

# FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Alive!  
In Christ... in the World



MAY 2020



Contents

**Sermon Series ..... 2**  
**Children & Youth..... 3**  
**Mission ..... 5**  
**Community ..... 7**  
**Foundation ..... 8**  
**Session ..... 9**  
**Spiritual Formation ..... 9**  
**CNC..... 10**  
**Journey of Faith ..... 11**  
**Special Profile ..... 13**

Event dates listed in this edition of Focus may have changed after the edition went to print.

We highly recommend reaching out for verification using the contact information provided, or by contacting the Ministry Center at 925-283-8722.



nothing can separate us from the LOVE OF GOD

By Gerald Chinen - Pastor, Care

I found some irony last night watching the news, and during a commercial break, an advertisement for a tour agency came on. The commercial was about these “amazing tour packages” specifically to Hawaii and Italy! Hawaii, historically, has had more than its share of health epidemics, brought upon by “travelers” (like the first missionaries) and “tourists”. Sadly, Native Hawaiians were blamed for their own sicknesses and ill health because they were “heathens” and their lifestyles brought this upon them. And of course, Italy was at one point in this current pandemic, the country with the most cases of COVID-19. Obviously, this isn’t the best time to be planning a trip to Hawaii, Italy, or anywhere else for that matter.

I couldn’t help but lament for myself that I can’t make a trip to Hawaii as I had planned on for this spring. My family is there, and I always look forward to being back in the islands. I don’t know now, when, and if I’ll be able to get back. Fortunately, there is Facetime, phone calls, and email. Last evening, I joined my cousins, my aunts, and my mom for a Zoom video call, and it was so nice to see everyone. Each of us shared what we were doing during the shelter-in-place order and talked about our families. I feel blessed to have a connection still with my family and feel so fortunate that nothing,

and I mean literally nothing, can separate us from each other, not even COVID-19.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

It’s great to have conviction, which Paul has in abundant measure. His conviction that God’s love is so deep, so generous, so compassionate, leads him to lay to rest any thought that even the worst of things could keep him from experiencing that love.

What I appreciate in this unusual and surreal period is that God’s love has been revealed in the many acts of grace and kindnesses through family and friends. Neighbors checking in on neighbors, younger people shopping and delivering groceries for our seniors. I know that many of you are finding ways to care for others, and in so doing, you are their reminder that even in the worst of times, nothing in this life can separate them from the love of God. Thank you, thank you for being an instrument of this precious commodity!

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

# IMAGES of EASTER

MAY 3 A Good Shepherd  
Psalm 23, John 10:1-10

MAY 10 Believe You Me  
John 14:1-14

MAY 17 For You, O God, Have Tested Us  
Psalm 66:8-20

MAY 24 Can I Get A Witness?  
Acts 1:6-14



**Sundays • 9:00 a.m. ■ [livestream.com/lopc](https://livestream.com/lopc)**

# children & youth



## connect with lopc youth on zoom!

- BTW (high school): Sundays 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- Alumni: Mondays 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.
- YOW (5th - 8th grade): Wednesdays 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

### Children's Ministry Resources

**A**s we journey together through this very weird time, the Children's Ministry at LOPC is more committed than ever to partnering with you. We're hard at work creating resources for you to share with your kids at home, not just to continue to invest in them spiritually, but to give them outlets to talk about how they're feeling and opportunities to find God in the midst of all of this.

Please email Director of Children's Ministry Ryan Timpte at [ryan@lopc.org](mailto:ryan@lopc.org) for more resources, pastoral care, and FaceTime chats with your kids.

Check out the Children's Ministry Blog:

[lopc.org/category/childrens-ministry](https://lopc.org/category/childrens-ministry)

for the latest resources we're creating for your kids, including a weekly Sunday school lesson from Ryan, simple spiritual practices to do at home from Lori, and Adventures with Susan. We'll also be reposting videos from The Fantastic Project, a series for kids on the values of kindness, justice, and mercy.

## Parent Support Zoom Groups

Led by Pastor Jaime Polson

Elementary age children: Mondays at 10:00 a.m.  
Middle and High School age children: Wednesday at 3:00 p.m.

Join Pastor Jaime Polson and other parents to share experiences and encourage each other through this uncertain time.

Register on [lopc.org](http://lopc.org).

---

## Cancellation of Children and Youth Ministry Summer Programs

We hope that you are all staying happy and healthy in the midst of this unprecedented time. The Children and Youth Ministry teams have been working diligently to provide support to children and youth and to discern best practices for our ministries moving forward. Unfortunately, we have had to make the difficult decision to cancel our summer programs including Vacation Bible Camp, Service Squad, the Middle School Mission Trip, and the High School Mission Trip.

We held off on this decision as long as we could, but have concluded that running these programs in June and July is no longer feasible given the changing nature of the CDC's recommendations and the state's response, the cancellation of summer programming on the part of some of our mission partners, the shortened time frame with which to plan, and the uncertainty around the impact on our volunteers and the communities we would serve. By cancelling our summer programs, we are all helping to keep our most vulnerable populations, and each other, safe.

We recognize how disappointing this may be and we share in that disappointment. Please know that we are committed to staying in contact with you and your family during this time. And we are working on alternative summer activities both online and in person once the state has deemed it safe to gather together

## Mindfulness with Girls Leadership

Girls Leadership's Certified Yoga Instructor & Meditation Practitioner, Sybil Henry, is offering guided meditations on mindfulness every Monday! Each Monday, a new video is uploaded.

Visit the Girls Leadership page on YouTube to view the videos!

again. It may not look like what we typically do during the summer, but we are committed to helping our kids re-enter the community, process the trauma of this time, and celebrate coming back together. We will keep you updated as we move forward together.

We miss you and your kids and we are greatly looking forward to the time when we can gather in ministry together with our children and youth. In the meantime, stay connected, stay happy, and stay healthy!

Contact Ryan Timpte at [ryan@lopc.org](mailto:ryan@lopc.org), or Keris Dahlkamp at [keris@lopc.org](mailto:keris@lopc.org), for questions.

Many thanks,

**Ryan Timpte**

Director of Children's Ministry

**Lori Robinson**

Associate Director of Children's Ministry

**Susan Wentworth**

Associate Director of Preschool Ministry

**Keris Dahlkamp**

Director of Youth Ministry

**Allison Kunz**

Director of Youth Ministry

**Jaime Polson,**

Pastor for Family Ministry

**Lauren Gully,**

Pastor for Mission & Spiritual Formation

# mission

## Congo Update

By Herb Long, LOPC Member

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is a major Mission partner for LOPC with its work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). LOPC supports projects financially in education (Build Congo Schools) and trauma healing for children (Healing Hearts). Unfortunately, the country continues to face numerous challenges of disease, poverty, and violence. The Ebola crisis has ended but coronavirus is now in the DRC. Kinshasa, the capital, has 11-12 million people who are at risk due to the close living conditions.

PC(USA) has four mission co-workers in the country (LOPC-sponsored Jeff and Christi Boyd and Larry and Inge Sthreshley) who have opted to stay in Kinshasa, although PCUSA World Mission has asked its mission workers worldwide to return to their home country. Please keep the mission co-workers and the people of the DRC in your prayers.

On a bright note, Build Congo Schools completed the construction of its ninth school for primary students (grades 1-6) at the end of last year. The pictures of a Dibatayi classroom show conditions before and after. With the completion of this school, fundraising for the tenth school has started. A new school not only increases the number of children being educated under better learning conditions, but also provides a building that the greater community can use. LOPC has donated about \$115,000 for school construction since 2013.



## An Update From Zimbabwe

By Phil Hunter, LOPC Member

As of this writing, the COVID-19 virus has not hit full force on Zimbabwe (only 24 cases have been reported by the WHO). The country, however, is getting ready for a massive increase. Neighboring South Africa is now reporting over 2,750 confirmed cases. The Zimbabwean government issued a complete lockdown for the country as of March 29. Many of the rural citizens who had come to cities seeking work are now returning to their villages to be with family, which reduces the size of the squatters' camps that might present a much larger health issue.



The country is already facing severe economic challenges with inflation now pegged at 300% and unemployment hovering around 80%. As they experienced 10 years ago, people are turning to other currencies to pay bills. Even the government is requesting that citizens pay their taxes in U.S. dollars. This economic strain is having an impact on HIV patients not having money for even transportation to pick up their medicine, to say nothing of the diminished quality of their diets. The silver lining is that children who have been getting the fortified porridge the JF Kapnek Trust, our mission partner, and others have been feeding them, has made them healthier and better able to combat diseases, including COVID-19.

Over the past few years, the Kapnek Trust has decentralized so that with the country on lockdown, they are still able to deliver some services to people in need. However, they are currently unable to travel around the country as they once did. They had delivered up to three months of fortified porridge to most of the schools prior to the lockdown, so the children in that program will have something to eat through June. We ask for your prayers for the Kapnek Trust and the people of Zimbabwe.

## The Global Impact of COVID-19

This global COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected our mission partners at home but also changed the lives of our international partners as well. Normally, we face different struggles than our international mission partners—however, as a result of this pandemic, we are truly all in this together. Our international mission partners face different obstacles in the face of this pandemic. Here are some updates from the places where LOPC is involved throughout the world, and the different ways in which you can join LOPC in praying for them:

At Children of Faith Missions (COF) in India, children were sent home to their guardians per government mandate to diminish the spread of the virus, which is more likely with a large number of people under one roof. As a result, only 20 students remain in the care of COF and are sheltering in place. Fortunately, COF has enough food and water to care for these students during this challenging time. Please pray that the children who have returned home are kept safe and well fed.

Our Middle East partner, Atfaluna, located in Gaza, is closed. However, the children are continuing their learning via short educational videos prepared by their teachers. A free-of-charge hotline has been setup to allow parents to contact social workers and other specialized staff at Atfaluna to answer questions and assist whenever possible. Atfaluna continues to follow up regularly to make sure families stay home and avoid exposure to COVID-19. The virus is especially troublesome in a place like Gaza that does not have the medical equipment necessary to care for people—there are only 87 ventilators in Gaza, most of them already in use. Please pray that the virus is kept at bay.

At Fotokids in Guatemala, founder Nancy McGirr responded that they, too, have been given a shelter-in-place order, and that the President of Guatemala has halted all flights to the country. In addition, a 4:00 p.m.-to-4:00 a.m. curfew has been enacted, and only essential workers such as food suppliers, and medical and emergency personnel are allowed to violate it. Please pray for the Fotokids families and the people we would have met on our Mission trip, on which 20 LOPC

members were scheduled to go at the end of March.

In Zimbabwe, JF Kapnek Trust reported a country-wide shelter-in-place order. Their staff is now working from home. Dr. Dan Robbins noted there has not been much evidence of COVID-19 so far, but the medical field is watching for an uptick of suspicious illnesses. Right now, there is an outbreak of RSV bronchiolitis in infants, so JF Kapnek is doing its best to keep the oxygen flowing at Harare Children's Hospital. Dr. Robbins is hopeful that all of the children are being kept well-nourished and will safely endure COVID-19. At this time, they are more worried for all those who are malnourished and/or HIV positive. Dan noted, "We are all hanging in there... challenging times but heartened by how we have all embraced our new reality to benefit our 'whole.'"



All mission workers across the country, including those in the Congo, have been asked to return to the U.S. However, Jeff and Christi Boyd, mission co-workers who have spoken at LOPC numerous times, have chosen to stay in the Congo and continue to care for people there.

For more details on our mission partners in the Congo visit [lopc.org/ministry/mission/congo-team/](https://lopc.org/ministry/mission/congo-team/)

# community



## Community Life

### ZOOM GROUPS

Exciting and fun things are happening for Community Life. Welcome to our brand-new Community Life Zoom Groups! Going on now, we have a series of varied groups for fun and fellowship. Things are always changing, so be sure to check the website for additions and details about these groups!

#### Yoga

Mondays at 8:00 a.m.  
with yoga instructor, Beverly Jane Peatross

#### Men w/Young Families and Professionals

Mondays at 6:30 p.m.  
with Chris Baldwin

#### Caring for Loved Ones with Dementia/Alzheimer's

Wednesdays, May 13 and May 27 at 10:30 a.m.  
with Pastor Gerald Chinen and Linda Fodrini-Johnson

#### Family Game Night

Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.  
with the O'Haver/Liu Family

#### The Weekly Wrap Up

Fridays at 4:00 p.m.  
with Vito and Linda LoGrasso

#### Cocktail, Mocktail, & Social Hour

Saturdays at 7:00 p.m.  
with Janell Proctor

Visit [lopc.org/community-zoom-groups](http://lopc.org/community-zoom-groups) to sign up!

## thursday Fellowship

*A program of Senior Care Ministries*

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

NOTE: CANCELED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE



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

While the physical church building remains closed as we shelter-in-place, Thursday Fellowship is still active and has a lot going on behind the scenes. Our volunteers have been reaching out to each other and our guests. We have used a variety of resources to encourage and connect with one another. What a blessing to have such a caring and supportive community in place. With every call and card written, deeper connections between our guests and volunteers have been created. This month, Thursday Fellowship celebrates its 41st anniversary. We plan to celebrate this milestone; however, the timing and scope is being adjusted. We all look forward to a time when we can engage face-to-face and feel free to hug one another. We long to get back to our meetings and will keep everyone informed via email and phone calls as the order to shelter in place evolves. Our primary concern is for the safety of our guests and volunteers. All attendees will be informed when it is safe for our meetings to resume.



# lopc foundation

## What Brought You to Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church?

By Staci Johnston, Foundation Trustee



Staci Johnston

**L**ivestream ...was the answer to that question given to me by a new church friend. She then explained her family had been church “shopping” for the past few years and hadn’t found the right church home. She heard of LOPC while attending a retreat, and years later, decided

to **Livestream** a few LOPC sermons with her husband. Soon afterwards, they attended their first service in person, and shortly after, they joined the Ephesians and Lenten Bible studies. They now use **Livestream** to attend church and connect with people through various Zoom Bible study groups.

I was curious about the history of LOPC and **Livestream**, so I spoke with Sharon Francis, a former LOPC worship and music coordinator. “We used to make audio recordings of our sermons each week,” she says, “and then have tapes available on Monday for members to check out. **Livestream** was the brainstorm of the worship team pondering how LOPC could get ‘off the hill’ and connect with people who couldn’t come to church, particularly Rossmoor seniors. I remember Googling how to broadcast a sermon live and found the company **Livestream**. Initially, Peter’s sermons were recorded with a handheld camera!”

In 2014, the LOPC Foundation made a grant to purchase the first phase of new high-definition equipment which advanced the video system from a “consumer” to a “professional” platform. Under Brett Strader’s (director of worship and music) leadership, LOPC has vastly expanded Livestream’s capabilities. For example, we now have multiple cameras that help the viewer connect with the service in clever and imaginative ways, such as the camera which zooms in on organist Stewart Scharch’s feet and colorful socks as he plays performs!

Over the past six years, LOPC’s use of **Livestream** has been a blessing for our congregation. Those homebound and traveling can easily join the rest of the community in worship wherever they are with the click of a button. Never so much has this been the case presently, as LOPC worship has been moved exclusively online in the wake of COVID-19. LOPC’s viewership on **Livestream** has increased to more than 1,100 “family units/hits” per week, from an average of 100 households (A “family unit/hit” is one household. A household is one, two, three or more people viewing a Livestream service together!).

Did you know that behind the scenes each week, Brett Strader and the worship team are spending hours and hours recording and then compiling all of the production elements of a **Livestream** service? Brett has been able to use his talents and joyfully explore new ways to create a Livestream worship experience for LOPC. The team’s efforts have expanded the church’s reach to its members and to the greater community.

Visit [lopc.org](http://lopc.org) to view **Livestream** and to learn more about accessing LOPC’s **Livestream** worship archives.

Over the past 26 years, large and small bequests made by donors to the Foundation have enabled the Foundation to be a permanent, reliable source of significant funding for LOPC’s ministries, including **Livestream**.

If you would like to learn more about how you can become a Friend of the Foundation and support LOPC, please contact one of the Trustees: Jim Beckemeyer, Lois Boyd, Jen Crocker, Jerry Ducey, Kristi Haigh, Staci Johnston, Phil Placier, Mike Ross, or Dara Youngdale.

# spiritual formation

## A New Family

A three-week online video Bible study on how Jesus opens the doors of the church.

Two Zoom Sessions to choose from:

- Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. May 6, 13, & 20  
or
- Thursdays at 9:00 a.m. May 7, 14, & 21

Join Pastor Lauren Gully as we look at three short films (shown online during the class) and discuss how Jesus opens up the doors of the Sanctuary from the perspective of the influential writer, Rachel Held Evans, who passed away in 2019. Rachel, in her work, opened a space for people to become involved with the evolution of their faith by example. Her books and gatherings created a safe space for people to allow and examine their beliefs and doubts. She was a voice of inclusion and social justice. She strived to be grace-filled while admitting her imperfection. Her advocacy was for the heart of God which is for the people of God. She inspired change and sometimes provoked resistance. But as she says in this series, her hope was to start more conversations than end them.

So let's begin the conversation! Email Elizabeth Ball at [elizabeth@lopc.org](mailto:elizabeth@lopc.org) to register!

# session

## March 2020 Session Highlights

By Paul Koenig, Clerk of Session

As we all know, this is a challenging time. Due to the shelter-in-place orders and the related concerns as to the coronavirus, the Session meeting scheduled for March 17 was cancelled. However, while Session did not have a formal meeting, Session met via Zoom video media on March 31.

Brief updates and reports were provided as to LOPC's finances and needs, as well as a review of LOPC's staffing in light of the crisis. Further, it was reported that as of March 31, over \$7,000 was raised for the Food Bank and other outreach mission.

A significant part of the meeting consisted of sharing concerns, including for pastors, staff, members and their families, as well as for all, generally. We are all dealing with this uncertain and difficult time, and the Session was so grateful for all that our pastors, staff, members, and volunteers are doing to keep and conduct our worship services, as well as many other meetings and activities, through Livestream and Zoom video meetings.



Save the Date

**All Church Retreat**  
at Mount Hermon

October 2 - 4

More info soon!

# church nominating committee

## Seeking New Church Leaders!

One of the cornerstones of our Presbyterian heritage is election by the congregation of church officers to provide leadership for the church as well as loving support for those in the church community. Each year we elect officers to serve for the following year, drawn from nominations from the congregation.

We are now in the process of selecting new officers and leaders for terms beginning January 2021. It is a privilege and responsibility to nominate members to serve as elected lay leaders. It is also necessary for us to participate in the essential process that will influence our church in the near future.

### The primary qualifications for nominees are:

- Strong commitment to Jesus Christ and the church's Mission Statement.
- Active participation in worship and in other ministries at LOPC.
- Stewardship commitment of time, talent, and financial resources.
- Leadership ability and organizational skills.
- Compassion in human relationships.
- An open-minded approach to ideas and problems.
- Spiritual depth and maturity.
- Ability to equip people for ministry and work in a team-based leadership role.

Elders, together with the pastors, lead and direct the ministry of the church. They are persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment. Elders serve on Session, the governing body of the church. They also chair various church teams through which all ministries are conducted. Eight elders are ordained annually to serve three-year terms.

Deacons, as set forth in Scripture, are leaders who serve as the caring, compassionate arm of the church. They provide loving support to all those in need within the church community. The primary area of Deacon service is care of members. Ten deacons are ordained annually to serve a three-year term and two deacons of high-school age to serve a one-year term.

The Congregation Nominating Committee (CNC) members receive and renew nominations for church officers. They select candidates to present to the congregation. They are elected for a one-year term.

Foundation Trustees serve on the LOPC Foundation. This nine-member foundation receives gifts in various forms and designations, manages investments, and provides funding for LOPC needs that cannot be accommodated in the church's annual operating budget. Trustees serve an initial term of four years and are eligible to be re-elected for one three-year term. Members who have served in the past can be nominated for a two-year term.

**Nomination forms may be submitted online at [lopc.org/news/cnc-nominations-needed-for-2020/](https://lopc.org/news/cnc-nominations-needed-for-2020/) Or send them via email to [cnc@lopc.org](mailto:cnc@lopc.org). We need your nominations, so please fill out and submit at least one nomination form.**

For more information, contact a CNC member: David MacKenzie (Chair), Paul Koenig (Clerk of Session), Jeff Patton, Ann Loar, Richard Courtney, Marsha McDonagh, Linda Kinrade (Deacon Representative), Peter Whitelock, and Gerald Chinen. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

We are looking forward to hearing from each of you.

# journey of FAITH

By *Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC member*

**D**r. Margaret Liu says the three tenets by which she has anchored her life are:

“First ‘Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not men,’ Colossians 3:23. For me, this means to try my best when I commit to something. This was the reason I tried always to excel in school, music, and other endeavors.

“Second: ‘To whom much is given, much is expected,’ Luke 12:48. I have been blessed with many opportunities and gifts, so I need to be faithful in developing them, then using them for God and to benefit others.

“Third, our purpose in life is to help bring in Christ’s kingdom. I take ‘Thy kingdom come’ in Matthew 6 as a task we are all a part of. To me this implies that all we do here and now, all of our daily activities and the way we live, should be to increase Christ’s love in the world.”

Raised in a devout Christian family, Margaret has lived out these tenets in her roles as a wife, mother, physician, and scientist.

“When we children were seven weeks, four (me), and six years, my father died in a car accident caused by an erratic driver,” she says. “It happened in the middle of Nevada as our family was moving for my father to take a position on the faculty at UC Davis. We were taken to a local hospital where a pastor came to visit my mom as he’d heard about the accident on the radio. He felt God told him he needed to come to give her God’s promise that ‘God is the husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless,’ Psalm 68:5. He said she should claim this promise. Later, when asked how she accomplished raising the three of us on her own, sending all of us to Harvard, and all three of us becoming physicians, Mom

would tell of God’s promise and say she raised us on her knees, meaning by prayer.”

Margaret’s parents were very influential in her life, especially her mother. “They had been Christians in China and came to the United States for graduate school, staying because of the political situation in China. Due to the existing Chinese Exclusion Act, Congress passed special legislation for them to stay because my father’s expertise was wanted at U.S.

universities. Still, they endured a lot of discrimination despite the fact that my father has his doctorate, and my mom had two master’s degrees. In fact, you might say discrimination was the cause of my father’s death as he was changing jobs because the department chair where he was then employed was trying to take his grant from him.”

The Liu family attended many different churches “as long as they preached that Christ is our Savior.” One was a house church Margaret’s mom helped found for college students and hippies who had become “Jesus freaks” and didn’t

feel comfortable in regular churches. Margaret met her husband, Robert Johnson, while doing clinical training in internal medicine at Harvard Medical School. “I was struck because even though we were very sleep deprived and people sometimes got impatient and querulous, he was always kind to the patients. I figured when you see someone 80 hours a week in all kinds of stressful situations, you see the real person. We’ve been married 36 years.”

Beginning as an instructor at Harvard, Margaret has taught at many universities. In the corporate world she’s worked at Merck, Chiron, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Her work in vaccines and immune treatments for cancer is cutting edge. As this is written during the COVID-19 crisis Margaret says, “Global



Margaret Liu & Family

health is my area, and my life has been turned topsy-turvy by professional issues related to COVID-19, including that I'm part of a small group of scientists helping the World Health Organization (WHO) write the guidelines for countries to manufacture DNA vaccines. This is a technology that my group pioneered, and we have had to speed up our timeline because DNA vaccines are one of the technologies being developed for a COVID-19 vaccine." Added to this, Discover Magazine named Margaret as one of the 50 most important women in science, and the Karolinska Institute awarded her an honorary Doctor of Science.

Despite all these achievements, Margaret and her family have been subjected to discrimination. She says it's not only because she is Chinese, but also, in her profession, a woman. "Really it began with my mom—for after my father died it was difficult for her to get a job even with her master's degrees. Finally, she was hired to mend books in the library but was told not to come out of the back room because they didn't want anyone to know they had hired a Chinese person.

"For me, to this day I consider how I dress when flying, or I tip very well in restaurants because I don't want people to think poorly of Chinese people. I'm constantly aware of being viewed differently. Every time I call a repair person, I worry about using my Liu name instead of Johnson because perhaps I won't get service, or as good service. I try to remember my mother as a role model. She suffered much more than I, and yet always trusted and praised God. I didn't realize I was female in the sense that I couldn't do things, because my mom did everything, including getting her doctorate while raising three kids. Only when I got to Harvard, where women had to have an overall higher MCAT score than men to get admitted, and when I was told by a surgeon that it was too bad I was female because I would have made a great surgeon, and then started to climb in my profession did I realize that women were viewed as inferior."

An example in her children's lives came in the 1990s when living in an affluent suburb of Philadelphia. "My son Matthew went first to a private Quaker

school where he thought he was black because he got treated like the one black girl in the class. Next, while attending a posh private school, he was made to attend 'Students-of-Color' sessions, and we were supposed to go to 'Parents-of-Color' meetings. He would come home saying he hated being Chinese, because kids ostracized him. Happily, after moving to California where there is more diversity, he became proud to be Chinese." Matthew has just recently received his PhD in moral philosophy at the University of Cambridge. My daughter, Ariana, graduated from Stanford and is pursuing a career in theater management and currently is a production associate at ACT in San Francisco.

For Bible verses, Margaret chooses Ephesians 3:17-20 with her favorite parts being that you may "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, since the first part highlights how huge God's love is and the second part underscores how infinite God is so we can't even dream up what to ask of Him."



# what does THE LORD require of us ?

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

*Editor's Note: Barbara and Dick Abel are long-time members of LOPC. And, as you'll read below, they have devoted countless hours to various mission projects. The Mission Team lifts them up as an inspiration to all and is laying plans to honor them - hopefully soon! Stay tuned.*

The Abels' first visit outside the country was to Guatemala to a program called Fotokids, run by a former Reuters' news-service photographer. It started with a group of six children who lived and worked in Guatemala City's vast garbage dump. "Originally called Out of the Dump, it has served over 1,000 at-risk children who have been affected by poverty and violence," Barbara explains. "By teaching them photography, it gave them a better chance, and it has since expanded to teaching graphic design and vocational skills, helping them gain confidence in creativity and leadership. Many have gone on to college, and they now work in good-paying professions. It's a joy to know kids whom we originally saw years ago, escape the garbage dump to a good life."



Dick & Barbara Abel

After Fotokids came travels to the Mother of Peace Orphanage in Zimbabwe, a joint project with Oakland's Allen Temple Baptist Church. "Before leaving on such a trip," explains Dick, "we organized 'pill-packing' parties, sorting pills donated by people who no longer needed them, but which were useful to Zimbabweans. We were saddened at the high rate at which children were dying from AIDS—so many orphans whose parents had died of the disease. Things are better now that there are new drugs," Dick explains.

Over the years, the Abels have made three such trips, each time carrying many pounds of drugs. "It felt like smuggling. On one trip, a member of the team got

pulled over coming out of the airport. She told them she was very, very sick," the Abels relate with a smile.

In the last six years, their work shifted to the Children of Faith Mission in Visakhapatnam, India, established by Rosie and Anand Thandu. "We love the Thandus, and they have often stayed at our home," Barbara says. They used to live in Walnut Creek, worked as professionals, and belonged to Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church. In 2002, they felt the call to

establish an orphanage in India. In just one year, the orphanage opened its doors to 30 children. In a matter of weeks, a much larger local orphanage closed its doors, and soon Children of Faith was home to 100 children, but the Thandu's made it work."

On the Abels' first trip to this mission, they conducted physical exams as Barbara had worked for many years as a nurse. On their next trip, accompanied by LOPC member Andrea Cochran, they conducted vision exams and checked weights and heights. "The kids loved that. I wrote the measurements on their hands,

and Dick recorded results. The kids had fun comparing results. They had no mirrors so didn't know what they looked like, but they could see how their height and weight related to their friends," Barbara recalls.

"You always receive more on these trips than you give," Barbara says. "I fondly remember a boy named David who knew it was my birthday and made a big sign 'Happy Birthday, Barbara.' To thank him I gave him a protein bar and said, 'I appreciate your sign and I'll never forget you.' He said, 'I'll never forget you' and pointed to me. That's what you get back; you can't buy something like that."



Traveling to Israel/Palestine, the Abels visited Father Elias Chacour who founded the Mar Elias Educational Institution—schools that now serve 2,700 students from preschool through high school—where students of different faith traditions learn to live and work together in peace. Dick says when they visited the student-body-president’s home he told them, “We are so glad you are here. You don’t have to do anything; we just want you to see our faces.” Dick continues, “However, we noticed the garden needed tending at Father Chacour’s home. When we asked if they would like eight able-bodied visitors to do some weeding. The answer was, ‘I’ve gone to Paradise and didn’t have to die!’”

The Abels know there is much need here at home and have volunteered at Warm Winter Nights when LOPC houses the homeless. Barbara and two friends from St. Benedict’s Catholic Church in Oakland have been helping feed the homeless for three years. They assemble small lunches, including Barbara’s famous cookies, and deliver them to a homeless encampment. Dick contributes by making the chocolate-chip cookies. Barbara also helps two times a month, cooking and serving meals at Manor Refuge, a place for women coming off drugs or are homeless.

So, what drew the Abels to this mission work? Barbara grew up in a Presbyterian church in Laguna Beach, CA. “Going to church was really fun, and I looked forward to it. I went to camp at Forest Home, and one night I went to the firepit by myself and absolutely knew that Jesus was there with me. From that time on, I thought of church as something more—a community of believers. But I remember it was in fifth grade when I knew I wanted to do something to help others. That’s why I became a nurse, attending UCLA. In college, I served the poor in Norwalk by doing immunizations.”

Dick’s father was a Presbyterian, so Dick attended Sunday school, but it didn’t stick. “One morning when our teacher left the room, I climbed out the window

and that was the end of that. I’ve always I been a people person. I joined organizations like One World. I loved the diversity I found at UC Berkeley. International House put me in contact with students from all over the globe and opened my eyes to a world that needed help.”

Barbara relates that later she went to a church in San Leandro, but found it without warmth or a message, so she dropped out until she and Dick got together. “We had just married and moved to Lafayette. He had a 15-year-old daughter, and I had a five-year-old daughter and a nine-year-old son. We wanted to set a good example. I asked him, ‘Do you want to go to church?’ He said, ‘Yes’, and I said, ‘Let’s go!’”

After visiting several churches, they came to LOPC, and joined after receiving warm welcomes from members Bev and Chuck Fellows and then-pastor Chuck Shields. They’ve been “going” ever since, not only to LOPC, but around the world in mission activities, setting an excellent example not only for their own children, but for all.

“Our Christian faith guides us in many ways, but especially in mission where Jesus says that caring for the least among us is caring for Him,” Barbara says. “The joy we have had working with the AIDS patients in Zimbabwe and the children in India is immeasurable. We are both led by Micah 6:8: ‘what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.’”





MAY 2020

49 Knox Drive  
Lafayette, CA 94549

IMPORTANT

Return Service Requested

Dated Material  
PLEASE DELIVER  
BEFORE 5/1/20

Thank you!

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
LAFAYETTE, CA  
PERMIT NO. 12

#### PASTORAL STAFF

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

#### WORSHIP & MUSIC

Brett Strader, Director  
Stewart Scharch, Organist

#### TREASURER

Char Casella

#### MINISTRY DIRECTORS

Chris Baldwin, Ministries Associate for  
Community Life  
Keris Dahlkamp & Allison Kunz, Youth  
Coleen Moulton, Seedlings Preschool  
Ryan Timpte, Children

#### FOCUS NEWSLETTER

Jon Corry, Communications

*Editors:* Dick James, Lexi Morrissey,  
& Renée Wigginton (cover image)

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

#### Monthly FOCUS Newsletter Deadline:

**May 1 for the June/July combined 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)

*We're all in this*  
**TOGETHER!**

Join us for worship online

**LOPC.ORG**

*Sundays at 9 a.m.*

*or any time you wish!*

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

Invite Friends & Family!

Connect with us online!



[/lopchurch](https://www.facebook.com/lopchurch)



[/LOPC](https://twitter.com/LOPC)



[@lopc\\_church](https://www.instagram.com/lopc_church)



[@lopchurch](https://twitter.com/lopchurch)



[/lopc](https://vimeo.com/lopc)

- Give.
  - Ask for prayer.
  - Get the latest news.
- All on the LOPC app.

Text "LOPC app"  
to the number 77977  
to download it today.



and at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org)