



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.

Dear Members and Friends,

Peace be with you! I intentionally chose those words to begin this message. Many Americans are not feeling particularly peaceful these days. Surveys indicate that the vast majority of the public feel worn-out by the volume of news they are exposed to regularly. In addition to the ordinary stressors of life, impeachment hearings and political wrangling in Washington have many of us on edge.

In the midst of all this, perhaps a good New Year's resolution would focus on self-care. That might include watching less news coverage, exercise, getting outdoors and embracing the cold air, and connecting with friends. It might be a helpful spiritual discipline to notice holy moments that break into our daily routines.

In her book *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, Kathleen Norris describes walking downtown on an unbearably cold winter day. She writes, "Walking with care, snow barely covering the patches of ice, I begin to recall a canticle or a psalm - I can't remember which - and my body keeps time:

Cold and chill, bless the Lord.
Dew and rain, bless the Lord.
Frost and chill, bless the Lord.
Ice and snow, bless the Lord.
Nights and days, bless the Lord.
Light and darkness, bless the Lord."

Norris then acknowledges that even though spring seems far off, it is coming. She writes, "Already there is dusk instead of darkness at five in the afternoon; already hope is stirring at the edges of the day."

Wherever you are in this New Year, I hope that something in the celebration of Christmas spoke to you a word of peace and hope. As the author of John's gospel indicated, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." May hope stir at the edges of your days in this New Year.

A prisoner of hope,
Eric

From the Pastor's Study



Children & Families Ministry



SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY



Let the fields
and all that
is in them
be full of joy.
Psalm 96:12

Our big brothers and sisters will be crashing Church School Chapel on Sunday, February 2nd for a special **Bible Bowl** service! Please bring a can or two of soup to contribute to our **SOUPER** collection for New Canaan Food Pantry!

Students Serve through Advent Season

On Sunday, December 15, our 4th-7th grade Church School classes participated in a service project preparing care packages for those

struggling to seek safe shelter at our nation's border. With love and compassion, our students prepared packages filled with toiletries, first aid kits, and a Spanish Bible to be distributed by a partnering church located in Pharr,

Texas. The kind souls at the Iglesia Misionera Christo Vive church in Pharr, Texas live out the true meaning of what a church community is as they meet weekly in a tire shop and connect with surrounding churches to best serve those in need. Their community is made up of immigrants from Ecuador,



Guatemala, & Mexico. Our students loved working together towards reaching their goal of 100 packages prepared. It is with grateful hearts that we pray these packages help those in need this Advent season!

Fellowship



Fellowship Chili Paddle Party

Friday, January 24, 7:00pm
Chili Contestants Needed!

Fellowship Chili Paddle Party

All are invited to the 9th Annual Fellowship Chili Paddle Party on Friday, January 24, at Waveny Lodge, from 7:00-10:00pm. Chili contestants are needed. If you would like to make chili, contact Laurel Carr, laurel@godsacre.org. Invitations will go out in early January so check your inbox!

Youth Ministry

Bringing our gifts to God in the New Year

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:10-11

Youth Ministries looks forward to all that is ahead in 2020, especially the opportunity to bring our gifts to God and God's church through fellowship and service of neighbor. Like the Magi, we too have gifts to bring to Christ. Through our time and our talents we have the opportunity to give back some of the gifts we have already received. The New Year offers many opportunities to serve our neighbors both near and far.

YG Commissioning Sunday – Gifts of Love from Our Congregation

YG will be partnering with Sierra Service Project this year in Sacramento, California. Our partners will be joining us for the weekend of January 10-12. Make sure you join us in church as our mission fish are commissioned at the 10:00am service Sunday, January 12. Come to worship with our young people and hear more about the trip, the incredible work, and faith building that will happen in Sacramento.

MSYG Winter Weekend – Gifts of Fellowship

MSYG will embark on their annual winter retreat January 3-5. This year we will be spending two nights at Camp Jewell in Colebrook, Connecticut, for a weekend of tubing, teambuilding, and crazy winter fun.

Youth Worship – Gifts of Gratitude

Worship is our opportunity to say thank you to God and be together as a beloved community. All youth groups – Minnows, Guppies, JYG, MSYG, and YG – will worship together on January 15. Family style dinner at 6:30pm in Smith Hall followed by worship from 7:00-8:00pm.

Mission Sponsor

Become a mission sponsor this year! We are sending 90 mission fish, advisors, and staff to Sacramento, California, and every donation helps make the trip possible. When you donate at any level and become a Mission Sponsor you will receive two letters from our YG Fish while on their trip and will be thanked and lifted up at our Mission Sponsor Brunch on Sunday, March 8.

To give, use this link and select "YG Mission Sponsors" - <https://godsacre.ccbchurch.com/goto/giving>



Music Ministry

Thank You to our Pianists and Singers

The Advent and Christmas seasons were especially beautiful because of the music. Thank you to all the singers who worked many hours to present lovely music for our services during the Advent and Christmas seasons. A special thank you goes to the pianists who provided music for the Advent Meditation services. Your talents, time, and devotion to the church are so admired and we are grateful. You inspire us when you lead in worship. Thank you for your gift of sacred music



Hans Tashjian in Recital

Hans Tashjian, bass, will perform his graduate recital at Yale's Sprague Hall in New Haven. The concert is Saturday, January 25, at 4:30pm and is a final requirement for the Master of Fine Arts degree. He has sung in opera companies across the country, which include Teatro Nuovo, American Opera Projects, Yale Opera, and Central City Opera. He has sung leading roles with Opera Delaware, Opera Southwest, Sarasota Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and the Caramoor Music Festival. Hans has appeared as a concert soloist with the Cathedral of St John the Divine, the Chelsea Symphony, the Canadian Chamber Orchestra of NYC, the New Jersey Conservatory, and the Pittsburgh Bach Choir. Hans is the Choir Scholar in the Chancel Choir.



Thank You to our Children's Choirs and Church School

What a special Advent and Christmas season it was! Thank you for your participation in the fantastic Nativity Pageant 2019 and Spirit Singers and Joyful Noise. The sacred messages you shared in your participation brought so much joy to our congregation. Thank you for your time and talents that made our team efforts so successful in praising God!



Join Our Annual and Fantastic... Children's Musical Spectacular!

For years the Congregational Church of New Canaan has produced a wonderful musical praising God and sharing in a spiritual message. Be a part of this long and wonderful tradition spanning generations and be a part of an awesome group that supports one another and works hard to share important stories. We want you and can't wait for your participation.

New Year's Resolution! Sing in a Choir or Ring Handbells in 2020

Start the New Year by participating in the Music Program at church.

- **Grace Notes (ages 2 & 3)**
resume Monday, January 6, 4:00–4:30pm
- **Cherubs (ages 4 - K)**
resume Monday, January 6, 4:30–5:00pm
- **Spirit Singers (grades 1-4)**
resume Wednesday, January 8, 4:00–5:00pm
- **Joyful Noise (girls grades 5-8)**
resumes Wednesday, January 8, 5:00–6:00pm
- **Chancel Choir (high school through adults)**
resumes Thursday, January 9, 7:30 – 9:00pm
- **Bell Boys (boys and fathers)**
resume Sunday, January 12, 11:15am-12:00pm

For more information, please contact Anush Avetisyan, anush@godsacre.org or (203)966-2651 x821 or Jody Blaine Davis, music@godsacre.org (203)966-2651 x827.

Flower Ministry

Flower Donations

The flowers that adorn our meeting house on Sunday mornings bring joy and beauty to our service but they can also honor loved ones and occasions in our lives. There are many reasons to donate flowers. In addition to remembering a loved one you can give flowers in celebration of:

Birthdays

Anniversaries

Weddings

Baptisms

To say "Congratulations" or "Thank You"



Floral arrangements are also a gift to those in our community who cannot physically be present in church. After each Sunday worship service, the flowers are delivered to the homebound or church members who need extra cheer.

The Flower Ministry team, along with the Pastoral Care team, invites you to make a contribution to cover the cost of an arrangement this year. Please consider a Sunday when you would like to thank God and honor a special person or moment with a gift of flowers. The suggested donation is \$75. Contact Marianne Perry, mperry@godsacre.org or (203)966-2651, x822 for more information.

Members of our Flower Ministry team create all of the arrangements.

If you have any questions please contact Juliet Howe, juliet@eehowe.com.

Missions and Outreach

Come with Us-OG Mission to Puerto Rico

In late September 2017, Hurricane Maria whipped through the U.S. island territory of Puerto Rico with tornado-level winds, drenching the island with intense flooding, crippling communications, and decimating countless homes. With the whole island affected, the relief and recovery efforts have been slow to start and will be needed on a massive scale. We have been looking for a way to help since Maria struck and have now located a partner doing extended work in one community in Dorado.



If you are looking for an opportunity to have a tangible impact on the lives of real people in need, come with us. Booking now through January 6, and thereafter based on availability of flights and housing. Questions or to signup: Marianna Kilbride at marianna@godsacre.org or (203)966-2651 x832

- **January 16 Pacific House Dinner Service, 4:30pm**
- **January 25 Noble House Work Day, 9:00am**
- **January 28 Open Door Lunch Service, 11:30am**

Adult Education

Adult Education in 2020!

The New Year is an excellent time to jump into Bible Study! Each class is always open to new members. Please contact Eric, eric@godsacre.org, if you have questions regarding any of our adult education opportunities.



Sunday Beginners Bible Study:
9:00-9:50am in the Parlor led by Eric
Jesus Top 40 Bible stories beginning January 12

Monday Morning Bible Study:
6:30-7:30am in the Library led by William Picard and Marianna Kilbride
Luke's Gospel beginning January 13

Tuesday Women's Bible Study:
9:30-10:30am in the Parlor led by Marianna Kilbride
Luke's Gospel beginning January 14

Wednesday Bible Study:
9:30-11:00am in the Parlor led by Chapin
Jesus Top 40 beginning January 15



Our Church Community

Ministers

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

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

Staff

Kelly Leather Antonson, x824
Senior Youth Director

Anush Avetisyan, x821
Director of Children's Music and Drama

Erik Burns, x834
Youth Director

Claire Carbonier, x839
Youth Program Coordinator

Laurel Carr, x833
Program Manager

Dr. Jo Deen Blaine Davis, x827
Director of Music Ministries

Anthony Jones
Sexton

Marianna Kilbride, x832
Director of Missions & Outreach

Caroline Leather, x835
Director of Children's Formation

Marie-Ange Masters, x823
Director of Accounting

Marianne Perry, x822
Pastoral Care Coordinator

Debbie Raymond, x826
Christian Formation Coordinator

Church Lay Leadership

Stephanie Douglas-Parkin
Chair, Board of Trustees

Jill Robey
Chair, Board of Deacons

Janis Hennessy
Chair, Nominating and Governance

Jeff Altman
Chair, Personnel



The Congregational Church
of New Canaan

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New Canaan, CT 06840
(203) 966-2651
www.godsacre.org

We are a Stephen Minister Church

Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the February Newsletter, please submit by January 15.

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 marie-ange@godsacre.org