

March 2022

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

In many cultures there is an ancient custom of giving a tenth of each year's income to some holy use. For Christians, to observe 40 days of Lent is to do the same thing with roughly a tenth of each year's days.

After being baptized by John in the river Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness where he spent 40 days asking himself what it meant to be Jesus. During Lent, we as people of faith, are supposed to ask what it means to be ourselves.

If we had to bet everything we have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get our wager and why?

When we look at our faces in the mirror, what do we see in it that we most like and who do we see in it that we most deplore?

If we had one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to us, what would it be?

Of all the things we have done in this life, which is the one we would most like to undo? Which is the one that makes us happiest?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if the circumstances called for it, we would be willing to die for?

If this were the last day of our lives, what would we do with it?

To hear ourselves try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who we are, it is also to begin to hear something of what we are becoming and what we are failing to become.

As always, these radical questions are posed in the embrace of God's love, where there is no fear, but only grace. Which leads me to conclude with the Other Serenity Prayer:

"God grant me the serenity to stop beating myself up for not doing things perfectly,

the courage to forgive myself because I am working on doing better, and the wisdom

to know that you already love me just the way I am."

AMEN.

– Vincent



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

March Worship and Preaching

March 2 – (Ash Wednesday, 7 pm), Daniel 9, "The Holiness of Ashes"

March 6 – Luke 4:1-13, "Unending Questions"

March 13 – Luke 13:31-35, "From Lament to Reparations"

March 20 – Luke 13:1-9, "The Hurt That Leads to Life"

March 27 – Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32, "Our Choice"



What the Pastor Is Reading

How Beautiful We Were,
Imbolo Mbue

When We Cease to Understand the World,
Benjamin Labatut

Expanding Our Understanding of Gender and Sexuality

On February 15th, Jule Arney, training coordinator for the Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation, provided an educational session to Sixth members on expanding our understanding of gender and sexuality.

As part of our celebration of 25 years as a More Light congregation, some of the participants in Jule's workshop will be sharing what we learned.



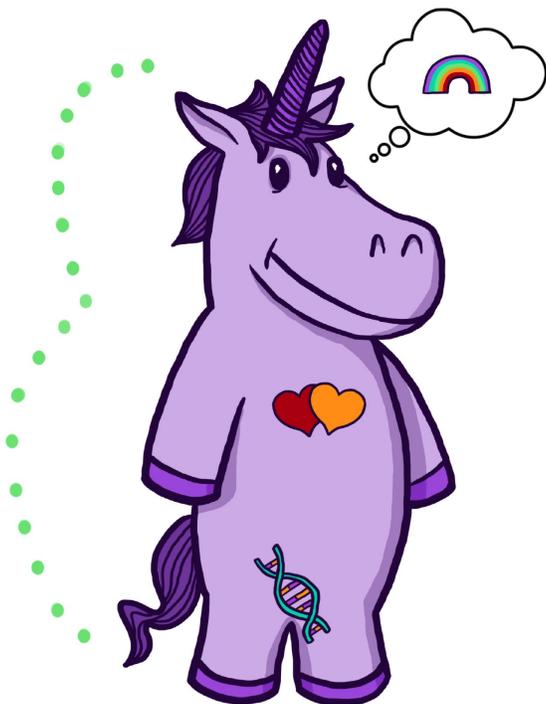
What did you learn?

It gave me a much better understanding regarding the difference between sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. I learned why it is so important to always introduce myself using my pronouns – it gets me in the habit, reminds me never to assume, and is welcoming. I also learned that if you don't know someone's pronouns, don't assume, instead use their first name. Plus if you make a mistake, apologize and move on – don't make the mistake about you.

– Beth Hazlett, Ruling Elder

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Equality Resources



Gender Identity

- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Man/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression/Presentation

- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

- Female
- Male
- Other/Intersex

Sexually Attracted To

- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Romantically/Emotionally Attracted To

- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan

Upcoming Events

Join Us for a Virtual Pancake Supper!: Tuesday, March 1 is Shrove Tuesday – and that means the Pancake Supper! This year there will be the opportunity to Zoom in on the event from your own home at 6 pm. (Stay tuned for the Zoom link as the evening gets closer.)

To facilitate the food and festivities, Fellowship Committee will be making pancake mix (just add water!) and maple syrup (the real thing!) available – as well as supplies for a mask-making activity – starting after Worship on Sundays February 20 and 27. Each baggie will contain one cup of pancake mix: enough for six or seven four-inch pancakes. Take what you need for you and your family. There will also be mix available on March 1: if you cannot make it to church during office hours (9-2) to pick it up, there will be a bucket with baggies of pancake mix and mask supplies outside the Murray Avenue door. Plan on dressing up for the occasion! Get out your beads and bangles! Thanks – and we hope to see you and virtually dine with you on March 1!

Ash Wednesday: We will have an in-person Ash Wednesday service – with the imposition of ashes – March 2 at 7 pm.

Sixth Church Community Member in the News:

Robert Turner

Earlier this month, National Public Radio (NPR) interviewed a member of the Sixth Church Community who is engaged in innovative research that seeks to better understand Parkinson's disease. Doctor Robert Turner, Director of the Turner Lab at the University of Pittsburgh's Neurobiology Department, is the husband of Sixth Church Choir member Jane Opgaard. Their grown children, Sterling and Carlisle, participated in Sixth Church Sunday School and Youth Group.

Parkinson's Disease, which afflicts almost one million Americans, gradually kills or disables cells that make dopamine, a chemical messenger associated with the brain's internal reward system. Parkinson's impairs walking and talking, and it may also adversely affect other behaviors.

The Turner Lab is one of several neurobiology labs at the University of Pittsburgh, and one lab at the University of California at Santa Barbara, that are starting a new project to study an odd behavior often observed in people with Parkinson's. That behavior, called paradoxical kinesia, is a variation of the placebo effect.

We typically hear about the placebo effect as a positive response to a sugar pill which the patient believes is real medicine. Paradoxical kinesia describes a similar impact in response to stress or a strong emotion, such as danger or pleasure. To illustrate this phenomenon, the NPR article begins by recounting how a Parkinson's patient with limited mobility suddenly sprang into action to prevent his grandson from falling down a flight of stairs.

The existence of paradoxical kinesia suggests that people with Parkinson's retain a second intact movement circuit in the brain, but that this pathway only becomes active in response to certain situations. If neurobiologists can find a way to activate this pathway and keep it active, this might provide a treatment for Parkinson's. The research is in its initial stages, and NPR describes a potential treatment "a long way off," but it does offer promise.

You can read the full NPR article, or hear the story, at <https://www.wesa.fm/2022-02-07/a-brain-circuit-tied-to-emotion-may-lead-to-better-treatments-for-parkinsons-disease>

– Peter Kaplan

Lent Resources 2022

It's that time again! The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday (March 2). Here are some new devotional materials and book suggestions to carry you through this reflective season.

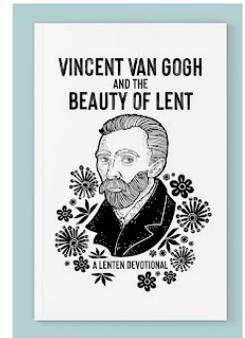
Copies of the following will be available in the church chapel. If you would like a digital PDF version please email Jenny Newman at Jennyrunew@gmail.com.

2022 Lenten Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 If you had to give away a million dollars, what would you give up?	2 Lead grace at dinner	3 Write a card for someone who needs love	4 Talk about the meaning of ashes	5 Write 10 things you are grateful for and give up one of them	6 Today, try not to eat any meat	7 Collect spare change in your house and give it away
8 What does your coat of arms mean?	9 Imagine you are in the desert for 40 days	10 Cure a cold with a spoonful of salt	11 Think about a person you love. Do something nice for them	12 Write a letter to someone you disagree with	13 Today, try not to eat sweets	14 Pray for children around the world
15 Lenten Food: What is your favorite Lenten food?	16 When you bite a lemon, how does it taste?	17 Pray for clean water around the world	18 Pray for the Government	19 Pray for the poor	20 Today, try not to use bread or meat	21 Pray for children around the world
22 What is the best thing you ever ate?	23 Pray for the sick	24 Pray for the old people in your church	25 Notice when you are talking about someone in a bad way and stop	26 Write a nice letter about someone you disagree with	27 Today, try not to play with toys that require batteries or electricity	28 Go get a diet of your clothes and find some things you are ready to give away
29 Discuss with your parents: How was Jesus a king?	30 Pray for the sick	31 Pray for the sick	32 Write down 3 things you are grateful for	33 Pray for the poor	34 Pray for the poor	35 Go get a diet of your clothes and find some things you are ready to give away
36 Palm Sunday: Apologize for something you did differently	37 Write down ways you can help and then start tomorrow	38 Pray for all those that have died in the past year	39 Why do you wear your Lenten garb?	40 Mandy Thurs: Take 10 Lenten garb items and give them away	41 Good Friday: Discuss with your parents: Why did Jesus die?	42 Holy Saturday: Write down ways you can help and then start tomorrow

Vincent Van Gogh and the Beauty of Lent by The Salt Project

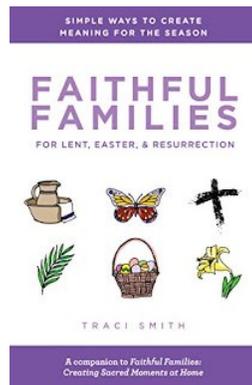
In this Lenten devotional, the words of Scripture and the paintings and letters of Vincent van Gogh will be our guides. Each week, biblical texts and Van Gogh's work throw light on each other, pointing toward simple, powerful practices you can try yourself, with your family or friends. You will need a Bible and all the paintings referenced can be found online. So grab your favorite Bible and a decent internet connection (all the paintings referenced here can be found online).



2022 Family Lent Calendar

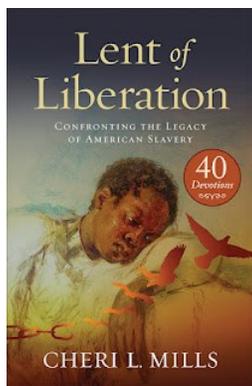
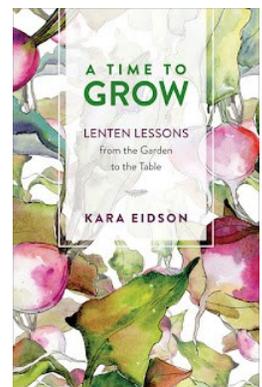
Books

These are available through the PCUSA online store or can be ordered by your favorite local bookseller.



Faithful Families: For Lent, Easter & Resurrection by **Traci Smith**: Parents, guardians, teachers, and ministers will find dozens of fun and easy practices for celebrating the Easter season with our kids. The practices and seasonal prayers are grouped into chapters titled Ash Wednesday, Symbols, Lenten Prayers, Lenten Refraining, Lenten Acts of Service, Holy Week, Easter Vigil and Easter Day, and the Season of Resurrection. Smith also offers theological notes guiding parents on addressing the violence of the crucifixion and the meaning of Jesus' death.

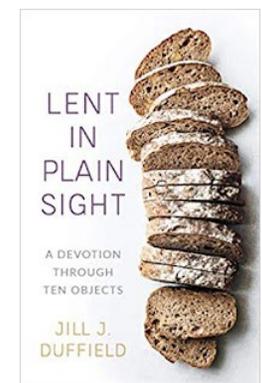
A Time to Grow by **Kara Eidson**: Themes of soil, water, light, time, fasting, feasting, and more guide the way from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. Readers will explore the intricacies of how faith is required to produce food and how that faith can lead us all to feast at the table on Easter morning



Lent of Liberation by **Cheri L. Mills**: Each of the forty devotions includes the testimony of a person who escaped slavery through the Underground Railroad, a Scripture passage, and a reflection connecting biblical and historical themes to challenge modern readers to work for liberation. Reflecting on Lenten themes of exodus, redemption, discipline, and repentance, readers, both Black and white, will be empowered for the work of racial justice.

Lent in Plain Sight: A Devotion through Ten Objects by Jill J. Duffield

The author draws readers' attention to ten ordinary objects that Jesus would have encountered on his way to Jerusalem: dust, bread, the cross, coins, shoes, oil, coats, towels, thorns, and stones. In each object, readers will find meaning in the biblical account of Jesus' final days. Each week, readers encounter a new object to consider through Scripture, prayer, and reflection.



Pittsburgh Green New Deal

Tuesday, March 29, Tuesday, 7 pm

Our local chapter of the Green New Deal national movement will be offering a Zoom talk on how we at Sixth can help promote the implementation of federal infrastructure spending for green projects in our area. We will learn how we can advocate at upcoming County Council hearings for well plugging and mining reclamation projects in Allegheny County. Please join us!



Congratulations to Our Gun Safety Committee!



On February 15, our committee had conversations with three rural congregations via Zoom about how they can begin to talk about sensible gun safety legislation in their congregations and with their legislators. With the help of CeaseFire PA Community Organizer Josh Fleitman, the group is building relationships with like-minded people of faith across our state for gun safety. Thank you!

March Birthdays

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| March 4 | Pam Howe | March 21..... | Winter Cornelius-Bates |
| | Katie Kaplan | March 25..... | Emma Cooper |
| March 8 | Jordan Lowe | March 26..... | Malakai Whipple |
| | Greg Nestor | March 28..... | Schuyler Stupica |
| March 9 | Linda Davoli | | |
| March 13..... | Joseph DeLucia | | |
| March 17..... | Wilson Juring | | |
| | Glenda Rosenberry | | |
| | Rohan Vaux | | |



By popular demand (read: Carol Emerson’s request), here’s an updated staff picture! Aren’t we a good-looking bunch?

Notes from the February Session Meeting

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes of the January 2022 Session meeting were approved unanimously, following some minor corrections.
- Minutes of the Congregational Meeting of January 30, 2022 were approved unanimously.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship attendance: 1/30 (livestreaming only), 75; 2/6, 48 (in-person) / 86 (You Tube); 2/13, 51 (in-person) / 53 (You Tube); 2/20, 58 (in-person) / 47 (You Tube)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

FINANCE

- Finance Chair, Elder Frank Davoli presented the Treasurer's Report from January 2022, followed by a discussion and questions.
 - Amount pledged has exceeded budget for the month of January
 - Ecclesiastical Apportionment has been paid to Presbytery, for Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly (paying this early also secures us a discount)

HOUSE & CAPITAL PROJECTS

- Elder Greg Winner gave an updated report.
 - There is a leak in the roof at the base of the bell tower. It has been difficult to hire a roofer to repair.
 - Sump pump has been installed in the basement.
 - The heat in the gutters needs to be rewired by an electrician.

STEWARDSHIP

- Elder Beth Hazlett reported that while there is nothing new right now, around mid-year the Executive Committee/Finance will be looking at the non-pledge amount (line item 314) to see how it effects the income.

PERSONNEL

- Carol Emerson made a Motion, on behalf of Rev. Kolb.
 - Motion that Rev. Kolb be approved to work off-site during the time period of March 9-23, with the anticipation that he will be available on Sundays for worship and will have plans for pastors on-call should the need arise, during that time. **Motion carried unanimously.**

BUILDING REQUESTS

- Bend the Arc, who was to have their meeting on-site this month, opted to ZOOM instead. There have been no other building requests.

BRAINSTORMING

- Rev. Kolb led a brainstorming session around two questions:
 - **What have you missed about church during the pandemic?** Responses centered around the personal connections in various forms, seeing the children, routine, choir/music.

- **How are we going to rebuild our community life, as we emerge from the pandemic?** Responses included community service projects, focusing on long-standing tradition and events, involve the children more in music and liturgy, family activities, welcoming to new members and new visitors.

WORSHIP/REOPENING TASK FORCE

- Elder Pam Howe reported that the task force met on 2/20/22 and had the following motions for Session.
 - **Motion that beginning March 1, that masks continue to be required, but that the masks be of a person's choice.** Candle lighting during hymns will be permitted once again on Sunday, February 27. Beginning Thursday, February 24, choir rehearsal will again be an hour and a half. **Motion carried unanimously.**
 - **Motion that communion be celebrated on Sunday, March 6 by the self-serve method. Motion carried unanimously.**
 - **Motion that there be an Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, March 2 at 7 pm, a Maundy Thursday communion service on April 14 at 7 pm (no Agape Meal), and a Good Friday service on April 15 at noon. Motion carried unanimously.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND APPRECIATION.

- A special Thank You to Kit Ayars for her work on arranging the session with Jule Arney from the Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation. It was very informative and very well received by those who were able to attend (electronically).
- A special Thank You to Lori Swensson and the work of the Gun Safety Committee, in their ability to build a relationship with those in rural communities for meaningful discussion about gun safety.

• JUSTICE TEAM

- On behalf of the Justice Team, Pam Howe made the following **motions for Session:**
 - **That Sixth Presbyterian Church host a zoom educational event with the Pittsburgh Green New Deal on 3/29/22. Motion carried unanimously.**
 - **That Session approve the hosting of a "Reparations: Pittsburgh Churches Talk About Repentance and Reconciliation" even on Sunday, March 27, at 12:30 pm, via livestream, zoom and/or in-person. The Motion for hosting of the event carried unanimously, with some discussion of the need to change the timing, depending on the availability of the presenters.**
 - **That Session approve a musical concert by Dr. Douglas-Jayd Burn on Sunday, April 10, at 2 pm (Palm Sunday) with a freewill offering to be collected at the concert to support Bethel AME's legal work. The Motion was passed unanimously, following discussion.**

DEACONS' MINUTES

The Minutes were referenced as available in the meeting packet.

CARE LIST

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

OLD BUSINESS

Pam Howe agreed to meet with the Earth Care chairs regarding issues that were raised last Session meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: No new business.

NEXT MEETING: March 30, 2022, 7 pm

Sixth Presbyterian Church
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Pittsburgh, PA 15217
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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.

Food for Thought...



The deadline for the April newsletter is March 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!

"I have come to believe that by and large the human family all has the same secrets, which are both very telling and very important to tell. They are telling in the sense that they tell what is perhaps the central paradox of our condition – that what we hunger for perhaps more than anything else is to be known in our full humanness, and yet that is often just what we also fear more than anything else. It is important to tell at least from time to time the secret of who we truly and fully are – even if we tell it only to ourselves because otherwise we run the risk of losing track of who we truly and fully are and little by little come to accept instead the highly edited version which we put forth in hope that the world will find it more acceptable than the real thing. It is important to tell our secrets too because it makes it easier that way to see where we have been in our lives and where we are going. It also makes it easier for other people to tell us a secret or two of their own, and exchanges like that have a lot to do with what being a family is all about and what being human is all about. Finally, I suspect that it is by entering that deep place inside us where our secrets are kept that we come perhaps closer than we do anywhere else to the One who, whether we realize it or not, is of all our secrets the most telling and the most precious we have to tell."

–Frederick Buechner