“How do we move forward with hope?”

So begins a compelling article from James Gustave Speth, a professor at Vermont Law School. (https://orionmagazine.org/article/cousel-despair-climate-catastrophe) He offers a picture of a “whole world festering unhappy souls,” fueled by the deprivations “born in economic disparities, social inequities, environmental decay, political oppression, invidious discriminations, the failure of education and health systems, the loss of community solidarity and human companionship, and, perhaps most important, the widespread sense of powerlessness and hopelessness in the face of these challenges.”

He then ponders several existential choices we can make in this reality we face every day: accepting this fate with bitter nihilism, calm stoicism, or hedonistic abandonment. Or Speth says, we can retreat into the denial free of fact and science and full of fake reality and mythic beliefs. Or, we can hope that somehow the problems will be solved, or if we are spiritual, put our faith in an afterlife.

Then Speth says, “there is the response I will call rebel and resist. Here, people fiercely oppose and fight back against their fate, knowing full well it is hopeless but nevertheless rebelling beyond hope because the human spirit tells them with insistence that what is unacceptable—all the suffering, all the loss, all the tears—must not be accepted.”

I want to be a rebel and a resister. What do you want to be with your one, wild precious life?

Looking forward to seeing you this fall.

Vincent
Children and Youth Updates

Fall Christian Education
It’s that time again! 11 a.m. worship and Sunday school will resume on September 11. Parents are asked to please review our updated Health and Safety Guidelines and complete our Children and Youth Registration.

Nursery Care and Extended Session
Nursery care for infants and toddlers will be provided from 10 until the conclusion of worship each week. Extended Session will be held during worship each week for children ages preschool through 3rd grade. Kids will be dismissed from worship during the Passing of the Peace following the time for children. Jenny Newman and Extended Session staff will provide snacks, story time, crafts, music, prayer time, Godly Play stories, and free play time.

Meet the Nursery and Extended Session Staff

Jenn McCartney has worked at Sixth for seven years. She is a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health. She conducts research on smart homes for older adults aging in place and is the research coordinator for Street Medicine at Pitt. She resides in Squirrel Hill with her two long haired cats, Mr. Tinkles and Pom Pom. She enjoys architecture and art.

Rachael Todaro has been with us for nearly five years! She is currently in her third year of graduate school at Chatham University’s Doctorate of Occupational Therapy program. Rachael plans to be a pediatric occupational therapist to help children of all abilities after graduating this upcoming April!

Elly Bertolet is a long-time member of Sixth and is a senior at Allderdice High school. Elly is active in theater and youth group.

Katie Smith is a preschool director with a background in psychology and religion. She loves coffee, art, language learning, and hanging out with her dog at Frick Park. Katie is very excited to join the nursery at Sixth Presbyterian.

Sunday school
Preschool through 6th grade class
Teachers: Linda May, Meghan Jones, Gwen Harcar
We will use the Feasting on the Word lectionary-based curriculum. The class may be divided into smaller groups by age depending on attendance.
7th-12th grade / Confirmation Class
Teachers, Jenny Newman, Joe Ashenden, and Marcus Robinson
We will use a combination of our Feasting on the Word lectionary-based curriculum and Big God, Big Ideas (PCUSA) Confirmation materials throughout the Sunday school year. Students will have the opportunity to be confirmed into church in the spring of 2023 if they choose to do so. Also, for those interested in Confirmation, students will have the opportunity to attend two confirmation retreats at Camp Crestfield led by Pittsburgh Presbytery. Dates for these retreats are September 24-25 and March 3-5.

Acolytes and Water Pourer
Pouring the baptismal water and lighting the Christ Candle are vital parts of our worship service. There will be a sign-up sheet for Sundays in the narthex of the church for children and youth are interested in being a part of the service in this way.

We will have a short training for Acolytes and Pourers after worship on September 18. Contact Jenny Newman for more information.

Staff and Teachers Meeting
A training led by Jenny Newman will be held Wednesday, September 7 at 6 pm for all staff, Sunday school teachers at the church to get orientated before the new year. We will cover Sunday schedules, building safety, procedures, childcare policy, reporting, etc. We group will also spend some time preparing Sunday school rooms.

September Birthdays

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

From October 25-November 9, the Gun Safety Committee at Sixth will be hosting a memorial display on the church grounds. The display is of about 80 t-shirts, each having the name, date, and age when the person was killed by gun violence in Allegheny County in the past year. Our goals are to bring awareness to the magnitude of gun violence in our own community and to seek gun safety legislation.

The Gun Safety Committee will need church members to help us! Committee members will be in the Parlor following worship on September 11th to answer questions and will have volunteer sign-up sheets as well as letters about seeking gun safety legislation.

Please volunteer to help with the memorial display or stop by to sign the letters!

Training for Adult and Youth Liturgists

We will have a training session for people willing to be a liturgist. The training will be in the sanctuary after church on September 18th. Please contact Pam Howe for any questions or concerns: Howepjs@yahoo.com or 412-343-7438.

Fridays on the Lawn—August Edition
Alas! I ran out of content for this page, but, in order to print correctly, there must be an even number of pages, so you get this sentence. Womp wah.
Notes from the August Session Meeting

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

CLERK’S REPORT:
- Worship Attendance: 6/26, 49 (in-person), 50 (YouTube); 7/3, 44 (in-person), 36 (YouTube); 7/10, 52 (in-person), 35 (YouTube); 7/17, 46 (in-person), 33 (YouTube); 7/24, 52 (in-person), 40 (YouTube); 7/31, 40 (in-person), 51 (YouTube); 8/7 (in-person), 51 (YouTube); 8/14, 56 (in-person), 66 (YouTube); 8/21, 35 (in-person), 81 (YouTube)

OMNIBUS MOTION:
- Request was made to pull one Motion for further discussion.
  - Motion that the Session approve an emergency grant of $3,554.44 to the Commonwealth of Oakland as Sixth Church’s contribution of this New Worshipping Community that works in Oakland and its nearby neighborhoods, and which shares our values. The funds for this grant will come from the Caring Ministry Designated Gift Fund (#277), which has not been used for a number of years. Following a short discussion and clarification, including reasoning from Church and Community committee members, Ruling Elder Tom Juring moved that the emergency grant be approved. The Motion passed unanimously.
  
- Ruling Elder Peter Kaplan moved that the remainder of the Omnibus Motion be approved and the Motion passed unanimously.
  
  - Motion to approve the minutes of the Session Stated Meeting, June 22.
  - Motion to approve the following people be removed from the church roll at their request: [redacted for newsletter purposes only]
  - Motion to approve the baptism of Isabel Inez Shifflet, child of Jason Shifflet and Jennifer Donnelly, born May 8, 2022, Pittsburgh, PA, TBA.
  - The House committee recommends that the Session approve the ACA group building request, beginning Saturday, October 1, 2022.
  - The Personnel committee recommends that the Session approve the Pastor’s request for remote work (10/4-8), vacation (11/13-20, 12/25-1/2/23), and the carry-over of 1 week of unused vacation and 1 week of unused continuing education.
  - Motion to approve the following changes to the communion schedule: September 11, October 2, November 6, and December 4. (Communion will not be held on August 7 or September 4 because the Pastor is out of town.)
  - Motion to approve the Rev. Charissa Howe to fill the pulpit on Sunday, November 20.
  - Motion to approve the revised dates for the Heeding God’s Call Gun Violence Display, October 24 to November 9, on the church front lawn and to approve the Memorial to the Lost Remembrance Service, Sunday, October 30, 3 pm
  - Motion to approve Ruling Elder Peter Gilmore to be our Elder commissioner to Presbytery, September 22.
  - Motion to approve the 2023 Stewardship campaign, “Love Will Win”; the congregational goal of $358,037; and the household goal of prayerfully asking that each giving unit consider adding 3% to their 2022 pledge and make that their 2023 commitment to Sixth.
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:
- **FINANCE:** Ruling Elder Frank Davoli, Finance Chair, presented highlights of the July/August Report.
  
  - Nothing remarkable to report in current financials
  
  - Church and Community funds will be distributed after September meeting. C&C will discuss using discretionary funds for Ehlers-Danlos Society, Planned Parenthood, and ALS, as way to honor those who have recently passed away.
  
  - The internal audit is nearly complete, with Capitol Campaign yet to review.
  
  - It was noted the Board of Pensions will be raising the dues on the Pension/Medical portion of the Pastor’s compensation in 2023. It was also noted that the costs for health care for the rest of the staff will increase by $5,000 in 2023.

WORSHIP AND LIVESTREAM:
- In reviewing the thoughts generated about worship and livestreaming, Ruling Elder Mary Lang noted that the services are, indeed, designed for those in the sanctuary for worship, while, in effect, inviting those who are watching on livestream to be with those in the sanctuary in spirit. This is evidenced by the changes in service/sermon to a more personalized service in response to church family crises. This will be referred to the Worship Committee to name as a positive, desirable concept.

  - There are still some concerns about the website-updating and ease of use, including finding the website through Google search. Amy Whipple, office manager, is looking for ways to update and streamline access.

  - Jenny Newman will work with others on staff to create a livestream visitor sign-in/donation form.

COMMITTEE MINUTES:
- Rev. Kolb referenced the Committee Minutes within the Session Packet

  - Note that Stewardship Committee will need Session assistance to make calls this year.

  - Housing Issue: Rev. Kolb thanked Barb Parees and Beth Hazlett for their warm greetings and housing assistance for [redacted for newsletter purposes only].

COFFEE HOUR:
- Suggestions were made as to how to reinstate Coffee Hour following the service, particularly while COVID level is moderate/high.

  - Ruling Elder Barb Parees moved that volunteers be requested to plan Coffee Hour for September 25, to be held outside, weather permitting, inside if COVID level is low. The **Motion** passed unanimously.

COMMUNION:
- Communion will be held on September 11. Session members volunteered to be Communion Servers/Ushers in response to Ruling Elder Pam Howe’s request.

NEXT MEETING: September 28, 2022, 7:00 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathi Robinson-Dassel
Now that the 2022 General Assembly has ended – the first-ever hybrid assembly – the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will try to live into the commitments made and the work ahead. Ruth Santana-Grace and Shavon Starling-Louis, the new co-moderators, stood for election using the theme “Unbounded We Thrive,” and the assembly spoke its mind on issues affecting the church and the world.

Israel/Palestine. The assembly voted 266-116 to approve one of the most controversial items before it — INT-02, declaring that the PC(USA) recognize the laws, policies and practices of the Israeli government regarding the Palestinian people “fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid.” Some have criticized the PC(USA) stance towards Israel as antisemitic, saying it hurts interfaith relations. Others say the assembly spoke courageously in supporting human rights for the Palestinian people.

Climate change. Voting 340-41, the assembly directed PC(USA) entities to divest from five oil and gas companies it concluded are not moving quickly enough to try to slow global warming — Chevron, ExxonMobil, Marathon Petroleum, Phillips 66, and Valero Energy. The vote reflected continued support for the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI)’s strategy of corporate engagement and selective divestment. Action on another item, ENV-09, also affirmed “that working in the fossil fuel industry is a necessity for many” and assured Presbyterians that “divestment is not a condemnation or judgment of their choice of employment.”

Litany of repentance. One of the assembly’s most powerful emotional moments came when White Presbyterians recited a litany of repentance from RGJ-08, offering an apology to African Americans for the sin of slavery and its legacy. One assembly committee focused exclusively on issues of race and gender justice — including violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, disparities experienced by Black women and girls, and racial disparities in health care. Other concerns: confronting White supremacy in the PC(USA) and working for reparative justice.

Gun violence. With recent mass shootings still echoing, the assembly approved VIOL-07, declaring 2022-2032 a “Decade to End Gun Violence” — asking the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) to develop tools for faith-based advocacy against gun violence and for studying “the intersection of white supremacy culture, Christian nationalism, and gender with gun violence.” It also approved VIOL-11,
directing MRTI to begin a process of corporate engagement with Walmart, Dick's Sporting Goods, and Kroger, three publicly-traded companies included in the investment portfolios of either the Board of Pensions or Presbyterian Foundation, and which sell guns not classified as semi-automatic and assault-based weapons. (Those weapons previously mentioned are already on the divestment list.)

**Family leave.** The assembly approved a proposed amendment to the PC(USA) constitution to say a minister's terms of call shall include at least 12 weeks of paid family medical leave (covering the birth, fostering or adoption of a child; care for ill or disabled family members; and healing following a loss or tragic event). To take effect, the proposed change needs approval from a majority of the presbyteries.

**Immigration.** The assembly voted 340-25 to declare the PC(USA) a “sanctuary and accompaniment church” — saying the denomination stands with immigrants and asylum-seekers and is committed to working for justice in U.S. immigration policy. That work often involves Presbyterians accompanying immigrants by offering housing and legal assistance, going with them to immigration hearings and other appointments and trying to get people released from detention.

**Restructuring.** Supporting recommendations from a special committee, the assembly voted to create a commission with the power to act and the responsibility for unifying the PMA and the Office of the General Assembly — basically, to restructure the top level of the PC(USA). Citing financial stress on congregations and presbyteries, the assembly also created a team to develop experimental models as alternatives to the current per capita funding system.

**Reproductive justice.** In the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade, the assembly approved a resolution on reproductive justice — saying the PC(USA) rejects “attempts at all levels of government to reduce, limit, or eliminate access to contraceptive and abortion care.”

**LGBTQIA+ equity.** The assembly created a new LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee as a permanent committee of the General Assembly — equivalent in access and accountability to the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice and the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee.

**Per capita.** The assembly set the new General Assembly per capita assessment at $9.85 per member for 2023 and $9.80 per member for 2024. That compares to the current per capita rate of $8.98 per member.

**2024 General Assembly.** Presented with four options, the assembly opted for a hybrid approach again for the 2024 assembly — choosing Plan Omega with online committee meetings and in-person plenary sessions in Salt Lake City, Utah.
Food for Thought...

“The Kyrie sometimes feels like a protest chant—its persistent roots hanging off, reminding me of the life that anchored it to the soil, words that live always on the edge of winter and spring. Because even as we sing these words, calling for mercy, we do so with the hope and belief that God’s mercy is already there.

So, I keep going. I roll out of bed and land on my knees. Push myself up. Keep putting one foot in front of the other and do the sanctified work that is breathing. And I keep looking. Keep seeing. Keep feeling. Keep trying to love like there’s no tomorrow. Love hard; love recklessly. Hug a little longer. Play those irrational and illogical games with the twins....Let bath time be like a baptism each night, and let the sweat that rolls off my face after a long run be an anointing. Laugh, cook, drink, clean, make a huge mess, sit and stare out the window. Let all of it mean something—gratitude, earnestness, hope; let it mean that life is abundant. And tell the children stories about this abundant life—how it’s meant to be shared, how it’s meant to be experienced by every single human being—even if it means we might have to tell the stories that are sad and hard. Because those are the ones that will shape their empathy and compassion. All of it. All of it is necessary for life right now.

All this work is worship, and it’s how we’ll make it.” —Rev. Mihee Kim-Kort