I may not yet have filled out your Arrangements at Time of Death for the church. We will help you do that! Part II will be held on Sunday, January 27 from 11:30am-1:30pm in the Chapel. For information, please contact Debbie at the church office, Debbie@godsacre.org.

Youth Ministries Update

The season of Advent give us time to pause and reflect on the life Christ intends for us to live; a life serving our fellow brothers and sisters. Join us for various service projects and Christmas Worship services this month!



Salvation Army Bell Ringing

Guppies, JYG, and MSYG are taking turns bell ringing for the Salvation Army outside of Dunkin Donuts this month. Our fish will be ringing and singing this month to raise money that will help defray heat costs for neighbors this winter. If you see them in town say hello and support their mission!



YG Teambuilding



The Covenant Event for YG this month is Teambuilding on December 2, from 1:00-3:30pm! Every YG fish who is planning on traveling on the Mission Trip this year is expected to attend. Make sure you come for this great opportunity to work on your problem solving skills with your team. Pick up and drop off will be at the New Canaan Country School, 635 Frogtown Road.

Christmas Worship

The last event before Christmas break for all of Youth Ministries is a Christmas worship service. Each group will celebrate in its own special way as together we walk through Advent towards the birth of Christ.

Church School this December

You're invited to Jesus' Birthday Party!

Please join Children & Family Ministries on Sunday, December 16th as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas... the birth of Jesus! Join us for cake, punch, & fun!

What's Happening in Church School

- December 2nd- Intro to Advent
- December 9th- Angel's Visit
- December 16th- Jesus is Born! Jesus Birthday Party!
- December 23- No Church School
- December 31- No Church School

Church School will resume January 6th!



Christmas Eve Services

Monday, December 24

Family Service with Nativity Pageant - 4:00pm

Experience the joy of Christ's birth through a procession of light and pageant provided by our children's choirs in this service designed especially for families.

Worship Service - 6:00pm & 7:00pm

Celebrate Christ's birth at these 30-minute services featuring Christmas scripture and classic hymns.

Caroling - 6:30pm

Join your family, friends, and neighbors for caroling on God's Acre with the New Canaan Town Band.

Candlelight Service - 11:00pm

A contemplative, candlelight service with scripture, sermon, music, and a procession of light. Communion will be served.

Our Church Community

Ministers

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Chapin Garner, x1
Senior Minister

The Rev. Eric M. Dupee, x2
Minister of Christian Formation

Staff

Laurel Carr, x833
Program Manager

Debbie Chapman, x831
Pastoral Care Coordinator

Dr. Jo Deen Blaine Davis, x4
Director of Music Ministries

Morgan Flagg, x834
Youth Director

Mya Gill, x821
Director of Children's Music and Drama

Anthony Jones
Sexton

Marianna Kilbride, x832
Director of Missions & Outreach

Caroline Leather, x835
Director of Children's Formation

Kelly Leather, x824
Senior Youth Director

Marie-Ange Masters, x823
Director of Accounting

Kelly Morrissey, x822
Chief Administrative Officer

Beth Picard, x839
Administrative Assistant

Debbie Raymond, x837
Christian Formation Coordinator

Avril Sweeny, x836
Director of Pastoral Care Ministries

Church Lay Leadership

Stephanie Douglas-Parkin
Chair, Board of Trustees

Mark Tedford
Chair, Board of Deacons

Doug Raymond
Chair, Nominating and Governance

Kathie Dinnie
Chair, Personnel

Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the January Newsletter, please submit by December 19th.

Email submissions to:
Laurel Carr
laurel@godsacre.org.

my connect 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 marie-ange@godsacre.org

 The Congregational Church
of New Canaan

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www.godsacre.org

We are a Stephen Minister Church