

April 2021

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

Resurrection is not our work. Resurrection is something God does. Death is the ultimate wrong that we cannot fix and cannot change. There is no explanation of Easter, except to say that this is what the love of God looks like in the face of death. God refuses to grant death the power to pull us from God. So, wherever pain and evil happen in this world, God is there, pushing back the power of death. In places where blood is spilled and breath is gone, God does what only God can do. The resurrection of Jesus means that death does not win.

But resurrection means more than that. God takes that which we cannot make right, and God redeems. Jesus was love, and the hard thing to face is how offensive we found that love to be. When the world tried to shut him up, tried to push him away, he wouldn't leave us. Jesus comes back.

Easter is the love of God come back to us. Even when we try to push Jesus away, he comes back. It's what love does. But there is more. Resurrection means that the way of Jesus is true. It means that to live like Jesus is to be fully human. It means that sins are forgiven and life is made whole. But if that is true, then there is no doubt that Easter isn't over. It's not complete. The angel says he is not here. "He has gone ahead of you to Galilee." Of course he has! We need to understand this. God's love is set loose in this world. So look for it. The love of God will show up in your life; look for it.

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

April Worship and Preaching

April 4 – Mark 16:1-8, “... And No One They Told... They Were Scared, You See, For...”

April 11 – Erin Angeli, guest preaching

April 18 – Acts 3:1-17, “Repeating Jesus”

April 25 – Psalm 23, “Fear No Evil”



What the Pastor Is Reading

A Promised Land, Barack Obama

War: How Conflict Shaped Us, Margaret MacMillan

April Birthdays

April 1 Sue Koehler

Diana Wood

April 2 David Rothenberg

April 6 Kate Davoli

Barb Parees

April 8 Sheila Kier

April 9 Bill Beggs

April 10.....Opal Middleton

April 12.....Peter Bower

April 16.....Meg Cummings

April 17.....Kathy Heron

April 18.....David Bennett

April 21.....Jane Fox

April 23.....Tom Juring

April 26.....Russ Loyd

Tyler Middleton

Susan Nestor

April 27.....Frank Davoli



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

David Bennett: *How To Know the Birds* by Ted Floyd

Cosy Cornelius-Bates: We just finished *The Illuminated Adventures of Flora and Ulysses* and are looking forward to eating donuts and watching the movie Friday!

Kate Davoli: Reading about a book a week for missiology class. Just cracked *Eat What Is Set Before You* – it's the professor's own book. Can't recommend or dissuade until I've read more of it.

Megan Fogt: Kaelan is enjoying reading *Pea, Bee, and Jay* by Brian "Smitty" Smith. We each read a character of the comic. Lots of fun.

Peter Gilmore: Still slowly reading the Mike Davis book I mentioned the last time. Every week I read a short story by Séamus Ó Grianna, great 20th century writer from Co. Donegal in the northwest of Ireland. As the stories are in Irish, you might say I'm reading the dictionary, too. Started the TV adaptation of *Wolf Hall* – mostly missed it on Masterpiece Theatre originally.

Lori King: As luck would have it, today is the day that I am finishing the book on King Philip's War – *The Name of War* – and beginning *Dying of Whiteness* by Jonathan Metzl.

John McCall: I am well into Obama's *A Promised Land*. Diane and I really appreciated Ken Burns' latest series *Jazz* on PBS television.

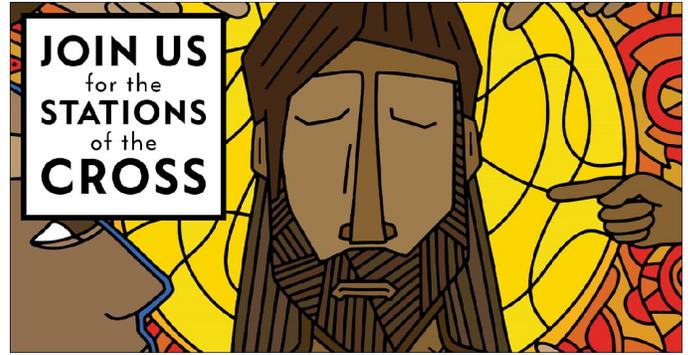
Susan Rothenberg: Upon the recommendation of a trusted friend, I have been reading *Wintering* by Katherine May. It has helped me reframe this time of pandemic to see it not only as a time of loss or tragedy, but also as a time of repair and restoration. It is beautifully written and I highly recommend!

Christian Education Updates

Stations of the Cross

As we prepare to move through the end of Lent towards Easter, we have created videos to take you through a cycle known as Stations of the Cross. Each video contains scripture and meditation, illustrations, and music. Watch them one at a time, at your own pace, or in succession. The whole cycle will take about 45 minutes.

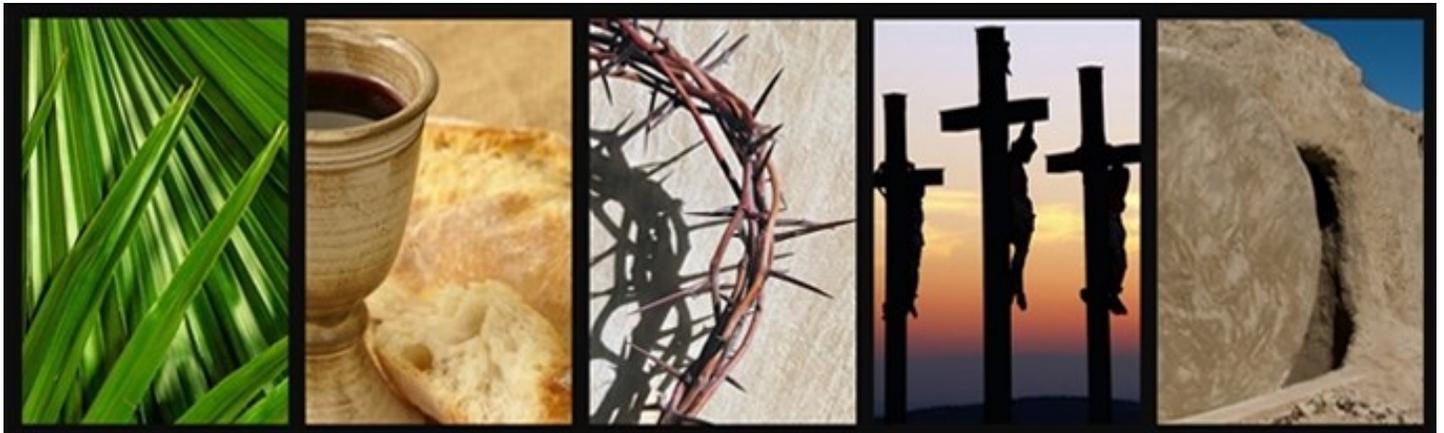
[Stations of the Cross](#)



Holy Week Virtual Challenge

Virtual activity for school kids and youth for Holy Week. Give it a try? You have to answer correctly to move on to the next part of the story.

[Journey Through Holy Week](#)



Sunday School and Youth Group

Just a reminder there will be no Sunday School Zoom on April 4. Please celebrate Easter with us by participating in our live-stream worship at 11 am

April Virtual Sunday School for preschool through sixth grade: 10 am

April 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.

Christian Education Committee

The Christian Education Committee will be meeting later this month to discuss possible outdoor activities for children and youth this summer and what the return of Sunday school, Extended Session, and nursery care in the fall will look like. If you would like to be part of the conversation please email Jenny Newman at Jennyrunew@gmail.com to receive meeting information.

Notes from the March Session Meeting

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

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship (YouTube views): 2/21: 86; 2/28: 65; 3/7: 67; 3/14: 56
- Reception of New Members:
 - **Motion to approve** the following new members:
 - Julie Mull by reaffirmation of faith. Julie will be welcomed into membership when we are back for full, in-person worship
 - Mike and Suzanne Carey by letter of transfer from First Presbyterian Church in Murrysville. Mike and Suzanne will be presented to the congregation when we are back for full, in-person worship
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
- The Pastor officiated the wedding of Comment Ndhlovu and Katrina Kennel at Sixth on March 3, 2021.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **FINANCE:**
 - The February financial report was presented for discussion by Finance Chair Mary Radcliffe.
 - Church Treasurer Erik Fogt has started an account for the trust established using the Tower easement agreement funds. Withdrawals from the trust will begin in upcoming months.
 - A draft of a financial strategy developed by the finance committee will be presented to the Session next month..
- **STEWARDSHIP:**
 - The stewardship committee will be advising the congregation to review their quarter one statements to ensure that their financial contributions were correctly distributed.
- **HOUSE:**
 - The following house projects have been addressed this month:
 - A rusted outdoor railing has been fixed
 - Pricing for cement and railing repair as well as for plaster repair in the narthex is in the process of being approved by the house committee.
 - The following capital campaign projects have been completed.
 - The fire safety system was successfully installed.
- **PERSONEL:**
 - The Personnel committee chair with deep regret and apologies reported the recent discovery that increases to the annual effective salary for The Rev Dr Vincent in the years following his call to Sixth were not submitted to the Board of Pensions. Shared was the appeal letter that Erik Fogt, Treasurer, sent last week to the Board of Pensions advising them of the error.
 - The personnel committee apologized to Vincent and communicated its commitment to completely addressing the impacts of this irrespective of the final Board of Pensions decision. Erik outlined several remedy options, the features of which were reviewed with Pastor Vincent Sunday. They will be reported to session at the April meeting for approval. The Personnel Committee chair advised that 2021's annual effective salary has been appropriately reported to the Board of Pensions; a process for future reporting established; and costs to cover past pension losses, penalties, fees et. al. and a benefits consultant review will be brought when known, though they appear, given initial solutions and exploration to be within current congregational finances

2021 GOALS

- Session reviewed the 2021 goals established during the February 2021 Session meeting.

COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURING TASKFORCE

- The taskforce presented their proposal for the committee restructuring process to the Session for discussion.
- The proposal addressed the following:
 - The core committees necessary for church functioning
 - The governing structures of committees
 - The need for Elder participation in committee memberships
 - The structures of special interest groups such as Gun Safety, More Light, and Earth Care groups.
- The Committee Restructuring taskforce will continue to formalize a proposal to present to Session at the April meeting.

WORSHIP/REOPENING TASK FORCE UPDATE

- The worship/reopening task force submitted a proposal for Church reopening to the Session to review. Per this proposal, the worship will continue to be live-streamed through the 2021 summer months. As instigated and organized by members of the congregation and/or committees, the task force could support increased opportunities for fellowship and re-connection at a variety of outdoor gatherings. The session would also consider the use of the church building for small group indoor gatherings.
- The taskforce recommends that in-person worship resume in the Fall of 2021 depending on circumstances of the time, and approval by Session.
- The proposal will continue to be developed and discussed by the task force in the upcoming months, including revisiting the possibility of reopening for limited, in person worship sometime this summer, subject to the increase in herd immunity and the relative spread of virus variants.

OLD BUSINESS

- The statistical report for the Presbytery is being reviewed and corrected. It will be submitted for Session approval when it is finished.

NEW BUSINESS

- The Deacons collected financial donations as well as food items for the Wilkinsburg Community Ministries. The donations will be delivered to the organization the week of 3/24/2021.
- Pulpit Supply
 - **Motion to approve** the following:
 - Erin Angeli to guest preach on April 11.
 - The scheduling of More Light Sunday for June 13 2021 with Kate Davoli preaching. (This service will be livestreamed.)
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Fellowship**
 - Plans have been proposed that there the annual church picnic be held on June 6 at the Rhododendron Shelter (Highland Park). Fellowship proposes to provide drinks (in cans, just this once) and possibly frozen individual ice cream treats for dessert. Each person or family would bring their own food to eat from home. The whole event is pending circumstances at the time, and approval by Session.
- **Christian Education**
 - The Christian Education committee is planning a committee meeting in April to discuss the following:
 - Vacation Bible School
 - Outdoor activities for the summer months
 - Sunday School in the fall.



- The Christian Education committee is also going to provide families details for the Squirrel Hill Clean Up Days being held April 18 - 24.
- **Motion to approve** the following Sunday school offerings:
 - April 18- "Mental Health and the Criminal Justice System" presented by Gail Kubrin
 - April 25- A reading of Diane Kerr's new book of poems "Perigree"
- **Motion Passed** Unanimously
- **Justice Core Team:**
- The Justice team has been working with the Alliance for Police Accountability to assist in their effort to pass two ballot measures in Allegheny county. The ballot measures would ban no-knock warrants in the city of Pittsburgh and limit solitary confinement in the Allegheny County Jail.
- **Motion to approve** supporting the justice team's continued effort to work with the APA ballot initiative by providing congregational emails, volunteer opportunity information and an article in the Sixth Sense.
- **Motion passed** unanimously

NEXT MEETING: April 28, 2021

Squirrel Hill Clean-Up

Our Sunday school classes have participated in Squirrel Hill Clean-Up day for the last several years. This year, in lieu of a large gathering for their annual Community Clean-up, the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition's Litter Patrol is inviting families and friends to remove litter from a block of your choosing. Choose a block where you live, a block in your favorite park, the block where you walk your dog, or a block that needs a little care. Participants are asked to decide the day and time during the week of **April 18-24, 2021**, that is convenient for your schedule.

Sign up at Grand Pandemic Sign Up to avoid duplication of effort and assure social distancing. They are also providing safety vests, bags, and gloves (cotton or Nitrile) if needed.

[Sign up here](#)

Don't forget to snap some pictures and share them with us here at the church!



Welcome, New Members!

On March 24, the Session welcomed Julie Mull, Mike Carey, and Suzanne Carey into membership. Check back in the May issue for an introduction from Mike and Suzanne.

From Julie: I am a Pittsburgh native, who's boomeranged from here to the South, to Philadelphia, and returned with my family, including my husband Evan and children, Sebastian, River, and Robin (and now two cats.) In the same way, I am returning to the Presbyterian faith while having explored Unitarian and Buddhist beliefs. I work at CMU and have an arts background. Our family loves nature and stays involved in BSA scouts as a way to get outdoors. I'm so happy to become an official member of Sixth Church.

Holy Week 2021

Palm Sunday: Join our livestream worship at 11 am with musical videos and a children's video Call to Worship, an invitation to make a contribution to One Great Hour of Sharing, and the message: "Love Endures."

Open Door Meditation: Visit our church website during Holy Week for a meditation on "A Time to Honor Our Grief."

Maundy Thursday Communion Service: Our pre-recorded service will air at 7 pm on Thursday, April 1, with a Zoom agape feast immediately following the conclusion of the YouTube service (Zoom link will be in your weekly email). Assemble your individual plates of hummus, olives, figs, and other goodies and fellowship with us.

Good Friday Noon Service: This year, a pre-recorded service will air at noon on Friday, April 2 on our YouTube channel. Join us for contemplative prayer and singing, and a reflection from Pastor Vincent on the silence of God.

April Adult Education Offerings

April 18, "Mental Health and the Criminal Justice System": Gail Kubrin, MD, is a psychiatrist who has been working at the Allegheny County Jail for three years, providing care for seriously mentally ill individuals. An advocate for better conditions, Kubrin will share stories of people who have been in jail, factual information, poetry, and possible solutions and resources. There will be time for Q & A, and how her presentation relates to the upcoming ballot initiative to ban solitary confinement at the Allegheny County Jail.

April 25, "Perigree": Diane Kerr's new book of poems *Perigree* won the 2020 Brittingham Prize from the University of Wisconsin Press. The book deals with the childhood trauma of sexual abuse. Diane will read excerpts from the book, followed by a time for discussion.

Greetings from Your Stewardship Committee Chair

You will soon be receiving your 2021 First Quarter donation statement. Please review it carefully to make sure that all donations have been assigned to the correct account, and that no donations are missing.

If your statement and the various accounts do not look correct, please reach out to either Amy Whipple (office@sixthchurch.org) or me (efhazlett@icloud.com).

In gratitude,

Beth Hazlett, Stewardship Committee Chair

Thank you!

A big "thank you" for all the donations of food and cash/gift cards to Wilkinsburg Community Ministry which were delivered on Wednesday, March 25. Most of us are familiar with the food collections at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Helping families at Easter with their main meal has only been happening for five years. Thank you again for your efforts and for sharing.

— The Deacons

Sixth Presbyterian Church
1688 Murray Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412-421-2752
office@sixthchurch.org
www.sixthchurch.org

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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!

Food for Thought...

“So here’s a blessing for all of you who find yourself living in the gray. Blessed are you who live here, this space between simple categories and easy answers... Blessed are you who build a home on uneasy ground, who, despite your trying, your asking, your searching, haven’t found the satisfying feeling of discovery. And blessed are you who never will. This is not an easy place to live. Outside of certainty, outside of knowing, outside of the truth. But blessed are you who realize that love and beauty and courage and meaning can still be found here. Amid the unease and the frustration and the sleepless nights. May you be surprised by your capacity for ambiguity, for the way it makes you a great listener and a good friend, for you are someone who knows how to feel your way around in the dark and squint for the stars. I wish it were easier, dear one. I wish I could hand you the answers you seek. But for now, may you find comfort in the fact that you are not alone here in the gray. We are all learning to live in the uncertainty in the unknowing. So blessed are we who live here together.” – Kate Bowler