

June 2021

# Sixth Sense

## From the Pastor

Upon learning the news that the Alliance for Police Accountability's Initiatives had passed in our local election, James Byrd, who has been living in solitary confinement at the Allegheny County Jail for more than three years, wrote a letter thanking voters.

Good morning.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the tireless efforts put forth by the citizens of Allegheny County Pennsylvania to make a difference by seeking the abolishment of solitary confinement at the ACJ.

Often times, our community is left in the dark as to the atrocities, physical, and psychological torture that is inflicted upon their sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, spouses, friends, and neighbors who unfortunately find themselves incarcerated in the ACJ. The public is misled or intentionally not informed about the lack of medical and mental healthcare, the violent physical abuse by corrections officers, and most importantly, the adverse effects caused to their mental health from being locked in and treated worse than wild animals are treated.

I know better than most, the ways and means in which long term solitary confinement can exacerbate current mental conditions, effectuate severe decompensation, and even create mental conditions where none previously existed.

I have been at the ACJ since June 9, 2015 and for the past three (3) years I have been locked away in solitary confinement on unit 8E. I have been denied basic human interaction, literally walked around on a dog leash (tether) when outside of the cell, beaten and strapped in restraint chairs for requesting mental health treatment, denied outside communications with attorneys, family, and friends.

*Continued on page 2*

**Exciting news: we will be reopening for in-person worship on June 20!**

**Stay tuned for details!**



SIXTH  
*presbyterian*  
CHURCH

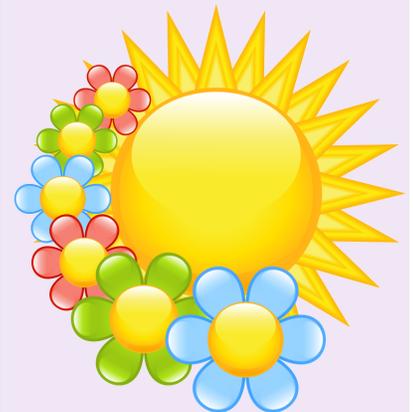
## June Worship and Preaching

June 6 – Picnic in the Park! II  
Corinthians 4:13-5:1, “The Bigger Picture”

June 13 – More Light  
Sunday, Kate Davoli  
Preaching

June 20 – Mark 4:35-41,  
“Why Are You Afraid?”

June 27 – Mark 5:21-43,  
“Known Only By Her  
Illness”



## What the Pastor Is Reading

*The Vanishing Half*, Brit Bennett

Being subject to these types of conditions of confinement has caused me to experience feelings of hopelessness, severe anxiety, manic depression, PTSD and to attempt to commit suicide by overdose on more than 10 separate occasions. I have witnessed other inmates both attempt and succeed at taking their own lives as a result of the effects of long term solitary confinement at the ACJ.

Quite frankly, the ACJ Administration typically plays the word game when addressing solitary confinement within the facility.

The public relations office repeatedly states that the ACJ doesn't utilize solitary confinement. However, the ACJ utilizes something far worse. It uses the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) as a place to house various inmates who are classified to various statuses, most of whom suffer from acute or some other form of mental disease. These inmates are mistreated and denied access to the necessary treatment in accordance with their medical and mental health needs. Because RHU is used interchangeably with solitary confinement, the ACJ frequently disguises its conditions of confinement there as something other than solitary confinement, when in reality, it is the same and often worse.

Pretrial detainees who are incarcerated at the ACJ are human beings first and foremost. Many are incarcerated because of a manifestation of a mental condition which led to the circumstances for which they are incarcerated. Others are innocent victims of the system. While incarceration can be, and is sometimes, necessary to protect society from crime and violent criminals, it is NEVER NECESSARY to lock human beings in solitary confinement and treat them like animals. Especially when it has been outlawed in the society in which we live.

So on behalf of myself and the inmates at the Allegheny County Jail, THANK YOU CITIZENS WHO CARE! Thank you for giving us hope in an otherwise hopeless situation.

Sincerely,

James Byrd aka Lost In The ACJ

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## 2021 Graduates

**Megan Sindhi** is graduating from University of Virginia with a BA in Statistics and will be attending Brown University in the fall to get a master's degree in data science.



**Liam Greenley** is graduating from PA Cyber Charter School.

**Lennon Franz** will be graduating from CAPA with honors as a visual arts major. Lennon will be attending Pitt's Dietrich School of A&S as a biology and studio arts minor.

**Sebastian Mull** is graduating from CAPA and will be attending Chatham University.

Proud Grandma Carol Emerson announces that **Nicholas Schuit** has graduated from the University of Pittsburg with a bachelor of science in business. **Lucy Brennan** is graduating from Oakland Catholic High School and will be attending Temple University.

Cliff and Nora Johnson announce that granddaughter **Devon Burke** had graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Community Development from Temple University and grandson **Colin Burke** has graduated from Annapolis High School and after a gap year will attend DePaul University in Chicago.

**Please let us know in the church office if there are any other graduates to celebrate!**

# Mark Your Calendars!

We will be hosting two in-person gatherings for children and youth this Summer at Prospect Shelter in Schenley Park. More details to follow!

Sunday, July 11 from noon to 3 pm.

Sunday, August 29 from 3 to 6 pm.



## We did a whole Sunday school year via Zoom!

Thanks to all the students and parents for their participation and patience.

(Picture: Sadie, Louie, and Jesse DeLucia)

## June Birthdays

June 4 ..... David DeJong

June 7 ..... Jack Farquhar

June 8 ..... Kate Kennedy

June 11.....Mary Lang

June 12.....Kate Brennan

Margaret Miller

June 13.....Colin Miller

Andrew Morgan

June 18.....Isabella Berg

Eve Guyette

Rainer Loyd

June 19.....Jean Moore

June 20.....Christine Tyndall

June 22.....Kyle Miller

June 24.....Chris McAdams

June 28.....Lori Swensson

June 29.....Malachi Cornelius-Bates

Liam Greenley



# Notes from the May 16 Congregational Meeting

## PURPOSE OF MEETING

Dr. Kolb stated the purpose of the meeting was for the congregation to hear and approve a correction to the Pastor's Terms of Call as well as elect an elder to the Session.

## MODERATOR TRANSITION

Rev. Myra Kazanjian assumed the role of moderator to review the changes to the Pastor's terms of call.

## PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING

As reported in the March 2021 Session meeting, increases to the annual effective salary for The Rev. Dr. Vincent Kolb 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. 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. To correct the effective salary to Rev. Kolb, the Session of Sixth Presbyterian church approved a plan during the April 2021 Session meeting, but this plan, it was determined, required congregational approval.

## PROPOSED REMEDY

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, chaired by Phyllis Rupert, 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.

The missing pension credits and related experience apportionments were added together for a total of 350.45. Assuming 30 years of retirement, the missing payments over the 30 years would come up to \$9800.00. This would be put into a retirement account of Vincent's choice. Sixth Presbyterian Church would pay for the related payroll taxes totaled to be \$2663.44. The collected cost to the church to correct this error and make Vincent whole would be \$12463.44.

## 2021 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Finance Chair Mary Radcliffe explained that the budget for the church had included pension credit costs but that this amount had not been spent. If approved by the congregation, a special allocation from surplus would be used to remedy the situation.

## MOTION TO APPROVE RECOMMENDED REMEDY

MOTION. A motion to approve the proposed solution was made, seconded and passed unanimously. The church will make the necessary payments to Vincent and the Board of Pensions. These actions will be reported to Session alongside a proposed improvement plan to the procedural manual

to ensure proper payment to the Board of Pensions in the future.

### REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

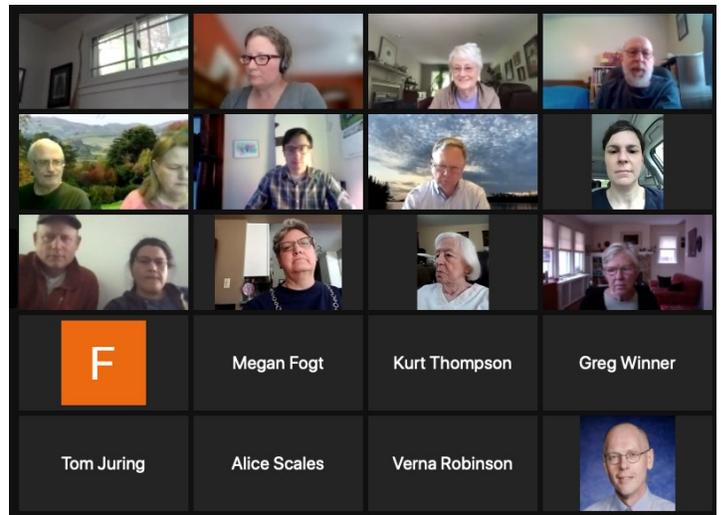
Due to a vacancy in the 2023-24 Session class, the nominating committee nominated Tom Juring to be installed as a ruling elder. Motion made, seconded and passed unanimously.

### SESSION UPDATE ON "SOFT" REOPENING

Elder Mary Lang summarized the work of the reopening task force. Due to the quickly changing federal guidelines, the reopening task force will meet to formulate a new plan for a potential reopening. The plan will be presented to the Session at the May 26, 2021 meeting.

### CHURCH PICNIC

Elder Jan Myers-Newbury provided plans and guidelines for the church picnic that will be held on June 6th 2021 at the Rhododendron Shelter in Highland Park starting at 11 am.



# Notes from the May Session Meeting

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

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the April 28th 2021 Session meeting and the May congregational meeting were presented to the Session for approval
- **Motion to approve** the April Session meeting minutes as written and the congregational meeting minutes with the following corrections:
- Correction of start time for the church picnic
- **Motion passed** unanimously

## CLERK'S REPORT

Worship (YouTube views): 5/2, 46; 5/9, 61; 5/16, 57; 5/23, 61

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **FINANCE:**
  - The April financial report was presented for discussion by Finance Chair Mary Radcliffe
- **STEWARDSHIP:**
  - There were no updates to report to the Session in the month of May from the Stewardship committee.
- **HOUSE:**
  - Capital Campaign Project updates:
    - The Liftkar chair was installed within the church building. Training for proper use of the chair was provided to the Director of Christian Education Jenny Newman and Office Administrator Amy Whipple.
    - The restoration of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary is ongoing. The current set of windows will be finished in the upcoming months and the next set will be removed to begin restoration.
  - General house updates:
    - Sara Mayo, as part of a Jewish community gathering, requested use of the building steps on August 29th 2021 at 12:30 PM for a communal shofar blast for Rosh Hashanah.
    - The request was approved.
- **PERSONEL:**
  - A written report was provided from Personnel chair Phyllis Rupert

## COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURING TASKFORCE

- The Task Force presented a proposal to the Session that outlined changes to the procedural manual related to committee structures.

- The committee restructuring proposal addressed committee missions, special interest and affinity group status, Session leadership requirements, and committee chair responsibilities
- **Motion to approve** the proposed changes to the procedural manual regarding committee structure as amended in the May 26th 2021 Session meeting.
- **Motion passed** unanimously

#### CORPORATION OFFICER ELECTION:

- **Motion to approve** the electing of the following officers for 2021-2022:
  - Frank Davoli, President of the Corporation
  - Beth Hazlett, Vice President
  - Carol Emerson, Secretary, for 2021-2022.
- **Motion passed** unanimously

#### REOPENING TASK FORCE PROPOSAL

- The Reopening Task Force presented a proposal for the reopening of the church building for in-person worship and outside activities.
- The proposal provided was limited to the month of June.
- The proposal suggested that the church building would reopen for an in-person worship service on June 20th, 2021. Participation in the service would require the use of masks at all times, social distancing, and limitations on congregant in-person interactions including the passing of the peace and offering collections.
- Pending the approval of this proposal, the task force also recommended that outside groups be allowed access to the building for use in small groups.
- **Motion to approve** the proposal from the Reopening Task Force to reopen the building for outside groups as well as on June 20th, 2021 for an in-person worship service with the understanding that further logistics would be decided upon by the Worship committee, staff, and Reopening Task Force members..
- **Motion passed** unanimously
- Further decisions around the re-opening of the building for in-person services and small group activities during the summer months will be made during the June 2021 Session meeting.

#### DEACONS CARE LIST

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

#### NEW BUSINESS

The Session celebrated the recent passing of the Alliance for Policy Accountability initiatives, but will talk further about the appropriateness of congregational appeals in worship for specific votes for ballot initiatives at the June meeting.

#### COMMITTEE MINUTES

Written reports were provided for the Session for review from the church committees.

**NEXT MEETING:** June 23, 2021

# Picnic and Worship in the Park: June 6 at 11 am

We are all excited by the prospect of seeing so many of you on **JUNE 6**. The worship and picnic site is the **Rhododendron Shelter in Highland Park**. **No masking will be required as this is an outdoor event.**

We are asking everyone to bring their own **PERSONAL PICNIC**....

There will be **NO POTLUCK** component this year, and we will **NOT** be supplying plates, cups, or cutlery. This makes sandwiches seem like a good choice...

We **WILL** however, have the following items available:

- 1) Paper napkins
- 2) Cold beverages in cans (both water and sodas)
- 3) Chips in individual bags
- 4) Individual ice cream treats for dessert



Needless to say, this goes against all Earth Care Congregation protocols, but this is a special exception, never to be repeated (we hope)!

**Worship will be starting at 11 am.** If you are able, it would be good to bring outdoor chairs or a blanket. We will provide a few folding chairs. If you need to unload items, it is fine to drive down close to the shelter, but then we ask you to move your car back to the road (unless this presents mobility difficulties for you).

If anyone is in need of transportation, please let Amy in the office know by Thursday, June 3, and she will get word to the Fellowship chair. Amy can also email a map to you if you need help finding the shelter. However, the easiest way to get there is to travel east on Stanton Ave. (which intersects Highland Ave.). It eventually curves to the left (north) and continues into the park. The shelter is on the right in a very short while – and we'll be so happy to see all of you!



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

Cosy Cornelius-Bates: We are studying China so reading *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Watching *China from the Air* and *Kung Fu Panda*

Kate Davoli: Final exam paper! I'll have developed my theology of mission in \*checks clock\* 32 hours or less! [Addendum: it happened! Got an A- ! ]

Carol Emerson: Read Elizabeth Warren's, *A Fighting Chance* about the establishing the Consumer Protection Agency, before she ever ran for office. Also want to read her book, *Persistence*, just published. Do I know how to have fun!! Oh, and watching *Outlander*, a real bodice ripper--enough to make a granny/church lady blush, or gawk, or both!

Peter Gilmore: I began teaching an online history class at Carlow University and begin taking a Zoom-based course in Irish Gaelic, in the continuing effort to gain real fluency. I'm near-done reading a book with the provocative subtitle *Ireland, Colonialism, and the Lost Revolution*. Learning a lot. Did you know aboriginal Australians didn't have the right to vote until 1967? I didn't. The book does a great job surveying imperialism and settler colonialism worldwide. Ain't pretty. The conditional tense in Gaelic – now that's a beaut.

Kirk Howe: Playing -- <https://youtu.be/assUHSvTTX0> and <https://youtu.be/UA3p54nKFNk>

Tom Juring: Just starting *Mental Immunity* by Andy Norman. A very timely book given the amount of irrational ideas that seem to be spreading and what can be done to counter that. His idea of "cognitive immunology" takes steps to improve our capacity for critical thinking. The author is a good friend of mine.

Kate Kennedy: Reading JJ Murray and Julia Garwood

Lori King: Just about to start *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* by Paul Ortiz

Linda May: Watching *Mare of Easttown* on HBO

John McCall: I finally finished *A Promised Land* by Barack Obama. Now I am reading *Weeding the Garden of Eden* by the Rev. David Severe a personal memoir of a retired Methodist pastor who once served as pastor of one of my longtime friends. Next will be *Lincoln on the Verge* by Ted Widmer, a book sent to me by my son, David. Diane and I have been watching on Netflix discs an Australian soap opera, *A Place to Call Home* which ran from 2013-18. Please consider this latter a confession, well not of sin, but simply trivial indulgence. [Ed. note: this is the most Presbyterian statement I've ever read in my entire life.]

Jenny Newman: I just finished *Klara and Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *Broken* by Jenny Lawson. I enjoyed both.

Maggie Ritchey: Just started *Persist* by Elizabeth Warren

Susan Rothenberg: Just finished *Premonition: A Pandemic Story* by Michael Lewis. It is a gripping account of how a few smart people saw COVID-19 coming, and how very few people at all levels of government and public health listened to them. Oh and also *Mare of Easttown* is fantastic. We started watching because my uncle's farm near Coatesville was used for some of the filming. We stayed for Kate Winslet and some wonderful Delaware County accents!

Amy Whipple: Malakai and I are enjoying the first Percy Jackson book, *The Lightning Thief*. I am savoring the final episodes / mourning the endings of *Younger* and *The Bold Type*, two wonderfully light summertime shows, as well as the ending of *Mom*. How I will I live without any of them??



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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 July/August newsletter is June 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...

“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

“But maybe there’s another kind of mercy – mercy so little that it costs almost nothing. So little most of us never notice it. The kind that arrives as a child sitting briefly on your lap, as a poem, a letter, a loving hand on your hand, a piece of paper cut with tiny scissors, held by strips of tape to a wall or window. Little mercy teaches a lesson, too: that everyone is human, just as we are. There’s no one – no one – who doesn’t deserve that kind of mercy.”  
– Lacy Johnson