

# “THE TALK OF TOWNLEY”

*Monthly Newsletter*  
**JANUARY 2024**

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. Matthew 2:9-12

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

31 – Glenda Ramdeen



**EPIPHANY**

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE:

### **Epiphany**

Epiphany is derived from the Greek word epiphaneia, meaning manifestation. In Christian circles, it is a holiday commemorating the first manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi, and the manifestation of his divinity, as it occurred at his baptism in the Jordan River and at his first miracle, at Cana in Galilee. Epiphany is one of the three principal and oldest festival days of the Christian church (the other two are Easter and Christmas).

The festival originated in the Eastern church, where it at first included a commemoration of Christ's birth. In Rome, by 354 Christ's birth was being celebrated on December 25 (Christmas), and later in the 4th century the church in Rome began celebrating Epiphany on January 6. In the Western church the festival primarily commemorates the visit by the Magi to the infant Jesus, which is seen as evidence that Christ, the Jewish Messiah, came also for the salvation of Gentiles. In the West the evening preceding Epiphany is called Twelfth Night. The time between December 25 and January 6 is known as the Twelve Days of Christmas.

These magi, we don't know whether there were three or thirteen of them because Matthew only says they offered the baby Jesus three kinds of gifts, were the sort of people who were looking for something. They were willing to risk a journey and brave enough to venture forth on the search. And when they got to the goal of their search, they felt joy. How about you? Have you found joy in Jesus?

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church. Such involvement includes: proclaiming the good news in word and deed, taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation, lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support, studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life, supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents, demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church, responding to God's activity in the world through service to others, living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life, working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment, caring for God's creation, participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful. In 2024, let us find joy in Jesus – together!

**PER CAPITA:** As you know, every December the Board of Trustees of the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey 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 their leaders and supporting the work of Commission on Ministry. The complete budget can be viewed on the Presbytery website. **The 2024 Per Capita for Townley is \$38.00 per member.** Please submit your check for this amount payable to Townley Presbyterian Church. 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

**SUNDAY ASSIGNMENTS:**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>*ELDER-IN-CHARGE</u>	<u>*LAY LEADER</u>	<u>COMMUNION</u>
Jan. 7	Carol Gordon	Lisa Heims	Carol G. & Lisa H.
Jan. 14	Karen Brelowski	Kathy Kreie	
Jan. 21	Janet Sangekar	Irene Schoenwalder	
Jan. 28	Irene Schoenwalder	Karen Brelowski	
Feb. 4	Kathy Kreie	Bruce Tangowski	Kathy K. & Bruce T.
Feb. 11	Lois Tangowski	Vyonna Thompson	
Feb. 18	Lisa Heims	Santiago Guzman	
Feb. 25	Marty Lindner	Cynthia Manno	



**\* 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.



**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** of Townley Presbyterian Church will be held on **Sunday, January 28, 2024** immediately following the 10:00 am worship service for the purpose of electing officers, presenting the budget, and any other business that may properly come before the meeting.

**NURSING HOME VISITATION:** Our nursing home ministry has been resumed at AristaCare, located at 400 W. Stimpson Avenue in Linden on the **second Sunday** at 2:00pm of each month. Please see Pastor Ron if interested in being a part of this ministry.

**SESSION MEETING:** The next session meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, January 17, 2024** at 7:30 pm in the upstairs meeting room. (Session meetings are usually held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month.)

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



**THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTHEAST NEW JERSEY:** The next meeting of the Presbytery is scheduled for Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at 6:30 pm. Website <https://pnenj.org>

**MISSION:**

- ✓ Food collected at Townley Church was donated to the Putnam Manor Association for their Annual Fall Food Drive for Thanksgiving.
- ✓ The Holiday Concert "Sound of the Season" held in the Sanctuary on December 2, was a success. Many came and enjoyed the show. Donations in the amount of \$687.00 were donated to The Gateway YMCA. Thank you to all who attended.
- ✓ We received a \$150 Christmas donation from the Saturday morning Al-Anon Group.
- ✓ Our annual Christmas Dinner Party was held on December 9, 2023, and enjoyed by all. The gift basket proceeds of \$629.00, and Bruce's raffle of \$97, gave us \$726.00 to donate to Townley Church's "Cherish the Church" Fundraiser. Thank you to everyone for these donations, as well as to those who donated items for the gift baskets.
- ✓ **Save the Date: Next year's Christmas Party will be held on December 7, 2024.**
- ✓ Thank you to everyone who donated to "Toys for Tots". A total of three large bags of toys were donated to our Bailey Hall Drop Box. The toy donations were given to the Westfield Police Department for their "Toys for Tots" fundraiser.
- ✓ Our "Gift a Senior" project was a success. We were able to gift 43 seniors a Holiday gift bag of items, with additional donations given to a food bank that supports a community of seniors! Thank you for your donations.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT CAMPAIGN:**

Townley Church needs help to fund several significant repairs. We appreciate your donations to our "**Cherish The Church**" Capital Improvement Campaign.



DONATE TO HELP RENOVATE



Help Us Reach Our Goal !



Online



Locally

Donations are tax deductible

**NOTE FROM YOUR TREASURER:**

Our Cherish the Church Fund amount is \$20,222. We are not only getting donations from our congregation but also from friends of Townley. Our goal is to raise \$50,000 in 18 months (June 2024). These funds are to be used for our capital improvements. A red mailbox to accept donations and a thermometer to track progress are in Bailey Hall. Special envelopes,

designed by Kathy Kreie, are next to the mailbox. Thank you to all who have donated so far to help us reach our goal! A project to replace the drafty daycare windows was completed during the holiday break.



**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.



**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](http://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](mailto:townleychurch@yahoo.com)). Away or missed a service? Catch our Livestream!

## **SESSION WORKS**



“Session Works” is a monthly communication of significant decisions made by Townley Session. From December’s meeting, the following items were approved/discussed:

- Approved 2024 Budget
- Approved Pastor’s Terms of Call for 2024
- Annual Congregational Meeting Date set: January 28, 2024
- Continued 2024 Calendar/Planning

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

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

*Practical Faith and Faithful Practice*  
by Valerie Izumi – December 15, 2023



These days, double-checking the accuracy of family lore is a lot easier than in days of old. Learning more about one’s lineage, the thread that connects us to the past and into the future, can add complexity to the family narrative, but can also deepen our understanding of who we are.

When Ruling Elder Kathy Lueckert, the child of a Presbyterian pastor and grandchild of Presbyterian missionaries in China, wanted to see if indeed it was true that there were nine generations of Presbyterian

pastors on her dad’s side, she started with Ancestry.com.

In addition to confirming the nine generations of Presbyterian pastors, Kathy learned she actually is descended from 12 generations of Presbyterians! “That explains a lot about me!” she said. “I grew up around a church and around pews on Sunday mornings and that was a big part of shaping my life.”

Kathy was first ordained at [First United Presbyterian Church of Dale City](#), Virginia. During a time of change and expansion for the congregation, she was recognized as a young adult who would bring gifts and talents that would nurture the faith and life of the congregation. She was ordained to the office of ruling elder and had various roles on the session, served on stewardship, served as liturgist, and worked on other at-large projects.

However, those beginning days were not without some glitches. Kathy was able to recognize that her particular talent for organization, clear linear and logical thinking, and planning and logistical skills did not mean that she would be a good fit everywhere. She learned that chairing the worship committee was “not her sweet spot” and not a good fit. She grew a lot during those days — “sometimes having to learn the hard way and had some growing edges.” But that did not deter her from serving actively in that church and beyond.

Kathy has served on the session of [Woodland Park Presbyterian Church](#) in Seattle and is the clerk of session at [Central Presbyterian Church](#) in Louisville. She has been active in presbytery work in [Seattle Presbytery](#) and [Heartland Presbytery](#), serving on both presbyteries’ councils. She has also served as the stated clerk of Seattle Presbytery, as an assembly assistant during several General Assemblies, as an appointed member of a General Assembly special committee and is currently the president of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation.

Yet Kathy, who says her faith is practical, remains humble when she remarks that she has tried to be active at all levels of the church, believing that this is part of our responsibility as ruling elders.

You may be wondering what she says sustains her:

- Her husband, Don.
- Looking for God's presence in the everyday and in everyday interactions — "I see evidence of God all around me if I just open my eyes."
- Keeping worship on Sunday mornings as a top priority to keep a close connection and be a part of a worshiping community.
- Keeping physically active. This is a time when she does her "batch processing" — "I have my conversation with God, good and bad, during those times when I am out doing something physical."
- Being a part of a running group, whose members have become important to her — "They are not church professionals; it is a good thing in your life to have a little bit of diversity."
- Adding more walking and biking to sustain her body.

#### **For Reflection:**

- As we take on responsibilities at work, in our homes, and for the church, it is crucial to regularly evaluate your energy levels and make adjustments. Pray and listen to your body's signals and rest when needed, let go of certain responsibilities, or acknowledge the possibility that a particular role or act of service may not be a good fit for you and consider other opportunities for service. How might you make modifications for your own sustainability?
  - In lifting up the partnership of ruling elders and ministers that is so important and key to our polity, Kathy said, "There are a lot of things that are not taught in seminary that ruling elders can help pastors navigate through. That partnership in helping the congregation navigate life these days, in particular, is even more important than it used to be."
  - How might your unique skills and experiences, along with the pastor or other elders, benefit the ministry of your congregation in these challenging times?
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*Valerie Izumi is a ruling elder serving the Office of the General Assembly as an assistant stated clerk, coordinating the General Assembly nominations process.*

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# New Year's Resolutions To Try for 2024

By MEGAN GRANT UPDATED: DEC 12, 2023, EXCERPTS FROM PARADE MAGAZINE

1. Work out to feel good, not be thinner.
2. Stop gossiping.
3. Give one compliment a day.
4. Do random acts of kindness
5. Read a book a month.
6. Volunteer.
7. Write down one thing you're grateful for every night.
8. Drink more water.
9. Talk to yourself with kindness.
10. Call a friend instead of texting them.
11. Let go of grudges.
12. Stay in touch with the people who matter.
13. Start a new hobby.
14. Bring a plant into your home.
15. Send handwritten letters.
16. Donate clothes you never wear.
17. Loosen up those tight muscles with some stretching every day.
18. Make something with your hands
19. Go to bed happy each night
20. Pay it forward
21. Talk less, listen more
22. Whatever your goals are, write them down

