

April 2020

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

It is resurrection season. Resurrection is good news, but in this time of uncertainty and fear, how good we feel about the Easter news is tempered by the threat of pandemic.

Sometimes, being an Easter people means we need to take a longer view. As children of God who await God's promised new day, when all that is wrong will be made right, sometimes we need to remind ourselves that the current concern, however ominous, will pass.

I was reminded of this when Amy Whipple, our Office Administrator, pulled out the minutes of the Sixth Presbyterian Church from the fall of 1918, the height of the last pandemic, the Spanish influenza. Pittsburgh was one of the most severely hit cities. Millions died around the world. The city government shut down all functions for a month; there was no worship at Sixth; the church did not have a Pastor at the time; 4 people in the congregation died. But the church continued its witness. The congregation, in the sanctuary of their homes, was invited to meditate on Walter Rauschenbusch's book, *Prayers of the Social Awakening*, which shows that we have always had a heart for doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly.

We will be apart on Easter morning. But the ties that bind us are stronger than social distancing. I encourage you to continue to reach out to one another, to participate in our online, meditative worship experience, and to practice all the social behaviors of sequestration, the best way to love the neighbors we do not know and cannot see.

Peace, that the world cannot give.
Vincent

All gatherings, Worship, and meetings are cancelled through April 30!

The Session of Sixth Presbyterian Church building has decided to keep our building closed through April 30, 2020 for in-person worship and use by outside groups. Worship will continue to be provided through online services. Session will monitor this situation and in-person worship will resume when deemed feasible. Let us all love our neighbors by maintaining our social distance.

For continuing updates and to access our online worship experience, visit sixthchurch.org



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

April Worship and Preaching

April 5 – Palm Sunday, Matthew 21:1-17, "The Day Jesus Destroyed the Church"

April 12 – Easter Sunday, John 20:1-18, "The Stranger We Have Always Known"

April 19 – the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, Leviticus 25:1-17, "Rest for the Land"

April 26 – Luke 24:13-35, "The Stranger Along the Way"

What the Pastor Is Reading

Disappearing Earth, Julia Phillips

Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland, Patrick Keefe

Night Boat to Tangier, Kevin Barry

Children and Youth

“This feels hard because it is hard.”

This sentence has stuck with me this week as we go about trying to navigate the world from our homes and in front of our computers. I was doing well last week keeping up with a lot of you through Facebook, texting and email. We used the Zoom platform to hold Bible study and youth group. But then Sunday rolled around and we were not physically together. I had taken a week off the earlier in the month so it was the third Sunday for me to not travel into the city for church. Throughout the morning I kept looking at the clock and thinking, “We would be in Sunday school right now” or “it’s time for coffee hour.” So, like probably all of you I am missing our church family and wishing we could be together.

“This feels hard because it is hard” wrote a pastor in a blog post on the Building Faith website. All of the technology we have is great, but it’s still not the same as being with our church community to worship, learn, and play together. I’ve been thinking about all the things that we would be preparing for in the usual way in the coming week like Palm Sunday, Easter worship, our Easter hunt in Sunday school, and the family retreat that is scheduled for May 9-10. The planning for these things is in a holding pattern for now as we, well, wait and see. As I write this, I am communicating with Camp Crestfield to find out what our options for the family retreat and I will keep you posted. Tom Petty wasn’t joking when we wrote the song lyrics “The waiting is the hardest part.”

But what is giving me hope? It’s all of you! I love seeing and hearing about all the ways you have been finding to be creative at home and connect with each other in these frustrating times. You are all in my thoughts and prayers as we are taking things week by week.

I know that as we all adjust into new routines, managing working from home, school closures, and social distancing and staying at home, you are most likely bombarded and overwhelmed with information and resources. I want to keep it simple and don't want to add to the abundance of online/virtual stuff out there.

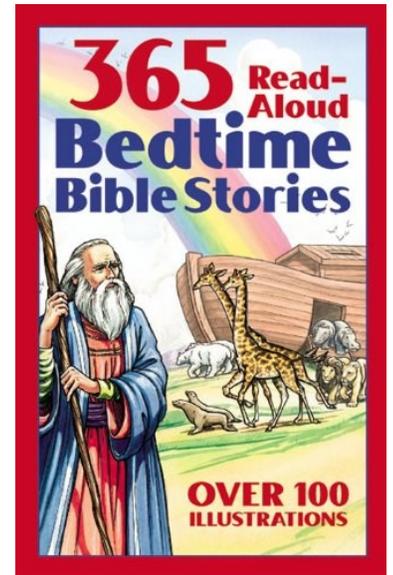
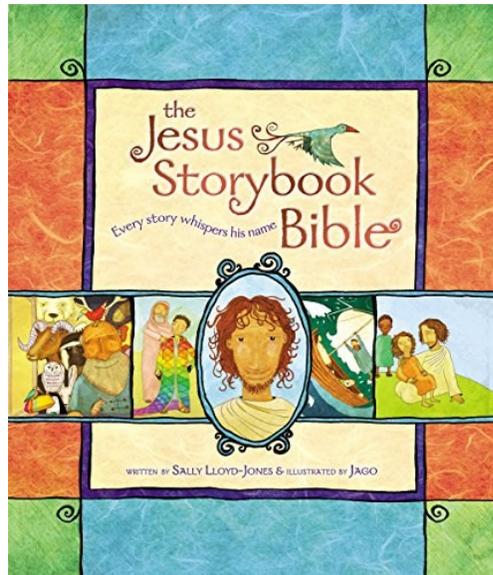
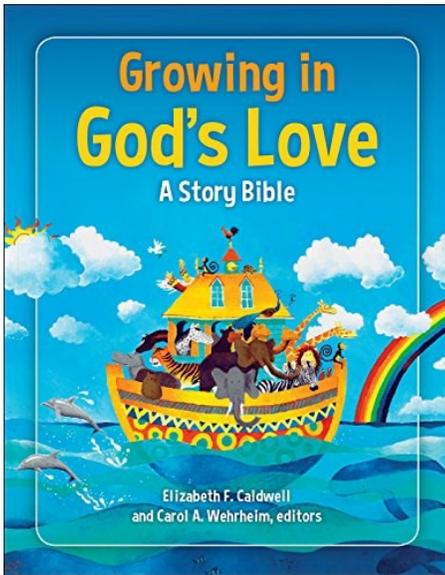
Here are the ways that we can continue to "do church" together in the coming weeks.

You can participate in worship by visiting our church website. We will be posting the Sunday bulletin which will include liturgy, scripture readings, hymns, audio recordings of the sermon and various parts of the liturgy, and a video of our Time for Children. www.sixthchurch.org.

Some ideas for worshipping at home with your young people:

- Light some candles! This is an important and popular part of our worship service and you can recreate this at home. Take a pause with your family light candles together and talk about the things that you are praying for.
- Sing! The online worship includes the hymns for the week. Or just gather together and sing your favorites.
- Read the scriptures. Grab a Bible and read the scriptures out loud together. For younger kids use a story Bible if you have one. If you don't have a story Bible, some of my favorite story Bibles are available on Kindle to download. Here are a few suggestions:
 - Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Kindle Edition by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A Wehrheim
 - Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name Kindle Edition by Sally Lloyd-Jones
 - 365 Read-Aloud Bedtime Bible Stories by Daniel Partner and Kathy Arbuckle

I will be using the children and youth blog (you can find a link to it on our website) as a place to post and share information. Weekly Sunday school lessons for grades 1-6 will be posted each week if you would like to do them at home with your family. The lesson plans contain a narrative version of the weekly passages,



background on the passages, and activities and questions for responding to the story. I will also be posting other resources, information, and ideas on how we can stay connected as a church family.

Youth Fellowship will continue to happen at our usual time, 6 to 7:30 p.m. Thursdays, virtually through Zoom. I will be sending out the meeting link weekly via email.

The weekly Wednesday Adult Bible study will be held through the video conferencing app/site called Zoom. If you would like to participate please send an email to the church office office@sixthchurch.org and we will send you the link to the scheduled zoom meeting.

Stay in touch! I am always available and want to hear from you! If you are a Facebook user join the Friends of Sixth Presbyterian Church group for more info as well. Please share! If you have resources, games or activities that have been helping you get through this time please pass your ideas along and I will share them with others.

Let me know what I can do to support you in the coming weeks. I am available for via email, phone calls or texting, Face Time and online chats! Want me to read a story to your kids? Or to say hello! I'd love to hear from you.

Peace and Blessings,

Jenny Newman, (412) 720-6392, Jennyrunew@gmail.com

*****Due to the pandemic, the family retreat is canceled.**

If you've already paid, please contact the church office for a refund.***

The Sixth Church Mouse Returns!

For congregants who would like to participate in an email form of prayers of the people, please contact sixthchurchmouse@gmail.com to be added to the list. You can submit prayer requests to the same email address by Thursdays at 5 pm to be included in an email sent each Friday.

Please remember that confidentiality still applies; we want this to be a safe place for both participants and those we love.

Notes from the March Session Meeting

(NB: notes from Session are pulled from yet-approved minutes)

MOTION TO AMEND THE ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

- The following amendment to the administrative manual was proposed to the Session based upon the recommendations provided by the Presbytery: “that the Session may meet *in an emergency by electronic means if all active elders have reasonable notice of the electronic meeting and the ability to discuss, deliberate, and discern the will of God and vote on business items. The quorum for such a meeting is one third of the active elders*”
- **Motion to approve** amendment to the administrative manual as outlined above.
 - ⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously
- **MOTION TO ESTABLISH ELECTRONIC SESSION MEETING ON MARCH 25TH, 2020**
- **Motion to approve** the holding of the session meeting as an electronic meeting.
 - ⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the February 26 Stated Session meeting and the March 14 Special Electronic Meeting were presented to session for approval with the following modifications:
- Change in wording to reflect building closure due to Corona Virus and the availability of online worship
- Change to session meeting attendance
- **Motion to approve** minutes as amended
 - ⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK’S REPORT

Worship Attendance: 3/1, 148; 3/8, 110

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **FINANCE:** February financials were presented by finance chair Mary Radcliffe. The treasurer’s report was reviewed by session members.
- **HOUSE:** Leslie Kaplan reported the completion of the following projects:
 - A broken exterior door handle has been repaired
 - The accessibility ramp at the Murray avenue entrance has been repaired and is fully operational at this time.
 - A roof leak caused by water damage has been repaired.
 - Greg Winner provided the following information related to tree planting originally scheduled for 4/19/2020: Tree planting will be rescheduled. The date of the tree planting will be determined at a later date and presented to session for approval.
- **PERSONNEL:** No updates at this time.
- **STEWARDSHIP AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATES:** Those who have not fulfilled capital campaign commitments will be contacted.

PASTOR’S REPORT AND DEACON’S REPORT

A brief update was provided to Session regarding members of the congregation who require care and assistance.

OLD BUSINESS

- Letter regarding White Supremacy
 - The Justice core team will continue to review this document and will make recommendations to the Session at a later date.
- Session Restructuring
 - The session has no update related to the restructuring of Church committees, Session and the Deacons at this time. The session will continue to review potential restructuring plans in upcoming months
- Mandated Reporters
 - All members of Session are mandated reporters. Mandated reporter trainings have been made available to session members.
- Crestfield Family Retreat:
 - Jenny Newman and the session discussed the possibility of holding the Family retreat at Crestfield this spring. The family retreat may not be able to occur due to Corona-virus related closures. Jenny proposed a potential family activity to occur over the summer to replace the retreat.
 - **Motion to approve** the deputizing of Jenny Newman and the Christian education committee to make a decision about Sixth Church participation in the family retreat in April 2020.
 - ⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously.
- Online Worship
 - Rev. Kolb asked for feedback from session members regarding the first online worship service that was presented to the congregation on 3/19/2020. Rev. Kolb also shared feedback he had received from congregation members. The discussion included members praising the worship service as well as members asking for better communication about where and how to find the service online. Session members provided suggestions including opportunities for congregation members to submit prayers of the people and the inclusion of more video recordings.
 - Vincent and the church staff will work to incorporate feedback into the upcoming weeks of online worship.

NEW BUSINESS

- COVID-19/Sequestration
 - The Session discussed the need to extend the closure of the church building due to the novel coronavirus and the shelter-in-place orders provided by Governor Wolf. During this discussion, it was also proposed that a Maundy Thursday worship be provided and that there be an Earth day focused service on 4/19/2020.
 - **Motion to approve** that Sixth Presbyterian Church building be closed through April 30th, 2020 for in-person worship and use by outside groups. Worship will continue to be provided through online services. Session will monitor this situation and in-person worship will resume when deemed feasible.
 - ⇒ **Motion approved** unanimously.
- Committee Information:
 - More Light Committee: The More Light committee will contact the guest preacher scheduled for 5/5/2020 to discuss the need to reschedule due to the Corona virus and stay-at-home orders.
 - Christian Education and nursery staff: Jenny Newman asked Session for suggestions related to nursery staff pay during closure of church building.
 - **Motion to approve** the charging of Jenny Newman to determine equitable payment to childcare staff workers based upon previous 2 months of payment
 - ⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: April 22, 2020, 7 pm

Birthdays

April 1..... Sue Koehler
Diana Wood

April 17.....Kathy Heron

April 2..... David Rothenberg

April 18.....David Bennett

April 6..... Kate Davoli
Barb Parees

April 21.....Jane Fox

April 8..... Sheila Kier

April 23.....Tom Juring

April 10.....Opal Middleton

April 26.....Russ Loyd
Tyler Middleton
Susan Nestor

April 12.....Peter Bower

April 27.....Frank Davoli

April 16.....Meg Cummings

Better Know a Committee: Stewardship

Want to get involved in the life of the church, but aren't sure where to start? This Q&A is the fifth in a series to help make committee information more accessible to congregants. Completed Q&As will also be compiled on the Sixth website.

What does the Stewardship Committee Do? The Stewardship Committee is tasked with seeking the financial resources necessary to support our Pastor and Staff, operate our church facility and fund the programs and ministries of the congregation. The committee coordinates the annual fall campaign by creating the overall theme and outreach materials and, as needed, speak with church members and friends.

Who might be interested in joining? Any members of Sixth with an interest in growing the financial strength of our church, with the curiosity or experience in financial development, or who want to explore their creative gifts in service to the ministry and congregational life of Sixth.

What do you get out of participating? You gain greater understanding of the financial structure and needs of Sixth Church. You experience a deep satisfaction in helping to grow the financial support of the church and its ministry. Also, you learn about church stewardship, how to interact with others about stewardship, and the pleasure of working closely with other members of our church family towards a common goal.

What is the time commitment? We hold one meeting in the first quarter to review the upcoming year. The second quarter meeting is to create a mid-year thank you letter to all those that have pledge. We will then meet in the third quarter to discuss the upcoming theme, testimonials and materials needed for the annual fall appeal. All meetings are held at 12:15 after worship.

How does someone get involved? Contact Elder Beth Hazlett, Chair of Stewardship by email: efhazlett@icloud.com or call/text: 412-370-9940

What We're Reading / Watching / Listening To / Doing

Cosy, Ben, Malachi, and Winter Cornelius-Bates: While staying at home, Malachi and Winter have been really into Super Smash Brothers. Malachi started the Percy Jackson series 3 days ago and is already almost done with book 2. We are also reading Harry Potter number 3 out loud. Movie-wise we've watched and listened to *Mary Poppins* and watched *Frozen II*. Cosy has been working her way through the Imperial Radch series by Ann Leckie and the Lady Sherlock mysteries. Ben is not allowed the freedom to consume any media because he is working from home and completing his doctorate. He may also enjoy Super Smash Brothers though.

Cyndi Dickson: Had a chance to watch *Harriet* on-demand. Great movie!

Peter Gilmore: *The Long Deep Grudge: A Story of Big Capital, Radical Labor, and Class War in the American Heartland* by Toni Gilpin which is a joy. Especially well-written, *The Long Deep Grudge* is a fascinating slice of US history. Also, *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America* by Michael P. Winship. This indicated by the title, this is a transatlantic study. It's well done. I began reading it because of a course I was going to teach for Pitt OLLI (Osher), now cancelled. But continuing on. I've had some issues clarified. I've also dipped into the Whipple-found, Kolb-mentioned, Rauschenbusch-written contribution to a liturgy for "social Christianity."

Kirk Howe: Practicing, composing, recording, biking, working in the shop.

Lori King: I just finished *Amity and Prosperity* and started *The Korean War: a History*.

Sue Koehler: I've been listening to the audio version of Hilary Mantel's new novel *The Mirror and the Light*, the third volume in her trilogy about Thomas Cromwell, the brilliant and cunning advisor to Henry VIII. It's very long (more than 700 pages, or 37 listening hours), but her historical scenes are breathtaking, and the narrator is very gifted. They have immersed me in the political intrigue of 16th-century England. Thomas Cromwell lasted a long time and amassed a lot of power, with few missteps, until Henry decided to lop off his head. Peter and I are watching the series called *Borgen*, which has been described as the Danish *West Wing*. There are three seasons, thirty episodes in all, about a fictional woman primed minister. Season one is particularly strong, and it won a Peabody Award. The political issues and realities are familiar ones, except the country is small and has a parliamentary system. So it seems that I am engaged in politics, just not in the US.

Verna Robinson: Reading *The Hope of Glory; Reflections on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross*.

Heather Vallone: Reading *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a story about serial murder on native american lands and the birth of the FBI. We are watching a lot of *Too Cute*, the Animal Planet marathon of a show about puppies and kittens. We are also watching a lot of "Ridiculousness" because internet videos of people doing stupid things are a great diversionary tactic. Dante is listening to every pop song parody that involves Minecraft he can find on YouTube. We are cooking and cleaning more than we ever have.

Amy Whipple: I recently finished a charming YA novel, *Pulp*, by Robin Talley. It follows parallel narratives of teenage lesbians, one in 1955 and the other in 2017, and the lesbian pulp novels of the '50s that tie the two timelines together. Right after, I read Julie Schumacher's *The Shakespeare Requirement*, a romp of a novel set in a university English department. It's the sequel to *Dear Committee Members*, which is told through recommendation letters. I'm also leaning hard on TV favorites, specifically *The Middle*, *New Adventures of Old Christine*, and *Murphy Brown*. Malakai has been listening to Selena Gomez's most recent album on repeat, and we're started working our way through *The Hobbit*. (We just finished our four-month tour through *Little Women*.)

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Dated Material – Do Not Hold

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We are an open and affirming community of faith in Jesus Christ. At home in an urban neighborhood of many faiths, we acknowledge that we are not alone on the path to understanding God. In worship, study, and fellowship, we celebrate our Presbyterian roots and find joy in our diversity. We strive for the grace to love one another as we seek a deeper understanding of life in the Spirit, working for justice and serving as stewards of God's wondrous creation.



The deadline for the May newsletter is April. 15th. Please email articles and announcements to Amy in the church office (office@sixthchurch.org).

You can also put printed copies on her desk.

Thank you!

“A Prayer of Shelter and Shadow,” Pádraig Ó Tuama

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireas na daoine.

~It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

~It is in the shadow of each other that the people live.

We know that sometimes we are alone,
and sometimes we are in community.

Sometimes we are in shadow,
and sometimes we are surrounded by shelter.

Sometimes we feel like exiles –
in our land, in our languages and in our bodies.

And sometimes we feel surrounded by welcome.

As we seek to be human together,
may we share the things that do not fade:
generosity, truth-telling, silence,
respect and love.

And may the power we share
be for the good of all.

We honour God, the source of this rich life.
And we honour each other, story-full and lovely.

Whether in our shadow or in our shelter,
may we live well
and fully
with each other.
Amen.