

June / July 2020

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

Abigail Van Buren said there are two types of people in the world: those who walk into a room and say, "There you are," and those who walk into a room and say, "Here I am." Some say there are two types of people in the world: those who greet the day with, "Good morning, Lord," and those who greet the day with, "Good Lord, it's morning."

When I was growing up, I was taught there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are prejudiced and those who are not. As a child, I naturally believed we were not prejudiced. No, that was other people. I'm not biased.

I see this differently now. I have a more nuanced understanding of bias. I have come to believe that no one escapes bias. To assume that I can be completely objective and that the particulars of my life hold no sway on how I see the world is self-deceiving. The truth is, no one completely escapes bias.

We tend to think of bias as an attitude. But psychologists are finding a biological component to bias. It shows up in our brains. Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt, a psychology professor at Stanford, explains the "mechanics of bias." She says our brains are wired to use the tool of "categorization." We categorize food and furniture and animals. These categories hold information, but also feelings, beliefs and associations. So, if you see a cat, you don't have to know the particular cat to know the category. We categorize people too: Muslims and Catholics; rich and poor; educated and not; obnoxious people from Philly, good Pittsburghers. Dr. Eberhardt says, "Whether good or bad ... our beliefs and attitudes can become so strongly associated with the category that they are automatically triggered, affecting our behavior. ... So, for example, simply seeing a black person can automatically bring to mind a host of associations: ... this person is a good athlete, this person doesn't do well in school, this person is poor, this person dances well, this person lives in a black neighborhood, this person should be feared."

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We will continue to keep our building closed due to the ongoing public health concerns. All events and activities, including services of worship, remain temporarily suspended. Session will monitor this situation and in-person worship will resume when deemed feasible.

For continuing updates and to access our online worship experience, visit sixthchurch.org



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

June Worship and Preaching

June 7 – John 4:1-26,
"Racism: It's About Us"

June 14 – Matthew 10:1-8,
"Heaven at Hand"

June 21 – Matthew 10:32-39,
"Hating Your Family the
Jesus Way"

June 28 – Ruling Elder Kate
Davoli Preaching

July Worship and Preaching

July 5 – Matthew, 11:25-30
"Open Yoke"

July 12 – Matthew 13:1-9, 18-
23, "Extravagant Sower"

July 19 – Genesis 28:10-19a,
"An Altar in the World"

July 26 – Matthew 13:31-33,
44-52, "The Kingdom of
God Is Like This and This
and This"

What the Pastor Is Reading

The Yellow House, Sarah
Broom

The Unwinding of the Miracle: A Memoir of Life, Death, and Everything That Comes After, Julie Yip-Williams

The British Are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777, Rick Atkinson

Once, a dear, gracious man in one of my congregations, who worked hard for racial reconciliation and justice, confided in me and said, *"Why can't we get past this?"* He intuitively understood from his work that racism in America is not something of the past, it is our great national sin, something we battle. We are all defined by the story of America, and racism has been a part of that story from the beginning. But we are also defined by the story of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ. And that story tells us, by God's grace, we can have the courage to really see each other and see the particularities that define our experience of the world. And by that same grace, we can push against and push back the structural racism that allows oppression and insult, injustice and tyranny, to continue to injure people of color, all citizens of this land that we love. And by that same grace, we can own our own bias, but battle that bias so that it does not lead us into actions/behaviors that would injure others and make us ashamed.

Maybe we won't get past this. Maybe God alone can heal that which we cannot heal. But we can get better, for we are living toward God's promised day, when our children will grow up to be neither the destroyers nor the destroyed. Racism is something that we can battle at Sixth Presbyterian for the good of all. Until God's grace removes the pain of racism from the earth, we, by the grace of God, can stay in the battle.

Peace!

Vincent

Your Capital Campaign Dollars at Work

Thanks to your generous donations to our capital campaign, we recently released three checks each totaling \$3,566.62 to Wilkinsburg Community Ministry, the Clean Air Council of Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh United. Thank you for helping us help these organizations feed the hungry, and fight for cleaner air and equity in Pittsburgh.

June and July Birthdays

June 4..... David DeJong	June 20.....Christine Tyndall	July 7..... Malena Howe
June 7..... Jack Farquhar	June 22.....Kyle Miller	July 9..... Melynda Nestor
June 11.....Mary Lang	June 24.....Chris McAdams	July 12.....Joseph Ashenden
June 12.....Margaret Miller	June 28.....Lori Swensson	July 14.....Carole Anderson
Kate Brennan	June 29.....Liam Greenley	July 15.....Cyndi Dickson
June 13.....Colin Miller	Malachi Cornelius-Bates	July 18.....Nathan Cooper
Andrew Morgan	July 2..... Brenda Flores	July 20.....Pamela Bower
June 18.....Isabella Berg	July 6..... Virginia McQuown	July 24.....Olivia McCann
Eve Guyette	Heather Vallone	July 29.....Thoren Vaux
Rainer Loyd		July 31.....Cheryl Kubelick
June 19.....Jean Moore		

The Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington

COVID-19 has forced the nation into an unprecedented emergency. The current emergency, however, results from a deeper and much longer-term crisis – that of poverty and inequality, and of a society that has long ignored the needs of 140 million people who are poor or one emergency away from being poor.

In 1968, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and many others called for a “revolution of values” in America and sought to build a broad movement that could unite poor and dispossessed communities across the country. Today, the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival has picked up this work. People across the nation have joined under the banner of the Campaign to confront the interlocking evils of systemic racism, poverty, climate change and ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism.

They are coming together to demand that the 140 million poor and low-income people in our nation – from every race, creed, gender, sexuality and place – are no longer ignored, dismissed or pushed to the margins of our political and social agenda.

That’s why I will be participating as an ally in the Mass Poor People’s Assembly and Moral March on Washington Digital Justice Gathering, on June 20, 2020. Our problems are deeper than the murder of George Floyd, and we at Sixth have understood this and worked to draw attention to this inequity, and we have tried to do our part to dismantle it.

The Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington will be an historic, generationally transformative digital event. Across the internet and the airwaves we will drive the vision and agenda of our communities into the heart of the national narrative.

In this unprecedented moment, we must tell the truth about the dire failures of our political leaders. We must also demonstrate that it is the leadership emerging from poor and dispossessed people that is paving a different way forward.

History teaches us that it is exactly in moments like these that a movement of the many is necessary to force the nation into action. In the midst of pandemic, economic collapse, climate change, and more, the key to real and lasting change lies within our communities – within our ability to come together in new and bold ways.

Jubilee Caravans - Sunday, June 14th 2PM:

To prepare for the national gathering, the PA Poor People's Campaign will hold simultaneous car demonstrations across the state. Here in Pittsburgh we will need drivers to join us in a caravan downtown. We are declaring jubilee from debt, from rent, from sickness, and from imprisonment. We will be pushing the national COVID-19 demands as well as our state demands.



Join us by registering for June 20, 2020 and share the news through these social media.

On June 20, we cry power to the nation!

– Vincent

Congratulations, Graduates!

Meg Cummings

On May 24, 2020, Meg Cummings graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, with a double major in Government and Sociology from Wesleyan University. Meg also completed a senior Honor's Thesis (No Promo Homo: State Laws Limiting Discussion of Homosexuality in Sex Education), which was given the designation of High Honors. Additionally, Meg was awarded the Davenport Prize, which is awarded by Wesleyan University for excellence shown by seniors in the field of government and politics.



Paul Watt-Morse

Paul Watt-Morse graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor of fine arts in musical theater from Boston Conservatory at Berklee. You can find out what Paul's up to by visiting his website:

<https://www.paulwattmorse.com>

Elena Berg

Elena Berg graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Arts in New Media Design, and a minor in Game Design, and Immersion in Spanish. Elena reports that she doesn't have a job yet but is open to freelance work.

View Elena's work by visiting:

<https://www.elenacuadraberg.design/>



Please let us know in the church office if there are any other graduates to celebrate!



David Rothenberg

David Rothenberg graduated from the Pittsburg Academy of Science and Technology. He will be attending Purdue University to Study engineering. Boiler up!

Youth Fellowship: The youth group will continue meeting on Thursdays via Zoom. Links to access the zoom sessions and meeting dates will be sent via email. Contact Jenny Newman at (412) 720-6392 or by email at Jennyrunew@gmail.com for more information.

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

Kit Ayars: Gobbling up the 'Maisie Dobbs' series of books

Carol Emerson: Reading Louise Penney's latest mystery, *A Better Man*, *Armand Gamache*, bien sur!

Kate Kennedy: Reading Jody Hedlund novels

Lori King: Reading *From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express: A History of Chinese Food in the United States* (my fun book for the year). Getting ready to start watching the new season of *Grantchester*.

Sue Koehler: For escapism, Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*. For an argument in favor of solitude, Thoreau's *Walden*. It turns out, he is a bit of a crank.

Opal Middleton: I'm playing a whole lot of *Animal Crossing*, and it's the most delightful escapism.

Sandy Myers: Just finished *The Shepherd's Life: Modern Dispatches from an Ancient Landscape*.

Jenny Newman: I am reading *Delighted: What Teenagers Are Teaching the Church about Joy* by Kenda Creasy and *Dean and Wondering about the Bible with Children* by Elizabeth Caldwell. For mindless fun, I am reading *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins. I am also enjoying the *Reply All* podcast and watching late-night Korean baseball league games because my husband is watching Korean baseball league games.

Kathi Robinson-Dassel: I love *Gamache*! But just finished *Tattooist of Auschwitz*, *Eleanor Oliphant*, and am reading *Me* by Elton John.

Amy Whipple: I just finished Jennifer Weiner's new novel, *Big Summer*, and Malakai and I are reading *Harriet the Spy*. (Was I thrilled to learn about the dumbwaiter at Sixth? Perhaps.) We also spent the month watching *Mrs. America*, a most-wonderful, bonkers-amazing-casted limited series about the rise and fall of the Equal Rights Amendment. (Malakai: SOS on all the accompanying commentary.)

Books about Race for Children

List compiled by the *New York Times*

Ages 0-3: Ezra Jack Keats's books about Peter (*The Snowy Day*, *A Letter to Amy*, *Hi, Cat!*, *Whistle for Willie*)

Ages 3-5: *Saturday*, written and illustrated by Oge Mora; *Hair Love*, by Matthew A. Cherry. Illustrated by Vashti Harrison.

Ages 5-8: *Each Kindness*, by Jacqueline Woodson. Illustrated by E.B. Lewis.; *The Youngest Marcher*, by Cynthia Levinson. Illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton.

Ages 9-12: *Resist: 35 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up Against Tyranny and Injustice*, by Veronica Chambers. Illustrated by Paul Ryding.; *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness*, written and illustrated by Anastasia Higginbotham

Ages 12+: *All American Boys*, by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely; *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

Notes from the May Session Meeting

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes from the April 29th 2020 Session meeting were presented to the Session for approval
 - ⇒ **Motion to approve** minutes as read
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

CLERK'S REPORT

- Worship Attendance (reported via link hits): 4/26: 201; 5/3: 62 5/10: 223; 5/17: 236; 5/24: 367

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- FINANCE:
 - April financials were presented by Finance chair Mary Radcliffe. The Treasurer's report was reviewed by session members.
- HOUSE:
 - Leslie Kaplan provided the following updates related the fire notification system:
 - Leslie met with the fire notification system company on 5/28/2020 to receive a new estimate and review the plans. The company predicts that the system can be installed over the summer of 2020.
 - Greg Winner and Leslie Kaplan provided the following information related to building maintenance projects:
 - Tree Pittsburgh has planted a new tree in the front of the Sixth Church Building in order to celebrate the Earth Day. The tree that previously occupied that location has been donated.
 - An electrician completed building repairs including updating outlets and electrical systems.
 - Sixth Church will be purchasing new folding chairs. The Session will attempt to donate the chairs to another organization.
- PERSONNEL:
 - Phyllis Rupert reviewed Personnel report. The Personnel committee continues to look for new members from the congregation to review yearly benefit packages for the church staff. The Personnel committee is also negotiating a change in policy that would provide the church staff the option to roll over vacation time into the next two year period.
- STEWARDSHIP AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATES:
 - Elizabeth Hazlett reported no updates at this time. The Session discussed updating office software to improve the pledge tracking system.

PASTOR'S REPORT AND DEACON'S REPORT

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

OLD BUSINESS

- Reopening Task Force update
 - The Session provided feedback on the letter and public statements released by the task force. The Session felt that the Task Force provided a comprehensive and clear plan for the congregation.
 - The Session agreed that when it is possible for the church to resume in-person worship services, it would be required that the Session meet and vote upon reopening.
- The Session confirmed that the 2020 church-wide picnic is canceled.

NEW BUSINESS

- Committee Information:
 - More Light Committee
 - The More Light committee has voted that Sixth will participate in both 2020 Pittsburgh Pride events by providing monetary support. Due to COVID-19, the pride events have been rescheduled for the Fall of 2020. At this time, the committee has agreed to not to have an in-person presence at either event.
 - The committee will continue to research appropriate organizations to receive the capital campaign funds that were originally going to be given to Judah Fellowship. Due to Judah Fellowship's permanent closure, the More Light committee will provide recommendations to the session when they have reached consensus.
 - Church and Community:
 - The Session reviewed the church and community report. There were no further updates.
 - Worship
 - The worship committee will continue to work on developing the online presence for Sixth Presbyterian church. The Session discussed the need for this online presence to include worship and community building activities.
- Verizon
 - The Session received correspondence from Verizon detailing a change in leasing policy for the cell phone tower on top of the church building.
 - ⇒ **Motion to approve** Elder Bill Moore as the lead in the negotiations with Verizon in relation to the cell phone tower lease.
 - **Motion passed** unanimously
- Nominating Committee
 - ⇒ **Motion to approve** Frank Davoli and Jan Myers-Newbury to the 2020 nominating committee
 - **Motion passed** unanimously

NEXT MEETING: June 24th, 2020, 7 pm

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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 August newsletter is July 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...

“But What Can You Teach My Daughter,” Audre Lorde

What do you mean
no no no no
you don't have the right
to know
how often
have we built each other
as shelters
against the cold
and even my daughter knows
what you know
can hurt you
she says her nos

and it hurts
she says
when she talks of liberation
she means freedom
from that pain
she knows
what you know
can hurt
but what you do
not know
can kill.