

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Alive!
In Christ... in the World



August 2020

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ONE BODY with many members

By Jaime Polson, - Pastor, Families & Executive Leadership

Dear LOPC Community,

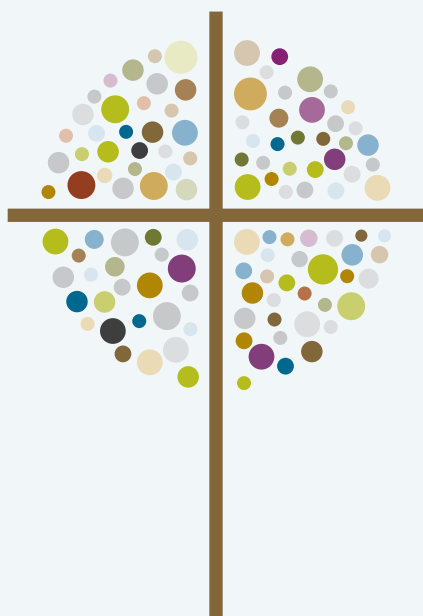
Over the past five months, our church, community and world have been living in times unlike any other during our lifetimes. We are living through a pandemic, and the many, many injustices and disparities that are embedded in our society through our systems and in us as individuals have come to light in new ways. This time has been a time of heartbreak and devastation in our world. And, I still believe God is working. God can work through us if we come with open hearts and willing hands. With God, nothing is impossible.

These verses in 1 Corinthians 12:12,26 remind me of our call that we belong to one another. God created us to be in healthy and flourishing relationships and to love one another. It reminds me that my individual choices surrounding how I live my life matters for other people to flourish. And their choices matter for me.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

1 Corinthians 12:12; 26

Remembering how much we matter to one another gives me hope for our future. Through our service in the world, our commitment to racial justice and our belief in the value for all God's children, I believe God will continue to guide and lead us to creating a better world for all of God's children. May we be dedicated to doing the continual work our faith calls us to do. "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Let us not give up, but rather trust that God is with all of us, walking alongside us, and leading into a future where flourishing and rejoicing is for all people.



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

Youth Sunday

stories of
FAITH
in covid times

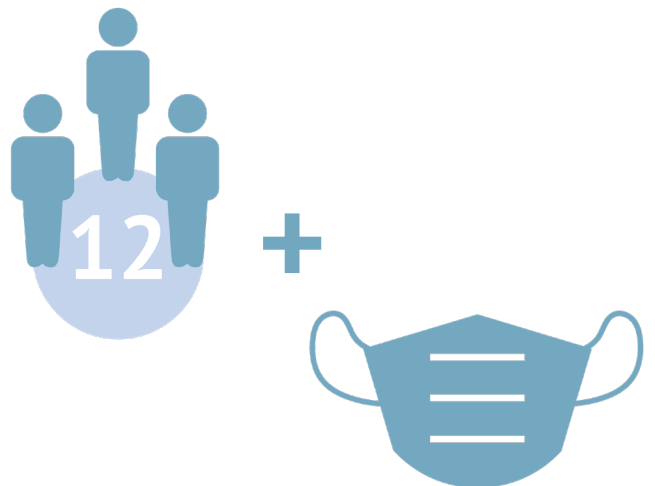
Though we were not able to have mission trips or in-person Vacation Bible Camp this year, the children and youth of our community have not been idle! Rather, they have been busy discovering new ways to practice their faith, serve others, and connect with the community even as we have sheltered in place. We look forward to celebrating and lifting up the voices of our young people as they lead us in worship. Please join us for a special Livestream Youth Sunday worship service on **August 30 at 9:00 a.m.** as we highlight the creativity and kindness of our community's youth!



youth

Outdoor Small Group Gatherings

Each middle and high school small group will be hosting one optional in-person gathering in August. In-person gatherings will take place outdoors, following social-distancing guidelines and safety measures, and will only take place as long as gatherings of up to 12 people are allowed by Contra Costa County. Parents, check your email for the schedule and more details.



mission

Primera Pres Needs Your Help!

By Mary Kay Atherton, LOPC member

Six years ago, Don and I signed up to be a liaison to our sister church in Oakland, Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispana, a.k.a. Primera. Over the years we have gotten to know Primera well through the One Sunday workday project and other ongoing mission outreach.

The pandemic has not been kind to our Hispanic brothers and sisters in Oakland. The City of Oakland is facing severe economic challenges, hampering efforts to provide food for those in need. Currently, over 85% of the Primera congregants are unemployed. Primera's top priority is their safety and well-being. Primera has been trying to meet basic food needs by providing a bag of groceries to families on Saturdays. The bag includes a portion of beans and rice, maseca (flour for tortillas), cooking oil and a small variety of fresh produce.

LOPC has responded to our sister church's needs by shipping 1,400 pounds of beans and rice, 150 pounds of sugar, 125 pounds of maseca, cooking oil, and some produce directly to Primera. The food was purchased wholesale from a restaurant supplier. Primera's deacons work to breakdown and re-bag the 50-pound bags of bulk items for distribution to the community. The purchases and shipments were made possible by the generosity of 35 LOPC members who gave \$2,500 in donations to directly support Primera's food bridge. We project that we can provide food deliveries to Primera through August but would like to be able to extend the food bridge until the impact of the pandemic has subsided.

If you are interested in contributing to the food bridge, please write a check to LOPC, memo line: Primera, and mail it to Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, Attention Primera, 49 Knox Dr., Lafayette, CA. 94549.

The reality of this situation is grim. In addition to hunger, Primera families are facing evictions and utility shutoffs. Unfortunately, the moratorium on Oakland evictions ended in mid-June. Primera staff are trying to work directly with the congregants' landlords and utility companies by placing "good faith" deposits on rentals to forestall evictions and shutoffs.

This is a time when hope meets caution. Primera continues to look for unexpected signs of hope. We ask that you please pray for Primera. Hopefully, LOPC can continue to make a difference in the lives of those families, at a time when it is most needed.

For more information contact Mary Kay and Don Atherton, LOPC members, liaisons to Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispana at athertonco@comcast.net or at 510-410-8419.

Warm Winter Nights

LOPC will host WWN this year from Nov. 2 - 16.

Every fall LOPC commits to hosting Warm Winter Nights, a traveling homeless shelter which runs from October to May annually, sponsored by the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County and 17 faith congregations. This program is vital to our community, as homelessness increases and affordable housing becomes scarcer in the Bay area.

The shelter provides homeless families with a clean, safe and warm place to sleep at night and support programming during the day. Participants either go to work or receive resource services at the Oasis Center in Pittsburg while their children attend school. All participants must be clean and sober, comply to behavioral standards and work toward self-sufficiency and permanent housing. This shelter meets key needs as families struggle to transition back into permanent housing.

Due to the uncertainty that exists, our degree of involvement may vary depending on the Shelter In Place orders that exist at that time but we look forward to helping in whatever capacity is deemed necessary and safe for clients as well as volunteers.

Update from Atfaluna School for Deaf Children in Gaza

By Chris Johnson, LOPC Member

Atfaluna, which LOPC has helped support since 2003, has been facing tough challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, like many other LOPC Mission partners. Of course, even before the pandemic, Gaza's 2 million residents experienced trying circumstances, living squeezed into 40 kilometers of land on the edge of Israel.

Nonetheless, during COVID-19, the school has continued to educate its children via remote learning and materials sent home. It also has provided social support and meals for students' families. The vast majority of the families have been unable to travel to work. In spite of the challenges, Atfaluna continues to provide a beacon of hope to its students, families and the greater community of Gaza.

The Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, a registered Palestinian NGO located in Gaza City, has been providing education and support services for the deaf since 1992. Literally thousands of deaf children, adults, and their families have received help at the school through deaf education, audiology, speech therapy, income-generating programs for the deaf, vocational training, parent, teacher, and community training and awareness programs, and a host of other services and programs.

The school was the first in Gaza to open its doors to deaf children. Schooling starts at kindergarten and continues onto primary and middle school, grades 1 to 9, in 20 classrooms. The educational process in the school depends on a dual language system which includes speech and Palestinian sign language. The school also houses a classroom for students with special needs in addition to hearing loss.

Contact Chris Johnson to learn more at chrisazim@gmail.com.



Atfaluna addresses deafness through four areas:

Education - academic instruction for 300 deaf students, training of teachers, sign language training.

Auditory support - primary and diagnostic hearing screening, hearing aid repair, speech therapy services, early Intervention services.

Vocational support - carpentry and wood working, sewing and embroidery, fabric and rug weaving, wood painting, pottery production and design, vocational training in the café.

Emotional support - community education and awareness, psychosocial and counseling services.



mission

Monument Crisis Center Grocery Bag Drive

Replacing the backpack drive due to COVID-19

August 22 Drop-Off 8:00 – 10:30 a.m. ONLY

Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church has made supporting the backpack drive at Monument Crisis Center (MCC) an annual tradition. This year with the tremendous increase in demand for food, the Center has decided to forego the backpack drive and replace it with a grocery bag drive.

Each contribution will consist of a paper grocery bag filled with the following six items -- cereal, plastic jar of peanut butter, can of tomato sauce, pasta, plastic jar of jelly, box of mac and cheese. In addition to the food, please enclose a \$10 or \$20 gift card to either Safeway or Target and a note of encouragement.

No Contact Drop Off Procedures:

As you enter the LOPC parking lot please drive along the far left parking row that is next to the Ministry Center building. Pull all the way up to the designated drop off spot just outside the Oak Room.

Stay in your car and a volunteer will collect the donated items from your car. Please do not park and walk your donations over to the volunteers.

This special package will help families who have lost jobs and are experiencing food insecurity. Many are experiencing the added burden of feeding children who normally would be in school receiving breakfast and lunch in accordance with Title 1. This is a great opportunity to help others and put your faith in action!

Contact robin@lopc.org for more information.

MCC Requests

A BROWN PAPER GROCERY BAG

filled with the following items:



lopc foundation

Lasting Legacy of Love

By Phil Placier, LOPC Foundation Trustee



The LOPC Foundation was established in 1993 as a way for LOPC members and friends to support the many vital church ministries into the indefinite future. Over the years, the Foundation has been blessed by many members and friends, creating a lasting legacy of love in their will, trust, IRA, also gifts while alive.

Gifts to the Foundation are different than annual giving to LOPC. Session approves use of annual gifts to LOPC, through pledges or otherwise, for the operating budget to support LOPC ministries and campus upkeep.

Gifts to the Foundation are lasting. They are invested with an indefinite time horizon. The Foundation has dual investment objectives -- to preserve capital, and to grow invested assets. The investment objectives are achieved by annual support for LOPC ministries in the prudent amount of 4% of the value of invested gift assets, measured as the average of asset values over the past 12 quarters.

Lasting net effects: The invested value of gift assets has increased over the years after providing 4% support for

LOPC ministries. The value of a gift to the Foundation continues to increase indefinitely. The blessing is that, as the value of your gift increases, annual support for LOPC's vital ministries increases.

Gifts to the Foundation are for loving ministries. Annually, Foundation support for specific LOPC ministries is determined by Session, in consultation with Foundation trustees. In 2020, there are 30 grants for LOPC operating budget expenses for over \$300,000, including eight mission projects, children's ministry, youth ministry, family ministry, senior adults, Thursday Fellowship, spiritual formation, deacons emergency fund, communications, worship media team.

Is it time for you to create a lasting legacy of love?

Foundation trustees: Staci Johnston (President) 925-588-9992; Kristi Haigh (Vice President) 925-890-0265; Dara Youngdale (Secretary) 510-388-4000; Phil Placier (Treasurer) 925-254-7769; Jim Beckemeyer, 925-324-9655; Lois Boyd, 925-787-2388; Jen Crocker, 925-765-4222; Jerry Ducey, 925-997-8839; Mike Ross, (925) 254-6621.

session highlights

Session Highlights

June, 2020, Meeting

By Paul Koenig, Clerk of Session

Pastors Peter and Jaime provided reports regarding plans for limited reopening of worship and programs over time to deal with the current pandemic and need for social distancing. Again, under the current conditions, full worship services will not resume for some time in the future. But plans are being developed to have smaller attendances on Fridays for some portions of the services to be Livestreamed the following Sunday.

Peter also advised the Session regarding the Congo Team. He then discussed the on-line programs for the

next month addressing diversity and anti-racism, an important focus for all.

Jaime reported on other planning going forward that she has been working on with team members, including programs and classes to be conducted on Zoom.

Jim Nagle, finance elder, gave a brief update about the Church's current finances. The Finance team will be doing further reviews and will provide further reports in the next two months.

welcome to our NEW MEMBERS

Emily Austin

Emily has been a frequent visitor to LOPC for about five years now. She, her husband Michael, and their curly-haired 4.5-year-old Lucille (who goes by Lucy) enjoy the inspirational messages from the ministry, the community and care of the Garden (where Emily has served as a storyteller in non-Covid times) and the warmth of the congregation. Emily and Michael are both theatre artists -- Michael an actor, and Emily a full-time drama teacher at Bentley School in Oakland. Lucy was starting to sing in the LOPC choir, and hopes it comes back soon. She also misses the cookies each Sunday.



Virginia (Ginny) Clifford

Ginny was with her son and his family in North Carolina when COVID 19 began to increase, and flew to California to live with her daughter, Katherine Welcomer, and her husband, Paul, (see pg. 8) and their youngest son, Nate, (home from Colgate). Her husband, George, died last August, spent the remainder of 2019 in Aiken, SC, getting the home ready to sell. It has not been an easy year, she says, especially with the outbreak of COVID-19. She is looking forward to being able to do more in Lafayette and to becoming an active member of LOPC. A teacher for almost 30 years, she attended an Episcopal Church in SC and was active in the Daughters of the King and the Stephen Ministry programs. She enjoys cooking and card games.



Lori Holbrook Banks

Lori grew up in the area, raised her family in Walnut Creek, and now resides in Martinez. Lori and her husband, Thomas, have three grown children, Brandon (32), Michael (26) and Taylor (19). Lori teaches first grade in the San Ramon Valley unified School District at Coyote Creek Elementary. She likes to garden, read, tutor children in reading and hang with her 8-year-old grandson, Blake. She was attracted to LOPC because of the people, volunteer opportunities, and worship services.



Doug and Jennifer Davidson

Doug and Jennifer moved from Philadelphia to the Bay Area in 2003, and currently live in Pleasant Hill. A pair of life-long American Baptists, they are the proud parents of Elliot, a senior majoring in psychology at the University of Southern New Hampshire, and Maya, a lovable lab-Pit Bull mix, majoring in squeaker-toys and barking at dogs on TV. Jennifer is professor of worship and theology at American Baptist Seminary of the West and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley; Doug recently began a new job as a stewardship reporting officer at UC Berkeley, after 30 years in editing and communications for religious and nonprofit groups. Both value the engaging worship and social justice emphasis at LOPC, and Jennifer appreciates the connections she's already made as part of several LOPC Bible studies. Doug enjoys playing the guitar and is a huge baseball fan (go Phillies), while Jen likes crosswords, cross-stitch, and cross-training—ok, not really cross-training, but she does enjoy a good hike now and then.



Bill & Melanie Brinkman

Bill and Melanie live in Lafayette with their two children, Brady (16) and Alana (14). Bill restructures and turns around troubled companies. Melanie works as a finance consultant in the sales and marketing industry. They enjoy running with their dog, Larry, and playing tennis. They appreciate the community they've found at LOPC and their children have enjoyed the kids' programs.



Lyn Houssami

Lyn recently relocated to Orinda with her husband, Zeid, and two sons, Adam (11) and Luke (8). Lyn has recently gone back to work full time as a design consultant for Smith and Noble. Typically, she says, you can find them playing or watching basketball, baseball as well as college football. Her sister, Lee O'Haver, and parents, George and Stephanie O'Haver, are members of LOPC. They have had the privilege of being guests at the annual LOPC Mt. Hermon retreats over the years.



Jim & Leslie Ward

Jim and Leslie live in Lafayette, right across Hwy 24 from LOPC. They have been married for almost 40 years and have three children. Jim, after 21 years as an officer in the Civil Engineer Corp., ran Sausal Corp. (general-building contractors) until several years ago, when their youngest son, Josh, took over the presidency. After 30 years of national construction sales, Leslie now runs their small winery, Los Arabis. They were members at Moraga Valley PC for 20 years. Now, due to the proximity, the welcoming attitude of the congregation, and the wonderful ministry of LOPC, they have found a new home church.



Deb & Tim Kinsella

Deb and Tim have been married nearly 40 years and raised three children. They reside in Littleton, Colorado but travel often to Walnut Creek to be with their oldest daughter, Renée Wigginton (LOPC member), and her husband, Ken. Recently retired, they enjoy traveling, completing home improvement projects together, and their little dog, Reese.



Katherine & Paul Welcomer

Katherine and Paul are both originally from the East Coast, and have lived in Lafayette since 1993. Katherine is a kindergarten teacher and fills her spare time teaching music, quilting, painting, sewing clothing, and anything else creative she can think of. Paul is a musician who enjoys brewing beer at home, reading, and watching the Warriors. Together, they have raised three children, and love being with them every chance possible.



Allen Norleen & Mara Plankers-Norleen

Allen and Mara live in Orinda and have been married five years. Their daughter, Alice, attends Orinda Intermediate School. Allen is self-employed as a manufacturer's representative in the hardware and home-improvement trade. In his free time, he tinkers on old cars and roots for the 49ers. Mara is a small-business consultant for Wells Fargo. She loves theater, especially costuming, and working with kids.



journey of FAITH

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC member

Jackson Wheeler says his passion for God and for football are intertwined in his journey of faith. Here is this part of his story.

“Growing up I was very involved in both football and basketball. I played them at Campolindo High School. I wanted to do my very best so I practiced consistently and constantly.

“In my sophomore year, football season ended, and I moved on to varsity basketball, but soreness in my quads [leg-muscle group] began to surface. Weeks passed. It got worse and worse. Every day I gave it everything I had, intensifying the pain. New Year’s Day my mom noticed my difficulties doing an easy hike and knew we needed to seek medical attention. I put a pause on all my activities as the long quest to discover the problem began.”

Late spring, Jackson was diagnosed with mitochondrial myopathy— which meant his muscles weren’t functioning properly, causing them to become weak and worn out quickly after exercising. Since it takes a long time to recover, overall energy is greatly depleted, and he discovered the condition affected the muscles throughout his body. But they did not know why or how to fix it.

“Searching for the root of my problem was when I began growing closer to God,” he says. “Throughout my life, I had believed in God and gone to church. But now, the many unknowns of my situation and my burning desire to be a great football player led me to truly seek God. As I continued practice through spring and summer, I was propelled by a Bible verse, ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’”

The more he trained, the more he ran, the worse his quads became, but he did play football. However, on a key play he didn’t make the catch, and that did it. Hopelessness overtook him. “I became depressed. My



health issues left my body so exhausted and depleted I could hardly focus on school. I lost faith in God and struggled to keep going. Luckily, there were mentors who supported me. At LOPC’s By the Way (BTW) high school group, Keris [Dahlkamp, Youth Director,] provided guidance, and I learned to reconnect with God. My football coach and my dad were with me every step of my journey. I decided to fight back.”

His condition worsened during his junior year. He became manager of the football team, continuing to attend practices, handing out equipment. As the season progressed, his coach had other ideas and told him to suit up, which he did, began practicing, and then went into a game.

“I grew closer to God and relied on Him for my strength, reminding myself that anything is possible if you do it through Christ. Every time I took the field, I repeated II Timothy 1:7, ‘For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.’ It reminded me not to fear or be anxious about my quads. If I trusted in the LORD and poured out my heart on the field, then he would take care of me. Whether I was suffering during the weekend after playing, or ready to take the field on a Friday night, I relied on God for ‘my strength and my salvation.’”

It won’t come as a surprise that Jackson was named the U.S. Bank Inspirational Player of the Week or that his coach called him the moral compass of the team.

community

Jackson and his family began attending LOPC when they moved to Lafayette six years ago. His older brother, Hunter, graduated from UC Berkeley this year and attended LOPC's youth group, as Jackson and his younger brother, Charlie, do now. They have a 10-year-old sister, Grace, adopted from China at age 10 months, who, they say, is the adorable princess of the family.

"I enjoy our Sunday sermons, which are a weekly reminder of the need to devote time to God. In attending BTW, Keris has been amazing in his support of me. He truly helped me keep fighting through my struggles and, more importantly, reestablish my relationship with God and make it stronger than ever," Jackson says. "Tom Scovel, a BTW advisor, has also been inspirational to me. His life story, growing up with missionary parents in China, being in internment camps, and other trials, helped me keep going, and reminded me that God gives us strength through all our problems."

Says Tom of Jackson, "He is an extraordinary young man. I discerned him as remarkably mature and impressively deep in his quest to become a more faithful disciple of Christ. I will miss him but look forward to following his progress in college."

Jackson will attend UC San Diego this fall, studying computer science. "I look forward to joining Christian organizations so I can share my knowledge of God in a way that will, hopefully, lift others up to do great things in their lives," he says. For now, he has been doing more volunteering, most recently with the Salvation Army in San Francisco delivering meals to the homeless.

He concludes, "Knowing how helpful it is to have a connection to God when going through difficult times in life, I want to utilize my own religious foundation to help others overcome their life obstacles. I know God has been with me all the way and will continue to guide me."

Layette Project

The COVID-19 pandemic hasn't slowed LOPC's Quilters and Chicks with Sticks organizations. Remarkably, they've continued to sew, quilt, knit and crochet at home, contributing their product to what is known as the Layette Project.



And what is that, you ask? Coordinated by Hillcrest Congregational Church in Pleasant Hill and support by LOPC, the Layette project has provided basic infant supplies to the neediest families through the Contra Costa Public Health Nurse Perinatal Staff for 60 years. It contributes about 25 layettes a month, year-round, more in economic hard times. To meet this need they rely on the support of organizations and individuals outside of their congregation.

Layette bags are packed full of clothing, sizes through 18 months, blankets, and other baby essentials. Typically, a bag holds 60 -70 items. A large stuffed animal peeks out from the bag, and a tote bag often completes the layette.

Both Chicks with Sticks and the LOPCided Quilters have been supporting this project for about 10 years. "We provide handmade quilts, afghans, receiving blankets, sweaters, hats and tote bags," says Louise Tanno. "We also provide a large quantity of new and gently used baby clothes, new stuffed animals, and other baby essentials. The entire congregation has supported this effort, in large part by donating during our annual Baby Shower, which is held every May.

"This year we were unable to have the baby shower. However, the need is still there, possibly greater than ever due to the current economic situation. We welcome any donations of new or gently used baby clothes and other items."

For more information about the Layette Project, including their specific needs, or to arrange collection of items, contact Louise Tanno at louisetanno@gmail.com, or Dianne Schneider dianneschneider@hotmail.com.

community



*thursday*Fellowship

A program of Senior Care Ministries

In August 2019, the Thursday fellowship team was busy planning for the year, looking forward to their annual volunteer-appreciation luncheon. Everyone was excited to see one another after our summer hiatus, and we looked forward to kicking off the 2019-2020 program year. Plans for creative crafts, luscious lunches and exciting entertainment were in place, and we were thrilled to welcome new volunteers and new guests. Everything was in place for the start of a banner program year.

Now, how we wish we were in the process of planning and preparing for a new program year. Even though volunteers and guests have stayed in touch via emails, cards, Zoom calls and telephone calls, everyone has expressed how much they have missed being together in person.

As we have watched and waited to see how the COVID-19 pandemic would unfold our hope has been we could resume our program this fall. After gathering all pertinent information and following the recommendations of the Contra Costa County Health Department, it has been decided Thursday Fellowship cannot meet this fall, and that we will reevaluate the possibility of restarting the program in early 2021.

Our greatest desire is to resume as soon as it is safe to do so. The health and safety of our Thursday Fellowship community is our top priority. During August, we will be exploring alternatives to our regular program. As those plans take shape and become more concrete, we will inform all of our volunteers and guests. We miss you and send loving thoughts to each of you to stay safe and healthy.

July 2020 Staff Announcement

Follow up

We are pleased to share some good news regarding the staffing announcement that was included in the July FOCUS with regards to two staff positions which were eliminated due to the lack of work during the pandemic. We would like to remind LOPC members and friends that Renée Wigginton and Terry Conte are both members of LOPC and they are excited to continue to be actively involved with LOPC in the future but in a member capacity.

LOPC Staff Position Available: Treasurer

10 hours/week

Responsible for financial supervision and review, IRS compliance, and setting and monitoring compliance with internal control policies and procedures. Minimum Requirements: Education-Bachelor's degree, Business. Major in Accounting or Finance. Experience-Five years Treasurer in non-profit field.

Please send resumes to Elizabeth Ball at elizabeth@lopc.org

Mount Hermon Retreat Canceled

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've made the difficult decision to cancel our All Church Retreat at Mount Hermon this year. We hope to schedule a new time to return to Mount Hermon in 2021.

While we know this is very disappointing, we believe it's the right decision based upon the information we have today related to the increase in Covid-19 cases and the continued uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. Thank you for your understanding during these challenging times.

Please contact Jaime Polson at jaime@lopc.org if you have any further questions.

vbs goes virtual!

By Ryan Timppte, Director of Children's Ministry



The COVID-19 pandemic has upended many things in our world, affecting even the youngest among us. From online school to canceled sports, our children have had to cope with a number of radical changes with almost no preparation. Luckily, our kids are incredibly resilient, but we were still heartbroken when we, the Children's Ministry team, had to make the decision to cancel all in-person summer programming this year.

Even as we made the right decision, we knew that our kids were going to need to learn new coping strategies to deal with our upside-down world. That's why we set to work immediately creating something entirely new: a virtual version of Vacation Bible Camp, where we could give kids the tools to ask questions about the world they live in.

That idea turned into our theme: Asking the Big Questions. We wanted to teach kids that not only is it okay to ask questions about why the world is the way it is, but those questions can bring us closer to God and closer to each other. We decided to do it over Zoom, structuring the program in such a way that kids would be able both to hear the message and to talk about it. And so, for 75 minutes each day over five days in June, we gathered as a community online to be in ministry with our kids.

Our Large Group team recorded a series of videos that we showed the kids as a way of opening our time together. From singing upbeat songs, to asking the daily Big Question, to teaching about the Bible story, our team created, in essence, five half-hour episodes of a children's television program. The amount of work that went into producing these videos shows how much our Family Ministry staff loves and values children.

During Small Group time, our kids were broken up into groups in Zoom, with one adult Shepherd and

three to four other children. Our Shepherds this year were nothing short of amazing. Composed of longtime dedicated Children's Ministry volunteers, former volunteers who answered the call to serve, and brand new recruits who decided to dedicate their time to something completely new, our Shepherding team led the kids through an incredible curriculum written and produced by Associate Director of Children's Ministry Lori Robinson, which she designed to give kids the space to voice their own concerns about the world. The groups first talked about what they heard in Large Group, and then they learned to do Spiritual Practices, like creating a sacred space or making prayer beads, that would give them tools to grapple both with the daily Big Question and with the questions that they might have themselves.

We were joined in this effort by kids and staff from two other churches: Hillside Covenant Church in Walnut Creek, led by Director of Children's Ministry Cheryl Garlick; and St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Danville, led by Associate Rector Susan Geissler O'Neil. We believe the Bay Area is stronger when we partner together with other churches, and we were thrilled both to be able to share this curriculum with their kids and volunteers in Small Group and to have them create their own videos for our Large Group sessions. Overall, we served 130 kids and 26 adults over three churches – an effort made all the more impressive by the fact that we pulled everything together in less than six weeks' time.

Altogether, the program helped kids navigate a broken world by remembering that God loves everyone, no matter what. We have made the curriculum and the videos we produced available for free to the community and to other churches at LOPC.org/virtual-vbc. And if you or your kids have any questions, big or small, contact Director of Children's Ministry Ryan Timppte at ryan@LOPC.org or Associate Director of Children's Ministry Lori Robinson at lori@LOPC.org – we would love to talk with you!



spiritual formation



by Hilde Clark, LOPC Member

When I am asked about why I treasure the monthly Companions gatherings here at LOPC, my answer is simple: I come away from each month's meeting feeling closer to God with a greater awareness for how he can impact my life. And with that realization comes a better understanding for how God is transforming me into the person He intends for me to be. I have learned so much about listening and the powerful impact it can have on my life and others. It is a skill I have taken into my everyday life that has changed, in a positive way, how I see, hear and respond to others.

Companions is a contemplative program intended to provide people an opportunity to intentionally slowdown in order to experience, see, and feel how God might be working in their lives in a small-group environment. It allows each of us to explore the Word of God in the Bible with others in a way that gives us insight into whatever might be impacting our daily lives! Some would say it is countercultural. It differs from a regular Bible-study program in which one learns to better understanding the meaning of the stories; rather, it invites us to listen to scripture to hear what words or phrases might attract our attention that day. It differs from a social gathering in that we aren't trying to figure out how to 'fix' each other's problems.

Rather, God is encouraging each of us to notice something unique going on in our own life. The Companion's confidential process lends itself to making the time and space to reflect on whatever might come up for you. Then, in turn, it helps to develop a closer relationship with each other and our Creator.

Quotes from Companions participants:

"Companions has been one of the very best experiences of my Christian life. To dig into God's word and find its meaning for ME (not through the lens of a pastor or group leader) has been profound. To see God working in the lives of others has also been a true blessing."

Elaine Deane

"Companions has been a blessing to me, a rare experience of sharing in safety and in trust, both in the full gathering and in our small group."

Bob Finertie

"Before I began participating in Companions, I had no idea what to expect. After my first Companions meeting, I was sure the Holy Spirit had guided me to be part of Companions. Companions is exactly what I had been looking for. This way of engaging with Scripture has had momentous effects on my life."

Jiyeon Bae

Summer Sermon Series

FAITH *at the* MOVIES

VIII

8/2 42
Ephesians 4:1-6

8/9 1917
2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10

8/16 SHADOWLANDS
Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

8/23 THE LION IN WINTER
Romans 3:21-26

9/6 THE DARKEST HOUR
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Fellowship Hour

DIRECTLY FOLLOWING THE 9 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE, WE WILL HOST A ZOOM CALL THAT WILL BREAK OUT INTO CONVERSATIONS TO GO DEEPER WITH THE SERMON AND FILM THEMES. IT'S GOING TO BE AN AWESOME WAY TO GET TO KNOW OTHERS AND GO DEEPER IN YOUR FAITH.



49 Knox Drive
Lafayette, CA 94549

AUGUST 2020

IMPORTANT

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BEFORE 8/1/20

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Jon Corry, Communications
Editors: Dick James, Lexi Morrissey
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August 1 for the September issue.
Email items to communications@lopc.org.

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Every Monday by 5 p.m.
for the following Sunday's issue.
Email items to communications@lopc.org.

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TOGETHER!

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9:00 a.m.

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