

May 2021

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

If the Gospel reveals anything to us, it is that the good news of grace and justice comes from unlikely sources.

The official police report issued by the Minneapolis Police Department was entitled, "Man Dies After Medical Incident During Police Interaction." It says the suspect physically resisted when he was ordered out of his vehicle. It says that the officers were able to get the suspect into handcuffs and that he appeared to be suffering medical distress. It notes that an ambulance was called and Floyd was taken to the hospital where he died. That is all the official account said until it was shattered by the horrific video of the knee on a man's neck for nine minutes.

We do not owe the judge or the jury or the system gratitude alone for the verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial. We owe Daniella Frazier, a teenager with profound courage, gratitude for her bravery in filming this murder take place, even after Derek Chauvin threatened her.

There is a saying I have seen often in protests over the last few years. It says, "Trust Black Women." A young Black woman made sure America would have accountability for what happened outside the Cup Food Convenience store on May 25, 2020.

George Floyd, may you rest and reign in peace.

Vincent

Save the date! We will have (distanced, BYO food) worship and picnic in the park on June 6! More details to follow.

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 2 – Acts 8:26-40, "Ordinary Water, Holy Promise"

May 9 – Acts 10:44-48, "The Last Person I Thought I Would Need"

May 16 – Luke 24:44-53, "Help From the Right"

May 23 – Acts 2:1-13, "Why Doesn't It Ever Last?"

May 30 – John 3:1-17, "The Head of the Trail"



What the Pastor Is Reading

The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X, Les and Tamara Payne

May Birthdays

May 1 Tom Cummings

May 3 Sharon Van Dyke

May 12.....Leslie Kaplan

May 14.....Gail Luley

May 21.....Mikki Danielson

Maggie Ritchey

David Wood

May 23.....Erin Cummings

May 26.....Karl Greenley

May 27.....Chris Gaul

May 28.....Dana Thompson

May 30.....Cliff Johnson

May 31.....Marnie Bertolet

Welcome, New Members!

On March 24, the Session welcomed Julie Mull, Mike Carey, and Suzanne Carey into membership. You can get to know Julie in last month's newsletter..

From Mike and Suzanne: Mike and Suzanne were both born and raised in Ohio. Mike in the suburbs of Cleveland and Suzanne on a family farm in northwest Ohio. We started our family in Ohio before moving to the Pittsburgh area in 1987. We have three adult children: Molly in Cincinnati, OH, Maggie with her husband Josh in Warrenton, VA, and Patrick in San Francisco, CA. Both of us are retired, Mike from the construction industry and Suzanne from a number of positions which drew upon her teaching and counseling background. Full disclosure: both of us are die-hard Browns fans. We are pleased to become members of Sixth Presbyterian Church.



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

Kit Ayars: Just finished *The Fourth Child* (Jessica Winter); mixed feelings on this one. Periodically dipping into *Four Hundred Souls* (Kendi/Blain).

Cosy Cornelius-Bates: We just watched *My Octopus Teacher*

Kate Davoli: Gonna be reading Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews (for my epistles class) and perhaps finishing *A Desolation Called Peace* (for fun).

Jen Joy: We just watched a new musical on Netflix, *A Week Away*. Really fun movie! I'm a sucker for musicals in general. It's about a foster teen who avoids juvie by spending a week at church summer camp.

Kate Kennedy: Reading the author J.J. Murray

Lori King: Reading *Smoketown* by Mark Whitaker about the golden era of the Hill District. Also, I recently watched the documentary *Down a Dark Stairwell*. It's about a police killing in 2014, but the officer was Chinese-American, so it seemed even more relevant in 2021.

Upcoming Congregational Meeting

On May 16 at noon we will have a Zoom congregational meeting. The Nominating Committee will put forth a new nominee for the Session class of 2023. We will also propose a remedy for the Pastor's missing pension credits with Rev. Brian Wallace moderating that portion of the meeting. The Zoom link will be in the all-church email the Friday before the meeting.

Notes from the April Session Meeting

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the March 24th 2021 Session meeting were presented to the Session for approval
- **Motion to approve** the March Session meeting minutes with the following corrections:
 - Correction of attendance to reflect Bill Moore's presence in the meeting
 - Correction of the title of an April 2021 Christian Education offering from "Perigree" to "Perigee."
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship (YouTube views): 3/28 (Palm Sunday): 67; 4/4 (Easter): 104; 4/11: 78; 4/18: 54; 4/25: 55

EXAMINATION OF OFFICERS

- The Session examined Gwen Harcar and Martha Funderburgh as to their readiness to be ordained and installed as Deacons. **Motion to approve their examination and ordination passed unanimously.**
- Due to a vacancy in the 2023 class of Elders, the nominating committee will convene in order to select a candidate. The candidate will be presented to the congregation at the May 16, 2021 congregational meeting.
 - **Motion to approve** Kathi Robinson-Dassel and Kit Ayars to serve as the Session and Deacons representatives for the nominating committee.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
 - **Motion to approve** the authorization of the service of the new slate of elders and deacons beginning July 1, 2021, until they can be appropriately ordained and installed with the laying on of hands at a future, full, in person worship service this fall.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

MEDICAL REPORT

- Drs. Frank & Maria Guyette provided a medical update to the Session regarding the status of COVID-19 nationally and in the Greater Pittsburgh region. The discussion was used to obtain guidance when developing safe reopening policies for the congregation.

REOPENING REPORT

- Rev. Kolb presented a reopening report prepared by the staff regarding concerns and considerations for safely reopening the church building during the summer of 2021.

- After a discussion among the members, the Session determined that there would be no ongoing plans to reopen the church space for in-person worship for the immediate future. This decision was made based upon concerns regarding the high level of case numbers in the region, and how to equitably determine eligibility for attending in person worship.
- The worship committee and reopening task-force will reconvene to work on a safe reopening plan and the situation will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

• FINANCE:

- Withdrawals from the account opened for the trust established using the tower easement agreement funds will begin on a quarterly basis.
- The March financial report was presented for discussion by Finance Chair Mary Radcliffe.
- The Sixth Presbyterian Church Memorial Trust Statement of Financial Strategy was presented to the Session for approval. The proposed strategy would codify the management practices of the Memorial Trust including administration, investment and reporting guidelines.
 - **Motion to approve** the accepting financial strategy as the stated policy of the church
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

• STEWARDSHIP:

- The stewardship committee report was presented to Session for review.

• HOUSE:

- Emmel & Koller finished correcting the exterior railings
- Peter Koehler finished constructing a catwalk and lighting in the attic for ease of future work, particularly in replacing light bulbs
- Plaster work in the narthex is slated to begin 18 May 2021.

• PERSONEL:

- As reported in the March 2021 Session meeting, increases to the annual effective salary for The Rev. Dr. Vincent in the years following his call to Sixth were not updated in the Presbyterian Board of Pensions portal for 2016 through 2021. Erik Fogt, Sixth church's Treasurer, updated the 2021 salary and then sent an appeal letter to the Presbyterian Board of Pensions dated March 17, 2021. Erik outlined several remedy options, the features of which were reviewed with Pastor Vincent and reported to Session in their March 2021 meeting. The Personnel Committee chair advised that 2021's annual effective salary had 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, as necessary, to be brought back to Session.

The Presbyterian Board of Pensions communicated their decision on April 9, 2021 to the appeal letter. The Presbyterian Board of Pensions agreed to permit corrected salaries for 2020 and 2021 leaving a deficit remaining for 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 understated salaries and an unpaid expense of 37% of the 2020 salary difference amount. In addition, the Presbyterian Board of Pensions advised of the right to a second appeal to a designated Vice President of the Presbyterian Board of Pensions.

Given the time, resources, and low probability of success on the counsel of Doug Portz, Regional Representative for the Board of Pensions, the Personnel

committee, with the expertise and considerable efforts of Erik Fogt and guidance of Mary Radcliffe, Finance Chair, and agreement of The Rev Dr Vincent determined to move forward with crafting and seeking Session and congregational approval for a solution, instead of re-appealing the initial decision by the Presbyterian Board of Pensions. The solution is to allow for an equivalent retirement savings and, as much as possible, similar anticipated growth.

Of the three initial options, the first best fulfilled those intentions and purpose. Option One figures, inclusive of taking into account the Experience Apportionments provided by Doug Portz, were presented to the Session for review.

- **Motion to approve** holding a congregational meeting on May 16 at noon, to propose a remedy for the Pastor's missing pension credits and to have Rev. Brian Wallace to moderate the portion of the meeting dealing with this issue.
- **Motion passed** unanimously
- **Motion to approve** the Pastor's use of vacation and study leave for the following dates:
 - June 7-13: Study Leave
 - July 5-18: Vacation
 - July 19-25: Study Leave
 - August 2-15: Vacation
 - August 16-22: Study Leave
- **Motion passed** unanimously

COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURING TASKFORCE

- Elder Leslie Kaplan presented a proposal for the committee restructuring process to the Session for discussion.
- The Session will review the proposal and discuss at the May 2021 Session Meeting.

PASTOR'S REPORT AND DEACON'S REPORT

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Christian Education:
 - **Motion to approve** the following:
 - The planning of outdoor summer gatherings on July 11th 2021 and August 29th 2021 for children and families at the Prospect Shelter in Schenley Park for a cost of \$150.00 per rental.
 - The continued use of the "Godly Play" curriculum for grades Pre-K and kindergarten and the "Feasting on the Word" curriculum for first grade and above.
 - The planning of a CPR and First Aid class in 2022
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

NEXT MEETING: May 26, 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.



Food for Thought...

The deadline for the June 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!

“Daring to hope every day – it’s much more radical, I think, to hope than to live in the despair I was born to. I think it’s much more dangerous.” – Mary Karr

“Spirituality does not mean going away from life. Spirituality means becoming alive in the fullest possible way so you are not just alive on the surface, you are alive to the core.” – Jaggi Vasudev

“When you are in the middle of a story it isn’t a story at all, but only a confusion; a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It’s only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else.” – Margaret Atwood