

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Make sure you reserve a
seat at our upcoming
Christmas Concert

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

**SOLD
OUT**

~~December 10, 2016 4:00 P.M.~~

December 11, 2016 2:00 P.M.

**SOLD
OUT**

~~December 11, 2016 5:00 P.M.~~

Childcare available for the first two services.
RSVP to childcare@LOPC.org by 12/4.

| DATE | ACTION | WAYS TO CONNECT | NOTES |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Thursday December 8 | Last Day to Pick-up Tickets | LOPC Ministry Center (9:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.) | Tickets not claimed by 12/8 will be distributed to those on the waitlist. |

A FREE-WILL OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN. SUGGESTED DONATION \$20

December 2016

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See more at LOPC.org

Sueños (Dreams)

by Lauren Gully, Pastor – Mission & Spiritual Formation



In October, I travelled to Guatemala to participate in a pastor's trip with International Justice Mission and to check in on our other partners Fotokids and Amigos del Lago. It's hard to know how to talk about a trip that exposes the hard truth about a place and about humanity. I don't really know how to answer when people ask me how Guatemala was. "It was good," is what I've said to some of you, but perhaps a more accurate answer is that my heart again has been changed, and I know, with even more detail, my dreams for the people I met in Guatemala when the Kingdom of God has fully arrived.

When I was in Terra Nueva, one of the small, impoverished communities outside of Guatemala City, I met a boy named Homerio and his mother. Homerio is a student in Fotokids, and Nancy McGirr, the executive director of Fotokids, took me to visit them in their home. Homerio lived in an alley between two homes. For a roof, they had attached a piece of sheet metal that poorly connected the sides of the two other homes. The sky peeked through the roof through holes in the sheet metal. Homerio's mom said she didn't consider their alley a home—just a roof. Even though Homerio is made fun of at school because he lives in an alley, he dreams of one day being able to provide for his mother and sisters.

Later in the week, IJM took me to a home for victims of child sexual assault. Most of the girls there were around 11 years old and had been abused by people closest to them, including their fathers. I met a girl there whose mother had been sending her to her uncle's house to bring him food on a regular basis for years, and every time she visited she was abused. She told us that she felt like she had to go because she wanted to be obedient to her mother. Because of her therapist and social worker, she now dreams of helping other girls like her when she grows up.

Perhaps the work our mission partners do, can be best summed up in one more story about someone else who I met on the trip whose name is Evelyn. She was one of the first students of Fotokids, and grew up living in the dump. Through Fotokids she had help and encouragement to stay in school and went on to complete her undergraduate degree. She is now married with two children and is currently transitioning to the role of Fotokids executive director. I asked her what Fotokids meant to her through all of these years, and with tears in her eyes, she told me it helped her to dream—even in the dump.

These are the dreams that I have brought back with me from Guatemala. By telling these stories, continuing our partnerships and remembering those who live far away, I believe that we are one day closer to the fulfillment of God's beautiful dream when all children are protected, have access to clean water, food and healthcare, and when children are free from poverty and dream audaciously. For more information on these partners please visit <http://www.lopc.org/ministry/mission/trips-and-partners>.





November 27 – December 18, 2016


Advent is a time of waiting and preparation, and a good time to ask questions about what we are waiting for, exactly. This Advent, there will be a sermon and study series focused on salvation, belonging, courage and grace, with an accompanying study guide available now. You can download the study guide from the LOPC.org website or pick it up in hard copy form in the Ministry Center reception area or Sanctuary Narthex. The study guide can be used with your existing small groups, but study groups have not been designated for this series. Questions? Email becki@LOPC.org

Christmas Poinsettias

Help decorate the Sanctuary for Christmas Worship Services by purchasing poinsettias to honor those who have been or still are important in your life. A list of "in Memory of" and "in Honor of" will appear in the Christmas Eve worship bulletins.

Look for the yellow Deacon's Booth on the plaza on December 4 and 11 to place your order. The suggested donation is \$15.00 per poinsettia.

After the worship services, Deacons will deliver the poinsettias to bring cheer to the home-bound or those living in care facilities. If you know someone who would enjoy receiving a beautiful poinsettia or you would like to deliver one, please sign up at the Deacon Booth or contact Janet Jourgensen, Receptionist, (925) 283-8722, or Kaaren Rose at khrose@sbcglobal.net



Poinsettias \$15

Yes, I / we would like to donate a poinsettia to help decorate the Sanctuary for Christmas Eve Worship Services.

☐ In memory of _____
OR

☐ In honor of _____
Example: birth, wedding, anniversary, appreciation, etc.

☐ I would like to help the Deacons deliver poinsettias to the home-bound and/or those in care facilities. Questions? Contact janet@LOPC.org.

Given by _____

Phone # _____ Amount \$ _____

Deadline: 12/11

Please make checks payable to LOPC. Thank you.
Fill out this form and return to the Ministry Center office at LOPC.

A list of names "In Memory" and "In Honor of" will appear in the Christmas Eve worship bulletins.

Men's Retreat 5/5 - 5/7



Location: Zephyr Point Conference Center (Lake Tahoe)

Zephyr Cove Conference Grounds along the beautiful lake front of South Lake Tahoe will be the site of our second annual LOPC Men's retreat. This retreat is open to all the men of the church. Our featured speaker for the weekend will be Ray Campton. Questions? Contact chris@LOPC.org.

Men's Breakfast - 12/21

Where women are always welcome.
7:00 a.m. | Davies Room

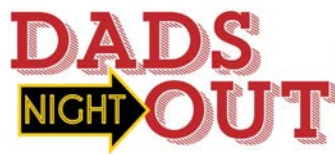


Gerald Chinen, LOPC Care Pastor

"My Sabbatical & Trip To Okinawa"

\$5 donation at the door for breakfast
R.S.V.P. to janet@LOPC.org or call
(925) 283-8722 x223 before noon on 12/20

Dad's Night Out - 12/1



Come join the men of LOPC for a casual evening of food and fellowship at Metro in Lafayette at 6:30 p.m. Please RSVP to matt@LOPC.org.



An Invitation To A Victorian Tea

December 2, 2016
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

Presbyterian Women of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church cordially invite all women to a Victorian Tea to be held in the Fellowship Hall on December 2 from One to Three O'clock.

Picture fine china, dainty tea sandwiches, flaky cookies and soul-warming tea! Add to this musical entertainment and the telling of the story of God's gift to man. It is the prescription for a joyful way to start the Advent Season. Bring your own favorite teacup and saucer to add to the holiday glow. Free tickets available.

Questions? Contact Charlotte at (925) 280-6038.

Presbyterian
Women
Living for Jesus

Women's Advent Gathering 12/8



7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. in the Chapel

Mary said yes to giving birth to Jesus. What are you being called to give birth to in your own life? What is growing in your spirit right now that is God's will?

Enjoy refreshments and conversation afterwards. Interfaith Women's Groups, comprised primarily of Muslim, Jewish and Christian members, will meet together for an Advent Service with messages and music from all of our faith traditions.

All LOPC women and friends are invited to come and discover the richness and beauty of exploring God through the richness of Interfaith Women worshipping together.

Chicks with Sticks



Donate new or gently used baby clothes to "Chicks with Sticks" by contacting Ellena Bloedorn, enbloed@comcast.net or Dianne Schneider, dianneschneider@hotmail.com (sizes 0-18 mos. only). Donations of yarn of all colors also gratefully accepted.

The Season of Giving

by Molly Maduck, Seedlings Communications Board Member



What brings you the most joy during the holidays? Maybe it is engaging in special family traditions or seeing old friends at festive parties. For most of us, it is not the things, but rather the connections that bring us the most joy. For this reason, the holidays are also a time for giving back, a time for connecting with others in need. At Seedlings, the

holidays are certainly filled with ample fun within our little community, but this time of year is also known as the "Season of Giving." Therefore, a goal is to instill within our children a desire to give, so that they can both connect with, and bring a little joy to other children who deserve the same.

Each year, the LOPC community looks forward to welcoming new guests during Warm Winter Nights. This year, Warm Winters Nights (November 7-21) gave families without a home the opportunity to have warm meals and a place to stay, and also to build relationships with members of our church community. This November, our older students helped make a beautiful welcome banner to put up in Fellowship Hall, welcoming the visiting families with paint, color and love. We learned that within these visiting families, there were several young children. Therefore, many Seedlings families contributed to a toy drive, so their parents and church tutors could play with them during their time here.

This month, the Seedlings Outreach Team will set up a "Giving Tree" in our Seedlings lobby. The tree will be filled with paper ornaments, each one representing a foster child in the Bay Area. Our students will be able to take an ornament, read about the age, gender, and Christmas wish of that child, and provide him or her with that gift. The donated gifts and cards will go to foster children through Alternative Family Services. The simple acts of purchasing a new toy and making a heartfelt card for another child give our children the hands-on experience of giving back. The tree will be in our lobby from December 1-16.

Even when we start small, service learning teaches kids that they can make a difference in the world. We might not be able to help everyone, but we can, in some small way, help someone. Hopefully this holiday season brings you both many moments of joy, as well as opportunities to serve and share your countless gifts with others. As Christian author J.R. Miller once wrote, "Nothing else in all life is such a maker of joy and cheer as the privilege of doing good."

Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church presents

Night in Bethlehem

12.7.16



Night in Bethlehem is LOPC's annual outreach event for families, from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., during which kids and their families explore what a marketplace in Bethlehem might have looked like the night of the birth of Jesus. This interactive, intergenerational gathering is meant to simulate the intensity and chaos of a nighttime festival. There is no set schedule; rather, families are welcome to come and go as they please. While at Night in Bethlehem, they will encounter shopkeepers, Roman soldiers, and beggars, all of whom have gathered in Bethlehem in accordance with the Roman census – and maybe, just maybe, these families will catch a glimpse of the holy family whose journey to Bethlehem gives our own journey to this city all the meaning in the world.

Your help is invaluable in bringing the marketplace in Bethlehem to life for our families. Whether you're a shopkeeper running a booth, a census taker helping families sign in, or a helper who sets up and takes down the city, you are an integral part of our community. Through you, families in the Lamorinda area will experience a piece of the Christmas story in a real and tangible way.

For more information and to volunteer to help,
contact Ryan Timpte at ryan@LOPC.org or (925) 283-8722, x234.



CHRISTMAS OPPORTUNITIES



Virtual Alternative Gift Market

Go to www.alternativegifts.org/pages/gift-registry/ and select a gift from around the globe to honor someone in your life while making a sustainable difference. Gifts will only be available for purchase online this year.

Monument Crisis Food Box Drive

Pick up a list and box on the plaza on 12/4 after both services and return the filled box on 12/11 to the truck parked in front of the Oak Room. During the week, boxes and lists of required items may be picked up in the Ministry Center Office.

Harbor House Toy Collection

Purchase one of the desired gifts from the list and bring the unwrapped present to the LOPC Ministry Center Office no later than 12/14.

Congo Necklace & Name Tag Holders

This team will be on the Plaza 12/18. All proceeds support Build Congo Schools which is currently collecting donations to build a sixth school in Dibuko with nine classrooms. Choose a lovely handmade gift for someone while providing a brighter future for a Congolese student.

Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispana (AKA Primera Pres.)

La Posada, the journey of the Bay Area's "newest" Presbyterian Church. Each year during Advent, a posada, "a journey," a candlelight procession, winds through the Oakland Fruitvale neighborhoods. The congregation commemorates the journey of the founding of the church and the journeys of its members. In the mid-90s, Presbytery recognized that a church serving the Hispanic population was needed in the East Bay. A small group began the process of planting a congregation, to be led by the Presbyterian minister Pablo Moratoya.

Throughout the year Primera programs follow the Presbyterian liturgy, with Deacons and Session providing leadership. What is unique is that each week, Monday through Wednesday, English as a Second Language classes are provided, as well as computer classes, and annual citizenship classes.

This past year, Nancy Henderson, a LOPC member, held sewing classes twice a month, using donated sewing machines. To date, this little group has sold almost \$250 worth of merchandise, with proceeds going to the food pantry.

Primera is located in a cluster of low-income neighborhoods, mired in poverty. Unemployment is the highest in the Oakland area. Primera has a food pantry, stocked by the members, and distributed to those who are in distress. A 50 lb. bag of beans will provide a meal for 60 adults and 18 children. If you can help with the food pantry, or if you have fabric for the sewing group, or gently used clothes, your donations would be appreciated.

Questions? Contact Mary Kay and Don Atherton, athertonco@comcast.net or Robin@LOPC.org

New Members - October 2016

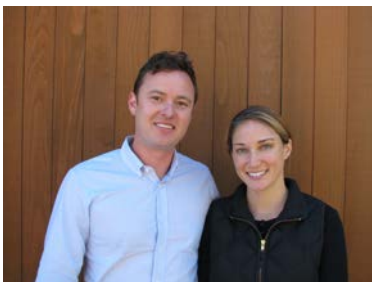
by Matt Bell, Director – Community Life



Cameron & Larry Adkison, along with their son, Tyler (15), moved to Lafayette last year, after Larry took a position at the UC Office of the President in Oakland. Cameron spends much of her time coordinating home-remodeling projects and Tyler's hybrid charter school/homeschool program. They appreciate LOPC's active role in mission, and the welcoming, authentic nature of the church.



Suzanne & Bob Garrett have lived in Walnut Creek for 30 years and have a grown daughter, Carolyn. Bob is retired from Union Bank, and enjoys a number of outdoor activities, including leading wilderness trips. Suzanne works as a professor and consultant, and enjoys volunteering for a number of organizations, including Resource Exchange International in Vietnam.



Mike & Eden Gschwend moved from San Francisco to Lafayette earlier this year, along with their son, Mason, who is sixteen months old. Mike works in commercial real estate with Kidder Mathews, and Eden is a Solutions Engineer for Salesforce. They have enjoyed traveling the world but are thankful for being able to settle down near family, and appreciate the LOPC Community.



Lily Chao lives in Oakland and has two grown children, Jonathan and Elizabeth. She is retired from American Airlines and has enjoyed traveling the world, as well as living in New York, Los Angeles and Shanghai. Lily is an avid tennis player, and appreciates the music, sermons, and welcoming congregation at LOPC.



Roz Breuner-Phair lives in Alamo with her husband, Tom, and in retirement, enjoys entertaining, especially when her family (including 15 grandchildren!) is involved. She enjoys reading, playing bridge, and being involved with charity work for the Children's Home Society. Roz appreciates the staff and worship services at LOPC.



Julian Chenault has spent many years living abroad but has settled in Orinda with her husband, Rich, and daughter, Jacqueline, who is seven years old. She is an Account Director for Legion, and enjoys staying active in a number of sports including biking, skiing and swimming. Julian is thankful for finding LOPC and being able to introduce her daughter to the church.



Yuji and Hiroko Shibuya moved from Tokyo to Orinda in 1990, and have two grown daughters, Aki and Kai. Yuji started his own consulting company and teaches finance and decision science at SFSU. Hiroko is a ballet dancer and teaches at the Contra Costa Ballet Centre, but her full-time work is as the Worship & Music Coordinator here at LOPC.



Alison Rein and her husband, Dennis, have lived in Lafayette for 36 years, and have a grown son, Chris. Alison is retired as a Park Supervisor from the East Bay Regional Park District, and enjoys hiking, learning to play the guitar, and studying Spanish. She appreciates the music and sermons at LOPC, as well as the friendly, welcoming congregation.



Susan Wentworth lives in Vallejo and works in Martinez as a partner of LASR Lighting, a commercial lighting company. She spends quite a bit of time at LOPC though, as she is the Associate Director for Preschool Ministries and coordinates the childcare program at the church. She can often be spotted wearing orange and black as she is an avid S.F. Giants fan.



Liz & Adam Voelker moved from the east coast to Lafayette last year, and have two children, Evelyn (3) and Thomas (1). They are proud Penn State alums and Liz looks after the kids (though is planning a start-up), while Adam works in commercial real estate for Tishman Speyer. They enjoy live music, visiting Hawaii, and are appreciative of the family and mission ministries at LOPC.

New Members Class – March 4-5, 2017



The LOPC Membership Class is an opportunity to meet the pastoral staff, have your questions answered, learn about the programs and ministries of the church, and make new friends. The class also serves to clarify what LOPC believes God has called this church to be, so visitors can make an informed decision about formalizing their commitment to this faith community. Ask questions and find out more about LOPC. All are welcome! The next LOPC Membership Class takes place on the weekend of March 4-5, 2017. Childcare available by reservation. Questions? Contact matt@LOPC.org.

What is *thursday*Fellowship?

Thursday Fellowship is a gathering of “the older and wiser among us.” We share a meal and enjoy fellowship, activities and entertainment. Everyone brings a half sandwich, we provide a tasty salad and yummy dessert, along with coffee, tea or water.

Each Thursday begins with an exercise, best suited to the age and mobility of our guests. Exercise is followed by a craft activity, which gives our guests an opportunity to express themselves creatively.

Next, guests enjoy a salad and beverage for lunch, followed by entertainment to top off our fun-filled day. Lunch is accompanied with various musical selections.



Parent-Daughter Workshops with Girls Leadership

Coming in 2017



Girls Leadership offers a series of courses for girls and their parents to build emotional intelligence. In the upcoming workshops, parent-daughter pairs will learn about identifying healthy relationships, finding their voices, and communicating more effectively. Girls also develop resilient responses to conflict, challenges, and mistakes. The program is interactive, fun, and enlightening, and it's also a great opportunity to gain insight and spend time with your daughter in a new and different way.

Questions? Please email jaime@LOPC.org.



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

FAMILY SERVICES: 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

TRADITIONAL SERVICES : 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

HOMECOMING COMMUNION SERVICE: 11:00 p.m.

This year, our 11:00 p.m. Island Style Christmas Eve Celebration will feature the Na 'Okina Hawaiian band and dancers! Like our summer Aloha Sunday services there will be Hawaiian music, and, of course, we will sing some of our favorite Christmas songs and share in communion. We'd love to have you join us for this special service and you can also participate beforehand by sending us your most recent or favorite photo of yourself and/or of your family in island or tropical attire. Please send your photo to hiroko@LOPC.org.



LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | 49 KNOX DRIVE, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549

MEN'S QUARTERLY GATHERING
SUCCESS TO SIGNIFICANCE
JANUARY 31, 2017

Calling all men with young families! Come connect with other men and hear a keynote speaker that will challenge our conceptions of success and faithfulness.
Location & time TBD. Questions?
Contact chris@LOPC.org

Boys Leadership Series

At LOPC, we want to be a place where boys mature; being confident in how God has created them while looking ahead to help them grow into the men they desire to become. To help foster this vision, we proudly introduce the Boys Leadership series. This series is comprised of three sessions with a kick-off speaker, Dr. Meg Meeker, on January 26, 2017 from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. at LOPC. The next two sessions will be held on two consecutive Thursday evenings - February 16 (session #2) and February 23, 2017 (session #3). We will focus on topics of faith, friendship, social media, healthy body image and sexuality and becoming engaged community members. This series is for parents only and has been created for parents who have boys of all ages. This class will be led by Rev. Jaime Polson, Chris Baldwin and several community professionals. Please email dave@LOPC.org.

Registration fee: \$10 (If you are participating in the three-session Boys Leadership Series, the fee will be waived). If you are unable to attend all three classes, you are warmly welcome to attend the parent education event with Dr. Meg Meeker on January 26, 2017 from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. at LOPC. This speaking event is open to all families of boys and girls. Please register for this speaking event online at www.LOPC.org. Registration for this speaking event begins December 2, 2016.

Dr. Meg Meeker is a leading authority on parenting and children's health. She combines her experience as a mother and a physician who has practiced pediatric and adolescent medicine for over 30 years. Her work with countless families over the years has served as the inspiration behind her best sellers: *Strong Mothers, Strong Sons*; *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*; *Boys Should Be Boys*; and *The Ten Habits of Happy Mothers*.

2017 Mom's Retreat

CONNECTING

Your Heart and Spirit

Your path as a Mom and Woman

| 9:00 a.m. | 9:30 a.m. | Host |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Breakfast & Social Time Oak Room | Program featuring Paige Nolan | Jaime Polson and the Family Ministry Team |

Questions? Email dave@LOPC.org



Guest Speaker: Paige Nolan is a writer, speaker, and coach whose mission is honoring the truth of women's lives

Find out more about Paige at paigenolan.com

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SEA KAYAK & CAMPING IN THE BAHAMAS FEBRUARY 19-26, 2017

Sea kayaking in the Bahamas and camping on its remote and uninhabited beaches: the weather is cool but the water stays warm; the sand is pure and white and the ocean more blue than your dreams; the islands are secluded and the kayak camping is classic.

Join us for a paddle through Paradise as we slip between the islands of the Greater Exumas and camp on pristine beaches where we are the only visitors to be seen. You'll learn kayaking and camping skills, enjoy a supportive and fun community all in a setting that couldn't be more beautiful.

Trip cost is \$950 (airfare and pre-trip lodging not included). The trip is for novices who have never done this before and should be considered moderately strenuous. The trip is led by Steve Harrington, a certified Open Water Sea Kayak Instructor by the American Canoe Association who has guided in this area before for Higher Rock Wilderness Adventures and as an instructor for both Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School.

Join us—participant numbers are limited!

For more information contact lauren@LOPC.org.

Micro Business Mentors Partner with Children of Faith In India



Micro Business Mentors (MBM) has established a lending program in Visahakapatnam, India. They are working with Children of Faith to create a network for small business owners to get an interest-free loan to start or expand their businesses. This adds to MBM's existing programs in Uganda and the Philippines.

Since its inception in 2008, MBM has made over 800 loans, impacting over 5,000 individuals and their families in reaching economic stability. MBM's vision for 2025 is to expand its work to 10 locations, 10 new mission partners, and impacting 100,000 people. In India, they have just begun, making 20 loans last September. The borrowers' businesses vary-vegetable stalls, tailors, goat herding, small cafes and more. These borrowers work closely with an on-site mentor who is supervised by the organization's Board of Directors. This mentor meets and talks with the borrowers from the beginning of the application process till the loan is paid off. The loans, varying between \$300-\$600 are repaid in six months. New loans will be made as these initial loans are repaid. Borrowers are identified through the growing Christian Network that Children of Faith is part of. MBM has a repayment rate of about 85%. Funding for these loans is from donations to the organization. Overhead costs are very low; in the U.S. the program is run entirely by volunteers. LOPC members Del Olson and Vince Wirthman serve on its board.

Learn more about the work of MBM and Children of Faith by visiting their website www.microbusinessmentors.com/childrenoffaithmissions.org

Youth Corner

High School Progressive Brinner-12/11

An evening of fun and festivities where we have breakfast for dinner at three different local homes! Meet at LOPC at 7:00 p.m., ends at 9:00 p.m. Questions? Contact keris@LOPC.org. Youth may wear pajamas or Christmas wear.



5th-8th Mediocre Talent Show - 12/14

Calling all youth to dust off your best untalents and show them off at our mediocre talent show. No one is perfect, and we embrace that fact about one another! The show takes place during YOW youth group 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.



High School Seniors and College Students' Dinner - 12/21

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Come connect and share stories, ask questions and hear about how your fellow youth are doing! Contact keris@LOPC.org for details.



Confirmation 2017!

For youth 8th grade through 12th grade

Confirmation is a time of learning, asking questions and exploring into one's faith as a Christian. It is an opportunity to

personally and publicly commit to following Christ and discussing what that means in today's world.

The class meets Sundays from 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted. With a limited number of sessions it is important students do their best to attend every class. Make-up sessions are available with the youth directors upon request.

Subjects include: What is the Church and Bible?; Worship; Mission; Sacraments; Trinity; Resurrection; Statements of Faith; Interfaith Relations.

Questions? Contact keris@LOPC.org.



Dates:

- Jan. 8 Confirmation Info Meeting; 12:00 p.m.
- Jan 22 Registration Due (no fee)
- Jan. 29 Session 1
- Feb. 5 Session 2
- Feb. 12 Session 3
- Feb. 19 Session 4
- Feb. 26 Session 5
- Mar. 5 Session 6
- Mar. 19 Confirmation Sunday in Sanctuary
9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.



Alex Aruliah, LOPC Elder

Alex Aruliah found his passion early in life. In high school, he became involved in Children's ministry, and he's been active in this field ever since. On his first Sunday attending LOPC he volunteered to help. "I'm very passionate about

youth," he says. "My desire is that when high schoolers graduate and go off on their own they have a relationship with Jesus. If they don't find a good community, God might slowly recede from their lives. My hope, and belief is that a strong faith enables them to continue on their own."

Alex began his walk of faith in Chennai, Madras, India where he was born into a Christian family in a country where only 2% are Christian. "I was raised by a single mom as my parents separated the year I was born. Technically we were quite poor growing up, but we did have a house my father had purchased. I and my three sisters were sponsored by Compassion International, an organization which concentrates on education for children. I actually met my sponsor when I came to the states as they lived in Los Gatos."

"Mom made sure we kids went to church school every Sunday. I'm grateful I was raised in Chennai as there was not the religious conflict which occurred in the North where Christians were persecuted. In fact, I was free to express my faith and even had a sign in my office later on which said 'Try Jesus.' Interestingly, when I came to the states my office didn't like it.

"There was a vibrant youth group in my church. I knew that just being born into a Christian household didn't make me a Christian. In my freshman year in high school I accepted Jesus at an alter call. It was a very important day in my life. During my last two years in India I became Children's Ministry Director, a volunteer position, and also had a full-time job. There were 150 kids in the program.

"God blessed me with work in a fast-paced growth company. My job was to speak with insurance

Journey of Faith

by Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

companies to follow up on health care claims. There was an office in Lafayette, and Char Parrish, who became my mentor, felt someone in the company should learn about how health care insurance works in the United States. I first came to Lafayette in 2003 for a month and advanced quickly. When I went back to India, Char approached me asking, 'Do you want to come back here for good?' I did in 2008. There were times when I asked, Why me? Why was I born in a poor family, why did my father leave us? Why was there a switch in companies? I see now God always had a purpose, which was revealed later. I realize I shouldn't care if it's later. I put my full faith in God."

Alex asked Char about a Presbyterian Church. She knew of LOPC and his first questions was, "Do they have a Children's Ministry?" Yes, they did and needed volunteers so he began with elementary school children using Godly Play. When the FUSE program began and he was asked to take it over as a paying job. "I said, I'll take it but I don't want to be paid. I have a good paying job and want to give back." Then he began working with the middle school kids on Wednesday evenings. Wanting to do still more he added high schoolers in the Sunday evening program, By The Way. He has been on every mission trip since 2009.

Serving first as a deacon, Alex is now an LOPC elder. He credits the Stephen Ministry program for helping him through a difficult time in his life. Happier times came when he met Sugthani, here on a one-month business trip from India. They had a two-year long-distance relationship before they married in her home town of Bangalore. This past summer Suganthi also went on a mission trip and she volunteers with the high school kids.

"Although my faith has matured I still sometimes ask, 'Why me?'," Alex reflects. "Then I remember, perhaps I can't see what your purpose is, God, but I have faith. You have brought me safely thus far, taking me through many ups and downs. You do have a plan for me. Yes, God is good." His favorite Bible verse, Romans, 12:12, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayers."

Christmas Special Offering

Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church has a tradition of illuminating the need that exists for children globally during Christmas. This need is highlighted by acknowledging two LOPC partners whose mission focuses on helping children. This year the two organizations that will be the recipient of the Christmas special offering are JF Kapnek and FOTOKIDS. Both organizations are dedicated to helping children thrive, despite the challenges they face daily.



The JF Kapnek Trust is led by local Lamorinda pediatrician Dan Robbins. His organization responds to the most urgent threats to child survival in Zimbabwe including HIV/AIDS, hunger and access to education.

The Trust continues to prevent over 15,000 cases of HIV/AIDS in newborns every year, creates pre-school programs serving over 18,000 children at 200 preschool sites and provides services to families with disabled children. JF Kapnek successfully partners with the local government and communities to implement meaningful change, ensuring ownership of the programs remain with Zimbabwe's local communities therefore increasing the chance of sustainability.



FOTOKIDS

to capture dreams



Fotokids was founded by award-winning, former Reuters news photographer Nancy McGirr in Guatemala in 1991. The organization began with a group of six children who lived and worked in Guatemala City's vast garbage dump.

Today, Fotokids continues to break the cycle of poverty through training children from violence-stricken communities in Guatemala in visual arts and technology. Fotokids provides a tool for self-expression, creativity, leadership and vocational training experience to hundreds of youth from poor rural and urban areas. The majority of our students, in addition to learning employable skills with Fotokids, receive scholarships to study in traditional schools from primary education through university.

Please consider donating to the Special offerings this Christmas Eve.

Prayers for Congo



Pray for the People of the Congo. Violent protests have erupted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as the government has not held Presidential elections as called for in the

Constitution. Some Congolese have been killed. The Presbyterian Church is committed to peace and democracy, but must also negotiate a volatile security situation. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has 10 mission co-workers based in the DRC.

Please pray for peace and justice for the people of the DRC, that they will have meaningful opportunities to express their political will effectively; pray for our partners and mission co-workers in the DRC as they work to promote peace and reconciliation in times of uncertainty; and pray that wisdom, humility, and righteousness will prevail among the DRC's political leaders.

New Church Directory Coming in 2017



The pastors and staff of LOPC are delighted to announce we will be producing a new pictorial church directory in 2017!

Photography sessions with Lifetouch will begin in mid-January.

You will be hearing LOTS more about this project after the holidays, but no need to wait – we encourage you to schedule your photography session now!! To schedule your appointment, go to our website, LOPC.org/directory and click on the Lifetouch link. That link will take you to the Lifetouch photography scheduling center where you can book a photo appointment.

To run a successful directory campaign we need **VOLUNTEERS!!!** Volunteers will greet families and help them check in for the photography session.

Janet Jourgensen is the LOPC staff contact for this project. Contact her at janet@LOPC.org, or (925) 283-8722 x223 for any questions, comments, suggestions or to **VOLUNTEER!!!**

Volunteer at LOPC

Join the Worship Team



The Worship Team is in need of a few additional members who would like to join this group in a team leadership role. Responsibilities may include Sanctuary decoration, ushering, greeting and traffic control, just to name a few. If you are interested in learning more, please contact one of the Worship Elders: B. Dana Lindstrom (bdana.LOPC@gmail.com) or Jody Black (jody.black@libertymutual.com).

Connecting Ministry

The Connecting Ministry is in need of volunteers to help welcome visitors and new members to the church, and help organize and staff the Welcome Center. If you are interested in the various ministries of the church, enjoy meeting new people, and can serve monthly or bi-monthly, or just want to find out more, please contact Matt Bell at matt@LOPC.org or (925) 283-8722 x231. Thank you!

Traffic

- Traffic Directors needed - Training is provided and no experience is required!
- To help with the traffic flow, please use your turn signal when entering or leaving the parking lot.
- Any suggestions and ideas for traffic control are greatly appreciated and always welcome.

Questions? Email traffic@LOPC.org.



Giving Your Gifts to LOPC

by Doug Bontemps, Finance Chair

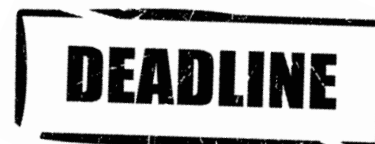
As the Advent candles light the path to Christmas, I feel the rising spirit of Christ and Christmas. I am so grateful to be a part of LOPC, where we celebrate differences, but are bound by our belief in God, and a commitment to respect and love one another. As part of the LOPC Finance Team, I witness the dedication of the staff and volunteers who make the church work, provide the spiritual programs and reach out to thousands of people in the communities around us with the love and comfort of Christ.

I am also grateful for the financial gifts from all of us, which enable such a vibrant church. And with those gifts comes an unspoken covenant that the money be used effectively. We take that trust to heart, and I can assure you that your church is healthy and growing. For the 10-month period ending October 2016 (current, as of this writing), we are on budget and feel confident in the outlook for the remainder of the year. Still, it's hard to predict the year-end results since December is such a large part of the budget year. Income is ahead of plan by 7%, due in part to a special mission gift and to pledges. The special mission gift was deployed (shown as an expense), but otherwise expenses are right in line with the budget. So, at this point our net is ahead of plan. Regarding the Sanctuary project, campaign pledge receipts are ahead of expectations. We expect to collect the remaining funds over the next 1-1/2 years of the campaign. Thank you for all of the ways that you support LOPC. Merry Christmas!

| | January to October 2016 | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Actual | Budget |
| Pledge Income | \$ 1,708,245 | \$ 1,616,800 |
| Non-Pledge Gifts & Offerings | \$ 172,016 | \$ 176,100 |
| Mission & Other Special Gifts | \$ 101,736 | \$ 41,512 |
| Faith Component | <u>\$ 3,185</u> | <u>\$ 3,000</u> |
| Total Congregational Giving | \$ 1,985,182 | \$ 1,837,412 |
| Session Emerging Needs Fund | \$ 50,000 | \$ 50,000 |
| Seedlings Offset to Shared Costs | \$ 130,792 | \$ 125,000 |
| Foundation Support | \$ 93,077 | \$ 93,077 |
| All Other | <u>\$ 50,888</u> | <u>\$ 50,500</u> |
| Total Income | \$ 2,309,939 | \$ 2,155,989 |
| Expenses | <u>(\$ 2,668,273)</u> | <u>(\$ 2,613,097)</u> |
| Net Deficit | <u><u>(\$ 358,334)</u></u> | <u><u>(\$ 457,108)</u></u> |

Deadline to Beat the Tax Man is Near

The end of the year is rapidly approaching. Anyone who plans to make tax-deductible donations to LOPC in 2016 is reminded that the church must either receive your gift by 5:00 p.m. on December 30 or receive your mailed gift postmarked December 31 or earlier. Sorry, we can make no exceptions to these IRS rules. For those giving stock, please note that these gifts must be in LOPC's brokerage account no later than December 31. Please notify Lidia (x229 or lidia@LOPC.org) or Char (x253 or char@LOPC.org) if you are making a stock gift, what stock(s) you're donating and how it should be applied. That way, we'll be on the alert for this gift and will know who it's coming from.



Year-end statements will be mailed in January. To insure the deductibility of your gifts, do not file your 2016 tax return until you receive this statement. Some of your gifts may not be tax-deductible if you file your tax return before receiving a written acknowledgement of your gifts to LOPC.

Another Kind of Autumn Harvest

by Kristi Haigh, Foundation Trustee



Kristi Haigh

Fall is my favorite time of year. While enjoying the fruits of the autumn harvest, I find it also to be a time of renewal as we enjoy clear days, anticipate the rainy season, and begin preparing for Advent and the New Year.

The activities of the LOPC Foundation at this time mirror the harvest cycle. The Foundation's fiscal year ends September 30, three months before LOPC's year-end. By late October, we have a report from our investment advisors of how the portfolios have fared during the prior 12 months. From these results we can determine how much we can "harvest" from the Foundation to support the various ministries and maintain the campus of LOPC during the following year. (The law pertaining to foundations as well as our desire to see the campus grow in order to support both planned and unplanned needs of the Church limits the amount we withdraw.)

Some of the funds we manage are restricted in usage because they are part of endowments, established by donors, but a large portion of the funds are unrestricted and can be used by Session wherever they are needed.

We tell Session's Finance team by the end of October what amounts will be available from the Foundation to assist in meeting operating expenses. During November, Foundation Trustees attend meetings with the Finance team to hear the plans of the various ministry teams for the coming year. The more we understand the work of the church, the better prepared we are to respond when a need arises.

Please know that none of this is possible, sharing the harvest, without the continuing support of Friends of the LOPC Foundation to grow the plantings from which we can reap a generous yield for years to come.

Please contact any trustee to learn more about how to become a Friend of the LOPC Foundation: Dick James, Lynn Trowbridge, Phil Placier, Staci Johnston, Alan Kizor, Dara Youngblood, Kristi Haigh.



Session Highlights – October 2016

by Bill DeWolf, Clerk of Session

In parallel with our stewardship campaign, Session ministry teams are engaging with our Finance team to develop the budget for next year. This process is not only important to maintain fiscal discipline for our church but plays a very valuable role in lifting up the many activities that our church supports with an eye to optimizing their effectiveness. The budget will be developed over the next few months as the funding of our many programs is bumped up against the response to our stewardship campaign. Session will approve the budget in January.

While Session is charged with the governance of our church, spiritual formation is a key component to all of our meetings. We are afforded the opportunity with each meeting to reflect on how our spiritual values can be incorporated into the decisions we make on behalf of LOPC and weave them into our lives "off the hill." It is our hope that these reflections will guide our church as we look toward a new year. We continue to be excited with the opportunities before us to make a difference.



LOPC
LAFAYETTE-ORINDA
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

49 Knox Drive
Lafayette, CA 94549

DECEMBER 2016

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PASTORAL STAFF

Peter Whitelock - Pastor / Head of Staff
Gerald Chinen - Pastor, Congregational Care
Lauren Gully - Pastor, Mission & Spiritual Formation
Jaime Polson - Pastor, Family Ministry

WORSHIP & MUSIC

Brett Strader, Director
Stewart Scharch, Organist

TREASURER

Char Casella

MINISTRY DIRECTORS

Chris Baldwin, Community Engagement
Matt Bell, Community Life
Keris Dahlkamp, Youth
Chuck Fry, Operations
Coleen Moulton, Seedlings Preschool
Ryan Timpote, Children

FOCUS NEWSLETTER

Ashley Jackson, Communications Director
Jennifer Shaul, Digital & Print Admin
Chuck Fry / Dick James

Thank you to all who contribute to each issue, and to proofreaders Bev Fellows and Janet Jourgensen.

Monthly FOCUS Newsletter Deadline:

DECEMBER 1 for the JANUARY issue.
Email items to communications@LOPC.org.

Weekly CONNECTIONS Deadline:

Monday by 5:00 p.m.
Email communications@LOPC.org.

Sunday Worship Services

9:00 a.m.

11:00 a.m.

Invite Friends & Family



Science and Religion - 12/12

6:00 p.m. in the Davies Room

A splash of Christmas spirit – a dash of friendship!

Join the Science and Religion study group to share a warm meal, good conversation, and comradeship around the table. We will meet and anticipate a wonderful evening of Fellowship.

Connect with us online!



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