

# FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Alive!  
In Christ... in the World



## September 2020

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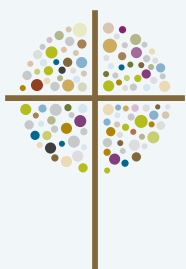
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### Pastors

**Peter Whitelock**

Head of Staff

**Gerald Chinen**

Care

**Lauren Gully**

Mission & Spiritual Formation

**Jaime Polson**

Families & Executive Leadership



# the one constant is LOVE

By Gerald Chinen - Pastor, Care

**F**all is usually a busy time of year. Parents normally would be readying children for a new school year, and of course, at LOPC, we would be gearing up for all our fall programs, which are numerous. However, this is not a typical fall. Far from it. In fact, for parents of school-age children, it's a very trying time as they await word from schools whether their kids will attend class physically or online. For a single parent, whatever the decision, it will be extremely taxing in various ways.

COVID-19 has changed everything for everyone all over the world. Personally, my own plans are in constant flux. I had planned to be in Hawaii in April until we were asked to shelter in place. So, I postponed the trip until May, and, as you may know, Hawaii has had a mandatory 14-day quarantine, and there is no indication when it will be lifted.

What makes it difficult is that my mother, at age 91, could not be healthier – except she was diagnosed with breast cancer about the time of the outbreak. For months, she has been seeing many doctors, and finally we have a treatment plan for her: three weeks of daily radiation - and it begins today as I write this article. Being an only child, I feel so badly I cannot be there for her; you might imagine the feelings of helplessness and guilt I struggle with. But then, I think of my mom's own attitude about it all. I know she is disappointed I cannot be there just yet, but she is so positive and so strong in her faith that she is facing this particular battle as though it is just another slight detour along the way!

What is truly amazing is that my wonderful, extended family -- my aunts and uncles, and particularly my cousins -- have all been pitching in, from cooking meals and paying her bills, to driving her to medical appointments, and so many other things. One of my cousins and I are in continual contact and she said to me one day, "We're family; we're here for each other."

So, even while this pandemic has disrupted and altered life, it could not and will not change the one thing that will always be a constant in life: love. I am so awed by the love my family has shown, not just my mom, but to me as well. Obviously, my mother is in for a challenge, but even

continued next page →

## youth



We're excited to announce our new

### Parking Lot Youth Group Programs for both YOW & BTW!

**B**oth programs will take place entirely outdoors in LOPC's parking lot in pre-registered small group "pods" and adhering to all CDC recommended COVID-19 safety guidelines, including social distancing. We will be following the guidance for worship by CCHS and the CDC for outdoor-religious services and small-group gatherings.

Each program will include a socially distanced and safe ice-breaker game for small-group pods, Bible-based devotional teaching relevant to current life events, small-group pod discussion time, and prayer, and individual spiritual practice activities.

Teenagers need meaningful connections with peers and adults outside of their household to support mental health and well-being. Regular contact with a small-group pod will provide a safe space for youth to collectively process what's going on in the world right now, validate their reactions, and share a faith-based perspective on current events. Spiritual practices shared during youth programs will equip students with coping mechanisms which encourage an ongoing connection with God and their faith community.

- BTW (for High School youth) will meet on Sundays, 4:00-5:15 p.m. for six weeks from September 20 to October 25.
- YOW (for 5th-8th grade youth) will meet on Wednesdays, 4:00-5:15 p.m. for six weeks from September 23 to October 28.

**Both programs require advance registration, open now through September 6. Visit [lopc.org/registrations](http://lopc.org/registrations) to sign up! Contact Director of Youth Ministry Allison Kunz at [allison@lopc.org](mailto:allison@lopc.org) for any questions.**

she will tell me that she is so thankful to have the love and support of our Ohana.

In 1 John 3:11, 16-18, we read:

*For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister[f] in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.*

You may know someone in the area, perhaps another church member, who does not have biological family nearby. Consider being their extended family. Reach out today. Call them, email them, text them, or just tell them you're thinking of them. Better yet, tell them you love them. It is the one constant voice, reminding them that no matter what is taking place in the world around them, they are loved.

## care

### Stephen Ministry

**M**. Scott Peck, in his popular book *The Road Less Traveled*, opens with these three words: "Life is difficult."

If these days have been particularly difficult on your emotions and spirit, you could benefit from talking with someone. Stephen Ministers are still available during shelter-in-place to meet with you on FaceTime or over the phone. Conversations are confidential.

Stephen Ministers are ready to meet with you weekly for as long as you need the support. Please contact Pastor Gerald at [gerald@lopc.org](mailto:gerald@lopc.org) or Jean Lee at [jleetravel@comcast.net](mailto:jleetravel@comcast.net).

# mission

## Atfaluna School for the Deaf Fundraising September 20 Changing the Face of Deafness in Gaza

**G**rowing up with a disability is hard even in the best circumstances, but in the Gaza Strip the challenge is even more profound. Atfaluna School for the Deaf, a long-time LOPC mission partner, is located in Gaza City and provides an oasis for those with hearing challenges. The school's mission is to improve the lives of deaf persons in the Gaza Strip by empowering them socially, economically, culturally, and civilly.

The upcoming 2020/21 school year marks the 18th consecutive year that LOPC has sponsored a classroom at the Atfaluna School for Deaf Children (ASDC).

Fundraising will kick-off on Sunday, September 20, during worship. Funds donated will provide the essentials: uniforms, hearing aids and batteries, transportation, medical assistance, and hot lunches for the students, as well as teacher salaries and classroom supplies. Funds will also provide the parents with sign-language training and job counseling. The goal is \$25,000.

**Fundraising begins September 20 and will be featured during worship.**

### Three Ways to Give:

- Write a check to LOPC with "Atfaluna" in the memo.
- Go to [lopc.org](http://lopc.org) > GIVE BACK > ONLINE GIVING and click "Atfaluna" in the dropdown menu.
- Use the LOPC APP > Press "Give button" > Click "Atfaluna."

Questions: Contact Chris Johnson at [chrisazim@gmail.com](mailto: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.



## Racial Equity Volunteer Opportunities

**M**onument Crisis Center (MCC) created a virtual summer-camp experience for students this summer. Students conducted science experiments, yoga, cartooning, and even made a COVID-time capsule! Families picked up supplies a few weeks before, so students had everything needed, and mom and dad didn't have to figure out how to afford anything – even salt and baking soda...lab stuff! There were 63 happy kids, all on Zoom. It was so successful that MCC is preparing to provide online tutoring this fall in lieu of its regular programming.



If you are interested in helping tutor students online this fall once or twice a week (MTWTh afternoons) please email Community Engagement Coordinator Jeanette Ramirez at [volunteer@monumentcrisiscenter.org](mailto:volunteer@monumentcrisiscenter.org) and let her know you are from LOPC (a referral is necessary). In addition, please fill out the online interest form at [monumentcrisiscenter.org](http://monumentcrisiscenter.org), click "Programs," and scroll down to "Volunteer." Fill out the information sheet and choose the age group you are interested in tutoring, your availability, and that you are an LOPC referral.

**W**ith schools often physically closed by the pandemic, educating children is becoming a challenge. Harbor House Ministries in Oakland is developing a program to help low-income students by using volunteer virtual tutors. If that is something that attracts you, contact Martha Allen at [martha@hhministries.org](mailto:martha@hhministries.org). Tutors will be paired one-on-one with a child they meet two to three times weekly for 30 minutes via Zoom or Google Hangouts.



Please see the longer article on page seven in this issue of Focus.

**A**s the new school year approaches, Hope Solutions has begun to plan for Homework Club. Although there are still many uncertainties about school, Hope Solutions is determined to provide homework support, whether remotely, on-site, or a hybrid of both, for children in the program.



Volunteers can help close the achievement gap and set students up for success by providing academic support and mentoring to students located in Pleasant Hill, Concord, Pittsburg, and Bay Point.

Contact Sandibel Arnold at [sarnold@hopesolutions.org](mailto:sarnold@hopesolutions.org) with questions or complete an application. Participants will be asked to pass a TB test and background check.

**P**rimera Pres is located in the heart of the Fruitvale District in Oakland, a community hard hit by the pandemic, with over 85% of its congregants currently unemployed. Primera's top concern is providing food to families. In response to this need, an LOPC women's Bible study group, along with other LOPC members have decided to work together to have food delivered in bulk to the church. Every Saturday, a grocery bag with beans and rice, Maseca (flour for tortillas), cooking oil, and a variety of fresh produce are distributed to families.



If you are interested in helping fund this project, please send a check to Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, Attention: Primera, 49 Knox Dr., Lafayette, CA. 94549, and put PRIMERA in the memo line, or donate online at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org).

# mission

## Congo Update

By Herb Long, LOPC Member

The Congo Team at LOPC has been using modern technology to keep up with various aspects of its mission work. Recently, Sue Gibbons, our advocacy chair, wrote asking if we might arrange a call with U.S. Ambassador to Congo Michael Hammer. Very soon, it was set up, and 12 Team members talked with him from his office in Congo, along with Ameliah Croft, Congo desk officer, and Josh Marks, Embassy staff, both in Washington, D.C.

Ambassador Hammer encouraged us in our commitment to voice the need to quell violence and corruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The new president, Felix Tshikedhi, has made some positive changes but the country still has many obstacles to overcome. The ambassador feels that Tshikedhi wants to work in partnership with the United States, which was not the case with the previous president.

The Congo Mission Team has several new avenues for advocacy as a result of the Ambassador's suggestion on this call, including establishing more communication with the Congolese people to inform them we are aware of their situation. Other suggestions were to contact religious organizations in the neighboring countries of Rwanda and Uganda to join in advocating for the end of the smuggling of minerals; and to press our United Nations' contacts for a more effective peacekeeping force to end Congo's suffering.

We had a Zoom call with two Congolese women in Washington, DC, Sylvie Maunga and Marie Cecile Groelsema, who are there to advocate for the DRC; their concerns mirror Ambassador Hammer's.

We have been in direct contact with our mission partners in Congo, Jeff and Christi Boyd. They are in Kinshasa, and report they are healthy and mostly work from home with many Zoom calls. Jeff goes to the store every three weeks to shop. Without a car, he hires a masked motorcycle taxi driver for transportation.

An important project involves Pastor Benoit. Children on the streets are taken to one of three regional

centers of the CPC and given food, medical care, and schooling. These institutions, however, are often substandard. The aim is to reunite them with their families, or people in their communities, which can take months, or even years, and requires resources to train people for this work.

Christi works with women making masks, which are paid for by a grant from the UK. Masks are delivered to the most vulnerable population. So far, almost 10,000 have been made, with a goal of around 25,000.

At the time of Jeff's recent email, over 8,000 had tested positive for the virus in DRC, with some 7,000 in the capital, Kinshasa, where the Boyds live. He reported social distancing and wearing masks is hardly possible in this poor, crowded city. But helpfully, much of life is lived outdoors. As suffering from COVID-19 increases, the Boyds ask for prayers for the Congo Mission Network. Technology equipment is needed. The Congolese are challenged by the economic impact and the increase of families out of work. Also, their churches lack funds, and as they cannot meet, offerings have dried up.

Larry Sthresley reports he and Inge are learning to work without face-to-face meetings and haven't left their compound in 10 weeks. He works with the IMA World Health program, which delivers health care for 10 million people and supports 165 health facilities to screen, refer, and treat COVID-19 patients. In the southern part of Congo, they are gearing up to deliver a couple million bed nets to every household in the area.

The program Build Congo Schools continues to raise funds for its 10th school. The LOPC Necklace team, has been unable to show their wares; if you would like to have a socially distanced visit to Bobbie Dodson's home, she would be happy to display its products. Email her at [bobbiedodson@comcast.net](mailto:bobbiedodson@comcast.net).

The Congo Team is grateful for the support of LOPC as we seek to help the people of this nation, where there is so much potential if only there were honest leadership, cessation of warfare, and multinational companies working to benefit its residents.

## Mission Update:

### N-95 Masks Refurbishing Project

Denise Rosson led two N-95 mask refurbishing events on the LOPC campus. The masks were part of a project UCSF started to get more masks into the community. Though these masks had technically expired to be used for medical purposes, they only needed to have the elastic replaced to be viable for non-medical use to prevent the spread of COVID-19. LOPC ended up tying 19,520 knots in new elastic straps and over 7,455 masks were re-strapped at two events!

### Trinity Center Clothing Drive



The response to the Trinity Center clothing drive was tremendous. A group of volunteers led by Jim Olufson helped with curbside pick-up and transported one truck bed and two trunks full of summer men's and women's clothing. The center staff was thrilled with both the quantity and quality of donated items. Later, LOPC member Sharon Bartlett joined two other volunteers to sort and arrange items on Trinity's racks and shelves, making them accessible to those who are homeless in the community. "LOPC's donations made a difference in lots of lives," Sharon said.

### Monument Crisis Center Support



LOPC supports what the Monument Crisis Center does in the community to provide food security to those that are struggling. With the onset of the pandemic, the need for food has increased tremendously and LOPC has helped fill it. Before the pandemic, LOPC would send an average of six barrels of food monthly, during the pandemic with the help of the congregation and the community it has doubled to approximately 12 barrels per month. Since January, LOPC has successfully delivered 192 barrels with 38,400 pounds of food.

In addition, Jim Boyd has led a group of volunteers who have dedicated 378 hours to re-bag 50 lbs bags of rice, beans and oatmeal into smaller gallon-size packages to be distributed to MCC clients. They have re-bagged over 18,000 pounds.



# mission

## Harbor House Needs Volunteers for Virtual Tutoring

With schools in the Bay Area starting this fall using a distance-learning model, we've seen parents in resourced neighborhoods banding together, forming pods, hiring tutors, and making sure their kids will still learn while the parents continue working. But what about families without these resources? Low-income children, lacking access to technology, and available adults at home who can teach them will suffer most.



That's why Harbor House in Oakland is offering virtual tutoring for students in first through eighth grades. Volunteers are paired one-on-one with a child they meet with two to three times weekly for 30 minutes via Zoom or Google Hangouts. Together, the tutor and the child decide what area of academics they want to focus on, and they create engaging times of learning. Tutors also have a chance to check in with the child, via ice-breaker games, to develop a positive mentoring relationship.

Harbor House piloted this program when schools first began distance learning last spring and learned what's effective. Several kids in the program even achieved academic gains! The goal for this fall is to take what's been learned and offer it to even more children. Harbor House would love to double or even triple the number of youth they serve through virtual tutoring. The only thing stopping Harbor House is lack of volunteers! The more volunteer tutors they have, the more kids they can serve.

If you have a heart for educational equity and seeing all children thrive during this difficult time, Harbor House would love to have you join its team of virtual tutors. Training and on-going assistance are provided. The time commitment is one to two hours a week for one semester. Application and background check are required. To learn more about applying for this opportunity, contact Martha Allen at [martha@hhministries.org](mailto:martha@hhministries.org).

## Prayers for Beirut and the Near East School of Theology (NEST)

Early in August, a massive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, caused extensive damage throughout the city, with a rising death toll and thousands injured. Beirut's Near East School of Theology (NEST) suffered extensive damage, as Dr. Sabra reports:



"We thank God that no one was injured at NEST... There were not many people in the building, but those who were escaped unharmed. The damage to the building is extensive. All eight floors above ground and two basements were hit. Glass windows, glass doors, glass panels inside the building, as well as many internal wooden doors were shattered. Never has NEST been hit so badly as yesterday, not even during the worst days of the 15-year war in Lebanon. Of course, we are not the only ones. The devastation in the rest of Beirut is vast.

"Our wonderful team of employees and workers are cleaning the glass today, but we have no illusions about being able to replace the glass and the doors soon. There is great demand on glass panels and repairmen in the city. We will be trying to cover the shattered windows and doors with nylon for the time being.

"The cost of repairing the damage will be enormous. We do not have an estimate yet, but it will be in the thousands of dollars. We appeal for your help."

To learn more about NEST and how to support them as they face the challenge of rebuilding their school, please go to <http://www.theonest.edu.lb/en/Home>.



# lopc foundation

## Found Time

By Lois Boyd, LOPC Foundation Trustee



Lois Boyd

**D**uring my working career, I used to wish for more free time - time to relax, to pursue non-career passions, to learn something new, to travel, to engage in hands-on volunteer activities, and to delve more deeply into my spiritual life.

I have been fortunate to have had nearly five years of retirement to pursue these activities before the pandemic hit. Now I find I have more unstructured time than is comfortable for me (a “certified” Type A), a condition that’s both a burden and a blessing. It has forced me to evaluate how I spend my time and has opened the door for considerable reflection on what God has in mind as I look toward an unpredictable future.

It’s likely the pandemic has shaken all of us to our foundations in one form or other - a not so subtle segue into the topic I am here to highlight: the LOPC Foundation. Reflecting on what has been most valuable in my life, I recognize LOPC has been a pivotal foundation, a faith anchor. Now more than ever, as we shelter in place, I am enormously grateful to the church staff for their above-and-beyond efforts to keep us connected to the community, nurture us spiritually through creative and meaningful worship services, daily devotionals and small-group study, and to provide safe opportunities to serve the community.

Since the pandemic emerged, we frequently hear “we’re all in this together.” That phrase has taken on meaning well beyond contending with the vagaries of the pandemic as we and our fellow Americans also

wrestle with issues of racism, justice, and equality in economic opportunity. By bringing us together (albeit virtually), LOPC continues to strengthen the Christian community to address these critical issues. The church is committed to helping us take this unprecedented time in our lives to seek new possibilities that God is presenting by creating opportunities for us to develop a deeper understanding of these issues and how our faith calls us to participate in effecting long-needed, meaningful changes.

It is so important that, well into the future, LOPC will be able to carry on its ministry that is true to the teachings in Micah 6:8 (as translated in The Message by Eugene Peterson):

*“He’s already made it plain how to live, what to do, What God is looking for in men and women. It’s quite simple. Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, Be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don’t take yourself too seriously - take God seriously.”*

I encourage you to become a Friend of the LOPC Foundation to support the forward-looking ministry that LOPC strives to provide to its members and the greater community.

To learn more, please contact any of the Foundation’s trustees: Jim Beckemeyer, Lois Boyd, Jen Crocker, Jerry Ducey, Kristi Haigh, Staci Johnston, Phil Placier, Mike Ross and Dara Youngdale. Also, please check the Foundation tab on the LOPC website for more information.

# journey of FAITH

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC member

**T**his month, Focus is pleased to highlight new member Jiyeon Bae. Originally from Seoul, South Korea, Jiyeon and her son Isaac have lived in the U.S. for 10 years and currently reside in Walnut Creek. Jiyeon has a wide array of ministry experience, having previously taught pastoral counseling in a graduate school in Seoul while running a counseling center. She completed a chaplaincy residency program at UCLA Medical Center in 2005. Jiyeon officially joined LOPC as an active member in October 2019 and is currently under care of LOPC and the San Francisco Presbytery as an Inquirer for ordained ministry as a Minister of Word and Sacrament.

## Here is a glimpse of Jiyeon's story:

"Faith, for me, is fruits in a relationship with God. God created human beings to be living, spiritual beings, so we are capable of being united with God by listening to God's voice and lifting our hearts to Him. It began as I, as a sinner, confessed all my past life where I didn't know God to God in silent prayer. I realized two things at this time. First, when faced with God, all human beings become a single individual before him. Second, I realized how ignorant humans are and how severely distorted the standards of good and evil are that we know. I realized God's will for humans is not an achievement or success, but a spiritual and existential transformation. The deeper my relationship with God, the more I am able to see, know, and feel the width, length, height, and depth of God's love. One of the tangible changes in me is that my prayer life centers around people's pain, hardship, injustice, and inhumanity.

"When I first visited San Francisco to help my son settle down in a first-year school a few years ago, I spent a month near his dorm going to the San Francisco Public Library and many other places in downtown. At that time when I saw downtown, it was like a homeless paradise. Even 80-90% of visitors in the public library were homeless. My intercessory prayer for San Francisco began after I saw all these sights.



Jiyeon Bae and son Isaac Kim

After I returned to South Korea, I had to ask my church members for prayer for this city I knew was one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

"While staying in San Francisco, I had dinner with my son and his Korean church friends at a Korean restaurant in Japantown. I told them, 'San Francisco is like the Garden of Eden, where the good and the evil coexist. You can eat with curiosity the fruit of the good and evil that God forbids, and also, you can eat the fruit of the tree of life in your faith in Jesus Christ. It depends on your choice.' We have the free will God has given us. With this free will, we should ceaselessly pursue true freedom that unites us with God through relationships. This is spiritual freedom. To know the truth is to know the depravity of humanity and to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can redeem us all.

"I hope to live my life reaching out to people through the freedom given to me. Even in Walnut Creek, where I live, I sometimes encounter homeless people. As I walked to a grocery on a recent Sunday, I prayed to meet a homeless person I could help. On the way to the mart, I saw a young white fellow lying on the lawn. I bought food, went back and gave it to him, and went home. Then I thought he also needs eternal food. I went and found him and asked if I could pray. He replied,

continued next page →

## session highlights

### Session Highlights

July 2020 Meeting

By Paul Koenig, Clerk of Session

#### Session again met virtually.

Pastor Peter Whitelock provided an update on the continuing work by LOPC staff and teams, including a draft of proposals for the Anti-Racism & Anti-Bias Work Group. Session members responded with various suggestions, generally with thoughts about being clear to all addressing current racial and diversity concerns. The proposal puts forward that this is a time for the church to self-examine about blind eyes to systemic racism, and to consider faithful ways, recognizing that many communities have benefitted from long-established societal patterns of white privilege. The proposal also addresses concerns about other bias issues, including those based on gender, religion, orientation, ability, and race.

The staff has drafted a model that addresses five areas: education, integration, transformation, engagement, and advocacy. The plan is expected to be considered at Session's August meeting.

Pastor Jaime provided updates regarding operations, including a job search for a new treasurer, and further needs to address coronavirus concerns.

Jim Nagle, Finance elder, updated the Church's current financial position, which is generally good in the current environment, but which likely may have needs going forward. A revised budget was proposed to adjust for changes and needs and approved by Session.

It is clear that the Pastors, staff, and different ministry teams are all doing great work in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Thank you and blessings to all.

'Yes.' I prayed for him as with the conviction that if the Lord would be his master, his life would undoubtedly be different. I said, 'take care,' and he answered, 'Yes,' in a clear, loud voice.

"On the same day, I went out to find another homeless person to whom to give food. I met a woman in her 40s. I also prayed earnestly for her soul to live a new life with the assurance that the Lord would help her. Maybe it isn't much, but it is my way of finding something I can do amid the COVID-19 crisis. It was a very grateful day.

"The Bible says my neighbor is the one to whom I reach out and have mercy on. My wish in my spiritual journey stays on the path of opening spiritual eyes and reviving souls. I continuously pray to God for this. I sincerely hope everyone who reads this may pray with me for this."

Jiyeon has been active in prayer groups and classes since coming to LOPC. She is currently a pastoral candidate in the Presbytery of San Francisco by an endorsement from LOPC. She graduated from Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, MN, in 2002. Her son, Isaac, is a student at St. Mary's College. "My son is a Minnesota boy, born when my husband and I lived there for nine years. Currently, my husband is a professor of economics at the university in Seoul. When I was in South Korea, I taught in graduate schools as a professor of counseling and also worked as a professional counselor. The best answer as to why I now am living in American with my son is that it is a response to God's call to me to come. We'll see what his plans are for me."

A favorite scripture verse for Jiyeon is Jeremiah 29:11, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

# community *thursday* Fellowship

*A program of Senior Care Ministries*



Leslie Lynch

If you have ever wondered how Thursday Fellowship could have been a successful program for 41 years, consider this. There have been a number of great program coordinators, but the cadre of dedicated volunteers has been the program's backbone and the secret to success. Each volunteer has cared

deeply about the program that has given seniors a day of fun and fellowship.

Two volunteers who have been with the program since its inception and have given Thursday Fellowship many years of dedicated service are LOPC members Leslie Lynch and Ginny Murphy. Together, they have volunteered approximately 2,880 days, which translates into 8,640 hours, or 40 years of Thursdays! Each brought their own special gifts and talents to the program, making each guest feel welcome.

For many years, Ginny took charge of all correspondence and birthday celebrations. All guests who were ill, recovering from surgery, had a personal loss or a cause for celebration received a handwritten note from Ginny. Often the notes were written at Thursday Fellowship so other volunteers could add their personal greeting. At birthday celebrations, each birthday recipient received a cupcake with a



Ginny Murphy

candle as Ginny related a special story or fact about each recipient. The entire group joined in singing happy birthday, and it was always a special day in our month.

Leslie has been an important historian of Thursday Fellowship, spending time documenting and creating albums that span many years. The albums were an invaluable resource when Pam Dahlen created the slideshow for our 40th anniversary party in May 2019. In the early years of the program, Thursday Fellowship was supported by the sale of handmade goods by the volunteers and guests. Leslie's creative talents were put to good use and the necessary funds were raised to support the program.

The most valuable gift to Thursday Fellowship from Leslie and Ginny has been their gracious hospitality. Each had the "gift of gab" to make guests and volunteers alike feel welcome and part of the caring community that defines Thursday Fellowship. We are grateful to these two dedicated women who have meant so much to the program and have contributed greatly to its success!

We look forward to the time when it will be safe to meet in person again and to serve the senior population of our community. Until then, everyone involved is grateful for the many rich memories of time spent together.



## Science and Religion Program Launches a New Season

The Science and Religion Study Group is delighted to kick off its 2020-21 program year in September with a presentation by esteemed St. Mary's College Professor, Father David Gentry-Akin. "Father Dave" loves showing us how religion and science are not, as some argue, incompatible. Rather, these two "ways of knowing" endeavor to answer different questions, employing different methods in doing so. Science answers "how" questions. Religion answers "why" questions. Science can help us understand how the universe came about, but it cannot touch the question of why the universe exists.



Fr. David Gentry-Akin

For a long time, Christians have understood "Revelation" as something that takes place only through the pages of the Bible. And, to be sure, the Bible is an important source of revelation for Jews and Christians. However, "The New Universe Story" that we are learning from contemporary physics challenges us to broaden our understanding of revelation, to understand that God has been involved in the project of God's self-disclosure from the moment of the Big Bang forward. So, the universe itself, as Father Thomas Berry taught us, is "revelatory." Revelation does not merely occur in human words written on a page, but in the very flaring forth of the universe some 14-15 billion years ago.

All are welcome! RSVP to Nancy Boren at [nancy.boren@att.net](mailto:nancy.boren@att.net). Check your email for a Zoom link for Monday, September 21, at 7:15 p.m.

## Memoir Magic

September 4, 11, 18 and 25, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Is your story bugging you to write it? This four-week class with Bob Finertie will get you started!

Email Lexi at [lexi@lopc.org](mailto:lexi@lopc.org) to sign up.

## Fourth Friday Book Group

September 25 and October 23, 4:00 p.m.

We will read the book *Just Mercy* by Brian Stevenson on September 25, and on October 23, *Reliance, Illinois* by Mary Volmer. All are welcome. Email Catherine Coleman to receive the Zoom link.

Email Catherine Coleman at [awaitingword@gmail.com](mailto:awaitingword@gmail.com) to sign up.

# spiritual formation



by Hilde Clark, LOPC Member

**W**hen 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.

*To sign up, email Lexi at [lexi@lopc.org](mailto:lexi@lopc.org).*

*Companions will meet once a month on Monday evenings or Thursday mornings from October through May.*

*Mondays, 6:30 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.*

*Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 7, Jan 11, Feb 15, Mar 15, Apr 12, May 3.*

*Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.*

*Oct 15, Nov 12, Dec 10, Jan 14, Feb 18, Mar 18, Apr 15, May 6.*

*Consider joining us for a nine-month adventure with Companions for the Journey. Companions is a safe, confidential community of people who gather to listen receptively to brief passages from the Bible and ponder how the words might connect to wherever we may find ourselves, or where God may be at work in our lives.*

*All meetings will be held over Zoom until further notice.*

## Presbyterian Women Bible Study

### *Why lament? Who laments? What is lament?*

Can you think of a time when our world was in a more lamentable state? How long has it been since you lamented? Do we really even understand what lament is?

“Into the Light,” the Presbyterian Women’s Bible Study, this year will help us understand:

- Lament in Scripture usually leads to hope.
- Lament is a proper theological response to a difficult situation in our world.
- Lament is about turning to God, crying out to God, and finding hope.



**PRESBYTERIAN  
WOMEN**

For a deeper look at this unusual subject, join one of our PW Bible study groups!

The Mary Magdalene Circle meets 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. on Zoom the third Tuesday of each month, beginning September 15. Contact Colleen Fawley at [fawleyc@hotmail.com](mailto:fawleyc@hotmail.com) or by phone at 510-704-7490 for more details.

The Esther Circle meets the second Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. Mary Lou Young is the leader. Contact her at 283-6376 for Zoom instructions.

The Mary Martha-Agape Circle meets the second Wednesday of the month at 10:30 a.m. Contact Catherine Coleman 520-928-9714 for Zoom/call-in instructions.

**Come, join a group and learn with other women of our church just what is lament anyway?**

## 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. Out of concern for the health and safety of our community – and given the changing nature of both state and county “shelter in place” ordinances – we felt this was the best way to proceed during such unprecedented times.

We hope to schedule a new time to return to Mount Hermon in 2021. Our 2020 speaker, Dr. Andrew Root, has agreed to come and speak in 2021 at Mount Hermon if it is possible to be together for a retreat at that time.

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](mailto:jaime@lopc.org) if you have any further questions.**



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### WORSHIP & MUSIC

Brett Strader, Director  
Stewart Scharch, Organist

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

### Monthly FOCUS Newsletter Deadline:

**September 1 for the October 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.  
Email items to [communications@lopc.org](mailto:communications@lopc.org).

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

Join us for worship online

**LOPC.ORG**

*Sundays at 9 a.m.*

*or any time you wish!*

**ONLINE Sunday  
Worship Service**  
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Invite Friends & Family!

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