

December 2017

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

Soon we will be gathered around the story that all of our attempts to explain fall flat-not because our explanations are wrong, but because they are too small. This is the story that calls into question our skepticism, our discouragement, and our despair. It is the story that invites us to trust that the love that makes us human has come to us.

The story is so ordinary it is told everyday: a pregnant woman, a nervous man, great anxiety when you realize you know diddly squat about being a parent. But then there is a soft cry, a first breath, and our whispered words: "It is alright, little one." All of it, so remarkably ordinary.

It is a story of a child born of woman like every child, and yet it is the story of a child born of God's Spirit like no other child. Because of what Christ sees in us, he could not help but come.

I hope you will join us throughout Advent and Christmas for worship, as we savor the story.

Peace!

Vincent



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

December Worship and Preaching

December 3: Hanging of the Greens Service, Mark 13:24-37, "All I Want for Christmas Is a Big, Fat Apocalypse"

December 10: Advent Communion Service, Mark 1:1-8, "Repentance"

December 17: Children's Christmas Pageant & Holiday Dinner

December 24: 11 am, Luke 1:26-38, "Embracing Favor"

7 pm, Christmas Eve, Philippians 2:5-11, "Love Came Down"

When the Pastor's Away

Pastor Vincent will be on away from December 25-January 1. In the event of a pastoral emergency, please contact Myra Kazanjian.

Sixth Church and God's Creation

Hays Woods

Near the small neighborhood of Hays, an area called Hays Woods is controversial due to development plans. The steep, wooded hills are home to a pair of nesting bald eagles, and are located along a narrow strip of land across the Monongahela River from Hazelwood. More than 600 acres were purchased by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and sold to the City of Pittsburgh for \$5 million. All of the acreage was supposed to become the city's largest urban park, but URA revealed that about 80 acres are reserved for access roads and a possible housing development near the Hays-Baldwin border.

The proposed park is ecologically sensitive, with small streams and drainage from abandoned coal mines; storm water management is part of the proposal. The URA plan to withhold some land came as unwelcome news to Hays residents. Corey O'Connor represents Hays on City Council.

Braddock Urban Farms

The restaurant staff of Superior Motors plan to farm a half acre across from the restaurant's Braddock location. The urban farm will raise greens and vegetables, along with a rooftop garden and greenhouse on the former car dealership building. Chef and owner, Kevin Sousa, also buys produce from Grow Pittsburgh's urban farm in Braddock. Grow Pittsburgh has successfully rehabilitated rubble-filled city lots into productive acreage, and Sousa hopes to acquire more city properties for farming.

Potter Township

Shell began construction at its ethane cracker plant, a complex of buildings to be completed in several years. Located in central Beaver County, the township has a population of about 550.

PA Constitution, Article 1, Section 27

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.

—Heather Lyle

Climate change training

When Al Gore brought his climate change slideshow to Pittsburgh in October, 1400 focused environmentalists were there to learn as much as we could. The overall lessons were few but powerful: 1. we all need to start working very hard to stop polluting the environment, and 2. we're going to do it by taking the message to as many audiences as possible.

Over three days, the Climate Reality Leadership Training introduced us to Mr. Gore's very large collection of slides documenting the peril of continuing on our accustomed path of wealth-seeking, accumulation, and careless disposal of leftovers. We heard from experts in climate and health, business leaders, policymakers, and innovators. Speakers from right here told us what they are doing in our community to make sustainability a way of life. A passage from our training manual states: "But if Pittsburgh exemplifies some of the worst and most dangerous consequences of the fossil fuel economy and climate crisis, it also offers a shining example of how cities can lead the nation on the frontlines of the fight for solutions." We learned how the renewable energy industry is in a breakthrough mode, how our health as a region can improve by cutting

reliance on fossil fuels, and how this transition to renewable energy and a low-carbon economy must be a just and fair one: the burden of change must not fall on those who can least afford it, and benefits from a clean energy future must flow to all.

Since the training, I and many others have been connecting with each other to put these lessons to work. It's been an exciting time. Three of us from Sixth attended the conference, and we have felt your support. It's great to be part of such an engaged and active congregation.

Recycling

Thank you for bringing your hard-to-recycle materials to our recycling bins - we really appreciate your participation! However, although we take energy bar wrappers (sponsored by Larabar), and salty snack bags (sponsored by Hain Celestial), we do not take candy wrappers or sweet snack bags. This may seem unreasonable, but the program we work with through TerraCycle has to have a sponsor for each of the items it accepts. There are bewilderingly many differentiated items that should be recyclable, but unfortunately not each one has a sponsor. Whoever would like to take on this problem with the goal of making all manufactured goods recyclable has their work cut out for them.

—Nora Johnson

What I Get From Singing in the Choir

Choir is one of my favorite times of the week. Although there are many things I do that I love, like my work and taking care of my family, there are few things that I get to do simply for joy. Choir provides a time during the week for me to spend doing something that is exclusively about me, my relationship to God, and my connection to the church. In addition to church service, choir rehearsal is a second time during the week to put away my anxieties and concerns and be present in a moment of worship.

Choir also is an opportunity to share the gifts we each have been given with the congregation. No two of us are the same, musically, personally, or vocally, but together we can bring our gifts and make something wonderful happen. Not only that, we get to have fun doing it, and enjoy the community that we at Sixth have built and continue to build together.

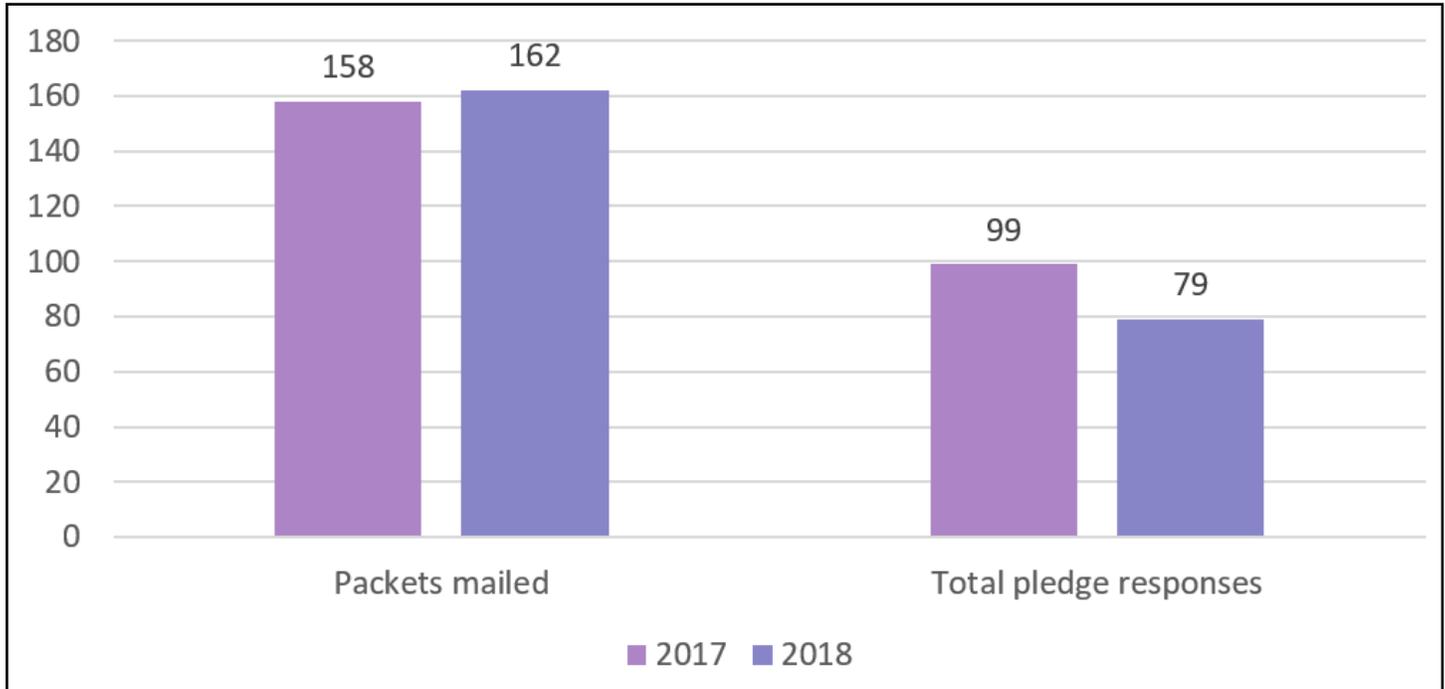
—Mary Radcliffe



Chris Pistorius and Verna Robinson with members of the third through sixth grade Sunday School class

For Such a Time as This, 2018 Stewardship Update

Don't forget to fill in your 2018 pledge card and either drop it in the offering plate or return it to the church office. Thanks to all who have already made their pledges for the coming year!



Our Deacons: More Than You Might Expect

At the end of a particularly grueling Deacons meeting--I think it was October's--the request went up for someone to write a short notice about our activities for SIXTH SENSE. It was late. I was hungry. My hand went up. Call it an "arm-jerk" reaction. Mostly, though, it was about getting to adjournment.

Now that I'm sitting here attempting to tell you with extreme brevity what all we do, I realize why that meeting was grueling. We had so much to consider and do with limited time, some financial constraints and the need to dig deep into our group creative resources.

The Deacons simply are about helping those who need help. We are not about politics. We are not about mercy. The only requirement, is need, and mercy is the tool of those who have power over others. That meeting reflected the range of work our very simple mission dictates. Here are the things we touched on in that meeting, plus some additional activities. My computer crashed, so I can just about guarantee you this list will not be complete. But it's the best I can do from memory and you'll get the idea.

We reviewed performance of our part of Presbytery's Lazarus Fund. Forty-four of the 150 presbytery-wide grants came through Sixth; each one interviewed by one of a team of volunteers. Between July and September, approximately \$30,000 was allocated emptying the fund. We are again on hold .

We approved another round of shopping for "Homeless Packs" to be assembled by Sixth youth and additional supplies for the "Care Closet" maintained by Amy in the church office.

We considered several requests for emergency help or tuition support (retreats and Camp Crestfield) from members and friends of Sixth.

Much of the meeting focused on what we call the "care list." That is simply a list of people in the Sixth Community who are sick, bereaved, dealing with a family illness or may simply need some help going somewhere, including to church.

We reviewed final plans for a seminar about issues surround the end of life. This may be the first of several seminars sponsored by the Deacons.

Decisions were made regarding budget, including allocation for additional supplies for homeless individuals and for a group project that is still under development.

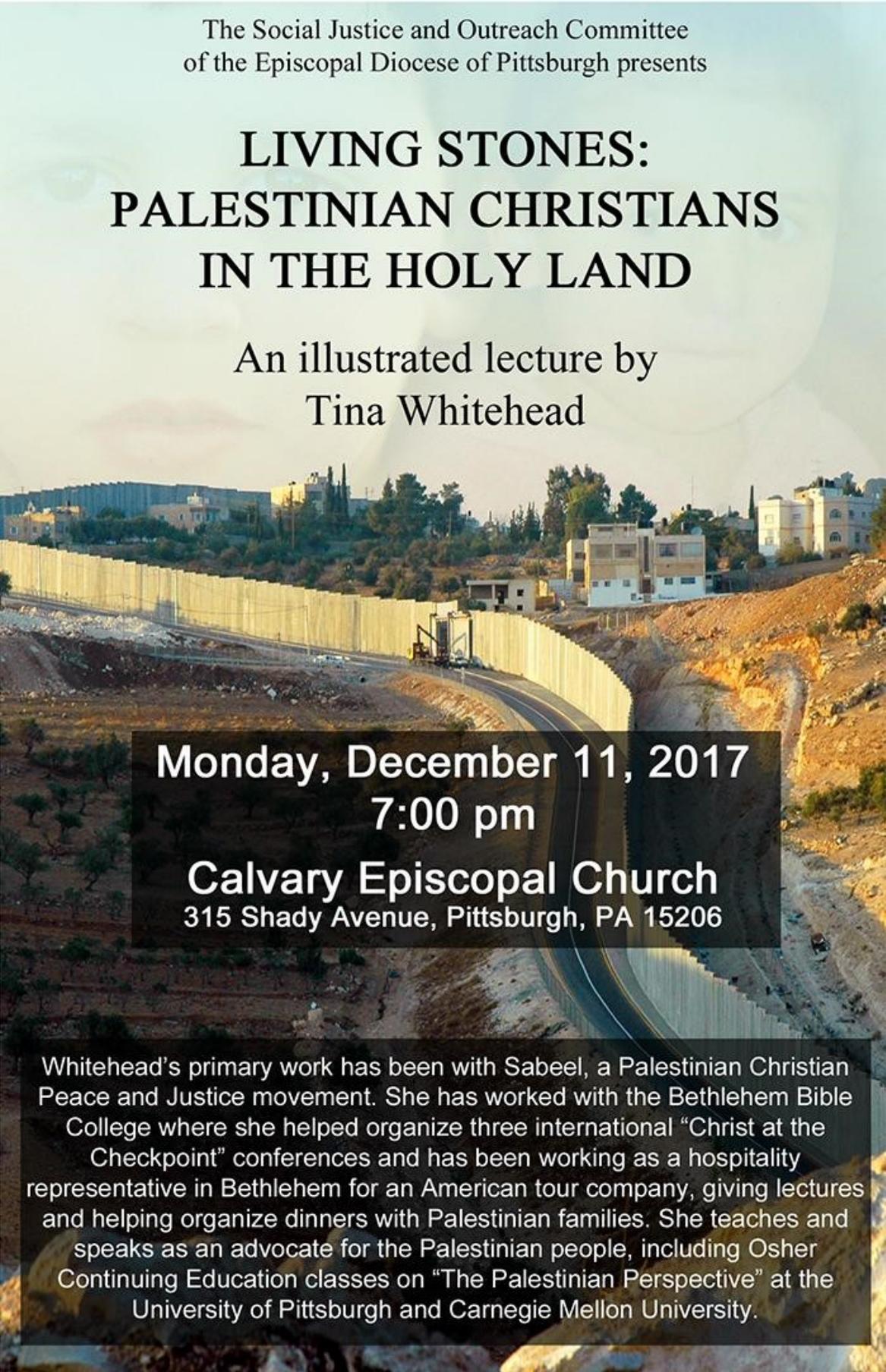
Support for Wilkinsburg Community Ministries, including a food drive and a financial donation.

Additionally over the past few months, the Deacons have organized a book drive for children in Wilkinsburg schools, and we funded a coffee card and note to our members who are away at college.

These broad strokes should give you a pretty good feel for our range of work. I certainly hope that feeling stays with you on the first Sunday of every month when money in the collection plate goes to supporting these and other programs of the Board of Deacons. You may also contribute through those little yellow envelopes.

God bless.

—Rob Beswick

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a long, grey concrete wall stretching across a hilly, urban landscape. The wall is topped with a chain-link fence. In the background, there are several buildings, including a prominent white building with a dome, and trees. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

The Social Justice and Outreach Committee
of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh presents

LIVING STONES: PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

An illustrated lecture by
Tina Whitehead

Monday, December 11, 2017
7:00 pm

Calvary Episcopal Church
315 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Whitehead's primary work has been with Sabeel, a Palestinian Christian Peace and Justice movement. She has worked with the Bethlehem Bible College where she helped organize three international "Christ at the Checkpoint" conferences and has been working as a hospitality representative in Bethlehem for an American tour company, giving lectures and helping organize dinners with Palestinian families. She teaches and speaks as an advocate for the Palestinian people, including Osher Continuing Education classes on "The Palestinian Perspective" at the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University.

Adult Education: The Reformation

Ruling Elder Peter Gilmore will be leading an adult study class on the Reformation at 10 am on Sunday, December 3 and Sunday, December 10. in the Parlor. Please join us!

Advent Dinner: Everyone Is Invited!

We hope you will join us for our annual Family Advent Dinner, which will be held from 5 to 7:00 pm on Sunday, December 3. Come and bring your family and friends to share a meal, make ornaments to decorate our Christmas tree in the Chapel, sing some carols, and share in the Nativity story.

Annual Christmas Dinner Sunday, December 17

Immediately following the Annual Christmas Pageant Tables will be festively set; meat and beverages will be provided; bring a dish to share if you are able (think about doubling the recipe!).

Christmas Food Collection!

Please partner with **The Wilkinsburg Community Ministries** to help our neighbors have an extra **special** Christmas. The Food Bank will be distributing Christmas boxes on December 20th and 21st.

Our challenge: 150 cans of hearty soup

If you have any questions, please contact Sheila Kier, 412-784-8543

If you'd like to volunteer to help pack boxes for distribution, please contact Ruth Kittner, 412-241-8072

Sunday School Announcements

December 16: Sunday school Christmas Pageant Practice at 10 am

December 17: Sunday School Christmas Pageant during worship, 11 am

December 24: No Sunday school. We will have nursery care and Extended Session during the worship service.

December 24: Christmas Eve Service at 7 pm. Nursery Care for infants and toddlers will be available.

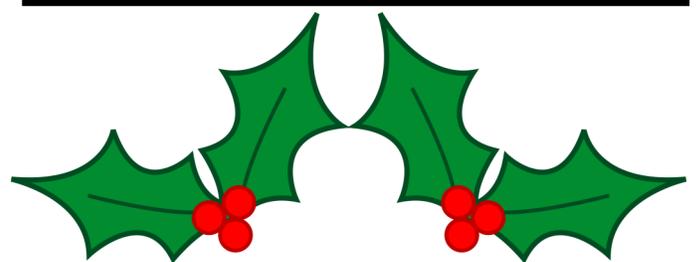
December 31: No Sunday school. We will have nursery care and Extended Session during the worship service.

Youth Happenings December

Sunday School: Sunday school class for junior and senior high is held each week (10 - 10:45 am) upstairs in Jenny Newman's new office (formerly Gail's music office). Join Amy Whipple and special guest stars for discussion on the week's scripture passages, current events, and other assorted topics. There will be donuts and drinks!

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, December 7, 14, and 21.

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



December 2017 – Events and Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 7:00 pm, NA
3 10:00 am, Adult Study: The Reformation 10:00 am, Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 12:00 pm, C&C Speaker Planning 12:30 pm, Ruling Elder Training 5:00 pm, Family Advent dinner 8:00 pm, NA	4 6:30 pm, Healthcare4All 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	5 Alexandra DeJong	6 11:00 am, Bible Study	7 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:00 pm, Choir	8	9 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA
10 10:00 am, Adult Study: The Reformation 10:00 am, Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 12:30 pm, Deacon Training (Chapel) 8:00 pm, NA	11 Nils Hammer Peter Watt- Morse 7:00 pm, NA	12 Mary Ellen Watt-Morse	13 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:15 pm, Deacons	14 Jack Brennan Jacob Watt- Morse 1:00 pm, Presbytery Meeting 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:00 pm, Choir 6:30 pm, Newtown Vigil	15 Lara Miller	16 Ellen Gaul Joan Markert 7:00 pm, NA

December 2017 – Events and Birthdays, continued

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
17 10:00 am, Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 12:00 pm, All-church Christmas dinner 8:00 pm, NA	18 Mark Bertolet 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	19	20 Louis DeLucia Carolyn Freeman 11:00 am, Bible Study	21 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:00 pm, Choir	22	23 10:00 am, Choir rehearsal 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA
24 Carol Emerson 11:00 am, Worship 7:00 pm, Candlelight service 8:00 pm, NA	25 7:00 pm, NA	26	27 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:30 pm, Session	28 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:00 pm, Choir	29 Jesse DeLucia Ethan Greenley Allison Sennott Carlisle Turner Sterling Turner	30 Benjamin Bates 7:00 pm, NA
31 11:00 am, Worship 8:00 pm, NA						



Hanna Pistorius reading to the quietest meeting of Extended Session on contemporary record

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www.sixthchurch.org

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We are an open and affirming community of faith in Jesus Christ. At home in an urban neighborhood of many faiths, we acknowledge that we are not alone on the path to understanding God. In worship, study, and fellowship, we celebrate our Presbyterian roots and find joy in our diversity. We strive for the grace to love one another as we seek a deeper understanding of life in the Spirit, working for justice and serving as stewards of God's wondrous creation.



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

Food for Thought...

“First we'll make snow angels for a two hours, then we'll go ice skating, then we'll eat a whole roll of Tollhouse cookie dough as fast as we can, and then we'll snuggle.” – Elf

*“When, someday, you return to Christmas Town, would you tell Santa about our homeless toys? I'm sure he will find little boys and girls who will be happy with them. A toy is never truly happy until it is loved by a child.”
– Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*

“I took a shower washing every body part with actual soap; including all my major crevices; including in between my toes and in my belly button which I never did before but sort of enjoyed. I washed my hair with adult formula shampoo and used cream rinse for that just-washed shine. I can't seem to find my toothbrush, so I'll pick one up when I go out today. Other than that, I'm in good shape.” – Home Alone

“Why is the carpet wet, Todd?” “I don't know, Margo.” – National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation