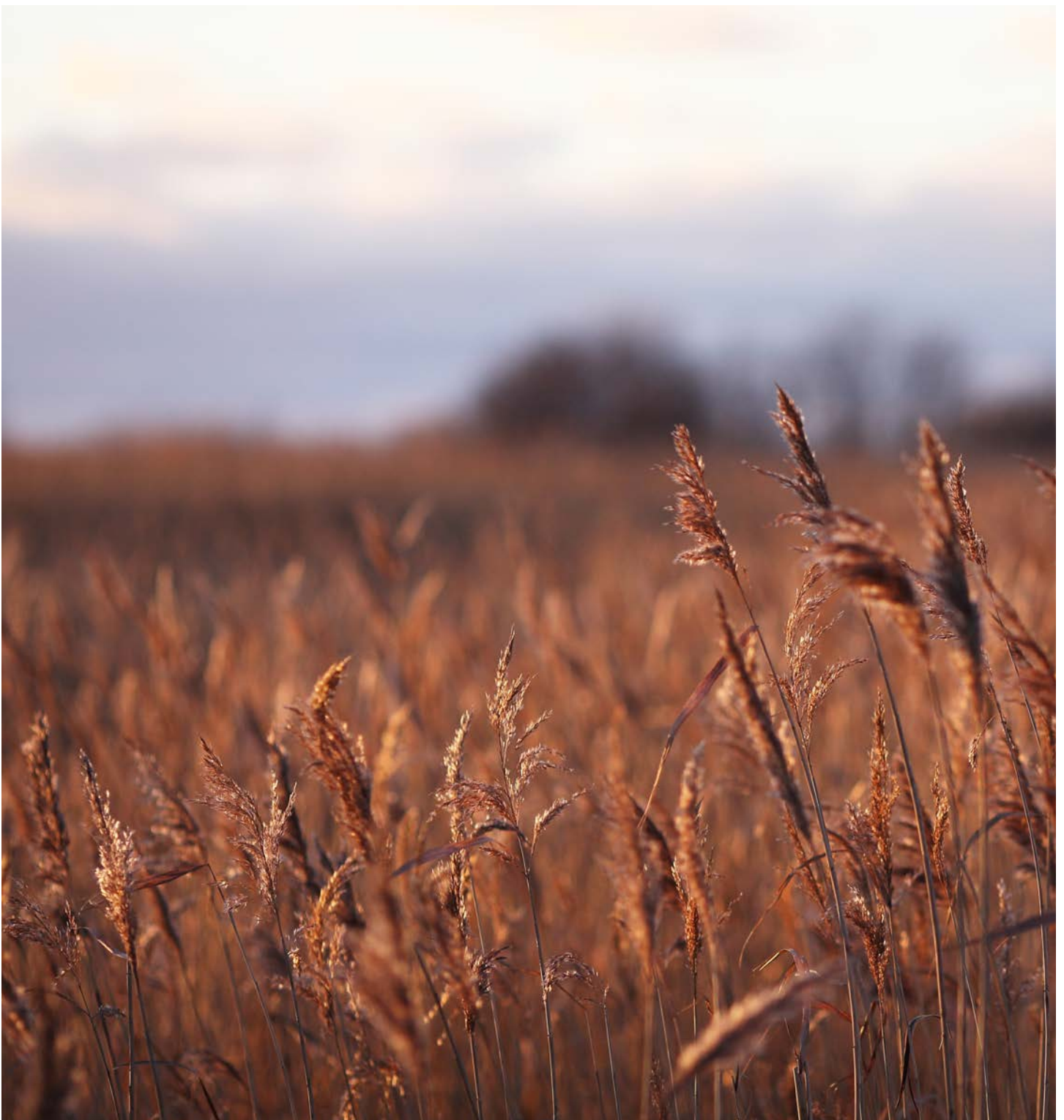


# FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Alive!  
In Christ... in the World



February 2020

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# February 2020

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# is living into my calling just ONE MORE THING TO DO?



*By Lauren Gully - Pastor, Mission & Spiritual Formation*

Over the past nine months, I’ve been experimenting with my spirituality—and specifically, my sense of calling. That might not surprise you because I am the pastor for Spiritual Formation. But it is easy to pay attention to the louder things in my life that need attention versus the still, small voice I depend on to lead me throughout my day.

I’m definitely all-in on Jesus, even the churchy stuff, but sometimes I’m not sure I want to pray for more of a calling.

As I have been experimenting with my spirituality, I’ve been thinking about what God might be calling me to right now, and my first thought, in all honesty was, “Isn’t what I’m doing already enough?”

It’s easy to think of a calling as a “new thing,” like giving back more, reading the Bible, etc. These things definitely are not bad things in themselves, in fact, I believe they are rewarding things, and I would generally encourage you to do them. But sometimes, it is the everyday tasks, done with more intention, that really, actually, and truly can make a greater difference over a lifetime.

With this understanding of calling, I have looked at the routine things I do, and the intention, feelings, and attitude with which I do them, and whether there is anything I want to try doing differently—and I definitely want to try to do some things differently!

While it sounds trite to say it’s not what you do, so much as how you do it that really is the more pressing, growing edge of Christians. The world doesn’t need more works-based righteousness—the world needs more love!

As Maya Angelou perfectly said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

This is the calling I feel is truest for me, and collectively, for Christians as well. How might this be true for you?

To continue the conversation, please reach out!

Pastors: Peter Whitelock, Head of Staff • Gerald Chinen, Care  
Lauren Gully, Mission & Spiritual Formation • Jaime Polson, Families & Executive Leadership

# Questioning Jesus

## a lenten study

### Coming Soon!

Information on Lent study guides and study groups will be available online beginning February 10.

Visit [lopc.org](http://lopc.org) for more information!

*By Lauren Gully - Pastor, Mission & Spiritual Formation*

Lent is a time when we get a boost in our spiritual lives. As Christians, it really all comes down to the life, work, and death of Jesus Christ, to which we pay special attention during Lent. Even though the message and meaning of Lent are the same year after year, our understandings, awareness, and the joy and hope of the season come alive in a new way each year!

This year, in our Lenten Small Groups, we will use an adapted version of Questioning Jesus, a study guide by Dr. Shane Berg, executive vice president of Princeton Theological Seminary, which he wrote last year for his own congregation, Nassau Presbyterian Church. Dr. Berg was a professor of mine during my time at seminary, and I always appreciated his historical and theological insights that weren't just heady facts, but which also had profound effects on my faith. Beyond the study groups, we will preach on the scriptures in the guide each Sunday in Lent.

He introduces the study this way: "In the Gospel of Luke, the evangelist gives us a rich and lengthy account of Jesus and his disciples making their way to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration, during which Jesus will be arrested and crucified. One of the recurring themes of this so-called 'travel narrative' (9:51-19:28) is Jesus responding to questions that are put to him by various figures in the story -- his disciples, members of the crowd that is often gathered around him, and even his dear friends.

"During Lent, we will explore the questions that people put to Jesus while he is on the way to Jerusalem, in Luke 9:51-19:28. Small groups will focus on these texts in a way that encourages participants to reflect deeply and personally on them, and even to wrestle with them. The goal is to engage the text each week in a way that shapes and nurtures our own faith in the safe, welcoming context of a small group."

**We hope that you will take this journey with us this Lenten season!**

February 23

# love does

Annual Service Day

Each year we aim to have

**OVER 300 PEOPLE**  
working on campus & in the community!



Many of the organizations LOPC partners with  
**DEPEND ON YOUR HELP**  
with projects that are larger than their staff can handle, or  
can't be funded by already slim budgets.



visit [lopc.org/lovedoes](http://lopc.org/lovedoes) to learn more!

# YOU CAN HELP!

Register at [lopc.org/lovedoes](http://lopc.org/lovedoes) for any of the choices below:



Project, On Campus: Create hygiene kits for the many homeless of the Bay Area.



Project, On Campus: Prepare and pack rice/beans/diapers, Senior Bingo Prizes, and assemble carts for clients.



Project, On Campus: Create a polar fleece blanket to comfort a child after testifying about abuse.



Project, Off-Site: Work with members of Temple Isaiah, the San Ramon Valley Islamic Center, and LOPC on an interfaith project to assemble hygiene kits for those in need.



Project, Off-Site: Facility maintenance including, painting, cleaning, reorganizing storage closet and garden maintenance with other ad hoc projects.



Project, Off-Site: Prepare bag lunches for clients and distribute at Tuff Shed community along with toiletry bags.



Project, On Campus: Create artwork to be used in stationery to benefit children.



Project, Off-Site: Help with facility improvements and garden maintenance.



Project, Off-Site: Clean and organize store, inventory, and displays, and unload donations from truck as needed.  
 NOTE: 16 and over only.



Project, Off-Site: Includes painting and organizing facility, deep cleaning kitchen, family room and common areas and miscellaneous projects as times allows.



Project, Off-Site: Deep clean the kitchen, dining room, and help organize storage room and other supply areas at Martinez Dining Room.



Project, Off-Site: Deep clean kitchen, reorganize pantry and supply closet and clean housing unit. NOTE: 16 and over only.



Project, On Campus: Package gently used and new baby clothes with care for distribution to economically challenged mothers.



Project, Off-Site: Help load vehicles and clean up at Food Distribution Center after food has been disbursed.

# youth

## Confirmation 2020

Confirmation is a milestone where LOPC staff and adult volunteers support students as they explore their faith, ask questions in a safe environment, and seek to take ownership over their faith journey. LOPC's Confirmation program is offered every Spring, and youth from grades 8-12 may choose to participate any year when they feel ready to consider taking this step of faith. *Registration deadline is February 3.*

### Confirmation Session Dates:

- Mondays, February 17 - March 23; 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. (excluding March 16)
- A special session on the morning of Sunday, March 15
- Confirmation Dessert: Thursday, April 16; 7 - 8:30 p.m.
- Confirmation: Sunday, April 19; 9:00 & 11:00 a.m.

Register at [lopc.org/ministry/youth](http://lopc.org/ministry/youth).  
Contact Kathy Timppte at [kathy@lopc.org](mailto:kathy@lopc.org) for info.

## High School Homegroups Weekend of February 1 & 2

Homegroup weekends are great fellowship opportunities and are a way to connect with members of your small group in a fun, casual setting. Advisors build more trust with the youth in these types of interactions.

Youth and parents: please connect with your small group advisors about the time and location!

## Spring Service-Learning Opportunity February 23

During Youth Alive on February 23, as part of the *love does* all-church service day, we'll meet in the Chapel to pack boxes of baby clothes for Loved Twice. Parents and other family members are welcome to join us anytime from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

## BTW Service Night: Loved Twice February 23

Join us as we continue congregation-wide *love does* Sunday by serving the organization Loved Twice. We will be folding and packing baby clothes which will be given to new parents in need.

## Save the Date

### Youth Summer Service-Learning Opportunities

#### 5th & 6th Grade Service Squad: June 1-5

Youth who complete grades 5 or 6 in May 2020 will serve for a couple of hours each day with a local mission partner in the East Bay and return to debrief and reflect on their experience. Youth will become acquainted with the many ways in which we can share God's love within our own community! Our dream is that this experience will inspire youth for a life of serving and loving others.



Questions? Contact Allison Kunz at [allison@lopc.org](mailto:allison@lopc.org).

#### 7th & 8th Grade San Francisco Trip: July 12-17

Youth who complete grades 7 or 8 in May 2020, will spend a week in San Francisco and the surrounding area serving with City Service Mission. Through this experience, youth will be introduced to the many ways we can serve people in our own Bay Area community.



Questions? Contact Allison Kunz at [allison@lopc.org](mailto:allison@lopc.org).

#### High School Yakima Trip: June 20-27

Youth who complete 9th-12th grade in May 2020 will travel to Yakima, Washington, to partner with an indigenous-led organization: S.L.A.M.

(Students Learning About Missions). S.L.A.M. is based within the Yakima Nation and focuses on teaching outside groups how they follow 'The Jesus Way' through their native traditions. Youth service teams will witness various ceremonies, learn about the history and culture of the Yakima people, and provide basic housework service in tribe elders' homes.



Questions? Contact Keris Dahlkamp at [keris@lopc.org](mailto:keris@lopc.org).

# seedlings



By Tina Clendenin, Seedlings Board Communications Member

Seedlings will begin the registration process for the 2020-2021 school year this month. We are so excited to be moving into our 37th year of providing quality care for the Lamorinda area. This year we have served more than 113 families!

If you are interested in enrolling your child at Seedlings Preschool or know a friend who is, here are a few tips and reminders for you! Registration will be processed in the following order. Please read carefully for dates and directions that apply to you!

## Current Seedlings Families

Currently enrolled families have priority for registering their children. After processing all of the currently enrolled students, their siblings (who are not currently enrolled) are then processed. Look for a registration packet coming home with your child in early February.

## Members of LOPC

Registration for current members of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church (who have completed the required membership class and are currently in the LOPC membership database) will be on Thursday, March 12, at 10:00 a.m. in the Seedlings office. Please look for signs on campus to direct you where to go.

## Families on the current (2019- 2020) wait list

(This wait list is currently closed.) Registration information will be sent via email in early February.

## Community Members

Community member means that you are NOT currently enrolled in our program, registered on our 2019 - 2020 wait list (this wait list is now closed), or a current member of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church (LOPC). **Registration for community members for our 2020-2021 Seedlings program will be on Thursday, March 19, at 10:00 a.m. in the Ministry Center Oak Room.** When you arrive, look for "Seedlings Registration" signs. Registration will be done on a first come, first served basis. As early as 8:00 a.m. a sign-in sheet will be put out. Registration will begin in the order of the names on the sign-in sheet when there are eight names. Community members are encouraged to email the day before at [seedlings@lopc.org](mailto:seedlings@lopc.org) to find out if there is available space.

## Please also note:

**Space in all Seedlings classes is limited and may be filled by current Seedlings children and their siblings.**

If a space is not available at the time you register, you will be placed on the 2020-2021 wait list for a \$50.00 non-refundable fee. This will be applied towards the annual registration fees if you are placed in the program during the 2020-2021 school year. After the LOPC member registration on March 12, 2020, we will then slot in anyone who has turned in a Wait List Renewal form. Then we will enroll community members on Thursday, March 19.

We look forward to another wonderful school year!

If you have questions please contact the Seedlings office by email at [seedlings@lopc.org](mailto:seedlings@lopc.org).

mission



### Special Offering—February 16 & 23

LOPC will collect a special offering on February 16 and 23 to benefit LOPC mission partner, Shelter Inc., an organization that works to prevent and end homelessness for low-income residents of Contra Costa County by providing housing, services, support, and resources that lead to self-sufficiency.

#### Shelter Inc. seeks to:

- Prevent the onset of homelessness through rental assistance, case management, and housing counseling service.
- End the cycle of homelessness by providing three to 24 months of housing and supportive services.
- Provide affordable housing for over 250 low income households.

#### Three ways to give:

- Write a check payable to LOPC with “Shelter Inc.” in the memo line.
- Go to [LOPC.org](http://LOPC.org) >GIVE BACK>ONLINE GIVING and click “Shelter Inc.” in the dropdown menu.
- Use the LOPC APP > Press “Give button” > Click “Shelter Inc.”

Contributions will be accepted February 16 – 29.

community

## thursday Fellowship

*A program of Senior Care Ministries*

Every Thursday from 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
in Fellowship Hall

On January 9, Thursday Fellowship started and guests and volunteers were thrilled to be back after the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. It was a month full of music, with our regular performers which included the excellent guitarist Marc Teicholz on January 16, and Syria T. Berry on January 30. All the performances were uniquely special, and it was a great start to the year 2020!

February promises to be full of fun. We look forward to celebrating Valentine’s Day with some special activities, and the afternoon programs this month are wonderfully varied and promise to entertain and educate us all.



- **February 6:** Jeanne Robinson Baker and her brother Brooks will speak on raising puppies for Guide Dogs for the Blind.
- **February 13:** Dr. Margaret Race, an Astro biologist and ambassador for NASA, will talk about her work with the coming Mars missions.
- **February 20:** Mike Kistner plays guitar as we sing along.
- **February 27:** The tap dancers of the Rossmoor Revue return with their colorful costumes and lively music.

If you are looking for a new activity in the new year, we welcome you to join us. Come as a guest and bring a friend. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Julie or Clarita. We especially need volunteer drivers. We look forward to seeing you in 2020!

Contact Julie Peterson, [julie@lopc.org](mailto:julie@lopc.org) or Clarita Wooldridge, [clarita@lopc.org](mailto:clarita@lopc.org) for more information.





## What Can We Learn From The Upcoming Census?

Presented by Kristine Solseng, Principal Planner for Contra Costa County

February 7. Refreshments at 1:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall, Speaker at 1:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary, The event is free and all are invited.



Kristine Solseng

“Every 10 years the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a full and complete count of every person living in the United States,” Solseng says. “This important count is enshrined in the Constitution as the basis for our representative democracy. The count is also used to determine federal funding allocations and provides important data for planning, policy, and businesses.”

An overview of the 2020 Census and its importance to our communities, how the county is working with various collaborators to ensure we have a complete count, and how the 2020 census is different from past decennial censuses will be featured topics in Solseng’s presentation.

A Minnesota native, Solseng attended the University of Oregon where she graduated with a degree in planning, public policy, and management. Currently, her work centers on community outreach to ensure Contra Costa County has a full and complete count in the upcoming 2020 Census. This once-a-decade opportunity will determine political representation, federal funding levels, and provide critical demographic data until 2030.

Solseng says she enjoys her work at the intersection of community, data sciences, and creativity. After nearly two decades as an urban planner, she’s been

involved in nearly every component of community building including financing, developing strategic plans, community outreach, project management, data analysis, and policy development. With a strong commitment to community engagement, she sees her goal as educating the public about complex issues using mapping, infographics, and staff reports.

“We are pleased that a local community planner will be a presenter and available to answer questions concerning the census and its implications for those of us who live In Contra Costa County,” says Nancy Whyte, member of the FFF team. “Come and invite your friends.”

## Revisiting the Higgs Boson

February 11, 7:15 p.m.,  
Oak Room.



This month, physicist Ed Gutman speaks on the topic “Revisiting the Higgs Boson.” In 2012, there was much excitement about the discovery of the Higgs particle. Since then, there have been new discoveries. Physicists are excited because these discoveries complete the Standard Model of physics. From a religious perspective, the Standard Model is our best understanding of the way God began creating the universe in Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning when God created the heavens and earth, ... Then God said, ‘Let there be light:’ and there was light.” Come, hear the modern version of the events during the first three minutes of creation.

## community

### The Parenting Journey

Wednesdays, 5:45-6:45 p.m.

LOPC invites parents of middle-school age children to join Valerie Hodgskiss for a six-week parent-support and community-building group. Possible topics include parent-child relationships, anxiety, and bullying. Valerie is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, mother of four children, and LOPC choir member.

Contact Michelle Browning at [michelle@lopc.org](mailto:michelle@lopc.org) with questions and to RSVP. Drop-ins are welcome but please RSVP in advance for headcount purposes.

### Membership Class

February 22, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Oak Room

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. It 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. Even if you're a long time attendee, the membership class is for everyone. All are welcome!

Register at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org) via the Event Registration Tab. For more information, contact Chris Baldwin at [chris@lopc.org](mailto:chris@lopc.org) or 925-283-8722 x110. RSVP for childcare to [susan@lopc.org](mailto:susan@lopc.org) by February 10.

### LOPC Breakfast

February 19, 7:00 a.m., Davies Room

Come learn about the new and exciting programs and events being done by Lamorinda Village in 2020! Lamorinda Village is a community-based network of people over age 55 living in Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda. Their purpose is to provide support and connections that help seniors remain in their own homes.



To RSVP contact Lexi at [lexi@lopc.org](mailto:lexi@lopc.org).



February 23, 10:00 a.m.

Parents with children (ages infant - 4th grade) will meet on the back playground and let the kids play while adults enjoy fellowship. Breakfast treats and coffee will be provided. Come out and connect with other families like yours! We meet on the last Sunday of the month between worship services at 10:00 a.m. from September-May.

### 4th Monday Book Group

2:00 p.m., Fireside Room

#### • February 24

*The Library Book* by Susan Orlean. Starting with the horrific fire in the L.A. Library, it probes the historic and current value of libraries.

#### • March 23

*A Place for Us* by Fatima Farheen Mirza, a story that follows an Indian Muslim family adjusting to life in the United States.

All are welcome to join us! For information about our group please email Jean Fiske at [jdfiske@gmail.com](mailto:jdfiske@gmail.com) or Bob Hoots at [bob2tam@gmail.com](mailto:bob2tam@gmail.com).

### Respite Night

February 28, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

For parents who have children and youth with special needs, ages 2-22.

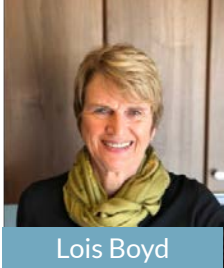
Dinner, games, therapy dogs, crafts, activities, and a movie! Children and youth will be divided by age, with age-appropriate movies. Sensory and quiet rooms are provided. Several professionals who work with children and youth with special needs will be on-site the entire evening. We will provide a staffing ratio to match your child's needs.

Register by February 17 by emailing Michelle at [michelle@lopc.org](mailto:michelle@lopc.org). Space is limited. We welcome you to connect with us before the Respite Night.

# session highlights

December 2019

By Lois Boyd, Clerk of Session



Lois Boyd

With Session bringing the year to a close, we acknowledged all that the church's ministry areas provide to the congregation and greater community. A summary report from each ministry area will be included in the annual report.

Jim Nagle (Finance Team Leader) reported that we are making progress toward fulfilling our faith component for 2019, and we expect to complete the year within budget. Pledge commitments for 2020 are strong. With pledges, Foundation support, non-pledge giving, loose offerings, and careful expense management, we expect to have a balanced budget for 2020 that is essentially unchanged compared to this year. The final budget will be presented at the annual meeting this month on February 9.

Looking to the new year, Session will particularly focus on starting the implementation of the recommendations in the Diversity and Volunteerism Task Forces reports. Each task force report calls for broad participation in our efforts to meaningfully improve our diversity and strengthen the cultivation and nurturing of our volunteers.

Jaime Polson reported on metrics related to Family Ministries. Seedlings retention rates are very high through pre-K. In Children's Ministry, Kids Rock in particular is going strong. We have experienced some decline in Sunday school attendance but more consistency as to the families that attend. Vacation Bible School attendance was down a bit as we were limited by the number of volunteers who participated. The Special Needs ministry is growing and meeting a critical need in our community. Youth Ministry is going strong, especially Youth on Wednesdays (YOW), and offers a broad array of programs so youth can fit in where they feel most comfortable.

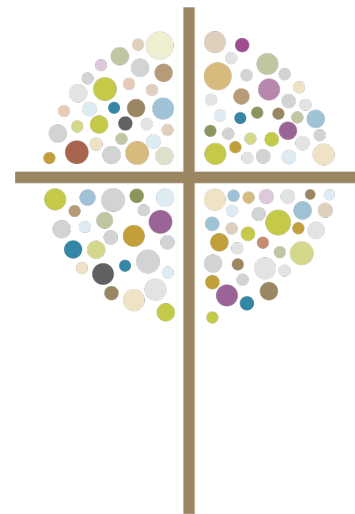
Peter Whitelock shared his goals for the new year. They focus on expanding worship attendance, working with task forces to implement their recommendations, and general ministry goals, including potential development

of a mission program to support the homeless.

In our continuing spiritual formation series, Don Colebourn shared his moving journey that supported him through the adversity of multiple health and business challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as Clerk of Session. At the beginning of the year, I passed the baton to the very capable hands of Paul Koenig. As I shared with Session, serving in this role has further strengthened my heart connection with the church and filled me with hope for its long-term sustainability.

**Looking forward to a blessed new year!**



# spiritual formation

Paul's Amazing Letter  
to the Philippians:

Finding **joy**

When Life is Hard.



April 16, 23, 30 & May 7  
7:00 – 8:30 p.m., Oak Room

Join Pastor Peter Whitelock for a four-week journey through the four chapters of Philippians (one per week) that have much to say about how we can weather the challenging seasons of life. This class will be practical, interactive, and, most importantly, applicable to your life.

To RSVP, contact Michelle at [michelle@lopc.org](mailto:michelle@lopc.org) or 925-283-8722 x248.

# 10:10

grow empowered to live in faith

10:10 meets each Sunday between services in the Oak Room and always welcomes newcomers!

**February 2**

**Mercy for All: My Inward Journey and Outward Action on Race**

Lori Robinson and Keris Dahlkamp will share experiences about their learning on civil rights.

**February 9**

**How to Talk to People You Disagree With**

Terry Clark will speak about effective dialogue in even the most difficult conversations.

**February 16**

**What It Takes to Forgive**

Ray Campton, MFT, will speak about the difficult work of forgiveness.

No 10:10 session on February 23.

## Living Into Our Calling: A six-week study on the Book of Ephesians

Continues Feb. 5, 12, 20; Mornings, 10:00-11:30 a.m.; Evenings, 6:30-8:00 p.m., Oak Room

Join us for a study on the book of Ephesians! This six-week study, led by Pastor Gerald Chinen, takes place on Thursdays, January 16 through February 20. To accommodate many different schedules, we are offering both morning and evening sessions: 10:00-11:30 a.m. and 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is a moving and encouraging picture of what the church can be, what the church should be. We'll find words of hope and challenge as we live into our calling to be the church.

# lopc foundation

## Foundation Adopts Revised Investment Policy

The LOPC Foundation has announced a major change in its investment policy that will allow it to substantially increase its investments in so-called ESG mutual funds. ESG investing is financial shorthand for mutual funds that operate according to Environmental, Social and corporate Governance guidelines.

Such funds, among other things, avoid stocks of tobacco and alcohol companies, gun and munition manufacturers, various natural resources mining firms, and the gambling industry. **Environmental criteria** include a company's treatment of hazardous waste and air pollutants, or treatment of animals. **Social criteria** cover employees' health and safety, relationships with communities and customers, while **corporate governance factors** deal with executive pay and shareholders rights. In the past few years, much more data in all of these areas is available than previously, against which to measure companies' behavior.

To be sure, the Foundation, and the Presbyterian Church (USA) have, generally speaking, historically maintained investments in various socially-responsible mutual funds. But the LOPC Foundation's holdings in this category previously were modest. Partly this was a result of a limited universe of such investments, which meant investment returns and profit potential were not as robust as investments elsewhere.

Today, that is no longer the case. Within the past few years, the marketplace of ESG funds has not only exploded but also changed considerably. With careful choices among different funds, investment returns now are comparable to non-ESG funds.

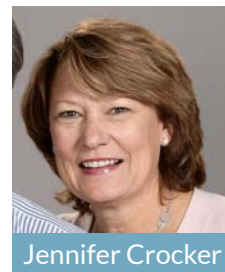


Staci Johnson

Starting late last year, following adoption of the new investment policy, the Foundation began shifting a significant portion of assets away from traditional mutual funds into ESG funds. As a first step, it has raised its ESG investments to roughly 35 percent of its investment portfolio. "Foundation trustees studied and discussed

this policy change at length," says Staci Johnston, Foundation president. "With the help of our investment advisors, we will be closely monitoring the results.

"We think this move makes the Foundation more sensitive and responsive to the many environmental, social, and governance issues that are increasingly important in our economy and the world today. And we will continue to be guided by the vision statement of the Foundation: striving to be a permanent, reliable source of significant funding for LOPC's ministries."



Jennifer Crocker

### Philanthropy: More Than Giving

By Jennifer Crocker,  
Foundation Trustee

Several weeks ago, the LOPC Foundation had a mini-retreat led by Maggie Harmon, the ministry-relations officer for the Southwest Presbyterian Foundation. She is a wonderful teacher with vast experience in creating faith cultures that have a good sense of generosity. I would like to share with you a few of my takeaways from our time with Maggie.

Each of us needs to decide what is important to us, what our values are, and what we want our legacy to be. Once we understand what matters to each of us, we need to commit to a legacy of our values. When we decide on a purpose, we can then work towards that purpose. Generosity isn't about the amount, rather it's about the commitment.

The LOPC Foundation gives each of us an opportunity to give in perpetuity, a chance to create a legacy that will last for generations to come.

In Maggie's words "philanthropy is much more than just giving; it is our opportunity to respond to God's commandment to care for each other, for this planet, and to ensure that our values live on for generations."

If you should have any questions about the LOPC Foundation, any of the trustees listed below would be happy to talk with you: Jim Beckemeyer, Lois Boyd, Jerry Ducey, Kristi Haigh, Staci Johnston, Phil Placier, Mike Ross, and Dara Youngdale.

# journey of FAITH

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

Chris Johnson says belonging to LOPC has enhanced his faith journey in many ways. "My family and I have found a home here where we all can grow in Christ. My three kids have been very happy in the enriching children's and youth ministries. I appreciate the open and nonjudgmental view of Christianity and the Bible, and the tolerance for the views of others.

"We love the music, focus on mission, fellowship, educational activities, and the wonderful leadership. But most of all, we love the sense of community, of folks trying to get closer to God by treating each other with respect and love. As for me, I hope I can positively impact the people around me. I try to use my resources, time, money, energy, and smiles, to show love and affection for people, especially those who lack the advantages I have. I think that is what Jesus preached."

It's Chris' opinion that we need to strengthen our relationship with the Lord and be filled with his love to be able to pass it on. "I think our church does a great job of building that internal, ongoing relationship of love for God and from God, and then providing many opportunities to spread that love to our faith community, our region through our local mission partners, and across the country and world through mission partners and LOPC's trips.

"I am very concerned about human rights and the self-determination of the Palestinian people and am so thankful for our connection and support of the Atfaluna School for the Deaf. I tried to visit them when we were in Israel, but found it wasn't possible due to many restrictions."



Chris Johnson & Family

Chris feels his concern might spring from his Lebanese background, as his mother's parents, devout Christians, immigrated from there. They began attending a Presbyterian church instead of Eastern Orthodox or the Catholic Church as many fellow Lebanese immigrants did. "My grandfather was very active and taught Sunday school and Bible study," Chris recalls. "Although I was young when he died, I shared my mother's deep affection for him. Maybe, in some way, that influenced me to start teaching Sunday school when my kids were young."

Chris has taught in our children's programs for many years. Now that his three children, Samya and Levi, 14, and Kalia, 13, participate in Youth Alive, that is where he devotes his time. Other activities at LOPC include *love does*, mission trips, men's retreats, the Monday-evening meetings organized by Chris Baldwin, Sowers group, Spiritual Formation and Interfaith meetings, and volunteering at the Mountain View facility. "I love serving others as a family through our Sowers group that incorporates service and spiritual formation, plus times of reflection and discussion. I hope to pass the gift of giving on to my kids to instill in them the sense of deep gratitude I get from it."

*“I think our church does a great job of building that internal, ongoing relationship of love for God and from God, and then providing many opportunities to spread that love to our faith community, our region through our local mission partners, and across the country and world through mission partners and LOPC’s trips.”*

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During his childhood, Chris says his family rarely attended church. He began attending youth meetings at a local Presbyterian church in his hometown of Monrovia, CA. “We had a great youth pastor, Tim Thompson. I appreciated his good nature and honesty. Later, I attended a Baptist church with a friend’s family. I liked the friends there and how dads were very involved. I loved the outdoor activities and found something surprisingly spiritual in the vastness of nature.

“Later, I drifted away from church, turned off by the fanaticism of some of the new-age churches I sometimes attended. I read a lot, troubled by much in the Old Testament. Why a God that created us all would favor one group just because they were related to an ancient (and perhaps fictitious) ancestor. And why the stories of God, as revealed in the Bible, have to be so complex. I thought the ultimate truth should be much simpler.

“So, I kept searching. I married late, had kids, and was ready to try church again. I found the church I attended made a huge difference. I’m thankful Heidi and I found LOPC.” Chris says he felt the real presence of God most

when his children were born, a gift from God. “The gift of service to others is another way I feel the presence of God in my life. The smile we get when someone realizes we took time away from our lives to help them is amazing. The effect on me is much more than I give. It is the way I recharge my God battery.”

Teaching in church school at first pushed him outside his usual comfort zone, he says. “Could I do it? When I was selected to be an elder in Spiritual Formation, I didn’t know much about spiritual practices, so we learned together. I trust God to be with me when I tackle a new task.

“Being present for people who are struggling with grief or other challenges, and just being there for them has been stimulating, as has been sharing my faith with law colleagues, wondering if they would regard me as some kind of Jesus freak or wacko. I try to be honest and trust the right words will come out.”

Chris says the verse from John 11:36 “Jesus wept” is a favorite because it encapsulates how God sent his only son to fully experience being human and feeling empathy for our suffering. “It is a reminder that God can relate to us and has reconnected us.”





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#### FOCUS NEWSLETTER

Jon Corry, Communications  
*Editors: Dick James, Lexi Morrissey,  
& Renée Wigginton*

*Thank you to all who contribute to each issue!*

#### Monthly FOCUS Newsletter Deadline:

**February 1 for the March issue.**  
Email items to [communications@lopc.org](mailto:communications@lopc.org).

#### Weekly CONNECTIONS Deadline:

**Every Monday by 5 p.m. for the following  
Sunday's issue.**

Submit items at:

[lopc.org/submission-for-connections](http://lopc.org/submission-for-connections)

## 2020 Annual Congregational Meeting

February 9, 12:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

**Lunch will be served. \$10 suggested donation.**

Sign up on the Plaza, in the Ministry Center or online at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org). We will review the past year, hear what is coming up in 2020, and vote on pastors' salaries. Annual Reports are available on the Plaza, online, and in the Ministry Center.

**Sunday Worship Services**  
**9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.**

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