

“THE TALK OF TOWNLEY”

Monthly Newsletter

MARCH 2021

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

12 Tom Catalano

PASTOR’S MESSAGE:

This Season of Lent

Lent is the season of spiritual preparation before Easter beginning on Ash Wednesday. During Lent, many believers observe a six-week period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual discipline. The purpose of the Lenten season is to set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ—to consider his suffering and his sacrifice, his life, death, burial, and resurrection.

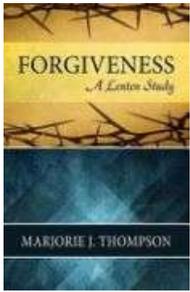


During this time of self-examination and reflection, a commitment to fast, or to give up something—a habit, like smoking, watching TV, swearing, or a food or drink, such as sweets, chocolate, or coffee is made. Strict observers of Lent do not eat meat on Fridays, often opting for fish instead. Some Christians also take on a Lenten discipline, like reading the Bible and spending more time in prayer to draw nearer to God. The goal of these spiritual disciplines is to strengthen the faith of the observer and develop a closer relationship with God.

The 40-day period of Lent is based on two episodes of spiritual testing in the Bible: the 40 years of wilderness wanderings by the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt and the Temptation of Jesus after he spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness. In the Bible, the number 40 holds special significance in the measurement of time, and many other important events revolve around it. During the flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Moses fasted on the mountain for 40 days and nights before God gave the Ten Commandments. The spies spent 40 days in the land of Canaan. The prophet Elijah traveled for 40 days and nights to reach the mountain of God in Sinai.

We should not let Lent become a hollow ritual where we give up small, insignificant vices as we prepare ourselves to observe the passion and resurrection of Christ. The fundamental call of Jesus to all who follow him is to sacrifice themselves and their lives for the good of their friends, neighbors, and even enemies. Easier said than done? Our example is Jesus. He demonstrated sacrificial living in his day. His sacrificial life had world-shaking ramifications on his society in his day. Our call is to imitate Jesus in our day. Perhaps we will give, in our giving up.

BIBLE STUDY: We will begin *A Lenten Study* on Forgiveness on February 17, 2021 for six weeks. Lent, a time to reflect on our Christian journey, is an appropriate time to deepen our understanding and practice of forgiveness. We'll take a close look at our understanding of forgiveness and address such questions as: Is forgiveness a Christian duty under all circumstances? Or are there situations when Christians do not need to forgive? Is forgiveness a matter between individuals, or is it meaningful only in the context of communities? Is forgiving the best route to healing for the injured? How do we get past emotional barriers to real forgiveness? Join us on Wednesday evenings 6:30-7:30 PM on Zoom beginning February 17. Please contact me for the book and Zoom info.



SUNDAY SERVICE: We will continue enhanced online Sunday worship services on Townley Church's Facebook page at 10:00 am, until further notice (**pending status of COVID-19**). Pastor will email the Sunday bulletin and Zoom info ahead of time.

SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP: After service, please join us for fellowship on Zoom while sipping on your favorite beverage. Don't have a computer? No problem, call in on your home telephone and connect with your fellow church members.

WORSHIP TEAM: A worship team consisting of the Pastor, Music Director, Lay Leader, Elder-in-Charge, Song Leader, and Sound/video Technicians meet at the church on Sunday mornings at 10:00 am to livestream our online worship services. This worship team **does not exceed 10 members** on any given day and all safety precautions are observed. Please contact Pastor Ron if you would like to be a part of this team or if you would like to visit during production.

SUNDAY ASSIGNMENTS FOR MARCH: Pastor Ron is asking those assigned for their assistance, if you are not considered high risk, with our enhanced Facebook Sunday worship services. **Please arrive by 9:40.**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ELDER-IN-CHARGE</u>	<u>LAY LEADER</u>
MARCH 7	Carol Gordon	Kathy Kreie
MARCH 14	June Donahue	Lisa Heims
MARCH 21	Feret Fenelus	Bruce Tangowski
MARCH 28	Lois Tangowski	Janet Sangekar
APRIL 4	Carol Gordon	Cecelia Harrison



"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: 1 717-275-8940. Access code: 367 0530

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

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.



Our new mission project: We will be providing winter socks, gloves and hats to the homeless. Those who wish to participate are asked to purchase these items and place them in the outside container by the church office doors (near our 9/11 garden). The items will be given to Operation Warm Heart for distribution to the homeless.

MISSION COMMITTEE REPORT DATED FEBRUARY 17, 2021:

- We received a thank you letter from Connecticut Farms Church for our grocery donation to their food bank.
- A donation of \$50 was received for our food pantry mission. June Donohue

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (MISSION): For over 70 years, One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) has provided Presbyterians a way to share God’s love with our neighbors around the world. Three programs supported by OGHS—Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self Development of People—work to serve individuals and communities in needs. These programs provide relief from natural disasters, food for the hungry, and support for the oppressed. If you wish to contribute to the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering, please send your contribution to Townley Church by Palm Sunday, March 28, 2021. Thank you!!!

“Give something, however small, to the one in need. For it is not small to one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could.”
— St. Gregory Nazianzen

THE ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING of Townley Presbyterian Church will be held on Sunday, February 21, 2021 at 11:00 am. It will be a hybrid meeting. Zoom info was recently emailed to members. We will be electing officers, presenting the budget, and any other business that may properly come before the meeting.



PER CAPITA: As you know, every December the Board of Trustees of the Presbytery of Elizabeth presents the Presbytery’s budget for the coming year. The budget includes Per Capita received from its congregations. This money is used to develop programs, such as training for congregations and its leaders and supporting the work of Commission on Ministry. The complete budget can be viewed on the Presbytery website. ***The Per Capita for 2021 for Townley is \$45.00 per member (same as last***

year). Please submit your check for this amount as soon as you are able, payable to Townley Presbyterian Church.

You can also pay your per capita from the Townley website, Townleychurch.org. Click on the “give now” button found on the home page of the website. It is not necessary to log in. You will see the per capita button under donations. Enter the amount and continue to the next page. Once submitted, you and Townley will receive an email confirmation.

We look forward to your participation in per capita giving, an expression of your commitment to ministry both within our congregation and beyond. Thank you. Janet, Church Treasurer

A NOTE FROM OUR TREASURER

Your Session sincerely appreciates how you have continued to let giving complete your lives.

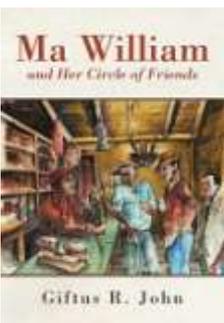
Please continue to **mail your weekly offerings** to the church office. **Bill Pay and other online banking** options should also be considered. Online contributions may also be made through our church’s website “**Give Now**” button:



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 *Ma William and Her Circle of Friends* by *Giftus R. John* (who lives in Union, NJ). Thank you Janet Sangekar for the suggestion. **We will discuss it on Monday, April 12, 2021 at 7:30 pm and have the AUTHOR join us at 8:15 pm via Zoom.** As you read, make note of any questions you would like to ask the author during our Zoom. This book doesn’t have any specific book discussion questions, so at 7:30 pm we will discuss the book in general and try to come up with additional questions and comments to discuss with the



author, when he comes on to join us at 8:15 pm. The book may be purchased directly from the author (\$15.00) by sending an email to: giftusjay@msn.com It is also available through Amazon and Barnes & Noble (\$9.49-\$15.95 for both websites).

Cecelia Harrison

NORTH EAST PRESBYTERY: The Northeast, following the call for name suggestions, and then a process of voting on them has selected its name! It will be called **The Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey**. Last week, the Commission on Preparation for Ministry of the new presbytery had a chance to meet via zoom to begin getting to know one another and to work on some of their initial policies and procedures. Groups focused on finance and mission have continued meeting and are developing plans and structures which will support the mission and ministry of the new presbytery.

NEXT CHURCH: 2021 NATIONAL GATHERING - BREAKING, BLESSING,

BUILDING: A Call For the Common Good. A FREE Live-Streamed Gathering for ALL Church Leaders on March 5-7, 2021. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

UPCOMING WEBINAR FOR LEADERS - DISCOVERING OUR GIFTS: God has gifted



each of us with a variety of skills, interests, and talents. As those called to leadership in the church, particularly to the ministries of ruling elder and deacon, many of those gifts are called upon in a variety of ways. Take time to explore and discover your own talents, how they can be used to form effective teams, and ways that we work together in community as God's children. During this Year of Leader Formation webinar on **April 14, 2021 at 7pm (eastern time)**, you can expect to search within yourself while also being introduced to some tools to use in your own congregation. Registration will be available later this spring. The webinar will be recorded for viewing at a later time.

Regarding Ruling Elders: A Monthly Series for Serving Faithfully

Leaders Pray by Rodger Nishioka – February 16, 2021

Good leaders pray.

For years I could not understand what the Apostle Paul meant when he told the believers in Thessalonica to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How do you do that? As a pastor's kid, I thought Dad's pastoral prayers dragged on for an eternity. As teenagers, my brothers and I began to time each of Dad's prayers. One Sunday dinner, my older brother told Dad he had set an all-time record by praying for more than six minutes. “How do you even know God is listening that long? And besides, if God knows everything, why do you have to tell God what God already knows?!” he asked. I thought it was a good question. Then Dad said, “Boys, I don't pray for God to know about us. I pray for us to know about God.” Years later, I thought

of Dad's response when I read American Trappist monk Thomas Merton say that he does not pray to change God. He prays so that he might be changed. This resonates with the Jewish theology that to pray is related to "judging oneself." For Jewish friends, to pray is to be changed or transformed for the better.

Understanding prayer not as a way to change God but as a way for me to become more and more in the likeness of Jesus helped me to view prayer in a different way. But I was still stuck with Paul's call to pray without ceasing. Then I was introduced to breath prayers—the idea that because God brought humankind to life by breathing into us (Genesis 2:7), when we breathe in, we take in God's very breath. And when we breathe out, we breathe God's breath to the creation. Breathing is a form of prayer because the goal is that we might be more attuned to God, and breathing takes God's very breath into our bodies.

Good leaders pray. It helps to develop a pattern for praying. Many of my friends and family know I start every prayer time by "breathing in God's mercies" and "breathing out God's mercies to the whole world." Then, when I am settled, I light a candle to remind me of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and I pray through lists I keep in my journal. I find it helpful to write down the name of someone or a situation the Spirit brings to me throughout my day. It helps me to pray out loud by speaking the name or the situation. Sometimes I ask for something specific; other times, I just say the name. There is no magic here. It is not that by my speaking I think suddenly God is more attentive. Rather, it is as Merton says, that when I say a name or situation, I am more attuned to the person or situation. In my praying, God helps me to abide, to rest, to remain with them. I always end my prayers with gratitude. What I have come to realize is the more attuned I am to God, the more faithful I am as a follower of Jesus.

Good leaders pray.

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 second 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/.



May good luck be with you
Wherever you go,
And your blessings outnumber
The shamrocks that grow.



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