



Sixth Sense

February 2025

A word from our Interim Pastor

Dear Saints,

Writing a newsletter article is often tricky, as you need to take an educated guess as to what the month to come might entail and what we all might need to hear.

While I am relieved that January is behind us, the same set of skills and approaches will be needed for the month of February. I wholeheartedly believe that this community of faith will continue to be where folks can find respite from a world that can feel filled with hopelessness, fear and despair.

When I find myself in any of those mental and physical spaces, I often turn to the reminder that Mary Oliver offers in her poem, "Don't Hesitate." She writes, "If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it."..."Joy is not made to be a crumb."

In the face of a brutal empire, the early disciples clung to the good news that Christ brought in Luke's gospel. In worship this month, we will do exactly the same thing. We will seek the good news in our midst and we will not hesitate to give in to joy when it comes.

Being in worship with you all is certainly a joy for me,

Rev. Sarah Robbins, Interim Pastor

WORSHIP

February 2nd	– "The Other Side" <i>Celebration of Communion</i>	Jeremiah 1:4-10, Luke 4:21-30
February 9th	– "Feeling Caught"	Psalm 138, Luke 5: 1-11
February 16th	– "Now and Then"	Psalm 1, Luke 6:17-26
February 23rd	– "Jesus Said What?" <i>The Director of Christian Education, Jenny Newman will preach.</i>	Genesis 45:3-11,15, Luke 6:27-38



Youth (6th-12th)

Confirmation Class

Sunday Feb. 2— 12:30- 2 p.m.

Lunch will be provided!

Youth Group

Thursdays — Feb. 6, 13, 20, 27

4:30 to 7 p.m. at East Liberty Presbyterian Church.

Dinner is served at 5.

Please enter through the entrance at 116 Highland Ave.

Contact: **Jenny Newman**

Jennyrunew@gmail.com

412-720-6392

Mark your calendar for these upcoming events—more info soon!

April 4th - 6th - Spring Presbytery Youth Retreat @ Camp Crestfield



Pictured: Youth from Sixth and East Liberty Presbyterian Church spent a cold and snowy afternoon together snow tubing at Boyce Park.

Christian Education Committee:

The Christian Education Committee will meet on Sunday, February 16 following worship at 12:30pm, upstairs in Jenny Newman's office. Please join us!

February Birthdays



Feb 2	Chris Berg		
Feb 3	Doris Bell		
Feb 9	Kit Ayers	Feb 18	Cyril Fox Brenda Jordan John McCall
Feb 10	Beth Hazlett	Feb 19	Greg Cooper
Feb 14	Peter Kaplan Shay Carter	Feb 21	Linda May
Feb 15	Kathleen Myers	Feb 23	Diane James
Feb 16	Maria Guyette	Feb 26	Jan Myers-Newbury Amy Whipple




February Earth Care Corner

By Lynn Kawaratani

Michael Brothers Recycling

Ever wonder what happens with the bags of plastic materials we collect to be recycled? Are they actually being handled responsibly? Fortunately, Michael Brothers has created a new Link Tree with links to explain how materials are saved from the waste stream including processes for recycling glass, metal, aluminum, cardboard and plastic. Plastic is converted into Hydroblox products which are a low-maintenance permanent solution to stormwater issues. Homeowners facing wet yards, shifting retaining walls, or other drainage under pavers can easily install Hydroblox planks which move water using natural water pressure. Made with recycled plastic, they serve as an alternative to drainage pipes made with new PVC plastic.

Please visit: https://linktr.ee/mbrecycling?utm_source=qr_code to learn more about all of the recycling processes at Michael Brothers.



Session Meeting Highlights

Sixth Presbyterian Church

January 2025

CLERK'S REPORT:

- **Worship: In Person/YouTube: 12/22-(80/48); 12/24 (Christmas Eve) -(175/60); 12/29-(64/51); 1/5-(88/40); 1/12-(83/41)**
- **Committee Annual Reports due January 20**
- **Approval for Rev. Robbins to perform wedding ceremony for Amy Whipple and Carrie Shannon O'Connell on January 16, 2025, approved by Session via email**
- **Pittsburgh Presbytery 2025 Meeting Schedule**
Thursday, February 20 - Virtual Meeting via Zoom at 1:00 PM-Elder Peter Watt-Morse was approved to attend.

FUNDRAISING DINNER:

Response has been positive for the dinner, taking place on January 25, as a benefit for humanitarian aid for Gaza. Donations can also be made through the church, and baskets will be on the tables during the dinner.

PASTORAL REPORT:

- **Notification of Mary Lib Myers' death-memorial service will be held at Sixth, date to be determined.**
- **Rev. Robbins and other members of Sixth are volunteering to assist with tax preparation through Just Harvest.**
- **Communion and the Congregational meeting will be held February 2.**
- **Jenny Newman approved to preach for worship, February 23.**

OTHER NEWS:

- **Elder Peter Watt-Morse presented the 2025 budget. Following discussion and some modifications, the proposed budget was approved.**
- **The Stewardship campaign was successful. Elder Peter Kaplan thanked Session and the Stewardship committee, Beth Hazlett, Patty Halverson and Barb Parees.**

COFFEE HOUR ASSIGNMENTS:

February 2-Choir, February 16-Session, March 2- Gun Safety

NEXT MEETING: February 19, 2025, 7 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Kathi Robinson-Dassel, Clerk of Session

2025 Annual Reports

Our committees work diligently throughout the year, offering their time and talents to do their best by Sixth. Please enjoy reading over these annual reports, written for us by the committee chairs.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

2024 was certainly a year of transition for our church. We welcomed new staff and continued working with our wonderful Interim Pastor. I am extremely grateful for those who have kept Christian Education opportunities thriving this year. First, we have terrific Sunday School teachers! Among them are Joe Ashenden, Linda May, Marcus Robinson, Meghan Jones, and parent volunteers who lead Sunday school each week and help in many other ways. Our childcare staff provides care for our young people in the nursery, during extended session, and helps out with Sunday school. Our staff included Kate Smith, Asa Parkhurst, Enrico Grammaroli, and Jenn McCartney this year. These creative people engage and welcome our children with love and care.

Here are more highlights of Christian Education in 2024 (in alphabetical order):

Confirmation Class: In May, Eve Guyette, Calvin Tantalo, and Sadie DeLucia became official members of Sixth Church. The trio began meeting monthly in the fall of 2023 with Pastor Sarah and myself and thoroughly and creatively explored what it means to be a church member, wrote statements of faith, and led worship on confirmation Sunday.

Easter and Christmas: We can't forget our Easter and Christmas happenings! It was a pleasure to work with our new music director, Shay Carter and put together our Sunday School Christmas Pageant service. The children and youth lead the service with music and a presentation of the Nativity narrative.

Out in the Community: Youth volunteered monthly throughout 2024 helping to prepare and serve meals at The Table, an outreach ministry of Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community on the South Side. We are grateful for Sharon Manley who cooked the meal and worked with us in the kitchen. Our youth were also front and center this year during Squirrel Hill Market Nights hosting a table in front of the church to welcome neighbors, share the mission of Sixth, and encourage voter registration.

Safety Policy Update: The Christian Education Committee worked to review and update our church's Safety Child policy to include new language and requirements for mandated reporting training for staff and volunteers, building use by outside groups, and adding language about childcare provided by Sixth, the role of parents and expectations for students conduct.

Vacation Church School: In June we again partnered with East Liberty Presbyterian Church for a week of Vacation Church school held in their building. Students and volunteers from 6th had a great time exploring the theme "Seekers in Sneakers."



Youth Group: In 2024 we continued amalgamating with East Liberty Presbyterian Church. By joining we have been able to have more opportunities for youth to gather weekly, and participate in mission trips, local service projects, and other fun events.

Youth Mission Giving: This year I would like to highlight this learning opportunity for youth I have the privilege to lead. The Church and Communities committee at Sixth yearly includes youth as decision makers in their annual mission giving. The 6th-12th grade Sunday school students spent several weeks researching local organizations and discussing what issues and needs in our community are most important to them. They decided to designate their portion of the allocations to places that directly support local young people and their families. This year's choices were Reading Ready Pittsburgh, Foster Love Pittsburgh, and Garfield Farms.

Youth Mission Trip: In August, I traveled with Sixth Church students Sadie DeLucia, Louie DeLucia, Eve Guyette, and Lia Casci along with Sarah Hackett and friends from ELPC on a service-learning trip to Washington, D.C. We stayed at The Friends Place in Capitol Hill and spend the week participating in service and social justice workshops, volunteering at Martha's Table, a nighttime visit at The Mall, visiting the Supreme Court, Library of Congress, the Capitol Building, and volunteering at the Capitol Food Pantry. We also visited the Museum of American History, The National Cathedral, National Museum of African American History, and participated in a Change Makers workshop at Friends Place. We visited the PCUSA Office of Public Witness and got to hang out with and learn from Jimmie Hawkins, director of the PCUSA Advocacy Office.

But wait – there's more . . .

There are just a few more things that I would like to highlight from this year. There are many things that I have done throughout the year that are part of my job description and some things that fall in the "other duties as assigned" categories. I attended and provided leadership for Pittsburgh Presbytery's winter youth retreat at Camp Crestfield along with students from Sixth and ELPC.

We have been using materials from Sanctified Art as our themes for Lent and Advent and I have enjoyed exploring the materials and curating prayer stations and take-home resources for the congregation. This year I hosted a read-a-long of a book called "Woven" and led discussions about the book's topic.

With our staff transitions this year, I stepped in to handle administrative tasks to keep things happening as usual and been active in worship planning and whatever else is needed to support the ministry of the church. I have been integral in working with Pastor Sarah on planning and hosting our Breaking Bread fellowship times, assisting with new members' classes and weekly Bible study, organizing outreach tables during Squirrel Hill market nights, and participating in the PRIDE parade, and helping to host the Presbytery event with Cole Arthur Riley.

In the area of continuing education and service to the greater church, it has also been a fulfilling year. In the spring I concluded my tenure as the treasurer for the board of directors for the Easter Region of the Association of Christian Educators. I served on the board for four years, two of which were as their treasurer. I helped organize and attended the EAPC spring conference held in May. Something new for me this year was participating in a research group with the Real Kids, Real Faith project of Union Theological Seminary. As part of the research, I spent six weeks using a script to teach and lead our extended session kids in body movement prayers and helping to evaluate and report back to the research group.

This project focuses on developing curriculum and resources in the area of children's spirituality. In addition to attending events and workshops provided by the Next Generation Committee of Pittsburgh Presbytery, I also had the pleasure of participating in a six-week cohort for veteran youth workers led by the Association of Presbyterian Educators.

Written and submitted by Jenny Newman

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Sixth Presbyterian Church, like most churches, contributes a significant share of its resources to help alleviate suffering and address injustice. The Church and Community Committee (C&C) is privileged to play a major role in Sixth's mission giving. C&C's approach to mission is distinctive in the thoughtful process we have created for allocating funds to deserving organizations, and how we emphasize advocacy for vitally needed social change.

Each year, Sixth devotes 10% of its total budget to mission, of which 40% is given to the mission programs of our denomination and the remaining 60% is allocated to "Locally Directed Missions", a fund which C&C manages. In turn, C&C sets aside a small amount of our locally directed missions budget (\$600 in 2024) to distribute to organizations chosen by the Youth Group.

We then dedicate 60% of the remaining funds to advocacy groups that are working to create a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world, and 40% to organizations providing direct assistance to alleviate human suffering.

The advocacy funds are allocated as follows:

- One half is divided evenly between the four Sixth Church committees which are engaged in work for change - Earth Care, Gun Safety, the Justice Team, and More Light; and
- One half goes into an advocacy pool that C&C distributes to advocacy organizations dealing with a variety of issues, including housing, hunger, public transit, economic equity, human rights, and peace.

The direct assistance funds are allocated as follows:

- Three quarters of these funds go into a direct assistance pool that C&C distributes to organizations providing help to people in need.
- One quarter goes into a "Rainy Day" fund to address urgent humanitarian situations that arise during the year.

Organizations in the advocacy and direct assistance pools are scored based on four criteria: 1) whether they are faith-based; 2) the level of active participation of Sixth Church members in the organization; 3) the percent of people of color on the organization's board; and 4) the organization's need for the funds Sixth Church can provide. Church members prepare written reports on all the organizations considered for funding from these pools. The reports describe each organization's work and accomplishments, as well as scoring information.

Based on the resulting scores, the C&C Chair recommends allocations. Then the members of C&C vote on whether to accept or modify those recommendations.

Some of the organizations that receive funds through the advocacy and direct assistance pools face diverse challenges and therefore engage in both advocacy and direct assistance. These hybrid organizations are scored both as advocacy and direct assistance organizations and receive a composite score.

In addition to C&C committee members, a number of other church members participate in the process of selecting organizations to be funded. These include Sixth members who propose new groups to fund, the youth group, the committees working for change, and people who prepare reports on the organizations they would like to see funded.

The allocations of the locally directed missions budget from 2024 are listed below. Links are provided so you can learn more about each group. Please consider making your own contributions to these great organizations.

Questions About C&C? Please contact Chair Tom Twiss (ttwiss@jpitt.edu) or Peter Kaplan (pghpeter9@gmail.com). Would you like to participate in our work? We invite all members and friends of Sixth to propose new organizations you believe are worthy of support. We also invite all members and friends to join our committee and help us evaluate and allocate funds to these organizations,

Organizations Aided by Committees:

Earth Care:

Bread for the World www.bread.org	\$570
Citizens for Pennsylvania’s Future https://www.pennfuture.org	\$570
Garfield Community Farm https://www.garfieldfarm.com	\$570
Three Rivers Waterkeeper https://www.threeriverswaterkeeper.org	\$570

Gun Safety:

CeaseFire PA Action https://www.ceasefirepa.org/take-action	\$1,200
South Pittsburgh Peacemakers https://www.southpittsburghcoalitionforpeace.org	\$540
Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund https://www.everytown.org/	\$540

Justice Team:

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship https://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/	\$1,140
Israel/Palestine Mission Network (recently renamed the Palestine Justice Network of the Presbyterian Church USA) https://thepjn.org/partners	\$1,140

More Light:

LAMP (LGBTQIA+ Affirming Ministries Pittsburgh) www.https://sites.google.com/view/inclusivepcusapgh/home	\$760
Shepherd Wellness Community https://qburgh.com/directory/shepherd-wellness-community/	\$760
Sisters PGH https://www.sisterspgh.org	\$760

Youth Group:

Foster Love Project Pittsburgh https://www.fosterloveproject.org/	\$250
Reading Ready Pittsburgh https://www.readingreadypittsburgh.org/	\$250
Garfield Community Farm https://www.garfieldfarm.com/	\$100

Church & Community Direct Allocations:**Advocacy Organizations:**

Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania https://housingalliancepa.org/	\$966
Pittsburgh United https://pittsburghunited.org	\$1,449
Pittsburghers for Public Transit https://www.pittsburghforpublictransit.org/	\$1,932
Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center https://sabeel.org/	\$2,415

Direct Assistance Organizations:

Fishes & Loaves Cooperative Ministry https://fishes-and-loaves-hazelwood.org/	\$1,762
Lazarus Fund of Pittsburgh Presbytery https://www.pghpresbytery.org/justiceministries/lazarusfund/	\$2,349
MHY Family Services https://mhfamilyservices.org/	\$1,468
Wilksburg Community Ministry https://wcm15221.org/	\$1,762

Hybrid Organizations (Combining Advocacy and Direct Assistance):

Casa San Jose https://www.casasanjose.org/	\$1,074
Church World Service https://cwsglobal.org/	\$1,074
El Porvenir Coffee Cooperative, Nicaragua - no website	\$1,342
Just Harvest	\$648

Rainy Day Fund:

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) https://www.unrwausa.org/	\$2,040
Friends of Sabeel North America https://www.fosna.org/	\$1,000

Presbyterian Special Offerings

As part of its mission, C&C is responsible for promoting donations by church members and friends to the Presbyterian Special Offerings sponsored by our denomination. Historically, Sixth Church has promoted two of these offerings:

- The **One Great Hour of Sharing**, collected during the Easter season, supports efforts to relieve hunger through the Presbyterian Hunger Program, promote development through the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, and assist in areas of disaster through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.
- The **Christmas Joy Offering**, collected during Advent, provides support for Presbyterian church workers and their families in their time of need and leadership development and education for communities of color at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Last year, Sixth Church members donated very generously to both of these Special Offerings. In 2025, C&C is planning to provide Sixth Church members with the opportunity to support a third Special Offering, the **Peace and Global Witness Offering**. This offering will enable us to promote the Peace of Christ by addressing systems of conflict and injustice across the world.

CROP Walk

Finally, C&C would like to highlight the continuing involvement of Sixth Church in CROP Walk. On October 13, 2024, the Sixth Church Team successfully completed another CROP Walk, raising money for the hunger and development programs of Church World Service (CWS). CWS receives 75% of the funds raised through the walk, and the remaining 25% is donated to Wilksburg Community Ministry. This year Sixth Church walkers raised \$5,333. Together, East Pittsburgh walkers raised \$30,414.

Peter Kaplan for the Church & Community Committee

DEACONS

The Deacons held their regular meetings via ZOOM (and once as hybrid) in 2024. As the committee charged with the attention to and care of the congregation, the Deacons checked in with each other at the beginning of each meeting, to also be sure to care for and support one another first.

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

Care List: The Deacons maintain a list of the church members who may need some attention or assistance and assign a Deacon to check on them regularly. This list is for public review only by Session and Reverend Robbins. People are removed from the list as their status or situation changes. The Deacons occasionally continue to provide some attention or assistance privately to an individual removed from the list, should their situation warrant it.

At the end of 2024, nine church members were on the official Care List, and their oversight was divided among five Deacons: Marnie Bertolet, April Clisura, Linda Davoli, Gail Luley, and Elizabeth McGuier. Each Deacon decides the approach that works best for themselves and their charge and provides support according to their individual schedules. The most common support includes conversations by phone, home visits, and meal assistance; although support may expand depending on particular needs and a response to emergencies. All efforts were recorded on the Care List Google document, which then is shared with all the Deacons.

PROJECTS

Homeless Packs, Lazarus Fund, Hot Metal Bridge Table

The team working on homeless packs for the Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community (Chuck Herrold and Brenda Jordan) spent \$1,716.42 (total for 3 shopping trips, in March, May, and October) on supplies for 200 packs, which were delivered to Hot Metal and distributed by them.

As treasurer, I (*Chuck Herrold*) wrote checks totaling \$16,000 in support of our commitment to the Lazarus Fund, assisting clients with payments for rent (chiefly) and utilities. Client interviews were managed and processed by Gwen Harcar until June and thereafter by April Clisura and Lelila Richards.

Sharon Manley was reimbursed a total of \$6,300 for meal preparation for the Hot Metal Table. This amount included a "retrospective" payment for the last quarter of 2023, as well as the meals she made until November of 2025.

Hot Metal Ministry Update: The former pastor there has left for another job, and that congregation is trying to sell the building on the South Side flats to fund the salary for a new one. The ministry to the hungry and homeless (including the packs for the homeless) is therefore suspended.

Although the status of the Hot Metal Table is in limbo for the time being, our commitment to this mission is a vital part of our care for the least of these and will therefore be continued as soon as an alternative arises.

Sharon's team of helpers has included Deacon Robin Holtje as well as other Sixth Church members.

Linda Davoli gwerthwresgair@gmail.com

EARTH CARE

This year we were mainly focused on updating the information on the church's website. We also looked into how various recycling groups use the plastic.

We continue to do a group collection of Plastics that cannot be collected curbside to take to Michael's Brothers. Various people are volunteering to take the plastic about every other month. The amount collected often fills up 2 cars. Michael's Brothers has changed where and how they collect the plastic. They are doing the sorting so we can now put all the plastic labeled 1-7 in one bag. The site is also opened 24 hours so we can drop off the plastic even on Sundays.

We have revamped our recycling information on the Sixthchurch.org website. We cleaned out most of what was downstairs and have found new places to Recycle most of the items. Check out sites like Staples stores for any tech items, batteries, pens, mechanical pencils or markers. Also check out Center for Creative Re-use for many items that you may of not even thought about recycling. The snack bags were sent to Terra Cycle after we found out how they are recycling the bags. However because the cost to obtain the containers and ship it to them, it was decided to encourage people to join together to buy the boxes instead of it being provided by the church. We have not been able to find a local site that takes this type of plastic yet.

We have started to see some progress on companies reducing packaging when shipping items or to use recycled plastic in their products. We encouraged the congregation to highlight when they saw examples of this. Some companies are doing a good job. We found examples of Coke and Dasani using 100% recycled plastic. Many shoes are not coming in individual bags any more. Many Ikea products are using cardboard to cushion parts instead of foam or plastic, Unfortunately others seem to be using more plastic!

In 2025, we will be focusing on some other ways we can care for our earth! We will also be including more news about Earth Care topics in our newsletter.

Respectfully submitted, Pam Howe

FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship (aka Hospitality) Members: April Clisura, Denise DeJong, Brenda Flores, Vicky Guy, Patty Halverson, Lynn Kawaratani, Kate Kennedy, Lori King, Mary Lang, Sharon Manley, Linda May, Jan Myers-Newbury, Barb Parees, Kathi Robinson-Dassel, David Wells

2024 saw the return to a few more Sixth Church traditions: We served an Ash Wednesday light supper (instead of Shrove Tuesday's Pancake supper), coordinated refreshments for the farewell to Vince Kolb, presented the ever-popular Deviled Egg extravaganza on Easter Sunday, assisted the More Light Committee in providing a reception after church on More Light Sunday, organized the early June Worship Picnic in the Park, coordinated a traditional sit-down luncheon after the Children's Christmas Pageant and spread the cookies on Christmas Eve.

Other events included: Rev Christy's West Bank presentation with a light lunch, assisting with the Cole Arthur Riley event and a few post-church refreshments.

Respectfully Submitted – Sharon Manley and Jan Myers-Newbury

GUN SAFETY

Members: Judy Schryer, Diane Scanlon, Lori King, Martha Funderburgh, Rae Hodges, Julie Caryl, Jin Shin, Lori Swensson, and visiting from Church of the Redeemer, Marianne Novy.

Focus: getting gun safety legislation passed in our Pennsylvania Legislature is our main focus; however, we also engage at the national level. Considering the presidential election outcome, we decided that perhaps common ground could be found by focusing more on preventing suicide by gun and also preventing school shootings.

Actions in 2024:

- sent letters to our 2 US senators and to Lisa Baker— chairman of the PA Judiciary Committee — and the Editor of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette
- joined Temple Sinai at their viewing of the CeaseFirePA film, Deadly by Design which was followed by writing letters to Lisa Baker, Joe Pittman, and Kim Ward asking them to support gun safety legislation.
- joined St. Edmunds letter-writing campaign for gun safety legislation to PA Senators.
- had a gun safety information table at the corner of Murray and Forbes for the September Squirrel Hill Night Market.*
- attended 1st session of Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research online presentation, “Reducing Gun Violence in America: Evidence for Change.”
- attempted outreach to Zone 4 Police but dropped this effort as they were not forthcoming
- with Rev. Sarah Robbins, the committee had a zoom meeting with Dr. Jay Breneman of CeaseFirePA, an expert on suicide prevention. He has agreed to give a presentation to our congregation. We will emphasize this as a gun safety measure. Exact date to be determined— hopefully in March. He shared some data with us, notably that the majority of gun-related deaths are from suicide, and also, that the rate is increasing.

Next Meeting: February 9, 2025

* We are investigating having t-shirts and possibly a banner made because at the Squirrel Hill Night Market we felt we needed to be better identified as a committee from Sixth Presbyterian

Respectfully submitted: Lori Swensson

HOUSE

The House Committee is responsible for taking care of the building and grounds.

For this past year, Leslie Kaplan and Chris Berg have been serving unofficially in this capacity, as there is no session member in this spot since Greg Winner and Tom Juring rotated off Session.

Improvements to the kitchen area: Chris Berg and Jan Myers Newbury (Fellowship) purchased and installed a new warming oven to replace the old iron pizza oven that was no longer reliable. This new purchase enabled us to hold the Christmas Dinner. Also, the dishwasher was fixed so that it heated water to safety and compliance standards, for washing and rinsing.

Recycling: The City of Pittsburgh will no longer pick up our recycling because we are considered a business. We have contracted with Republic for once a month pickup and have purchased two large rolling bins.

Landscape: The heat and drought last summer affected the plantings, especially the trees. Nevertheless, several shrubs were added this year to fill out the landscaped portion of our grounds: Fothergilla 'Fizzy Mizzy', a dwarf Hydrangea paniculata and a dwarf spruce. Frank and Dex Guyette helped expand beds (to accommodate plant growth) by removing grass and mulching several areas. Our agreement with the condo led to a large patch of an invasive shrub being removed in the fall. Plans for the area include native flowering shrubs and perennials (in concert with the Earth Care Committee). If anyone would like to help take care of the garden, please contact Leslie Kaplan.



Capital Projects: The capital projects included:

- The Kitchen and Ridinger room renovation/repair;
- Accessibility improvements including repair of the ramp and completion of an accessible Children's bathroom on the second floor;
- Renovation of the Chapel with painting, flooring, sound abatement panels, a hanging system, and a wall mounted TV for presentations.
- Concrete repair and replacement of steps at street level, and fence and wall repair, and a new poured patio in the rear
- The restoration of the sanctuary windows, which was completed this December.

Submitted by Leslie Kaplan and Chris Berg

PERSONNEL

The Personnel Committee is responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures are in place for staff and volunteers, are compliant with local, state, and federal labor laws, and in accordance with guidance provided by the Pittsburgh Presbytery. Throughout the year the Committee meets with Staff as needed to conduct business related to benefits, compensation, schedules, workloads, opportunities for growth, challenges, or emerging needs.

2024 has been a year of change, refresh, and new starts. With one resignation, two new hires, and one contract extension, and three new committee members.... the Personnel Committee was quite active!

Three independent search committees were active this year!

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is continuing its work. The Personnel Committee supports the PNC and will ultimately be involved in the hiring process when the new pastor is identified.

The Office Administrator Search Committee, after much work, hired Kelly Johnson on March 12, 2024 to the role. The members of this committee were Sara Berg, Sara DeLucia, Beth Hazlett, Kirk Howe, Barb Parees, Sarah Robbins, and Marcus Robinson. All of the volunteers and part-time help who kept our office functioning in the absence of a dedicated staff member are thanked!

Director of Music Search Committee was formed following the resignation of Douglas-Jayd Burn. Members of this search committee were Sara DeLucia, Chuck Herrold, Barb Parees, Sarah Robbins, and Andrew Swensen. In October Shay Carter was hired and joined the Staff on November 3, 2024. We are grateful for Kirk Howe's talents, musical gifts, and leadership while at the organ and leading music during the interim.

The contract of Reverend Sarah Robbins to serve as Interim Pastor was extended until July 31, 2025. In addition to staff changes and search committees, the Personnel Committee has new faces! Sara DeLucia, Patty Halverson, and Mary Lang are the new members as of October. Andrew Swensen will rejoin once the PNC work wraps up.

With gratitude to the 2024 Personnel Committee Barb Parees (chair), Carol Emerson, and Andrew Swensen.

Respectfully submitted, Sara DeLucia, Patty Halverson, and Mary Lang

STEWARDSHIP

"Embracing Our Future With Faith"

The Credits:

Stewardship Committee Members: **Patty Halverson, Beth Hazlett, Peter Kaplan** (Chair), and **Barb Parees**.

Essential Support: **Pastor Sarah Robbins** (two excellent Stewardship sermons and essential leadership); **Office Administrator Kelly Johnson** (Stewardship brochure design and production, pledge tracking, and 2023- 2024 pledge payment reminders); and **Session Members** (follow-up calls to obtain pledges).

Moments for Stewardship During Worship in October and November: **Pam Bower, Calvin Tantalo,** and **Tom Juring**.

Written Testimonials for the Stewardship brochure: **Judy Schryer, Carol Emerson,** and **Lori King**.

Above All: The **Members and Friends of Sixth Church** who generously pledged to the 2024-2025 Stewardship Campaign!!

The Results:

The Stewardship Committee is delighted to report that the 2024-2025 Stewardship Campaign has been successfully completed, and that we exceeded the Campaign's goal for pledges. Thank you! Here are the results in detail:

Dollar Amount of Pledges Received: We received pledges totaling **\$361,533, which exceeded our \$357,000 goal by \$4,533 or 1.27%**. It is also worth noting that **the amount of the pledges we received was 3.3% higher than last year's total of \$350,000**.

Number of Pledges Received: 86, down from last year's 89 pledges.

Pledge Increases: 52 (63%) of the 83 households who pledged to the 2023-2024 campaign increased their 2024- 2025 pledges by at least 2% (the increase we requested). Many households increased their pledges by well over 2%.

All of the metrics of this year's campaign were positive, with the exception of the number of pledges. We continue to see a decline in the number of pledges received, although this year's decline was much smaller than last year's. We received 97 pledges during the 2022-2023 campaign, 89 during the 2023-2024 campaign, and 86 this year. As in recent years, the decline was due to a combination of deaths, people moving away, and households unable to pledge due to their economic circumstances.

The Theme:

At present, our congregation is in a period of transition as we optimistically seek a new installed pastor. At the same time, under Pastor Sarah's skilled interim leadership, life goes on at Sixth much as it has in recent years.

We felt that this combination of faith and continuity should determine the theme for this year's campaign. We have faith that through our prayers and discernment, God will guide us on the path to a bright future. At the same time, we have faith that the remarkable strengths of our congregation, and the talents of its individual members, will once again guide us into a new and fruitful period in our history.

We struggled a bit with the wording of theme, until Pastor Sarah offered the perfect word to express our optimistic outlook - we are embracing our future with faith.



The Process:

Once we had agreed upon the theme in late Spring, we recruited three people to present Moments for Stewardship during worship in October and November, and three people to write testimonials for the stewardship brochure. All of them offered eloquent and highly personal perspectives on why Sixth Church is important to them. We were especially proud that one of our youth, **Calvin Tantalo**, stepped forward to offer his thoughts about Sixth.

After we received the written testimonials and wrote the Stewardship letter, **Kelly Johnson** did a wonderful job creating the stewardship brochure. The committee joined her to mail in mid-October. At that point, the Campaign went into high gear. **Pastor Sarah** presented her two stewardship sermons on October 27th and November 3rd, which was Stewardship Dedication Sunday.

The congregation's response was swift and positive. Before Thanksgiving, we had received pledges exceeding 80% of our goal! The Session and Stewardship Committee members followed up with members and friends who had not yet pledged, and we met the campaign's goal well before Christmas. In some years, the campaign has extended well into the new year.

We are profoundly grateful for your generous and prompt response to this year's campaign. You have truly shown that you embrace the future of Sixth Church with faith!

Peace and Blessings, The Stewardship Committee

WORSHIP

I'm happy to report that 2024 was a mostly uneventful year for the Worship and Music committee. The two highlights were the addition of Shay Carter to run the music program and the return of the Christmas luncheon after the pageant.

It took no time at all for Shay to find her rhythm so the committee cannot take any credit for the success she is bringing to worship every week. There is a return to utilizing more of the talent within the church and this has been met with positive response.

I haven't heard anything from anyone about inclusive language in worship in quite some time. Of course, this can be revisited at any time, but from all appearances it seems that worship is striking the right chord in this area.

There was some discussion about the postlude at the end of the service. The issue was that some visitors were making it out the door without a proper welcome from the congregation. The Worship committee has worked with the ushers to make sure both exits have an usher to greet anyone new to our sanctuary. Making sure we welcome the stranger in our midst is so fundamental to who we are, I'm glad we have a solution in place.

Moving toward Advent and Christmas last year, we adopted a wonderful protocol that guided us through the season with artwork, lectionaries and topics of discussion. There was much discussion of how we personalize this. The biggest issue was about how to make the metaphor of a quilt into something more tangible. There seemed to be enthusiasm for the concept but little desire for anyone to actually take it on. I will take my share of the responsibility for letting this slip. I'm hoping future endeavors come to better fruition.

I have a very short wish list for 2025. I would like to make sure that Shay feels completely supported by the congregation and would be very interested to know if there are any larger projects she would like to take on. I'm thinking of possibilities to combining forces with another congregation and/or producing a larger work of music. Stay tuned!

I would like to see Worship and Music working closely with Church and Community to keep a presence at the Squirrel Hill First Friday events. Keeping in touch with our neighbors cannot be overestimated.

I want to keep the Christmas luncheon going.

I also want to thank Sarah Robbins for being on top of everything and making our job so easy. As we prepare for a transition, we are prepared to work with the next Pastor and make change happen as smoothly as we can.

Respectfully submitted, Scott Bell (chair, Music and Worship Committee)



The **deadline** for the March newsletter is:
Monday, February 24st.

Please email articles and announcements to the church office at officesixthchurch@gmail.com.

You can also put printed copies on the office desk.

Thanks you!



SUMMER CAMPS

GROWING HAPPY CAMPERS SINCE 1947

SUMMER CALENDAR

JUNE 22-27
DAY CAMP FOR 1ST-8TH GRADE
OVERNIGHT LEADERS IN TRAINING - 9TH TO 11TH

JUNE 30-JULY 2
BRING YOUR GROUP FOR A DAY OF CAMPY FUN!

JULY 6-11
OVERNIGHT CAMP - 3RD TO 8TH

JULY 14-18
DAY CAMP - 1ST TO 8TH

JULY 20-25
OVERNIGHT SERVICE ADVENTURE CAMP - MS AND HS
OVERNIGHT LIFEGUARDING CAMP - 15 AND UP

JULY 27-AUGUST 1
DAY CAMP - K TO 5TH
OVERNIGHT CAMP - 6TH TO 8TH

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LAUGH, DISCOVER, WORSHIP, PLAY, LIVE!

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Use your summer to
make a difference!*



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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