

January 2022

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

The carol we sang at the conclusion of the Christmas Eve service is “*Joy to the world, the Lord has come... let heaven and nature sing.*” The inspiration for this world-encompassing joy comes from the promise of an angel. I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people. Joy for all the people? What is the nature of this joy the angel promises? What would it look like for this world-encompassing joy to be real, in a new year, long after the Christmas tree has been hauled to the dumpster?

For me, the joy that knows no season is rooted in the confidence that God’s love searches for us; God’s desire is to dwell with us. I am also convinced that God’s love does not rest with us but seeps out of us and fills the spaces between us and our neighbors, shaping our encounters with others. Both of these realities provide a reason for joy in our lives.

But I also imagine the angels had to tell us of this joy because joy does not come easily in a world like ours. It takes some courage. Given the way the world is, even just the events in the past couple of months – school shooting violence and devastating storms and Covid numbers rising – it may seem that the only way to be joyful is to try to sequester ourselves away from all that is bad. Don’t you sometimes just want to escape?

Ferrol Sams writes a short story of a nameless character who is a narcissist and goes through life using people. When confronted with how he has hurt others, he blows it off saying, “*If you don’t say it out loud, it never happened.*” He gets sick but pretends he’s not. “*If you don’t say it out loud, it never happened.*” The story ends with his saying, “*I never said it out loud, but I’m still dying.*” Denial is a powerful anesthesia. It has allowed all of us, at times, to avoid the realities of our lives. And that has a powerful attraction at times, but I think the angels were not promising a joy based on self-denial. I think they promised joy that is real and lives in the real world. And that takes a bit of courage. Joy is not an act of denial, but to some degree, it is an act of defiance.

See if this makes sense to you. Joy is a gift. It is a gift born from the love of God and comes from knowing that God’s love calls us by name. Joy results from trusting this love. But at the same time, joy is a discipline. It is something that we pursue. It is something we practice. By practice, I mean we live each moment believing we are loved by God. When times are wonderful, we remember that we are loved by God. When times are hard, we remember we are loved by God. And that love shapes our choices.

As the new year begins, my prayer for you is that you will be blessed with the unexpected gift of joy, and that you will engage in the disciplines of remembering and serving, which foster joy.

Merry Christmas!
Vincent



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

January Worship and Preaching

January 2 – Rev. Charissa
Howe preaching

January 9 – Luke 3:15-17, 21-
22, “You Are My Child”

January 16 – John 2:1-11,
“Blessed Agnostic”

January 23 – Luke 4:14-21,
“We Are a Part of a Long,
Amazing Story”

January 30 – Jeremiah 1:4-
10, “Fire Shut Up in My
Bones”

What the Pastor Is Reading

Klara and the Sun, Kazuo
Ishiguro

Burnt Sugar, Avni Doshi

Honoring Gail Luley

We are creating a video montage (or “Tribute”) for Gail Luley, whose service as Director of Music at Sixth Presbyterian Church has meant so much to all of us. To do so, click on the link below and follow the instructions. To prompt your thinking about what to say in your video, ponder these two questions: What do you appreciate most about Gail Luley? What is your favorite memory of Gail Luley?

Please help us express our collective love and appreciation for Gail and all that she has done for the music ministry of our church.

If video is not your preferred medium, please write and bring a card to Sixth and place it in the designated receptacle, and we will make sure she gets your note.

<https://www.tribute.co/gail-luley/>

Justice Team Update

After months of conversation on the Justice Team, and after a long conversation at the December Session meeting, the Session voted to not be a sponsoring congregation for PIIN in 2022.

Below is the letter to the Executive Committee of PIIN:

At its December 15 meeting, the Session of Sixth Presbyterian Church voted to suspend our sponsoring congregational membership to PIIN for 2022. This vote followed a lengthy conversation within our Justice CORE team about the direction and viability of PIIN going forward, and our capacity to continue to provide significant volunteer leadership and financial support.

During the last six years that Sixth has renewed its membership in PIIN, our congregation has benefited from national and local training, and the ability to occasionally join with other faith communities to raise our voices on behalf of racial and social justice. We have provided leadership for direct actions, sacred conversations, and PIIN’s continuity through active participation in PIIN’s Executive Committee. We continue to value the friendships and relationships we have built with likeminded people of faith who hold the sacred call to do justice dear.

However, an ongoing unaddressed concern of the organization, and a need of our particular congregation, is in the area of base building, moving people of faith in our congregation and organization from work in direct charitable service, to systemic intervention for just public policy and expenditures. We believe that the central mission of faith-based community organizations is to build people power that holds public officials accountable with specific, democratically decided demands via direct action. Throughout the last six years, PIIN has not seen the work of building its base across a broad coalition of congregations to be its primary focus. This has made it increasingly difficult for our congregation to see the investment of time and money in PIIN as worthwhile.

We remain committed to the sacred call to do justice. In the coming year, our Justice CORE team will continue to invest our energies and resources to advancing social and racial justice in the Pittsburgh community as we consider how to best answer that call in the future.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Vincent Kolb

Sixth Presbyterian Church

Christian Education

In-person Sunday School Resumes!

Beginning Sunday, January 9 at 10 am in-person Sunday school classes will resume. Please join us upstairs for the following classes:

- Preschool-3rd grade will be led by Jenny Newman and our childcare staff and will meet in the primary Sunday school room.
- 3rd-5th grade will be led by Linda May and Meghan Jones and will meet in the secondary Sunday school room.
- 6th grade and up will be led by Joe Ashenden and Marcus Robinson grade will meet in the youth room (Jenny's office).

Please note that class locations may be adjusted due to number of participants based for class when needed for social distancing.

Virtual Sunday school options will still be available at 10 am Sunday and 6 pm Thursdays for those who are not yet comfortable/able to attend in person. Zoom link for this class will be sent to families via email.

Nursery Care for infants and toddlers will be provided during Sunday school and worship (10 am until the conclusion of worship.)

Extended Session for preschool through 3rd grade will be held 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.

Youth Group

Youth Fellowship will continue to meet weekly via zoom and/or in-person at times determined by group.

Those attending in-person are required to wear masks and to review our safety guidelines.

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 classes and 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.

Continued on the next page

- Parents/students will be reminded to follow all guidelines in our existing General Health and Safety guidelines/policy. 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 contract tracing.
- Training will be provided for staff and volunteers about all health and building safety protocols.
- Activities/meetings held in public spaces will be held in accordance with national/state health guidelines for groups meeting in public spaces/businesses. Mask will be required for unvaccinated youth who are meeting with our group in a public space.
- Self-Screening/Contact Tracing: Anyone testing positive after attending a 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 individuals please stay home if the individual or anyone in your household has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or if anyone is currently experiencing or has experienced COVID-19 symptoms.



January Birthdays

January 2 Scott Bell

January 3 Rachel Rothenberg

January 11.....Meghan Jones

Debbie Phillips

January 13.....David Myers-Newbury

January 18.....Jennifer Joy

January 26.....Vicki Guy



Thank you to everyone who participated in our Sunday School Christmas Pageant. Visit the church website if you have not seen it yet!

Thank you to all who brought an ornament to decorate our family tree. After we take down the tree, ornaments will be available for pick-up in the church office.

Notes from the December Session Meeting

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the October 27, 2021 Session meeting were presented to the Session for approval
- **Motion to approve** as written
- **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship: 10/31, 62 (in-person), 40 (YouTube); 11/7, 65 (in-person), 54 (YouTube); 11/14, 60 (in-person), 38 (YouTube); 11/21, 67 (in-person), 75 (YouTube); 11/28, 66 (in-person), 43 (YouTube); 12/5, 80 (in-person), 39 (YouTube); 12/12, 80 (in-person), 37 (YouTube)
- **Motion to approve** the following:
 - Scheduling of the Annual Congregational Meeting for Sunday, January 30, 2022, at noon.
 - Designating Ruling Elder Kathi Robinson-Dassel as the 2022 Clerk of Session
 - The baptism of Abigail Catherine Singleton, born July 5, 2021, daughter of Daniel Singleton and Sara Spinella, on February 20, 2022.
 - A letter of transfer of Sara Spinella from Downtown United Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **FINANCE:**
 - Finance Chair Frank Davoli presented the October financials, November financials and treasurers report for review.
- **STEWARDSHIP:**
 - Elder Beth Hazlett reported on the progress of the stewardship campaign. At the time of the Session meeting, the stewardship campaign had received 85 pledges totaling \$309,042.24 or 88.9% of 2021 stewardship goal.
- **HOUSE:**
 - General house project updates for December 2021 include:
 - The process of gutter and downspout maintenance for the winter season has been initiated in order to avoid past issues with these systems.
 - A quote to replace the exterior kitchen door has been received by the house committee with work to begin on this project shortly.
 - After identifying that an outside faucet was left running for an undetermined amount of time, the house committee is finding solutions to avoid this issue in the future.

- The Capital Campaign updates include:
 - The house committee brought to the attention of the Session that the price of completing the restoration of the sanctuary stained glass window has increased as the project has progressed due to the cost of labor and materials.

- **PERSONNEL:**

- Annual Reviews for Pastor and staff were scheduled for and conducted on Tuesday, December 14th. Feedback for each employee was solicited from one team member and one leader.
- The Personnel Chair, Phyllis Rupert, regrets having to submit her resignation from Session at the end of three years.
- The Session will look to fill the role of Personnel Chair in the upcoming year.

BUILDING REQUESTS

Motion to approve Bend the Arc's annual meeting for Friday, January 21, 2022, at 7 pm

Motion passed unanimously

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/CHAIR MEETING DATE

The Session scheduled a meeting to review proposed 2022 annual budget with committee chairs and members of the executive committee for 6 pm on January 19, 2022 via Zoom

REOPENING TASKFORCE AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE

- Current COVID-19 protocols will remain in place for the months of December and January.
- **Motion to approve the following:**
 - The recommendation made by the Worship/Reopening Task Force, in concert with the Christian Education committee, that Children's Sunday School resume on January 9 with the 3 in-person classes.
 - **Motion passed** with ten in favor and one opposed.
 - The recommendation for the scheduling of communion for February 6, 2021 and March 6, 2021
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
 - The recommendation to the Session that Rev. Charissa Howe fill the pulpit on January 2, 2022.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously.

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC SEARCH COMMITTEE

- The Search committee has recently met and reviewed 4 applicants.
- The Search committee is organizing the interview process, doing reference checks, and seeking to schedule interviews with desired applicants by January 15, 2022
- In order to boost the job posting to national platforms, the Committee recommends the following motion:
- **Motion to approve** the Session allocating \$1,000 in search expenses, to be taken from #457 in the 2021 budget for Choir supplement.

- **Motion passed** Unanimously

PRESBYTERY REPORT

- The Session reviewed the December 2021 Presbytery report provided by Elder Carol Emerson.
- The meeting highlighted the Freedom Rising and International Partnership ministries
- The next Presbytery meeting will be held on February 24th, 2022 over Zoom.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Earth Care:**
 - The Earth Care committee requested Session approve the publishing of a quarterly Earth Care Newsletter.
 - **Motion to approve** actively tabling the discussion regarding the publishing of a quarterly Earth Care Newsletter until the January 26th, 2022 Session meeting.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously.
- **Justice Team**
 - **Motion to approve** the Justice team's recommendation to the Session that Sixth Presbyterian Church suspend its sponsoring congregational membership with PIIN for the year 2022.
 - **Motion passed** with one Session member abstaining
 - **Motion to approve** the Justice Team's recommendation to the Session that the current draft of the statement opposing White supremacy be put aside.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
 - The Thomas Merton Center approached the Justice Team about Sixth Presbyterian Church signing onto a petition with other community organizations including Valley View Presbyterian Church, St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh United, CAIR Pittsburgh, Jewish Family & Children's Services, the Sierra Club (Pittsburgh Chapter), Sisters of St. Joseph, and Casa San Jose. The petition urged The Colcom Board of Directors to stop funding organizations with anti-immigration positions.
 - **Motion to approve** the Justice team's recommendation to the Session that Sixth Presbyterian Church be a signatory on the petition.
 - **Motion passed** with one Session member abstaining.

DEACONS CARE LIST

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

NEXT MEETING: January 26, 2022

Update from the Stewardship Committee

First we want to thank everyone who has submitted their 2022 pledge. We currently stand at \$328,242.24 of our pledge goal of \$347,609. We are very confident we will get very close to closing our \$19,366.76 gap.

As noted in our campaign materials, we are increasing our budget this year so that we can cover:

- 1) Continued live-streaming of our worship, so that our church members and friends can participate in our community life wherever they happen to be;
- 2) Expanding our benefits for our hardworking non-pastoral staff in a time of rising healthy care costs;
- 3) Paying for the PWSA's new stormwater fee that is based on our property's impervious surfaces;
- 4) Sustaining our support for the 30 mission partners who live out our values of justice, inclusion, equity and charity through their locally directed missions.

If you have not already submitted your 2022 pledge, please e-mail Amy Whipple (office@sixthchurch.org) with your pledge amount by January 7; so that we can finalize the Church's budget for 2022.

We are On This Road Together, and together we can meet our goal and continue our mission to serve, heal, love, and care.

Thank you all, and blessed New Year,

The Stewardship Committee



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

Cosette Cornelius-Bates: We are watching *Kid Cosmic* as a family; I'm reading *Pachinko*. Malachi is on his second time through listening to *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. I think his next podcast at *Unschooling Malachi* is going to be on Columbus inspired by that book.

Peter Gilmore: Reading Sally Rooney's novel, *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* Four 30-somethings, bound by love, hope, and confusion, figure out lives worth living. "And I want that – to prove that the most ordinary thing about human beings is not violence or greed but love and care."

Kate Kennedy: reading David Baldacci

Lori King: Reading *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, edited by Viet Thanh Nguyen

John McCall: I am well into Brian McLaren's *Faith after Doubt: Why Your Beliefs Stopped Working and What To Do About It*. Even we aging preachers need to continuously nurture what can sometimes be our fading faith.

Heather Vallone: I am working on *Perigee* by Diane Kerr! Thanks to Judy Schryer!

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

Dated Material – Do Not Hold
Address Service Requested



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 February newsletter is Jan. 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 light a candle to the dead.

And light a candle to miracles, however unlikely, and pray that you recognise yours.

And light a candle to the living; the world of friendship and family that means so much.

And light a candle to the future; that it may happen and not be swallowed up by darkness.

And light a candle to love.

Lucky Love." – Jeanette Winterson