



RULING ELDERS

Regarding Ruling Elders: A Monthly Series for Serving Faithfully

Rodger Nishioka - April 15, 2021

Each of us has a deep and profound need to be seen. That

truth has never been more real to me than when a young white man shot and killed eight people, six of whom were Asian American women, in Atlanta recently. Those deaths brought into clear focus the dramatic rise of anti-Asian hatred across our country.

I am a fourth-generation Japanese American. I was born in Honolulu. My parents were both born in California. Their parents, my grandparents, were born either in California or in Hawaii. It was my great-grandparents who emigrated from Japan to the United States. We have been Americans for more than 150 years. Yet we, like many other Asian Americans, are viewed as “perpetual foreigners.”

It is one thing to live in a large metropolitan area with many other Asian American faces. It is another thing to live in the Midwest where there are fewer of us around. So, it was particularly moving for me when I was walking to church in the week following the shootings in Atlanta, and I saw an older white woman, who was out walking her dog, approaching me. I remembered seeing her on earlier walks. As I came closer to her, I stepped off the sidewalk to walk in the street (COVID protocol). She smiled at me and nodded her head. I waved and said, “good morning” and kept walking. Then I heard her say, “Excuse me.” I stopped and turned around. She was standing there with her dog and said, “I really don’t know you, but I see you walking. I just wanted to say that I am glad you’re here, and I am so sad about what happened in Atlanta, and I hope you’re okay.” And standing there on that bright, sunny morning, in this neighborhood near my church, I started

to cry. “Thank you,” I said, when I could get the words out. “Thank you so much for your kindness.”

Each of us has a deep and profound need to be seen. Jesus did just that. Jesus saw people. He saw the leper and the paralyzed man. He saw the child and the widow. He saw the pharisee and the rich young ruler. He saw them all.

Leaders see. Leaders see people carefully, thoughtfully, and clearly, so much so that each person knows they have been seen. It is far too easy, especially in these days as the pace of our lives begins to pick up, for us to get too focused on our tasks, our errands, so that we do not see the people whom God has placed before us. People need to be seen. Good leaders see.

For Reflection:

- A time when you knew someone saw you, really saw you.
- A time when you felt unseen.
- A way you can see others in these days.

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 fourth 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/. Past issues of the articles are available in **Equip, the church’s online training site**