

February 2021

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

At the Inauguration of President Joe Biden, through the voice of young Amanda Gorman, we were invited to consider "The Hill We Climb." I am convinced that one of the reasons her poem was so moving for so many of us is because poetry can do things not permitted by logic or reason. Poetry gives us access to contradictions and tensions that logic denies. Poetry will not only remember; poetry also proposes and conjures and wonders and imagines and foretells.

It is interesting to me that the Jews in the Bible turned to poetry so often to express their relationship and experience with God. Miriam did poetry when the Hebrew people crossed out of Egyptian slavery. Deborah did poetry when it dawned on the Hebrews that the Canaanites were not so formidable. Hannah did poetry when little Samuel was born. Eventually Mary did poetry when she found out she was pregnant.

All these mothers in Israel celebrated the impossible that was right before their eyes, even though they could not explain any of it. They did poetry while the hard men around them were still parsing logic, writing memos, and drafting briefs.

As a new administration begins its work to respond to the virus, rebuild our public institutions, and restore equity, poetry will fuel the revitalization, because poetry opens us to the future that memos work to control. And relinquishing some control in order to receive the impossible from God is the ongoing task of those of us who seek to be faithful and seek to build a more gracious world.

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

February Worship and Preaching

February 7 – Mark 1:29-39,
"When You Don't Feel Like
It"

February 14 – Mark 9:2-9,
"Fond Memories, Fonder
Hopes"

February 21 – Mark 1:9-15,
"Standing Tall in the
Wilderness"

February 28 – Mark 8:31-38,
"Freely Accountable"



What the Pastor Is Reading

A Children's Bible, Lydia
Millett

Homeland Elegies, Ayad
Akhtar

Christian Education Updates

Virtual Sunday School for preschool through sixth grade: 10 am

Virtual Youth Group: Thursdays from 6 to 7:30 pm

All Zoom links will be sent via email. Please contact Jenny Newman at Jennyrunew@gmail.com if you need to be added to the email list.

Adult Sunday School with Bill Guy: 10 am

Adult Education: 9:45 am

February 14, "2020 Election: Reflections of a Researcher": Join our own Ruling Elder Mary Radcliffe for a freewheeling discussion of the 2020 election results and what it means for the future.

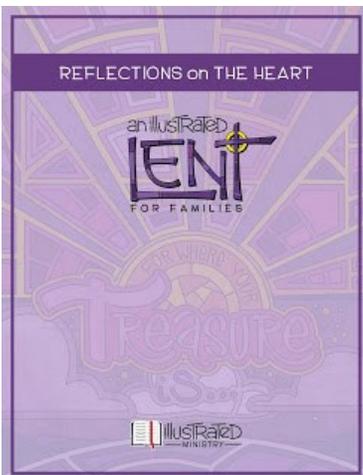
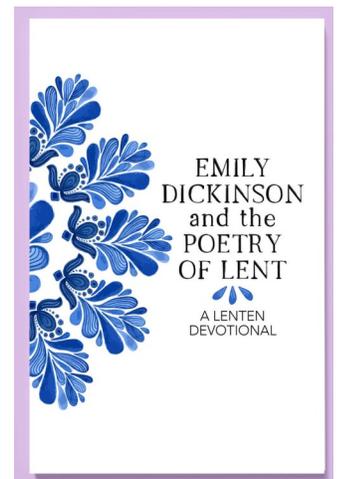
February 21, 28; March 7-21, "The Virus Has Been My Teacher: Reflections on a Year of Lent": Lent is a season of penitence and reflection, but the past year with COVID has been a Lenten experience of its own. We have learned some lessons during this past hard year, and we can't afford to waste a global crisis. Join Pastor Vincent as we consider various themes: It Is Not Good to Be Alone, Talking About Difficult Things, and Angels Are Everywhere.

Things to Explore During Lent!

Emily Dickinson and the Poetry of Lent by The Salt Project

In this Lenten devotional, biblical texts and simple, accessible practices weave together with Dickinson's poetic vision, creating a 40-day journey into the heart of the holiest week of the year. All you'll need is your favorite Bible and a collection of Dickinson's poems (all the poems in the devotional can also be found online). Jenny has both hard copies and downloadable copies of this one! Email

Jennyrunew@gmail.com to request a copy!



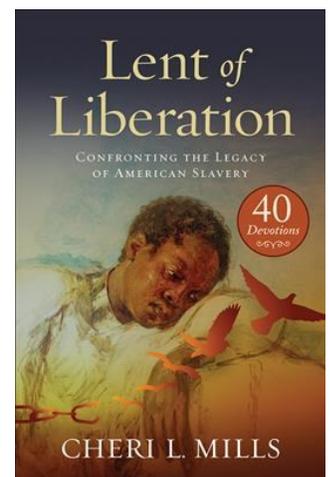
Lent for Families: Reflections on the Heart by Illustrated Ministry

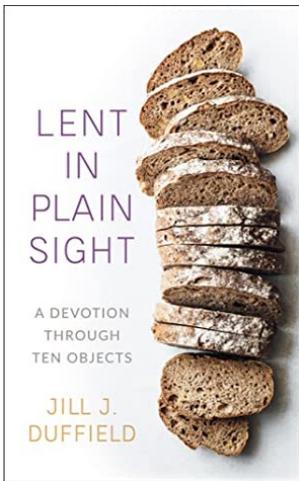
Starting with Ash Wednesday this Lenten resource includes weekly devotions, activities, and coloring pages for families to use during Lent.

The following books can be purchased from the PC (USA) Store or possibly ordered through your favorite local bookseller:

Lent of Liberation: Confronting the Legacy of American Slavery by Cheri L. Mills

Mills invites readers to learn more about the brutal institution of slavery and its impact on Black people in America and recognize how its evolution and legacy continue to harm their descendants in the United States today. Each of the forty devotions includes the testimony of a person who escaped slavery through the Underground Railroad, a Scripture passage, and a reflection connecting biblical and historical themes to challenge modern readers to work for liberation.

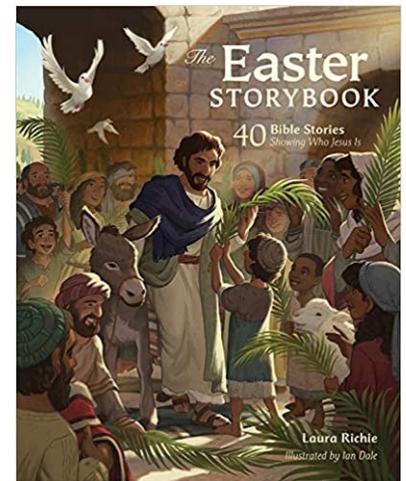




Duffield reflects on ten ordinary objects that Jesus would have encountered on his way to Jerusalem: dust, bread, the cross, coins, shoes, oil, coats, towels, thorns, and stones.

The Easter Storybook by Laura Ritchie

The stories start with Jesus' time in the temple as a boy and end with his appearances after the resurrection. Each of the 40 full-color, beautifully illustrated stories includes a Bible passage and a conversational question to guide families through the Easter season together.



Birthdays

February 2 Chris Berg

February 3 Doris Bell

February 9 Kit Ayars

February 14.....Peter Kaplan

Glenna Van Dyke

February 15.....Kathleen Myers

February 16.....Maria Guyette

February 18.....Cyril Fox

John McCall

February 19.....Greg Cooper

February 20.....GG Loyd

February 21.....Linda May

February 22.....Louise Ford

February 23.....Diane James

February 26.....Jan Myers-Newbury

Amy Whipple

February 27.....Janet Kanaskie

Alliance for Police Accountability

At the Session's December meeting, our elders authorized our church's Justice Team to collect signatures for two ballot initiatives of the Alliance for Police Accountability (APA). Beginning December 29 and concluding on February 16, in conjunction with Pittsburgh United, the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network, Sisters Pittsburgh, APA needs to collect 30,000 signatures to get 2 initiatives on the ballot in May. One initiative is to end the practice of solitary confinement at the Allegheny County Jail, and the other initiative is to end the "no-knock warrant," known around the country as the Breonna Taylor law.

If you already want to sign the petitions, you can click on the link [Sign the petition \(apa-pgh.org/ballotquestions\)](https://apa-pgh.org/ballotquestions). If you would like to help our efforts to get as many community signatures as possible, please contact a Justice Team member for more information (Peter Kaplan, Peter Gilmore, Tom Twiss, Marnie Bertolet, Pam Howe, Mary Crossley, Vincent Kolb). Stay tuned for announcements in January worship for how you can help us in this work. It is one way we can make the message on our church sign a reality, that "Black Lives Matter."

Notes from the January Session Meeting

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the December 16th Session meeting were presented to the Session for approval
- **Motion to approve** December Session meeting minutes with the following corrections:
- Correction in language used to describe Unison tower agreement as a Final Easement Agreement
- **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship (YouTube views): 12/6: 80; 12/13: 207; separate Pageant video: 245; 12/20: 85; 12/24: 90; 12/27: 60; 1/3: 66; 1/10: 65; 1/17: 65; 1/24: 52

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

- The Session welcome a new member Schuyler Stupica by letter of transfer

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **FINANCE:**
 - The December financial report was presented for discussion by Finance Chair Mary Radcliffe.
 - A draft of the 2021 budget was presented to the full Session for review. The budget draft had previously been approved by the Executive Committee. During the 2021 budget draft review, the following was discussed:
 - The management of surplus funds
 - The creation of a fourth category within the endowment to house monies gained through the Unison easement agreement and surplus.
 - **Motion to approve** a draft of the 2021 budget to be presented to the congregation at the annual congregational meeting.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
 - **Motion to approve** the limiting of the amount of surplus funds to be left in the market money account to be no more than \$60,000 with the remainder of the funds moved into the endowment.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
 - **Motion to approve** establishing a fourth category of endowment funds into which the unison funds and the distribution from surplus will be placed to supplement the general operating budget.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
 - It was so ordered by the Session that rewards gained through credit card use from PNC bank be given to Maggie Ritchey as a gift to thank her for her years of service as treasurer.

- **STEWARDSHIP:**

- Stewardship chair Beth Hazlett reported the 2020 Stewardship campaign raised a total of \$337,484.12.

- **HOUSE:**

- Capital Campaign updates: Elder Leslie Kaplan is continuing to work with Stanley on the installation of the fire protection system.

- **TOWER UPDATE:**

- Elder Beth Hazlett presented the final easement agreement for use of the cell phone tower to the Session for review. Per this agreement, Sixth Presbyterian Church will receive a net total amount of \$428367.89 for a 50-year easement agreement.
- **Motion to approve** the 50-year easement agreement with unison
- **Motion passed** unanimously.

PASTOR'S REPORT AND DEACON'S REPORT

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

NEW BUSINESS

- Committee Restructuring Proposal
 - The session reviewed committee restructuring proposals provided by Elder Bill Moore and Elder Leslie Kaplan.
 - The session will plan to complete the committee restructuring process prior to the change of officers in June 2021

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Worship Committee:
 - **Motion to approve** Communion service dates as February 7th, 2021, March 7th 2021 and April 4th 2021.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
 - The worship committee will determine Communion dates for the rest of the 2021 to be presented to Session at a later meeting.
- Christian Education Committee:
 - **Motion to approve** the Sunday school offerings "2020 Election: Reflections of a Researcher" with Ruling Elder Mary Radcliffe and "The Virus Has Been My Teacher: Reflections on a Year of Lent" with Vincent.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

NEXT MEETING: February 25, 2021

Welcome, New Member!

At the January meeting, the Session received Schuyler Stupica into membership.

From Schuyler: After graduating from Kenyon College in 2019, I moved to Pittsburgh to work as a legal writer at an immigration law firm downtown. I have loved living in Squirrel Hill for the past year and a half, and I am particularly grateful for the warm, welcoming, and active community I have found at Sixth Presbyterian Church. I'm a big politics nerd and have enjoyed canvassing for various campaigns in the Pittsburgh area. One day I hope to run for elected office myself! I also enjoy going on long bike rides and hikes, cooking, and picking apples multiple times a season at Soergel Orchards. Although I'll be starting law school at the University of Michigan this fall (with the plan of becoming a public defender), it won't be a permanent goodbye. I am hoping to take summer internships in Pittsburgh and will also visit the city throughout the school year to see my boyfriend of five years and, of course, attend Sunday worship services at Sixth!



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

David Bennett: Lawrence Zeleny's *The Bluebird: How You Can Help Its Fight for Survival* (The Audubon Naturalist Library)

Marnie Bertolet: *Becoming* by Michelle Obama

Kirk Howe: I just did a live-stream of the Ingis Piano Duo. <https://youtu.be/1CM9jUW1jmk>. They are amazing! Program starts at about 2:30 into the video.

Kate Kennedy: Nelson Demille's *The Quest!*

Lori King: *Collateral Damage: Changing the Conversation About Firearms and Faith* by James Atwood. Bonus: not until I started reading the book did I realize that the author is a retired PC(USA) pastor.

Linda May: *Lupin* on Netflix, a new crime series from France.

Kathi Robinson-Dassel: Trying to get a vaccine appointment. Aarrggghh!!

Maggie Ritchey: Trying to sort/clean up all my treasurer's stuff!

Amy Whipple: The adoption group I belong to is reading Gabrielle Glaser's recent release *American Baby: A Mother, a Child, and the Shadow History of Adoption*. Malakai and I are about to embark on the Percy Jackson series.

Treasurer Update

On December 31, 2020, Maggie Ritchey completed seven years of being our church treasurer. She has served us with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.

Maggie, we are deeply grateful that you rendered this service for so many years. THANK YOU!

Erik Fogt has agreed to be our new church treasurer in 2021. THANK YOU, ERIK! As we transition to his service, please address all church treasurer related inquiries to Sixthchurchtreasurer@gmail.com. This includes reimbursable expense reports, check requests, and any other financial related inquiries.

Wilksburg Community Ministry Update

Wilksburg Community Ministry continues to operate, distributing food and Giant Eagle gift cards. Sixth Presbyterian Church's usual Christmas Food Drive could not occur due to the COVID virus epidemic forcing our church to suspend services.

However, our members can continue to support the work of Wilksburg Community Ministry's providing food and Giant Eagle gift cards for food by sending money or gift cards to Wilksburg Community Ministry at 702/704 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15221 or via their website at www.wcm15221.org.

If you wish to volunteer in packing food boxes, please contact Ruth Kittner at 412-241-8072 or email caring@wcm15221.org.

—Sheila Kier



In Our Own Write: Creative Writing for LGBT Elders (ages 50+) from Pitt's Center for Creativity

Join writer Erik Schuckers from the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Creativity for this FREE virtual nine-week workshop.

Through readings, guided writing prompts, and workshop discussions, learn how to share your experiences through poetry and short nonfiction.

We'll meet twice a week via the free Zoom platform to explore writing from memory, family and community, the body, and more, all from our unique perspectives as LGBT elders. **Meetings will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays from 7-8 p.m. starting February 17.**

We'll read and discuss contemporary LGBT pieces, write and share our own original work, and have the chance to meet virtually with publishing LGBT writers.

At the end, you'll be able to share what you create through a collective reading and a limited edition chapbook to be distributed to all participants and archived in the University of Pittsburgh Library System.

This workshop is geared specifically toward those with little or no previous writing experience: beginners welcome! The only requirements are access to a computer and the desires to explore creative writing and connect with our community.

Deadline for registration is February 12: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/in-our-own-write-creative-writing-for-lgbt-elders-ages-50-registration-138314850441>

2020 Annual Reports

Christian Education

In gathering information for the annual report on 2020, I came across an article I wrote in April where I used the quote “It feels hard because it is hard.” And guess what, still true! 2020 came with so many challenges that forced all of us to rearrange how we do life. We at Sixth Church have been navigating how we can do ministry virtually during the time of a pandemic and I want to thank everyone in our church family for their patience, support, and creativity as we try to move through this uncommon time together. As you can see from the length of this report (apologies to our faithful readers), we have done our best to provide ministry and educational opportunities despite not being able to gather in person.

While all of our programs and activities moved online mid-March, I want to first highlight a few things that happened early in the year.

Beginning in January, our Sunday school classes and youth group met weekly as usual and we offered nursery care and Extended Session during worship. Our children and youth actively participated in worship in multiple ways. These include serving as acolytes and water bearers, lighting peace candles, and being part of our lively Time for Children.

In January and February, I worked closely with staff, the Christian Education Committee and outside security professions in updating our church’s Emergency and Disaster Response Plan. We held training sessions for staff, teachers, and church leaders. Our plan identifies two evacuation meeting locations and outlines procedures to be used in case of an active shooter or building emergency. We created a form for a Children’s Individual Emergency and Lockdown Plan which identifies the needs of children and youth who have sensory, behavioral, or medical needs to be used in the case of an emergency event. We shared the updated safety plan with the congregation through the newsletter, church website, and a Minute for Mission during a worship service. We also held an emergency drill with the children during the Sunday school hour showing them where to go and what to do in case of a building evacuation.

In February, we held a listening session for members, parents, and volunteers to begin a re-visioning process for our children and youth ministries at Sixth Church. The session was held as a part of project I was working on as required course work for the Youth and Theology Certification from the Youth Institute of Princeton Seminary. Prior to the listening session, I created critical ministry objectives and the outline for a project called “FutureCasting” designed to help Sixth assess and reevaluate our ministry to children and youth. A survey was created to gather information from parents and congregation members and the listening session was held to respond to the information gathered. Unfortunately, the process was interrupted when we closed the church for in-person gatherings. Although I completed the year-long certification program in May, I look forward to picking up where we left off in that process. The next steps are to regroup and beginning working on the “next steps” we outlined during our session.

Since mid-March, Sunday school, youth group, and adult education classes have been meeting online using Zoom. I began recording videos for our Time for Children that can be used in our Sunday worship service that are either presented online, pre-rerecorded, or live streamed on YouTube. Some of our young people have been enlisted to help by appearing in Time for Children videos. Sunday school lessons and other resources are provided online each week on the Children and Youth blog. We delivered summer treat bags containing fun snacks, crafts, and at-home resources to families. In the fall we assembled more treat bags and included Communion elements for families to celebrate Worldwide Communion Sunday at home. Advent calendars and seasonal resources were sent out to families as well.

We presented our version of the Sunday School Christmas Pageant virtually using zoom and videos created by our kids.

In late spring I began working with church’s reopening task force and created plans and protocols to be used when we can resume in-person programs for children and youth. Our re-opening plan for Christian Education was vetted by the Christian Education

Committee, the re-opening task force, and approved by the church session.

ADULT EDUCATION:

First and foremost, Bill Guy's Sunday school class continues to meet on Sundays for Bible study. The class examines books of the Bible in detail and in depth. Particular attention is paid to the way verses of the Bible have been translated or mis-translated from Hebrew and from Greek. Pastor Vincent continues to lead a weekly Wednesday Bible study that looks at the lectionary passages that will be used for the following Sunday's worship. Both groups have been meeting virtually since mid-March. We have had an amazing offering of Adult Education studies and discussions this year coordinated by Pastor Vincent. All the sessions from mid-March on were offered virtually. The following is a brief recap of what was offered by month:

January

- Our Water Campaign: Pastor Vincent shared the work of the Our Water Campaign in advocating for green infrastructure in the largest capital project in the history of southwestern Pennsylvania.
- A Witness from the Border: Led by Rabbi Jeremy Markiz, Associate Rabbi at Beth Shalom, who shared his experience of visiting detention and migrant centers as part of a Jewish witness called Truah this past fall.

February

- Our Criminal Justice System: With Public Defender Lisa Middleman who spoke on the on the current state of our penal system.
- Natural Earth Burial with Peter McQuillin and Laura Faessal discussing options for end of life.

March

- An update from Wilkesburg Community Ministries with Ruth Kittner. Ruth shared the particular challenges the Wilkesburg community currently is facing.
- PIIN in 2020 with Jamaal Craig sharing the upcoming work for the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network: criminal justice reform, counteracting voter suppression, and turning out voters of conscience.
- Experience with the Criminal Justice System with Terri Minor Spencer, the Executive Director of P.O.W.E.R. (Providing Opportunities with Effective Resources) shared her work with returning citizens.

August

- Justice Core Team: Educational hour focusing on the proposed Statement Against White

September and October

- The Rationale for Single Payer Health Care with Retired physician Dr. Michael Schroering
- Free People Strike with Wilson Juring, son of Tom Juring and Mary Crossley, was injured in the altercation between Pittsburgh Police and demonstrators in East Liberty on June 1. He is now a plaintiff in the suit being brought against law enforcement working for the Free People Strike, a statewide movement to free as many of the 45,000 prisoners in PA who are locked up in close quarters in the middle of the pandemic.
- Book discussion on "Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and It's Urgent Lessons for Our Own" by Dr. Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.
- Rev. Karen Rohrer led a discussion on her collaborative work on the book "Sustaining Grace: Innovative Ecosystems for New Faith Communities." Dr. Alex Finley discussing her book "An Intimate Economy: Enslaved Women, Work, and America's Domestic Slave Trade."

November

- Discussion of the book "Spiritual Resources for Coping: Without Buddha, I Could Not Be a Christian" by Paul Kittner: Pastor Vincent led discussion and welcomed congregation members Diana Wood and Kate Davoli and speakers.
- Jews and Abortion: Traditions, History, and Values with Dr. Rachel Kranson.
- Pandemic update with congregation members with Dr. Maria Guyette and Dr. Frank Guyette.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Newman on behalf of the Christian Education Committee

Church and Community (C&C)

In 2020 members of C&C remained satisfied with the values we had endorsed in our 2019 allocation process and with the relative weights we had assigned to advocacy and direct assistance. Consequently, at our May meeting we agreed to retain the same overall balance established in 2019 allocating: 1) \$500 to the Youth Group to be used as it saw fit, 2) 60% of the remainder to organizations engaged in advocacy for social change (with half of this to be distributed by C&C, and half by the four independent advocacy committees), and 3) 40% of the remainder to organizations engaged in direct assistance (with 25% of this going to a Rainy Day Fund for emergencies).

C&C members also were generally satisfied with the specific amounts contributed to organizations in 2019. Consequently, leaving aside organizations supported by our Rainy Day Fund, we agreed to assist the same organizations in the same percentages in 2020. Because the budget this year for locally directed missions was about 6% below the amount budgeted for 2019, there was a corresponding reduction in the amount allocated to each organization.

In light of the economic uncertainty caused by COVID-19, and in keeping with the guidance of Session, we agreed that our disbursements should be spread over the year so as not to strain the Church's cash flow. Also, per Session guidance, we agreed that most funds for direct assistance should be distributed first to reduce suffering. With these guidelines, C&C voted to distribute the funds in three disbursements, as described in the table below.

One adjustment we had to make this plan was to reallocate funds originally donated to New Sanctuary Pittsburgh, a faith-based organization devoted to protecting and supporting immigrants facing deportation. In early June 2020 we discovered that our 2019 check to New Sanctuary Pittsburgh had not been cashed and that the local organization had dissolved. In response, we voted at our June meeting to reallocate the New Sanctuary Pittsburgh funds from 2019 to New Sanctuary Movement Philadelphia, and to reallocate the New Sanctuary Pittsburgh funds for 2020 to Casa San Jose of Pittsburgh. Both organizations have strong records of important advocacy work on behalf of immigrants in our state. With that adjustment, we disbursed the funds as follows:

Disbursement and Primary Target	Funding Date	Amount	Percent of Total
First Disbursement – Funding for Groups Providing Direct Assistance	6-15	\$10,028.67	33.6%
Second Disbursement – C&C Advocacy Organizations, Rainy Day Fund, and Reallocation of 2019 New Sanctuary Pittsburgh Funding	9-15	\$11,613.65	38.9%
Third Disbursement – Independent Advocacy Committees (Earth Care, Gun Safety, Justice Core Team, and More Light)	10-1	\$8,238.55	27.5%
Total		\$29,880.87	100.0%

Rainy Day Fund

Our Rainy-Day allocations were made in accordance with our decision in 2019 to use these funds for urgent and extreme need in response to a local, national, or global disaster. Additionally, we were guided by three considerations:

- We saw this moment as a call to address the intersectionality between racism, poverty, and the pandemic that defines this moment in the history of our country and of the world.
- We saw this as an opportunity to join in the work of our sisters and brothers in faith.
- We felt the need to address the effects of the pandemic at every geographic level: local, national, and global.

Because these considerations led us to fund three organizations that we had not previously supported, we want to share brief descriptions of these groups.

The Critical Community Needs Fund (CCNF) of the POISE Foundation of Pittsburgh - POISE is a Pittsburgh community foundation all of whose trustees, and almost all of whose senior staff, are African American. POISE has created the CCNF to provide support to small, Black-led organizations responding to critical needs in Pittsburgh’s Black community as the result of the pandemic. Its seven primary focus areas are life-sustaining needs, mental health, faith-based organizations, urban gardening in Black communities, Black business associations and CDCs, information dissemination, and bridging the digital divide for families and seniors.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is one of the mission agencies of the Presbyterian Church USA. Native American communities have been especially hard hit by COVID-19 and PDA has awarded \$50,000 to presbyteries that are engaged in meaningful partnerships with Native American Communities and can respond to the pandemic. Our donation will be targeted to support this work by the presbyteries, which include the those of the Grand Canyon, Dakota, Wyoming, South Louisiana, and Northwest Coast.

The Coronavirus Relief Fund of Church World Service (CWS) – CWS, which C&C has supported directly and which the congregation supports through the CROP Walk, has created a Coronavirus Relief Fund which CWS seeks to raise \$1.75 million in 2020 and \$1 million in 2021. A large proportion of the funds will be used across the United States where CWS provides a continuum of services to newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant farm workers. The largest amounts of the Fund will be used for rental and other financial assistance across the U.S. (40%), expansion of global hunger and poverty fighting (23%), refugee resettlement offices in the US (14%), and migrant and refugee support globally (11%).

Each of these entities received 25% of the Rainy-Day Fund. The remaining 25% was donated to 412 Food Rescue of Pittsburgh and supplemented the amount C&C gave through its regular allocation process.

Independent Advocacy Committees

As noted earlier, we allocate half of our advocacy budget, or 30% of the amount given to C&C for locally directed missions, to the four independent advocacy committees of Sixth Church: The Justice Core Team, the Gun Safety Committee, the Earth Care Committee, and the More Light Committee. Each of these groups has established its own process for deciding what groups these committees will support. The table below shows how the independent committees allocated their funds.

Organization	Amount	Organization	Amount
Justice Core Team:		Natural Resources Defense Council	\$300.00
Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN)	\$2,119.26	PASUP – Pittsburghers Against Single-Use Plastic	\$100.00
Gun Safety Committee:		Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania	\$100.00
CeaseFire Pennsylvania	\$750.00	More Light Committee:	
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America	\$625.00	Persad Center, Pittsburgh	\$706.43
Black Women for Positive Change	\$625.00	That All May Freely Serve	\$706.43
Earth Care Committee:		Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence	\$706.43
Penn Environment	\$750.00		
Group Against Smog and Pollution	\$750.00	Total	\$8,238.55

C&C Programming During 2020

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, programming opportunities were more limited in 2020 than in past years. However, on March 4 C&C co-sponsored – together with Amnesty International Pittsburgh and Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty – the program “17 Years, 8 Months, & 1 Day on Death Row.” Our speaker was Juan Roberto Melendez, who told the inspiring story of hope and survival about the nearly two years he spent on death row for a crime he did not commit.

Summary of C&C Giving

The following table summarizes C&C’s allocation of funds through its committee process, including the Rainy Day Fund. We are deeply grateful for the 2020 pledges of Sixth Church members and friends, which made these donations possible.

Organization	Amount
Organizations Providing Direct Assistance:	
Church World Service	\$1,526.18
Wilksburg Community Ministry	\$1,398.28
El Porvenir Cooperative, Nicaragua	\$1,351.39
Just Harvest (direct assistance & advocacy)	\$1,144.63
Lazarus Fund	\$1,048.71
Table Ministry of the Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community	\$1,048.71
MHY Family Services	\$1,048.71
Global Links	\$953.86
412 Food Rescue - C&C Allocation	\$850.48
Neighborhood Academy (direct assistance & advocacy)	\$1,057.24
Total	\$11,428.19
Organizations Advocating for Change:	
Casa San Jose of Pittsburgh	\$1,911.10
New Sanctuary Movement Philadelphia	\$1,962.41
Sabeel Jerusalem	\$1,654.07
Pittsburgh United	\$1,033.79
Anti-Racism Team Pittsburgh Presbytery	\$827.04
Total	\$7,388.41
Rainy-Day Fund:	
Critical Community Needs Fund of the POISE Foundation	\$706.43

Organization	Amount
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for Presbyteries with Native American Populations in Need	\$706.43
Church World Service Coronavirus Relief Fund	\$706.43
412 Food Rescue – Rainy Day Fund Allocation	\$706.43
Total	\$2,825.72

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Twiss and Peter Kaplan, co-chairs

Committee members: Kit Ayars; Sara Berg; Kate Davoli; Carol Emerson; Norma & Jack Farquhar; Keith Gillogly; Peter Gilmore; Nora & Cliff Johnson; Myra Kazanjian; Sheila Kier; Sue Koehler; Maggie Ritchey; and Diana Wood.

Earth Care

As is the case for most groups, 2020 put a damper on Earth Care Committee (ECC) activities, with many of us left only to explore our at-home environment. I’m grateful, however, for the activities and functions were still carried out.

In February, Pete McQuillin and Laura Faessel from Penn Forest Natural Burial Park visited Sixth to share more about their burial park and cemetery and about the process of green burial, which is a much more natural and easy-on-nature alternative to traditional burial methods. In addition to burial grounds, Penn Forest, located in Verona, is also a nature preserve and site for nature enthusiasts.

As our building remains closed, many at Sixth have probably had certain hard-to-recycle items pile up. I don’t have any impressive recycling stats to share this year, however I expect there will be a glut of recycling once we finally convene again.

For Earth Day in April (the occasion’s 50th anniversary), we had plans to invite local environmentalist and educator Maren Cooke to present at Sixth. Plans were also being made to host Cricket Hunter from Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light, an organization of faith communities responding to climate change. Alas, these plans had to be scrapped! However, I am thankful to Leslie Kaplan, Greg Winner, and others at Sixth and in the community who worked with Tree Pittsburgh and other groups to obtain and plant a chinquapin oak tree on the church grounds in recognition of the 50th Earth Day.

Additionally, Pittsburghers and some from Sixth still had the chance to recognize Earth Day and learn more about environmental issues at the virtual Earth Week Pittsburgh event.

As part of Sixth’s outreach mission and in collaboration with the Church and Community Committee, the ECC was able to select various environmental groups to receive funding. In 2020, Sixth’s ECC supported a diverse mix of local, regional, and national environmental groups: PennEnvironment, the Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP), the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburghers Against Single-Use Plastic (PASUP), and Recycle this PGH. My thanks to all who helped in choosing these great groups.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Gillogly, chair

Fellowship

The Fellowship Committee has basically been inactive since the church closed in March. Our last event was the Pancake Supper on Tuesday, February 25.

We have had Zoom meetings as a committee on Sundays at 1 pm on five occasions; in addition we had two outdoor “meetings.” The purpose of all of these was social, and to listen to and support each other.

We look forward to opportunities to once again plan and execute meals as what we lovingly refer to as “God’s Catering Service.”

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Myers-Newbury, co-chair

Gun Safety Committee

Active Committee Members: Judy Schryer, Joan Gaul, Vincent Kolb, Diana Wood, Cliff Johnson, Norma and Jack Farquhar, Myra Kazanjian, Maggie Ritchey, Alice Scales, Lori King, Lori Swensson, chair.

Also attending as often as possible: Rob Conway of CeaseFirePA.

The Committee held its first and only meeting on January 26, 2020. Unfortunately, the COVID shutdown prevented any further in-person meetings.

At that meeting we set our goals:

- to join with others in our community also working for gun safety (in the belief that numbers count when lobbying legislators),
- to show those affected by gun violence that we care.

In the works were (and still are) plans to support CeaseFirePA as it lobbies our Pennsylvania legislators to support gun safety measures. We have prepared a “Moment for Mission” to explain ERPO (Extreme Risk Prevention Orders) to our congregation. ERPO is the first of two issues CeaseFirePA plans to focus on. The second is passing legislation concerning mandatory reporting of Lost and Stolen guns.

Other actions taken by the committee:

- Communicated to Mike Turzai, Speaker of the PA House of Representatives, urging him to push the House Judiciary Chair to move ERPO and Universal Background Checks legislation out of his committee. And reminding Speaker Turzai of the Parkland anniversary and the need for gun safety legislation.
- Signed on to the CeaseFirePA amicus brief supporting the City of Harrisburg’s right to establish firearms ordinances.
- Participated in the CeaseFirePA webinar concerning how people can use their shopping to help prevent gun violence.
- Submitted our decision on gun safety organizations we wish to support with an allocation of funds: CeaseFirePA \$750.
- Moms Demand Action \$625.
- Black Women for Positive Change \$625.

As COVID precaution measures and vaccinations continue and meetings become possible again, we will resume our work toward gun safety, especially at the state level. The gun-involved murder rate in many cities has increased and events of last week at our nation’s capitol remind us this work needs to be done! We welcome others in our congregation to join with us in this committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Swensson, chair

House

It was admittedly a relatively tame year in 2020 for the House Committee, with COVID slowing, if not preventing, many things, but here's what did occur:

CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

Tremendous thanks to everyone who has pledged and contributed to the Capital Campaign fund for Sixth Presbyterian Church! You may remember that we have already completed the Kitchen renovation, the Ridinger Room ceiling, second floor accessibility improvements, ramp repair, sanded and painted all the outside black metal railings, and completed significant concrete work: paved the back patio, replaced a quarter of the front steps, and part of the wall along the street.

Here is a rundown of this year's Capital Project accomplishments:

Renovation of the Accessibility Ramp: The outside ramp had deteriorated with holes, cracks and disintegrating block. Mariani and Richards completely repaired and restored the ramp, replacing many of the concrete blocks and re-caulking the ramp surface. The cost was \$4,480.

Fire Safety Project: The church signed a contract in May with Stanley Security for installation of the Fire Safety Project. This project includes emergency pull stations at every door (hardwired with wifi reporting) smoke and heat detectors, sirens and/or strobe light alarms in most rooms and a computerized monitoring system of the equipment and any alarms thru the phone lines. The company then drew up detailed technical plans and submitted them for review with the City and then the State. This took unbelievably long, compounded by slowdowns due to COVID-19. We just heard that our project has been approved by the State, and Stanley is waiting to receive the permit. Installation will begin in early February. The price is: \$46,331.28 due upon completion. There will be an additional quarterly monitoring fee of \$78.99 which will be paid out of the church's operating budget.

Stained Glass Windows: The second stained glass window was completed this summer. It is the large, four-lancet window in the middle of the east wall of the sanctuary. The completion included a new protective, vented glass covering and scraping and painting of the outside wooden filigree and casing. In order to remove the old protection and do this work safely, we had to get Duquesne Light to place a covering over the electrical service lines that come into the church between window 2 and 3. Due to the difficulty of getting this done (several months wait and many phone calls) we decided to also address the outside needs of window 3 at the same time- removing the old cover, scraping, painting, and putting up a new metal framework and tempered glass. This third, two-lancet window was removed for restoration this fall. Expenditures for 2020 included full payments for windows one and two, and partial payment for window three, totaling \$86,250.

The sanctuary window restoration project will take several more years. We plan to complete the other remaining Capital Campaign work in 2021. Peter Koehler is planning the improvements to the chapel and there are a few second floor access items remaining. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Leslie Kaplan at bezbeads@verizon.net.

Charitable Contributions: In June, charitable contributions were made to the following organizations based on the congregations contributions made to the capital campaign fund in 2019:

- Wilkinsburg Community Ministry, \$ 3,566.62
- Clean Air Council, \$ 3,566.62
- Pittsburgh United, \$ 3,566.62

EXTERIOR

- The lightning strike damage to the stone work last year that was contracted in late 2019 was completed early in the year

- Back in February, Tree Pittsburgh granted the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition a tree as part of their greater celebration of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, and the Urban Coalition asked to plant the tree in the yard at Sixth. While a whole ceremony and fanfare were intended for a planting on the anniversary itself, COVID prevented that from actually occurring. But we still got the tree! We arranged a date in May, and a crew from Tree Pittsburgh came out, as did Leslie Kaplan and myself, along with Mardi Isler from the Urban Coalition, and we planted a chinquapin oak near the driveway on Forbes.
- During the unrest over the summer, one of the handrails up the stairs of the main Forbes was damaged. Contractors repaired the handrail and the concrete around it.
- Murray Avenue-side door lock was rebuilt after keys wouldn't turn in it.

INTERIOR

- An electrician made a number of improvements around the building
- Replaced four old outlets along the back wall of the sanctuary
- Installed an outlet in the narthex to power the hearing aid chargers
- Replaced the GFCI outlet and weather housing on the front yard sign
- Lowered the light switch in the 2019-renovated upstairs bathroom
- Installed an outlet on the ceiling of the same bathroom to permit the door opener to be permanently powered
- Damage in a corner of the wall in the narthex that was causing a leak was repaired.
- The fan in the Ridinger Room that long had the "do not use heater" sign upon it got a new motor and switches, and now works again.

VERIZON-RELATED EVENTS

In late August, a drain line from one of Verizon's AC units clogged and subsequently soaked the Groom's Room floor with condensate. A Verizon tech was dispatched to clear the drain and stop the water leak. The old carpeting was removed and fans were set up to dry the area as quickly as possible. Remittances for repairs are being handled via Verizon's online landlord portal, where invoices can be submitted. To date, a mold remediator has sanitized the subfloor to ensure mold will not begin growing in the wood and new carpet once it is installed. The mold remediation invoices have been submitted, but not remitted, as yet.

In late May, Verizon informed us that they intended to make upgrades to their equipment and were proposing new terms to the leasing contract which would decrease the monthly rent we would receive. Aside from two different offers from Verizon, we were also contacted by two site management companies offering us alternative terms. Ultimately, the Session agreed to the deal offered by Unison Site Management: a 50-year lease in exchange for a one-time lump sum payment. Contracts are being finalized now and will go into effect in early 2021. Under this new arrangement, Verizon will remain the occupant of the bell tower, under Unison's management.

COVID-RELATED ACTIONS

- The building was closed in mid-March for worship and other use beyond staff occupancy and niche uses (e.g., voting). Since then, weekly services have been pre-recorded or live-streamed.
- Several air purifiers were purchased for use in office spaces
- During the annual inspection, the filters in the furnaces were replaced with higher-efficiency filters.
- Inquiries to two different HVAC contractors have been made for modifications to the furnaces. As of writing, both are still in the planning phase.
- Installation of humidifiers to elevate the humidity of the air entering the sanctuary
- Installation of switches to allow the furnace blowers to operate continuously

UPDATES FROM PETER KOEHLER

- I replaced the defective photocell switches that control the two outside

lights at the Forbes Ave. entrance.

- I located instructions on the web for the timer switch that controls the light over the Murray Ave. entrance door and the two lights on the sides of the steps leading up to that door. With those instructions I reprogrammed the timer switch to work properly.
- With help from you and Kirk Howe I ran a video cable through the crawlspace underneath the sanctuary from the back of the sanctuary to Amy's office for sharing the church services on the internet.
- On election day I replaced the defective flood light bulbs above the handicap ramp to make it safe for voters to use the ramp after dark.

MISCELLANY

- A couple times over the summer, volunteers from the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance and Casa San Jose used the yard to distribute masks and cash assistance to minority locals burdened by the pandemic.
- Sixth was a polling location on 03 November 2020. Interior access to voters was restricted to only necessary locations to limit any potential contamination spread and the occupied area was professionally sanitized the next day.
- Boy Scout Troop 3945 expressed interest in moving from Morningside VFW to Sixth. Details are still being arranged and no meetings would occur until the building is reopened.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Winner, chair, and the House committee: Leslie Kaplan and Peter Koehler

More Light

Sixth has had a robust and joyful presence at Pittsburgh's summer Pride events for many years, but this, as in so many other ways, was a year like no other. (Thanks, COVID.) The More Light Committee looks forward to opportunities in 2021 to join with others in our community and celebrate, in the streets, the gift of LGBTQ+ lives.

Session affirmed the More Light Committee's recommendation that the portion of the Capital Campaign dedicated to Sixth's More Light mission be channeled to SistersPGH annually, until such time as the Capital Campaign ends (2022). Session also supported the Church + Community Committee's recommendation that its funds for Sixth's committee-mission areas be distributed to the Persad Center, That All May Freely Serve, and Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. We've recommended that Celeste Scott, a principal leader in SistersPGH be invited to do a Sunday School hour so that we can strengthen our ties to this organization and its work.

The Reverend Alex McNeill, Executive Director of More Light Presbyterians, will join us in worship at such time as the country's health situation allows. Reverend Dr. Vincent Kolb and Reverend Myra Kazanjian led Sixth's observation, as part of virtual worship service in November, of the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

In December, Sixth supported a proposal from Erik Schuckers, University of Pittsburgh, for [In Our Own Write](#), a pilot program at Pitt for a series of online writing workshops where LGBT+ elders can turn their personal histories/experiences into "work that moves, challenges, or provokes reflection....Illuminating aspects of the LGBT experience of community."

Respectfully submitted,

Kit Ayars, chair

Stewardship

Elder Beth Hazlett became chairperson of the Stewardship Committee in January, 2020. Members of the committee are: Carol Emerson, Patty Halverson, Peter Kaplan, and Vincent Kolb (ex officio)

Goals for the year were to be:

- Follow up with potential delinquent Capital Campaign donors
- Develop and implement a Planned Giving Campaign
- Send out mid-year Stewardship Thank you letter
- Develop and implement the 2021 Stewardship Theme Campaign

March:

- Elder Hazlett attended Advancement Advisors workshop on “Planned Giving for Small Shops”
- Stewardship Committee met virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic,
- Stewardship Committee wrote “Get to Know The Stewardship Committee” for the April Sixth Sense.

July:

- Stewardship Committee met virtually
- Goals revised to put the Planned Giving Campaign and conversations with potential delinquent Capital Campaign donors on hold until 2021 due to the economic uncertainty the pandemic caused
- Mid-year Stewardship letter was written and disseminated
- Initial discussions regarding the 2021 Stewardship Campaign—how to have one virtually

August:

- Stewardship Committee met virtually multiple times during the month
- 2021 Stewardship Campaign theme, “Shaped by Hope”, financial goal, and timeline were finalized

September:

- Stewardship Committee met virtually multiple times during the month
- 2021 Stewardship Campaign participants (3 brochure testimonials & 3 Moment for Stewardship speakers) were selected
- Stewardship Campaign letter and brochure were finalized

October

- 2021 Stewardship Campaign began on Sunday, Oct 4 with the first of three Moments for Stewardship at the virtual Sunday morning worship service
- Moments for Stewardship were also given October 11 and October 25, with a Stewardship sermon given on October 18
- Stewardship Campaign packets (letter, brochure, pledge card and stamped return envelope) were sent to Sixth members and friends on October 15

November

- November 1 was virtual pledge Sunday—the Committee asked that pledge cards be sent to the church by this date.
- Stewardship Committee met virtually mid-month to divvy up those members/friends we had not heard from yet.
- “Friendly Reminders from the Stewardship Committee” regarding returning 2021 Stewardship pledge cards, fulfilling 2020 Stewardship and Capital Campaign pledges
- December
- Stewardship Committee met virtually to discuss final push to those members/friends we had not heard from yet.
- “Friendly Reminders from the Stewardship Committee” regarding returning 2021 Stewardship pledge cards, fulfilling 2020 Stewardship and Capital Campaign pledges

2021 Stewardship Campaign

- Pledge Goal: \$340,582
- Pledge Actual: \$337,484.12
- Average Pledge: \$3,183.81 down from 2020's Average Pledge of \$3,289.34
- Total Pledges: 99 (including 5 new) down from 2020's Total Pledges of 103

Commentary: Given the congregation's inability to worship and meet at Sixth Church in person, the Stewardship Committee commends Sixth's ability to "just miss" our 2021 Stewardship Pledge Goal. We hope by the end of 2021 our Stewardship Pledge Goal will be our Stewardship Pledge Actual.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Hazlett, chair

Worship

Soon after celebrating Epiphany and Baptism of the Lord in January, we began to hear about a new virus, COVID-19, making an appearance in the U.S. Shortly after celebrating the second Sunday of Lent on March 8th, COVID-19 was declared a Global Pandemic.

After consulting with medical experts, we heeded their recommendation that we immediately suspend gathering in the sanctuary for worship, as of March 15, 2020, until it was safe to do so.

The worship committee greatly appreciated the work of, and consultation with, the Re-opening Task Force that was created to research, create, and provide informed guidance and guidelines for resuming public worship. With ongoing review by session and worship committee, it was not yet deemed safe to resume in-person worship for the remainder of 2020.

However, meaningful worship continued! Thanks to the ingenious, creative efforts of our pastor, Vincent, our musician, Gail Luley, our Children and Youth Minister, Jenny Newman, our office administrator and zoom expert, Amy Whipple, and our videographer/technician/musician/engineer/lighting and sound expert, Kirk Howe. Online worship was provided, first as recorded worship services, then gradually as live-stream (and recorded) worship services. The purchase of necessary video, electrical, and sound equipment were recommended by the worship committee for this purpose and approved by session.

Several choir members and church members volunteered as singers and liturgists for these services. Masks were worn and social distancing practiced. Joan Markert even custom-made masks especially for singers. Children were able to participate in creating a magnificent version of the annual Christmas Pageant remotely!

The creative efforts it has taken by many to make sure our congregation continues to have the opportunity to worship has been greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Bower, chair, and the Worship committee: Pam Howe, Pam Twiss, Verna Robinson, Gail Luley, Jenny Newman, Vincent Kolb, and Kirk Howe (honorary member).



Whew! Made it! Did you actually read the reports? Our committees work hard throughout the year to do their best by Sixth – and the chairs to write these reports – so you should probably go back and read them if you didn't. You're great!

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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 March newsletter is Feb. 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!

Food for Thought...

“You have to love. You have to feel. It is the reason you are here on earth. You are here to risk your heart.” – Louise Erdrich

“This is how things happen, cup by cup, familiar gesture after gesture. What else can we know of safety or of fruitfulness?” – Marie Howe

“There may be more beautiful times, but this one is ours.” – Jean-Paul Sartre

“The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up – ever – trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?” – Terry Tempest Williams