

January 2018



SIXTH
presbyterian
CHURCH

Sixth Sense

From the Pastor

For as long as I can remember, churches have waged war over what is more important: being engaged in the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, or taking care of our magnificent church structures so that believers can have a spiritual home. I have participated in these battles as a Pastor with Session members, as dedicated leaders have tried to be wise stewards of a congregation's energy and resources. Some of the battles have been heartfelt discussions about priorities, some have been knockdown dragged out battles. But always, it has seemed to me, the fights were predicated on a false premise, that buildings and missions are opposites, and that there has to be winners and losers in the contest.

This false binary has been dramatically refuted at Sixth since I arrived. Every once and a while, invariably when I am alone in the building, someone will knock on the door and thank me that there is a rainbow flag hanging outside. After the last Presidential election, 3 different individuals, a Muslim student, an Egyptian immigrant, and a Hispanic health care worker came in and simply asked me, "Would I be safe here?" All of these visits convinced me that our building also serves our mission simply by standing where it does, on the corner of Forbes and Murray, for now 113 years.

I say this because in January, our church leadership is going to begin to share with you in detail what the needs of our home are going to be and what it will cost to refurbish and restore this very sacred space. This will be challenging information to consider, because congregations like ours like the main focus of our life to be outward, meeting emergency needs through the Lazarus Fund, for example, or working for policies like affordable housing, living wages, and clean, lead-free water. It will be easy to fall into the old "either-or" trap of thinking that we either have to be "for renovations" or "for mission." As we always say at Sixth, the issue before us is more "gray" and complex than we might first imagine.

To "be up to speed" with what is going on, Session leadership will be conducting walking tours of our facility immediately after worship on January 7 and 14. On Sunday morning, January 21, at 10 am in the Ridinger room, there will be a light continental breakfast served and a presentation on why we think the building refurbishment needs to be considered now rather than later. I hope you will make every effort to participate in one of the walking tours, and come for the January 21st breakfast, so that you can be informed. In February, we will be asking the entire congregation to respond to what is being proposed. More about that later.

We are here today and thriving as a congregation because other wise leaders made provisions for our church home long ago. Now it's our turn to consider how best to ensure the legacy of Sixth continues. I hope you will enter into discernment with me in the new year, as we seek to be faithful to a place that we all love so dear.

Peace! Happy New Year!

Vincent

January Worship and Preaching

January 7 – Mark 14:12-16,
"The Spirituality of
Buildings"

January 14 – John 1:43-51,
"Come and See"

January 21 – Jonah 3:1-5,
"Sin-biosis or Symbiosis?"

January 28 – I Corinthians
8:1-13, "Correct, But Not
Right"

Sixth Church and God's Creation

For those of you who are concerned about nearby fracking operations, here is some information. Unconventional gas and oil well drilling, known as "fracking," causes air pollution from chemicals used to explode into deep shale formations, releasing pockets of natural gas or crude oil. We are accustomed to conventional oil and gas wells that extract by natural pressure, plus pumping operations, from wells. Unconventional wells employ large volumes of water, to drill downward or horizontally for deposits. Waste water from that drilling can seep into groundwater, and carbon dioxide is released into the air, along with benzene, methane and more.

According to citizens at Sustainable Monroeville, local Huntley and Huntley Energy Exploration LLC is doing seismic testing in 200 square miles that include Monroeville, Plum, Penn Hills, Trafford, Pitcairn, Oakmont, Penn Township, and other eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh. Seismic testing uses explosives underground to help map locations of gas deposits in the shale. The company already has one permit to drill in Plum Borough. The group, Citizens 4 Plum, wants fracking operations to be located outside the designated Rural Residential zone, stating that many residents moved to Plum to enjoy a rural quality of life.

Some Penn Township, Westmoreland County, residents formed Protect Penn Township to fight against fracking by Apex Energy. The group is suing, based on rights to clean air and water, as stated in Pennsylvania's Environmental Rights Amendment (Article 1, Section 27); the residents aren't asking for a total ban on fracking, just that wells are located a safe distance from homes, schools, businesses, and recreational areas. Penn Township includes Harrison City and Bushy Run Battlefield.

Thousands of shale gas wells exist in counties surrounding Allegheny County. In this county, leases by gas companies are found in 85 of 130 municipalities. Strong, updated zoning ordinances can restrict drilling to less populated areas. Top leases occur in West Deer, North Fayette, Elizabeth Township, Fawn, Findley, Forward, South Fayette, Jefferson, and Robinson, per the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, May 30, 2017. Range Resources LLC has begun drilling in Indiana Township, while Merrion Oil and Gas Corp. has received a "conditional use" permit to explore fracking on grounds of the U.S. Steel Edgar Thomson Works. The steel mill acreage is included in Braddock and North Braddock, with a small section that lies within the borders of North Versailles. The mill has current EPA air quality violations, which are certain to increase if fracking proceeds.

If this hits a little too close to home for you, more data is available at frack.skytruth.org/pennsylvania; www.pennfuture.org/energy; foodandwaterwatch.org/state/pennsylvania; paagainstfracking.org.

—Heather Lyle

Pittsburgh Presbytery Acts!

On December 14, Pittsburgh Presbytery passed a resolution co-sponsoring an Overture on divestment from fossil fuel, encouraging churches to implement carbon-free strategies as a moral and theological imperative, and endorsing a letter of opposition to the construction of the Shell Petrochemical Ethane Cracker in Beaver County.

The letter notes that our faith tradition has "affirmed our responsibility to care for the earth as our home and care for all people, especially our most vulnerable populations." It goes on to say, "We are opposed to the building of the Shell Ethane Cracker plant because we believe that the plant will drastically decrease the air quality in southwestern PA, air quality that already is among the worst in the country. This plant, and subsequent plants that are planned for the Ohio Valley, will be mass producing plastic products that have been linked to the death of animals and the diminishment of fragile natural habitats."

The letter, which will be circulated broadly to elected officials, public media, and church groups, concludes with: "Please know that Pittsburgh Presbytery stands firmly in support of policies that create jobs that also promote sustainable environmental practices. May God help us all to remain true to the abiding values of taking care of the earth for our generation, and generations to come."

The resolution was brought to the floor of Presbytery by the Peacemaking Ministry Team and was shepherded by our pastor, the Rev. Dr. Vincent Kolb, along with the Rev. John Creasy, who is associate pastor at The Open Door Presbyterian Church and the director of the Garfield Community Farm, as well as on the board of directors at Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light, an activist group that is "a religious response to global warming."

December 14, 2017, was a wonderful day.

—Nora Johnson



Youth Happenings, January

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, January 4, 11, and 18.

Pittsburgh Presbytery Youth Event: Sunday, January 21 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm, youth 6-12th grade are invited to attend The Big Event which will feature music and youth speaker Mark Oestreicher at Beulah Presbyterian Church. Please contact Jenny if you are interested in attending. Jenny will provide rides to and from Sixth Church if needed.

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

Understanding Human Trafficking Workshop

"Understanding Human Trafficking & How to Respond." This workshop, presented by Ms. Julie Evans, MSW, Director of Crisis & Prevention Services, Pittsburgh Action Against Rape, will be held Thursday, January 25, 2018, 4:30 to 6:30pm (arrival & refreshments begin at 4:00pm) at South Avenue United Methodist Church, Wilkinsburg, PA 15221. Any adult interested in this important societal issue is welcome to register (\$5 in advance preferred by January 23rd).

Attention Public & Parochial School Educators: This workshop is approved by PA DOE for Act 48 Professional Development Hours (2). Bring professional ID# & \$5 check or money order payable to AIU-3 (processing fee) with you to workshop.

For anyone who wishes to register, provide your name, telephone number, church/school/community organization & \$5 check or money order payable to the Wilkinsburg Sanctuary Project. Mail to Mary Ann Hvizdos, 825 Mifflin Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15221. This workshop is co-sponsored by the Wilkinsburg Sanctuary Project & Blessed Be Educators.

Session Notes: November 2017

The minutes of the October 25, 2017 meeting of Session and the November 19, 2017 Congregational meeting were approved.

Worship Attendance: 150 on 10/1, 136 on 10/8, 130 on 10/15, 132 on 10/29, 130 on 11/5, 138 on 11/12, 127 on 11/19, and 122 on 11/26.

The Pastor performed the wedding of Kurt Thompson and Dana Canelli in Wexford, PA on October 29, 2017.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to approve the letter of transfer of Opal Middleton to Sixth from Unity Presbyterian Church.

A motion was made seconded and approved to approve the letter of transfer of Phillip DenBleyker to Calvary Episcopal Church.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to have Nora Johnson be our Elder Commissioner to the December Presbytery meeting.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to have Maggie Ritchey as our 2018 Church Treasurer with gratitude.

Elder Erik Fogt reviewed the October Financials and introduced the 2018 Budget.

Elder Leslie Kaplan explained that our Painter made a mistake on his bid and did not charge enough for his painting of the doors. The painter is Greg Heisler and the amount which he did not include in his bill is \$4200.00. The painting is finished. Elder Kaplan is looking for a second estimate on the cement work and she is looking for a good plaster worker.

Elder Lauren Ward reported that we have received 79 pledges for a total of \$281,000. Calls will be made this week to members who have not yet pledged with the hope of reaching our goal.

The Case for Support portion of the Feasibility campaign was reviewed by the Session with feedback. The final draft will be presented at the January 3, 2018 meeting. There will be revisions that are circulated electronically between now and then.

Annual reviews of all employees will be done in December.

Elder Kate Davoli informed the Session that her status as an Inquirer in the Presbytery will be reviewed on December 6 and that she may be dismissed from the care process because her personal family configuration is in violation of the Book of Order. After she fielded questions, she was dismissed so that the Session could reconsider its endorsement of her candidacy. An anonymous poll (8 in favor, 3 abstentions) was taken and the endorsement remains. Should her Inquirer status become public, the Session will look to Ruling Elder Verna Robinson to be an official spokesperson to address the media.

Pastor Kolb reported that he has been asked to be a part of the Administrative Commission of the Plum Creek Church.

Session Members will need to be appointed to chair and participate on the 2018 Congregational Nominating Committee. If interested, Elders should tell the Pastor.

It was moved, seconded, and passed to invite Larry Schweiger to speak on climate change in Sixth in March or April pending his schedule, and to approve a \$3000 budget from the Memorial Fund.

It was moved, seconded, and passed to move Advent Communion from December 3rd to December 10 to accommodate the Hanging of the Greens service on December 3.

It was moved, seconded, and passed to approve Rev. Myra Kazanjian to preach on December 31.

Our next Session Meeting will be January 3, 2018.

– Millie Barnes, Clerk of Session

Stewardship 2018, A Wonderful Success!

Dear Members and Friends of Sixth:

Congratulations! We made our stewardship goal of \$320,000 thanks to you. Over the last three months, we have received commitments from 103 families or individuals, including 19 new pledges. Your generosity will help ensure that Sixth continues its ministry and mission in 2018.

A special note of thanks goes out to Kit Ayars, April Clisura, and Shawn Patton for their contributions to this year's stewardship brochure and to Keith Gillogly, Margaret Miller, and Jen Joy for their testimonials during worship. We also want to thank Amy Whipple for her weekly bulletin updates on our progress and for her help with stewardship mailings.

With deepest gratitude,

Lauren Ward, on behalf of the Stewardship Committee (including Millie Barnes, Erik Fogt, Patty Halverson, and Peter Kaplan)

What I Get From Singing in the Choir



I joined the Sixth Church choir in September 2016. This was partly for personal reasons – for fellowship and goodwill and for the opportunity to learn more about how to use my voice effectively. In the larger sense, singing in the choir glides us through the liturgical year with musical reminders of the meaning of each church season and offers rich reminders of two millennia of Christian history as well. Lastly, singing in the choir brings fun, joy, and peace.

– Leila Richards

January 2018 – Events and Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	2 Scott Bell	3 Rachel Rothenberg 7:30 pm, Session Meeting	4 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir	5	6 7:00 pm, NA
7 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 12:15 pm, Walking Tour 8:00 pm, NA	8 7:00 pm, NA	9	10 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:15 pm, Deacons 7:30 pm, 14th Ward Democrats	11 Debbie Phillips Meghan Jones 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 6:30 pm, Clean Air Council Groups of Ten Training (Parlor) 7:30 pm, Choir	12	13 David Myers-Newbury 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA
14 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 12:15 pm, Walking Tour 2:00 pm, Pittsburgh Watercolor Society 8:00 pm, NA	15 7:00 pm, Knit Night (off-site) 7:00 pm, NA	16	17 11:00 am, Bible Study	18 Jennifer Joy 6:00 pm, Youth Group (Crazy Mocha) 7:30 pm, Choir	19	20 7:00 pm, NA

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
21 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Case for Support Continental Breakfast 10:00 am, Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 8:00 pm, NA	22 7:00 pm, NA	23	24 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:30 pm, Session	25 7:30 pm, Choir	26 Vicki Guy	27 10:00 am, Course in Miracles (outside group) 7:00 pm, NA
28 10:00 am, Adult Sunday School 10:00 am, Sunday School 11:00 am, Worship 8:00 pm, NA	29 7:00 pm, NA	30	31 11:00 am, Bible Study 7:30 pm, Session Meeting			

Coffee for Sale!

We have coffee for sale! Stop by the church office to buy a bag of coffee from our mission partners in El Porvenir!

Regular or dark roast ground or whole bean: **\$13**

Decaf ground or whole bean: **\$14**



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www.sixthchurch.org

Dated Material – Do Not Hold
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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 February newsletter is January 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...

“I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes.

“Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're Doing Something.

“So that's my wish for you, and all of us, and my wish for myself. Make New Mistakes. Make glorious, amazing mistakes. Make mistakes nobody's ever made before. Don't freeze, don't stop, don't worry that it isn't good enough, or it isn't perfect, whatever it is: art, or love, or work or family or life.

“Whatever it is you're scared of doing, Do it.

“Make your mistakes, next year and forever.”

— Neil Gaiman