“THE TALK OF TOWNLEY”

Monthly Newsletter
NOVEMBER 2026

Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor,
but evil comes to the one who searches for it. Proverbs 11:27

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

6 – Antonio Garcia
10 – Lillian Nwosu

PASTOR’S MESSAGE:

The mid-term elections are weeks away. Amidst all the energy being stirred up, the oldest Biblical commandment might well serve Christians as our paramount guide: ***Thou shall have no other Gods before me.***

I learned this Exodus 20:3 verse in Sunday school. From day one, we were told it is about something really big, telling us who to follow and who not to. In short, it says our ultimate allegiance is to God alone.

What does this mean when it comes to election day? As citizens of the United States, we have the responsibility to vote and decide on the shape of our future. When we vote as Christians, we should make these decisions based on our vision of what God calls us to do, not what someone else might threaten us into doing.

This biblical claim about our ultimate allegiance to God matters enormously during this particular election season. Voting has never been an easy thing to do. This time, however, the stakes are higher than usual. There is a war brewing in our polling places. It is possible that ICE officers (or other enforcement personnel) will be at or near our voting stations, their presence meant to intimidate potential voters and drive them away. This is a terrible and illegal situation that we may be forced to confront, and it will be frightening.

But Christians must remember that our right to freely vote is a blessed gift from God, and in contrast, it is a blatant sin for ICE or anyone else to use fear to deny us our God-given freedoms. In short, present-day Washington is not our God; ICE officers are not messengers of divine decrees. Our moral conscience, guided by faith, is the only touchstone that matters. Our forebearers recognized this and made it flat-out illegal for forces like ICE to scare us into following their mandate. The Constitution is on our side. The Bible is shouting out support!

Scripture’s Tradition of Resisting

Christian Scriptures tell us, again and again, stories of rulers who threaten and coerce people. In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar builds a golden statue and orders his people to bow down to it. Everyone knows it’s a weird thing to worship gold, but they lackadaisically follow the king anyway.

But three brave, ordinary guys stand up and refuse. They see it’s a farce. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego simply say “no,” even knowing the furnace awaits them. They see that their arrogant leader is acting like God, and trying to trick everyone into foolish idolatry rather than honest expression. These three men choose to follow the First Commandment. The powers that be are not God, they say. Their gold-obsessed emperor has no clothes.

In the New Testament, the same story unfolds as the Apostles are hauled before Roman authorities and ordered to stop spreading a message the leaders don't like. Peter answers bluntly, ***"We obey God rather than men*** (Acts 5:29)." The Roman rulers disagree with the Apostles but try as they might, they can't change their minds. A stubborn faithful lot these Jesus-followers were! It moves me that two millennia ago, people like us recognized that the government could not tell them what was true. Like them, we must be strong and hold to our convictions.

Barmen's warning

In May 1934, leaders of Germany's Confessing Church met at Barmen and issued a declaration against a government regime that demanded the church's total allegiance. The declaration rejected the idea that any area of life could belong to "other lords" than Christ.

Barmen did not need to name the dictator for people to know who they meant. It applied the First Commandment to a State that had begun to treat loyalty to itself as a sacred duty and dissent as betrayal. Barmen also knew that the cost for disobedience was high, but the writers of Barmen, against great odds, stood strong nonetheless. And with them, countless generations of US citizens of color, immigrants, women and more have bravely bucked the odds and fought against repressive state-forces to secure their free vote.

We are not living in 1934 or 1965 or even 2016, and these comparisons should be made with care. But each example teaches the church to notice early when a government replaces responsible obedience to shared law with supplication to the whims of the ruler. Some might answer this argument by pointing to what Paul says about rulers: "Let every soul be subject unto the (state's) higher powers" (Romans 13:1). That verse deserves a serious reply, not a dismissal.

Paul's point is that believing in God and following God's will does not relieve us from making hard, real-world, political decisions. We all have to do so in a democracy. The challenge is to ask what is the most faithful, loving choice, rather than bowing down to unrighteous leaders or bowing out of civic involvement altogether. We are called to be active in determining our world's future. Paul urges us: engage out of love and justice and not coercion or force.

Speak, and do not bow

The First Commandment frees us from more than false worship. It frees us from false fear. If God alone is God, then no federal badge, no detention threat, no terrifying black mask should have the power to silence our voices. That said, it is painful to recognize how high the stakes are for so many, as it was in days past.

If Christians stay true to their scripture and theology during in this election season, the church's task is clear. Pastors should preach the good word of freedom and courageous action, not fear. Congregations should mobilize to stand beside the neighbors most exposed to intimidation and protect their freedom by becoming poll workers or watchers or simply walking with people who could be threatened. However Christians choose to show up, every person of faith should keep speaking out about how we should be governed, because that voice was never the State's to give or take. For the faithful, be who you were called to be!

And yes, we will render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But our conscience and our votes were never on that list.

Rev. Dr. Serene Jones

Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President Emerita and Johnston Family Chair in Religion and Democracy, Union Theological Seminary.

SUNDAY ASSIGNMENTS:

DATE	*ELDER-IN-CHARGE	*LAY LEADER	COMMUNION
Nov. 1	Tonya Moses	Karen Brelowski	Tonya & Karen
Nov. 8	Irene Schoenwalder	Diane Smith	
Nov. 15	Linda Zehner	Tonya Moses	
Nov. 22	Karen Brelowski	Cynthia Manno	
Nov. 29	Carol Gordon	Nisha Beech	
Dec. 6	Janet Sangekar	Feret Fenelus	Janet & Feret
Dec. 13	Lois Tangowski	Lilian Nwosu	
Dec. 20	Kathy Kreie	Diane Smith	
Dec. 27	Feret Fenelus	Khary Wilson	

* 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.

November 1 – Khary & Nisha Wilson
November 8 – Lynn Bailey
November 15 – Lilian & Chris Nwosu
November 22 – Cynthia Manno
November 29 – Vyonnia Thompson

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS on **November 1, 2026, at 2:00 am**. Please remember to turn your clocks backward one hour to Standard Time.

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.

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.

- 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 **November 7.** Setup times for the Blessing Room will be **Thursday, Nov. 5 from 9:30am – 11am & 6pm – 8pm, Friday, Nov. 6 from 9:30am – 11 am.** Please join us if you are able. The remaining 2026 Blessing Room Date is: **December 5.**

BLESSING ROOM 2027 CALENDAR

- January 9 ** (2nd Saturday of the month)
- February 6
- March 6
- April 3
- May 8 ** (2nd Saturday of the month)
- June 5
- July – no distribution ** (day before the 4th)
- August 7
- September 4
- October 2
- November 6
- December 4

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.

RAPHAEL'S LIFE HOUSE served as our community outreach mission at Townley Church, under the leadership of Janet and Lisa in partnership with Connecticut Farms. On **September 30th,** we hosted a baby shower designed to assist the mothers and infants residing at "**Raphael's Life House**", where collected donations were distributed among all participants. The event featured dinner and cake for all mothers, infants and attendees. I wish to express my sincere appreciation and recognition to Cynthia, Diane, and Lois for their exceptional dedication and support throughout the evening. We are deeply grateful to Khary, Nisha, Lynn B., Allision, Linda Z., Diane S., Susan D., Cynthia, Vyonnia, June, Deb, Marty, Cecelia, Bob, Zoraida, Janet, and Lisa for their thoughtful donations of baby items and supplies. Respectfully Submitted, Lisa Heims

SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ: The Salem Roadhouse Café proudly presents the Robert Hill Band on **Saturday, November 14, 2026**. The doors open at 7:30 pm, the show starts at 8:00 pm. Admission is $20, Students $15 and includes show, snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and desserts. 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. 2026 show proceeds will benefit Townley Church "Blessing Room" where needed things find needful hands. See attached flier.

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON sponsored by Townley Presbyterian Church and Salem Roadhouse Café will feature live holiday music on **Saturday, December 5, 2026,** from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm. Free hot chocolate and snacks will be available. There will be a free will offering for the Townley Church Blessing Room, along with other church mission projects will be accepted. Please be generous.

SALEM ROADHOUSE 2027 DATES

- February 13 (Tentative)
- March 13
- April 10
- May 22 - Lawn concert outdoors
- June 12
- July 10
- August 14
- September 11
- October 9
- November 13
- December 4 – "Sounds of The Season" Christmas Show

SESSION MEETING: The next Session meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 18, 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!*

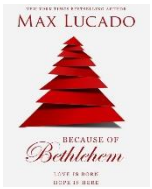
SESSION WORKS: "Session Works" is a monthly communication of significant decisions made by Townley Session. From **October's** meeting, the following items were approved / discussed:

- Church calendar was reviewed
- Blessing Room 2027 Calendar was approved by Session
- Townley will pursue re-establishing the Office of Deacon thru this year's Nominating Committee.
- Concerns about deportation issues affecting one of our member's family were brought up and a discussion about church involvement over immigration policies followed.
- Session is meeting with Comunidad Cristiana leaders in November

DEACON?

The office of a Deacon is defined in the Book of Order (G-2.0201) as a ministry set forth in Scriptures as one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.

WEDNESDAY NOON BIBLE STUDY – We look to complete our Fall Bible Study of "Galatians: Accepted and Free" on November 4. We will begin an Advent Study intitled: ***Because of Bethlehem***, by Max Lucado, **November 18th**. ***Because of Bethlehem,*** God knows what it's like to be human. ***Because of Bethlehem***, when we talk to him about tough times, he understands. He's been there. He's been here. ***Because of Bethlehem***, we no longer have marks on our record... just grace. See Pastor Ron for your study guide.



CHRISTMAS PARTY: Townley Church annual Christmas Party will be held in Bailey Hall on **Saturday, December 12, 2026**. There will be Christmas Carols, music & prize baskets. Doors open at 4:00 pm, Dinner is at 5:30 pm. BYOB (wine only). Cost is $35 per adult, $20 per child ages 5-12. Children under 5 are free. Paid reservations are a must by Sunday, December 6 to Lisa or Kathy. See the attached flier!

If you have any new items that you would like to donate to the Christmas Party Gift Auction, please give them to Lisa Heims before Thanksgiving.

SCOUTING AMERICA: Thank you for your support in allowing Scouting to return to Townley! Our next informational meeting is on **November 16th** at 6:00pm in Bailey Hall. Please pass the word!

THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTHEAST NEW JERSEY: The next Presbytery meeting & 5th Anniversary Celebration of the Presbytery is scheduled for **Saturday, November 7, 2026,** at 11:00am. The meeting will be held (in-Person only) at The Terrace, 299 Paramus Road, Paramus, NJ 07652. Website: https://pnenj.org

SWEETHEART BRUNCH: – has been scheduled for **Sunday, February 14, 2027**.

SPRING RUMMAGE SALE: We will be having a Spring Rummage Sale on **April 23 & 24, 2027** in Bailey Hall.

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

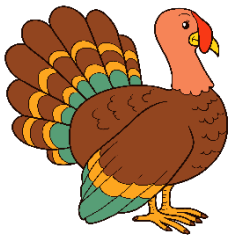
NEW LEGACY BOOKS: Our Book Donation Bin is at the back of our Salem Road parking lot. All book donations must be in good readable condition and have an ISBN barcode on the cover. No Encyclopedias, Magazines or water damaged books can be accepted. Your donation helps raise funds for Church Mission projects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

- We received a check from New Legacy for $42.85.

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!

THANKSGIVING POEM



The One Who Turned Back
(from poemcove.com)

Ten men were healed beside the road,
and nine went on their way.
One turned around, ran back, and knelt
to thank the Lord that day.

This year, when all our needs are met
and plates are piled up high,
Lord, make us like the one who turned
and did not hurry by.