



Garden City Community Church Connections April 2026

Building a community where all are enriched
through Christian Love, Service, and Spiritual Renewal.

A Message from our Council of Trustees (COT) Chair

“He is not here; He has risen!” Luke 24:6

Easter reminds us that darkness and grief can turn to joy and light. The disciples had to trust Jesus through his death and resurrection. Similarly, your trust in our church’s leadership and Search Committee has allowed us to leave behind the wilderness and enter into a new beginning under the spiritual guidance of our new Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Maria Francesca French in June. We are excited to partner with her to grow together in faith, serve together in community and share together in fellowship. Let us remember this Easter season to spread the good news of Jesus’ resurrection and teachings to bring light to those in darkness.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

Look for opportunities through the church and within your communities to continue Jesus’ teachings. Keep your eyes out for messages about serving within the GCCC: helping in the Giving Garden, collecting or transporting food donations, teaching Sunday School, helping with VBS, etc. A strong church worships together, serves together and supports each other. Alleluia!!

Faithfully,

Karin Melkonian
COT Chair





Dear Garden City Community Church,

Thank you for giving me such a beautiful candidating weekend. You welcomed me with open arms yet did your due diligence to get to know me and my background to make sure we would be a good fit for each other. On Sunday I preached a message that I carefully and prayerfully prepared just for you and this important and sacred time. I wrote it with love and with great hope for our future together. When you invited me back in after your vote I couldn't believe the reception you gifted me. And the news of a unanimous vote! Well, how could I not feel anything but a radical welcome!

I am deeply looking forward to beginning our life together. There is much I will need to learn from all of you. I hope you will be patient with me as I navigate your story and history and join you in writing its next chapter. There is so much to look forward to and I can't wait to get started.

Thank you again for the love, for the welcome, and for trusting me with the honored and cherished call of GCCC senior minister.

Yours,

Rev. Dr. Maria Francesca French

GET TO KNOW

Your New Senior Minister Candidate

Rev Dr
Maria
Francesca French

A Few Things To Know About Maria:

- Ordained minister, author, speaker, consultant, and educator.
- Passionate about mission and outreach; committed to building inclusive communities where all feel welcome and empowered to serve.
- Loves high holy days and liturgical seasons, investing deeply in how communities experience these pivotal moments in faith.
- Excited to partner with ministry teams to listen, learn, and co-create vibrant, meaningful programming and worship experiences.

Personal Life:

- Extroverted, people-oriented, and driven by curiosity and compassion.
- Loves to travel; living in the South of France for a year and a half remains a favorite life experience, and she spent the first four years of her marriage in the UK with her husband, Simon.
- Passionate about New York City and international adventures.
- Maintains lifelong friendships across the US and the world.
- Expresses herself through style and fashion.
- Devoted to family, friends, and her miniature dachshund, Randy.

On Ministry & Joy:

- Loves preaching, teaching, and engaging with congregations.
- Experienced with youth and intergenerational ministries, consistently impressed by their intellectual and spiritual depth.
- Committed to serving those who have fallen through the cracks of traditional church experiences.
- Believes ministry should never be boring.
- Approaches leadership with transparency, authenticity, and collaboration.

Core Passions:



Connection:

Connecting people with God and one another in meaningful, transformative ways.



Development:

Developing programs that combine service, reflection, and community engagement.



Nurture:

Nurturing lay leaders and volunteers to grow in faith and confidence.



Explore:

Exploring theology to meet the evolving needs of contemporary seekers.



Celebrate:

Celebrating the joy of shared life and worship in both local and global contexts.

Education:



Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Studies (2005)



Master of Arts in Christian Thought (2017)



Master of Arts in Religion and Theology (2017)



Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) (2022)

Publications:



Before You Lose Your Mind: Deconstructing Bad Theology in the Church (Quoir, 2021)



The European Reception of John D. Caputo's Thought: Radicalizing Theology (SUNY Press, 2022)



Safer Than the Known Way: A Post-Christian Journey (Quoir, 2023)



Reconfiguring: A Collection of Post Christian Thoughts and Theologies (Quoir, 2023)



Who is Jesus to You? (Quoir, 2024)



Chapter contribution



Sole author



Garden City
Community
Church





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Worship Schedule

Sundays

10:30 AM

Livestream & In-person

Tuesdays

Intercessory

Prayer Service

9:30 AM In-person

Pulpit Supply for April

Maundy Thursday April 2—7:00 pm - Rev. Bonnie McDougall Olson

Easter Sunrise Service—6:30 am—church lawn

Easter Sunday April 5th—10:30 am Rev. Noel Vanek (prelude starts 15 min. earlier than service)

April 12th — 10:30 am Rev. Bonnie McDougall Olson

April 19th — 10:30 am Rev. Bonnie McDougall Olson

April 26th—10:30 am Rev. Rayford Howell



Emergent Pastoral Needs after August 24th

In the event of a Pastoral Emergency please contact the Church Office for Assistance – 516-746-1700.

PLEASE
PRAY

Men's Breakfast

All men of the church and their visitors are welcome; it is an opportunity to enjoy relaxed fellowship and conversation over a shared meal.

Next meetings are on April 4th and May 2nd at 8:00 am: Carle Place Diner 151 Old Country Road in Carle Place. Reservations are not needed.



Food Pantry Bi-weekly Food Collections

New Pantry

The LICC Emergency Food Pantry will be permanently closing their doors on April 15th.

The LICC Board has voted to close the pantry due to financial struggles meeting their operating expenses.

Rev. Deacon Anthony wants to thank us for our continued support throughout the years.

**We are now planning to take our food donations to:
the New LIFE Center-Long Island - Franklin Square, NY.**

They are in need of the same non-perishable items that we gave to the LICC Emergency Food Pantry. See the flyer in this newsletter for needed items.

Our next scheduled donation drop-off dates are **April 1st, 15th and 29th** . Please drop your non-perishable food items on this dates before noon on the Whitehall Blvd. porch.

If you want to sign up to be a driver to deliver our donations, please sign up here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904084BACAD2EAA8-60986164-2026>



off



Maundy Thursday, April 2nd at 7:00 pm—Sanctuary

Good Friday, April 3rd at 12:00 pm—3:00 pm—Chapel open for prayers & Meditation

Easter Sunrise Service, April 5th at 6:30 am—Church lawn

Easter Sunday, April 5th at 10:30 am—Sanctuary (prelude starts s15 min. earlier than service)

Easter Egg Hunt, April 5th at 11:30 am—Playscape

Tuesday Prayer Service

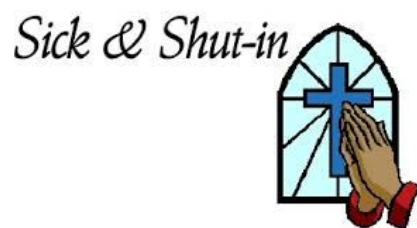
The Prayer Service welcomes anyone who wishes to join us. We are meeting in the chapel Tuesday mornings at 9:30 am. Please email the office if you have a prayer request. **All requests are kept confidential.**



Members at Home List

If you or a loved one would like to be included on our 'Members at Home' list or if you have moved to a residential facility, please make the church office aware by emailing us at:

churchoffice@thegccc.org or calling us at (516) 746-1700 prompt 2. We want to make sure we can reach out to you! Do you know a church member that we should add to this list? If so, please let us know.



ON-LINE GIVING UPDATE

Garden City Community Church is partnered with Breeze Church Management Systems to support our *On-line Giving Initiative*.

If you would like to set up “Recurring Contributions” or make a “Onetime Contribution” to support our many Ministries, please click on the link below. Our online giving platform allows us to align our congregational giving with our member data base, resulting in greater efficiency and clarity for Church Members.

<https://gcc.breezechms.com/login/create>

Giving can also be accessed through GCCC website via the “GIVE” button

<https://gardencitycommunitychurch.org>

We appreciate your support in our efforts. If you have any questions or concerns, please call Liz in the office (516)746-1700.

Online
Giving



Sunday Forums

April 12th Forum: All are invited to the Sunday Forum on April 12th at 11:45 a.m. after the 10:30 am worship service. Jim Burdi will be presenting a forum on planned charitable giving. He will discuss techniques for lifetime giving and estate planning, including the use of trusts, that can increase the value of your gift, as well as benefit you and your family.

April 26th Forum: Mary Dewar will be speaking about her book, Behind the Red Curtain at our Sunday Forum on April 26th at 11:45 am. The book is in her own words and written by her niece Vicki Panhuse.

On Forum days - Fellowship hour will start in the Parlor at 11:30 am. The forum will start at 11:45 am. If people want to continue with the fellowship hour they can move to the Kensington Room. The fellowship items will remain in the Parlor.



Weekly Intercessory Prayer Service

Beloved of Christ, do you long for a more intimate, meaningful relationship with God? Do you feel called to pray on behalf of others and for your own needs? Do you wish to feel more centered, at peace, and joy-filled? Do you desire to be in continual conversation with God and experience Jesus in others? If so, consider spending one hour a week with us on Tuesdays at 9:30am in the chapel. I guarantee that it will be time well spent, as you realize the charge of something greater than yourself.

Initially, as we gather for communal prayer, we heed the directive of St. James:

“...pray for one another that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.” (St. James 13:16)

We lift-up the hundreds of petitions entrusted to our care annually. Prayer requests can be made by completing the cards found in the pew racks and placing them in the offering plate, by speaking to one of the ministers, or by notifying the office. All requests are kept strictly confidential.

Next, we reflect upon the weekly lectionary Scripture reading or some other inspirational message. The experience of Holy Spirit moving among us through our sharing is palpable. Lastly, we enter into centering prayer and quiet meditation, followed by The Lord’s Prayer and a final communal blessing. Members have commented that they have observed spiritual growth over time as they have incorporated these practices into their daily routines. As we progress from petition to praise, we begin to internalize the words of St. Paul:

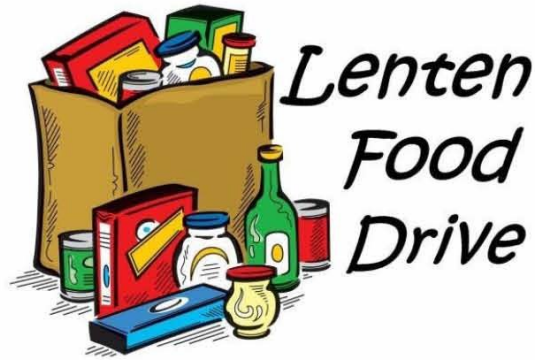
“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstance, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Come, join us in this most important ministry!

In Love, our Source

Kitt Von Braunsberg





Food insecurity is growing on Long Island. According to LI Cares there are 313,800 food insecure Long Islanders, including an estimated 71,500 children. That means 1 in 9 Long Island residents, and 1 in 6 children, face hunger every day.

Food pantries now try to give the recipients a choice in the food they receive. Imagine the anxiety a mother may experience if she goes to a food pantry to get food and half the items she is given cannot be eaten by her child due to a peanut allergy. When people are given a choice to select their food, they can feel less anxiety as they know they are picking food their families can and want to eat.

During Lent, we are asked to give up something or to help someone. We can do both by donating food during this Lenten Season. We are asking that each week during this Lenten season you donate non-perishable food items for the pantry if you are able.

Any donation is welcome and appreciated but during each week of Lent we have suggested items.

February 22nd - plastic bottles of nut butter (peanut butter, almond butter, etc.) and jelly

March 1st – any kind of pasta and pasta sauce, 1-2 pound bags/boxes of rice

March 8th – canned items (fruit, soup, vegetables), shelf stable milk

March 15th – toiletries (toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, deodorant, feminine products, razors, shampoo, conditioner)

March 22nd – canned meats/fish (chicken, spam, Vienna sausage, tuna, salmon)

March 29th – Palm Sunday – all sizes of diapers, baby supplies (wipes, lotions), formula, baby food

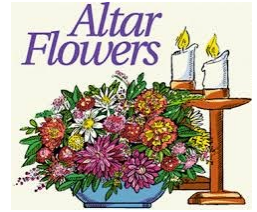
April 5th – Easter Sunday – dry cereal (cold), hot cereal (grits, oatmeal)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT. IT IS MUCH APPRECIATED.

Please leave your donated items in any of our food donation boxes located throughout the building on the first floor.

MINISTRY ACTIVITIES

Worship Altar Flower Donations



A \$50.00 dollar donation provides a gift of love! Use this link: <https://www.gardencitycommunitychurch.org/give> and go to the online giving 'quick give' and choose the dropdown line: 'Give to 2026 Flowers' - or - hand deliver or mail to The Garden City Community Church.

Sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904084BACAD2EAA8-60985577-2026>

Include the wording you wish us to include in the Order of Worship.

2026 Fellowship Hour Sign Up



Hosting Refreshment and Friendship after worship conversation

Perhaps hospitality and hosting are your passion. Schedule two ways: notebook in the Parlor or: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904084BACAD2EAA8-60985864-2026>

Questions? Call the office at (516) 746-1700 or email churchoffice@thegccc.org

Fund a Refreshment and Friendship conversation time:

<https://www.gardencitycommunitychurch.org/give> and go to the online giving 'quick give' and choose the dropdown line: 'Give to 2026 Fellowship'.

Worship Ushers or Liturgists Opportunity

Perhaps you would love to serve as an usher or liturgist on Sunday morning?

Please call the church office at (516) 746-1700 or email us at churchoffice@thegccc.org.

Here is the link to sign up to be a liturgist:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904084BACAD2EAA8-60985875-2026>





Donations for Americana Fair

We will be starting to accept items on **Tuesday, April 7th** for this year's Americana Fair. Please contact Gloria in the office for more info or to schedule a drop-off time at (516) 746-1700 option 2. The fair will be held on **Saturday, Nov. 7th from 10am-3pm.**



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE

HAVE YOU CHANGED ANY OF YOUR CORRESPONDENCE INFORMATION LATELY?

Moving or preparing to move?



Do you have a new address, a new phone number or a new e-mail address?

Do you want to receive our weekly e-blasts about all the activities going on in the church?

Are you getting the mailings from the church?

Please let the church office know if any of your information has changed so that we can stay in touch with you! We are updating our files and want to make sure we have the correct information.

GC Community Church Tech Team

We are looking for youth (and the otherwise young-at-heart) to contribute to bringing our weekly services, special services, and other content to our homebound and our away-from-home members. This is also our chance to reach out to those seeking a new church home. But we cannot do this alone, we need your help, or your children's help in making this happen. Absolutely no experience required, and while we will guide newcomers, we will also gladly take advice from the old sages.

Contact Steve Short, Tim Martens, or William Stone

Or Just join us some Sunday, in the balcony



Musical Ensembles September through June

Adult Choir – Open to H.S. students through adults. Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings from 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm. The choir sings from Welcome Day in September through Church School Sunday in June.



Youth/Church School Choir – Open to grades 3-5. Rehearses during Church School. Performs at the 10:30 am service before Church School dismissal.



Handbell Choir – Open to H.S. students through adults. Rehearsals are planned in modules before each performance. Performs 4 times a year.



Youth Band – Open to grades 8-12 and college students. Performs on special occasions.



For more information contact Frank Crosio, Minister of Music at music@thegccc.org

APRIL 2026

WITH SECURE, VIRTUAL COUNSELING SESSIONS
AVAILABLE FOR ANY NEW YORK RESIDENT
Prepared especially for LCC Congregations & Schools

“3 Sips of Water”

Cultivating Patience

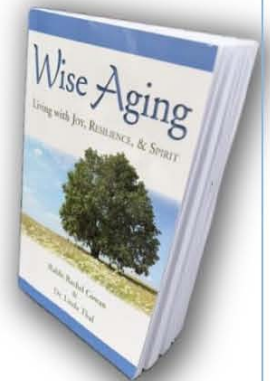
by Rev. Thomas S. Taylor, PhD., LCSWR

At times my wife complains that I cut her off mid-sentence – before she’s finished speaking. And she is right. The impact, inadvertently, is she feels her thoughts are minimized and undervalued and, by extension, so is she. Ouch!!!

My *impatience* is one factor in cutting off my wife and others. I’m too impatient to let her finish and to take in what she is saying. I am even too impatient to modify my response to reflect a 2-way exchange. My impatience prompts me to jump in and add my 2 cents... and maybe, even change the topic because it’s uncomfortable or unfamiliar.

Our patience is a quality that is needed and tested in most daily activities and interactions. The presence of or lack of determines the quality of our exchanges with loved ones and others. We have all witnessed people talking past each other, often causing unnecessary conflict. While watching we may say to ourselves, “if only you’d slow down and listen to each other and not interrupt.”

My wife and I are currently facilitating an 8-week retired clergy group “*Ministry Encore and Beyond – What’s Next for Me?*”. Each week the group takes up one of five spiritual qualities – gratitude, generosity, patience, joy, and equanimity – that promote well-being and aging well outlined by Rabbi Rachel Cowan & Dr. Linda Thal in their book, “*Wise Aging - Living with Joy, Resilience, and Spirit*”.



**Cultivating
patience makes
us “better friends
and partners”**

When our clergy group discussed the spiritual quality of “patience”, one member-described their coping mechanism for cultivating patience as “3 sips of water”. They explained “when I feel my impatience rising, I take 3 sips of water and hold them in my mouth. These 3 sips of water stop me from reacting too quickly. These 3 sips of water have saved me from getting into a lot of trouble.” You, no doubt, have your own “coping mechanism” to minimize being reactive – count to 10, take 3 deep breathes, walk around the block and more. These coping mechanisms interrupt our tendency to react by fighting, fleeing, or freezing.

As the authors of *Wise Aging* recognize, “When we give into anxiety or anger, we create our own turmoil and do nothing to help ourselves respond to the situation.”¹ The authors remind us when we add patience to our spiritual tool kit it, “helps us do the essential work of growing older with wisdom”, “gives us the time and mental space to see alternatives to what we cannot change, to find good” and gives us “the capacity to be more loving, more forgiving, and less afraid”. In short, patience makes us “better friends and partners”¹.

The Rev. Tom Taylor, PhD., LCSWR
Assistant Executive Director, LCC

¹P.191 & 197, Cowan, Rachel, and Thal, Linda, *Wise Aging - Living with Joy, Resilience, and Spirit*. (2015), Behrman House.
To learn more about [Dr. Tom Taylor, PhD., LCSWR](https://www.lccny.org/meetourcounselors) and all LCC’s Counselors, go to <https://www.lccny.org/meetourcounselors>.
Call the Lutheran Counseling Center at 516-741-0994 or 1-800-317-1173 or e-mail us at Center@lccny.org to set an appointment.

April



2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Food Donation drop off - noon Confirmation Class 6:45pm	Mourndy Thursday 2 Tenebrae Communion Service 7pm	Good Friday 3 Chapel open for meditation & prayers 12:00pm – 3:00pm	4 Men's Breakfast Carle Place Diner 8:00 am
Easter 5 Sunrise Service 6:30 am Sunday Service 10:30 am - (prelude 15 min earlier than start of service) Sunday School 10:30 am – NOT SCHEDULED Easter Egg Hunt 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:30 am	Easter Monday 6 Church office closed	7 Prayer Service 9:30 am Start dropping off items for Americana Fair	8 Adult Choir Rehearsal 7pm – NOT SCHEDULED	9 Adult Choir Rehearsal 7pm – NOT SCHEDULED	10	11
12 Sunday Service 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am – NOT SCHEDULED Fellowship Hour 11:30 am Sunday Forum 11:45 am High School Youth Group 6:00pm	13	14 Prayer Service 9:30 am	15 Food Donation drop off - noon Confirmation Class 6:45pm	16 Adult Choir Rehearsal 7pm – NOT SCHEDULED	17	18
19 Sunday Service/Sunday School 10:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:30 am Ministry Committee 12:00 pm	20	21 Prayer Service 9:30 am	22 Adult Choir Rehearsal 7pm	23	24	25
26 Sunday Service/Sunday School 10:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:30am Sunday Forum 11:45am Middle School Youth Group 6:00 pm	27	28 Prayer Service 9:30 am	29 Food Donation drop off - noon	30 Adult Choir Rehearsal 7pm		