

February

2017



SIXTH  
presbyterian  
CHURCH

Sixth Sense

## From the Pastor

Recently, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reprinted an article that went viral in social media. It offered the tired bromide, in the aftermath of the election, that politically and theologically conservative churches are growing, while liberal-progressive congregations are dwindling in size and influence. The thesis was based on in depth research of 22 congregations in Ontario, Canada – hardly a significant sample size. And what was disturbing about the findings is that they ignored data from Pew Research and Holy Cow consulting and other reputable groups who study North American religious experience.

The truth of the matter is that there is not one “silver bullet” when it comes to measuring vitality and influence. What makes a faith community thrive is complex, and attributable to a variety of factors, some within the congregation’s capacity to influence, and others not.

The most interesting material I have been looking at from Holy Cow Consulting (which did an extensive study of our congregation in 2006) singles out 2 significant factors for congregational vitality: a worship experience that is winsome, and a capacity of a community of faith to adapt to changing internal and external circumstances.

As you read through the numerous annual reports from our congregation, pay attention to all the ways that we are attempting to be responsive and adaptive to the current environment in which we find ourselves, the Orwellian reality of America, 2017.

Keep the faith!

Vincent

### February Worship and Preaching

February 5 – I Corinthians 2:1-5, “Weakness, Fear, and Trembling”

February 12 – Psalm 119, “Lamp and Light”

February 19 – Matthew 5:38-48, “Love Your Enemies”

February 26 – Elder Kate Davoli Preaching



**Save the date!**  
**Family Retreat**  
**at Camp Crestfield**  
**May 13-14**

# Annual Committee Reports

## Christian Education

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It was an active and full year for Christian Education at Sixth Presbyterian in 2016. We thank the many dedicated Sunday school teachers and volunteers that give countless hours to minister to our children youth, and adults.

Nursery care was provided each week during Sunday school and worship and an extended session held for children in preschool through 5th grade. This year additional nursery and child care was provided for parents during committee meetings, church events, and public action events. Children and youth actively participated in worship throughout the year in multiple ways. These include serving as acolytes and water bearers, creating Alleluia banners for the beginning of Lent, and being part of our lively Time for Children each week. Many youth have participated in worship by serving as ushers, sharing languages on World Communion Sunday, and participating in dramas for Palm Sunday and other services.

Sunday school students participated and volunteered for Squirrel Hill clean-up day in the spring. In May, church families attended a successful and fun family overnight retreat at Camp Crestfield. Throughout the summer, we held three Family Art Night programs our Vacation Bible School program. The themes for the art nights were "Up in the Sky," "Under the Sea," and "Animals." The events featured a fellowship meal, packing care packages for the Deacons, a special guest leading a drum circle and a visit from a therapy dog,

Our annual Rally Day breakfast was planned and executed on the first day of Sunday school in September. In October, we held a special education session for young children on Communion and Baptism and the children helped make Communion bread for World Wide Communion Sunday.

Our Sunday school students presented their annual Christmas pageant and families attended our annual Advent/Ornament dinner organized by the Christian Education committee with a meal provided by the Fellowship committee.

The youth group participated in many activities and events throughout the year including weekly coffee shop gatherings, volunteering in the community at community at East End Community House and Garfield Community Gardens.

Throughout the summer youth help host tables at Squirrel Hill Market Nights where we sold Building New Hope coffee. The funds raised were donated to our mission partners in El Porvenir, Nicaragua. Our youth joined youth from Shadyside and East Liberty for an educational event about the protests at Standing Rock. Students wrote letters to legislators, packed care packages for those protesting and designed a banner that was sent to local friends involved in the protests.

Youth were also asked by the church's Church and Community committee to help designate a recipient for a mission allocation of \$500. After researching local organizations and charities that directly serve youth in the Pittsburgh area, our youth chose the LGBTQ youth arts organization Dreams of Hope and a donation was made to the group on behalf of our Sixth youth.

The Christian Education Committee also help to support and host adult education programs at the church throughout the year. Along with the More Light Committee, we welcomed guest speaker Emmett Patterson in January to speak about "Justice, Faith, and Identity." Also in January, Dr. Bev Gaddy, Associate Professor of Political Science at Pitt-Greensburg, led a session and taught about a Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."

Our adult Sunday school class led by Bill Guy continued to meet throughout the year with a dedicate group studying the synoptic Gospels.

## Christian Education, continued

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Pastor Vincent led several education events through the year including "Growing the Presbyterian Church: Myths and Facts" where the latest data from Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) research services was discussed. Pastor Vincent also leads a weekly lectionary Bible study each week and led a Lenten study on the book "Finding God Beyond Religion"

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Newman on behalf of the Christian Education Committee

## Church and Community

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Last year, the new initiatives that Sixth Church has begun for social justice and environmental stewardship became central elements of our congregational life.

Early in the year, Sixth received recognition as an Earth Care Congregation, and the Earth Care Team enlisted many Church members to improve our environmental practices, incorporate earth care issues into worship and education, and effect the larger world through support of environmental groups and community actions.

In our first full year after rejoining the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN), members of Sixth, led by the Social Justice Core Team, participated in and supported PIIN's work and actions to confront and address economic inequality and structural racism.

The Gun Safety Group continued to advocate for common sense gun laws through legislative training, a rally on our front lawn, the "PA for Background Checks" bus trip to Harrisburg, and writing to our legislators.

In response to the growing work on a range of justice issues, the Church and Community engaged Sixth Church members in an open e-discussion and an in-person meeting to reconsider the Committee's goals for the church's locally directed mission funds. This discussion helped the Committee reach a consensus to provide more funds for groups that advocate for positive social and environmental change.

At the same time, Sixth Church maintained its strong tradition of charitable giving. The Church and Community Committee provided substantial support for a varied group of charities. Sixth continued its pivotal leadership in the annual CROP Hunger Walk and raised a record amount. Finally, Sixth Church successfully completed its 5-year effort to support the construction of the East End Cooperative Ministry's Community House in East Liberty.

This year's report is co-written by Nora Johnson (Earth Care), Mary Crossley (Social Justice Core Team), Joan Gaul (Gun Safety), Peter Kaplan (Church and Community), Sue Koehler (CROP Walk), and Bill Beggs (EECM Capital Campaign).

### **Our Life as An Earth Care Congregation: The First Year**

In March, Sixth Church received its certification as an Earth Care Congregation. The Earth Care Pledge, signed by Session, says: "God calls us to be careful, humble stewards of this earth, and to protect and restore it for its own sake, and for the future use and enjoyment of the human family." To fulfill the pledge, the Earth Care Team met three times during the year, pulling together ideas for ways we could effectively address some of the environmental challenges that confront us every day, and putting some of these ideas into action.

At our January meeting we considered ideas based on the four areas of congregational life highlighted by the Earth Care Congregations program. Under 'worship', we talked about devoting one or more Sundays to earth care, worshipping outdoors, and using home-grown flowers in our worship services. Under 'education', suggestions included reaching out to the whole congregation using our website, working with the DCE to

## Church and Community, continued

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organize a youth group trash pickup project, and think about a recycling effort. Under 'facilities, we talked about an energy audit, looking at our renewable energy use, continuing to replace energy-inefficient lighting, the possibility of a rain barrel and bike rack, and the use of native plants on the grounds. Under 'outreach', we thought about financially supporting environmental groups, consideration of how we can use our location at a transit hub in some way, continuing to advocate for green infrastructure in county-wide storm water improvements, and getting involved in local trash pickup campaigns.

We had been certified as an Earth Care Congregation by the time we met in April, and several more ideas were discussed: explore the role of meat production in the creation of the powerful greenhouse gas methane, encourage use of CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture: buying produce directly from the producer), participation in the Food Bank gleaning program, a tour of a local recycling plant, paperless Sundays, Earth Care Sunday, and publicizing our work with press releases.

From this wealth of ideas, we undertook the following activities during 2016:

- In worship, care for God's creation was lifted up numerous times during the year in liturgy, music, and sermons.
- We celebrated Earth Care Sunday on April 24 by taking the Earth Care Pledge and with a Moment for Mission.
- During the spring, several congregants signed up for the first time with regional farms to receive fresh produce.
- We began to organize our recycling project.
- We organized a joint meeting of the House Committee and the Earth Care Team., and by the end of the year we had met twice and were analyzing our building's energy efficiency.
- With funds allocated to us by the Church and Community Committee, we identified and sent checks to two environmental organizations - Penn Environment, a local group, and the League of Conservation Voters, a national advocacy organization.
- Announcements of Sixth Church's involvement in Earth Care Congregations appeared on our web site, in Pittsburgh Presbytery's P-News, and in the publications Squirrel Hill Magazine and Print, the weekly newspaper of Pittsburgh's East End.
- Native plants were planted in the beds in front of the church.
- We continued our involvement with PIIN and the Clean Rivers Campaign to find a green and just solution to storm-water infrastructure renewal in our county.
- On October 2, World Communion Sunday, we kicked off our recycling project, collecting a variety of hard-to-recycle items.

The recycling project has been a resounding success! By the end of the year, deliveries to recyclers included 40 pounds of batteries, 3 laptop computers, 2 desktop computers, 3 monitors, 1 television, and 41 lbs. of other electronics. Other items being collected include energy bar wrappers, plastic bathroom waste, pens and markers, scotch tape dispensers, plastic snack containers, and techno-trash. One of our collectors comments: "It's great to provide a convenient means for church members to recycle and turn in electronic waste. These items are too often left out on the curb or thrown away with regular trash, harming the environment as they break down. As with most environmental and recycling efforts, a small bit of extra effort will help preserve our future and our home."

The Earth Care program has been well supported: there are seven members of the original Earth Care Team, and 16 others have been added to the email contact list to receive updates and meeting notices. Six people on

## Church and Community, continued, continued

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the list are collectors of recyclables, and seven are members of the Earth Care/House Chairs group. There were between 10 and 13 attendees at each of the Earth Care Team meetings during 2016.

I'll close by thanking Vincent, Jenny, and Amy for their consistent and energetic support of our efforts. Altogether, it's been a great year for Earth Care at Sixth.

### **Our Engagement in the Struggle for Social Justice**

Having rejoined the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN) in fall 2015 as a result of the listening campaign at Sixth, in 2016 members of Sixth regularly participated in and supported PIIN's work and actions to confront and address economic inequality and structural racism in their varied forms. A "Core Team" of seven Sixth members and Rev. Kolb met monthly throughout 2016 to support to coordinate and organize Sixth's support of PIIN initiatives. These include task forces relating to public safety, the Clean Rivers Campaign, ratepayer justice, Fight for \$15 (living wages) and a Union, and community schools. For example, member of Sixth marched and participated in "Fight for \$15 and a Union" rallies for fast food and hospital workers in April and November.

In 2016, PIIN's major initiative for engaging congregations broadly was "Sacred Conversations on Race + Action." Congregations (like Sixth) that chose to participate began having a series of "Sacred Conversations on Race" in fall 2016. These Sacred Conversations permitted PIIN members to discuss their experiences with race in their own congregations, using a curriculum developed by Metropolitan Churches United (a Gamaliel affiliate in St. Louis) after the protests that followed Michael Brown's shooting.

To introduce the congregation to Sacred Conversations and give those interested a sense of what the conversations would be like, Core Team members planned a "teaser" session during the Sunday School hour on September 18. Core Team member Marnie Bertolet facilitated this session, which approximately 25 people attended. Then, on Saturday, October 1, more than 200 people attended the community-wide Sacred Conversations kickoff gathering at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Fifteen people from Sixth attended this gathering, which included a presentation on the history of racism and the value of Sacred Conversations.

On Sunday, October 16, the first Sacred Conversations session was held at Sixth, with over 40 people attending. The facilitated discussions first examined vast material and social disparities between adjacent white and African-American neighborhoods in St. Louis and in Pittsburgh and then explored White privilege and how it is experienced by attendees. It was followed on Sunday, November 13, by the second Sacred Conversations session, with 30 people attending. The session included reflection on participants' experiences since the first session, viewing and discussion of a "Race Roundtable" video from St. Louis, and viewing and discussion of "The Talk" video about how African-American parents must teach their children how to avoid police violence.

Core Team members Marnie Bertolet and Peter Gilmore were trained and served as facilitators for other PIIN congregations participating in Sacred Conversations during fall 2016. Sacred Conversations will continue into 2017.

Sixth Presbyterian made important contributions to PIIN's major fundraising effort for the year: its Annual Banquet held on May 1. Led by Core Team members Mary Crossley and Heather Vallone, Sixth's fundraising efforts succeeded in raising \$5010 in program ads and patrons and selling 27 dinner tickets. Attendance at the Banquet allowed PIIN supporters to meet and socialize with members of other PIIN congregations and to hear about PIIN's accomplishments over the preceding year.

## Church and Community, continued, continued, continued

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Finally, from August 7-13, 2016, Core Team members Pam Howe and Peter Kaplan participated in Gamaliel's National Leadership Training (NLT) in Illinois. NLT, which draws participants from across the nation, provides training in faith-based social justice organizing and action.

With the troubling events of 2016 behind us and concerns about what lies ahead in 2017, members of Sixth's Social Justice Core Team are sobered by the challenges our community and nation face with respect to economic inequality and structural racism. We remain inspired, however, by the progress that PIIN has made locally and by remembering to keep our eyes on the beloved community that God wishes for people on earth, and we believe that the people of Sixth have an important role to play. Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

### **Gun Safety Educates, Influences, and Advocates**

For the Gun Safety Group, and the larger movement for sensible gun laws, 2016 was not a visibly productive year. However, the Gun Safety group met its goal to educate, influence, and advocate. We met almost monthly, spending a good bit of time writing and calling Pennsylvania legislators to support Senate Bill 49 and House Bill 1010, versions of a bill to require background checks on the private sale of long guns. Later in the year we wrote to oppose SB 1330 and HB 2558, which reintroduced 2015's Act 192, giving any individual or entity standing to sue local municipalities that enact gun safety measures.

We joined with the JCC to sponsor a session of Cease Fire PA's Legislative Contact Training, which several church members attended in February. A strong effort was made to promote and encourage participation on CFPA's May 16 "PA United for Background Checks" rally at the State Capitol, where we also met with our legislators. The reviews of the trip's effectiveness were mixed, but our voices were heard.

In June, we hosted a very successful Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America "Wear Orange" event. Held outdoors on our Church lawn, it was well organized by Moms and brought in our members, members of neighboring congregations, and people off the street. Valerie McDonald Roberts, the City's Chief Urban Affairs Officer, spoke at the event.

Nora and Cliff Johnson have been rebutting NRA arguments, notably by book review and analysis. In October, Judy Schryer and Lori Swensson scripted and recruited a cast to reenact CFPA's "Talking About Guns" as a Minute for Mission. In November, Judy and I participated in the Pittsburgh pre-telecast of WQED's "THINK Guns in a Free Society". Myra Kazanjian participated in a similar event in Washington County.

Vincent has tried to expand our outreach by contacting like-minded groups. He has had only two responses. He and Millie Barnes met with the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP). Vincent and I have met with Aggie Brose of Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC). Aggie Brose is an extraordinary woman with a grasp of the total situation in a neighborhood that began with a real gun problem.

We share information by reporting on what we have heard and read. Vincent has kept the committee informed of police community relations. He is also the major force in getting people to meetings, and on busses. Lori has kept us informed of PIIN's actions on guns.

We have worked closely with outside groups, particularly CFPA and Moms. Rob Conroy of CFPA has provided a lot valuable information, attended our meetings, and kept the whole committee informed by e-mail. As our relationship with Moms has grown, Myra became our official representative. We provided financial support to CFPA and Moms with allocations from the Church and Community Committee. We try to keep the congregation informed through newsletter articles, announcements, and presentations.

# Church and Community, still going

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I was unable to attend the last meeting, in December, which Myra chaired. Myra has now agreed to Chair the Gun Safety Group. Happily, as there is much to be said for new ideas and new leadership. Myra will have great support from a committed group that includes, in addition to those mentioned, David and Diana Wood, Tony Schryer, Alice Scales, Peter Kaplan, Norma and Jack Farquhar, Nils Hammer, Martha Funderburgh, Carol Emerson, Millie Barnes, Joan Gaul and Nancy Wells.

## **Church and Community: A New Focus on Advocacy**

During the last two years, Sixth Church has experienced a tremendous increase in activity on issues of social justice and environmental stewardship. As these wonderful efforts unfolded, I had become concerned that the C&C's allocation process for our Locally Directed Missions budget was falling out of step with the changing priorities of the congregation. To address this issue, a re-visioning process was undertaken. Although this process took most of the year to complete, the process was successful in stimulating discussion, gathering valuable information, and realigning our mission giving to better support our new focus on positive social and environmental change.

As a first step in this process, in February an "Open E-Discussion" of future directions for C&C was initiated. A series of questions, was e-mailed to members and friends of C&C as well as church members engaged in the new initiatives, a total of 48 individuals. The Open E-Discussion asked the following questions:

- Should C&C stick to its core function of allocating Locally Directed Mission funds, or are there things C&C should be doing that it is not doing now?
- Should C&C engage the larger congregation in the allocation process, or are you satisfied with the current process?
- Do you think our donations should be mostly directed to groups with charitable purposes, or those which advocate for social and institutional change?
- Do you think our donations should have a dominant local focus, or should we support groups with national and international foci as well as those which work locally?
- Should we continue to support many groups, or focus on a smaller number of groups to which we can make larger donations?
- Should we continue to support groups to which we have donated for a long time, or make a concerted effort to support groups we have not supported in the past?

Seventeen responses to the Open E-Discussion questions were received. In March, an in-person meeting attended by 20 people provided an additional opportunity to comment. The responses can be summarized as follows:

- There is support for C&C's allocation function, and some feel that the Committee has the important function of sharing and inspiration. Possible new directions include focus on specific objectives for greater impact, more partnering with organizations, and serving as a venue for discussion of issues (a function also being taken on by the Social Justice Core Team).
- A plurality felt the allocation process is fine as is, a significant minority felt that the process is acceptable but should include greater outreach, and a handful advocated engaging the entire congregation.
- Nearly half of the respondents felt that we should increase funding for advocacy, another group supported a mix of donations, and a smaller group felt that charity remains a top priority.
- The consensus was for a mix of local, national and international giving.

## Church and Community, works harder than probably all of us

- A majority felt that we should focus on a smaller number of groups with larger donations.
- Opinions were split evenly on whether we should emphasize funding groups we have supported in the past, fund a mix of old and new groups, or emphasize funding for new groups.

At its May meeting, Church and Community agreed on the allocation process for 2016. Members received assignments to prepare brief reports evaluating each of the groups that were funded in 2015. I was assigned the task of approaching our four mission-based groups (PIIN Core Team, Earth Care, Gun Safety, and More Light) and the Youth Group to solicit funding requests. I was also assigned to prepare a proposed allocation plan once the reports were complete.

Over the summer, 14 Committee members, friends, and staff prepared reports on groups we currently fund, and three of the four mission-based groups submitted requests. The Youth Group was approached and its members were given the opportunity to allocate \$500 of the budget through a discussion led by Jenny Newman. The reports prepared as part of this effort will be published in the Sixth Sense during 2017.

At our October meeting, the Committee unanimously approved the allocations listed in the table below. This allocation reflects some, but not all, of the responses that were received in the Open E-Discussion and at the March meeting:

- In a major change, it provides much more support for our new church initiatives.
- A second major change is that the portion of the budget devoted to advocacy increased from 9% to 29%.
- The budget maintains a mix of local, national, and international causes.
- The budget retains some funding for every group we have supported in the past, but new groups also get funding.
- The budget increases the number of groups we are supporting, arguably reducing the impact of our donations. This is an issue we may want to address in coming years.

Here is the allocation of the Locally Directed Missions Budget, which the Committee unanimously approved at its October 2 meeting:

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Wilksburg Community Ministry	\$2,250
The Neighborhood Academy	\$1,800
PIIN: Annual Banquet Contribution (\$600); and Core Team Support for Training	\$1,600
East End Cooperative Ministry	\$1,200
Gun Safety Group: CeaseFirePA (\$600); and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense	\$1,200
Earth Care Team: Penn Environment (\$600); and League of Conservation Voters	\$1,200
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank	\$1,090
MHY Family Services (formerly Mars Home for Youth)	\$1,050
El Porvenir Cooperative, Nicaragua	\$1,000
Crestfield Camp and Conference Center	\$1,000
Lazarus Fund	\$1,000
Reimbursement for EECM/Neighborhood Academy Meals	\$1,000



## Church and Community, continued for the rest of our lives

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Anti-Racism Transformation Team of the Pittsburgh Presbytery	\$900
Just Harvest	\$900
Church World Service	\$850
Global Links	\$610
Youth Group: Dreams of Hope	\$500
Table Ministry of the Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community	\$500
Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute	\$350
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>

### **A Record Year for the CROP Walk**

The Pittsburgh East CROP Hunger Walk (on October 9) was a great success this year, and the contribution of the Sixth Church team was very important to that success. As a few final contributions continue to come in, the total for the walk is over \$24,000. Our Sixth Church walkers and their many wonderful walk sponsors raised \$5,938. That's a high-water mark for the walk AND for our team!

Our walk heroes were: Bill Beggs, Louise Craft, Sean Evans, Cliff Johnson, Nora Johnson, Leslie Kaplan, Peter Kaplan, Sue Koehler, Peter Koehler, Vincent Kolb, Gail Luley, Jenny Newman, Caitlin Schroering, Pam Twiss, Lauren Ward, Jen Wheatner, Savanna Wheatner and her friend Robin, Amy Whipple and Malakai, Dave Wood, and Diana Wood.

The funds raised will go primarily to the hunger and development projects of Church World Service, which is faithfully engaged in combatting hunger and poverty around the world. A smaller portion of the funds will return to help fund hunger programs in Pittsburgh - 10% to the East End Cooperative Ministry and 15% to the Wilkesburg Community Ministry.

Thank you to the walkers and to the many Sixth Church donors to this wonderful and worthy event.

### **EECM Capital Campaign Concludes Successfully**

Thanks to the generous members of Sixth Church, our commitment of \$10,000 to the East End Cooperative Ministry (EECM) Building Fund campaign has been met and exceeded. This campaign helped to pay for the construction of the EECM's attractive and functional Community House building in East Liberty. The construction of EECM's Community House enabled the organization to place all its programs under one roof with greatly improved conditions and amenities.

This commitment was made in the Fall of 2012 and our campaign began in the Spring of 2013. As of January 11, 2017, twenty-six individuals or family units of the congregation have contributed \$10,040. Although a little more is expected and members may continue contributing if they desire, we are declaring the campaign successfully closed. We thank all those who contributed financially and others who have supported this campaign with prayers and in others ways.

Special thanks go to Bill Beggs and David Wood, whose persistence was crucial to the success of this long-term effort.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Kaplan

## Evangelism

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Members of the Evangelism Committee worked effectively on many different fronts in 2016. In coordination with Pastor Vincent Kolb, Millie Barnes led several sessions for prospective new members during the past year. And over the course of the year, 11 new members were welcomed to Sixth Presbyterian Church.

Evangelism committee members assisted Scott Bell in promoting and hosting two concerts at Sixth during the months of July and August. Both of the concerts occurred on Squirrel Hill Night Market evenings. Admission was free and the performances were open to the public. Together, they brought more than 200 listeners to our sanctuary and front lawn.

Members of the Evangelism Committee spearheaded the work necessary for the creation of a new church directory which was distributed in September 2016.

Finally, Mary Lang has faithfully managed the ongoing task of maintaining the schedule for ushers and greeters for Sunday services and special events.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Halverson

## Fellowship

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The Fellowship committee plans and executes some of the large gatherings and meals for Sixth throughout the year. The Lenten season is particularly busy with our Shrove Tuesday pancake Supper, Agape meal on Maunday Thursday, and the Deviled Egg reception on Easter morning after worship. We held the Church Picnic at Highland Park this year in early June. The fall Stewardship event was a breakfast in 2016, and was well attended. During Advent the Fellowship crew hosted a meal for the tree trimming event on the 2nd Sunday of Advent and of course the annual Christmas Dinner. Several Fellowship members also helped to perform a "deep clean" of the main kitchen, including the upright refrigerator. Finally, various members volunteered to host the fellowship hour after service in the chapel during the month of December. New members to the committee are always welcome; if interested please contact Joe DeLucia, Jan Myers-Newbury or Sharon Manley.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph DeLucia

## House

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Harry Kirk continued to keep the building looking good throughout the year in spite of the fact that he now works a total of three jobs after accepting a full-time job with J.C. Penny. He performs the usual inside cleaning, set-up, and small repair tasks and keeps the grass cut. Harry also has a keen eye for spotting problems which he brings to my attention if they exceed either his expertise or the scope of his contract. Furthermore, at Vince's urging Harry has compiled an annual schedule of routine checks and preventative maintenance tasks that should be carried out in order to prolong the working life of our costly HVAC systems and arranges for the work to be done by outside contractors.

For the record, other building-related tasks that were carried out during the year 2016 were the following:

**Installation of LED Ceiling Lights:** During January through April a total of 6 additional round fluorescent ceiling light fixtures in the church building were replaced with new LED fixtures of the same size, bringing the total to 23. These fixtures provide greater luminosity but save energy.

## House, continued

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**Repairs to Video Security System:** Early in the year we also experienced problems with the video security system in the church. The first problem was that one of the four video cameras (the one that monitored the area at the top of the handicap ramp) quite working. The company that had installed the system originally back in 2013 (General Alarm Systems located in Wilkinsburg) installed a new camera. A few months later the monitor in the Church Office stopped displaying the four video views; the problem was traced to a defect in the long VGA cable that carried the video signals from the Organ Room to the Main Office. I repaired the defective part of this cable.

**Repair of Roof Over the Sanctuary:** MTG Roofing and Sheet Metal completed the repair of the roof over the sanctuary on May 27, 2016. The repair involved the replacement of missing tiles and resoldering of metal flashing that had separated. We have not experienced any further roof leaks since then.

**Replacement of the Bell Tower Roof:** JG Contracting, engaged by Verizon Wireless, replaced the deteriorated membrane covering the flat roof of the Bell Tower with a prefabricated 50 mil Duro-Last Roofing System and installed flashing all around. The installation was completed on June 10, 2016. A representative from the company that made the new roofing system inspected the work afterwards and certified that it had been installed in accordance with the company's specifications. The new roof has a 20-year warranty.

**Replacement of Two Window Air Conditioners:** In June the old window air conditioners in the Church Office and the Pastor's Office were replaced with new 5,000 BTU units of greater energy efficiency.

**Baby Changing Station:** In July a baby changing station was purchased and installed in the larger of the two bathrooms on the main floor.

**Sanctuary Handrails:** In mid-July the oak handrails were finally installed on both sides of the steps in front of the sanctuary, supported securely by the custom-made iron posts and brackets. Chris Bandy, a local wood craftsman, did a very nice job.

**Replacement of Carpet in the Chapel:** Unfortunately our grant application to upgrade the Chapel was unsuccessful, but thanks to the generosity of a member of Sixth Church we were able to go ahead and remove the unsightly carpet in the Chapel in mid-August and replace it with engineered wood flooring. A major improvement!

**Removal of Yews:** In mid-October Arboreal Tree Service, Inc. removed the overgrown yews along the West side and the Forbes Avenue side of the church building and ground out the stumps.

**Renewal of Snow/Ice Removal Contract:** In October our snow/ice removal contract with Spherical Land Solutions, LLC was renewed for a third year; they served us well past two years. The cost has increased a little.

**Advice Regarding our Stained Glass Windows:** In early November Jane Fox and I met with Mr. Kirk Weaver, President of Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studios. We had invited him to look at our stained glass windows and advise us on what we should do to preserve them. While we had been much concerned about the disrepair of the plexiglass panels covering the outside of the stained glass windows, Mr. Weaver feels that such panels often do more harm than good because they tend to trap moisture. After looking at our windows he expressed much more concern about the condition of the wood frames that support the stained glass windows, especially on the West side of the Church. He recommended strongly that we engage a competent painter this coming summer to fully strip the cracked paint off the frames and repaint them with marine-quality protection. This may be a 2-3 year program.

## House, continued, continued

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**Underground Drainage of Downspouts:** In November and December technicians from Sembower-Mikesell, Inc. Plumbing, Heating, & Air Conditioning, spent two days investigating the condition of the underground drains that are supposed to handle the rainwater coming down from the roof of the church but fail to do so even in fairly moderate rainfalls, which results in water coming in under the door that leads from the basement kitchen directly to the outside concrete steps. Correcting this problem was given highest priority. A report on what the inspection found is expected in early January. Based on that report we can make plans regarding corrective action.

**Locking Up Sixth Church After Sunday Service:** Throughout 2016 several members of the Hour Committee (Tom Cummings, Joe DeLucia, Leslie Kaplan, David Wood, and I) have taken turns locking up the building after the Sunday service.

**Unfinished Business:** In addition to implementing the correction of the storm water drainage problem and the refinishing of the stained glass window frames there are several other House problems that have been discussed during 2016 but not solved. They are:

The forced air heating system that serves the sanctuary is still operating with just one blower motor instead of two. I have contacted the manufacturer of the motor that is still operating to inquire if they could provide us with a matching second motor, but received a negative response. Since the motor that is still operating is very old, we should really solve this problem by purchasing and installing two matching new motors.

When these two new blower motors are installed, we should also replace the breaker/control equipment that operates the motors.

The routine inspection of the furnaces at the start of the 2016/17 heating season discovered a small leak in one of the two furnaces that heat the water for the circulating hot water heating system that serves all of the rooms in the church building other than the sanctuary. It is an old unit and our contractor was not able to find a replacement for the module that has the leak. Thus ultimately that second furnace will have to be replaced, with a more efficient new one.

The interior of the entire building needs patching and painting in many places.

The wooden doors at the Murray Ave. entrance and the Forbes Ave. entrance need to be refinished before they deteriorate much further.

The basement kitchen needs to be thoroughly cleaned, the sections where the paint is peeling need to be scraped and repainted, and the gas stove/oven with the unreliable pilot light needs to be repaired or replaced. (These items were brought to our attention during the latest inspection of our kitchen.)

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Koehler

## Personnel

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It is the Personnel committee's great pleasure to have the opportunity to work with our staff throughout the year making sure they have the appropriate resources to do their jobs. Annually, we provide performance appraisals using a model where six members of the congregation rate their performance; three chosen by us and three by the staff member. It is not surprising they received the highest ratings in all categories! 2016 was the first full year this staff has been together and here is a snapshot of each and how they have come together to work for the greater good on all fronts for all of us at Sixth.

## Personnel, continued

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Amy has been a unifying force and encouraged fellowship and comradery (read that lots of laughing) among staff members. She worked closely with Millie, Clerk of Session, to clean up and organize church records and member databases and has made the office a helpful place for congregants and neighbors alike. The church newsletter is a joy to receive each month and she never admonishes us for turning things in late!

Harry has managed his custodial duties with equal parts good humor and high energy efficiency. He has worked closely with Peter Koehler, the House Committee and the many contractors who come and go to bring substantial changes to our building and grounds. Harry comes early, stays late, leaves nothing to chance and provides us with a place to worship and learn that is clean and welcoming.

Jenny, as the Director of Christian Education, began the year ensuring our compliance with new State laws concerning volunteer and staff clearances and we are up to date! Jenny's presence among our children, youth and families is both seen and unseen. Her thoughtful and often amusing (with a little help from her small friends) children's messages, the many events throughout the year and her constant presence on social media using her Children and Youth Blog, Facebook and Instagram sharing weekly youth devotions, information, resources and recommendations. The unseen part for me is the enthusiasm and exuberance expressed by the children as they thunder from the sanctuary, move about the church during and after worship, or navigate the fellowship room in search of food, friends and family. It makes my heart soar.

Gail celebrated her 20 years as Director of Music at Sixth on April 24<sup>th</sup>! The choir sang two of her favorite pieces, "Ubi Caritas" by Maurice Ravel and "Hark I Hear the Harps Eternal", a traditional hymn arranged by Alice Parker. When asked about her time at Sixth, Gail said "My hope is that our work has enriched your worship and even, at times, brought you closer to God and to that special place in your heart."

We could not be more blessed than to have the opportunity to experience every week, the amazing talent of Gail Luley.

Vincent remarked recently that he so grateful and proud to be part of a high functioning team of talented and devoted staff, and to have the opportunity to work alongside leaders and church members who are so committed to each other and to Sixth Church. We have witnessed since the day he arrived, his commitment to justice and inclusion in our community and the world, and to making a difference in Pittsburgh for those who are most vulnerable and without a voice. His sermons, his teaching, his participation in our many communities of faith, his willingness to share our joys, our sorrows and most importantly our hope, make him a leader we are fortunate to have in our midst.

From a Personnel Committee's perspective, Gail said what is music to our ears (pun intended), "I feel blessed to prosper in this environment."

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Parees, Carol Emerson, and Phyllis Rupert

## Worship

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"Worship is at the very heart of the church's life. All that the church is and does is rooted in its worship. The community of faith, gathered in response to God's call, is formed in its worship. Worship is the principal influence that shapes our faith, and is the most visible way we express the faith."\*

"In worship, through Word and Sacrament, the church is sustained by the presence of Christ. Joined in worship to the One who is the source of its life, the church is empowered to serve God in the world."\*

## Worship, continued

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Our Worship Committee worked with our pastor, the Rev. Dr. Vincent Kolb, and our musician, Gail Luley, to help plan and implement our services that celebrate the liturgical year and the Sacraments of Eucharist and Baptism. In addition, our responsibilities involved many aspects of worship, including preparation of the worship space, training and scheduling of liturgists and acolytes, preparing communion elements, the annual church picnic, hosting guest preachers, and so forth.

Sacraments continue to be central to our worship. We have celebrated the Baptisms of infants, children, and adults, and the Eucharist. In addition to our monthly celebrations of the Eucharist, we celebrated the Lord's Supper on Epiphany Sunday, during Lent on Maundy Thursday, on Easter, Pentecost, World Communion Sunday, All Saints' Day, and at the Women's Weekend.

We have continued to incorporate youth in our worship services in several ways including the participation of acolytes who bring in the Light of Christ, children who pour the baptismal water each Sunday, youth musicians and readers, youth and children who enacted the Magi story for Epiphany, the "locking" and "unlocking" of our Alleluias for Lent and Easter, and "Time for Children" offered during most worship services. With appreciation for our Sunday School teachers and the leadership of Jenny Newman, we have seen strong family participation grow in our worship.

Sixth Presbyterian has become an Earth Care Congregation this year and the worship committee has joined in the efforts to be so.

We have celebrated the seasons of Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas and several special worship services including Epiphany of the Lord, Baptism of the Lord, Transfiguration of the Lord, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunday, the Day of Pentecost, our annual Worship in the Park, World Communion Sunday, and All Saints Day.

Worship provides us with an opportunity to "glorify and enjoy God" with a community of faith and to offer our service as part of the body of Christ, serving as a corporate priesthood.

I want to thank all members of the Worship Committee who have been devoted to creating meaningful worship for our congregation: Pam Howe, Kirk Howe, Margaret Miller, Jenny Newman, Verna Robinson, Kathi Robinson-Dassel, Pam Twiss, Pamela Bower, Gail Luley, and Rev. Dr. Vincent Kolb.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Bower and Verna Robinson, co-chairs

\*Book of Common Worship

You made it all the way through the reports! I'm really proud of you.

I hope you're not just reading this message because it caught your eye. People work really hard on the committees that make our church run, and committee reports are pretty thankless. Do the committees, their members, and their chairs a solid and go back.

You made it all the way through the reports! I'm really proud of you. For real this time.

# Notes from Session, January Meeting

## CLERK'S REPORT

Worship Attendance:: 217 on 12/24, 54 on 12/25, 75 on 1/1, 128 on 1/8 and 116 on 1/15.

A motion was made to approve the Session Committee and Initiative Chairs for 2017. It was approved.

The Session Endorsement of Kate Davoli has been forwarded to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A Stewardship Report was received from Lauren Ward, Chair of the Committee stating that we have received 99 pledges totaling \$299,666.00 for 2017.

Finance: Maggie Ritchey, the Treasurer reviewed the Financial Report. Peter Watt-Morse after a brief discussion made a motion to approve the 2017 Budget.

It was approved.

House: Peter Koehler discussed the needed drain repair. A motion was made to approve the Drain Repair from Sembower. It passed.

Personnel: Barb Parees reported that all the staff evaluations have been completed and all received good reviews.

## NEW BUSINESS

The WOMEN'S MARCH in Washington and Pittsburgh, which will take place on Saturday January 21, were discussed.

A Presbytery Meeting will take place on February 16. None of the Elders present were able to be our representative. The Pastor and Clerk will talk to other Elders and find one to attend.

Kate Davoli reported that she has a meeting at the Seminary at 4pm on February 8 and she needed a liaison to go with her. She was advised to ask an Elder to be her Liaison. She will do this. The Session will approve the liaison at the next meeting.

## PASTOR'S REPORT

The Pastor reviewed the New Officer's Training, which will take place on January 28. There will be childcare available for this meeting.

## WORD OF THANKS TO SESSION CLASS OF 2016

The Pastor spoke word of thanks to Sara Berg, Patty Halverson, Peter Koehler, Maggie Ritchey and Peter Watt-Morse.

The next Executive Committee Meeting will be on February 12, 2017 at 12:30pm.

The next Session Meeting will be Wednesday, February 15, 2017 at 7:30pm.

The meeting wrap-up was expressed by the Pastor as good.

The meeting was adjourned and ended with prayer by the Pastor.

Respectfully submitted,

Millie Barnes, Clerk of Session

# Sixth Church and God's Creation

Please note that if you want to drop off a TV, PLEASE TALK TO KEITH FIRST! The recycler requires a fee, and the person who is dropping off the TV needs to cover that cost.

Sue Koehler, who collects Techno-Trash, says, "I keep track of one of the bins for collecting electronic and techno trash. My bin has been filled to overflowing three times! The most popular items have been charging and power cords and floppy disks (all probably from long-dead devices). We've also received a lot of CDs and cassette tapes. They have all been delivered to an electronic recycler."

She adds, "Continue to bring your techno trash, and please take careful note of the signs on the bins.

We've received some items NOT ON THE LIST, AND THEY ARE NOT ALL RECYCLABLE."

—Nora Johnson



## February 2017 — Events and Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> 11:00 am, Bible Study	<b>2</b> <b>Chris Berg</b> 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	<b>3</b> <b>Doris Bell</b>	<b>4</b> 7:00 pm, NA
<b>5</b> 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 12:30 pm, Christian Education Committee 12:30 pm, Gun Safety 8:00 pm, NA	<b>6</b> 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 11:00 am, Presbyterian Women 6:30 pm, 14th Ward Democrats 7:15 pm, Deacons	<b>9</b> <b>Kit Ayars</b> 6:00 pm, Fiberarts Guild 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>12</b> 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, New Member Orientation 11:00 am, Worship and Dedication of Pew Bibles 12:00 pm, Earth Care 12:30 pm, Executive Committee 8:00 pm, NA	<b>13</b> 7:00 pm, NA	<b>14</b> <b>Peter Kaplan</b> <b>Aldora Watt</b> <b>Glenna Van            Dyke</b>	<b>15</b> 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:30 pm, Session	<b>16</b> <b>Maria Guyette</b> 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> <b>Cyril Fox</b> 7:00 pm, NA
<b>19</b> <b>Greg Cooper</b> 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 8:00 pm, NA	<b>20</b> <b>GG Loyd</b> 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	<b>21</b> <b>Linda May</b>	<b>22</b> <b>Louise Ford</b> 11:00 am, Bible Study	<b>23</b> <b>Diane James</b> 6:00 pm, Youth Group at Crazy Mocha 7:30 pm, Choir practice	<b>24</b> <b>Jan Myers-            Newbury</b>	<b>25</b> 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA
<b>26</b> <b>Amy Whipple</b> 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, New Member Orientation 11:00 am, Worship 8:00 pm, NA	<b>27</b> 7:00 pm, NA	<b>28</b> 5:00 pm, Pancakes!				

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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...***

“Can we live through February?” – Dar Williams

“Why does February feel like one big Tuesday?” – Todd Stocker

“The day and time itself: late afternoon in early February, was there a moment of the year better suited for despair?” – Alice McDermott

“When God was making the months I think February was a mistake, like a burp. There it was, small, dark, and prickly. It had absolutely no redeeming qualities.” – Shannon Wiersbitzky

“Even though February was the shortest month of the year, sometimes it seemed like the longest.”  
– Lorraine Snelling



**The Deadline** for the March newsletter is February 15th. Please email articles and announcements to Amy in the church office ([office@sixthchurch.org](mailto:office@sixthchurch.org)). You can also put printed copies on her desk. Thank you!