

# Sixth Sense

December 2024

## Words for the Beginning

Dear Saints,

December 1st brings the beginning of Advent, and with it a new theme for our reflection and worship together. Using SanctifiedArt's resource-- we will traverse these weeks together in preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth, looking at endings and new beginnings.

The authors of the resource write, "We have crafted an Advent resource filled with blessings, with the words we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season together. We invite you to enter this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.

In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings-- large and small, personal and political. And yet, Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. As we also move through new personal and political chapters, may these words for the beginning renew us and remind us of the ways we are called to live out our faith."

I hope to see you in worship, or have you join us on the livestream, as we engage these scriptures together!

May the joy and hope that Christ brings permeate these troubling and challenging times for us all,

Rev. Sarah Robbins, Interim Pastor

### WORSHIP

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December 1st

"You Are A Blessing"

Luke 1:26-38, Isaiah 43:1-7

*Communion and fellowship after in the chapel*

December 8th

"We Can't Go Alone"

Ruth 1, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

December 15th

*Jenny Newman and Shay Carter will help the children/youth lead the Christmas Pageant, with a Christmas potluck dinner afterwards.*

December 22nd

"Hope Is Worth the Risk"

Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:46-55

December 24th

"Love Knows Your Name"

Luke 2:1-20, Isaiah 9:6

*7pm Christmas Eve candlelight and communion service, with special music to begin at 6:45pm.*

December 29th

"Don't Forget to Laugh"

*Joy-focused scriptures; lots of carols/hymns  
Casual and Comfy service at 11am, no education hour at 10am.*

January 5th

"The Road Isn't Straight"

Matthew 2:1-12, Isaiah 43: 16-21

*Epiphany celebration with communion and receiving of star words, fellowship after worship in the chapel.*

# Annual Christmas Dinner

## Sunday, December 15

### Everyone Is Welcome!

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!)

If you are planning to attend, please drop this form in the offering plate or return it to the church office. A copy of this flyer will be included with the bulletins on Dec 1st and Dec 8th.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

No. of Adults \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Children \_\_\_\_\_

I will bring \_\_\_\_\_ Salad \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetable \_\_\_\_\_ Dessert

<b>December Birthdays</b>			
Dec 11	Nils Hammer Peter Watt-Morse	Dec 20	Louis DeLucia Carolyn Freeman
Dec 15	Lara Miller	Dec 24	Carol Emerson
Dec 16	Joan Markert	Dec 29	Jesse DeLucia Ethan Greenley Allison Sennott
Dec 18	Mark Bertolet	Dec 30	Benjamin Bates



# DECEMBER

## Youth (6th-12th)



### Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

6 to 7 p.m. Thursday Dec. 5

6 to 7 p.m. Thursday Dec. 12

### Christmas Pageant

**Sunday, Dec. 15** during 11 a.m. worship

Please be at the church at 10 a.m.

### Youth Group

4:30 to 7 p.m. **Thursday Dec. 19** at East Liberty

Presbyterian Church. Dinner is served at 5.

Please enter through the entrance at 116 Highland Ave.

### Sunday School :

No Sunday school Dec. 29 and Jan. 5

**Contact: Jenny Newman**  
[Jennyrunew@gmail.com](mailto:Jennyrunew@gmail.com)

### Christmas Pageant

Join us on Dec. 15 as our children and youth lead worship and present the annual Sunday school Christmas Pageant.

*Rehearsal dates for the pageant are Thursday, Dec. 5 and Dec. 12 from 6 to 7 p.m.*

Please contact Jenny if you have any questions or would like to participate in the pageant.

### Sunday School/Nursery

There will be no Sunday school on Dec. 29 and Jan 5. We will have nursery care on those days during worship. There will be nursery care available for infants and toddlers during our Christmas Eve service at 7.

### Wrap It Up!

Youth from Sixth Church and ELPC recently wrapped nearly 100 children's books as a service project for Reading Ready. This non-profit organization supports young children locally by increasing access to books and by encouraging family engagement through reading. Reading Ready Pittsburgh offers a variety of literacy programs and partners with local childcare centers, the AIU Head Start, AIU Early Head Start



programs, and other community organizations. They have a location in Homestead called B is for Books which offers free books for children and a place for programs and events. The organization also partners with and provides support for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library which is a book gifting program that mails free high-quality books to children no matter a family's income. For more information, visit their site: <https://www.readingreadypittsburgh.org/>.

## PNC Update

We have been interviewing many wonderful candidates for the pastor position. We are currently finishing up the second round of interviews and are planning to take a break for Advent and Christmas and let the pastors who we have been interviewing have a chance to focus on their congregations. We plan to conduct final interviews after Epiphany.

*Erik Fogt, PNC Chair; Joe Ashenden, Vice Chair*

*Kit Ayars; Pamela Bower; Andrew Swenson; Peg Watt- Morse; and Mary Radcliffe*

## COOKIES! COOKIES! COOKIES!

Following the Christmas Eve Service, we enjoy cookies and punch as we greet friends and family from near and far away. Please bring a plate of home-baked cookies if you are able to. Leave them in the Chapel or the small upstairs kitchen before the start of the service. Thanks – *the Fellowship Committee*

## Earth Care News

The next plastic pickup for Michaels will be December 8. Nora and Cliff Johnson will pick up your used plastic, all numbers mixed together, from the back hall of the church after the worship service. We appreciate your help keeping plastic out of our trash dumps and waterways, and if you'd like to go one step further, Nora will return your paper bag or cardboard box if it's in good shape. Please let her know if you'd like your receptacle back.



Also after worship on December 8: The next Earth Care meeting will be held in the parlor. Anyone interested in Earth Care is invited to attend. Any questions? Contact Pam Howe at [howepjs@yahoo.com](mailto:howepjs@yahoo.com).

## Poinsettia Memorials

We offer two options for honoring loved ones at Christmastime:

- You can buy a poinsettia for \$8 and have a name placed in the Memorial Booklet in honor or memory of a loved one. You can then take your flower home after the Christmas Eve service.
- The second option will be to have a loved one's name placed in the Memorial Booklet as before but instead of buying a flower, you will be donating \$8 or more to the Deacons Fund.



*Deadline for orders is December 10th. Order forms will be with the bulletins during Dec 1st and 8th service; alternatively, you can email or call the church office.*

## Thanks to You, The Stewardship Campaign is Making Progress!

This year's Stewardship Campaign got off to a great start in late October, and we are pleased to report that this positive momentum continues. As of Sunday, November 24, we have received pledges totaling \$331,496 or 93% of the \$357,000 campaign goal. We are especially grateful that the majority of households who have pledged responded positively to our request to increase their financial commitments by 2% or more.

If you haven't pledged yet, there are multiple ways to do so:

- If you still have the Stewardship brochure and the stamped envelope that came with it, you can fill out the pledge card contained in the brochure and mail it to Sixth Presbyterian Church, 1688 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15217.
- You can bring your completed pledge card to church on Sunday and place it in the collection plate during the offering.
- We have placed bright yellow pledge cards in the pews - you can fill one out during worship and place it in the collection plate.
- You can call or email Kelly Johnson, our Church Secretary, and let her know the amount of your pledge at (412) 421-2752, or [officesixthchurch@gmail.com](mailto:officesixthchurch@gmail.com). You can also ask Kelly to mail you a pledge card.
- You may receive a call from a Stewardship Committee or Session member with a friendly reminder to make your pledge commitment. You can provide that person with the amount of your pledge.

We thank all of those who have already pledged and are grateful to those of you who will soon pledge. We deeply appreciate that you are embracing the future of Sixth Church with faith!

*The Stewardship Committee-* Patty Halverson, Beth Hazlett, Peter Kaplan & Barb Pares

## Calvin Tantalo and Tom Juring Speak on Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee asked three members of our congregation - Pam Bower, Calvin Tantalo, and Tom Juring - to speak about the theme of our Stewardship Campaign, "Embracing the Future with Faith." All three offered compelling and personal responses.

We shared Pam's testimonial in the November Sixth Sense, and we are sharing Calvin and Tom's talks with you this month. Like Pam's they are both well worth reading if you missed the services at which they spoke, and worth re-reading even if -or perhaps especially if - you were in the sanctuary on those mornings.

*(continues on next page)*

## Calvin Tantalo

I would call myself an artist. Throughout my life & career, I have been fascinated in the act of depiction & emotion, really putting your soul in something. No matter how much work has gone into a piece, if you put your soul into it, it's art.

Now I've been to every church except for the ones I haven't been to, and I can tell you with confidence that Sixth Presbyterian Church has some real soul put into it. Sixth approaches its services & communities with genuine compassion. It's a more light church, meaning everyone feels safe within the walls. Sermons are comedic & personal, the choir is dedicated, & the corridors have that perfect touch of authenticity, they even smell like nostalgia. When Eve & I asked if we could contribute our art to the bulletins & the service, we were accepted vigorously, and encouraged to create more, as this is the kind of place that's nothing but honored to display parts of its community's identity, it's really quite special. If you'd like to make a generous pledge to keep the lights on, be welcome.



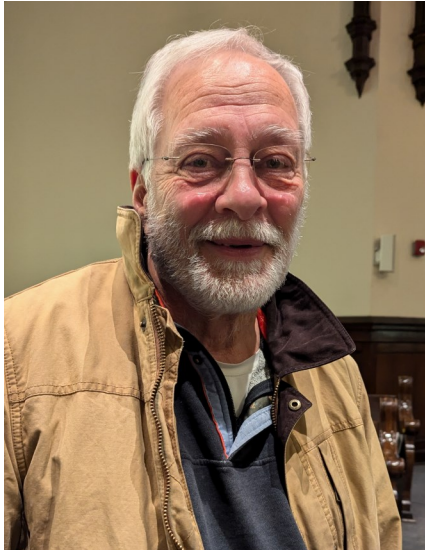
I'll be real with you, keeping this speech short is a genuine challenge, there's just so much I want to say! I like to think I'm more laid back, but only when I'm writing do I realize; I am bursting at the seams with faith. When I was confirmed to the church a few months ago, I wrote a seven-page essay on my thoughts on faith. My opinions on it now? I wasn't totally right, but I was onto something. Of course, it's impossible to "figure out" religion, and as a coder & enjoyer of a good riddle, I've really torn myself to pieces over the years with this stuff.

To me, at least right now, faith is this: If the world were to end tomorrow, everything you know & love gone in an instant, realistically, you would be pretty sad. It's a terrible thing to think about, but you would not fall into despair, you would not plummet, you wouldn't even pray. You don't need no God to save you, as faith is not the will to cling to what you have, but the maturity to let it all go when you must. By the time you have reached this state of mind, God has already saved you, and you no longer require a heaven to go to. During that last sunset, the finale of humanity, you would keep your head held high, without fear, with your whole being, embracing the future with faith.

## Tom Juring

When I was first asked to give a presentation to this congregation on "embracing our future with faith", my first thought was 'the stewardship committee made a lousy choice', they couldn't have picked a less suitable presenter on this topic than me. I have to admit I've been on a rollercoaster when it comes to faith, especially religious faith.

Do I have belief in a guy who could perform miracles? Walk on water? Who could come back from the dead? I don't know. There's a bunch of stuff in the Bible that stretches my beliefs based on what I understand as science. My training and understanding of the world is challenged and throws shadows of doubt, sometimes as fierce storm clouds on what we are asked to believe. I try to keep an open mind, an open spirit but I struggle with this. I think a few others here do as well. I do want to mention though that I have immense respect and some slight envy for those of you here who are beyond that personal struggle.



But my broader concern with the concept of faith is with those who call themselves Christians yet act as though the example Jesus gave us doesn't apply to their concerns or behavior. I feel dismayed with those who have little empathy about people who are poor, hungry, homeless, the displaced, the wronged, the foreigner seeking a new start, the care for our earth, the sick in need of care, the list goes on and on. This claim of Christian faith for some ends at the door of the church. It's like a fine pencil line where one stops and won't cross due to either political or social parameters that anchor their being no matter what they righteously proclaim is their faith. My take on Christianity is that that is not the example Jesus gave us to follow. His message embraced service that helped the displaced, the shunned, the sick. It's about the care

and salvation of others in our life, not just about our individual souls, but about our collective well-being. It's about how we help each other.

And that's why, almost 20 years ago, my family and I stepped into this church and found a home. We found a community that lives their faith. Many here step up, speak out and stand up for the wronged, for the displaced, for those who Jesus most sought out to help. So, I look out into this congregation of believers, to you, and see individuals who fight for those displaced by war, build awareness against gun violence, feed the hungry, care for the sick, help the displaced, embrace those who partner differently, work for a better environment, and provide a hand and a heart to our neighbors who are hurting. And doing this while making wondrous music, thoughtful prayers, inspiring sermons, diligent study, and a knowing support for all of us here, no matter what our level of religious faith, sexual orientation, ethnic identity, age, position, education, or title might be.

We continue to recreate this church week by week, working to keep this community vibrant and alive through these efforts and prayers. And these endeavors also include our thoughtful and deliberate actions to step up and provide support. It takes money to keep this community going. To pay the power bills, support the staff, keep things clean and in repair, and bring us together in communion. If you have not yet made a pledge, please do so. If you believe in this community, if you are a joyous part of this community, be thoughtful, be considerate. It's us here in this church, and online, each giving what we can to keep it alive. It matters, you matter. I believe in this church as a manifestation and vehicle of my Christian faith, I believe in you and our prayers and the work we do together embracing our future, in faith. Thank you.

## Notes from the Garden

Fall in our church garden has been long and colorful this year. Some of you have noticed the blooming cherry trees along Murray Ave, *Prunus s. 'Autumnalis'*. Church members planted these five trees in 2014, they were donated by Tree Pittsburgh with support from the WPA Conservancy. The second one in is *Prunus 'Okame'* that blooms bright pink in early Spring, the others will have pale pink flowers in Spring and Fall.



Pictured: Chuck Herrold, Joe DeLucia, and Nora Johnson

Thanks to all the church members who have volunteered their time in the garden in past years!

We always welcome new garden helpers to plant, maintain, mulch and beautify our corner of Squirrel Hill. Special thanks this year to Frank and Dex Guyette who cut down the dead apple tree and removed a lot of grass growing in the wrong places!

Contact me if you want to help in the Spring- there will be a lot of work to do, such fun!

~Leslie Kaplan, [bezbeads@verizon.net](mailto:bezbeads@verizon.net), (412) 400-3459





## SESSION UPDATES

### CLERK'S REPORT:

- **Worship: In Person/YouTube: 10/27-(70/58); 11/3-(96/36); 11/10-(85/68); 11/17-(86/32)**
- **Presbytery Meetings for 2024**
  - ◊ **Thursday, December 12 – Northmont United Presbyterian Church at 1:00PM- Elder Scott Bell scheduled to attend**
- **Annual Reports due for January meeting**

### PASTORAL REPORT:

- Session will continue the work begun at their retreat.
- The “Owl” has been purchased and will be installed shortly.
- Rev. Robbins sought approval to have January 19 off, which was granted.
- The Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on February 2, 2025.
- Session agreed that a new photo directory would be a big help for the new pastor, and this will be pursued, and Marcus Robinson will lead.

### SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

- **PNC:** The PNC continues to meet every week and is working toward a positive outcome.
- **NOMINATING COMMITTEE:** Elder Berg will convene the committee before spring to begin the search for the Deacon/Elder nominations for the 2025 class.

### OTHER NEWS:

- Pledges are behind, bringing us behind budget for the year. Expenses are down because of the brief absences of staff and utilities have been below budget, but that is not likely to continue. The new budget will depend upon success of the stewardship campaign.
- Appreciation for the hard work and projects that Kelly Johnson has taken on as Office Administrator.
- Very happy to have Shay Carter aboard as Music Director.
- The new warming oven has been installed.
- To be sure that visitors are greeted after worship, the ushers will be available during the postlude.
- Those who attended the “Why Palestine Matters” series met on Sunday, November 24, 2024. The group will continue to meet and discuss actionable ways to respond to the humanitarian crisis, including a fundraiser in January.
- The Christmas Pageant and Potluck Luncheon will be on December 15.

*Respectfully Submitted, Kathi Robinson-Dassel, Clerk of Session*



The **deadline** for the January newsletter is:  
**Monday, December 23rd.**

Please email articles and announcements to the church office at [officesixthchurch@gmail.com](mailto:officesixthchurch@gmail.com).

You can also put printed copies on the office desk.

Thanks you!

## Advent!

Please stop by our table in the Chapel for devotionals, Advent calendars, and other materials to celebrate and journey through the Advent season at home.

Our friends at A Sanctified Art have provided an e-reader version of this year's Advent devotional, which you can access on your computer and mobile devices: [online.flippingbook.com/view/811735764/](http://online.flippingbook.com/view/811735764/).



*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.*

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