

# “THE TALK OF TOWNLEY”

*Monthly Newsletter*

**AUGUST 2021**

## **AUGUST BIRTHDAYS**

3 Maryann Cove  
8 Cecelia Harrison  
30 Robert Harrison

### **PASTOR’S MESSAGE:**

*Guest commentary by Susan Presley*

In many parts of the United States, life is returning to some semblance of normalcy. The CDC changed their recommendations and explained that we have reached a threshold where only non-vaccinated people need to wear masks. People are gathering again. These are exciting times after the last year. A danger exists, though, when we try to rush people back into our church buildings.

On social media and elsewhere, pastors, more than any other leaders, seem to be firmly – and sometimes forcefully – encouraging parishioners to return to their buildings for worship. Church leaders who worshipped online for a year are suddenly delivering sentiments like these:

- “Watching online isn’t community – it’s convenient.”
- “Virtual church isn’t church.”
- “If you don’t meet together, you’re saying Jesus isn’t worth it.”

While I’m confident the ministers sharing these thoughts mean well and are trying to be encouraging, three problems with this type of sentiment come to mind.

First, it seems suspicious that for the past year churchgoers were encouraged to worship online, but now they’re being told it’s a bad idea. Did our worship during the pandemic not count? Wasn’t God glorified then? Weren’t those prayers real? If it was valid then, why wouldn’t it still be?

Second, some individuals have very legitimate reasons to stay home. In the church I pastor, a faithful church leader went into anaphylaxis with her first vaccination. She nearly died, but survived with the help of emergency workers and an ambulance trip to the hospital. When she reads messages like the above, they break her heart. It will take time before she (and others) can join us in person on Sunday, but she’s with us online. She sings and prays and passes the peace, and she’s not the only one in a compromised state.

Third, when pastors demand people come back into the building, they simply look desperate. To outsiders, it sounds much like, “Hurry up and get back here before I become irrelevant.” These sentiments that hint (or outright claim) that Christians are less devout for not yet coming into our buildings make us look like we’re simply searching for more people in our pews. Are we more interested in attendance numbers or in spreading the message of the gospel of Christ by any means?

Jesus ministered to people by going to where they were and by taking care of the most vulnerable. He didn’t demand they show up somewhere to hear him talk. I’ve searched and scoured and can not find a place in Scripture where Jesus told his followers to meet in a building. “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together” are the words of the Apostle Paul, and even he didn’t say it had to be in a brick-and-mortar structure. “Assembling together” can happen in a lot of ways.

## CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF LAURIE



The Parnau family asks you to join them in a Celebration of Life service for Laurie Parnau on Sunday, September 5<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon at Townley Presbyterian Church. Further details on visitation will follow at a later date.

## CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF JOSEPH



The Hastick and Jensen families ask you to join them in a Celebration of Life mass for Joseph H. Hastick on Saturday September 18<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon at St. Francis Catholic Church at 308 Jefferson Street, Hoboken, NJ. Further details on visitation will follow at a later date.

**SUNDAY ASSIGNMENTS FOR AUGUST:** Pastor Ron is asking those assigned for their assistance, if you are not considered high risk, as we resume our in-person worship services. **Please note changes in the July and August schedule.**

**Please arrive by 9:15.**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>*ELDER-IN-CHARGE</u>	<u>*LAY LEADER</u>
AUGUST 1	June Donohue	Lynn Bailey
AUGUST 8	Lois Tangowski	Irene Schoenwalder
AUGUST 15	Carol Gordon	Lisa Heims
AUGUST 22	Janet Sangekar	Diane Smith
AUGUST 29	Lisa Heims	Janet Sangekar
SEPT. 5	Linda Zehner	Cecelia Harrison
SEPT. 12	Carruthers Tumfour	Lisa Heims



\* If you are unable to be Elder-in-Charge or Lay Leader for your assigned Sunday, please switch with someone and inform Pastor Ron. If you switch a month or more in advance, please also contact Cecelia, so the Sunday assignments can be listed correctly in that upcoming month's newsletter.

**"TIME FOR PRAYER":** We are praying by teleconference on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 pm. All may call in to pray and/or make prayer requests: Dial-in using your phone: 1 605-562-8401. Access code: 367 0530

**MISSION:** June D. asks everyone to please remember the Connecticut Farms Food Pantry. While donations of non-perishable items can be accepted on Sunday mornings at 11:00am, you are encouraged to support this ministry with a monthly monetary donation of \$4.00— a dollar a week can bring food to an empty pantry. Please mail it to Townley Church for distribution.



**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** If you have any items that you would like to have included in September's (monthly) newsletter, please e-mail them to [CeceliaH@comcast.net](mailto:CeceliaH@comcast.net).

**SESSION MEETING:** Will be held on Wednesday, August 18, 2021.

**NATIONAL NIGHT OUT:** Will be held on Tuesday, August 3, 2021 – from 6:30 to 7:30pm. Come, bring a friend and let's meet and greet some of our neighbors. This year we are contracting an Ice Cream Truck to serve delicious, cold treats for those who gather. Donations will be accepted to offset the cost of the truck. Please see Diane, Carol, Janet and Pastor Ron for more information.



**RUMMAGE SALE:** Fall Rummage Sale will be Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. The set up will begin on Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup>. More details to follow. Please let Janet, Linda Z., or Glen Z. know if you are available to help.



**SAVE THE DATE** – For our Christmas Party on Friday, December 10, 2021 at 6:00pm. It will be held at: La Casa Di Martino, 301 West Clay Avenue, Roselle Park, NJ 07204. Reservations and cost of \$30.00 per person (cash preferred) are appreciated as soon as possible, but no later than November 28<sup>th</sup> to Lisa Heims or Kathy Kreie. The restaurant requires a minimum of 30, with a maximum of 50 people.



### **A NOTE FROM OUR TREASURER**

Your Session sincerely appreciates how you have continued to let giving complete your lives. **Your weekly offerings** are accepted Sundays in person or can be mailed to the church office. **Bill Pay and other online banking** options should also be considered. Online contributions may also be made through our church's website "**Give Now**" button:



Our church's Donation Page can also be reached using the **Quick Response (QR) Code** below. A QR Code is a two-dimensional, modular barcode that, when scanned by a smart phone (most phones use the camera to do this) will connect you to our Donation Page.



**TOWNLEY BOOK CLUB:** Our next book is ***The Midnight Library: A Novel by Matt Haig***. "An absorbing but comfortable read...a vision of limitless possibility, of new roads taken, of new lives lived, of a whole different world available to us somehow, somewhere, might be exactly what's wanted in these troubled and troubling times." —*The New York Times*. We will discuss it on **Monday, August 2, at 7:00 PM**. (Please note the change of time.) Weather permitting we will meet outside on the church lawn. Please bring a chair. Let's also bring snacks to share! Cecelia Harrison



**THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTHEAST NEW JERSEY:** A Called Meeting will be held on



Wednesday August 4, 2021, at 7:00pm via Zoom. The legal address of our new Presbytery is 340 West Passaic Street, 3rd Floor, Rochelle Park, New Jersey 07662. Sign up by Subscribing on website <https://pnenj.org/> to receive news and updates.

**"SOUNDS OF THE SEASON - A FREE HOLIDAY CONCERT":**



This coming December 3<sup>rd</sup>, a Saturday night, Townley Church will be sponsoring a free holiday concert for the community. The show will be three hours long, starting at 6:30PM to about 9:30PM featuring holiday music in multiple genres; from rock/blues/folk to jazz groups, with traditional solos, duets, instrumentals and even traditional organ. Professional musicians, groups, and even talented Townley folk will be performing renditions of holiday favorites, including some audience participation tunes. The show will be upstairs in the sanctuary, with Christmas decorations, special lighting in the chancel and decorations inside the church. A "free will" offering box or bowl will be in the Narthex for donations to a yet-to-be-named charity will be present for anyone attending the show to allow them to offer a gift.

This is a community outreach event, opening up Townley Church to the "outside community". As the next month rolls by, **every** member of Townley will be asked to participate in the planning, organization, and actual running of the event. Many have different skills in areas that are much needed, such as Promotion/publicity, Sanctuary Decorating, Setup/Teardown of the show, inside "Hosts" (Think ushers) and front door greeters for the attending public. Folks who are "friends of Townley" but not officially church members are also welcome to join us and help.

We need every church member to help with promoting the show *starting now* and through the fall until the show; by word-of-mouth, Facebook, online, newspaper and online media, posting flyers, etc., etc. (We're open to ideas!)

The core organizing team is made up of:

Pastor Ron Thompson, Cynthia Manno, Janet Sangekar, Bill Jensen, Lisa Heims, Lois Tangowski and Bruce Tangowski

We have already begun to tap some of you for specific areas where we feel you can help, but if there is a skill or area of interest that you have that you would like to help with, please contact one of us as soon as possible.

We envision a full sanctuary watching wonderful musical performances!

**REGARDING RULING ELDERS: A MONTHLY SERIES FOR SERVING FAITHFULLY**

***Leaders Speak by Rodger Nishioka – July 15, 2021***

Several years ago, I was privileged to serve on an interfaith panel in Washington, D.C., on the topic of why so few young adults were remaining in churches, mosques, and synagogues. The panel included an Episcopal bishop, an African Methodist Episcopal bishop, a Southern Baptist pastor, a Roman Catholic monsignor, two Jewish rabbis—one from the conservative tradition and one from the reform tradition, two Muslim imams, a Mormon leader, and me. I was more than a little intimidated.

The moderator skillfully led us through a series of questions. Some friends of mine were in the audience. During the first half of the conversation, I did not say a lot. At the break, one of my friends asked if I was okay. I assured them I was fine.

As I was making my way back to the stage, one of the imams greeted me. He said he had read my research about young adults and was glad to meet me. Then he asked me, "You are Christian, are you not?" I was a little startled and replied, "Yes, I am." He smiled and said, "Interesting. If you are Christian, then why do you not speak as a Christian?" I stumbled through some meager response, and then he said, "It is hard to have a conversation with someone who is not speaking. My brother, Allah has placed you here to speak. Speak like a Christian."

After the panel discussion was over, my friends told me that during the first half they were worried something was wrong with me because I spoke so little and did not contribute much. Then after the break, they said I was a totally different person. When they asked what happened, I told them that the word of the Lord came to me through a Muslim imam.

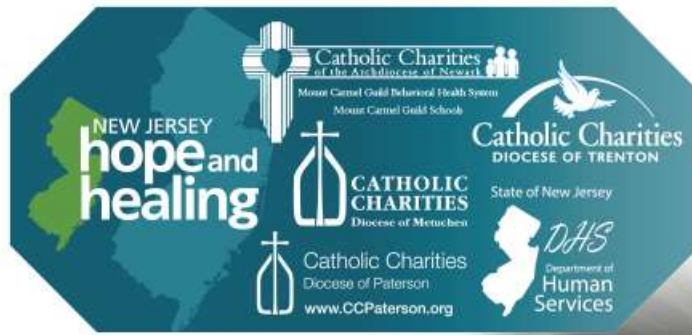
We are followers of Jesus Christ. And we are leaders in Christ's church. We have something to say. We have a testimony to give. I worry that we Presbyterians too often stay silent because we do not want to impose our faith on others, or we do not want to be identified with those people who yell their faith at others. So, we make the mistake of keeping silent. The problem then is that the only "Christian voices" others may hear are mean-spirited and judgmental. People are yearning to hear about the love and grace of God.

My sibling, God has placed you here to speak. Leaders speak.

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*Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka serves as the senior associate pastor and director of adult faith formation at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas. Prior to joining the staff at Village Church, he served as a professor of Christian education at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.*

*This article is the **seventh** in a 12-part series focusing on PC(USA) leader formation as a part of the Year of Leader Formation: Investing in Ruling Elders and Deacons. Additional resources are available at [www.pcusa.org/leader-formation/](http://www.pcusa.org/leader-formation/). Past issues of the articles are available in **Equip**, the church's online training site.*



## NEED HELP COPING WITH HARDSHIPS CAUSED BY COVID-19?

Unsure where to find  
resources to help you  
recover?

Crisis Counseling Services for those affected by the  
COVID-19 pandemic. If you or anyone you know needs  
to speak with someone, call:

**(732)204-6510**

**CONFIDENTIAL • FREE • ANONYMOUS**

This program is a Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) brought to you by NJ Hope and Healing, Catholic Charities Community Services in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Disaster and Terrorism Branch, through a FEMA/SAMHSA grant.

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