

December 2023



Sixth Sense

From the Pastor:

Saints,

This Advent and Christmas season the staff and Worship committee are excited about the theme and gorgeous resource we are using from SanctifiedArt.Org

This year, the theme centers around the lectionary passages found in Luke and tries to answer the question, "How Does A Weary World Rejoice?"

Below is part of their answer, written exclusively by women.

"Joy is often a companion to many other emotions. We can feel joy in addition to feeling many other things at once: grief, anticipation, anxiety, excitement, disappointment, exhaustion. Perhaps many of us live with the myth that joy is not something we deserve—or that it is wholly out of reach. But our joy is rooted in the truth that we belong to God. Can you tether yourself to that deep truth? You deserve to feel joy—fully. The world needs your joy, even if you are weary. Our joy is better when it is shared.

This theme of course alludes to a line in the familiar Christmas hymn, "O Holy Night,"³ which has an interesting history. The song was originally written by a French poet who was atheist, and the music was supplied by a Jewish composer. The hymn was later translated into English by an American Unitarian minister. In the 1800s, it became a popular hymn for Christian abolitionists due to its justice-focused language in verse 3.4 Like Mary's song, the hymn reminds us that justice and joy belong together. Sometimes our joy is an act of resistance.

And so, this Advent, we will hold space for our weariness and our joy. We will seek a "thrill of hope" in our hurting world. We will welcome joy—even and especially if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice."

I look forward to engaging these texts with you all in worship and during our devotional time on Sundays at 10am in the parlor.

Peace to you,

Rev. Sarah Robbins

December 3rd — The First Sunday in Advent/Communion

Worship: We Acknowledge Our Weariness

Scripture: Psalm 80 and Luke 1:1-23

Fellowship: Join us in the chapel for Appetizers & Advent resources

December 10th – The Second Sunday in Advent

Worship: We Find Joy In Connection

Scripture: Isaiah 40 and Luke 1:24-45

December 17th – The Third Sunday in Advent/ Children and Youth Christmas Pageant

Worship: We Allow Ourselves To Be Amazed

Scripture: Psalm 126 and Luke 1:57-66

Fellowship: Join us in the chapel for A Christmas Lunch

December 24th – The Fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve

Morning Worship at 10am: We Sing Stories of Hope

Scripture: Luke 1:46-80

This service will begin earlier than usual, and will have a casual feel to it.

Come in your comfy Christmas attire and take some time to breathe and prepare for Christmas together.

Evening Worship at 7pm:

This service will include Communion as well as candlelight.

Fellowship: Join us in the chapel for a plethora of cookies and scintillating conversation

December 31st – New Year's Eve

Worship: We will begin at 11 am with an abbreviated Lessons and Carols service

Come prepared to sing and embrace the new year!

January 7th – Epiphany Sunday/Communion

Worship: Still Searching

Scripture: Isaiah 60 and Matthew 2:1-12

Fellowship: Join us in the chapel for star cookies and to receive your “star word.”

Sunday mornings (December 3, 10, 17) 10-10:30 – Advent devotional study with Rev. Sarah in the Parlor

How Does a Weary World Rejoice?: Art, Poetry, & Reflections for Advent in Luke's Gospel

Paper copies available in the chapel or a digital version online: <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/136123036/>

Children and Youth Updates

Christmas Pageant

Join us on Dec. 17 as our children and youth lead worship and present the annual Sunday school Christmas Pageant.

Rehearsal dates for the pageant are from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 30, and Thursdays Dec. 7 and 14. Please contact Jenny Newman if you have any questions.

Sunday School/Nursery

There will be no Sunday school on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31. We will have nursery care on those days during worship. There will be nursery care available for infants and toddlers for our church service at our Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m.

Advent Begins!

Join us after church on Sunday, Dec. 3 in the Chapel during coffee hour for **Appetizers and Advent** to kick off the Advent season. We will have Advent calendars, devotions, and other materials for you to take to celebrate Advent at home. We will also be decorating our Chapel Christmas tree.

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Sixth Presbyterian Church

Contact: Jenny Newman
Jennyrunew@gmail.com

Youth

(6th-12th)

Wednesdays
6,13,20

Weekly Youth Group at ELPC

4:30 to 7 p.m. Dinner is served at 5. East Liberty Pres. Church use the Highland Ave. entrance

7

Youth Service – Hot Metal Bridge/The Table

5 to 6:30 at Hot Metal Bridge Church. Contact Jenny if you need transportation to and from 6th.

7, 14

Christmas Pageant Practice

6:30 to 7:30 in the sanctuary.

17

Christmas Pageant

For those participating be at the church at 10 a.m. Worship at 11 a.m.

Bonus Stewardship Content: Peter Gilmore, How 'the Good that is Ours to Do' Effects Change and Touches Hearts

This is my personal testimony as to how the good that is ours to do effects change and touches hearts.

You might recall that in March 2022, with the guidance of Pastor Vincent, we invited into our sanctuary Rev. Dale Synder of Bethel AME Church and his outreach team for a presentation on Bethel's reparations campaign.

The story they presented can be summarized like this:

Organized in 1808, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is the oldest African-American congregation in Pittsburgh. For decades, Bethel did the Lord's work in a marginalized community which developed in the Lower Hill District, then the outskirts of the city. The congregation erected a big, beautiful Romanesque-style church, with a sanctuary which could seat 1,900. Over time, that number would be less than two-thirds of the church membership.



Bethel's vital role as a community center and focal point abruptly ended in the 1950s. The city fathers decreed the entire Lower Hill was blighted – well, all except for the exclusively white Catholic Church two blocks away. Bethel AME and other properties must be razed, the city said. Bethel AME received compensation far below the property's worth – chump change, in other words. The congregation was banished to the far side of the Hill. And the beautiful Romanesque-style church was reduced to a dusty pile of rubble.

Rev. Snyder and his team explained that Bethel was seeking compensation for its losses and looking for support from the city, which had seized the land; the Penguins Organization, which had profited from the land; and all the white churches which had not spoken out against this injustice.

Sixth Church responded. Not long after this meeting, a fundraising concert took place in the sanctuary, featuring the extraordinary talents of our newly arrived music director, Douglas-Jayd Burn. The Justice Team crafted an overture, which ratified by the Session, was sent to Pittsburgh Presbytery. The overture basically asked Presbytery to endorse Bethel's reparations campaign.

I was tasked by Pastor Vince and Session to explain the rationale behind our overture at meetings of Presbytery.

Sixth Presbyterian Church had a special responsibility to make this request, I told Presbytery. Our beginnings were in the Lower Hill, as a mission project located in a glass factory just three blocks away from Bethel. Once organized as a congregation, our first half century of existence took place in the Hill District. When we moved, it was not because we were disdained, disparaged, disregarded, disrespected or dispossessed because of the color of our skins or the belief that we were bearers of blight. We came to the corner of Forbes and Murray because we wanted to and because we could.

But fifty years later, as our former neighbors and siblings in Christ at Bethel were desperately struggling to hold on to their little piece of the Hill, Sixth Church said nothing and did nothing. Pittsburgh Presbytery said nothing and did nothing.

We have a moral obligation to admit that an injustice took place and that we

were complicit in the commission of that injustice through our silence, I told Presbytery. The initiative of Bethel AME and its reparations campaign gives us sinners the opportunity to act to repair the harm that occurred in part because of our silence.

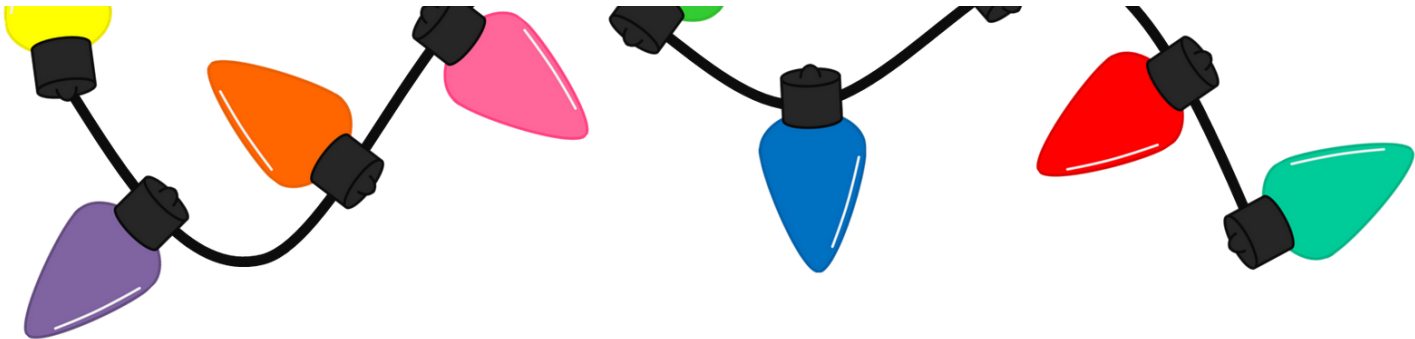
Sixth Church had many allies on the floor of Pittsburgh Presbytery when it voted unanimously in May 2023 in favor of our overturn.

And something else happened.

While Black Presbyterians felt deep sympathy for Bethel, mention of reparations aroused anger and hurt. Elders and ministers from historically Black congregations reminded church leaders that they had been marginalized, disrespected, neglected – by their own Presbytery. Difficult but necessary conversations ensued and led Presbytery to also create the Repair and Reconciliation Alliance for purpose of examining the experiences of Black Presbyterians and offer recommendations for repair and reconciliation. That work has begun.

On the floor of Presbytery, more than once a Presbyter came up to me and said, “Please thank the saints of Sixth Presbyterian for me. Please thank Sixth for speaking out against racial injustice and helping to create a space for talking seriously about the harm of racism and the opportunities for repair.”

Friends, there are people you don’t know and have never met who are thankful to you – thankful to this wonderful, precious community of faith – and the good that is ours to do.



December Birthdays

December 4	Douglas-Jayd Burn	December 18.....	Mark Bertolet
December 5	Alexandra DeJong	December 20.....	Louis DeLucia
December 8	Keith Gillogly		Carolyn Freeman
December 11.....	Nils Hammer	December 24.....	Carol Emerson
	Peter Watt-Morse	December 29.....	Jesse DeLucia
December 12.....	Mary Ellen Watt-Morse		Ethan Greenley
December 14.....	Jack Brennan		Allison Sennott
	Jacob Watt-Morse		Carlisle Turner
December 15.....	Lara Miller		Sterling Turner
December 16.....	Ellen Gaul	December 30.....	Benjamin Bates
	Joan Markert		



Earth Care Christmas Gift Guide

In this time of giving, we have the opportunity to share wonderful gifts that help the planet as well. The Earth Care Committee has these recommendations for all the loved ones on your list.

PAKA

pakaapparel.com/

Crew Socks (3 pack) / \$20

Ditch plastic in your wardrobe. Head to toe apparel including underwear, men, women and unisex made from alpaca natural fibers which are sustainable.



The Refillery

therefillerypgh.com/

Toothpaste Tablets / \$13.98



Get household products without plastic packaging. You'll bring your own containers for personal care or cleaning products. To avoid toothpaste in plastic tubes, get their toothpaste tablets which come in little metal canisters. Gift cards are also available.

Ten Thousand Villages

tenthousandvillages.com/

Sunny Garden Birdhouse / \$24.99

A bright eco-friendly birdhouse, handcrafted in India from wire and recycled snack wrappers. These pre-consumer factory leftovers would otherwise be discarded.



Our Children Our Earth: Toys, Silks & Eco-Goods

<https://www.facebook.com/OurChildrenOurEarth/>

Animal Upon Animal / \$22 (discounted price for mentioning gift guide)

Locally owned business that mindfully cares for our most precious gifts—our children and our earth. They carry a wide selection of quality natural and eco-friendly toys and gifts for adults, too.



Blueland

blueland.com/

The Clean Essentials / \$39

Our Hand Soap, Multi-Surface Cleaner, Bathroom Cleaner, and Glass + Mirror Cleaner have all of the plant-based power without any of the single-use plastic. Made to keep our home and planet in tip top shape.



Green Row

greenrow.com

Recycled Glass Drinking Glasses (4 pack) / \$35

Dishwasher-safe, this drinkware is made from low-temperature recycled glass certified by the Global Recycling Standard that lends it a beautiful, blue-green hue.



Rocket Book

<https://getrocketbook.com/>

Core Reusable Notebook / \$34.99



Jet down notes in this smart notebook which can be saved to an app in seconds and nothing is ever lost. Cutting down on paper use means reduced carbon emissions.

Seltzer

www.seltzergoods.com/pens-and-stationery

Seven Year Pen / \$9.95

Believing that sustainability can be fun and colorful, Seltzer makes a long lasting pen with a large ink supply, quality parts and is refillable.



Uncommon Goods

uncommongoods.com

Repurposed Sari Patchwork Apron / \$30

This fun, colorful apron (each one is unique!) is made by artisans in Bangladesh, using repurposed sari swatches.



Pennsylvania Resources Council

prc.org/workshops-collection-events/workshops

Gift a Workshop / \$70-80

A gift certificate for a PRC workshop (in-person and virtual) makes a perfect gift—the \$70 Backyard Composting course fee includes instruction and an 82-gallon compost bin, while the \$80 Watershed Awareness course includes instruction and a 55-gallon rain barrel.



East End Co-Op

www.eastendfood.coop/

Equal Exchange Organic BioRevolution Coffee Beans / \$9.99

Support local businesses and fair trade. Equal Exchange aspires to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sound, to foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers.



Notes from the November Session Meeting

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

CLERK'S REPORT:

- Worship Attendance: 10/29, 90 (in-person), 75 (YouTube); 11/5, 94 (in-person), 44 (YouTube); 11/12, 75 (in-person), 46 (YouTube)
- Session Correspondence:
 - Copy of Per Capita apportionment from Pittsburgh Presbytery to Treasurer.
 - Thank you from Wilkinsburg Community Ministry, Shepherd Wellness Community, and Sisters PGH for donations.
 - Request to be removed from membership by Sandra Myers.
 - Communion Servers volunteered.
 - Still need commissioner for next Presbytery meeting on December 7, 1 p.m. at Union Presbyterian in Robinson.

OMNIBUS MOTION:

With additions to the Agenda, the Omnibus passed unanimously.

- Motion to approve the Agenda for November 15, 2023, Session Meeting.
- Motion to approve the minutes of the Session Stated Meeting, October 23, 2023.
- Motion to approve the minutes of the Congregational Meeting,, October 29, 2023.
- Fellowship Committee requests permission to have the traditional Cookie Reception after the Christmas Eve service.

PASTORAL REPORT:

- Rev. Robbins acknowledged Amy Whipple's resignation from the position of office administrator as shared via email. Finding a suitable replacement will be difficult. Elder Barb Parees reported that Amy is working on a transitional document and that a job description will be created soon, as well as a plan to thank Amy for her incredible work.
- Rev. Robbins will be sending information to the PNC soon, as to how they will need to proceed. Session will need to decide how to be involved in distributing the church survey and processing the information.
- Elder Peter Watt-Morse had requested that committee chairs submit their budget requests by this Friday, November 17. An Executive Committee meeting will be held early in December. This will include; Moderator, Rev. Robbins, Stewardship Chair, Peter Kaplan, Finance Chair, Peter Watt-Morse, a House Chair, Tom Juring or Greg Winning, and Personnel Chair, Barb Parees, Treasurer, Erik Fogt, and Clerk, Kathi Robinson-Dassel. There was agreement that Executive Committee meetings should take place more frequently.
- The Worship budget for 2023 did not include sufficient funds for the guest musicians and singers. Ideas about making up the deficit were discussed, and Rev. Robbins will have a discussion with the choir for their thoughts. All agreed that music is a very important part of worship and that next year's budget should reflect the added expenses.
- Rev. Robbins will share the schedule for Advent soon. Kate Davoli will be preaching on November 26, with Rev. Robbins leading worship.

STEWARDSHIP:

- Stewardship Chair, Elder Peter Kaplan shared the positive and less positive aspects of the stewardship campaign so far. He circulated the list of those who had yet to pledge so Elders could share in making calls, as reminders to turn in pledges.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

• FINANCE:

- Elder Watt-Morse referenced the report and shared some highlights.
- Pledging is still below budget, but larger donations often are made before the end of the year.
- He will need to have a discussion with Treasurer Erik Fogt to determine the current state of the Capitol Fund.
- Preference that Church and Community funds be distributed earlier in the year.

• HOUSE:

- Elder Greg Winner reported that they are still working on some issues throughout the church.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Committee reports were referenced.

DEACONS MEETING/CARE LIST:

- The Deacons' minutes and Care List were referenced.
- Rev. Robbins has learned that many of the members who are unable to attend worship as easily are feeling disconnected from the congregation and would like to feel more a part of the life of the church. Several thoughts and ideas were generated, with recognition that Covid interrupted many of the intergenerational and congregational activities.

OLD BUSINESS:

Elder Tom Twiss shared that the Overture, which was briefly discussed in the October Session Meeting, had been revised and that he, on behalf of the Justice Committee was prepared to present as a motion for Session to approve then send to Pittsburgh Presbytery for their consideration and approval, to then be sent to General Assembly for consideration.

The request for approval as presented:

The Presbytery of _____ overtures the 226th General Assembly of the Presbyterian

Church (U.S.A.) to:

1. Direct the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to begin focused engagement with General Electric (GE) and Palantir Technologies, Inc. in the 2025 and 2026 proxy seasons and to report back to the 227th General Assembly (2026) with possible divestment recommendations for the companies that are not moving toward compliance with established General Assembly policies.

A lengthy discussion followed, and it became clear that members of Session were not prepared to vote at this meeting.

Elder Peter Kaplan moved that we table the vote on the motion and call a special Session meeting (TBD-December), to further discuss overture and our response to the Israeli/Hamas conflict. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: None

NEXT MEETING:

The Executive Committee meeting and the next Session meeting are to be determined for the month of December.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathi Robinson-Dassel, Clerk of Session

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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.

Food for Thought...

"Advent," Heather Christle

It's hopeless, the stars, the books
about stars, they can't help themselves
and how could you not love them for it
here in the new week with animals
burying food and everything outlined
in cold and even friends, it's hopeless,
this mess, this season, all that
is lost and tickets and strangers,
what can I say, only sitting here
on this dark bench waiting for what
I don't know, I want this world
to remain with me, this holy tumult,
which does not know it loves me
and you, friends, spectacular driveways,
an orange, the vanishing year.

"On the days and nights when I believe this story that we call Christianity, I cannot entirely make sense of the storyline: God trusted God's very self, totally and completely and in full bodily form, to the care of a woman. God needed women for survival. Before Jesus fed us with the bread and the wine, the body and the blood, Jesus himself needed to be fed, by a woman. He needed a woman to say: This is my body, given for you." — Rachel Held Evans



The deadline for the January newsletter is December 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!