

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

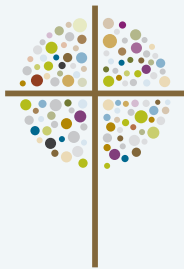
A WELCOMING AND LOVING
COMMUNITY OF FAITH
that LEARNS, GROWS, AND SERVES
TOGETHER.



June • July 2021

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SABBATH

By Lauren Gully - Pastor, Mission & Spiritual Formation

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Work six days and do everything you need to do. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to GOD, your God. Don’t do any work—not you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servant, nor your maid, nor your animals, not even the foreign guest visiting in your town. For in six days GOD made Heaven, Earth, and sea, and everything in them; God rested on the seventh day. Therefore, GOD blessed the Sabbath day; God set it apart as a holy day.” -Exodus 20: 8-11

Rest is important – it is holy. It is something that helps us to remember that we are not God, and it reminds us who/what it is that we actually worship. We are not gods – we cannot go on and on without a break or rest. We are creatures. There are essential things that help us function, such as sleep, water, and food. Despite omnipotence, God is not a workaholic – even God took a rest after a very productive six days! Rest is important because it reminds us of who it is we answer to, and who, ultimately, is our God. It reminds us as Walter Bruggeman says, “It is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of goods.” Surely, our existence requires work, but Sabbath reminds us ours is a God of freedom, rest, and mercy.

After seven years serving alongside all of you, I’ll be taking my Sabbatical (extended time of Sabbath) this June and July. I’m so excited to be able to safely do some international travel, rest, and have some time to prepare to start my Doctor of Ministry program at Duke University upon my return! Please know that while I’m away I’ll be praying for God to prepare me (and all of us) for the next chapter of ministry at LOPC—I know that God has great plans for our church!

I am so terribly grateful for the opportunity to take a Sabbatical this summer. In fact, I wish that it was within my power to give all of the essential care workers, teachers, care takers, and basically everyone else a rest from this hard year. I’ll be praying that each of you, in the way you most need it, will have an opportunity to rest this summer—to remember that you are a created being whose worth is not dependent on your productivity or what you can do. I hope that you get time to simply rest and know how much you are loved.

Pastors

Peter Whitelock

Head of Staff

Gerald Chinen

Care

Lauren Gully

Mission & Spiritual Formation

Jaime Polson

Families & Executive Leadership

mission



To sign up for any of these events, visit:
lopc.org/lovedoes

Monument Crisis Center

Monument Crisis Center Summertime food drive

Summer can be a difficult time for families whose children are not in school and as result not receiving daily subsidized breakfast and lunch. Please consider donating cans of peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, pasta, tuna, or any other staple. Just drop your donation in the barrels outside of the Oak room all summer long.

Volunteers Needed to Bag food for Monument Crisis Center!

Volunteers are needed to help package bulk quantities of beans, rice, and oatmeal into quart size bags that can be easily distributed to clients. The work is done on campus in Fellowship Hall socially distanced with masks. As the summer approaches we are looking for more volunteers to assist in this vital effort. Note: minimum age is 16.

NEED
doesn't take time off
in the summer...

Food Bank Work Day

June 6

Join others as we work together at one of the largest food banks in the nation, the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano Counties. You will help sort and package food into boxes to be distributed at various sites throughout the area. You will be met by LOPC Liaison Sandy Ducey.



White Pony Express Opportunity

June 12

The White Pony General Store (WPGS) distributes new and like-new clothing, shoes, toys, children's books, and games to our Contra Costa neighbors in need. WPGS partners with local businesses, clothing retailers, and individual donors to sort, organize, and deliver high-quality goods free of charge. Volunteers will work in the White Pony General Store and help prepare and organize clothing for distribution. Minimum age 12 and up.



Harbor House Summer Camp

July 12-16

Harbor House located in the San Antonio neighborhood of Oakland is committed to providing a safe place for families and their children to grow and flourish. Harbor House's summer camp 2021 will be called Camp Mosaic. It will focus on exploring the beautiful mosaic of cultures in the neighborhood. Small pods composed of elementary, middle, and high school students will have a blast learning about their own cultures and the cultures of others in their community.



mission

Focus on Housing

By: Stephanie Bontemps, Elder for Mission

California ranks 49th in the United States in housing units per capita. For years now, it hasn't built enough housing to satisfy the need. This is now a crisis in our state, particularly in the Bay Area, with our vibrant economy and rapid job growth. Even though those of us who own homes have benefited tremendously as values have increased due to lack of housing supply, many others in our community cannot afford housing at all... and more people are pushed out of their housing each year as rents and values rise. In particular, first-time the number of homeless seniors is a rapidly growing problem.

What's happening locally? All cities in California are required to plan for additional housing. Using Lafayette as an example, the city has a General Plan that defines the outlook for the city over a 20-to-25-year horizon. Last updated in 2002, Lafayette's General Plan will be revised by the end of 2022. A General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), a volunteer group consisting of city employees and residents, has been formed to lead the effort and take input from the community. The General Plan includes a Housing Element that is updated more often, generally every five to eight years. California periodically issues a mandate for each community to add a specific amount of housing, called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). Lafayette's new RHNA allocation is 2,114 units, with specific requirements for affordable units (28% very low income, 16% low income). The revised General Plan will lay out a plan to meet these requirements.

You may also have heard of AB 2923, recently passed state legislation that requires BART-owned properties to be made available for housing with specific density (units/acre) that is typically greater than existing zoning. Communities must comply by revising zoning rules by July 1, 2022. In Lafayette, because the BART station is in a very high-risk fire zone, density there may not make sense and alternative locations may be considered.

What can you do?

First, stay informed. The issues are important and complex, so get your news from reliable sources (i.e., not just social media). Check out your city website and sign up for news to learn what your city is doing to support housing. Each of our local communities is holding meetings (virtual, for now), many of which are recorded so you can listen to or watch them when convenient.

For more information and important links, visit: lopc.org/housing.

Second, support your city's and state's efforts to house all of our citizens. Welcoming new neighbors into our community is part of LOPC's vision.

Third, support local LOPC partner organizations that focus on housing the most needy in our community. Though LOPC donates a meaningful portion of our mission budget to these groups, your personal donations (financial or needed items) and volunteer help are much needed.

Check out their websites to get on their mailing lists or contact your Mission Elders, Stephanie Bontemps at sbontemps@comcast.net and Rick Burris at rab56@comcast.net, for more information.



\$250,000 Grant Awarded to Monument Crisis Center



Faith in action.

After attending a presbytery meeting in September 2019 and learning the San Francisco Presbytery (SFP) was offering grants to non-profits addressing the homelessness crisis, Phil Hunter, current clerk of session, called a meeting in the LOPC library to explore this opportunity for Contra Costa County for anyone interested. More than 30 LOPC members overflowed the library to learn about the grants.

In April, after a lengthy journey, the Presbytery Grant Committee approved a \$250,000 grant for the Monument Crisis Center (MCC).

Back in 2019, once the meeting in the library began, it quickly became apparent that not only did 'homelessness' need to be defined, but also issues contributing to homelessness had to be considered -- job insecurity, mental-health issues, families' health concerns, education, training, transportation challenges, applying for government assistance, and city-zoning ordinances. The committee also recognized that many non-profits provide multiple services. How could the committee identify the organization best suited for a grant? With the help of Lauren Gully, pastor for mission the committee strategized over this issue.

The group broke into small teams to investigate nine proposals from six non-profits in Contra Costa County (CCC) who assist the homeless. Each team visited an organization and asked about their work related to homelessness -- their priorities, programs, goals, and what would an organization do if awarded a grant of \$100,000?

After two months of investigation, the committee reconvened to hear a report from each team. At the

conclusion, all present, using a rank-choice process, expressed their vote for each organization. The result was unanimous: Monument Crisis Center (MCC) was selected as the organization that LOPC would sponsor, applying for a grant from the San Francisco Presbytery (SFP). The grant pursued was for \$250,000 to help MCC expand services into East Contra Costa County.

With MCC identified as the choice, Ken Sargent, a group member, began working with MCC to complete the grant application, helping articulate the needs, priorities, and plans MCC had for the East County to reach more underserved, marginalized individuals and families. MCC's expansion plans included their multi-faceted assistance program: offering food, education, wellness checks, health/blood pressure screenings, legal aid consultations, after school programs, domestic violence resources, mental health issues, financial literacy, employment counseling and job application assistance, and more. In June 2020, session approved the application, which was then sent to the Presbytery grant committee.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 was having a huge impact on MCC's services. Even before the large grant was considered by Presbytery, the grant-application chair suggested LOPC apply for a separate smaller grant of \$32,000 to help MCC cover immediate COVID-19 needs. With COVID, county-health standards put new burdens on MCC to distribute donations efficiently and safely. The \$32,000 grant funded an employee to manage the enormous increase in donations received in response to the COVID "shut down" while complying with the county's stricter health standards. Session approved this application in November, and the first check was mailed before 2020 year end.

The LOPC/MCC application for \$250,000 was one of many that the presbytery needed to consider -- a process slowed by COVID. In late 2020, the LOPC/MCC application was considered in detail. Finally, in April this year, presbytery awarded Monument Crisis Center the \$250,000 grant to help expand its services into East Contra Costa County. Though the journey was lengthy, the benefits will reach countless thousands for years to come -- the result of a village, a caring community -- and a small group committed to a larger purpose.

mission

Kapnek Rises to Challenges

LOPC has a long history of commitment to mission. For international mission partners, it can be a challenge to understand all they might accomplish and even harder to come along side and physically help their efforts. Our church's relationship with JF Kapnek Trust, headquartered in Harare, Zimbabwe, was highlighted by our senior-high's work with it in 2010, and our relationship has only grown since then.

Initially focused on treating AIDS/HIV, Kapnek's interest in helping Zimbabwe's children was furthered by building preschools in rural areas and offering many services, such as bringing nurses to the preschools for health checks; and providing nutritional porridge to the children. The porridge is prepared by parents and enables Kapnek staff to check on a child's health. As previously reported in *Focus*, Kapnek was serving this porridge to more than 20,000 children at some 220 preschools for only three cents a day per child, until COVID-19 forced schools to close.

This had a devastating impact on preschool children. No preschool means no nutritional porridge, often the only meal of the day. Kapnek met this challenge by pivoting its delivery systems and has continued to offer porridge for pick up at school. This means parents bringing children on the journey could meet with nurses and the children continue to receive health screenings. Some of LOPC's support in 2020 enabled this effort.

Kapnek's efforts have also included supporting re-opening the Children's Hospital in Harare, the country's capital. The crippled Zimbabwe economy left the hospital in dire need of repair and supplies.

Kapnek also has helped upgrade the burn unit at the hospital. Much of Zimbabwe's population live in rural areas with minimal modern conveniences. Cooking over an open fire in thatched-roof structures often leads to out-of-control fires. When children's burns are extensive, they are often nursed and treated naked and without blankets, exposing them to hypothermia in the winter. Kapnek has worked to find a donor to fund four ceiling-mounted heating units for the pediatric burn unit.



Kapnek's ability to meet challenges has extended to their work with AIDS/HIV during Covid-19, when field workers were prohibited from visiting potential patients in rural areas. Supported in part by a USAID grant called TASQC (Target, Accelerate and Sustain Quality Care), Kapnek recruited over 600 community outreach agents in one province to help track and test family members and their sex partners. Before starting this process only 42 new cases were identified. With the community agents' program, a tenfold increase was identified, finding over 460 cases in a corresponding time frame. Once diagnosed, the new clients are entering treatment.

The Kapnek Trust has managed to serve the people of Zimbabwe during difficult times due, in part, to strong leadership. Recently, Hillary Tanyanyiwa, Kapnek's former director of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programs (OVC) has been named the new country director (executive director) for the Trust. With LOPC's long relationship with the Trust, some LOPC's members have met Hillary, who has worshiped with us in past years. In a recent presentation, Hillary announced that Kapnek is seeking grants to address tuberculosis, the second largest killer in Zimbabwe after AIDS/HIV. LOPC sends prayers for continued success to Hillary Tanyanyiwa and the entire Kapnek Trust staff in providing health care for those in need in Zimbabwe.

Hope Solutions Update

By: Deanne Pearn, Executive Director of Hope Solutions

As we begin to emerge from the COVID crisis there is a lot to be proud of in Contra Costa County. Among other things, our county-wide homeless continuum of care pivoted quickly to move unsheltered, medically vulnerable people off the streets into the safety of hotels. Our county partners worked tirelessly to make good use of emergency funds from federal and state sources to enhance our emergency response, and were able to lease 600 units through four hotels through June 30. In addition, our county was ultimately able to purchase a 160-unit hotel that will become a permanent part of our emergency response system. In addition to managing the crisis, our community more broadly came together to pass Measure X, a renewable local-funding source that will generate an estimated \$80 million per year for safety-net services and support.

As a vital member of the countywide continuum of care, Hope Solutions continued to move homeless individuals, seniors, and families into housing through our Housing Navigation program and new rapid-rehousing programs. Despite the pandemic, Hope Solutions grew program services by 17% and added capacity to house and support families, formerly incarcerated folks, and youth and young adults.

The intensive focus on strengthening our emergency-response system necessarily limited our continuum of care's ability to focus on adding more permanent supportive-housing units in our community, which is the key to ending (rather than managing) homelessness among our community's most vulnerable neighbors. As we pull out of the pandemic Hope Solutions is continuing to focus on adding more housing for homeless families, seniors, and individuals. We are launching a planning study for a forthcoming capital campaign to raise funds to build or buy at least 50 units. A critical part of this initiative involves working with faith community partners. We look forward to working with LOPC as we work to bring this dream to fruition.



youth

Project Serve

June 2-5

Project serve is an exciting, new summer service-learning opportunity for our youth in fifth- 12th grades. They will work alongside LOPC's local mission partners while following all recommended COVID safety measures. Please be in prayer for our youth as they serve our community!



Youth will work together in teams in the afternoons doing the following:

- Packing baby clothes for Loved Twice
- Making to-go bags for Trinity Center
- Stocking the free clothing store at White Pony Express
- Preparing produce at the Food Bank
- Packing rice and beans for Rice & Beans Project
- Distributing food boxes at Monument Crisis Center
- Socializing safely together with Thursday Fellowship seniors
- Building and painting 10 playhouses for Habitat for Humanity, and wrapping up with a family celebration

Friday Fundays!

Summer Youth Hangouts: for youth completing 5th-12th grades

- Ice Cream & Games @ Lafayette Park
June 11, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
- 4-Square & Popsicles @ LOPC
June 25, 5 - 6:00 p.m.
- Reservoir WALK @ The Reservoir
July 23, 5 - 6:00 p.m.

Questions? Contact Allison: allison@lopc.org

Youth Sunday

August 29

Save the date for this annual worship service in the Sanctuary as the children and youth of LOPC share their experiences and insights after participating in Vacation Bible Camp and Project Serve! It is always a blessing to have the young ones lead us all in worship!

community

First Friday Forum

June 4 at 10:00 a.m

Is a comprehensive immigration policy attainable in the United States? First Friday Forum (FFF) speaker, Irene Bloemraad, will discuss this and other issues in her talk, *Immigration Reform: Possible or Pipedream*. Register for this webinar presentation at lopc.org/first-friday-forum.



Irene Bloemraad

Dr. Bloemraad says, “U.S. immigration policy is a kaleidoscope of many parts, from border control to refugee resettlement, temporary visas to naturalization. I’ll talk about the broad framework of U.S. immigration law and some of the fine points of recent controversy.”

An immigrant herself, she first lived in Canada before settling in the United States. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard and her M.A. from McGill in Canada. She is a professor of sociology at UC Berkeley, the founding director of the Berkeley Interdisciplinary Immigration Initiative, and co-director of the Boundaries, Membership, and Belonging program at the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research.

Bloemraad says she studies how immigrants become incorporated into political communities and the consequences of their presence on politics and understanding of membership. “My research stands at the intersection of immigration studies and political sociology.

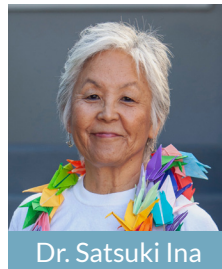
“I have developed immigration classes at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and I run an informal immigration workshop for those researching immigrant related topics.” In 2013, she was awarded the American Cultures Innovation in Teaching prize. This year brought the honor on campus with being given the Distinguished Teaching Award in Social Studies.

As with our previous First Friday Forum topics and their subjects, working on immigration issues is a priority of the new administration so it is of importance

to learn more about the issues, their problems, and consequences of actions taken. Caroline Giers, FFF team member says, “We are fortunate to have a speaker who has studied the various aspects of immigration so extensively. I’m sure we will gain a better understanding of the complexity of the issues surrounding the topic of immigration. Be sure to register.”



A Conversation with Dr. Satsuki Ina
Wednesday, June 9, 2021, at 11:00 a.m.



Dr. Satsuki Ina

Satsuki Ina, PhD, was born in the Tule Lake Segregation Center, a maximum-security prison camp for Japanese American dissidents during WWII. She is professor emerita in the School of Education at California State University, Sacramento. She has produced two award-winning documentary films broadcast on PBS: *Children of the Camps* and *From A Silk Cocoon*, now streaming on Amazon. She currently has a psychotherapy practice in the San Francisco Bay Area specializing in Collective Trauma.

Her upcoming book, *Be Strong, Don't Cry*, will be published by Heyday Press, Berkeley, in 2022. Currently, she is co-founder of “Tsuru For Solidarity,” a nonviolent, direct-action project of Japanese American social-justice advocates working to end detention sites and support front-line immigrant and refugee communities that are being targeted by racist and inhumane immigration policies.

To register, please visit lopc.org/registrations.

thursday Fellowship

caring • sharing • loving

A program of Senior Care Ministries



Looking back

For many years it has been a long-standing tradition to celebrate the end of Thursday Fellowship's program year with an Hawaiian themed party. Hawaiian decor, food and entertainment set the stage for a spectacular celebration. Pastor Gerald Chinen performed on his ukulele and sang traditional Hawaiian songs. We were dazzled by the Hula dancers and some of our very own volunteers and guests joined in the fun. It was always a festive way to end a years worth of excellent programs, and a great send off for our summer hiatus.

Looking forward

This June 2021, we are looking forward to once again honoring Winnie Watson's birthday. Winnie is one of our longtime volunteers and is celebrating her 103rd birthday on June 4th. Happy Birthday Winnie!

In early June some of our Thursday Fellowship volunteers will participate in a cross generational project with the LOPC youth called Project Serve. All

COVID safety precautions will be observed and we will not only have the opportunity to socialize but to also do a service project together. This is an opportunity to join together with the youth to share and to learn more about God's love and justice in the world.

In mid June the state of California hopes to reopen the economy. Thursday Fellowship is in a demographic category that requires extra safety measures to be able to open. We are closely following the latest information from our state and county, and have the wise guidance of Pastors Jaime Polson and Gerald Chinen to help us navigate the complexities of resuming our program. There are still many pieces that need to come together and we are working hard to fit each one in it's place so that Thursday Fellowship will thrive once again in person. In the meantime, stay safe and enjoy the summer.

Watch for updates in the August issue of *Focus*.

care things you may not know about STEPHEN MINISTRY



- Stephen Ministers are available to meet weekly with someone going through a tough time. We are trained to listen and care so a person can process their situation. As one care receiver said, “My ‘visiting angel’ met with me once a week during the most difficult year of my life. Her prayers and her sympathetic ear threw me a lifeline. I can’t say enough in support of Stephen Ministry.”
- Stephen Ministers receive 50 hours of training initially, followed by ongoing continuing education: “This trained person had my confidence, ...and I grew to count on his listening ability. It was a difficult time in my life... our time together in those weekly meetings was highly valuable to me. This experience convinced me of the Christ-like work of Stephen Ministers.”
- We often serve people without a specific faith tradition or with one different from ours: “I will, for the rest of my life, be grateful for having encountered the kind, patient, and wise spirit, in working with the ‘Church lady’ (a Stephen Minister). Thank you!”
- Care receivers appreciate the “airtime” to focus on themselves so they can process and heal. “You have been by my side through some of my toughest times. Thank you for all your love and support!”
- Stephen Ministers can help someone explore challenging spiritual issues in a confidential, non-judgmental environment: “I confided in a friend about my unhappiness, and he felt fear was blocking my spiritual contact with God. I decided to ask LOPC’s Stephen Ministry for help to restore my faith. For six months, we met each week. (My Stephen Minister) became my spiritual guide, mentor, and trusted friend. What a relief it was to share and openly cry with him. And the tears washed away my fear. Ask God to give you courage to reach out and ask for help – ask for a Stephen Minister.”
- We are not meant to go through life’s challenges alone: “I am extremely grateful to you for helping me through that dark time in my life.”

Please contact Pastor Gerald Chinen at gerald@lopc.org or Jean Lee at jleetravel@comcast.net if you would like to learn more about Stephen Ministry for yourself or a loved one. We will need the individual’s permission to contact them.

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:

Shirley Morris,
who passed March 29.

Howard Stutzman,
who passed April 30.

Vickie Hipkiss,
who passed May 1.



foundation

Is the Pandemic Over Yet?

By Jerry Ducey, Foundation Trustee



Contra Costa County has changed pandemic tiers, up and down, and our governor and Dr. Fauci talk about dangerous COVID variants. But, lo and behold, businesses are opening up, people are venturing out, and I even enjoyed a dinner in a restaurant.

The LOPC Foundation has been able to meet via Zoom in order to continue to manage your contributions and support various programs for the church. The Foundation continues to support the move to video services, the Senior Ministry, our campus facilities and its upgrades, and our Mission Program.

While LOPC's annual operating budget is supported primarily by the congregation's pledges and other gifts in response to the stewardship campaign, the Foundation's vision is to be a long-term source of funds for the church, as well as enhancing the annual budget. The nine Foundation trustees believe that God guides us in our work to provide the support to strengthen our mission projects on your behalf through a wide variety of investments.

As the trustees look to the future, we ask for your prayers and God's help to continue this important work. Our prayer is that you will consider becoming a "Friend of the Foundation." Simply put, it means including a provision in your will or trust to continue to support LOPC. It is only through your giving that we can continue our work.

Any questions you have can be answered by one of the Trustees. It is your Foundation, and with God's guidance and your help, we can continue to support and strengthen the vision of LOPC.

session

Session Highlights - April 2021

By Phil Hunter, Clerk of Session

This is an exciting time! We are slowly coming out of our cocoon from the COVID-19 "stay at home" directives. We see the beauty of the spring with wildflowers, budding home gardens, and even the tall green grasses bending to the wind in the open spaces around us. And here at LOPC, we are starting to consider team goals for the next program year that starts in September. Of course, the ministry teams are trying to predict just how open our campus will be in the fall.

As in prior years, ministry teams are asked to layout their plans in light of the five priorities:

1. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in our community and train up committed Christ followers in our contemporary world.
2. Expanding or developing ministry that leads people into active service in the world in service to others.
3. Expanding or developing ministry in one or multiple ministry context(s) (i.e. onsite, offsite, digitally, online).
4. Deepening our commitment to anti-bias work in word and deed in order to build a more just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive church, community, and world.
5. Prioritizing worship as a central component for disciples to nature and deepening their Christian faith individually and in community.

In the coming months, elders and the ministry teams they represent will be determining goals, what steps will be taken toward those goals, and equally important, how we can measure those goals.

This is an exciting time in the life of LOPC as we come out of our collective COVID-19 experiences with more understanding of others and more empathy to our community's needs.

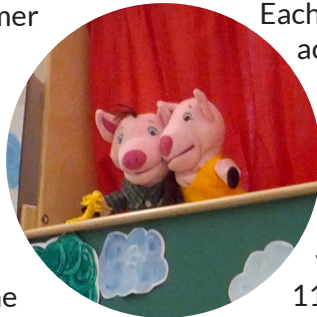
seedlings

Summer at Seedlings

By Taylor Morrill, Seedlings Communications Board

We are so excited to announce that Summer at Seedlings is back for 2021! Summer at Seedlings is a special summer camp experience where children get to learn and explore while having fun the entire time! While this summer will look different than past years' camps, our amazing Summer Director, Kathy LaPlante, is confident that "campers will be sure to have a wonderful time exploring and learning!"

This year, the camp will run for five weeks, June 15 to July 23. Camp will be held from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Tuesday - Friday, with an option to attend either two or four days a week. While the program is typically available to children who not only attend Seedlings but also the greater Lamorinda community, we were only able to admit currently enrolled students, ages two and up, to ensure the safety of our students and staff. "Our goal is keeping our program as safe as possible as we continue to navigate through our COVID protocols," says Miss Kathy.



Each week will be jam-packed full of play, activities, and exciting new themes each day. Some of this summer's themes will include "Obstacle Course," "Disney Character Scavenger Hunt," "Dinosaur Dig," "Bubble Show," and "Car Wash and Snow Cones!". While we are not able to have outside vendors this year, Miss Kathy, along with 11 other Seedling's teachers, have a fabulous program planned for the children. "From puppet shows to dry-ice displays, air rockets and volcanoes, we will work hard to impress even the toughest critics!" Miss Kathy told us. The campers are guaranteed to have a blast!

Miss Kathy is just as excited as the children for all the fun that is in store for them! "It is always a joy for me to be part of Summer at Seedlings, and I am looking forward to starting my seventh year directing this fun program. I am grateful that the parents choose to send their children here to be with us!" In return, Seedlings is incredibly grateful for Miss Kathy and all of the incredible work she puts into this summer program!



journey of faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

David MacKenzie remembers this about his faith journey: “The biggest influence was my Young Life Club. It was my junior year in high school that I most strongly felt God’s pull in a way which was beyond the faith I had inherited from my own family and moved me into a life that was clearly outside the path I would have taken on my own.



David MacKenzie

“I felt God’s unique call. There was a sense of unconditional love and a new desire to not just move with the herd of other teenagers. Theirs was a path that generally included a lot of alcohol as part of acceptance. Not my path. It was truly a born-again experience which changed my life. In 2021, it seems to me, that the term ‘born again’ has a lot of negative connotations, but in 1970, I found it to be transformative. It was then that Jesus was most real to me and present in my life on daily basis.

“There have been several other major points in my faith journey, such as joining Berkeley First Presbyterian Church in 1980 and subsequently meeting my wife, Jane, there. It was also in finding and joining LOPC. This came after a time I had been feeling I was alone, wandering in the desert without a faith support system, not unlike the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. I found a home.”

Becoming a Presbyterian was a big change from David’s upbringing. His parents were Southern Baptists, and he recalls, “We were in church every Sunday morning for worship, Sunday School, and often for Sunday-evening worship, which was a big thing back in the 1950s and 1960s in the South where I grew up.”

A time when David’s faith journey led him outside his comfort zone happened like this. “I was laying on the living room floor thinking, ‘We have this house with three bedrooms and no children. We should share it with a church intern.’ About 10 minutes later the phone rang. Jane answered it, and then came to tell me that our music director, David Morales, said the housing situation for the music intern wasn’t working out and he asked if the intern could live with us. Much to Jane’s

shock I quickly answered, ‘Yes,’ and told her of the thoughts I’d just had. The intern lived in our home for a year, and it was a fabulous experience. I see that as a ‘Burning Bush’ moment where God was speaking to both of us.”

David is a long-time member of the choir. “Singing in the choir and making music in the church has been wonderful for me,” he says. “Music touches me on a deeply

spiritual level. With the right director, the right music, and the right singers, music has grounded me and deepened my faith. This was especially so when Jane was attending Princeton Seminary getting her Minister of Divinity degree, and we were mostly living apart on opposite sides of the country. For me the phrase ‘To sing is to pray twice’ definitely holds true.

“I flew to Princeton every other week for the two years she was there. Now, Jane is the Associate Pastor for Community Care at First Presbyterian Church of Burlingame. Not a day goes by in which God’s presence and workings are not part of our normal course of conversation. Watching Jane be transformed in her pastoral role has deepened my faith, and I find her patience amidst the challenges, which she often faces in her work, to be a witness in God’s presence in my own life and in the world.”

David feels that his primary sense of mission and service at LOPC has been in music and worship but sees God now as opening space for him to pursue other options, though he is still trying to discern what those might be and feeling a bit clueless about the future.

In conclusion, David observes, “My discovery in life has been that sometimes it is the alone times, the lonely times, the times when things seem pointless and without direction, that God is given the space to move us to new places and in new directions. It is only looking back that one can see the hand of God in the moment. Fighting to maintain the status quo is often a very counterproductive strategy.”

For his favorite Bible verses, David chooses Psalm 23.

spiritual formation

Praying the Psalms

Starting June 1

So many of us struggle with prayer, and we look for guidance in many places, but in the center of our Bibles we have a tremendous resource: The Psalms. This was the prayer book of Israel, as it was also for Jesus. For generations, Christians have prayed and sung the Psalms.

Visit lopc.org/psalms to get more information and sign up for any or all of the below:

- Daily Readings will be emailed each morning June 1 - 30.
- 4-week discussion groups with Pastors Peter and Jaime.
- June Sermon series Praying the Psalms. Watch on Livestream or join us in-person.

Mount Hermon All Church Retreat 2021 Has Been Canceled

The LOPC All Church Mount Hermon Retreat has been a blessing to our community for many years, and we look forward to going back in 2022. Normally, we would have hosted the retreat in the fall of 2021. However, our leadership team has made the difficult decision to postpone the retreat. Although many in our community are now vaccinated and things seem to be slowly returning to “normal,” there are still many necessary limitations on activities, facility spaces, and dining to keep guests safe at Mount Hermon. We would not be able to host a number of the activities for children, and youth attendance would be very limited too. Although we have not been able to be at Mount Hermon physically over the past year, LOPC has provided financial support to Mount Hermon to help keep their staff and ministry thriving during the pandemic.

Thank you for your understanding during these ongoing challenging times. Please contact Jaime Polson at jaime@lopc.org if you have any further questions.

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! Some would say it is countercultural. It differs from a regular Bible-study program in which one strives to better understand the meaning of the stories; rather, it invites participants to listen to scripture, to hear words or phrases that catch our attention that day. It differs from a social gathering in that no one is trying to figure out how to “fix” others’ 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 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.

Daily Devotion Videos

This summer we are changing the frequency of our Daily Devotions to come out twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday in order to accommodate vacation and Sabbatical schedules for our staff. Stay connected with us twice a week this summer for messages to connect you to your faith and to grow your awareness of God!

To sign up for Daily Devotion emails please go to lopc.org/daily-devotion, or follow up on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter



finance

Financial Update

By Jim Nagle, Finance Elder

| January to March 2021 | Actual | Budget |
|--|------------|------------|
| Income | | |
| Pledge Income | \$ 784,447 | \$ 719,215 |
| Non Pledge Gifts, Loose Offerings, & Other Giving | 39,354 | 66,500 |
| Mission & Other Special Gifts | 42,242 | 28,400 |
| Session Emerging Needs | 52,000 | 52,000 |
| Faith Component | 813 | - |
| User Fees | 725 | - |
| Total Income | 919,581 | 866,115 |
| Expenses | (853,722) | (868,408) |
| Net Surplus (Deficit) | \$ 65,859 | \$ (2,293) |

Thank you to everyone for your gifts to LOPC whether they are in the form of time, talent, or treasure. We are already three months into 2021, and I am happy to report LOPC is off to a strong start financially. Pledge income was \$65,232 above budget, primarily due to \$38,476 received in early January related to 2020. Additionally, LOPC received pledge gifts above pledged levels of approximately \$12,000. Non-pledge, loose offerings and other giving trailed budget by \$27,146, most likely due to not worshipping in person. Mission deployed an additional \$14,000 in special gifts not previously budgeted related to \$12,000 in national disaster funds and \$2,000 for the Contra Costa Food Bank. Based on generous congregational giving last year, \$52,000 was deployed to mission partners in the first quarter of 2021 with session approval.

Our staff continues to be great stewards of funds, resulting in \$14,686 of lower expenses for the quarter relative to budget. Overall, spending was reduced in almost all ministry areas. Mission expenses were \$14,000 above budget due to the deployment of special gifts mentioned above.

Again, thank you for your gifts; please keep LOPC in your prayers. How can you help LOPC maintain its strong financial footing? If you have made a pledge already, thank you. If you have not made a pledge, please consider doing so at this time.

staff updates

Lidia Is Retiring!



Lidia Jesionek

For the past 17 years, LOPC has been blessed to have Lidia Jesionek on staff, serving as church accountant. But recently she announced she plans to retire in September 2021. While we are sad she will be leaving, we are excited and happy for her to pursue the retirement plans that she has been making with her husband, Krys. Lidia also says she plans to stay connected with the LOPC community as a volunteer for Thursday Fellowship, a program she has fondly supported for many years.

“We have been so blessed by Lidia’s diligent and loving service to LOPC as our bookkeeper,” says Pastor Peter Whitelock. “Anyone who has had the privilege of working with her knows what a special person she is, and how much she cares for people. On top of that, she has a wonderful sense of humor! We will miss her.”

Lidia has developed a special kind of ministry of her own, he added, one that has grown out of the sensitive nature that church finances often entail. “She has been there for church members through their difficult times and has always respected the need for confidentiality and discretion. Her keen eye for detail has been a tremendous value to the finance team and LOPC staff to ensure that budgets are on track and accurate. We are forever grateful to the significant contributions she has made at LOPC.”

Lidia will continue as church accountant through September 2021 in order to work closely with LOPC Treasurer Staci Johnston and the finance team, during this transition, says Pastor Jaime Polson. “Staci and Jim Nagle, finance elder, and the finance team are working on plans to begin the hiring process for this position. If you have any questions, please contact me, jaime@lopc.org or (925) 283-8722, ext. 226.”

LOPC will be celebrating Lidia later this summer so church members and friends can thank her for her many contributions to serve God and our church.



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Lauren Gully, Mission & Spiritual Formation
Jaime Polson, Families & Executive Leadership

WORSHIP & MUSIC

Brett Strader, Director
Stewart Scharch, Organist

TREASURER

Staci Johnston

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:

July 1 for the August issue.
Email items to communications@lopc.org.

Weekly CONNECTIONS Deadline:

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

June Membership Class

NEW: Wednesday Class

June 9 - 30

Join us for four consecutive Wednesday evenings from 6:30 p.m.-7:45 p.m. on Zoom to meet the pastoral staff, learn about LOPC, and explore church membership. This is also a great way to learn about programs and get plugged in!

To register, visit lopc.org/join or contact Chris Baldwin for more info. at chris@lopc.org



**ONLINE Sunday
Worship Service**
9:00 a.m.

Invite Friends & Family!

Connect with us online!



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