

March

2017



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

“And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.’” John 8:11

Condemnation is a heavy burden to bear. No matter the source of the condemnation and no matter the reason, condemnation crushes the life out of us all when given the opportunity. Many of us live our lives condemned because we have been unable or unwilling to permit that burden to be removed. Sometimes the condemnation is self-imposed, and we just cannot forgive ourselves for what seems to be, in our own estimation, some great failure. Sometimes the condemnation comes from outside ourselves for failures in the eyes of others. Whether these failures are relatively insignificant or enormous, the burden of condemnation is hard to bear. Therefore, the words of Jesus above are music to our ears. To know that we do not need to carry the failures of the past into the future is good news indeed! In the Lenten season, we remember that Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save the world (look at John 3:17). The good news for all of us declares that the chains binding us to past failures can be broken; we can be set free to live all our tomorrows without condemnation.

Stop and think for a moment about all those memories that keep invading your consciousness to convince you that you are condemned. And then remember these words that are often said as the Assurance of Pardon at the baptismal font: “Who is in a position to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us” (Romans 8:34). They may be the most important words that we say each week. Why? Because there is no condemnation for those who walk with Christ.

Today, offer all the condemnation of the past and present—silly and substantial—to God in Christ Jesus and hear these words of Jesus addressed to you: “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.” You are free. Thanks be to God!

Vincent

March Worship and Preaching

March 5—Genesis 3:1-9, “Limits”

March 12—Myra Kazanjian Preaching

March 19—John 4, “Argument”

March 26—John 9, “Two Heretics”



Update from the Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone for helping to raise nearly \$300,000 in pledges for 2017. We are off to a great start. This year, the Committee will be looking at the potential for a capital campaign in the coming months. The reason? Infrastructure repairs and upgrades that we simply need to do to keep the church the safe, warm, and inviting place that is God's House and our home.

Stewardship will be working with the House, Finance, and Executive Committees over the month of March to understand the needs and priorities facing the church. In April or early May we hope to hold a group dinner to discuss what the Committee has learned and where we might go with regard to a capital campaign that will provide for the church. By July we hope to have developed a plan to share with Session and then with the Congregation in the fall as we enter our traditional stewardship season.

Are you interested in joining the Stewardship Committee? We would be delighted to have new members and would welcome additional talent and wisdom! It's an exciting time to be looking ahead and envisioning the future of Sixth. Please let me know if you'd be willing to serve.

Peace,

Lauren Ward, Stewardship Co-Chair

Deacons: What We Do

Deacons have many responsibilities.

Probably the most familiar one is providing meals for members of the congregation who are ill.

Our treasurer, Rob Beswick, handles the Lazarus Fund, which one-time grants to low-income families throughout Allegheny County who are facing eviction or having their utilities turned off.

Deacons are also responsible for the Care Closet, which has small offerings of clothing, food, and toiletries to folks who come to the church asking for help.

We continue to sponsor Household Helpers, who help folks who attend Sixth to carry out numerous tasks; for example, turning a heavy mattress, caring for a pet while its owner is out of town, and helping folks move locally when they can't afford a moving van.

The Deacons also carry out one-time projects. Presently, we are sponsoring a drive to provide books that have African-American protagonists for the children of the two elementary schools in Wilkinsburg (read more about this on the next page!).

Finally, along with the Elders, we help to serve Communion.

If you have any questions, you can talk with Vincent or our new moderator, Peter Kaplan.

—Louise Craft



Children filling Homeless Care Kits during Extended Session. The Deacons supplied the contents, including hand warmers, socks, and shelf-stable proteins.

Church-Wide Book Drive

Have you decided to give something up for Lent this year? How about giving up one or more books to donate to a local school in need. The Deacons are gathering books for elementary school children in Wilkinsburg, where roughly 40% of students are known to be functionally homeless (living in unstable situations or in temporary locations). Most are children of ethnic minorities, so the goal is to gather books with positive portrayals of children of color and their families, so these kids might easily relate to the stories and see themselves in the characters they read about.

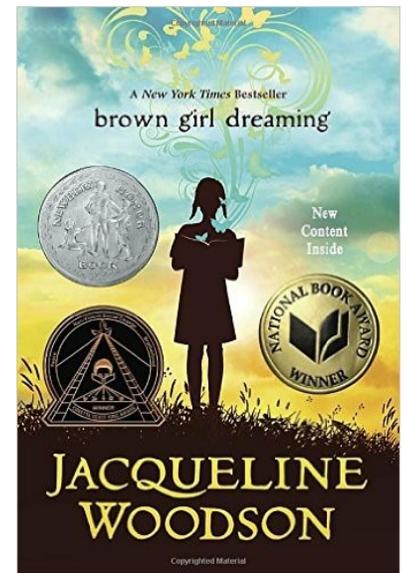
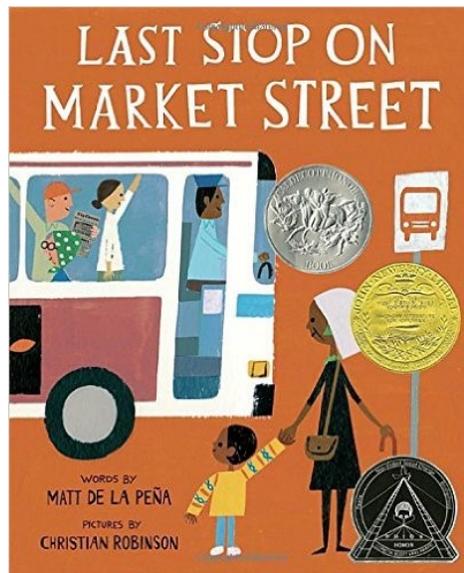
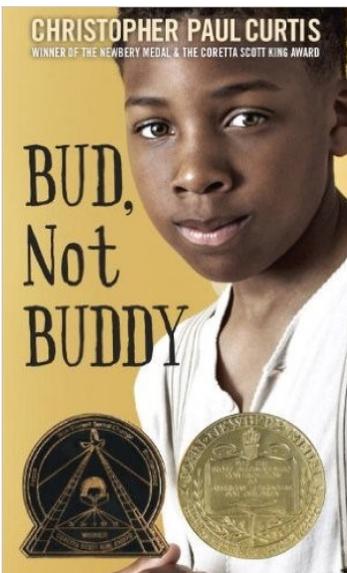
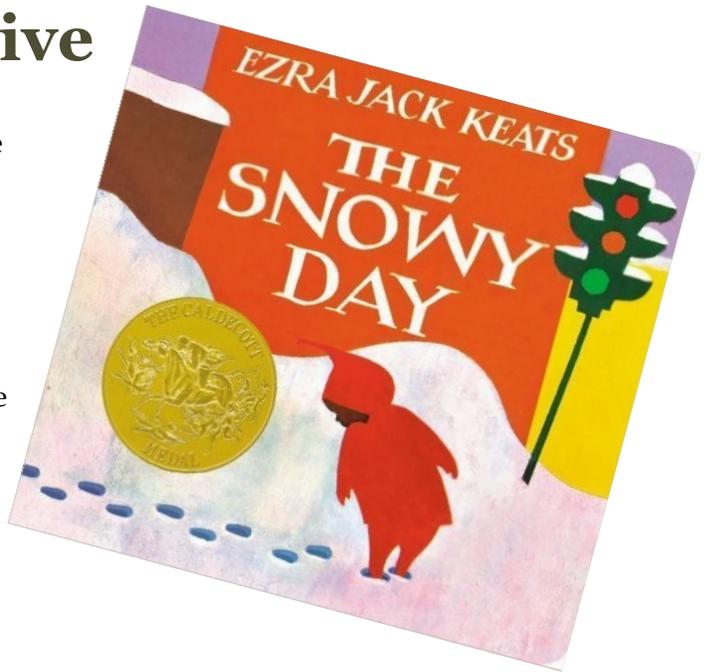
We are not asking you to weed through your children's book selection at home, but rather to consider seeking out some specific books to inspire minority children in grades K through 6, or approximately age 5 through 12.

Please pick up a flyer with a list of book ideas, generated by some web research and suggestions from our friendly neighborhood child librarian, Megan. Additional books featuring minority children would also be welcomed, particularly ones portraying friendship, adventure, kindness, finding strength to do what's right in difficult situations, etc. The book list will also be on our website.

Also, feel free to browse through the books on display in the sanctuary. Consider shopping at Half-Priced Books, on Amazon.com, or in other discounted locations or websites...books can be gently used or new. We want to make sure we have books for each age group so if you are buying more than one, please consider representing more than one age group.

Books can be donated at the church any time during Lent. The books will be delivered shortly after Easter. As a mom of a 6-year-old, I experience daily how enjoyable reading together can be for us both. Watching my daughter learn to sound out words and read some on her own is really exciting. Our hope is that the book donation will have a positive impact on some of our most vulnerable and marginalized local young people, and help foster a life-long love of reading. Thank you for your consideration!

—Jen Wheatner



Notes from Session, February Meeting

CLERK'S REPORT

Worship Attendance: 113 on 1//22, 135 on 1/29, 120 on 2/5, 134 on 2/12.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to designate Carol Emerson as our Elder Commissioner to the February 16 Presbytery Meeting.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to appoint Leslie Kaplan as the Session Liaison to Kate Davoli as she becomes and is an Inquirer at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to give a \$250 reimbursable expense line for books and 40% of the psychological testing cost for our new Inquirer, Kate Davoli, from the Session Discretionary line item.

A motion was made seconded and approved to refer the appeal by the Presbytery Peacemaking Ministry Team for legal aid for the Defense Fund of the Sioux people at Standing Rock.

The resignation of Margaret Miller was accepted with regret.

An email was received from Toby Graham by the Clerk stating that Kate Davoli was accepted by the Presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry to be an Inquirer.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Stewardship: Elder Lauren Ward reported details of the Stewardship Report. The campaign has raised a total of \$299,666.00. She stated the committee would discuss the possibility of having a special campaign to raise money for repairs to the infrastructure of the church building, which are needed. She stated she will have a dinner in April at her home to discuss this possibility. She will invite Elly-John Kelley, from the Presbyterian Foundation to this meeting

Finance: Maggie Ritchey reviewed the Financial Report. The income for the month is \$34,683.69 and the total expenses are \$6,870.39.

Personnel: Elder Barb Parees made a motion that Myra Kazanjian be made a Parish Associate for 6th Church. A contract has been written to be signed by the Associate, the Pastor and the Clerk of Session. The contract will be effective March 1, subject to the approval of Presbytery. The motion was seconded and passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Worship: Elder Verna Robinson reported that the Communion Dates for this year are February 5, March 5, April 13 (Maundy Thursday), April 16 (Easter), May 7, May 13 (Family Retreat), June 4 Pentecost (Picnic Sunday), July 2, August 6, September 3, September 24 (Women's Retreat), October 1 (World Communion), November 5, December 3, December 24 or 25?, Men's Retreat (date ?), and January 2, 2018

A motion was made, seconded and approved for Myra Kazanjian to preach on March 5.

After a lengthy discussion about the justicecalendar.org created by Mary Radcliffe, a Motion was made, seconded and passed to refer the matter to the Communication committee with an eye to revising our current website policy.

After a lengthy discussion, it was moved, seconded, and passed to refer the matter of becoming a Sanctuary Church to the Church & Community committee for a recommendation.

After a lengthy discussion, the Mapping of the Congregation that was done by Rev. Myra Kazanjian, chair of the Gun Safety Committee, was referred back to the committee for information as to how the committee is planning to use the mapping.

February Session Notes, Continued

There was a discussion about what constitutes a diverse and accepting church.

PASTOR'S REPORT

The Pastor reported that new Session members who have not been on a Session before will have a mentor to help them for the first six months.

A sheet titled "Session Member Expectations" was distributed.

INFORMATION

Core Team: Elder Mary Crossley reported that the PIIN Banquet will be held on May 7. A motion was made, seconded and passed that Fund Raising for PIIN would be conducted the same way it was last year.

Christian Education: Elder Chris Pistorius reported that there will be speakers during Lent for Adult Education starting March 5 and continuing March 19, 26 and April 2 at the 10 o'clock hour in the Parlor. A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the series, "Justice, Justice, You Shall Pursue."

Respectfully submitted,

Millie Barnes, Clerk of Session

Sixth Church and God's Creation

So much is going on! We'll celebrate Earth Day Sunday on April 23; Earth Day itself is Saturday, April 22.

Two marches in Washington, D.C.: Is anyone going to either?

Saturday, April 22: March for Science / Saturday, April 29: People's Climate March

Recycling: We've improved our storage system for all those recyclable items you've been bringing in. Peter Koehler has built custom-designed shelves in the Men's Choir Room, and the whole area is easier to use. We're also improving the signage.

We have an **unidentified TV**. There's a charge for recycling TVs. We need to hear from the person who dropped it off, and we won't take it to the recycler until we do.

We're now accepting **BINDERS** for recycling.

Please **don't leave plastic bags** with us, but take them to a Giant Eagle bin. Thanks!

ALCOSAN storm water project: ALCOSAN has announced that it will distribute \$9 million for green infrastructure projects around the county. We're glad about this, but it is only a tiny portion of the total to be spent and needs to be increased. Vincent asked that we register our support for green infrastructure through a link to PWSA's website.

EPA governance: We need to be watching decisions by the new leader of the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt. The EPA is supposed to be protecting the health of each one of us by protecting our air and water, our forests and wildlife. When we see signs that the interests of big energy or real estate concerns are taking precedence over the public interest, we need to make our objections heard.

www.justicecalendar.org is a new website being developed by Mary Radcliffe to provide current information on activist events in our area.

—Nora Johnson

Sponsored by Church & Community: Just Harvest

Founded in 1986 and focused on Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Justice Harvest is an advocacy and charitable organization which in the words of its mission statement, *“educates, empowers and mobilizes people to eliminate hunger, poverty, and economic injustice in our communities by influencing public policy, engaging in advocacy, and connecting people to public benefits”*. What sets Just Harvest apart is that it simultaneously brings resources to our community’s neediest citizens and seeks to change the system that creates poverty and hardship for these citizens.

Hunger is a significant issue in Allegheny County, where 14% of all residents and nearly 18% of children suffer from food insecurity. People and children are considered food insecure if they sometimes lack access to enough food to live an active, healthy life.

Just Harvest directly helps needy people in the following ways:

- Helps people obtain food stamps, school meals, summer and after school meals, in-school meals and resources from the WIC (Women Infants Children) food program.
- Assists families applying for welfare benefits.
- Provides free tax return preparation for low income families. In 2015, Just Harvest volunteers prepared 2,700 tax returns resulting in \$5.7MM of income to needy families.
- Through its Fresh Access program, Just Harvest has been instrumental in setting up farmers’ markets in low income communities that would otherwise not have access to fresh food. Just Harvest devised a system to enable farmers to accept food stamps, and its Fresh Food Bucks gives food stamps shoppers an extra \$2 for every \$5 of food stamps spent at the markets.
- Just Harvest is rolling out its Fresh Corners program to enable small corner stores in low income communities that lack supermarkets to stock healthy food.

Just Harvest’s policy, tax, and budget advocacy activities include:

- Working to improve the quality of public safety net programs like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps (SNAP), and others by lobbying for more sensitive and compassionate welfare policies, working to improve the Department of Public Welfare’s customer service, and holding policymakers accountable.
- Increasing usage of federal and state child nutrition programs through advocacy and community outreach.
- Lobbying local, state and federal governments for tax policies that reduce income inequality, and improve tax policies as they apply to low income people. Just Harvest has successfully worked to expand the earned income tax credit (EITC) and the child tax credit, prevented additional paperwork requirements for the EITC, and changed the timing for collection of the local service tax so it is less of a hardship for low income families to pay it.
- Working to create the Pittsburgh Hunger Fund, which uses Community Development Block Grant monies to pay for hunger programs in Pittsburgh’s neediest neighborhoods.
- Working to create Pennsylvania’s KEYS program, which supports welfare and food stamp recipients to pursue degrees at the state’s community colleges.
- Preventing large cuts to the federal food stamp budget in 2014.

- Demonstrating at such events as the PA Budget Day of Action in June 2016.

Based on all of the foregoing ways in which Just Harvest helps need people and successfully advocates for change, the organization is accomplishing its mission quite effectively. It also works with a broad range of groups at the local, state, and national levels that share its goals.

Just Harvest sees advocating for social change as one of its primary functions. This is illustrated by these excerpts from its statement, "About Poverty and Hunger", which is found on its website:

"Allowing poverty and hunger to persist in America is a political choice made by government officials and their supporters – the choice not to make needed changes in policy nor to adequately fund the services and programs that help struggling people. We have the power to change these choices, end poverty, and abolish hunger, but it will take more than charity to do this. Fundamental change requires fundamental reform. ... To end poverty and hunger in America we must stop skewing our policies to benefit the elite."

Sixth Church's involvement with Just Harvest goes back to its earliest years. Cliff Johnson was a founding member of the Just Harvest Board of Directors and the only Presbyterian on a board with several people of faith. According to Cliff, Sixth Church's support of Just Harvest marked the first time that the Church and Community Committee provided support for an organization advocating social change.

Just Harvest has two entities for tax purposes:

Just Harvest: A Center for Action Against Hunger is the lobbying arm of Just Harvest, and is a 501(c)(4) organization. Because it conducts a substantial amount of direct and grassroots lobbying for public policies that address hunger and economic injustice, contributions to the Center for Action Against Hunger are not tax-deductible.

Just Harvest Education Fund is the community education and outreach arm of Just Harvest. Contributions to the Just Harvest Education Fund are tax-deductible.

Adult Education: Lent Speaker Series

As a follow-up to the stimulating program on the criminal justice system in January, the Social Justice/PIIN Core Team is presenting speakers with a social justice theme during Lent. *Each will take place as the Adult Christian Education offering during the Sunday School hour, at 10 am.*

On **March 5**, UPMC employee Nila Peyton will be our speaker. She is a leader in the Fight for \$15 movement. She excited interest and admiration when she gave a Minute for Mission during worship on Sunday, November 29 of last year – a sure indication that she would be the appropriate speaker to address the injustice of low pay.

On **March 19**, we will hear from **Molly Nichols**, the executive director of Pittsburghers for Public Transit. A vibrant and dynamic advocate for public transit for all, Nichols will talk about the work of her organization in successfully reversing cuts in service to neighborhoods and will point out the vital

connections between transit, employment, and affordable housing.

The speaker on **March 26** will be **Gale Schwartz**. She is a Project Specialist with the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania. With 12 years of nonprofit experience, she has been with the Housing Alliance since 2013 serving as the Coordinator of the Southwestern PA Housing Alliance and its subgroups the Rental Housing Work Group and Building Inclusive Communities.

On **April 2**, **John Creasy** will give a front-line report from the struggle of the Sioux nation to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. Last November, Rev. Creasy visited and participated at the Oceti Sakowin resistance camp in South Dakota. Rev. Creasy is the Associate Pastor for the Open Door, director of Garfield Community Farm, and a member of the Pittsburgh Presbytery Peacemaking Ministry Team.

Youth Happenings March

"Food for Thought" – Sunday school class for junior and senior high is held each week (10-10:45 am) at Bruegger's.

Confirmation Class – The Confirmation Class will be meeting in the parlor on Sunday, March 19 from 12:30 to 2:30 pm.

Youth Fellowship at Crazy Mocha – Youth are invited for coffee and conversation at Crazy Mocha on Murray Ave. from 6 to 7:30 pm on Thursdays, March 9, 16, 23, and 30th.

Contact Jenny Newman at (412) 720-6392 or Jenny@Sixthchurch.org



Mark Your Calendars

Palm Sunday Family Potluck

**5 to 7 pm
Sunday, April 9 in the
Chapel**

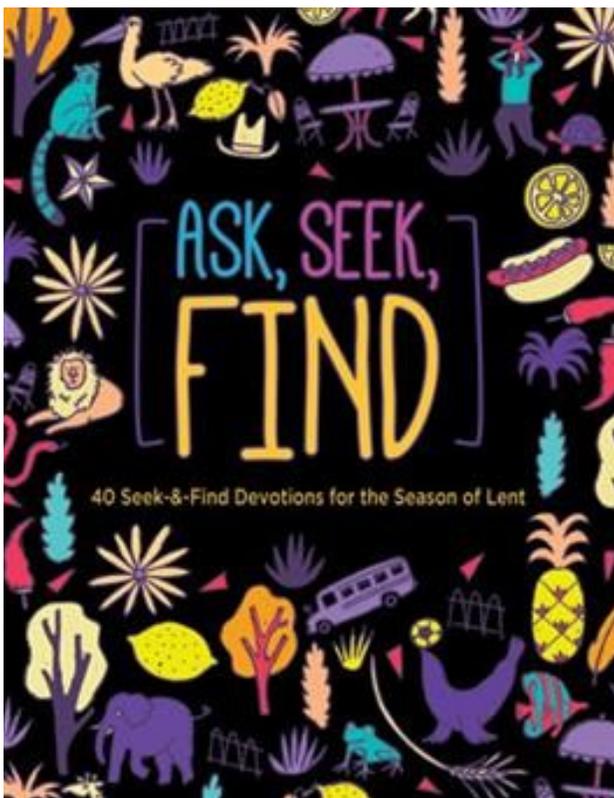
Bring a dish to share and join us for fellowship, crafts and Holy Week activities for all ages.

Hosted by the Christian Education Committee.

Lenten Resources

A company called Creative Communications publishes church resources of all kinds and this year at Sixth Church we will be sending families home with these two resources.

"Ask, Seek, Find" has a short daily devotional to read children and brightly-illustrated seek-and-find pictures pages containing hidden objects that tell the story of Jesus' passion and resurrection.



The Lent 2017 Children's Calendar is a one-page calendar filled with prayers, activities, and suggestions for Bible readings. The calendar also includes instructions for creating a Lenten prayer tree.

We have these available at the church so please take one home!



Family Overnight Retreat 2017



May 13-14



Sixth families are invited for a time of fun and fellowship at Camp Crestfield. Plan to arrive at Camp Crestfield at 10 a.m. Saturday and we will conclude with a casual worship service on Sunday morning.

Families will be staying in Scott Lodge and meals will include lunch and dinner Saturday and breakfast on Sunday. We will have a campfire, a hayride and other activities including rock climbing and canoes.

To register, please fill out the registration form below and return it with payment to Jenny Newman in the church office by **Sunday, April 2**.

Questions? Contact Jenny at 412-720-6392 or Jenny@sixthchurch.org

Retreat Registration

Names: (Please list all family members attending & ages of children)

Please list dietary and/or physical restrictions for any of your family members attending:

Contact Information (Phone, email)

Cost:

\$75 for families of 2
\$100 for families of 3
\$125 for families of 4 or more

Note: The actual cost of the retreat \$65.25 per person for ages 11 and up, \$35.25 per person for ages 5 to 10. Children age 4 and under are free. If the actual cost for your family is less than the amount listed above, please pay the lower amount!

We have financial help available if needed. Contact Jenny Newman for more info.

Amount Paid _____

March 2017 — Events and Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 11:00 am, Bible Study 6:30 pm, 14th Ward Democrats	2 6:00 pm, Worship Committee 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	3 3:00 pm, Fiberarts Guild 6:00 pm, Union Meeting	4 Pam Howe Katie Kaplan 12:30 pm, House Committee 7:00 pm, NA
5 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Justice Speaker 11:00 am, Worship 12:15 pm, Church & Community 8:00 pm, NA	6 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	7	8 Jordan Lowe Greg Nestor Sam Utz 11:00 am, Presbyterian Women 7:15 pm, Deacons	9 Linda Davoli Lynn Mischeff 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	10	11 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA
12 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Executive Committee 11:00 am, Worship 12:00 pm, Gun Safety 2:00 pm, Pittsburgh Watercolor Society 8:00 pm, NA	13 Joseph Delucia 7:00 pm, NA	14	15 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:30 pm, Session	16 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	17 Wilson Juring Glenda Rosenberry Rohan Vaux	18 7:00 pm, NA

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
19 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Justice Speaker 11:00 am, Worship 12:15 pm, More Light Committee 12:30 pm, Confirmation Class 2:00 pm, Moms Demand Action 8:00 pm, NA	20 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	21 Winter Cornelius- Bates	22 Alex Utz 6:00 pm, PIIN Core Team	23 Brooklyn Andrews 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	24	25 Emma Cooper 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA
26 Malakai Whipple 9:50 am, Sunday School 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Justice Speaker 11:00 am, Worship 2:00 pm, Alopecia Support Group 8:00 pm, NA	27 7:00 pm, NA	28	29 11:00 am, Bible Study	30 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir practice	31 Jeffrey Kaplan	

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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...

"The beautiful spring came; and when Nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also." – Harriet Ann Jacobs

"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade." – Charles Dickens

"March came in that winter like the meekest and mildest of lambs, bringing days that were crisp and golden and tingling, each followed by a frosty pink twilight which gradually lost itself in an elfland of moonshine." – L.M. Montgomery

"Only those with tenacity can march forward in March" – Ernest Agyemang Yeboah



The Deadline for the April newsletter is March 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!