

May 2023



# Sixth Sense

SIXTH  
*presbyterian*  
CHURCH

## From the Pastor

As you will see from the enclosed Session minutes, our Session voted to approve my 90-day temporary disability beginning on May 1. The Session also voted to hire the Rev. Sarah Robbins to lead worship and preach, provide pastoral care, and moderate the Session on a part-time basis until I am able to return to work.

Sarah is a graduate of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. She has served a number of congregations as an interim, co-leads a consulting business with the Rev. Susan Rothenberg that helps presbyteries and congregations deal with adaptive change, and is the Senior Vice Moderator of Pittsburgh Presbytery. She is the spouse of Ben Robbins, the pastor at Northmont Presbyterian Church, and mother to Liam. I have had the privilege of working alongside Sarah as we engaged a church in conflict and have served with her on the Commission on Ministry for several years. We are fortunate that she is available and willing to serve; I trust her implicitly. You will find that she is an engaging speaker, a careful listener, and a person of deep faith.

Because of the Board of Pensions' new Temporary Disability program, we will be able to hire Sarah for part-time work while I am gone at no additional cost to the church. (Our pension dues fund this program.) While the church is paying 40% of my compensation, the Board will be providing 60% of my compensation as a disability benefit. This frees up 60% of my compensation to pay for Sarah's part-time work while I am gone. This is the great advantage of being a part of a connectional church!

Temporary disability will enable me to focus on my health for the last part of my chemotherapy treatment leading to what I anticipate will be a stem cell transplant early in June. During this 90-day period, I will not be performing any ministry tasks at Sixth or in the Presbytery. I will be staying off social media, except to update friends and family on the status of my health. Sarah will be our pastor and she will be my pastor. One get well card I received put it this way: "you carried so many through tough times...now, we will carry you." I have felt that support and will continue to need that support in the coming days. So, I am stepping completely away so that I can get better and so that Sarah can fulfill the role she has been hired to provide-be our temporary pastor for a season.

Thank you again for everything you have done and are doing to provide meals and rides while I convalesce. Next to my treatment, it is the best medicine anyone could expect to receive. I will miss you all, but covet your prayers, as I navigate the days ahead.

Peace!  
Vincent

## CDC Community Risk and Worship

Masks are required in the building while Allegheny County is in a "medium" or "high" CDC community risk designation; N95 or similar masks are preferred while in "high." Masks are welcome while in "low."

(6th grade and up)

# May Youth Group

**Thursday, May 4: 6 -7:30 p.m.** In-person at the church.

**Thursday, May 11: 6 –7:30 p.m.** Virtual games and fellowship via Zoom. Link will be emailed.

**Thursday, May 18: 6 -7:30 p.m.** In-person at the church.

**Thursday, May 25:** Youth volunteering/serving meals at Hot Metal Bridge's The Table from 5 to 7 p.m. / Meet at the church at 4:30 p.m. for transportation with Jenny or meet at Hot Metal. You must RSVP to Jenny if you will be attending.

Sixth Presbyterian Church

For more info email Jenny Newman  
[Jennyrunew@gmail.com](mailto:Jennyrunew@gmail.com)

**Sunday School:** Our last day of Sunday school will be Sunday, May 28.

**Vacation Bible School:** We will be collaborating with East Liberty Presbyterian Church for Vacation Bible School this year. Changemaker Lab VBS will be held June 26-30, 9 am to 3 pm at ELPC for kids in pre-K (age 4 and potty-trained) through grade 5 (completed). Youth in 6th -12th are invited to sign up as volunteers and adult volunteers are needed as well! To register for VBS or to volunteer here is the link!

<https://cathedralofhope.org/ministries-programs/children-youth-ministries/vacation-church-school/>

The VBS theme this year is Changemakers Lab, a place children will learn that everyone can make a difference in the world! Through five Bible stories, we'll explore examples of people who experienced and brought about a change in the world around them. These people provide a model for asking hard questions, working together to solve problems, reaching across differences, caring for all people, and imagining a new world. Through worship and drama, Bible study, STEAM activities (science, technology, engineering, art, math), and active games, children are invited to see and experience the transforming love of God.



**Middle School Mission Trip with ELPC:** Mark your calendars! Youth who have completed 6th, 7th, and 8th grade are invited to participate in a mission trip from July 5-8. The trip is being planned by leaders at East Liberty Presbyterian Church and the group will be staying at Camp Crestfield and participating in a variety of service projects in the area. Jenny Newman will be going along if any of our students are participating. More information will be coming soon. Please let Jenny Newman know if anyone is interested.

# May Birthdays

May 1 ..... Tom Cummings

May 3 ..... Sharon Van Dyke

May 12.....Leslie Kaplan

May 14.....Gail Luley

May 21.....Mikki Danielson

May 23.....Erin Cummings

May 26.....Karl Greenley

May 27.....Chris Gaul

May 28.....Dana Thompson

May 30.....Cliff Johnson

May 31.....Marnie Bertolet



## Notes from the April 2, 2023 Special Session Meeting

*(NB: notes from yet-approved minutes)*

Rev. Kolb called this meeting following recent discussions with his treating physicians. Because he is very immunocompromised, his physicians want him to be preaching in the sanctuary only if everyone is masked, no exceptions. For the Palm Sunday service, as requested and approved by Session via electronic vote, anyone attending the service was required to be masked. There were no objections or exceptions from the members of the congregation, all were masked, and Rev. Kolb was able to preach his sermon. He would like to do the same on Easter Sunday, though follow through with all being masked will be a bit more complex.

Following a discussion about strategies, Elder Pam Howe proposed that on Easter Sunday, April 9, all in the congregation/choir will be required to mask (except for those playing specific instruments-distance will be maintained by Rev. Kolb), and Rev. Kolb will be in the sanctuary through the sermon, after which he will exit to watch the live-stream. At this point, masks will be optional for the remainder of the service, including Communion. Rev. Andy Greenhow and Rev. Karen Rohrer will be assisting with the service and officiate at Communion. **Members of Session who attended were unanimous in their agreement.**

Rev. Sarah Robbins, who co-led the Palm Sunday Service, will be preaching for the already planned absences April 16 and April 30 and efforts will be made for a guest preacher on April 23 as well. Rev. Robbins has indicated that she would be available for longer-term coverage while Rev. Kolb is on temporary disability.

Rev. Kolb, with the assistance of Elder Barb Parees/Personnel Committee and with Rev. Brian Wallace, will pursue May 1 as the beginning of his short-term leave, through the Presbyterian Church USA's Board of Pensions, at which point, they (BOP) would need to provide Sixth with a part-time Pastor. The hope is that Rev. Kolb will be able to return by August 1, 2023.

Rev. Kolb is planning to attend the April 26 Session meeting, at which time a motion will be made by the Personnel Committee to grant his short-term leave request, due to ongoing medical issues, and that a temporary part-time pastor be called, beginning on May 1, 2023.

Having no other business, the meeting was closed at 5:30, with thanks.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathi Robinson-Dassel, Clerk of Session

# Notes from the April Session Meeting

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

## CLERK'S REPORT:

- Worship Attendance: 4/2 (Palm Sunday), 100 (in-person), 93 (YouTube); 4/6 (Maundy Thursday) 35 (in-person), 32 (YouTube); 4/9 (Easter), 175 (in-person), 93 (YouTube); 4/16, 88 (in-person), 68 (YouTube); 4/23, 84 (in-person), 39 (YouTube)
- Reading of the Minutes: As Clerk of Session, Kathi Robinson-Dassel attended the annual Session Minutes Review at Pittsburgh Presbytery. The minutes of Session as well as the Church Register for 2022 were reviewed and Approved with Commendation.
- Building Request is listed as part of Omnibus Motion.

## EXAMINATION OF INCOMING OFFICERS:

The Book of Order requires that congregants who have not been previously ordained to an office in the church be examined:

*"When persons have been elected to the ordered ministry of ruling elder or deacon, the session shall provide a period of study and preparation, after which the session shall examine them as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; and the duties of the ministry. The session shall also confer with*

*them as to their willingness to undertake the ministry appropriate to the order. If the examination is approved, the session shall appoint a day for the service of ordination and installation."* (Book of Order, G-2.0402)

To that end, Rev. Kolb met with Joan Markert, nominated to the 2026 Class of Ruling Elders, and with Gail Luley, nominated to the Class of 2026 Deacons. Both joined the Session meeting to share what they had learned having spoken to the Pastor and received information about their respective roles as a Ruling Elder and as a Deacon. Each responded to these questions:

1-What is the most important thing you did not know about being an Elder/Deacon in the church that you did not previously know?

2-What is the most interesting thing that you learned about why we ordain officers and why we are guided by our confessions?

Having answered both question to the satisfaction of Elders present and hearing several comments about the thoughtful consideration in answering those questions, Ruling Elder Tom Juring moved that the nomination of Joan Markert be accepted for ordination as a Ruling Elder and that the nomination of Gail Luley be accepted for ordination as a Deacon. The motion passed unanimously and with thanks for their willingness to serve.

## OMNIBUS MOTION:

Two motions were pulled from the Omnibus for further discussion and clarification. 5-Following assurances that a new chair of the Worship Committee and a Session representative would be appointed, that motion was able to remain in the Omnibus as written. 7-Elder Peter Kaplan reflected on the new approach and positive theme for the Stewardship Campaign and requested that the timeline be approved as part of the motion as well.

- Motion to approve the minutes of the Session Stated Meeting, March 29, 2023

- Motion to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of Session, April 2, 2023
- Motion to approve the Pittsburgh Chamber Orchestra of Pittsburgh's Christmas Concert, Sunday December 10, 3 p.m.
- Motion to approve the Rev. John Creasy, of the Open Door and Garfield Farms, to preach on Earth Care Sunday, April 23.
- Motion to approve Committee Chair assignments for 2023-2024
  - Christian Education: Joe Ashenden (chair)
  - Church & Community: Tom Twiss (chair)
  - Earth Care: Pam Howe (chair)
  - Fellowship: Lori King
  - Finance: Peter Watt-Morse (chair)
  - Gun Safety: Lori Swensson (chair)
  - House: Gregory Winner, Tom Juring (co-chairs)
  - More Light: Marcus Robinson (chair)
  - Nominating: TBD
  - Personnel: Barb Parees (chair)
  - Justice Team: Peter Gilmore (chair)
  - Stewardship: Peter Kaplan (chair)
  - Worship: TBD
- Motion to approve Peter Watt-Morse as President, Katharine Robinson-Dassel as Secretary, and Erik Fogt as Treasurer, as the Officers of the Corporation. This will authorize them to be the signers on the accounts for PNC Bank and the Presbytery Foundation.
- Motion to approve the 2024 Stewardship Theme, "The Good That is Ours to Do" and the following timeline:
  - Target Challenge Budget, Individual Household Goal, 8/23/23
  - Moments for Stewardship & Stewardship Preaching, October
  - Dedication Sunday-11/5/23
  - Follow Up 11/5/23-1/24/24-As done last year, Session members will be asked to make follow-up calls to households which have not yet pledged at the November Session meeting.

Ruling Elder Mary Lang moved that the Omnibus Motion be approved, following the discussion and amendments, for Motions 1-7, including 7a-d. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **PERSONNEL MOTIONS:**

Ruling Elder Barbara Parees, as chair of the Personnel Committee, shared the

Committee's process and history involved in seeking arrangements for coverage for Rev. Kolb's temporary-disability absence. Rev. Sarah Robbins has been recommended for the position of temporary pastor, which is a part-time position. Rev. Brian Wallace (Pittsburgh Presbytery) and Doug Portz (Board of Pensions PCUSA) have reviewed and approved the contract, dependent upon Session approval.

Some minor changes were made in the contract before approval by Session was requested. Under COMPENSATION, \$3900 was allotted for Housing/Utilities. Rev. Robbins' husband, also a minister, already receives this allotment, so that amount will be added to the Salary amount. Rev. Robbins is also covered under her husband's medical, so that allotted \$603 will be added to her vouchered Expense Allowance, including cell phone use.

Elder Parees made the following motions on behalf of the Personnel Committee:

- The Personnel Committee moves that the Session approve Dr. Vincent Kolb's application for 90-day temporary disability beginning May 1, 2023
- The Personnel Committee respectfully moves that the Session provide funding for 40% of Rev. Vincent Kolb's effective salary in the amount of \$8165.19 to make up the difference between the 60% of effective salary provided by the temporary disability plan, so that his compensation during his medical leave will be realized in full. Sixth will continue to pay 100% of his pension and Social Security, which is already in the budget.
- The Personnel Committee moves that the Session approve the Pittsburgh Temporary Pastor Contract between Sixth Presbyterian Church and Rev, Sarah Robbins beginning May 1, 2023, for a period of three months while Rev, Kolb is on a 90-day medical leave, with an additional unbudgeted needed expense of \$2,764.73 to cover BOP Pension, Medical and Disability, SECA offset and Medical Reimbursement.

The motions passed unanimously with many thanks to Barbara Parees, as chair, Carol Emerson and Andrew Swensen, Personnel Committee, and to Frank Davoli and Peter Watt-Morse as outgoing and incoming Finance Chairs.

#### **FINANCE:**

Elder Frank Davoli shared the March Financial report highlights:

- Pledges coming in at a better rate this past month. Non-pledged amounts are less than anticipated
- Market funds have improved by about \$69,000 due to memorial gifts and the market improving. Memorial gifts included check from Norma Farquhar in memory of Jack.
- Audit/summary reviews have been completed through 2021 and there have been no issues or concerns.
- Peter Watt-Morse and Mary Radcliffe will work with Erik Fogt to complete the 2022 audit.

#### **COMMITTEE MINUTES:**

Referenced with some corrections/additions:

- Earth Care Committee-the date for the Plastics collection to take to Michael Brothers will be May 14, not May 7.
- The Stewardship Committee minutes should have included the timeline as noted in the Motion, as well as a note on the Completion of Capital Campaign Fund-Raising. At last month's Session Meeting, we reported that we are calling selected households to determine if they intend to complete their pledges to the Capital Campaign. We have contacted roughly half of these households, and most have indicated that they intend to complete their pledges.

## DEACONS MINUTES/CARE LIST:

Minutes and Care List were referenced. Rev. Kolb shared that Joan Gaul's memorial service will be held May 20, 2023. A memorial service for John Herring is tentatively scheduled for August 12, 2023.

## COMMUNION:

Servers volunteered for May 7, 2023 Communion

## OLD BUSINESS:

- Bethel AME Overture was discussed and Session agreed that the Overture should be presented, as planned, for vote at the Pittsburgh Presbytery meeting on May 18, 2023. Commissioners for that meeting will be Elders Pam Howe and Peter Gilmore, chair of the Justice Committee.
- The Emergency Preparedness update was referenced.

## NEW BUSINESS:

Rev. Kolb thanked the outgoing class of 2023 and highlighted the many ways each has contributed, above and beyond, to the life and works of the church. This is the last class who willingly served six extra months for the transition to the Spring Installation of officers. Many thanks to Larry Chan, Frank Davoli, Beth Hazlett, Pam Howe and Mary Lang.

## COFFEE HOUR ASSIGNMENT:

May 7, 2023-Stewardship

## NEXT MEETING:

May 24, 2023

## MEETING WRAP-UP/RATING/CLOSING PRAYER

Rev. Kolb shared an update and expectations for the next three months, in response to questions and concerns of Elders, and the one-word ratings were thoughtful. He adjourned with prayer and gratitude at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathi Robinson-Dassel, Clerk of Session

# Sixth Church and God's Creation

## Join in Earth Care's Single-Use Plastic Challenge!

As you may have seen, the 23rd was Earth Day Sunday at Sixth. The Earth Care Committee has decided to focus on single-use plastic reduction and has created a challenge for the congregation. Why this focus? Back in 2019 members of Sixth participated in a Single Use Plastic Challenge organized by the Pittsburgh Friends Meeting House. The group watched documentaries and heard from experts. Plastic waste is no longer a theoretical problem, with most of the plastic on earth being produced in the last 10-20 years and most used for packaging. We encourage you to look at <https://www.beyondplastics.org/> for really comprehensive and scientific information, as well as ways you can get more education and take action on single-use plastic.

For that Single Use Plastic Challenge: we are asking the congregation to take part in reducing our personal single-use/disposable consumer plastic use over the next 4 months - and hopefully continue the new habits we develop. The goal is to change our thinking about plastic from a convenient

tool we can grab as part of our consumer experience – to one of thinking about plastic as a resource that should be scarce and reserved for durable uses, perhaps in industry and medical supplies.

For our kickoff on Sunday we introduced a tree art on the wall of the Sanctuary, created by Pam Howe, which we are going to cover with repurposed plastic bottle caps to symbolize actions we, collectively, not in competition with one another, in the congregation take over the next 4 months to avoid purchasing plastic items. Your action will count toward our mutual goal whether you avoid the purchase altogether or whether you buy a substitute item that is not made of or packaged in plastic. There will be nothing to tie bottle caps to an individual person – we are asking people to report their actions for the purpose of seeing our collective impact as a congregation. We feel there is value in representing that visually.

You can record your actions online with a form (link below) – or if you come to church, you can use our paper chart to add your week's worth of actions. A volunteer will attach bottle caps to our tree for every 5 actions we accumulate – there will be nothing to tie the bottle caps to an individual person. Earth Care's core group organizing the Challenge will update everyone in person, and via communications, on and around our annual Church in the Park! And we will tally our impact again at the end of August.

Register for the Single-Use Plastic Challenge - <https://tinyurl.com/2023SixthChallenge>

Log actions - <https://bit.ly/SixthSUPChallenge23>

## Ideas to Avoid SUP (Single Use Plastic)

### STORES

- Bring your own grocery and produce bags
- Buy items in glass containers or cans (look for shiny metal lining inside can)
- Buy in stores that produce is NOT encased in plastic.
- Bring bags to other stores also including Farmers Market.

### RESTAURANTS

- Refuse straws and bring your own reusable
- Refuse plastic silverware for takeout
- Bring own containers for leftovers
- Refuse a plastic bag to carry leftovers

### BRINGING FOOD FROM HOME

- Pack sandwich in reusable bags or paper
- Bring own silverware
- Use small containers or reusable zip bags to pack fruit etc.
- Bring own water bottle and travel mug
- Pack in reusable lunch bag

### HOME AND PERSONAL CARE / TOILETRIES

- Look for lotions, toothpaste, shampoo, hand soap, etc. sold in bars and powders/tablets
- Look for spray cleaners, toilet cleaners, laundry detergents that are refillable or in powders and tablets
- Vinegar, baking soda and lemon can tackle most cleaning tasks
- Stop buying dryer sheets (they are made of plastic) – ball up some tin foil or purchase wool balls
- Look for wet wipes that are made from natural fibers, such as Kirkland at Costco; if you need to disinfect, use vinegar
- Look for toilet paper that is not sold in plastic shrink wrap

## What to Buy Instead?

- Refill reusable containers for cleaning products and toiletries at [The](#)



[Refillery](#) on Murray Ave. or try [OCO](#) on Woodshire Dr. for a curated collection of plastic-free alternatives

- Shop the bulk dry goods and some toiletries at East End Food Co-Op with reusable containers
- Get inspiration for single-use-free and plastic-free products online (but beware “laundry strips” and squishy pods of detergent that may utilize polyvinyl alcohol that fully biodegrades only under certain conditions; use powder or tablets instead). Try these retailers: [Netzerocompany.com](#), [lifewithoutplastic.com](#), [unscentedco.com](#), [zerowastestore.com](#), [tru.earth/store](#)
- Find more ideas: [www.reefrelief.org/2013/01/51-ways-to-reduce-plastic-use-or-completely-eliminate-it/](http://www.reefrelief.org/2013/01/51-ways-to-reduce-plastic-use-or-completely-eliminate-it/)

## Tips for Collectors of Hard-to-Recycle Single-Use Plastics for Sixth Church Pickups

First, what is Hard-To-Recycle SUP? These are plastics frequently used as packaging that are not accepted by municipal recyclers. The City of Pittsburgh accepts only bottles with small necks like bottles, jugs and jars. Not acceptable are yogurt and cottage cheese tubs, plastic clamshells that berries frequently come in, bowl-shaped containers, and other wide-mouthed containers.

We have limited room in cars.

So when you sort your plastics for the Sixth Church SUP Pickup, do not put the tubs, clamshells, and bowls into your box.

And put your plastic milk and juice bottles and other narrow-necked containers into your blue recycling bin for the city to collect on recycling day.

If you live in another municipality, find out what their rules are for recycling. Use their service as much as you can and bring to 6th what they don't take.

How to participate as a collector?: sort your single-use plastics as you accumulate them, save them until the pick-up Sunday, bring them (ideally in paper bags and cardboard boxes) to Sixth Church on that day or during the week before.

Sort your plastics carefully, and make sure everything is clean!

Separate your plastics correctly: #1 in its own container, #2 in its own container, and plastics 3 - 7 all together.

Do NOT combine various groups of plastic in one box. For example: #1 and #2 in the same box will not be accepted.

Plastic bottle caps are acceptable only if they have visible numbers 3 - 7.

Containers: please use paper bags and cardboard boxes rather than plastic bags.

Michaels doesn't accept plastic bags. Recycle any plastic bags in the large collection boxes at Giant Eagle stores.

Write your name and plastic numbers on your bags and boxes.

Bring your bags and boxes to 6th Church on the designated Pickup Sunday. If you need to leave your bags and boxes on a day during the week before Pickup Sunday, let us know:

On Pickup Sunday, put your bags and boxes in the back hallway by the small kitchen.

When the drivers are ready to load their cars, help them out.

Sixth Presbyterian Church  
1688 Murray Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
412-421-2752  
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.*



**The deadline** for the June/ July newsletter is May 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 World I Live In,” Mary Oliver

I have refused to live  
locked in the orderly house of  
reasons and proofs.  
The world I live in and believe in  
is wider than that. And anyway,  
what's wrong with Maybe?

You wouldn't believe what once or  
twice I have seen. I'll just  
tell you this:  
only if there are angels in your head will you  
ever, possibly, see one.