

NINE NEW MEMBERS and COUNTING

Peace Dale Congregational Church welcomed nine new members on April 24th. L to R: Wenda Mason, Renee and Jim Crisafulli, Guy and Maria Cassaday, Fred Evenson, Bob Clark, Susan Sward, Christine Grevstad, John Hobgood

Welcome to the newest members of our faith family!

It is a joy to welcome Wenda Mason (on the far left). She has lived here for 10 years and has been involved in all kinds of ministries over her lifetime. Ask her about the healing ministries, which she has taken part in.

Fun fact about Wenda, as I mentioned in church, while she has never been to Block Island, she did used to live on a different island - St. Simon's Island in Georgia. She has four children and 15 great grandchildren. She comes to us most recently from the Assembly of God Church. She enjoys our service and the friendliness of our congregation. Welcome Wenda.

Next to Wenda, are Jim and Renee Crisafulli who come to us most recently from Slatersville Congregational Church (where they were members for 6 years). They especially appreciate our contemporary services, and our pumpkin mission (that raises money for Welcome House and the Native Americans who grow them). They say they get a beautiful feeling coming here and find the church very welcoming. And that welcoming piece is especially meaningful to them. Welcome Jim and Renee.

Next to Jim and Renee are Guy and Maria Cassaday, who reside in Wickford. She was born in Providence and he's from New Jersey. She grew up Catholic and he was Presbyterian in his younger days. They've been in RI for many years. Maria said they knew of this church because of Sally Bradley's Husband, Rev. Raymond Bradley Jr.; he was the pastor at Riverside Congregational Church, where she met him 30 years ago. Maria said he took good care of them. Guy says Rev. Bradley was a "guiding light" for him in many ways. He couldn't really co-officiate their wedding at the Catholic church, but he did take part in it. Once married, they attended the Congregational Church. Maria echoes the feeling of others stating how welcomed they felt here.

They have a son Christopher, 26, and they also have a new puppy. And talk about a fun fact, most of Guy's career was spent designing toys for companies like Tonka toys – Playschool, and Hasbro. Guy worked on GI Joe for five years, and even did

some work on Lincoln Logs. Being the specialized artist that he is, he says he can draw anything that doesn't have a pulse.

Maria says that she likes the contemporary worship service. They came on Music Sunday last summer and loved it. They say the message is good, they find our church Christ centered and they like that we are Open and Affirming. Welcome Guy and Maria.

To the right of me in the picture are Susan Sward and Bob Clark. Susan closed on her house one year ago and lives just a block from the church. They are literally our neighbors. Susan used to live in Charlestown. Following the passing of her husband, she decided that she wanted to live someplace and be part of a community. She fell in love with Peace Dale. She said it reminds her of an English village. When she moved here a year ago, she brought her painter along. Bob had been her painter for seven years. They fell in love and will soon be getting married. Susan says, it feels very magical, like destiny and her big perennial garden is incredible.

They came On Christmas Eve; it was Bob who suggested they try us out. They said it was so beautiful inside – they liked the service and the way we sang silent night in English and German. They felt welcome and appreciate the way we announce our joys and concerns.

Susan had seven girls in her family and was brought up in the Catholic faith. They like the way we focus on the now and how we celebrate the Love and grace of God. She says “she [feels] like she belongs. Didn't have to hide anything. Such a revelation that I can belong to a church.”

Susan says they are both helping with the Dinner Table ministry - she drives the runs. She said, “This is huge for me. I didn't realize (initially) on Christmas Eve, it's so community based (our church). People make a community. People are the community. She says, I'm just amazed I'm sitting in a church right now.”

And we are so glad, Susan and Bob, that you decided to not only sit in our church but become active members. Susan knows Guy through the Wickford Art Association. She's a natural science illustrator who retired from teaching art. She continues to make artwork. Susan can draw things with a pulse.

Bob says there's a big welcome mat here for sure, and he appreciates our community service. We warmly welcome you both, Susan and Bob.

Next to Bob and Susan, on the far right, are Christine Grevstad and John Hobgood.

John has lived in RI over 20 years. He says he smuggled Christine over the border – she is from Lon guy land. Apparently, there is a right way to pronounce it. They are both from Massapequa (also the hometown of Jerry Seinfeld). They talk about how difficult it was to get into Rhode Island during Covid. Once here, they had to quarantine for two weeks. Ask them about putting cardboard over their license plates.

He grew up Presbyterian and she was Roman Catholic. They live in Hope Valley and are a widow and widower. John jokes that they've been married 72 years, but not to each other. They plan on getting married here in August. Amazingly, they were actually high school sweethearts some 40 years ago, but lost touch until recently. Thank God they found each other again.

Christine really likes the fact that anyone is welcome here, no matter what. She said people would come right up over to them and welcome them. They are happy we are such a community-oriented church with our ministries. She loves to cook and said, "For me, that's how I show people I love them."

John's mother was Jewish. When he heard our mission statement – Called by Christ to create Shalom and Justice for all, he knew, this is the place to be. Christine says it's also about the Joy, they really appreciate the joy in our church.

John and Christine, we are so happy to offer you a warm welcome. It is about Joy after all, isn't it?

We are an apron wearing congregation who is not afraid to express a little joy during our worship, fellowship, and service projects every week.

On behalf of our whole fellowship, welcome to all new members and may we continue to grow as an apron wearing community, in the image of God.

May the Joy of Christ be with all of us, with our ever-expanding family of God.

Because no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, no matter your skin color or who you love, We Welcome You. Amen.

Pastor, Fred