

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AUGUST 2021

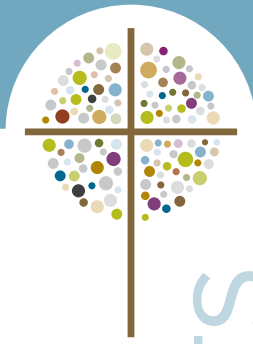
# FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



LOPC.ORG





# the august LULL

By Peter Whitelock - Pastor, Head of Staff

For many of us, August brings the final bit of rest and respite as our summer season draws down. The slower pace of summer months at LOPC allow for time to thoughtfully plan, pray, and set programs for the coming year. This year is a little different for me. Since I'll be heading out on sabbatical in August, all of my preparations for the coming program year had to be completed weeks ago! I am, though, very much looking forward to this gift of time that you provide me with this sabbatical for study, reflection, rest, and some travel. During my sabbatical I will be doing some light traveling, exploring a new model to teach Biblical history, and mentoring in the area of stewardship. I look forward to sharing what I've learned when I get back!



This year August will also be a little different for our staff. There is still much work to do in moving through the pandemic and returning to in-person ministry across our many ministry platforms. We have a great team working all the angles and staying in touch with our county officials for the latest health guidelines, so that we can open up again in ways that are safe, healthy, and sensible. Do keep them in your prayers.

We also have staff moving in new areas of responsibility these days, and, most notably, the Rev. Chris Baldwin, who was ordained and installed as a pastor earlier this summer. While his area of responsibility will remain focused on congregational life and small groups, he is assuming new roles and responsibilities as a pastor to our church community. We are so blessed to have him in ministry with us!

So, perhaps there is not so much of an August lull this year, but as we look ahead to September, there is much to celebrate as in-person programming resumes and the ability to reconnect with one another is once again something we can embrace!

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#### Pastoral Staff

- Peter Whitelock - Head of Staff
- Gerald Chinen - Congregational Care
- Lauren Gully - Mission & Spiritual Formation
- Jaime Polson - Families & Executive Leadership
- Chris Baldwin - Community Life

#### Worship and Music

- Brett Strader - Director
- Stewart Sarch - Organist

#### Treasurer

- Staci Johnston

#### Ministry Directors

- Keris Dahlkamp & Allison Kunz - Youth
- Coleen Moulton - Seedlings Preschool
- Ryan Timpfe - Children

#### Focus Newsletter

- Jon Corry - Communications
- Dick James & Lexi Morrissey - Editors

#### Submissions & Deadlines

Please send requests for submissions to:  
[communications@lopc.org](mailto:communications@lopc.org)  
no later than August 1 for the September issue.

Thank you to all who contribute each month to *Focus!*

# *thursday* Fellowship

*caring • sharing • loving*

*A program of Senior Care Ministries*



In June, a number of our Thursday Fellowship volunteers had the opportunity to participate with the middle school and high school youth on Project Serve. First, we learned about Trinity Center in Walnut Creek and the work that it is doing in our community to support the homeless. Next, we sorted and packed many boxes of baby clothes. The clothes were donated to Loved Twice, an organization that provides baby clothes to needy families to cover the child's first year of life. These activities gave our volunteers an opportunity to serve and connect with each other and also with the youth. Connections were made among all the volunteers, and meaningful conversations were enjoyed. We look forward to more opportunities to work and volunteer together again.

In July, we started planning for our Thursday Fellowship program this fall. Our goal is to plan exciting activities and engaging entertainment while we prioritize the safety measures required to keep our volunteers and guests safe. Some parts of the program may look a little different, and while there will be guidelines to follow, be assured the love and spirit of community and friendship that defines Thursday Fellowship will be as strong as ever. One mandatory guideline will be that all Thursday Fellowship guests and volunteers **MUST** be vaccinated to be able to participate. Look for the finalized updates in the September issue of *Focus* and in *Connections*.

**We cannot wait to see you in the fall!**

# journey of Faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

The journey of Hiroko Shibuya, LOPC's current worship coordinator, began in a Buddhist household where there was a small Shinto shrine in the corner of her house. "I must confess that I said a prayer before big exams, challenges, and so forth, while being quite unsure of whom I was asking for such a favor," she says.

"I came to know Christ when I met Yuji in my first job after college. When we started to talk about marriage, he suggested we should have a common 'discipline' to build a harmonious family. He meant seeking to start a relationship with Jesus. Yuji had been introduced to Jesus attending a Christian preschool. Then he had done his graduate studies at Michigan State University where the Christian faith and lifestyle of his host mother, Mrs. Kumata, led to his dream of following her example."

Hiroko and Yuji looked for a church where they could learn about Christ. When they faced some difficulties, Hiroko's father remembered his acquaintance, Mr. Arima, who had served as a Sunday school teacher in a church near their home. Mr. Arima listened to Yuji and Hiroko and introduced them to the pastor at Bancho Church, the Rev. Masaru Takahashi. The Rev. and Mrs. Takahashi welcomed them into their home and immediately started a semi-private Bible study on Romans. Yuji and Hiroko began attending church and participating in many of its programs. On Christmas morning of 1983, the two were baptized. The entire congregation of Bancho Church joined in their wedding celebration in April 1984.

In time, Hiroko became disillusioned



as she observed hypocrisy among members and left the church. "I think God saw no hope in me in that environment," she says, "and we believe it was divine intervention that in 1990 Yuji's job took us to Moraga. God sent several messengers and messages to bring me back to the church. It was a pivotal moment in my life. I was back in Jesus's loving care."

Yuji and Hiroko became active members of Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church (MVPC). One day the senior pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jim Rueb, asked if one of them could accompany him to a Billy Graham Crusade in Tokyo. The Shibuyas decided to send Hiroko while Yuji took care of their young daughters at home over an extended weekend. That visit helped Hiroko reconnect with Bancho Church, and also gave her an opportunity to introduce Pastor Jim to the Rev. Okado, who was called to be the pastor at Bancho, after the Rev. Takahashi's passing. Soon, a sister church relationship was established.

During a visit of a Bancho Church delegation to Moraga, Pastor Okado was invited to deliver the sermon. As he spoke no English, Hiroko translated. "Translating a sermon seemed almost beyond me as I had no formal theological training, but I started with the boldest faith and prayers. Then, something extraordinary happened. The words and phrases simply started coming in my head. I typed with amazing ease and thought this must have been the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no other way to explain it. When the 2011 East Japan earthquake happened, I volunteered to be on the translation team and worked with people from all around the world."

Starting ballet at age six, Hiroko says it has become a core element of who she is. After she came to know Christ, it took a while to figure how to combine Christianity and ballet. Providentially, she found a Christian group at Community Presbyterian Church in Danville. "I'd been trained in classical ballet, so it was a stretch to dance with these liturgical dancers, all trained in modern, contemporary discipline, but I did, and learned a lot. Then I started a liturgical dance team at MVPC, which became a place where young members could express themselves.

"A unique experience came when I visited a Christian leadership-training center in Hungary for a mission project. I danced to 'Come to Jesus' by Chris Rice in front of the hearing impaired. I tried hard to communicate the message of the song in movement. This experience truly helped me grow as a dancer. I started feeling much more confident in expressing my faith in my movements, even in ballet class.

"Recently, I participated in a webinar

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## journey of *Faith*

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featuring Ta-Nehisi Coates, (American author and journalist,) on the subject of reparations. Mr. Coates said, 'We all have different things to contribute to keep moving forward.' I thought this summarizes the idea of diversity very well. I try to discern what I can do to leave the world a slightly better place.

"I'm learning how to interact with the people with whom I come in contact, asking, 'How has God gifted me to help those in need; how may I offer service?' I feel I have discovered a new way to see the world that God so amazingly created."

Now, after over seven years on the LOPC staff, Hiroko says, "Having formerly been in much more conservative churches, I feel a greater ease in engaging in faith conversations with younger progressives and social-justice advocates, including my own children. I thank God for guiding me to where I am."

About a favorite Bible passage, Hiroko says, "Since my faith journey began when I met Yuji, and we decided to follow Christ together, it's Psalm 118:22. 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.' That was the preschool graduation passage Yuji had kept along for years and then we used for our wedding."

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## FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

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### 2021 SERIES RECAP

From the responses we received from the Lamorinda community we can report we had a very successful First Friday Forum (FFF) series in 2021. There were six outstanding speakers. If you missed hearing one of them or would like to hear the talk again, go to our website, [lopc.org/first-friday-forum](http://lopc.org/first-friday-forum), and at the bottom of the page, click on 2021. A video recording and slides for most programs are available.

In a poll of viewers seeking ideas for preferred program topics, the favored response was to continue the mix of foreign affairs, arts/humanities, social science, and science programs. The FFF team is taking the results into consideration as it plans next year's series.

**The FFF team thanks LOPC members for their support and promises equally stimulating and informative lectures in 2022, with both in-person and webinar options.**

#### The speakers in our 2021 series were:

January: Larry Lamborn

***The Encirclement of Asia***

February: Deanne Pearne

***Housing and Homelessness in Contra Costa County***

March: Dr. Margaret Liu

***Covid 19: What You Need to Know and Do in March 2021***

April: Dr. Raphael Danziger

***Middle East Update***

May: David Seaborg

***Climate Change: Causes, Consequences and Solutions.***

June: Dr. Irene Bloemraad

***Immigration Reform: Possible or Pipedream***

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## youth sunday

**Sunday, August 29, at 9:00 a.m.**

Please join us for this year's Youth Sunday worship service! Youth and Children will share their experiences from Vacation Bible Camp and Project Serve as they lead us in worship! The theme will be the story of The Exodus – Out of the Darkness and Into Something New! Participate in this beloved annual service either in-person or on Livestream.

# mission

## Good News for

# Monument CrisisCenter

By Jim Boyd, MCC Partner Liaison

**M**onument Crisis Center (MCC) in Concord has received exciting news. After long months of working with many local and state groups and people, including LOPC, sufficient funds have been raised finally, enabling it to buy the rented building that currently houses its headquarters.

As might be expected, the process was complicated, often filled with question marks and uncertainties. Among those who lent a helping hand were long-time donors who promised funds if the building ever came up for sale. When that finally transpired, still others stepped up with large matching-fund challenges. Together, in about the past month, \$1.2 million was pulled together, which was enough to make a substantial down payment toward purchase.

And then something akin to a miracle occurred! Sandra Scherer, MCC's executive director, received a phone call from the office of State Senator Steve Glazer with news that the State of California had just passed a budget item awarding the Center \$3.7 million to help it purchase the building. Now, the Center will own a permanent home, one

### A Community in Need:

March 2020 – May 2021

#### Served:

- Fed 101,400 People
- 5300 New Individuals Registered

#### Provided:

- Distributed 1,682,340lbs of food from shelf-stable items, pasta, rice, cereal, etc.
- 560,780 Pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, and eggs.
- In addition: diapers, toiletries, resources, and more.

that is a long way from its rented, humble 900-square-foot facility occupied in 2003.

Though buying the building is a monumental blessing, much work remains, and further resources are needed to fund all the amazing programs that help the underserved folks in the community. This is a pivotal moment in its history, as well as the result of 19 years of hard work and dedication of Sandra, her staff, volunteers, donors, and religious and governmental support. To learn more about what MCC is doing, please take a few minutes to check out its website ([monumentcrisiscenter.org](http://monumentcrisiscenter.org)) and read the Summer Newsletter 2021.

**Save the date and come to celebrate the good news on MCC's 19th anniversary, August 15, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., at 1990 Market Street in Concord. If you would like to support the work MCC is doing, please visit [monumentcrisiscenter.org/mcc-home](http://monumentcrisiscenter.org/mcc-home).**

## August 19, 2003

Monument Crisis Center opened in Concord, California as an emergency food pantry in a 10 x 10 storefront with only a handful of volunteers. The starting budget for Monument Crisis Center was \$23,000



- Food Program Established
- Volunteer Program Began



**2004**  
Resource Program Began



**2006**

- Moved to Second Location
- Youth Enrichment & Education Program Established



**2007**

- Senior Moments Established
- First Annual Backpack Day



**2008**

- First Annual Youth Summer Camp

# Monument Crisis Center



## TODAY

Monument Crisis Center is a family resource center providing food, resources, and services to the community. MCC is located in a stand-alone, two-story, 12,600sqft building.

**June 2021**  
Registered Client Family number 25,000.

### 2014

- Moved to Market Street
- Resource and Referrals Established
- Community Engagement Established



### 2020

Continuing to serve throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. seeing over 300 families a day in Spring 2020



### 2011

First Annual Resource Fair



# session

## Highlights

### May & June 2021

*By Phil Hunter, Clerk of Session*

May's Session meeting included a report from the previous Presbytery meeting. The Presbytery meeting's worship service included the Rev. Gregory Bentley, co-moderator of the PCUSA, challenging all Presbyterians to "accept change without fear... to dig deeper, to go further." These words were reflected in the variety of updates given throughout that Presbytery meeting and in our own Session meeting.

In this Presbytery meeting we heard that the Covid-19 health crisis created economic emergencies for a number of churches and how many of those churches responded to help, not only their own members, but also people who lived nearby. Several churches sought to develop permanent senior housing on their property, while others established food pantries. Some churches involved in these efforts have fewer than 100 members which created staffing and funding challenges. They certainly went further.

By the time you read this you'll know the State of California opened more fully on June 15. LOPC has been

and continues to work closely with CAL OSHA to ensure we keep staff, facilities, and ministry areas safe. As we transition from remote to in-person gatherings, hybrid models are expected to continue to allow people to be able to remain at home while participating in the life of the church. With hybrid models continuing, LOPC is working to improve the network speed throughout the campus for improved on-line connectivity. Additionally, three new large- screen TVs with Wi-Fi capabilities will provide greater flexibility and ease of use. Perhaps an unseen action, but we are going 'further' in offering both in-person and virtual events.

In other areas of activity:

- Chris Baldwin was ordained and installed as the new Associate Pastor for Community Life.
- Over 60 children and 25 adult volunteers held in-person Vacation Bible Camp on campus. Even with social distancing and mask wearing, everyone had fun.
- Seedlings joyfully welcomed 30 new families to its programs.
- LOPC registered 12 people in June to a new members' class.

The all-church Mount Hermon Retreat has been postponed until 2022. Mt. Hermon is still struggling to navigate the pandemic restrictions while offering a wide range of activities and facility spaces, including dining while keeping guests safe. Hopefully, this much-cherished tradition will return in full next year.

In response to the June bombings in Gaza, LOPC's Mission Team sent funds to the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children to assist its work with families impacted by the conflict.

Staff has recognized that many people in the LOPC geographic area are interested in LOPC's wide-ranging ministries but do not attend Sunday services. In order to present a broader scope of what LOPC is about - more than 'just' Sunday services - Session has been working on a new Mission Statement. After months of thoughtful work, it adopted a new mission statement:

**A welcoming and loving community of faith that learns, grows, and serves together.**

# finance

## May 2021 LOPC Results

*By Jim Nagle, Elder for Finance*

It is hard to believe that we are five months into 2021, and the church is finally starting to open back up. We are very fortunate to be in a strong financial position based on the generosity of everyone. May 2021 year-to-date results are ahead of budget by \$102,438. Year-to-date total income is \$93,206 above plan due to late 2020 giving, generous 2021 pledge giving, and the deployment of unbudgeted special gifts to mission partners, Habitat for Humanity playhouses, and Livestream enhancements. Non-pledge and loose-offering income are trending lower than plan, most likely the absence of in-person worship. This should improve as we move toward in-person attendance this fall.

Year-to-date expenses are tracking \$8,818 below budget. Many ministry areas are trending at or below budget due to spending delays related to the timing of rolling out of the pandemic offset, in part, by the expenses related to the deployment of special gifts noted above. We have a great staff that is closely watching the usage of LOPC resources.



## stocks

### We Give Stock to LOPC

By Doug Bontemps, LOPC Member

When Stephanie and I pledge each year, we always complete our pledge with a donation of stock. It makes much more sense for us than cash. Our situation may not be the same as yours, so you might want to talk to a tax professional; however, let me tell you about the advantage in our case.

We have some stock that we got many years ago, and it has gone up nicely over time. When we sell that stock, we will have to pay tax on the increase in the stock's value. For most of us that capital gains tax is 15% or 20%, depending on tax bracket.

However, if I donate that stock to LOPC, we don't have to pay that tax, and LOPC doesn't either. What's more, the donation is at the stock's current value. I get the tax deduction at that higher price as well.

Here's an example of the savings. Say I have pledged \$1,000 to LOPC, and I have stock currently worth \$1,000, which I bought a several years ago for \$600. If I sell the stock, I will need to pay tax of \$74 (\$400 gain x 20% tax rate = \$74). It would be better to give the stock to LOPC. LOPC would sell the stock for \$1,000, and together we saved \$74! However, I get the \$1,000 tax deduction for something I paid \$600.

#### How do you donate stock?

**Step One:** Transfer the stock from your brokerage account to LOPC's Schwab account. You can do this online from your brokerage account, or by calling your brokerage firm. Your broker will need:

- How many shares of which stock you wish to donate
- Transfer information:

Charles Schwab  
DTC#: 0164  
Acct#: 5320-8343  
Acct Name: Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church  
Your name

**Step Two:** Send LOPC bookkeeper, Lidia Jesionek, an email at lidia@lopc.org to let her know it's on its way. My email would say, "Lidia, I am sending [# shares] of [stock name] to your Schwab account. Please use this to pay my 2021 pledge"

**Donating stock is easy to do and will save you money! Contact Doug Bontemps at (925) 451-4857 for more information.**

## foundation

### Being the Best Versions of Ourselves

By Jim Beckemeyer, Foundation Trustee



Jim Beckemeyer

The members of my department at work take their television binge-watching quite seriously. Pre-pandemic, it was not uncommon for me to arrive on a Monday morning and hear two colleagues debating the merits of that weekend's Game of Thrones episode or the newest Netflix drama.

Recently, my boss gave a glowing recommendation for a comedy/drama called Ted Lasso. Ted is a small-time college football coach hired to lead a professional English football (i.e., soccer) team. Soccer is a sport about which he knows almost nothing. This would seem to have disaster written all over it.

Ted's entire approach, and the premise for the series, is summed up by a quote Ted gives in an interview with a reporter from the local newspaper. "I've never really concerned myself with wins and losses. For me, success is about helping these young fellas be the best versions of themselves on and off the field. And that ain't always easy."

That quote really struck me. I began thinking...do I make other people want to be the best versions of themselves that they can possibly be? Do I make it easy for God to bring out my best, or do I resist like the players on Ted's team? I have found that the support of the LOPC community is vital in providing the encouragement, inspiration, and support I need to be the best version of myself. Maybe you feel the same way.

My hope is that financial support from the Foundation will allow LOPC to thrive well into the future; that Foundation contributions which make up a meaningful share of the church's annual budget will give LOPC the extra bandwidth to stretch, try new things, take some risks, and really push all of us to be the best versions of ourselves that we can possibly be in our local community and across the globe.

**If you would like to learn more about the LOPC Foundation or how the Foundation supports LOPC's ministries, please feel free to contact any of the Foundation Trustees: Jim Beckemeyer, Lois Boyd, Jen Crocker, Jerry Ducey, Kristi Haigh, Staci Johnston, Phil Placier, Mike Ross, or Dara Youngdale.**

## care

### What is The Rossmoor Parish?

By Bev Fellows, LOPC Member

Rossmoor is an over-55 community in Walnut Creek of about 10,000 residents. Residents and non-residents alike enjoy the many amenities including 18,000 acres of lush grounds and trails as well as multiple clubhouses, swimming facilities, golf courses, tennis, pickleball, and table tennis courts. Multiple park areas and meeting spaces are available, and there have been many LOPC picnics and other meetings hosted there!

There are approximately 110 LOPC church members who live in Rossmoor and comprise what we call the Rossmoor Parish. Rossmoor residents enrich LOPC with their deep history, grace, and opportunities for growth and service. The Rossmoor Parish members hold Bible studies and hymn sings. They check in on each other. The residents enjoy Love Does service opportunities and look forward to returning to post-pandemic Rossmoor Parish social and cultural events.

During pandemic isolation Deacons, Barnabas, and Care Team volunteers including young families have treasured making calls and delivering small gifts to Rossmoor residents needing to remain at home. The Senior Ministry and the Congregational Care teams continue to explore ways to both serve Rossmoor Parish residents and, just as importantly, create new ways to benefit from their wisdom and experience.

## spiritual formation

### Companions for the Journey

Companions is a contemplative program intended to provide an opportunity in a small-group setting to intentionally slowdown in order to experience, see, and feel how God might be working in their lives... It allows each of us to explore the Word of God in the Bible with others in a way that provides insight into whatever might be impacting daily life!

The Companion's confidential process lends itself to making 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.

**Companions meet monthly on Monday evenings or Thursday mornings from October through May. For questions or to participate in the next session, please contact Carl Grant at [clgrantsd@gmail.com](mailto:clgrantsd@gmail.com).**

## hold in PRAYER



*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

### Prayers of comfort and peace go out to the family and friends of:

**Charlotte Cranmer**, who passed August 22, 2020. Service is November 6 at 11:00 a.m.

**Jackie Reising**, who passed November 9, 2020. A service was held July 31.

**Gladys Schaible**, who passed November 26, 2020. Service is September 4 at 1:00 p.m.

**Barbara Hoots**, who passed March 31. A Service was held July 17.

**Marjorie Kingland**, who passed March 18. A Service was held July 29.

**Mary Ann Crandell**, who passed April 6. Service is August 14 at 11:00 a.m.

**Vickie Hipkiss**, who passed May 1. A service was held July 24.

**Cindy Wright**, who passed May 1. A service was held July 24.

**Dave Hiden** who passed June 4.

**Rev. C. James Hinch**, Former LOPC Interim Pastor 1998-1999 who passed June 20.

**Diane Steuber**, who passed June 24. A service was held July 10.

**Betty Brown**, who passed July 4. Service is August 2 at 2:00 p.m.

# lopc staff contact list



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**LAFAYETTE-ORINDA  
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## Series Continues in August!

# FAITH AT THE MOVIES

IX

August 1 · **Nomadland**

August 8 · **Raya and the Last Dragon**

August 15 · **Mulan** (live-action version)

August 22 · **Columbus** (2017)  
Warning: Language.

### Faith at The Movies Fellowship Hour

Hosted simultaneously in-person in the Oak Room and  
on Zoom at 10:10 a.m.

To sign up, visit [lopc.org/registrations](https://lopc.org/registrations).