

June 2017

# Sixth Sense

## From the Pastor

*"The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness." John Kenneth Galbraith*

For many of us who are progressive and Christian, the world changed dramatically last November 8, and that drama took office on January 20. We are now 100+ days into the new normal as "the Resistance", and I find that like-minded people are in various stages of accommodation, much like what we were once taught were the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

For people of faith, dedicated to the long haul of upholding the gospel values of equality, equity, and inclusion, I am finding there to be powerful resources available for us to deal with a world where "alternative facts" are the norm, where we are being led by a child masquerading as an adult.

One of the most powerful resources we have as people of faith is memory.

Much of Christian faith is about memory. Continually in the Bible, the people of God are reminded who we are and what we are to be.

The flow of news and information combats the power and purpose of this holy memory. We are riveted to the present, saturated in news cycles that create a daily amnesia. Tweets drive our attention, and then subsequent tweets reverse what was previously said, so that prevarication becomes the norm.

Our memory as a people of faith will be crucial in the days to come as we hold those in power accountable, maintain perspective, and exercise judgment. More importantly, the memory of who we are as God's beloved children keeps us grounded in the face of competing narratives that seek to justify the selfishness and greed that envelopes our nation and world. Our faith story tells us that we are faced with nothing new, as we consider Jesus, suffering in humility, yet bravely challenging the alternative facts of imperial power.

What I am trying to say is simple. In the particular era in which we find ourselves, it will be important for us, even in the summer, to gather around the pulpit, the font, and the table and hear the words of Jesus, *"Do this in remembrance of me."*

He is risen!

Vincent



SIXTH  
*presbyterian*  
CHURCH

## June Worship and Preaching

June 4 – Acts 2, "Moping, Coping, Hoping," Worship in Schenley Park and Church Picnic

June 11 – Genesis 1:1-5, "In the Beginning, God"

June 18 – Genesis 21:1-7, "Laughing as Prayer"

June 25 – Matthew 10:34-39, "Hating Your Family"

## Head's Up

- Summer worship hours begin Sunday, June 11 at 10 am
- Beginning June 11, we are changing the order of service. It will read:
  - Gloria
  - Time for Children
  - Passing of the Peace

# Nicaragua 2017: Share in Our Mission

Looking for a way to get our kids involved in mission? Join us in supporting the young people at El Povenir in Nicaragua.

Sixth Presbyterian Church has been visiting the community of El Porvenir (The Future) in Leon, Nicaragua, for nearly seven years. El Porvenir is a cooperative of organic, fair trade coffee farmers. About 42 families live on the farm and work the land.

The partnership we have built with El Porvenir has allowed us to develop life-long relationships, learn about the Nicaraguan culture, the history of the United States' involvement in Central America and explore our own faith and our own call as followers of Christ. We are excited that a group from Sixth will be visiting again in June. We will be talking about our upcoming trip and our friends in Nicaragua with the kids at Sixth in Sunday school and Extended Session in the coming weeks.



*Please contact Jenny Newman ([Jenny@sixthchurch.org](mailto:Jenny@sixthchurch.org)) or Sara Berg ([Sarasaracuadraberg@gmail.com](mailto:Sarasaracuadraberg@gmail.com)) for questions about what to donate.*

**We are collecting art supplies for the school at El Porvenir! This would be a great way to talk about mission with your children! Here's how you can participate:**

Have your kids pick out their favorite art and school supplies to donate. Have your kids write a short note about themselves and include a picture!

We will share your kid's notes, pictures, and donations with our friends in Nicaragua and bring back notes and pictures from the school children at El Porvenir!

Donations and letters from kids can be brought to Jenny Newman in the church office by **June 15**. **Donations should be packable items like crayons, paper, markers, sketch pads, watercolors, charcoal, etc. Also school supplies like pencils, sharpeners, pens, etc.**

We are also collecting first aid/medical supplies (band aides, alcohol swabs, first aid creams, etc. ) for the community at El Porvenir. You can also make a one time monetary donation through our E-Give link at [www.sixthchurch.org](http://www.sixthchurch.org).

Most importantly, we ask for your prayer support. Include our mission group and the kids and families!



# Sixth Church and God's Creation



## Marches

Sixth Church was well represented at the Science and Climate marches, both in Pittsburgh and in Washington, DC. On a cool and cloudy April 22, at least eight of us from Sixth gathered with thousands of others in Oakland at the Cathedral of Learning to March for Science. The next weekend, Sixth Church was represented at the People's Climate Marches in both Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. At least three of us were in D.C. in the daunting heat with hundreds of thousands of other people waving signs and screaming our heads off, just as at least seven Sixth Churchers took part here in Pittsburgh. These were great events and it was a joy to take part!

—Nora Johnson

## Work Day at Sixth

Saturday, June 17 from 8 am-Noon

There is something joyous about working together to make things better! In this case, the work is planned in and around the church and everyone is invited to join in the fun! We will have projects and tasks to suit everyone's abilities, indoors and outside. The young and strong are particularly encouraged to come, and there will be child care available for the youngest of us.

For more information, speak to Leslie Kaplan, or call her at (412) 400-3459

## Event Notices

- Audubon Society of Western PA is holding a series of Citizen Scientist Data Nights; see their web site [www.aswp.org/events](http://www.aswp.org/events) for information.
- Garfield Community Farm sponsors Saturday volunteer work days at their urban farm, directed by Rev. John Creasy.
- Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy needs volunteers to help with park maintenance. See [pittsburghparks.org](http://pittsburghparks.org).
- Green Building Alliance: Inspire Speakers Series presents "Food and Sustainability" on June 6, 5:30-7 p.m. at the Elsie E. Hillman Auditorium, 1825 Centre Ave. To register/pay, see [www.go-gba.org](http://www.go-gba.org).
- March and Rally Against Fracking, Tuesday June 20 at 5-8 pm, Station Square. Sponsored by Three Rivers Rising Tide and other anti-fracking organizations.
- Nine Mile Run Watershed Association staff lead a Tree Discovery Walk at 6:15, starting at the Frick "Blue Slide" Park on June 21. Register at [www.nmrwa.org](http://www.nmrwa.org).

—Heather Lyle

# Supported By Church and Community: El Porvenir, Nicaragua

## Mission:

El Porvenir is a cooperative of coffee farmers who live, work and worship together at the top of a volcano in the North-Western part of Nicaragua. Committed to the preservation of the natural environment that was entrusted to them, the community strives to follow organically certified growing methods for their crop. Living in community allows them to share natural resources for conservation and to obtain educational and social benefits that they could not obtain on their own.

## Programs and Accomplishments:

The community's main "program" is growing and selling organic coffee. However, along with this comes a great commitment to live in community and provide a better future for their families. Much of their energy is spent attempting to answer to the needs of the community for sustenance, education, and medical care.

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*"El Porvenir itself is a perfect example of what can be accomplished when there is social justice."*

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Over the last eight years, since Sixth Presbyterian Church initially visited the community, they were able to:

- Purchase a truck, which was used for transporting produce to the market, transporting high school students to school (which was 1 ½ hours away), and transporting those in need of emergency medical assistance.
- Replace all of the farm's aging coffee trees in order to increase productivity and improve the quality of their crop.
- Keep up maintenance of the treacherous mountain road, which connects them to the rest of the world.
- Build guest quarters to house volunteer groups.
- Bring potable water to the top of the mountain.
- Build a health clinic and the furniture to equip it.
- Incorporate music and art to their school curriculum.
- Provide small, interest-free loans to several members of the community in order to care for medical needs.
- Provide medication to the children of the community to treat their ailments.
- Hire a doctor who visits the community once per month in order to offer much needed medical check-ups and ongoing care.
- A team of women leaders managed and controlled finances for medical needs.

## Evaluation of El Porvenir's efficacy and involvement of Sixth Church members:

The community of El Porvenir struggle through poverty, lack of resources, and the whims of Mother Nature on an ongoing basis. Their life is extremely challenging, many times wondering how they will continue to feed their families and keep the farm afloat. Even with all of their challenges, they have been able to accomplish a great deal, thanks in part, to the help they receive from organizations like our church. The people of El Porvenir are extremely hard working, yet due to their life circumstances, they could not achieve many of their goals without outside assistance.

Members and friends of Sixth Church have visited the community on four different occasions, purchase their coffee through Building New Hope, and have maintained friendships through social media. A fifth visit is planned in the Summer of 2017.

El Porvenir makes full use of their resources to benefit the education, health, and sustenance of their community. Accountability and transparency have been a central part of their ongoing practice. They have been great stewards of the earth and the land in which they live.

Our church community has been greatly blessed by our visits with this community. Trip participants' lives have been changed through the visits with these extremely humble people, who take great pride in their work. Several participants have expressed the influence that these trips have had in the ways in which they see the world today and the paths they have chosen for their futures.

### Social Change:

El Porvenir itself is a perfect example of what can be accomplished when there is social justice. Their commitment to educate their children and provide their participants with the basic necessities (water, food, shelter, health) has brought about great social change to the community. Children who expected that they would grow up to be farmers and live a life of poverty, like their parent have, are accomplishing medical degrees, veterinary degrees, business degrees, teaching degrees, and even technical degrees. Many of them have learned to speak English and, more significantly, many have discovered gifts and talents that they were not aware of.

Social change is extremely difficult and very time consuming. Not only does it require persistence, but also commitment and time. The community of El Porvenir is no different. They continue to struggle with many of the social issues they face, yet they continue their commitment to work for social justice and social change.

—Sara Berg



*Note: This is the fourth in a series of articles that will be published in the Sixth Sense each month to acquaint the members and friends of Sixth Church with the organizations that the Church and Community Committee supports with our funds for locally directed missions. Previous articles highlighted the work of Just Harvest, the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN), and MHY Family Services.*

# May Session Notes

Worship Attendance: 110 on 4/23, 93 on 4/30, 112 on 5/7, 115 on 5/15, 140 on 5/21.

The Session minutes from 2016 were reviewed by Presbytery representatives on 5/20 and were approved with commendation.

Finance: Elder Erik Fogt reviewed the financial Report as of April 30. He reported that the Financial review or audit will be done on June 17 with the 24th as a backup day, tentative time, 10 am-noon. The committee doing it will be Maggie Ritchey, Marnie Bertolet, Sue Koehler and Eric Fogt.

House: Elder Leslie Kaplan reported that she had received an estimate, for repairing, restaining, and varnishing the church doors at the Murray and Forbes Ave. entrances, from Gregory Heisler. She has seen and received reports of his work. The bid is \$9415.00. Maintenance will have to be done every five years and will be put on the Maintenance schedule.

**Motion:** The doors will be repaired, stained and revarnished by Gregory Heisler at a cost of \$9415, and the work will begin on June 1. The motion was made, seconded and approved.

Elder Kaplan reported that she is getting estimates on other work that needs to be done. A workday at the church is planned for 6/17/17 from 8am to 12noon. She is in the process of making a list of projects to be done.

Stewardship: Elder Lauren Ward reported on a dinner she had had at her home to explain the repairs needing to be done at the church and talking about the possibility of having a Capital Campaign to pay for the work.

Personnel: Elder Barb Parees reported that the Personnel Committee is recommending that all Nursery and Child Care workers be made employees of the church and be paid regular wages, taxes and Social Security.

**Motion:** A motion was made and accepted to follow the recommendation of the committee to make these persons employees of the church.

**Motion:** The Deacons will sponsor a "End of Life Seminar" to be held in the fall. The motion was seconded and passed.

Prayer: Many prayers were expressed and were prayed for.

Worship: A **Motion** was made, seconded and passed to have Myra Kazanjian preach July 30.

Church and Community: Details about the June 18 information for the New Sanctuary Movement meeting were shared.

More Light: Elder Kate Davoli reported that there will be two Pride Marches held on Pride Sunday because of the criticism of the sponsorship of the event. After some discussion, it was decided that the More Light Committee should decide which Parade they wished to take part in.

Pastor Kolb reported that he is a representative of the committee on Ministry to the Plum Creek Church while they decide whether to remain in the Presbyterian Church USA or leave the denomination.

He reported that he has been contacted by the Greenfield PC, who wanted to discuss the possibility of their members being transferred to Sixth upon the dissolution of their congregation. Pastor Kolb and the Clerk of Session will meet with them on June 18 to discuss this.

He reported that he is Co-Chairing the Search Committee for the next PIIN Executive Director.

## May Session Notes, continued

The Session endorsed the thank you letter written by Dr. Kolb to Temple Sinai for the Shabbat worship and dinner invitation.

The next Executive Committee meeting will be June 18 at 10 am and the Session Meeting will be June 28 at 7:30 pm.

The meeting was closed with payer.

Respectfully submitted.

Millie Barnes,  
Clerk of Session

*Families! Please take our end-of-the-year survey: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/KF7DK6F](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KF7DK6F)*

## Youth Happenings, June

### Confirmation Class

The Confirmation Class meetings are tentatively scheduled for 10 am to noon Saturdays June 10 and July 8 and 11:30 to 1:30 pm on July 23. Please check with Jenny Newman as these dates are subject to change.

### 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 Tuesdays May 6 and 13, and Thursday, May 22.

Contact Jenny Newman at (412) 720-6392 or [Jenny@Sixthchurch.org](mailto:Jenny@Sixthchurch.org)



# Neighbors Vacation Bible School

5:30 to 7:30 pm

July 14, 21, and 28

Children ages preschool and up are invited to join us for three nights of Vacation Bible School where we will explore the themes of "**Who is our Neighbor**," "**Welcoming our Neighbor**," and "**Loving our Neighbor**."

We will begin each session with a meal at 5:30 pm. Parents are welcome to stay and participate! Older students (6th grade and up may be asked to volunteer as helpers for the evening.)

The June 21st session will feature a special program with puppets from the Kids On the Block show from the Children's Institute.

To register please visit [www.sixthchurch.org](http://www.sixthchurch.org)

# Discussion to Participate in New Sanctuary Movement

On Sunday, June 18, the Church and Community Committee (C&C) will host an information and discussion session to consider the potential participation of Sixth Church in the Pittsburgh's emerging New Sanctuary Movement (NSM).

The meeting will take place following the worship service in a to-be-determined church space. All members of the Sixth Church community are invited and encouraged to attend. The goals of the meeting are to:

- Provide church members with information about how the NSM is working with people of varied faiths and ethnicities in Pittsburgh to end injustices against immigrants. Opal Middleton, an active member of the Pittsburgh NSM who has been attending Sixth Church for several months, will make a presentation along with other colleagues in the Movement.
- Agree upon a recommendation from the C&C to the Sixth Church Session concerning participation in the NSM. We hope that the Session will consider this recommendation at its meeting on Wednesday, June 21.

At its February meeting, the Session considered some ways of supporting immigrants and undocumented people and determined that the C&C should be asked to consider this question and make a recommendation to Session. At the March Church and Community meeting, Session member Kate Davoli led a discussion with C&C in which she asked the committee to think about the implications of being a sanctuary congregation.

- On May 21, Opal Middleton made a presentation to the C&C on current immigration matters in the Pittsburgh area, and about the near-term plans of the NSM here:
- Contrary to common perceptions, at this point the NSM is not engaged in providing housing for immigrants. Even if that changes, the churches that would be asked to provide housing would be the ones that are better equipped to do that. Sixth Church will not be asked to house people in the church. This was a concern aired during earlier discussions of the matter.
- Spanish speaking immigrants are a focus of Federal deportation efforts, but they are not the only group that suffers immigration injustice.
- "A not insignificant number" of Mandarin speaking immigrants are victims of human trafficking, which involves sex work or indentured domestic servitude to wealthy Pittsburgh families.
- The recent crackdown on political dissent in Turkey, Russian threats to invade the Ukraine, and persecution of LGBTQ people in Chechnya have led to increased undocumented immigration from these countries. Outreach to the non-Spanish speaking people is difficult because very few people speak their languages and because they do not arrive together in groups
- The so-called "Asylum Gap" in U.S. immigration policies makes it practically impossible for persons fleeing persecution in other countries to apply for asylum unless they have already set foot on U.S. soil. The process of obtaining political asylum takes three years, and during that time it is very difficult in most cases to obtain work permits or receive public benefits. For Russian and Turkish speakers, there is presently no asylum category for which they can apply. All these factors cause people who must escape danger and persecution in other countries to come to the United States on tourist visas which they then overstay, making their status precarious and making them vulnerable to exploitation
- The Pittsburgh NSM is modeling itself on the more established NSM that has emerged in Philadelphia. Based on Philadelphia's experience, the Pittsburgh Movement is focused on two major initiatives:
- A "Listening Campaign" to learn of the needs of various immigrant communities in Pittsburgh. A crucial part of this initiative will be to recruit people who can speak the languages of immigrant groups. Spanish speakers are of course needed, but there is also a great need for speakers of the Mandarin, Russian, and Turkish. English speakers can also participate in this effort and involvement by all concerned people is welcome.

- A “Rapid Response Team” to prevent deportations/arrests by government officials. Large number of participants, including lawyers, are on call to intervene and engage in civil disobedience to prevent arrests and deportations. This work requires training which is available in Philadelphia.
- Sixth Church could join other congregations who participate in the Pittsburgh NSM. Current requirements are that a congregation appoint a member to attend NSM leadership meetings who is authorized to speak on behalf of the church (it is understood that Presbyterian churches may require Session approval for certain actions).

Please plan to attend the June 18 meeting to learn much more about the work being done to oppose immigration injustice in Pittsburgh and how Sixth Church can participate in this work.

## Storm Drain Repairs at Sixth

*This is the third in a series of periodic reports on renovations and repairs at Sixth Presbyterian Church. In Pittsburgh, we have measurable precipitation, either in the form of rain or snow, on 146 days out of the year. This puts an extraordinary burden on our roof and storm water drainage system. House Chairs Peter Koehler and Leslie Kaplan have been working diligently over the course of the last year to fix these drainage problems that have resulted in repeated flooding in the main kitchen and the Ridinger Room which, in turn, has caused secondary damage to lower portions of drywalls and woodwork.*

We focused in particular on the underground drains that were supposed to carry the storm water from the three downspouts near the exterior steps to the main kitchen; when they could not handle all of the rainwater, water backed up at the bottom of the exterior steps and seeped under the door into the kitchen.

Since we were unable to find any records regarding the routing of the underground storm drains and their condition, our first step was to contract with Sembower-Mikesell, Inc. (a local plumbing, heating, and air conditioning contractor who had done good work for Sixth Church before) for a careful video camera examination of the underground storm drains to assess the problem(s). It revealed that the three downspouts near the exterior steps to the kitchen were connected to a single 4 inch diameter pipe that ran under the concrete kitchen floor from the bottom of the exterior steps straight towards the stove for approx. 20 feet to a Y-junction that connected the storm drain and the drain from the kitchen sink to a 6 inch diameter pipe that ran from that junction to the furnace room, where it connected to the sanitary sewer. Apart from the fact that a 4 inch diameter pipe is inherently inadequate to handle the volume of rainwater from these three downspouts, it was also partially blocked by debris.

A fourth downspout along the back of the church connected to a pipe near the lower end of the handicap ramp that disappeared into the ground but seemed to be so solidly blocked soon thereafter that the video camera could not advance.

After discussing these findings with us, we agreed to the Sembower-Mikesell’s proposal to break through the concrete floor in the kitchen and replace the 4 inch diameter pipe with a 6 inch pipe and reconnect the three downspouts and the kitchen drain to it. Before doing that he pressure-cleaned the 6 inch pipe downstream of the Y-junction. He also installed three access ports that allow for clearing these pipes under the kitchen floor should they get clogged again. At the base of the exterior steps the contractor installed a large area drain with a sediment basket to collect debris before it entered the drain pipes underneath the kitchen floor. When all of this plumbing work was done the contractor backfilled the trench he had dug through the kitchen and re-cemented the kitchen floor. After allowing the new concrete floor to dry for a couple of months new vinyl tiles were installed to finish the floor in the kitchen.

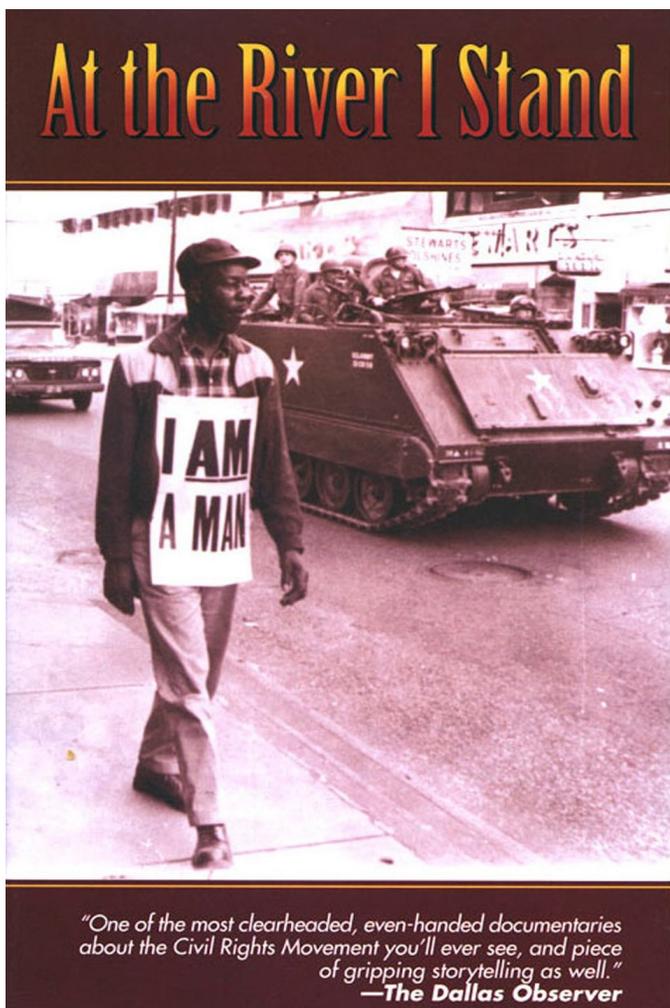
After the ground thawed the contractor dug a large hole by hand to find the blockage in the underground drain of the fourth downspout near the lower end of the handicap ramp. It turned out that the vertical underground drain visible above ground turned horizontal approximately 3 feet below the surface and just ended after about 6 feet, near the edge of the driveway to the condo. In order to provide a passage for the rain water from that downspout the contractor installed a sloped pipe above ground between the wall of the church and the handicap ramp, cut a hole into the hollow space underneath the top landing of the ramp, and connected it to the existing pipe that drained the water from the downspouts on either side of the top of the handicap ramp into the sanitary sewer.

How much did it all cost? The video inspection cost \$3,000; the work in the kitchen area came to \$17,400; and the rerouting of the drain for the fourth downspout cost \$6,425. The floor tile replacement was done in-house; materials came to \$185. Thus the total cost of this project was \$27,010.

## June 2017 – Events and Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 6:30 pm, Nicaragua Trip Meeting	2	3 2:00 pm, Moms Demand Action  7:00 pm, NA
4 <b>David DeJong</b> 11:00 am, Worship in the Park!  8:00 pm, NA	5 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	6 6:30 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha)	7 <b>Jack Farquhar</b> 11:00 am, Bible Study	8	9	10 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group)  10:00 am, Tibetan Buddhist Group  7:00 pm, NA
11 <b>Mary Lang</b> 10:00 am, Worship  8:00 pm, NA	12 <b>Margaret Miller</b> <b>Kate Brennan</b> 7:00 pm, NA	13 <b>Andrew Morgan</b> <b>Colin Miller</b> 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha)  7:00 pm, At the River I Stand	14 11:00 am, Bible Study  7:15 pm, Deacons	15	16	17 6:00 pm, Squirrel Hill Market Night  7:00 pm, NA
18 <b>Isabella Berg</b> <b>Eve Guyette</b> <b>Rainer Loyd</b> 10:00 am, Worship  8:00 pm, NA	19 <b>Jean Moore</b> 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	20 <b>Christine Tyndall</b>	21 11:00 am, Bible Study	22 <b>Kyle Miller</b> 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha)	23 2:30 pm, Fiberarts Guild	24 <b>Chris McAdams</b> 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group)  7:00 pm, NA

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 10:00 am, Worship 11:00 am, Earth Care Committee 2:00 pm, Pittsburgh Watercolor Society 8:00 pm, NA	26 7:00 pm, NA	27	28 <b>Lori Swenson</b> 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:30 pm, Session	29 <b>Liam Greenley</b> <b>Malachi Cornelius-Bates</b>	30 <b>Jim Funderburgh</b>	



**At the River I Stand** skillfully reconstructs the two eventful months that transformed a strike by Memphis sanitation workers into a national conflagration, and disentangles the complex historical forces that came together at the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The film showing will be followed by discussion.

**Tuesday, June 13, 7:00 pm**

### Family Retreat 2017 at Camp Crestfield



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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 July/  
August newsletter is June  
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...

"Green was the silence, wet was the light, the month of June trembled like a butterfly." — Pablo Neruda

"It was June, and the world smelled of roses. The sunshine was like powdered gold over the grassy hillside." — Maud Hart Lovelace

"In early June the world of leaf and blade and flowers explodes, and every sunset is different." — John Steinbeck

"What is one to say about June, the time of perfect young summer, the fulfillment of the promise of the earlier months, and with as yet no sign to remind one that its fresh young beauty will ever fade."  
— Gertrude Jekyll

"Spring being a tough act to follow, God created June." — Al Bernstein