

September 2021

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

Repentance is an old word that only seems to be spoken by preachers from pulpits. But it has contemporary relevance. The word repentance in Greek in the New Testament literally means to “change one’s mind,” to do a 180 degree turn in the way one looks at one’s life and the world.

I think of repentance as “reframing.” Changing the interior monologue we carry on with ourselves during the day. It is an absolutely essential skill, because this Fall we find ourselves in a world much different from what we hoped for when we all got vaccinated in the spring.

Reframing in this season of COVID means focusing on all that we have in our lives and giving little thought to all that is missing. It is putting some brackets around our disappointment and discouragement with systems and individuals who have refused to vaccinate and mask and protect others. It is focusing on what we can do today, and laying aside tomorrow’s troubles for tomorrow.

We are all trying to live our lives on overload right now. Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, that great prophet of our time, recently likened our lives to a circuit breaker box that has been tripped. In a recent post, she shared some advice that we should all keep in mind as we consider the challenges of getting kids back to school, navigating work in person and online, lamenting the tragedies going on in Haiti and Afghanistan, and feeling a sense of foreboding as climate crises accelerate. Her spiritual advisor said this to Nadia:

What’s MINE to do, and what’s NOT mine to do?

What’s MINE to say and what’s NOT mine to say?

What’s MINE to care about and what’s NOT mine to care about?

Nadia concludes the post by saying that we should not put our heads in the sand, but there is also not one human heart that can bear all that is heartless that is happening right now.

So, reframe. Care about and work for the good that has been given you to do. Know that there are others called to causes you cannot give yourself to at this time. And place everything else in the most reliable hands we know.

Peace!

Vincent



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

September Worship and Preaching

September 5 – Mark 7:24-30,
“Schooled”

September 12 – Mark 8:27-
38, “Cross Talk”

September 19 – Mark 9:30-
37, “Last of All”

September 26 – Mark 9:38-
50, “Shock Therapy”

What the Pastor Is Reading

Writers and Lovers, Lily King

The Memory Monster, Yishai
Sarid

Monogamy, Sue Miller

**See inside for
details about fall
worship and
programming!**

Worship and Other Updates for Fall

Below are the recommendations to Session of the Worship Committee and Reopening Task Force as well as additional updates / information regarding our transition into fall.

Because of the rise of infection rates in our region, the Session voted to require that masks continue to be worn inside the building for all in-person activities, including worship, with no exceptions. Consistently throughout the pandemic, we have erred on the side of caution, in the interests of our values, which call us to love and protect our neighbor to the best of our ability.

When worship moves to 11 am Sunday, September 12, there will be some changes to our in-person and livestream experiences. The New Testament word for church, “ekklesia,” literally means “assembly.” From the very beginning when Jesus walked the earth, he gathered followers. We believe that the central focus of our life as a congregation is public worship, together, in this sacred space. In addition to masks, we encourage you to be fully vaccinated and to join us for worship every Sunday.

To enhance our in-person experience, we will be returning to worship as we experienced it before the pandemic. Returning: Choir, the Time for Children, Extended Session, standing for hymns, coming forward to light prayer candles for loved ones and friends, collecting the offering, and reading more of the assigned lessons for the day. If the new members we have received during the pandemic are willing, we will formally receive them in public during worship. We are beginning plans to have our first in-person communion service on World Communion Sunday.

The livestream will continue and the link to each week's service will be made available on our website, sixthchurch.org, or you can subscribe to our YouTube channel. Should you have trouble accessing the livestream, please contact Amy in the office. Each week, we will also post the bulletin online. Our last weekly all-church email will be Friday, September 10. After that, we will return to our pre-pandemic email policy (monthly newsletter, births, deaths, and time-sensitive communications).

Worship is central to us as Presbyterians, but Christian education and nurture, like mission, run a close second. Given the rise of infection rates, the Session also voted to postpone our September Sunday morning speaker series in the interests of reducing time we are inside in close proximity to one another. It is hoped that after the infection rates crest, we will be able to reschedule presentations from Pittsburghers for a Green New Deal, Squirrel Hill Stands Against Gun Violence, and our own Sara Berg updating us about our mission partners in El Porvenir.

If you are a faithful attendee of Bill Guy's Bible Study, the class will resume meeting Sunday, September 12, at 9:30 am over Zoom, concluding in time for you to drive to church for in-person worship or to settle in to watch the livestream. Contact Bill (whveguy46@gmail.com) to receive the Zoom link and to be added to his email list.

Pastor Vincent's weekly Bible study of the lectionary texts resumes Wednesday, September 8 at 10:30 am over Zoom. Contact the office to be added to the email update list and to receive the Zoom link.

Christian Education Reopening Plans!

Erring on the side of caution, we will begin to phase in programs for children and youth this fall starting with nursery care and Extended Session. Our current goal is to limit the length of time our young people will be spending in our building while providing some opportunity for us to gather in person.

Beginning September 12:

- Nursery Care for infants and toddlers will be provided during the worship service. Childcare staff are required to be vaccinated for Covid-19 and wear a mask.
- Sunday school for children in **preschool through third grade** will be held

during Extended Session each week during worship. Children will be dismissed from the sanctuary during worship following the Time for Children and will be brought back as a group to the sanctuary at the conclusion of the worship service. We will use the Primary Sunday School Room or the Ridinger Room depending on the size of the group. We will abide by the safety guidelines listed below. For the time being, Sunday school for grades four and up and youth group fellowship time will resume virtually.

- There will be two weekly opportunities for virtual Sunday school for all ages via Zoom: **10 am Sundays** and **6 pm Thursdays**. The sessions will last for 30 minutes. We will be posting weekly Sunday school resources and a children's bulletin for those participating in Sunday school and church at home.
- Youth Group for grades six and up which will be held weekly on **Thursdays from 6:30 to 7:30 pm**.
- Additional outdoor activities and gatherings for children, youth and their families may be planned with masks being required for all unvaccinated individuals.

We will continue to monitor the rate of community spread and adjust programming and protocols monthly for all in-person gatherings for children based on the CDC's recommendations for school and day care facilities, state regulations, county health department guidelines, and all guidelines and requirements established by the leadership and Session of Sixth Presbyterian Church. Our next step will be to resume in-person Sunday school for grades four and up.

Safety Guidelines:

- Masks will be required indoors for all staff, teachers, and volunteers. Masks for children over age 2 who can wear them will be required while indoors.
- A combination of portable room HEPA filters, window air-conditioning units, and open windows will be utilized to provide room ventilation.
- In good weather, we will be able to take Sunday school/extended session students outside to meet in designated spaces on the front stairs or front yard.
- Rooms/spaces used for Sunday school, nursery, and extended session will be cleaned after each use. Toys and materials used will be set aside for cleaning following each session.
- Social distancing will be practiced. We will provide enough crayons, pencils, arts and craft supplies to limit sharing.
- Kids/staff/volunteers will use the restrooms one at time unless assistance is needed.
- Parents/students will be reminded to follow all guidelines in our existing General Health and Safety guidelines/policy [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- Completion of our registration form for children and youth will be required for all those attending Extended Session, Sunday school, and all other in-person programming. Visitors and those not in our registration system will be asked to provide contact information. [Children and Youth Registration](#)
- We will keep attendance lists for all kids and adults for the purposes of contact tracing.
- Training will be provided for childcare staff, teachers, and volunteers about all health and building safety protocols.
- Self-Screening/Contact Tracing: Anyone testing positive after attending service or church program is asked to please report it to a church staff member right away so we can do contact tracing. For everyone's safety, we ask that people please stay home if you or anyone in your household has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days, or if anyone is currently experiencing or has experienced COVID-19 symptoms.

CROP Hunger Walk – Sunday, October 10 at 2 pm

The CROP Hunger Walk will be back in person this year! Sixth Church has been a significant participant in this important effort during the walk's 52-year history. Come and join us!

There will be one major change in logistics in the interest of safety. We will still meet at our usual location, South Avenue Methodist Church in Wilksburg, but the gathering will be in the church's expansive side yard rather than indoors. All registration be handled ahead of time, either by the individual church team or online.

You are encouraged to sign up online. When we ran a remote walk last year, everyone registered online, and it worked well. We'll still make it possible to sign up in person when we gather for worship, but we encourage you to take that step right on your computer.

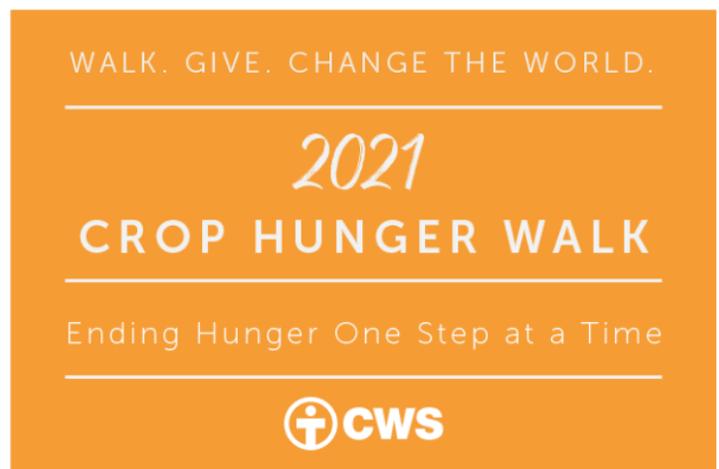
Here is our team site, where you can sign up to walk or make a donation:

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/team/sixth-presbyterian-church-of-pittsburgh>

CROP raises money for Church World Service programs around the world – to fight hunger and to develop sustainable agricultural practices. If you'd like to know more about the important ways your money is being used, check out this site. Every time we go there, we are convinced about the good and important work being done! Give a family hope for their future.

<https://cwsglobal.org/about/>

– Pam Twiss and Sue Koehler, co-chairs



September Birthdays

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| September 1 | Sadie DeLucia | September 21..... | Ashley Bower |
| | Ethan Miller | | Corey Bower |
| September 2 | Elise Bertolet | September 22..... | Millie Barnes |
| | Fred O'Leary | September 23..... | Rob Beswick |
| September 4 | Carol Beggs | September 24..... | Karen Gaul |
| | Frank Guyette | September 25..... | Sara DeLucia |
| | Elizabeth Sindhi | | Peg Watt-Morse |
| September 8 | Judy Schryer | September 27..... | Daniel Cummings |
| September 10..... | Sara Berg | September 28..... | Mary Lib Myers |
| September 16..... | Martha Funderburgh | September 30..... | Susan Rothenberg |
| September 20..... | Megan Sindhi | | Larry Van Dyke |

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

Cosette Cornelius-Bates: It's very hot so pandemic pool, video games, watering the garden. Malachi made a podcast. Also gardening.

Sara DeLucia: We painted the pavement! The mural is in the intersection by Baum Grove, the community-owned green space, 400 Roup, 15232

Peter Gilmore: Going slightly mad in preparing for my Pitt Osher class which begins 8/31 and coping with my Franciscan class which began (gulp) yesterday (8/24). My reading is scattered, but a constant are the weekly short stories by Séamus Ó Grianna from the first volume of the collection *Cora Cinniúna (Twists of Fate)*. Ó Grianna is a marvelous writer; these are stories full of the foibles and heartbreak of being human. Yes, the stories are in the Irish language, so I'm also reading the dictionary on my phone, hoping that Ó Grianna's rich use of Donegal idioms will literally not be lost in translation. Which brings to mind a phrase I've learned: "Níl neart air: It can't be helped."

Kirk Howe: Learned to weld!

Jennifer Joy: Just returned from a relatively low-stress week in DC with my family. And now my parents are back in town for about 3 weeks to hang with the girls until they return to school so I can work.

Lori King: *Burn-in* by PW Singer and August Cole, a mystery set in the "near future," which I am absolutely devouring. I have less than 100 pages left, and I definitely recommend it.

Linda May: Reading travel books and blogs to plan our vacation this fall to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National parks.

John McCall: I am enjoying the novel *Plainsong* by Kent Haruf. Next I'll start on *Psychedelics and Spirituality* edited by Tom Roberts, a relative of mine.



Notes from the August Session Meeting

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the June 23rd 2021 Session meeting were presented to the Session for approval
- **Motion to approve** the May Session meeting minutes with the following corrections:
 - Spelling of “Personnel”
 - Editing of committee headings to accurately represent the committee structure.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK’S REPORT

- Worship attendance: 6/27, 64 (In-Person), 44 (YouTube); 7/4, 39 (In-Person), 45 (YouTube); 7/11, 37 (In-Person), 61 (YouTube); 7/18, 43 (In-Person), 45 (YouTube); 7/25, 41 (In-Person), 32 (YouTube); 8/1, 44 (In-Person), 41 (YouTube); 8/8, 32 (In-Person), 33 (YouTube); 8/15, 32 (In-Person), 31 (YouTube); 8/22, 33 (In-Person), 30 (YouTube)
- Rev. Myra Kazanjian performed the wedding of Erin Elizabeth Cummings and Francis Amrit Gandhi on August 28 at Sixth Presbyterian Church.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **FINANCE:**
 - The June Financial reports were presented for review by Finance Chair Frank Davoli.
 - The Session members provided feedback on how the financial reports are provided for future Session meetings.
- **STEWARDSHIP:**
 - Stewardship Chair Beth Hazlett reviewed the proposed 2022 Stewardship theme and strategy.
 - The Executive Committee will meet in September 2021 to further develop and finalize the “challenge budget” for the 2022 Stewardship Campaign.
- **HOUSE:**
 - The scheduled UPMC vaccine clinic that was to be held on the church property was cancelled by UPMC.
 - Verizon notified House chair Greg Winner that reimbursement for the carpet damage has been approved and is pending deposit.
 - The following projects were presented to the Session for future consideration:
 - Repairing of the basement window wells
 - Repairing the roof drain near the Murray Ave. entrance

- House Chair Tom Juring requested approval to receive a check from church treasurer Erik Fogt for \$1200.00. This check would be cashed in order to place a deposit for sidewalk shoveling services for the 2021-2022 winter season. Following payment, a receipt will be required to document the deposit for shoveling services.
- **Request approved**
- **PERSONNEL:**
 - Personnel Chair Phyllis Rupert presented the Session with a committee report detailing that the Board of Pensions (BOP) requires Sixth to submit an employer agreement by October 7th 2021
 - The Session reviewed the proposal and will vote to approve the employer agreement for all employees at the September 2021 Session meeting.

BUILDING REQUESTS

- August and September building requests were presented to the Session for review and approval:
- UPMC Vaccine Clinic Staging Area Space- cancelled
- Squirrel Hill Market Night, Saturday- August 29, 5-10pm. (Chapel Space)
- Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance- August 31 and September 1, 7AM-9AM (Church Front)
- Election Polling Site- Tuesday November 2, 6AM-9PM (Chapel Space)
- **All building requests were approved**

REOPENING TASK FORCE

- Elder Pam Howe presented the Reopening task force/Worship committee report with the following recommendations:
 - **Motion to approve** that the current protocols, which include masking inside the building at all times, remain in effect.
 - **Motion to approve** that the focus of fall worship will be on the in-person experience, as opposed to the livestream
 - **Motions passed** unanimously

COMMISSIONER TO PRESBYTERY

The Session approved Kit Ayars to serve as the commissioner to Presbytery.

CHAIR AND COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- Session reviewed the 2021-2022 committee chairs in order to recognize new leaders and current vacancies. The committee chairs are as follows:
 - Christian Education: Linda May, Joe Ashenden
 - Church & Community: Larry Chan
 - Earth Care: Cosy Cornelius-Bates, Lynn Kawaratani
 - Fellowship: Jan Myers-Newbury, Lori King
 - Finance: Frank Davoli

- Gun Safety: Lori Swensson
- House: Gregory Winner, Tom Juring
- More Light: Kit Ayars
- Nominating: Kit Ayars
- Personnel: Phyllis Rupert
- Justice Team:
- Stewardship: Beth Hazlett, Carol Emerson
- Worship: Pam Howe, Mary Lang

DEACONS CARE LIST

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

NEW BUSINESS

Shree Janjagaran School

In 2017, the Greenfield Presbyterian church closed. As part of the terms of the dissolution, the Presbyterian Foundation granted the request of the Greenfield Session to transfer the Simmons Fund from Greenfield PC to Sixth. As part of that transfer, the outgoing Session of the Greenfield church expressed the hope that proceeds from the fund might be used in ways they had hoped: addiction treatment in Greenfield, and support for the Shree Janjagaran School (SJ) in Nepal.

The Greenfield connection to the SJ school came through Amar BK, a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, and his wife Sharmila, who were working at the school to provide education, identity, and status for Dalit "untouchables."

Both Amar BK and Sharmila have had to spend extensive time apart under severe financial distress because of the strictures of current immigration law with regard to student visas. Sharmila was recently hospitalized with a serious medical condition that is very costly, necessitating Amar's emergency return to Nepal.

- **Motion to approve** attending to immediate needs of Amar BK and Sharmila's family by providing \$1000.00 from the Simmon's fund while also beginning to discuss the financial needs of the Shree Janjargarn school
- **Motion passed** unanimously

COMMITTEE MINUTES

- Christian Education
 - Christian Education chair Elder Linda May presented the Christian Education Reopening plan for 2021-22 school year, the Safe Child Policy 2021 update and the Adult Christian Education offerings
 - **Motion to approve** the principles outlined in the Christian Education Reopening Plan for the 2021-2022 School year pending revisions related to the timing and schedules

- **Motion passed** unanimously

- **Motion to approve** the Safe Child policy
- **Motion passed** unanimously
- Amendments will be made to the administrative manuals based upon updates to the Safe Child Policy.
- **Motion to approve** the following Adult Christian Education offerings with an understanding that changes to the programming may be needed based upon safety and community interest:
 - September 12 – “Pittsburgh Green New Deal Coalition”
 - September 19 – “Squirrel Hill Stands Against Gun Violence,” Carolyn Ban and Eve Wider,
 - September 26 – “Update from El Porvenir,” our own Sara and Chris Berg
 - October 10 – “Mental Immunity: Infectious Ideas, Mind-Parasites, and the Search for a Better Way to Think”
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

Executive Committee:

- The Executive Committee will meet in September 2021 to review and approve the following topics:
 - Finalizing the 2022 Stewardship campaign theme and strategy
 - Determining recommendations to Session for the spending of benevolence funds to meet Sixth Church’s commitment to spending at least 10% of its annual budget on mission-based work.

NEXT MEETING: September 29, 2021 at 7 pm.

Participants Needed

This is an invitation to participate in a study about the concept of welcome for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender congregants of LGBT-affirming churches.

Are you:

- at least 18 years old?
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or transgender, gender-nonconforming, gender-queer, or gender-nonbinary?
- a member of an LGBT-affirming Christian church or do you regularly attend an LGBT-affirming Christian church?

If so, we'd like to talk to you about your experiences with feelings of welcome and unwelcome in Christian churches. If you are interested in participating or would like to learn more about this study, please contact Dr. Craig Cline or Ms. Amy Garzon-Hampton.

Craig Cline - 304-876-5337, ccline@shepherd.edu

Amy Garzon-Hampton- 304-876-5334, ahampton@shepherd.edu

IRB Proposal Number 441 has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Shepherd University

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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 October newsletter is Sept. 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!

“When Teresa of Avila was asked what she did in prayer, she replied, ‘I just allow myself to be loved.’” – Anthony de Mello

“Love is the story and the prayer that matters the most.” – Brian Doyle

“You have not grown old,
And it is not too late
To dive into your increasing depths
where life calmly gives out its own secret.” – Rainer Maria Rilke

“That is how life goes – we send our children into the wilderness. Some of them on the day they are born, it seems, for all the help we can give them. Some of them seem to be a kind of wilderness unto themselves. But there must be angels there, too, and springs of water.” – Marilynne Robinson