

May 2020

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

Andrew Sullivan wrote in *New York Magazine* in late March, "It's quite possible that by the end of all this, almost every American will know of someone who has died. A relative, a friend, an old high school classmate ... this will change us. ... All plagues change society and culture ... with consequences we won't discover for years or decades. The one thing we know about (this) epidemic is that at some point it will end. The one thing we don't know is who we will be (when it does)."

I don't know when this will end. I don't know how long it will be before we return to our sanctuary. I don't know what will happen between now and then. But I believe this: this crisis, like all crises, can't afford to be wasted. Seth Godin says, in a crisis, "it's easy to abandon what we believe, because we assume that when things get back to normal, so will we. But we forget, the choices we make, even in a crisis, particularly in a crisis, shape who we are."

Things are not normal and our normal ways of caring for others, of caring for one another, are not always available to us. We can't get together, or share a meal, or even visit our friends in the hospital. It's a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. We can't afford to waste this crisis. This is a time to remember what matters most, what is needful, as Jesus said. I'm thinking about those of you who have children at home. Maybe in addition to teaching math and geography, maybe set some time aside to tell the stories that are important to your family. If your family or friends are scattered, maybe by phone or Zoom or FaceTime, reflect on the moments that have shaped your family. Or talk about moments in the lives of others that have inspired you and shaped what you value most. In a time of crisis, when everything seems to be shifting daily, we need to dig deeper into the truth that sustains us.

You are always in my daily prayers. Be safe. Be well.

Peace!
Vincent

We will continue to keep our building closed due to the ongoing public health concerns. All events and activities, including services of worship, remain temporarily suspended. Session will monitor this situation and in-person worship will resume when deemed feasible.

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



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

May Worship and Preaching

May 3 – Psalm 23, "Jesus Saves"

May 10 – Psalm 131, "Calming Our Souls"

May 17 – Acts 17:16-34, "An Unknown God"

May 24 – John 17:1-11, Acts 1:6-14, "Your Upper Room"

May 31 – Pentecost, Acts 2:1-13, "Who Needs to Be There?"

What the Pastor Is Reading

What You Have Heard Is True, Carolyn Forché

The Topeka School, Ben Lerner

A Way Other Than Our Own, Walter Brueggemann

Children and Youth

Graduates! We would like to honor graduating members and friends of our church family this year in our June newsletter. Please send a photo and information to Jenny Newman via email: Jennyrunew@gmail.com.

Youth Fellowship: The youth group will continue meeting on Thursdays via Zoom. Links to access the zoom sessions and meeting dates will be sent via email. Contact Jenny Newman at (412) 720-6392 or by email at Jennyrunew@gmail.com for more information.

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.

May Birthdays

May 1.....Tom Cummings

May 23..... Erin Cummings

May 3.....Sharon Van Dyke

May 26..... Karl Greenley

May 4.....Jan Maxwell

May 27..... Chris Gaul

May 12..... Leslie Kaplan

May 30..... Cliff Johnson

May 14..... Gail Luley

May 31..... Marnie Bertolet

May 21..... David Wood

Maggie Ritchey

Mikki Danielson

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

David Bennett: *Thomas Wolfe*, a biography by Elizabeth Nowell. Coming to terms with my obsession for Wolfe and the deep impression he left on me. This is an early biography by someone who knew him fairly well. The biography included many revelations to me.

Cosette Cornelius-Bates: I'm watching *Grace and Frankie*. We've also been playing Rat-a-tat-cat

Sara DeLucia: Louie is reading the *Spy Kids* series by Stuart Gibbs (*Spy School*, *Spy Camp*, *Evil Spy School*, *Spy Ski School*...). Sadie reread the *Percy Jackson* and *Heroes of Olympus* books. Jesse is reading Disney Classics Golden Books.

Carol Emerson: Reading Dickens's *Great Expectations* and the Clinton's *Gutsy Women*. Listening to NPR and playing too much online Scrabble

Megan Fogt: *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster* by Jonathan Auxier. Available with your library card on Hoopla, also local author...and last month's book club pick (I'm a bit behind)

Peter Gilmore: Not often enough, I'm playing my harmonica(s), trying to rebuild my fiddle/mandolin repertory of jigs, reels, hornpipes. Having finished reading *All the Shah's Men*, a gripping account of the 1953 US/British coup which overthrew a democratic government in Iran, I hope to get back to the interrupted reading of *The Long Deep Grudge: A Story of Big Capital, Radical Labor, and Class War in the American Heartland*. I try to remember to dip into Donald McKim's *Coffee with Calvin: Daily Devotions*. And I try to keep the birdfeeder filled! It's an endless delight watching the cardinals, finches, sparrows, nuthatches, towhees, and more, and even starlings and mourning doves cross paths around the feeder.

Patty Halverson: I am reading Louise Penny mysteries and watching *The Last Kingdom*

Kirk Howe: Writing and recording. Yesterday I finished recording a short work by the French composer Olivier Messiaen.

Lori King: Reading *The Making of Asian America* by Erika Lee; watching *Call the Midwife* and *Somewhere South* from *A Chef's Life* on pbs.

Sue Koehler: I just finished a powerful book that reminds us that Covid-19 is not our only health issue. It's by Pulitzer-winning journalist Eric Eyre – *Death in Mud Lick: A Coal Country Fight against the Drug Companies That Delivered the Opioid Epidemic*.

Gail Luley: Reading *Fineas Finn* and *A Journal of the Plague Year*. Watching *Jane the Virgin*.

Jenny Newman: Ready to dive into *The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz* by Erik Larson

Susan Rothenberg: I am watching for the first time all the seasons of *Madame Secretary* which is pure escapism, and I love it. I just finished *A Very Stable Genius* and am about to begin Michael Lewis's *The Fifth Risk* because I clearly don't love myself enough to stay away from books that are going to make me angry. Earlier in March, I read *Dear Church* by Lenny Duncan. It is "a love letter from a black preacher to the whitest denomination in the U.S." Highly recommend.

Amy Whipple: Malakai and I are nearly done reading *The Hobbit* with *Harriet the Spy* on deck. I'm finally reading Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House*, which seemingly everyone I know read last year. I've very much been enjoying watching new episodes of *One Day at a Time* and *The Good Fight*. We continue to listen to Selena Gomez on repeat.

Notes from the April Session Meeting

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

MOTION TO ESTABLISH ELECTRONIC SESSION MEETING ON APRIL 29, 2020

⇒ **Motion to approve** the holding of the session meeting as an electronic meeting.

⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously

SESSION ELDER CHECK-IN

- Session members reported on how they were doing during shelter-in-place measures that were ordered on 3/23/2020 by Governor Tom Wolf.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the March 25 2020 session meeting were presented to the session for approval

⇒ **Motion to approve** minutes as read

⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship Attendance (reported via link hits): 3/29: 219; 4/5: 262; 4/9: 158; 4/12: 479; 4/19: 441; 4/26: 246

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **FINANCE:** March financials were presented by finance chair Mary Radcliffe. The treasurer's report was reviewed by session members.
 - The session reviewed the following proposals related to financial planning during the COVID-19 closure:
 - Application for the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan: The session decided not to apply at this time for the PPP loan based upon the church's current financial status.
 - Withdrawal of funds from New Covenant Program: The session agreed that it would not be wise to withdraw funds from this program this quarter based upon the current state of the stock market.
 - Dispersal of Church and Community Capital Campaign funds: The session approved that funds to the three approved organizations be dispersed immediately as outlined in the capital campaign (Clean Air Council, Wilkinsburg Community Ministries, Pittsburgh United). Due to the closure of one of Judah Fellowship, session will determine how to disperse the fourth amount of funds at the May 2020 session meeting.
- **HOUSE:** Leslie Kaplan presented a proposal for a fire notification system that will be completed as part of the capital campaign.
 - ⇒ **Motion to approve** fire notification system plan as proposed
 - ⇒ **Motion passed** unanimously
 - Greg Winner provided the following information building maintenance projects:

- Greg toured the facility with an electrician to review electrical system updates.
- Greg has been in contact with the tree-planting organization and is working to reschedule the project for Fall 2020.
- PERSONNEL: Phyllis Rupert reported a need to form a committee of congregation members that will guide the 2020 benefits process for church staff. Phyllis offered a statement of gratitude for the church treasurers and financial chair during the COVID-19 closure.
- STEWARDSHIP AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATES: Beth Hazlett provided an update from the stewardship committee and will continue to work with the church office to analyze pledge donation data.

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

- Online Worship
 - Rev. Kolb will continue to work with church leaders and congregation members to provide online worship. Rev. Kolb recommended that the Worship committee meet to discuss ways to build online presence during this time of closure.
 - The session charged the worship committee to develop a plan for increasing the church's online presence and will receive a report from the Worship committee at the May 2020 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- Corona Virus/Sequestration
 - The session discussed the need to extend the closure of the church building due to the Corona virus and the shelter-in-place orders provided by Governor Wolf.
 - ⇒ **Motion to approve** that church staff draft a statement related to closure of the church building until further notice..
 - ⇒ **Motion approved** unanimously.
 - The session reviewed a set of questions provided by the Presbytery. The questions were provided as a guide to developing a responsible plan for reopening. Session approved the formation of a committee of Jan Myers-Newbury, Pam Howe and Mary Lang to review Presbytery questions and develop a transition plan.

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- More Light Committee: The More Light committee discussed the Church's participation in the People's Pride event. Due to a change in the event date, the committee will discuss participation in the People's Pride March at their next meeting and report the decision to the session.
- Church and Community: Church and community requested session's permission to release two previously recorded presentations via the church website.
 - Session approved releasing of recordings upon receiving permission from presenters

NEXT MEETING: May 27, 2020, 7 pm

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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.



Food for Thought...

The deadline for the June/July newsletter is May. 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!

“Willingness is saying yes to the mystery of being alive in each moment.”
—Gerald May

“Only silence is deep enough to hold everything.” —Sister Florence Leone

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.” —Rachel Carson

“But the discipline of blessings is to taste each moment, the bitter, the sour, the sweet and the salty, and be glad for what does not hurt. The art is in compressing attention to each little and big blossom of the tree of life, to let the tongue sing each fruit, its savor, its aroma and its use.” —Marge Piercy