“THE TALK OF TOWNLEY”

Monthly Newsletter
AUGUST 2026

Proverbs 3:5-6
New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition
“ 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

2 – Francia Landrau
3 – Maryanne Cove
7 – Emanuel Nwosu
8 – Cecelia Harrison
30 –Robert Harrison

PASTOR’S MESSAGE:

PRESBYTERIAN PATRIOTISM: HONESTLY HONORING OUR HISTORY

In the wake of the PC(USA)'s condemnation of Christian nationalism, Matthew B. Warren explores how Presbyterians can love their country without confusing it with the kingdom of God.

By Matthew B. Warren
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During last week’s 250th anniversary celebration, as fireworks lit up the night sky on the Fourth of July, I felt conflicted. Given the rise of Christian nationalism — and its condemnation by the General Assembly just days earlier — how should I, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) minister, respond to this national milestone? Beneath the “rockets’ red glare,” I found myself asking: Can Presbyterians be patriotic? I believe the answer is yes. In fact, I believe Presbyterian patriotism offers a vital, prophetic witness against Christian nationalism. Disciplined by history and guided by our Reformed theological tradition, it allows us to commemorate the American Revolution without succumbing to either nationalistic flag-waving or blanket condemnation.

WHY PATRIOTISM IS A PRESSING QUESTION FOR PRESBYTERIANS

Can Presbyterians be patriotic? This question is especially timely. Just days before the nation’s semi quincentennial, the General Assembly voted down a commemoration of Presbyterians’ revolutionary involvement, fearing it “risks sanctifying a narrative that binds the Church’s witness to a national origin story” and fuels Christian nationalism. Yet the Committee on Reformed Identity in the United States also noted that its disapproval “in no way discourages people from taking pride in their Presbyterian heritage and its contributions to American civil society.” That leaves American Presbyterians with an important question: How should we relate to our nation’s history without slipping into Christian nationalism or American exceptionalism?

I approach that question as both a full-time AP United States History teacher and a part-time minister of a small rural congregation nestled between the historic battlefields of Monmouth, Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey. For both my congregants and my students, the Revolution literally happened in our backyards. This history matters to us; it is part of who we are. At the same time, I share the committee's concerns about nationalism. In my classroom, I strive to teach history honestly. My students wrestle with our nation's exclusions, failures and contradictions alongside its achievements. In this complexity, I point them to figures who forced the nation to confront its sins — specifically Frederick Douglass, who can serve as a guide for Presbyterians navigating patriotism today.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS OFFERS A MODEL OF HONEST PATRIOTISM

On July 5, 1852, Douglass delivered his famous speech, "What to the Slave is The Fourth of July?" Like a prophet, he excoriated celebrating Independence Day from the perspective of an enslaved person, "us[ing] the severest language" to describe the nation's hypocrisy in failing to extend liberty, equality, and justice to millions of enslaved Black Americans. He refused to romanticize the nation's past. Presbyterians should do the same.

Douglass – himself a Christian – also refused to spare the church. He declared it "superlatively guilty" for its complicity in slavery, condemning those who had "shamelessly given the sanction of religion, and the Bible, to the whole slave system."

Denouncing the Christian nationalists of his own day, he wrote that "the existence of slavery in this country" meant that "your Christianity is a lie." Likewise, American Presbyterians must reject Christian nationalism, name our nation's sins and stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized. How should we relate to our nation's history without slipping into Christian nationalism or American exceptionalism?

Yet Douglass did not stop with condemnation. His critique was rooted in a deep appreciation for the Declaration of Independence, whose principles he called "saving principles." He urged his "fellow-citizens" to "stand by those principles … at whatever cost."

He spoke with genuine respect for the nation's founders, describing them as "brave" and "truly great men," and argued that it was "a slander upon their memory" to claim they intended the Constitution to be "a slave-holding instrument."

That appreciation made his critique even more powerful. Douglass rejected not America's founding ideals but its failure to live up to them. He ended his speech "where I began, with hope" — hope that the nation could yet embody the liberty and equality it proclaimed. His prophetic honesty, grounded in hope rather than cynicism, provides a model of patriotism that American Presbyterians urgently need today.

WHAT THE PC(USA)'S CONFESSIONS SAY ABOUT CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Our own confessional tradition reinforces this vision. The Confession of 1967 reminds us that while all people stand under God's judgment, "no one is more subject to that judgment than those who consider themselves guiltless before God or morally superior to others" (9.12).

The PC(USA) therefore rejects the claims of moral superiority and national supremacy that lie at the heart of Christian nationalism, a stance underscored by the denomination's commitment to an honest

patriotism at the 223rd General Assembly. Our confessions also declare that “the church which identifies the sovereignty of any one nation … with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and betrays its calling” (9.45). A distinctly Presbyterian patriotism can never equate the nation with God’s kingdom.

HOW WORSHIP SHAPES PRESBYTERIAN PATRIOTISM

Our worship also forms us for faithful citizenship. Corporate confession is central to Presbyterian worship. As Christians, we confess not only Christ but also our sins.

The same posture should shape how we commemorate our nation. Where nationalism seeks celebration without confession, presenting a sanitized past built on comforting myths, Presbyterian patriotism insists that commemoration and confession belong together. Naming our nation’s sins is not unpatriotic; it is an act of Christian truthfulness that echoes Douglass’ prophetic witness.

This intersection of confession and commemoration points toward a distinctively Presbyterian patriotism. In Philippians, Paul exhorts believers to dwell on “whatever is true … whatever is just … if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise.”

Guided by Scripture, Presbyterians can celebrate what is genuinely good in our founding documents – ideals such as liberty and equality – while also calling the nation to embody them more fully.

That calling will look different across our denomination. For some, it means extending those ideals to marginalized communities, such as supporting the families of detainees at Delaney Hall. For others, at a time when the nation is enacting violence at home and abroad, faithful witness may mean abstaining from civic celebrations altogether. Sometimes a solemn silence is the most patriotic act of all. Where nationalism seeks celebration without confession, presenting a sanitized past built on comforting myths, Presbyterian patriotism insists that commemoration and confession belong together. “

PATRIOTISM WITHOUT NATIONALISM

Ultimately, patriotism is not the problem. Uncritical nationalism – with its demands for historical amnesia and unquestioning loyalty – is.

The General Assembly rightly warned against binding the church to a national origin story. Yet our Reformed tradition also provides the tools to navigate this tension. Grounding our civic engagement in honest history, corporate confession and Christian hope allows Presbyterians to offer a prophetic witness without abandoning our heritage.

We reject Christian nationalism not by ignoring our past, but by remembering it truthfully and, like Frederick Douglass, laboring toward the fuller realization of the liberty and equality proclaimed in our nation’s founding Declaration 250 years ago.

The Rev. Dr. Matthew B. Warren serves part-time as a minister of Word and Sacrament at the United Presbyterian Church of Millstone and teaches social studies full-time at a public high school in Central New Jersey. He completed his Ph.D. in divinity at the University of Aberdeen in 2022.

SUNDAY ASSIGNMENTS:

DATE	*ELDER-IN-CHARGE	*LAY LEADER	COMMUNION
August 2	Kathy Kreie	Diane Smith	Kathy & Diane
August 9	Feret Fenelus	Cynthia Manno	
August 16	Marty Lindner	Nisha Beech	
August 23	Diane Smith	Lynn Bailey	
August 30	Irene Schoenwalder	Lilian Nwosu	
Sept. 6	Linda Zehner	Feret Fenelus	Linda & Feret
Sept. 13	Janet Sangekar	Khary Wilson	
Sept. 20	Carol Gordon	Kathy Kreie	
Sept. 27	Karen Brelowski	Irene Schoenwalder	

* 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 the following month's newsletter. Please give yourself enough time to set up prior to worship, 30 minutes is suggested.

COFFEE HOUR: Volunteers are needed to bring baked goods for Coffee Hour on Sunday mornings after worship. There is a sign-up sheet in the kitchen. If you have any questions, you may contact Linda Zehner.

August 2 – Diane & Janet
August 9 – Cynthia Manno
August 16 – Kathy & Lisa
August 23 – Debra Bufanio
August 30 – Yvette & Carlos Otero

GOSPEL BRUNCHES ARE BACK! As in previous summers, we have taken advantage of a few Sundays after our monthly Roadhouse shows to have our worship services held in Bailey Hall. Our next Gospel Brunch will be held on **Sunday, August 9.** Please come join us for this nice and cozy "coffee house setting" worship services. Juice, coffee and a delicious brunch will be served.

CLOTHING DISTRIBUTION: ***The Blessing Room*** is open to Union County residents **who need**

essential items. Patrons should park in the rear lot and enter through the rear door. We will have clothing and small household items available for distribution at no cost. Patrons should bring proof of residence and bag(s) will be supplied to carry out their items. The Townley Blessing Room is the location where a ministry dedicated to providing essential items to individuals and families in need takes place. Townley acts as the conduit. As God blesses Townley, we bless others.

- On June 6 we had 28 guests visit our Blessing Room.
- There are volunteer opportunities to help with the Blessing Room. If interested, please see Janet or Diane.

The Blessing Room will be open on the **1st Saturday of each month** from **9 am to 11 am**. in the Chapel Basement. Set up and last-minute sorting will start at 8:00 am that morning. Donations and volunteers will continue to be needed. Our next distribution date will be **August 1st.** Setup times for the Blessing Room will be Thursday, July 30 in the morning from 9:00 a.m. to noon and in the evening from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. There will also be set up on Friday morning, July 31, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Please join us if you are able.

Wednesday Night Activity Schedule

July 29 **Edison Presentation**	**August 5**	**Game**
	August 12	**Movie**
	August 26	**Game**

SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ - The Salem Roadhouse Café proudly presents AMANI on Saturday, August 8th, 2026. The doors open at 7:15 p.m., the show starts at 8 p.m. Admission is $20 and includes show, snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and dessert. The venue is located in Bailey Hall, at Townley Presbyterian Church, 829 Salem Rd, Union, NJ. The Roadhouse operates as a non-profit that raises funds for several carefully chosen local charities. AMANI is led by veteran musicians Stephen Fuller (vocals) and Marty Eigen (woodwinds), whose musical partnership is supported by a collective of outstanding performers drawn from the region's finest musicians.

NURSING HOME VISITATION: Our nursing home ministry is held at Arista Care, located at 400 W. Stimpson Avenue in Linden every **second Sunday** at 2:00pm each month. Please see Pastor Ron if you are interested in being a part of this ministry.

RAFAEL'S LIFE HOUSE BABY SHOWER: Townley Church will partner with Connecticut Farms Church in sponsoring a Baby Shower for expectant mothers at Raphael's Life House in Elizabeth this fall. If you wish to donate an unwrapped new item for the baby shower, please write your name next to that item on the master sign-up sheet posted on the kitchen refrigerator in Bailey Hall. For example, if you wish to donate two items, please write your name on two separate lines. (We want to make sure each of the 12 residents receive the same number of gifts.) Cash donations are also welcome. Please bring your gifts and or cash donations to Lisa or Janet by September 13, 2026. Lisa and Janet will purchase additional gifts with your cash donations, wrap all the gifts, and represent Townley Church at the baby shower on September 30. If you have any questions, please contact them.

What is Raphael's Life House?

Raphael's Life House is a transitional housing program designed to support young pregnant women and mothers who are experiencing homelessness. The program provides a safe, structured living environment where residents can stay for an extended period (typically up to 12–18 months) while working toward independence. The program focuses on helping residents build stable, self-sufficient lives by offering a range of supportive services. These include parenting and prenatal education, life skills development (such as budgeting and self-sufficiency), job readiness training, and connections to educational opportunities. Each resident typically has a private living space for herself and her child, along with access to shared community areas. Staff provide ongoing case management and guidance, helping residents set goals, secure employment or education, and eventually transition into permanent housing. Overall, Raphael's Life House aims to empower young mothers by providing not just shelter, but the tools, support, and resources needed to create long-term stability for themselves and their children.

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

THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTHEAST NEW JERSEY: The next meeting of the Presbytery is scheduled for **Saturday, November 14, 2026,** at 9:30am – 11:30am In-Person only. Location to be announced. Website: https://pnenj.org

SESSION MEETING: The next Session meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, August 19, 2026,** at 7:30 pm in **Bailey Hall**. (Session meetings are usually held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.)

Please note that you do not have to be on Session to work on a committee.
Your talents are always welcome!

SCOUTING AMERICA: Scouting offers youth the opportunity to learn more about themselves in a fun and safe environment, giving them the skills they need to succeed at every stage of their lives. The Patriots' Path Council proudly serves more than 11,000 youth members and more than 4,000 volunteer leaders in the New Jersey counties of Middlesex, Morris, Somerset, Sussex, and Union. We invite boys and girls to join Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing, Sea Scouts or Exploring. The council is welcoming and accessible to all youth and their families regardless of interests, abilities or economic resources.

NEW LEGACY BOOKS: All book donations must be in good readable condition and have an ISBN barcode on the cover. No Encyclopedias, Magazines or water damaged books can be accepted. Your donation helps raise funds for Church Mission projects and Church repairs. For more information or if you wish to purchase books, please visit: NewLegacyBooks.com.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE CONNECTICUT FARMS FOOD PANTRY. You are encouraged to support this ministry with a monthly donation of $4.00 (just $1.00 a week). The food bank prefers a monetary donation so they can purchase what is needed.

- There are volunteer opportunities to help with this food pantry. If interested, please contact Janet or Diane.

GIVING TO TOWNLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: You can also support our church using your credit or debit card by using this QR Code or by clicking the "Give Now" button on our church website at www.townleychurch.org.

WE HAVE A FACEBOOK PAGE! "Like" our Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/TownleyChurch) to get the latest updates on your wall. Share your Townley comments, photos, and videos. If you want pictures added or notices posted, please send an email to the church office (townleychurch@yahoo.com). Away or missed a service? Catch our Livestream!

COMMUNITY NEWS

THE MARKET AT UNION – June 4, 2026 – September 24, 2026

The Market at Union will return to 1980 Morris Avenue on June 4 through September 24 for its 2026 season, bringing weekly vendors, food trucks and local businesses back to the Union Arts Center lot. The market will be open on Thursdays from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Vendors scheduled to appear include Wagner Family Farm, The Union Sourdough Co., Chlorophyll & Chill and Roots to Press. Food trucks and prepared-food vendors will also rotate throughout the season. Participating businesses include Cousins Maine Lobster, Amaras Caribbean BBQ, Urban Dog and Gustosa Food Truck. Dessert and beverage vendors include Little Snow Bites, Rachie's Bakery and Pine Acres Lemonade. Other vendors include Vittle Paws, which sells freeze-dried dog treats, and Mystic Moon Sticker, which offers handmade keychains and apparel. Parking will be available in front of and behind Town Hall.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Residents are invited to connect with local law enforcement and enjoy an evening of family-friendly activities during Union's annual National Night Out on **Tuesday, Aug. 4**, at Union Police Department headquarters. The free event will take place from 5 to 9 p.m. at 981 Caldwell Ave. Planned activities include police headquarters tours, a Dunk-a-Cop dunk tank, a DUI impairment goggle demonstration, and displays featuring the Police Department's SWAT team, as well as fire and emergency medical services personnel. The evening will also include games, music, a DJ and food for families to enjoy.

GIRLS NIGHT OUT

Girls Night Out
WILD & FREE

Don't miss out! Dust off your cowboy boots and get ready to kick up your heels! Join us for a night of country fun and Southern charm at our Girls' Night Out event on **Friday, August 7, 2026, from 6 - 10 p.m.** We've transformed the venue into a boot-stompin' country celebration with two lively areas. Enjoy live entertainment, free activities, and a beer garden in the Union Arts Center Plaza. Registration in front of Town Hall begins at 5pm (for Township of Union Ladies) and 5:30pm (non-residents) on event day. Then you'll be able to select workshops and receive a swag bag, while supplies last. Please note that swag bags and workshop tickets are limited! Limit one swag bag, one shirt, and one workshop ticket per lady (21 and older) while supplies last. Get ready to walk the Center and explore over 30 diverse businesses, each offering unique food tastings and promotions. Don't forget to bring your cowboy hat and heels!

TWO EVENT CONCERT SERIES

The Township of Union and the Union Arts Center (UAC) 1980 Morris Ave. have announced the launch of *Sundays in the Plaza*, a two-event community concert series held in the Arts Center Plaza for residents of all ages.

Sunday, September 13 | Family & Children's Day 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.: "All About Woodwinds" - Interactive Concert (Free) Presented by UAC and featuring the acclaimed SOMA Salon Concerts, this interactive children's concert introduces young listeners to classical music. Following the performance, young audience members will have an opportunity to meet the musicians and explore the woodwind instruments up close. This outdoor performance is free to the public. **2:45 PM – 3:30 PM:** Magic Jim Live ($15 per ticket). The fun continues indoors at the DMK Black Box Theater with a lively, 45-minute, family-friendly magic show featuring the popular Magic Jim. Tickets are $15 per person. Tickets for this indoor magic show on September 13 are available online via Eventbrite at unionartscenternj.com. Food and refreshments from featured businesses will also be available for purchase.

Sunday, September 27 | Big Band, Jazz & Swing 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM: Reeds, Rhythm and All That Brass Band (Free). The Plaza will come alive with the timeless classics of the great big-band era. Guests are invited to dance on the Plaza, enjoy the swinging sounds of this beloved 17-piece jazz and swing orchestra, and savor delicious dishes from a featured local restaurant. This outdoor performance is free to the public.

Crossword Puzzle Answers

Across	Down
1. Swimsuit	1. Surfboard
4. Snorkel	2. Shovel
5. Ocean	3. Flipflops
6. Waves	4. Shore
8. Towel	7. Jellyfish
9. Sandcastle	9. Sunburn
10. Picnic	10. Pail
11. Sunglasses	13. Crab
12. Sunblock	
14. Lifeguard	