



Dear Church Family,

Advent is a time for our imaginations to be freed and for our faith to grow. It is a season for wild dreams and daring possibilities. It is a time of year when scripture encourages us to believe in the impossible goodness of God and God's ability to transform the very nature of the world for the better as written by the Prophet Isaiah: "The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

From the Pastor's Study

After Easter this year, the church staff and leadership made a commitment that has produced remarkable results in our life together. While we did our best to salvage something of the sense of Easter, in the early days of this pandemic, losing so much of the Easter experience was especially challenging. Day by day, we had to confront life closing down and closing in upon us. After "losing Easter" and contemplating all the potential losses of additional aspects of our church life on the horizon, we decided to shift our focus. In late April, we chose to stop thinking and talking about all we couldn't do, and we began to focus exclusively on all we could do. It was a huge shift for us, don't obsess about what is not possible; pursue what is possible. This was the moment when programs and programming at church began to be a bit more dynamic. We began meeting for worship safely outdoors. Our Church School, Children's Music, and Youth Program joined together to form and offer an extremely popular hybrid program during weekdays. We started a Handbell Choir. We launched Daily Meds. We added a Wednesday Worship Service. We created Bedtime Bible Stories. We found creative ways for our section leaders to sing. We tented the front yard for the entire month of September. On and on it has gone. Instead of focusing on obstacles, we pursued opportunities.

By way of further example, one of those identified opportunities launches immediately after Thanksgiving. In a summer meeting with Lauren Carlson, a former youth group member and senior in college, the conversation turned to the extended break most college students would have after Thanksgiving and how many of them would likely remain in New Canaan until February.



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.

Continued on page seven



Mission and Outreach

Simply Advent

Join us in one or more of our simple and beloved outreach traditions of giving during Advent. Each year during Advent, we work with local partners to help ensure that children from low-income or homeless families receive gifts, that local families and individuals in need have a full day of food on Christmas, and that neighbors have heat and electricity in the winter. This year, to keep everyone safe, our partners have asked us to send donations rather than shopping for toys and groceries. Salvation Army Bells will ring as ever, and we've added the chance to help Pivot with meals. Need within our community has risen higher than ever this year due to the Covid crisis. We are grateful for your help in making the lives of those struggling financially better this Christmas.

Online Angels

Please use this link to our Stamford partner Inspirica's wish list on Amazon: https://smile.amazon.com/hz/charitylist/ls/LRP7F8CN-M9M6/ref=smi_ext_lnk_lcl_cl

You will need an Amazon account which you can sign up for at no cost. Gifts will be mailed directly to Inspirica. Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org.



Digital Doves for Person to Person

The requests for Dove Bags have increased substantially over the last year. To participate, please make a check out to *Person to Person* and include your email address in the memo.

Please mail your check to **Debbie Simpson, 171 Spring Water Lane, New Canaan, CT 06840**, or use the GIVE button on our website to contribute by December 4. The suggested donation is \$50.00. Person to Person will purchase the gift cards for families and deliver them to the agencies to hand out to their clients. Contact Debbie Simpson, dcdsimp@aol.com for more information.



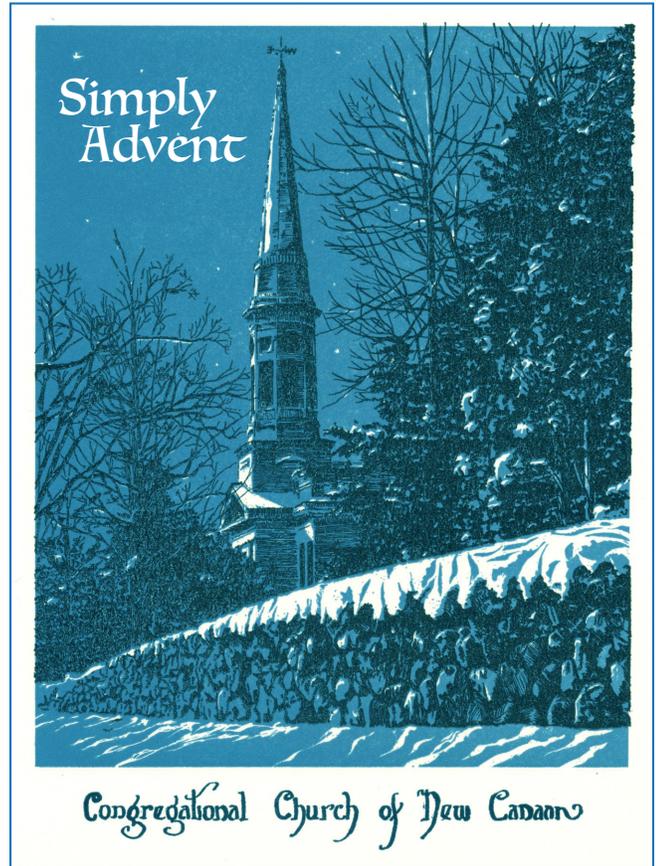
Salvation Army Bell Ringing

One thing hasn't changed! Walter Stewart's Market welcomes us to ring the bells as per usual. Families and/or bubbles can safely serve outside, masked (suitable for warmth!), and distanced while ringing the bells, spreading good cheer, and collecting for those with less. One hour shifts are available; please sign up here or contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org.



Pivot Ministries Holiday Meal Train

This holiday season, we have the opportunity to support our Pivot friends by providing meals for them. New Canaan cooks are a favorite of the men, and restaurant meals or contributions are also much appreciated as they continue to deal with fewer food donations due to the pandemic. To participate, go to: www.godsacre.org/advent2020.



Message from Deacons

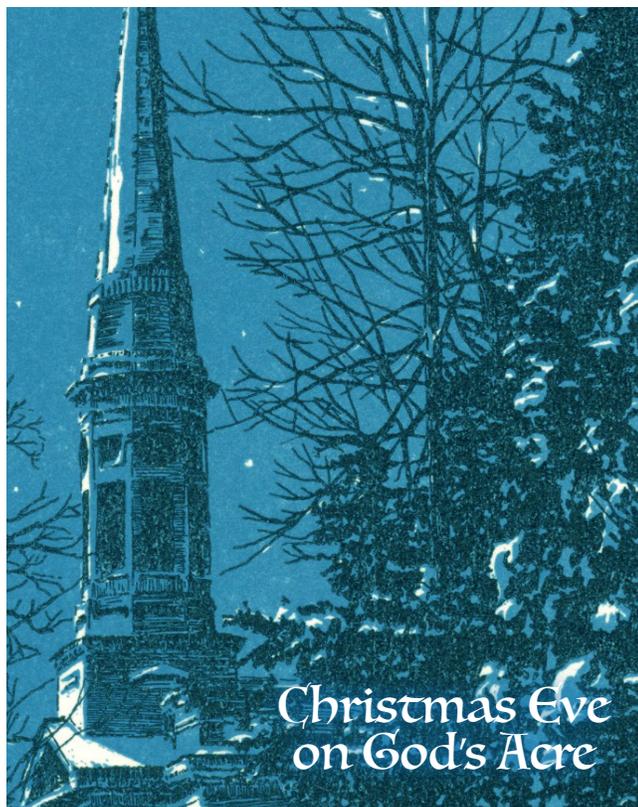
O Come, All Ye Faithful

2020 has been a year full of change and uncertainty. While we will undoubtedly miss out on many Christmas traditions this year, the Deacons have decided to try something new. We hope that you will join us under the 'Christmas-on-God's-Acre' tent this year. We will be celebrating outside, physically distanced and wearing masks just as we did this summer – subject, of course, to all state and local regulations. Dress warmly and wear comfortable shoes. While we will be unable to sing, we WILL be able to be in community with one another, listen to wonderful music, and celebrate the Christmas story under the stars.

- 4:00-4:30 pm – Family Worship
- 6:00-6:30 pm – Family Worship
- 7:00-7:30 pm – Family Worship
- 11:00-11:30 pm – Candlelight Worship

In addition to these services, the Children's Nativity Pageant will be safely recorded in advance and will be shown all evening in the youth tent.

Please invite your friends and neighbors. God's Acre is a large and friendly place that may be the source of hope and light that we need in 2021.



2021 Stewardship Campaign

Our Pilgrim Journey

On November 22, we kicked-off our 2021 Stewardship Campaign. As we begin this new season preparing for our future together, we ask all our church family members and friends to consider giving generously this Stewardship season. As a way of honoring our Pilgrim past, as we all realize how we have come together to work through the challenges, pledging your support is an opportunity to strengthen our vital church community.

Focusing on how our Pilgrim forbearers met the challenges they were faced with, we embody their strength with these virtues:

Hope for a better and more blessed future we believe the Lord is calling us into.

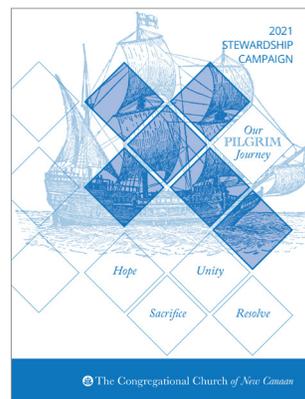
Unity that brings diverse people together for the common good and the glory of God.

Sacrifice that is undertaken trusting that the Lord will indeed continue to provide in this life and the next.

Resolve that motivates us to pursue missions and causes that are greater than ourselves and healing for God's world.

These are the faith commitments that have upheld and inspired Christians for generations, and they are the commitments that will allow faith to thrive and flourish on God's Acre for generations to come.

We hope we can count on your support. Please return your pledge card to the church by mail or pledge online at godsacre.org. We hope we will receive your pledge commitment by the end of this year or no later than Epiphany Sunday, January 10.



*We do covenant with the Lord and with one another, and do bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in all His ways, according as He is pleased to reveal Himself unto us in His blessed word of Truth.
Amen*

Women's Fellowship & Junior Deacons

Deck the Tents for Christmas Eve

Save the Date:

Thursday, December 17

Unusual times produce remarkable adaptations. Instead of mourning the cancellation of our traditional Women's Fellowship Christmas Tea, the Fellowship Team & our Junior Deacons had the bright idea to join forces and Deck the Tents for Christmas Eve!



We invite all the women of the church to join us on Thursday, December 17, from 2:00-4:00pm (rain date: Friday, December 18) to decorate the tents for our Christmas Eve Outdoor Worship Services. This outdoor venue will allow us a socially distant opportunity to gather and safely celebrate the season. We will string lights, hang roping, and prepare for the light of the world to shine upon us. Wear your masks and warm gloves to help prepare your heart and your church for Christmas!

An invitation will come in early December to your inbox, but please contact Linda Williams, mrswilliams@worldcontact.com if you would like to join us or have any questions.

Flower Minsitry

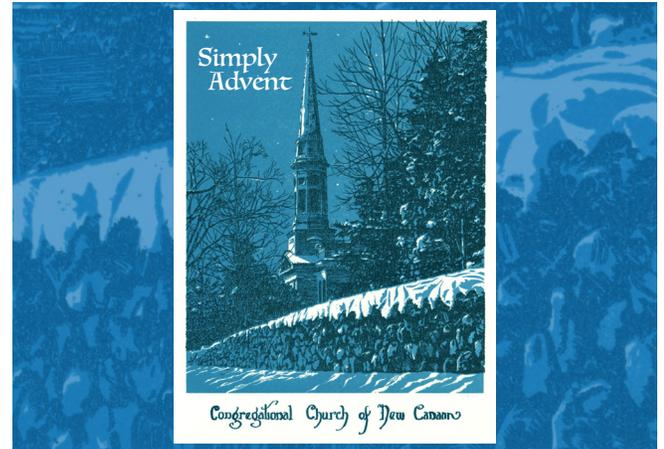
Christmas Flowers

Yes, the holidays will look a bit different this year but the outdoor magic we have planned is truly something to look forward to. Although we will not have our usual Christmas display, there will be lovely Christmas flowers at our Sunday services. The holidays are a wonderful time to remember loved ones or commemorate a special event.

Consider donating an arrangement to a December Worship Service or to our outdoor Christmas Eve display. Contact Marianne Perry, mperry@godsacre.org or 203-966-2651 x822 to donate.



Adult Formation



Simply Advent Offerings

If we peel back the glitter and gloss of modern Christmas, we find simple people very much like ourselves trying to make sense of their lives and their God. Join us in a time that forces us to be simple to hear the stories once more in a number of venues.

The Christmas Story, His and Hers

Did you know the Christmas story is a mashup? Read Joseph's story in Matthew, Session 1, and Mary's story in Luke, Session 2. Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org for a Zoom invite.

Mondays, 12/7&14, 7:00-8:00am with William Picard and Marianna Kilbride.

Tuesdays Women's Bible Study, 9:30-10:30am with Marianna Kilbride

INCARNATION:

Fleshing Out the Bible's Christmas Stories

Join the Rev. Dr. Allen Hilton for this free, online Yale Bible Study this Advent exploring how the Gospels approach the nativity story. This four-session Zoom study is on Mondays at 8:00pm EST.

November 30

According to Matthew: Joseph's Dilemma, Magi's Gifts, and Herod's Inhumanity

December 7

According to Luke: Small Child in a Big World

December 14

According to John: Word Made Flesh

December 21

Love Came Down – The YBS Christmas Episode

Wednesday Night Bible Study, 7:00pm-8:00pm

We will be listening to the Monday Yale Bible study and then spend our time together unpacking the study and applying it to our walk through Advent.

Children & Youth Ministries

Fish Happenings!

YG Team Reveal – Sorting Hat Style!

One of our YG community's many cherished traditions happens to be the foundation for building a diversified community for our youth to thrive within. Every fall, we take our larger youth group and divide our fish into smaller "teams." The purpose of teams within YG is to create small group settings where youth from all grades and varied interests can build strong relationships throughout the year. The goal is for these teams to provide a peer support system to help them navigate the school year and enable students to meet peers who otherwise would not due to different high school experiences. Our teams seek to create an environment for our fish to step outside their comfort zone and get to know their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who they may have otherwise not had the opportunity to do so. Each team has a young adult advisor to help guide the youth throughout the YG year. Once established these teams operate as family units for the year!



On Sunday, November 1st, we launched into team life with a Harry Potter inspired event. Our fish gathered at a distance in our meeting house to hear their name called from our "sorting hat." From there they left the meeting house and were met in the hallway to be sent to their final destination where their team would gather for the first time. Our teams were formed, one by one, and we are thrilled to enter this time in our program year!

That same night our youth went to work and together named their team. For as long as we can remember now, our team names started with the letter A and went alphabetically from there. Since it is 2020 we opted to continue with the general feel of "anything goes" and switched things up. We began our naming with the letter K this year. Our 2020 YG Teams are:

Krispy Kreme
Linguine
Marty

Nesquick Bunny
Oompa Loompa
Pink Panthers



Thankful Hearts

November launches us into a season of gratitude and giving. Our youth took time to pause and give thanks to God for the blessings in their lives and serve others!

In a time of great uncertainty in our ever-changing world, one thing that continues to remain the same is our youth's desire to serve. Last month our church' youth, from our youngest kindergarteners to our veteran YG seniors, assisted in preparing 90 Thanksgiving dinner bags for nonprofits throughout Fairfield county. Our K-6th grade youth groups decorated delivery bags with grateful hearts and sparked creativity that displayed hand-drawn turkeys, words of scripture, and lots of love.



Then it was our 7th & 8th graders' turn to do their part! Working at a rapid speed, they filled 90 bags with the dressings of a delicious Thanksgiving dinner, including some youth favorites: corn, potatoes, and stuffing! On Sunday, November 22, although the church felt much different than our usual busy, buzzing service day, it was wonderful to welcome packed family cars filled with our YG families eager to deliver our final product. This moment offered families time to spend with one another, serving as a family unit this holiday season. We are so grateful for the generosity, dedication, and support that was offered by our entire congregation in making this event a success! 90 families will enjoy the blessing of a Thanksgiving celebration, thanks to you!



Children's Music Ministry

Virtual Nativity Pageant

Thursday, December 24

Beginning after our 4:00pm Christmas Eve service, join us as we preview our Virtual Nativity Pageant. It will run all evening in the Youth Tent featuring the talented children of God's Acre!

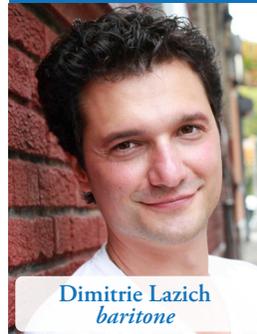
If you would still like to participate, please contact Anush Avetisyan, anush@godsacre.org



Music Ministries

Wednesday Worship Services

You are invited to Wednesday Worship services at noon in the Meeting House. These 30-minute services will feature scripture, a brief sermon, and prayers given by The Rev. Dr. Stephen Chapin Garner or The Rev. Kibbie Laird. Also, a section leader from the Chancel Choir will be featured each week. Thank you for making a reservation, wearing a mask, and keeping socially distant.

DECEMBER 2	DECEMBER 9	DECEMBER 16	DECEMBER 23	DECEMBER 30
 <p>Anne Maguire <i>mezzo soprano</i></p>	 <p>Jenny D'Alba <i>soprano</i></p>	 <p>Dimitrie Lazich <i>baritone</i></p>	 <p>Antonio Abate <i>tenor</i></p>	 <p>Anush Avetisyan, <i>soprano</i> Matthew Cossack, <i>baritone</i></p>

Thursday, December 24

4:00, 6:00, 7:00pm

Identical Services

A brass quintet will herald you to the tents with festive music

Anush Avetisyan, Anne Maguire, Antonio Abate, and Matthew Cossack will sing traditional Christmas music.

11:00pm

A Modified Lessons and Carols by Candlelight
String & Brass Quartet prelude begins at 10:45pm

Anush Avetisyan, Anne Maguire, Antonio Abate, and Matthew Cossack will sing traditional Christmas music.



Raymond Fellow Meditations

Each Wednesday during Advent, our Raymond Fellows, or a member of our staff, will share a brief message on the weekly theme - *Hope, Peace, Joy & Love*. Look for these reflections and keep in the spirit of preparing for our Lord.

 <p>JaQuan Beachem</p>	 <p>Zac Carroll</p>	 <p>Natalie Owens-Pike</p>
--	--	---

Pastoral Care

Stephen Ministry Training Beginning in 2021 Ever Thought About Becoming a Stephen Minister?

The Congregational Church of New Canaan will be training another class of Stephen Ministers in early 2021 through 50 hours of extensive training on Zoom. Stephen Ministers work alongside our pastors to care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support to people going through a difficult time, such as divorce, grief, hospitalization, unemployment, terminal illness,



relocation, chronic illness, or loneliness. If you have gifts for caring, encouragement, and listening, please begin to prayerfully consider whether you might want to be part of this exciting ministry. If

you think you might be interested, talk with one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders: Beth Baker, Rev. Kibbie Laird, Rev. Chapin Garner, or Marianne Perry.

Welcoming Team

Welcome New Members!

This fall, we were overjoyed to welcome 14 new families into our Gods Acre community. We hope you will join us in embracing them into our family of faith.

Bill & Alice Burnham
White Oak Shade Road

Josh & Alexandra Stinchcomb
Oenoke Ridge Road
Lily & Charlotte

David & Martha Burnham
Weed Street

Peter & Re Telep
Russet Road
Stamford, CT

Zak & EmmaRae Carroll
Winchester Avenue
New Haven, CT

Jim & Anne Wagner
Elm Place
Maeson, Tema & Chandler

Starling & Lesley Cousley
Ash Tree Lane
Boyd & Adele

Bethany Zaro
Saint John's Place

TJ & Kimberly Jetnil
Woodland Road
Lucas & Lily

Tom & Juli Johnson
Thurton Drive
Kelsey, Jack & Beau

Lynne Krasnauskas
Locust Avenue

Todd & Bonny Plosker
Kelley Green
Natalie & Samantha

Bob & Susan Schroeder
Maltbie Avenue
Stamford, CT

Rich & Elizabeth Sharp
Old Norwalk Road
Lily & Amelia

From the Pastor's Study

Continued from page one

One of the things Lauren said was that she was going to miss participating in her collegiate Christian fellowship at school. Opportunity! We stumbled on the idea of creating a Collegiate Christian Fellowship on God's Acre during the break. We contacted a handful of former YGers, and Lauren drafted a study plan for the winter. I do not know how this will go or where it will lead, but we have over two dozen college students who plan to gather on God's Acre this winter to talk about matters of faith and pray together.

We have found that it is really amazing what can happen, by God's grace, when we stop obsessing about obstacles and start focusing on opportunities. It is a simple but profound shift in thinking that can lead to unexpected and tremendous blessing. I have realized this isn't merely a "pandemic approach" either, but it can be a "daily discipline." We stop talking about all the things we can't do, and we focus on what can be done. If we cultivate this mindset in our relationships, in our homes, in our places of work, in our church, even the most difficult of times and circumstances can be wildly generative and dynamic. And who knows, if that kind of mindset becomes habitual, then perhaps the very nature and character of creation can change so that wolves and lambs peacefully cohabitate, and lions and leopards and livestock can befriend each other. Even children find a voice and a vocation of leadership.

It all can begin with a simple and sacred commitment this Advent. Don't obsess about what is not possible; pursue what is!

Yours in Christ,
Chapin



Our Church Community

Ministers

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

The Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird, x831
Associate Minister of Children, Youth,
and Families

Staff

Kelly Leather Antonson, x824
Senior Youth Director

Anush Avetisyan, x821
Director of Children's Music & Drama/
Video Production Technician

Erik Burns, x834
Youth Director

Laurel Carr, x833
Program Manager

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

Anthony Jones
Sexton

Marianna Kilbride, x832
Director of Operations

Caroline Leather, x835
Director of Children's Formation

Marie-Ange Masters, x823
Director of Accounting

Marianne Perry, x822
Director of Operations

Church Lay Leadership

David Carlson
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

23 Park Street
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 January newsletter, please submit by January 18. 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