

March 2021

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

In the Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit*, nine-year old Beth Harmon attends an orphanage where she is befriended by Jolene, who asks her, "What was the last thing your mother said to you? I like to ask that question." Beth also meets Mr. Shaibel, the custodian. He teaches her to play chess. She is a prodigy, and as a young adult she hits the national and then international stage as she strives to become the best chess player in the world. Her success in chess is equally matched by her lack of success in relationships, as this quiet, troubled girl lives life with little connection to others, save the pieces on the chess board, and substances on which she depends.

Fast forward a couple decades, Beth is at the top of her game in chess, but her life is directionless and falling apart. Out of the blue, Jolene knocks on her door. Jolene has followed Beth's rise to stardom, but was surprised by how undone her successful friend was. She says to Beth, "I'm here because there was a time you were all I had, and I was all you had. I'm here now because you need me." Even when the world looks at us and assumes we have it all together, we know in our own hearts we are fragile, questioning, and no one escapes the times of testing, especially one year into COVID. We know it acutely at times, but it's true all the time: We can't get through life on our own.

I hope in these hard, lonely days, when it never seems that masking and distancing are going to end, you found a way to be that Jolene for someone else in your life, and someone has been a Jolene for you.

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

March Worship and Preaching

March 7 – Mark 11:12-21,
"Worship is No Time to Hide"

March 14 – John 3:14-21,
"The Whole Story Is Grace"

March 21 – Jeremiah 31:31-34,
"On Their Hearts"

March 28 – Mark 11:1-11,
"Love Endures"



What the Pastor Is Reading

Hamnet, Maggie O' Farrell

Shakespeare in A Divided America, James Shapiro

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: 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.

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

Peter Gilmore: In fits and starts, I'm reading *Old Gods, New Enigmas: Marx's Lost Theory* by Mike Davis, a great writer and deep thinker. It's not "new" (having been published in 2018, but it's new to me. Plodding through a couple of other books, and (also in fits and starts) re-creating my repertory of Scottish and Irish dance tunes on the mouth organ.

Jen Joy: The girls and I binge watched *Just Add Magic* over the course of a week or so; I wish there was another season!

Kate Kennedy: Going thru all the books by Nelson Demille

Lori King: reading *The Name of War: King Phillip's War and the Origins of American Identity* by Jill Lepore

John McCall: At the end of the year, I read a truly delightful and rather profound, Irish novel by Nial Williams, *This Is Happiness* and several times Diane's prize-winning book of poetry, *Perigee*. Since then, Paul Knitter's, *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian*, Marcus Borg's *Days of Awe and Wonder*, and now I'm on Obama's *A Promised Land*.

Jenny Newman: Reading *Little Theologians: Children, Culture, and the Making of Theological Meaning* by David M. Csinos and the YA novel *Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo. I just reread the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* for a book club. Listened to the podcast *I Am Not a Monster* from BBC radio about an American woman who takes her children to the Islamic States group's caliphate and how she ends up in an Indiana prison. Also just started watching *The Americans* tv series.

Scenes from the January 31 Congregational Meeting



Notes from the February Session Meeting

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the January 27th 2021 Session meeting were presented to the Session for approval
 - **Motion to approve** January Session meeting minutes with the following corrections:
 - Correction of year from 2020 to 2021
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship (YouTube views): 1/31, 84; 2/7, 70; 2/14, 60 on Zoom, 20 on YouTube; 2/17 (Ash Wednesday), 11; 2/21, 71
- The General Assembly Statistical Report was tabled because there were errors in the membership roll and the financial report. Kolb will see if an amended report can be submitted, but in the past, reports submitted by the GA deadline have been final.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

• FINANCE:

- The January financial report was presented for discussion by Finance Chair Mary Radcliffe.
- Mary Radcliffe proposed that the Session will revisit unspent line items from the 2021 budget at the end of the first quarter. At that time, the Session will consider reallocation of unspent funds to the Church & Community budget. Elder Carol Emerson will present this information to the Church and Community Committee at the February 28, 2021 meeting.
- The unpaid Ecclesiastical apportionment (per capita) was paid for 2019 and 2020, in addition to this year's per capita.

• STEWARDSHIP:

- The Stewardship committee will continue to provide quarterly statements to congregation members regarding Capital Campaign contributions and monthly giving.

• HOUSE:

- Capital Campaign updates:
 - The fire safety system will be inspected 2/26/2021.
- Building updates:
 - A roof leak in the narthex was fixed. The building will require replacement plastering.
 - The carpet in the groom's room has been replaced following water damage.

• TOWER UPDATE:

- The final easement agreement with Unison regarding usage of the cell phone tower was finalized in January 2021. The funds have been paid to Sixth Presbyterian Church by Unison at the time of this meeting.
- The Presbytery has approved the agreement between Sixth and Unison.

• PERSONNEL:

- Personnel Chair Phyllis Rupert reported that the health care aspect of staff benefits appears to be effective
- The Session, leaders, and congregation were reminded of the regular day off for Pastor and staff. Mondays the office is closed and Pastor and staff have the day off. Please be respectful of their need for refreshment so that they can better serve the congregation and perform the mission of the church.

2021 GOALS

The Session members began developing 2021 goals. The brainstorming session included initial plans and timelines for implementation as well as consideration for the committees needed to accomplish each goal.

Goal areas included:

- Implementing Safe return to in-person ministry
- Implementing safe return to in-person/hybrid Sunday School, youth group and extended Session as well as applying the feedback and findings from the revisioning process.
- Developing an annual plan for long-term stewardship communication
- Completing remaining capital campaign
- Mid-year officer transition
- Restructure Session committees
- Develop and Implement a Talent Solicitation for Stewardship

COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURING

- The Session reviewed proposals for committee restructuring provided by Elders Bill Moore and Leslie Kaplan.
- The Session established a task force to further discuss the committee restructuring process and provide the full Session with a proposal at a later time.
- Elders Bill Moore, Leslie Kaplan, Kit Ayars, Beth Hazlett and Mary Radcliffe will form the task force to address committee restructuring.

PASTOR'S REPORT AND DEACON'S REPORT

- A brief update was provided to Session regarding members of the congregation who require care and assistance.
 - **Motion to approve** the Deacons sponsor a food drive for Wilkinsburg Community Ministry that will include less canned items with preservatives.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
- Outdoor Opportunities for Worship
 - Rev. Vincent and the staff of Sixth Church would like the decision-making process around outdoor opportunities for worship and community to be Session with input from the congregation and support from the staff. The plans would need to be reflective of the congregation's needs and tolerance for contact during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Gun safety**
 - **Motion to approve** the following recommendations from the gun safety committee:
 - Moment for Gun Safety by Chair Lori Swensson on February 21, 11am, to kick off a congregation wide effort to get 100 signatures on the letter below, including 100% participation from our church officer
 - Promote the campaign from February 14-March 14, to collect not only 100 signatures, for the Common Sense Agenda, but 10 attendees at the virtual Legislative Day of Action on March 23.
 - Invite Josh Fleitman to do a Sunday School presentation on February 21, Sunday, at 945am, to talk further about the above Common Agenda and expansion of Cease Fire's work in SW PA.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
- **Worship Livestream protocol**
 - The Worship Livestream protocol was presented to Session for review
 - The Session offered the following corrections and clarifications:
 - Clarification of payment of videographer
 - Addition to the church access process to be more inclusive of those who do not have personal keys to the church building.

NEXT MEETING: March 24, 2021

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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 April newsletter is March 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 can trust a human being with grief... grief is just love squaring up to its oldest enemy. And after all these mortal, human years, love is up to the challenge.” – Kate Braestrup

“In my humdrum life, the daily battle hasn't been good versus evil. It's hardly so epic. Most days, my real battle is doing good versus doing nothing.” – Deirdre Sullivan

“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

“A map, then, is only a life of conversations about a forgotten list of irretrievable selves.” – Dionne Brand