

# “THE TALK OF TOWNLEY”

*Monthly Newsletter*  
**DECEMBER 2021**

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

7 Janet Sangekar  
21 Feret Fenelus  
23 Tommy Webb  
29 Linda Zehner



## PASTOR'S MESSAGE:

### *A Christmas Carol*

As our calendars turn to the month of December, our hearts turn towards the carols of Christmas. Carols tell stories through songs, hymns or chants. The focus of Christmas carols encompass the impact of our Savior's birth.

I was reminded recently of my oldest son's participation in the Broadway showing of "A Christmas Carol" when he was in middle school. "A Christmas Carol", the play, is based on the short novel by Charles Dickens. It recounts the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an elderly miser who is visited by the ghost of his former business partner Jacob Marley and the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come. After their visits, Scrooge is transformed into a kinder, gentler man.

Consider going through a similar occurrence. No, I am not saying that anyone is like Ebenezer Scrooge! I am saying that an encounter with *A Christmas Carol* might be transforming. Examine the idea of the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come.

The first spirit, the spirit of Christmas Past, takes Scrooge to Christmas scenes of Scrooge's boyhood, reminding him of a time when he was more innocent. The scenes reveal Scrooge's lonely childhood at boarding school, his relationship with his beloved sister, and a Christmas party hosted by his first employer, Mr. Fezziwig, who treated him like a son. Scrooge's fiancée is shown ending their relationship, as she realizes that he will never love her as much as he loves money. The visit ends with Scrooge being upset by hearing his fiancée's description of the man that he has become. Our pasts define us.

The second spirit, of Christmas Present, takes Scrooge to a joyous market with people buying the makings of Christmas dinner and to various celebrations of Christmas. We are introduced to Bob Cratchit and family. His youngest son, Tiny Tim, is a happy boy who is seriously ill. The spirit informs Scrooge that Tiny Tim will die unless the course of events changes. Before disappearing, the spirit shows Scrooge two hideous, emaciated children named *Ignorance* and *Want*. He tells Scrooge to beware the former above all and mocks Scrooge's concern for their welfare. The present speaks to us, do we hear and heed?

The third spirit, of Christmas Yet to Come, shows Scrooge a Christmas Day in the future. The spirit reveals scenes involving the death of a disliked man whose funeral is attended by local businessmen only on condition that lunch is provided. His housekeeper and the local undertaker steal his possessions to sell to a fence. When Scrooge asks the spirit to show a single person who feels emotion over this man's death, he is only given the pleasure of a poor couple who rejoice that his death gives them more time to put their finances in order. When Scrooge asks to see tenderness connected with any death, the spirit shows him Bob Cratchit and his family mourning the death of Tiny Tim. The spirit then allows Scrooge to see a neglected grave, with a tombstone bearing Scrooge's name. Sobbing, Scrooge pledges to change his ways. Defined by his past, prodded by his present, and horrified by his future, Scrooge vows to change.



On Christmas morning, Scrooge awakens -- a changed man. That's some story. But the Christmas Carol is this: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only **Son**, that whoever believes in **Him** shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). Because of our God-given Hope, Faith, Peace, Love, and Salvation, our lives are changed. "In **Him** was life, and that life was the light of all mankind." (John 1:4). **Christ** changes people – ***The Christmas Carol***.

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE:** The Townley Christmas Eve Service will be held on Friday, December 24, 2021 at 7:30 pm. Volunteers are being sought for reading parts. See Pastor Ron if interested.

**SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY:** The Sunday, December 26, 2021 service at 10:00 am will be hosted by our synod. It is a pre-recorded service which will be group watched in our Fellowship Hall. It will also be made accessible to those who wish to watch from home.

**SUNDAY ASSIGNMENTS FOR DECEMBER:**

<b><u>DATE</u></b>	<b><u>*ELDER-IN-CHARGE</u></b>	<b><u>*LAY LEADER</u></b>
DEC. 5	June Donohue	Kathy Kreie
DEC. 12	Lois Tangowski	Bruce Tangowski
DEC. 19	Carol Gordon	Vyonnia Thompson
DEC. 26	Janet Sangekar	Carruthers Tumfour
JAN. 2	Lisa Heims	Maryanne Cove
JAN. 9	Linda Zehner	Cynthia Manno
JAN. 16	Carruthers Tumfour	Lynn Bailey



\* 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 next month's newsletter. Also, give yourself enough time to set up prior to worship time.

**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 11:00 AM, 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 donation to Townley Church for distribution.



We received a thank you note from the Connecticut Farms Food Pantry for our food donation. During the months of November and December, the normal food distributions will include turkeys.

Our Operation Christmas Child project resulted in 16 filled shoe boxes. Shoe boxes are on the way to be distributed where needed. You can follow your shoe box by scanning the QR Code on the label OR entering the nine-digit code beneath it at [samaritanspurse.org/activate](http://samaritanspurse.org/activate).

Our October Rummage Sale was a major success, we raised \$4,087. \$400 of the proceeds is being donated to Operation Warm Heart.



**BIBLE STUDY RETURNS:** Our Advent Study for December begins on Wednesday the 1<sup>st</sup>, at noon. We will have sessions taking us through Advent. Bring your lunch. A Zoom link will be available to those who can't attend in person.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Al Obner's new address is: Harrogate



Alfred Obner  
400 Locust Street  
Box 238  
Lakewood, NJ 08701

**SESSION MEETING:** Next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 15, 2021 at 7:30 pm.

**TOWNLEY BOOK CLUB:** Our next book is ***This Close to Okay by Leesa Cross-Smith***. "It is a powerful, vibrant novel about the life-changing weekend shared between two strangers, from the award-winning writer Roxane Gay calls a 'consummate storyteller'. " We will discuss it on Monday, December 6, at 7:00 PM. Let's bring snacks to share while we discuss. Cecelia



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

### **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.



**"SOUNDS OF THE SEASON - A FREE HOLIDAY CONCERT":** This coming December 4<sup>th</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.

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 members are: 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 you have a skill or area of interest you would like to help with, please contact one of us as soon as possible.

We envision a full sanctuary watching wonderful musical performances!

**CHRISTMAS PARTY:** Thank you for all that booked Townley's December 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas Party. It will



be held at: La Casa Di Martino at 301 West Clay Avenue, Roselle Park, NJ 07204. Reservations are now closed and the restaurant has received our confirmed head count. We have dozens of great prizes and a special prize for the attendee wearing the most Festive, Funniest or Ugliest Holiday Sweater/Outfit! The doors open at 6PM and dinner will be served at approximately 7PM. The restaurant has a very small parking lot and mostly on the street parking. We all look forward to a wonderful evening of good food, fun and fellowship to welcome in the Christmas season.

**THE CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY):** For church professionals and lay people, Columbia's Center for Lifelong Learning provides non-degree courses and events—opportunities to learn with and from others for faithful discipleship. Led by top-notch seminary faculty, our offerings are biblically and theologically grounded, with a practical focus to help participants identify and address specific, real-life needs. [Consider these upcoming opportunities.](#)



**VIRTUAL SONG CIRCLE  
1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays at 4pm**

The Garden State Threshold Choir invites anyone needing a respite from life's challenges to a half hour of gentle, soothing songs twice a month. On the first and third Tuesdays at 4pm, Judy Hahn, GSTC director, opens a Zoom room for a "Song Circle." Listeners



are invited to be off camera if they choose, close their eyes, and “receive song.” Threshold songs are known to slow breathing, lower blood pressure, and ease stress for those listening.

The Garden State Threshold Choir is an affiliated chapter of Threshold Choir International, the nonprofit network of choirs who go, by invitation, to sing in small groups at the bedside of those at life’s thresholds of living and dying.

When singing in person became prohibited, the choir developed their own collaborative video recordings to re-create the magical *a cappella* harmonies of their unique repertoire of songs. Hahn and other choir members use these short videos, as well as their own solo voices and audio recordings, to bring comfort to those seeking a half hour of rest in the Tuesday Song Circle. The singers focus on singing from the heart, not as a performance for entertainment, but with the same tenderness and intention of singing at bedside.

Hahn, who is a member of United Presbyterian Church of West Orange and resides in Whippany, formed the first Threshold Choir chapter in New Jersey in 2017. A second New Jersey chapter has begun to form in Bergen County. For information about Threshold Choir, visit [thresholdchoir.org](http://thresholdchoir.org). To receive a Zoom invitation link to the Tuesday Song Circles, contact Judy Hahn at [GardenState@thresholdchoir.org](mailto:GardenState@thresholdchoir.org).

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

### ***Leaders Wonder by Rodger Nishioka – November 15, 2021***

When I was teaching at Columbia Seminary, each of our graduating seniors was required to preach in a weekday chapel service in the spring semester of their final year. Many of the faculty made it a point to be there. We wanted to support the students and hear what they had to say as they were preparing to leave seminary.

One of our graduating seniors, Kate, showed a great deal of poise and presence when she stepped up to the pulpit. She preached on the Magnificat, Mary’s beautiful song of praise from Luke’s gospel. She helped us to see Mary in new and insightful ways. Then, instead of concluding the sermon with the usual Presbyterian three points, she surprised us. She made a series of “I wonder ...” statements. “I wonder how Mary felt as the baby Jesus was growing inside of her.” “I wonder how she coped with her moments of excitement and moments of fear.” “I wonder if she asked why God had chosen her.” Kate paused after each statement inviting us to wonder with her. To close the sermon, she looked out at us and said “I wonder ...” and then sat down. I remember catching my breath at the beauty and power of the word so faithfully proclaimed. I remember wondering with Kate.

At Village Church, I have the great privilege of working alongside the Rev. Hallie Hottle, our pastor for young adult ministry. Hallie reminded me that awe and wonder are incredibly attractive for many young adults. Many young adults are rightly suspicious and wary of leaders who portray the world as cut and dried and only want to give out answers. They are more intrigued by mystery and wonder.

For many of us as leaders, we think our job is to give answers. To be sure, answers are important. But in these days as we continue to discern our way through times of uncertainty, leaders are called to wonder with our people. We are being called to ask deep questions and to sit and ponder and reflect and wait for the Lord to show us the way.

I wonder what the Holy Spirit is doing among us now.

I wonder how we can be even more faithful.

I wonder what risks we are being called to take.

I wonder where we will find the courage.

Leaders wonder.

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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 11th 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.*

## THE HUSH OF CHRISTMAS by Carl F. Verge



Have you observed this Christmas thing?  
How shoppers shop and sleigh bells ring,  
And children wrapped in muffs and cuffs  
Are trying out their newfound stuff.

Have you observed how fast it comes,  
Overtakes, invades our homes?  
How life takes on that quickened pace  
That makes each day another race.

But have you noticed how the rush  
Is stayed with times of holy hush?  
And no one ever seems to know  
From where they come or where they go.

A pause upon a Christmas stage,  
A costumed, bearded ancient sage,  
Points to a distant tinsel sky,  
And all at once the Christ is nigh.

Or at a time when by the tree  
The children watch so eagerly,  
As shining bells are put in place  
And wonder fills each tiny face.

Or by the fire when children sleep  
And parents whisper so to keep,  
The stillness of the fading day  
As treasures in their hearts to stay.

Or when amidst the candlelight  
The choir begins, "Oh, Holy Night,"  
And lives so filled with busyness  
Are wafted to a quiet bliss.

So as the season comes your way  
For you and yours, we humbly pray  
That in this time of Christmas rush  
You will find that holy hush.

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