

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

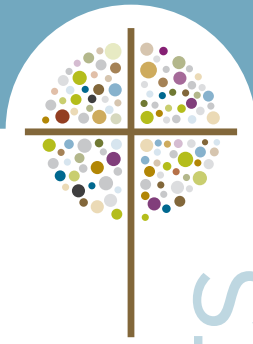
DECEMBER 2021

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

LOPC.ORG



christmas HOPE

By Peter Whitelock - Pastor, Head of Staff

*In thinking about the future, one must choose between hope and fear. We live in a time when the latter is relentlessly cultivated, and usually by people who want to pressure us into seeing things their way or influence us to buy what they're selling. God's word, each and every Advent, is that when we wait upon the Lord, good things come from His hand. **We live in hope.***

In reviewing some old files recently, I came across the snippet above from a piece I wrote for this column over 10 years ago. When it comes to fear, I don't think much has changed. Can faith really help us with fear? It all depends on what kind of faith. One prominent Christian pastor who left the ministry recently observed, "The way that I have been living has not led to life, expansion, and love. It's led to a narrower and narrower controlling, fearful outlook." In his case faith fueled fear, and he's rethinking it.



Christmas reminds us that God does not intend for us to live in fear. Life is serious business, and threats abound, but into the midst of all our uncertainties about the future we welcome the Prince of Peace. The angels proclaim to us from Luke's gospel, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." The savior has come, and God is with us in a new way. Faith that produces hope flows from our confidence in God's love and grace, and it starts by receiving the gift of Jesus.

Merry Christmas!

CONTENTS

December 2021

- Christmas Eve 2
- Mission 3
- Staff Updates 4
- Community 4
- Journey of Faith..... 7
- Care..... 8
- Seedlings 9
- Youth 10
- Finance 11
- Foundation 12
- New Members..... 13
- Session 14

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

Treasurer

- Staci Johnston

Ministry Directors

- Lori Robinson - Children
- Keris Dahlkamp & Allison Kunz - Youth
- Coleen Moulton - Seedlings Preschool

Focus Newsletter

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

Submissions & Deadlines

Please send requests for submissions to:
communications@lopc.org
no later than December 1 for the January 2022 issue.

Thank you to all who contribute each month to Focus!

Join Us!

CHRISTMAS

Eve

Family
Service

Traditional
Service

3:00 p.m.

In-Person + Livestream

7:00 p.m.

In-Person + Livestream

4:30 p.m.

In-Person Only

8:30 p.m.

In-Person Only



livestream.com/lopc

mission

Christmas Eve special offering

To learn more about how you can help, visit lopc.org/specialoffering.

Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church has a long tradition of highlighting mission partners each Christmas Eve whose goal is to help children. This year's special offering will benefit the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children located in Gaza and Children of Faith Missions in Visakhapatnam, India.



Atfaluna

Atfaluna provides education for 250 deaf children and serves more than 5,000 hearing-impaired people and their families annually through its speech pathology and clinical audiology programs as well as community outreach activities. To accomplish this, Atfaluna provides a variety of services including early intervention and diagnostic testing, speech therapy, sign language, and academic education, in addition to providing hearing-aid repair, vocational training, and counseling services.



Children of Faith Missions

Children of Faith Missions provides a secure home and valuable education to more than 120 vulnerable school-age children in Visakhapatnam, India. Many of the children come from broken homes and are at risk for living on the street if not for the home provided by COF. Most are in the care of extended family, are orphans with no parent present, or are semi-orphans just one. COF provides shelter, nutrition, health care, and a Christian-based education to all the children it houses.

mission

LOPC Awarded for Exemplary Support

By Steve Crocker, LOPC Member

The LOPC Mission Team is happy to announce that LOPC was recently awarded the Rollie Mullen Leadership Award by STAND! For Families Free of Violence. This award is given annually and honors a passionate and dynamic individual or group who is committed to ending domestic violence. Some of the past recipients have been Senator Dianne Feinstein, Congress-man George Miller, Margaret Leshner, and Bay Area Legal Aid. It's a big deal to get this recognition, and a huge honor.



What most stood out for STAND! was LOPC's willingness to continue to engage in supporting their organization even though the pandemic created major challenges to serving. While many organizations significantly restricted their activities, LOPC actually expanded their outreach to STAND! You dropped off vital cleaning supplies; our youth wrote wonderful notes of inspiration to their staff; you thoroughly cleaned and organized several of their housing units, turning them into welcoming homes, in preparation receiving traumatized families; you purchased much needed supplies for their housing units; and you rebuilt their outdoor garden area to create a peaceful and beautiful setting for their clients. And your generous donations allowed us to continue to financially support their very effective programming needs.

A big thank-you goes out to all of you who were willing and able to help STAND! during what has been a very difficult time for all. Your efforts were so very meaningful and significant to the staff at STAND!, as well as the victims of abuse they serve.

Congo Necklaces for Sale

December 19, after the 10:00 a.m. Service

Christmas is coming, and the Congo Necklace Team has just the right gifts for you to give to family and friends. Along with a lovely necklace or scarf, there is a flyer which tells the recipient how their items aid the children of Congo in getting better brick- and-mortar buildings instead of leaky mud wall and thatched-roof schools. Your purchases will help Build Congo Schools construct new schools and add needed facilities, such as latrines and water, to existing ones. The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the poorest nations in the world. Your generosity will help provide a brighter future.

staff updates

Please welcome Eric Thompson as the new LOPC Technical Director!

As technical director, Eric is responsible for managing the audio, video, and lighting for worship and memorial services and providing audio and visual technical support as needed during various church programs. He's been regularly involved with LOPC since May 2021, filling in as a camera operator for the Sunday Livestream. Prior to LOPC, he worked for seven years as a sound engineer at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley. Eric has always had a passion for audio and video production, having worked in broadcast television and filmed weddings around the Bay Area.



Eric Thompson

Eric is excited to begin his new role as LOPC Technical Director! Please say hello and introduce yourself if you see him on campus.

community

thursday Fellowship

caring • sharing • loving

A program of Senior Care Ministries

November provided many reasons to be thankful. Firstly, we were glad to support the Senior Care Ministries Team in its "Touch of Love" fall project, where over 70 seniors were recognized. Secondly, with the vaccine for children being approved, they are closer to joining the ranks of the vaccinated, which makes our community safer. Finally, Contra Costa County Health Services (CCHS) lifted some of its indoor masking requirements. This last development has allowed us to begin planning the return of our Thursday Fellowship program.

December is here and we are excited to announce a Thursday Fellowship Christmas Party. Join us Thursday, December 16, at 11:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. to share some Christmas cheer and celebrate the message of love and peace. We are required to follow current CCHS guidelines to keep everyone safe. Proof of vaccination will be required to participate. Check Connections and the LOPC weekly email for further information.

For questions, please call LOPC at 925-283-8722 x 281 or email Julie Peterson at julie@lopc.org.

community



FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

January 7, 10:00 a.m. on Zoom

As the United States continues to have a tenuous relationship with North Korea, LOPC's First Friday Forum presents the timely topic, "Crisis on the Korean Peninsula and a Rational Way Forward" with Dr. Michael Baker as the lecturer. "Despite the Trump-Kim summit that was declared a success by both sides, tensions between the U.S. and North Korea continue to rise and there is the fear it can lead to conflict," Dr. Baker says. He will discuss why North Korea acts in a belligerent fashion, whether there is a credible threat to the security of the U.S. and its Allies, and the importance of the Koreas to their neighbors and world commerce. American and Allied options such as diplomacy and war will be explained, along with a way forward using constructive engagement.



Dr. Michael Baker

Dr. Baker is a retired Rear Admiral of the United States Navy. He was Commander of the U.S. Naval Medical Forces in Korea from 2001 to 2005, working on contingency planning and joint exercises involving potential crises on the Korean Peninsula. He served his country for 30 years and received numerous awards including three Legion of Merit Awards.

After 35 years, Dr. Baker continues to practice general surgery in Contra Costa County. In the medical field he teaches combat casualty care, triage, trauma, and response to complex disasters and humanitarian emergencies. He also teaches about the military for Osher Lifelong Learning Programs at UC Berkeley, Cal State East Bay, Dominican University, and others. He is a resident of Rossmoor.

To register for the Zoom presentation, visit lopc.org/first-friday-forum.

Devotionals

Want to start your day with devotional messages from our pastors and program staff? Devotionals are posted Monday through Thursday each week!

Catch our videos on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or on lopc.org.

Friday Book Group

December 3 at 4:00 p.m. on Zoom

Join us to discuss *The Book of Joy*, by Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu.

All are invited to join!

Contact Catherine Coleman at awaitingword@gmail.com to be added to the group.

Respite Night

For Parents who have children and youth, ages 2 – 22, with special needs

December 3, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Drop off your children with special needs and siblings for an outdoor evening of fun and games. Our trained, background-checked, and fully vaccinated staff will care for them. CCPH guidelines for COVID-19 will be followed.

Advanced registration is required by November 29. Volunteers over age 14 are also needed. Contact Michelle Browning at michelle@lopc.org to register or volunteer.

Sanctuary Flower Sponsorships

The 2022 Flower Calendar is open. Sponsoring the chancel floral arrangement for worship is a way to celebrate a special occasion or honor loved ones. Sponsor dedications are printed in that week's worship bulletin. The suggested donation is \$150.

Please visit lopc.org/flowers to choose a date for your 2022 flower sponsorship. Contact Lexi Morrissey at lexi@lopc.org for more information.

Fourth Monday Book Group

December 6 at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom

Join us to discuss *The Code Breaker*. Jennifer Doudna, and *Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race* by Walter Isaacson

Contact Jean Fiske at jdfiske@gmail.com to be added to the group.

Advent Wreaths • Crafts • Ornament Decorating



Intergenerational **ADVENT** Festival

December 5 ❄️ 11:00 a.m.

All are welcome!

Please join us in Fellowship Hall after worship to celebrate the beginning of Advent. Make an Advent wreath and decorate an ornament. Additional seasonal crafts will be available for young children. This festival is in partnership with Young Families Connect, so the playground will be open for young children to play.

christmas eve **POINSETTIAS**

This Christmas, we will continue our well-loved tradition of adorning the sanctuary with poinsettias. You may donate a poinsettia for \$20 at the booth that will be on the plaza November 28, December 5, and 12 following the 10:00 a.m. service. Fill out the order form below or pick one up in the Ministry Center office. You can mail the form to the Ministry

Center or bring it by in person. Mailed requests must be received by December 16. A list of poinsettia dedications will be published in the Christmas Eve bulletins. Those who have donated poinsettias may bring their plant home after the final Christmas Eve service.

Questions? Contact Lexi at lexi@lopc.org.

\$20

I / We would like to donate a poinsettia to adorn the sanctuary on Christmas Eve.

Given By: _____

In Memory of: _____

Or

In Honor of: _____

Phone: _____ Amount: \$ _____

Poinsettias are \$20 each. Please make checks payable to LOPC.
Please fill out and return this form to the Ministry Center Office at LOPC by December 16.

Please Circle
Cash Check

journey of Faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

Dr. Patrick Chen remembers a mission trip to Mexico when he was in high school as life changing. “Our youth group did outreach at local churches and parks. We developed a play that highlighted the gospel message, and I was cast as the lead actor. I’m an introvert without a performing arts background, so I was quite uncomfortable in this role. However, despite my insecurities and lack of talent, I observed how audiences responded powerfully to the message. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude that God gave me the privilege to do his work and serve.”

Patrick continues, “Since my experience in Mexico, I have had a passion to work with Spanish-speaking communities. Currently I am a primary-care physician in a clinic dedicated to serving Spanish-speaking patients. I feel this is part of God’s plan for me to make a positive impact with my colleagues and my patients.”

Patrick began his faith journey as a member of a strong Christian family with loving parents and two older brothers. “All of us went to church every Friday night and Sunday morning. My parents frequently served as both leaders and teachers at church. I feel very fortunate that I was surrounded by such positive role models.”

While a freshman at Cal, Patrick found another calling. “I had the heart to encourage the various campus Christian fellowships to support each other and work together. I felt that

unity was something Jesus truly cared about, especially in such a challenging environment as Cal. I quickly learned that some fellowship leaders felt threatened by this idea and became critical and suspicious of me. It was hurtful and disorienting to experience believers attacking each other. However, we persevered, and the unity movement gained momentum quickly.

“By my sophomore year we earned commitment from eight campus fellowships that sent representatives to meet weekly to support one another in our common goals. Our mission statement was to open the hearts of our individual fellowships to what God was doing in the larger church by sharing prayer, praises, and promoting each other’s outreach programs. We officially established the campus group, Unity in Christ, which still functions with its original purpose twenty-seven years later.

“Also in college, I had the opportunity to volunteer on the mercy ship, Anastasis, in Eastern Europe. I was assigned to be a galley cook. In my off-hours I joined the healthcare outreach teams and spent time learning from the medical missionaries. I felt how rewarding it was caring for people holistically. It was powerful to meet believers from all over the world coming together for a common purpose.”

The Chen family became members of LOPC in 2018. “My wife, Patty, and I were truly touched by LOPC’s warmth and friendliness toward us



Left to right: Noella, Patty, Kaia (top), Adalyn (bottom), & Patrick Chen.

and our three daughters. Patty is a rheumatologist at Kaiser Oakland. My daughters are Noella, 8, Adalyn, 6, and Kaia, 4. We feel very safe raising our children in this nurturing community.

“I am grateful that I have been elected to become an elder, and I want to help others find faith, family, and a home at LOPC. Another group that I am happy to be in is the Monday night men’s group. It is a great bunch of guys who care about each other.”

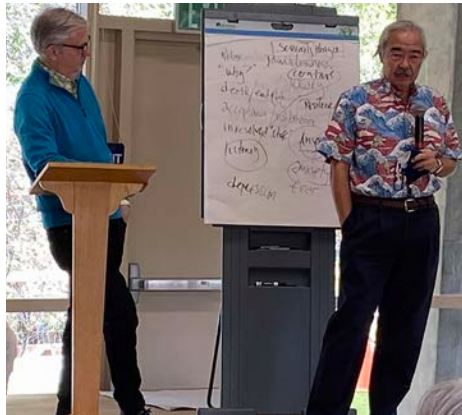
As to his vision for the future for himself and LOPC, Patrick says, “It’s an increasingly challenging and complicated world, and it’s easy to feel lost. I hope we continue building up our community so everyone can feel like friends and family. I still feel strongly about supporting unity in the church and promoting peace in our community. As a primary-care physician, I feel the challenges daily of working in this world with my colleagues and patients as I try to live out my faith.”

care A Season of Care

By Leslie Finertie, LOPC Care Team

Joyfully, this event took place in person on October 23 for A Season of Care retreat with Ray Campton, MFT, entitled “In the Valley of the Shadow: The Spiritual Impact of the Pandemic.” Participants shared their reactions to the pandemic including fear, powerlessness, weariness, isolation, and undefined anxiety. Possible antidotes included focusing on what we have with gratitude, relaxing to let life unfold at its own pace, truly listening with love to others to the point where we can articulate their positions, and taking time for considered perspective about life and community.

Multiple kinds of loss were identified such as material, relationship, dreams,



roles, and abilities. Some primary losses also generated secondary losses such as a widow being uninvited to couples’ gatherings. Grief happens when we accept loss while also reinterpreting life so that the positive value of the lost person or object survives.

We need to allow ourselves to lament and then remember that God’s mercy is new every morning. It’s a life-long process to learn enough about our inner workings to build integrity and live authentically to God’s purpose. When we ask for God’s help, we can take small steps, such as giving back to the next generation, meeting outside with neighbors to create a new community, and learning how to minimize racial and judgmental tendencies. If we recognize that we are God’s beloved and there is nothing we can do to change it, we can learn to accept that every single person is also God’s beloved. Slowing down enough to saturate ourselves in God’s overflowing love will help us become the people we were created to be, bringing God’s kingdom more fully into the world.

A Year of Care and Outreach by Senior Ministries

By Catherine Coleman, LOPC Member



Connection has become even more important during this unique era when isolation became so necessary. It was imperative to develop a rich collaboration among multiple ministries in order to initiate efforts that expressed regard for seniors whose options were limited by the pandemic.

Thursday Fellowship, Rossmoor Parish, and First Friday Forum connected with Congregational Care Ministries, Deacons, and various staff members with heartwarming results. The challenge of finding new and better ways to connect began almost immediately after daily routines were disrupted by Covid – and those efforts will continue in 2022.

More frequent and more focused calls, more notes written with thoughtful intention, including handmade notes made by LOPC youngsters, small Touch of Love gifts, communion kits delivered to homes - these efforts and more have yielded such richness. One of the most delightful new connections were those between young families and our seniors when they personally delivered small gifts of affection from the church family.

With the approach of the new year, these collaborations will continue and we look forward to more opportunity to represent the LOPC community with a focus on its elders.



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

Bonnie Turpin, who passed March 1, 2020 & **John Turpin**, who passed January 21, 2021. **A combined memorial service will be held December 4 at 11:00 a.m.**

Carol Finney, who has passed. **A service will be held December 4 at 3:00 p.m.**

Dinah Dethero, who has passed.



seedlings

Fall 2021 Classroom Happenings

By Sarah Bennett, Seedlings Communications



The Seedlings Preschool year started about two months ago and the teachers and staff report the students are simultaneously having lots of fun while also being very productive. Here are some updates from a few of the classroom teachers...along with adorable Halloween pictures (left).

Enjoy and Happy Holidays to all!

Petunias: taught by Miss Kim and Mr. Max, Ages: 2 - 3.

The Petunias have been busy celebrating the arrival of fall and Halloween—singing songs about falling leaves, pumpkins, and grinning Jack-O-Lanterns. The class has read lots of stories about autumn and Halloween adventures and worked on seasonal art projects. The students made paper-plate pumpkins, painted on black paper at the easel, and worked on a few group murals using paint and markers. Since the beginning of school, students have especially loved Pete the Cat books, and so the class has read a few new ones each week and the children keep asking for more! The Petunias have also been doing fine-motor activities and growing seeds in the terrarium. We have teeny, tiny carrot sprouts growing now, and the grass they grew became so long the Petunias practiced their scissor skills and cut the grass!

Snapdragons: taught by Miss Megan and Miss Lexi, ages: 3 - 4

Snapdragons celebrated Halloween on two days, and the students dressed up in amazing costumes and loved the Halloween scavenger hunt. Miss Megan and Miss Lexi hid Halloween icons outside, and the class worked together finding them. Each student got a clipboard to check off the icons as they went

Marigolds: taught by Miss Cheryl and Miss Jen, ages: 4 - 5.

The Marigolds are full steam ahead and are working on many fine-motor projects, playing with play dough, finger-painting, beading, making tear art, gluing, and having fun coloring with outdoor chalk. The students are using their gross-motor skills outdoors with climbing, ball throwing, noodle-bat play, bike riding, and obstacle courses. Teachers reported the Marigolds' Halloween costume party was a big success, and the students enjoyed snacks of Witch's Fingers, Bat Wings, and Jack-o-Lanterns. They also loved participating in the Halloween freeze dance and cookie decorating. In November, the class will focus on being kind, thankful, and grateful.

Daffodils: taught by Miss Susan, Ages: 4 - 5.

The class began the year getting to know routines, making new friends, and having fun with their autumn curriculum. Miss Susan said, "While the children believe they play all day, they have unknowingly been strengthening their writing grip, learning word building through phonics, adding and subtracting, and building social skills through cooperation, kindness, and conflict resolution. October activities included preparations for Halloween, and the classroom evolved into a creative and colorful learning space, all at the hands of the children. She is looking forward to embracing the cooler months, and incorporating Gratitude and Heritage into the class curriculum."

youth

Confirmation faith milestone



High School Christmas Dinner

December 19, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

A swanky dinner party with good food, fancy music, & fun competitive Christmas games. Come celebrate Christmas and dress up if you like!

Middle School Mediocre Talent Night

December 19, 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

We often get judged by our level of excellence, but have you ever been celebrated for being mediocre? "Mediocre" means "of only moderate quality, not very good" and boy will we enjoy some mediocre performances by our very own youth and advisors! Youth can sign up as individuals or in a group to share a mediocre talent: a song, a skit, a dance, playing music, telling jokes, gymnastics, anything goes! Don't want to share a talent? No problem. Sit back and enjoy the show! Christmas attire welcome, but not required.

We invite youth in 8th-12th grades to consider joining Confirmation this year. Through this program, youth confirm the promises made by their parents at their baptism; to share their intent to live as faithful followers of Christ. Are you unsure what that means? Then this program is for you! Come explore what Christians believe and how Christians relate to others in the world while asking your burning questions in a judgment-free zone. At the end of our two half-day retreats, youth will choose whether or not they feel ready to be Confirmed at this time.

Retreats are on January 8 and 15 from 12-4 p.m. with Confirmation Sunday on February 6. Registration opens online in early December.

No Youth Events December 20-January 8. We'll see you back at Youth Alive, YOW, & BTW on January 9!



finance

Financial Update

By Jim Nagle, Finance elder

Firstly, the Finance Team thanks everyone for their contribution this year of time, talent, and treasures to make LOPC the church it is. The finance team wants to let you know that as we roll into the fourth quarter, we are very fortunate to be in a very solid position financially.

We ended the third quarter with a surplus of \$60,482, well ahead of budget due to unbudgeted income from the Employee Retention Credits (ERC). The credit flows from mandated government pandemic restrictions that directly impacted LOPC in the amount of \$329,809. This surplus is offset by pledge income which is ahead of budget offset by lower non-pledge and loose offering giving.

Special Gift funds of \$80,285 were deployed ahead of budget to various local partners, including Contra Costa Food Bank, Congo, Disaster Relief, Harbor House and Sojourner Truth, Habitat for Humanity, as well as for pastor education and Livestream worship enhancements, offset by a refund and lower-than-expected deacon spending.

Our staff continues to be great stewards of expenses. September year-to-date expenses totaled \$63,544 over budget, which included deployment of \$80,284 in special gifts expense. Most ministry areas are trending at or below budget due to delays in spending related to the pandemic. Expenses included the replacement of the failed Sanctuary sound system and a new pastor camera, which is to be funded by the Foundation.

LOPC is well-positioned as we enter the final 2021 quarter with the benefit of the ERC offset by a \$59,896 budget shortfall for Seedlings 2021 school year, due to the impact of government restrictions. 2021 non-pledge and loose offerings are forecast to be significantly below budget for the year; however we are forecasting the budgeted faith component to offset this.

We are grateful for our staff and faithful congregation during the past 18 months. If you have already pledged and given, thank you. If not, please consider a pledge and know any contribution is greatly appreciated.

September 2021 LOPC Results Actuals vs. Budget

January 1 - September 30, 2021	2021 YTD Actual	2021 YTD Budget	Fav(Unfav)
Congregational Giving			
Pledge Income	\$ 1,713,345	\$ 1,634,215	\$ 79,130
Non-Pledge, Loose Offerings, Other Giving	151,539	225,000	(73,461)
Total Congregational Giving	\$ 1,864,884	\$ 1,859,215	\$ 5,669
Seedlings	\$ (5,896)	\$ 54,000	\$ (59,896)
Session Emerging Needs Fund	52,000	52,000	-
Mission & Special Gifts	164,013	83,729	80,284
Foundation	252,895	252,895	-
Total Income Before ERC	2,327,896	2,301,839	26,057
Employee Retention Credit	329,809	-	329,809
Total Income	2,657,705	2,301,839	355,866
Expenses	2,597,223	2,533,679	63,544
Net Surplus(Deficit)	\$ 60,482	\$ (231,840)	\$ 292,322

December Finance Giving Deadline for Tax Purposes

LOPC must receive your mailed gift postmarked 12/31/21 or in-person gift by 5:00 p.m. on 12/31/2021. There can be no exceptions.

If you are making a stock gift, please notify our accountant Farah Mohammadzai farah@lopc.org (x229) with the type of stock it is, and how it should be applied. Stock must be received in LOPC's brokerage account by 12/31/2021.

Please do not file your 2021 tax return until you receive your year-end LOPC statements with written acknowledgment of your gifts to LOPC, which will be made in January 2022. Thank you for your generous giving to LOPC!

2022 Pledge Envelopes

If you pledged for 2022 and requested a box of envelopes, they will be available to pick up in the Chapel Monday – Friday, December 6 - December 19, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., and on Sundays from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

If you have questions, please email the LOPC Accountant, Farah Mohammadzai, at farah@lopc.org.

Giving at LOPC

One of the most practical ways you can help during times like these is to continue to support LOPC financially.



To give visit lopc.org and select GIVE BACK and the Online Giving Tab, or scan the code above on your mobile device.

DOUBLY blessed

Giving from IRA's May Offer Seniors Tax Advantages and the Ability to Give More to LOPC

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson
& Tim Carlson, LOPC Members

There are many ways to give of your time, talent, and treasure to LOPC. As seniors, we found that recent federal income tax law changes provide an even more tax-efficient pathway for our giving from our IRAs.

Seniors may now benefit more directly from these recent federal tax law changes because qualified contribution deductions directly reduce adjusted gross income. We are now able to increase our pledging because of these new income tax benefits:

Higher standard deductions are available to all taxpayers, which increased concurrently with limitations on certain itemized deductions.

New qualified-contribution deductions are available to taxpayers who are required to take age-related distributions from their IRAs.

Suggested next steps:

Confer with your tax advisor to learn if it is advantageous to fund your LOPC giving out of your required IRA distributions.

Contact your IRA custodian to arrange for your qualified contributions.

foundation welcome NEW TRUSTEES

By Jim Beckemeyer, Foundation Trustee



As we prepare to ring in 2022, the LOPC Foundation looks forward to welcoming two new trustees while saying farewell to a couple of faithful board members.



Linda Fodrini-Johnson will be joining the Foundation in January, having just completed a three-year term on session as the elder for Generosity (formerly Stewardship). Linda is the Founder of Eldercare Services, an organization that has provided care management, counseling, advocacy, education, and support groups for over 30 years. At LOPC, Linda has partnered with Pastor Gerald to lead a bi-monthly support group for those caring for someone with dementia. Linda and her husband, Bruce, have enjoyed participating in a host of mission activities, including the weekly Monument Crisis Center food drives, multiple Love Does projects, and travel with other LOPC members on a mission trip to Zimbabwe.



Doug Bontemps will also begin a first term with the Foundation in January. Doug and his wife, Stephanie, have been members of LOPC for the past 15 years, although he also attended LOPC as a youngster. Doug has served in multiple leadership roles at LOPC, having been the elder on separate occasions for the Finance, Personnel, and Stewardship teams. When he's not busy serving our church community, Doug can be found working in the finance industry as a managing director at Silicon Valley Bank. We are delighted to welcome Doug to the board.

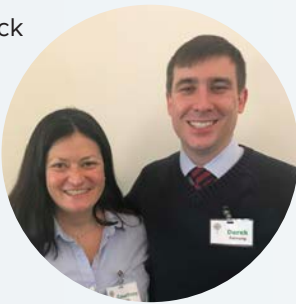
As we bring on two new faces, we say goodbye to two outgoing trustees, Phil Placier and Jerry Ducey. Phil has faithfully served the Foundation for seven years, acting as treasurer for most of his tenure. We will miss the wealth of knowledge, expertise, and insight that Phil brought to the team, but we know where to find him. Jerry joined the Foundation back in 2018. We are grateful for Jerry's efforts in helping us spread the Foundation's purpose and message to the LOPC community.

Please join us in welcoming Doug and Linda as new trustees and thanking Jerry and Phil for their enormous contributions.

Should you have questions about the Foundation, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the 2022 trustees: Jim Beckemeyer (president), Dara Youngdale (vice president), Staci Johnston (secretary), Jen Crocker (treasurer), Doug Bontemps, Lois Boyd, Linda Fodrini-Johnson, Kristi Haigh, and Mike Ross.

Derek Farnung & Courtney Keefe

Hello! Derek and I recently moved back to the Bay Area after several years on the East Coast. I am a Lafayette native and Derek is from Rochester, NY. We first met and lived in San Francisco, and after moving to Boston, decided to come back to raise our family in Lamorinda. We have two sons: Andrew (2 years) and Henry (2 months). We love the outdoors and are avid hikers and skiers. We also traveled abroad extensively before Covid and look forward to bringing our kids along as soon as we are able. We were attracted to LOPC by our desire to meet other young families and get involved in the community as we settle into our new home in Orinda. Service and fellowship are important values in our household and in looking for a place where we feel welcome and actively participate with our children. LOPC seemed like a natural fit!



Oommen & Shilpa Thomas

Oommen and Shilpa have lived in Lafayette for 20 years and have attended LOPC for several years. Their children have attended the children and youth ministry programs (Tareek, age 18, and Zarah, age 15). Shilpa is an architect/medical planner with Kaiser Permanente, and Oommen is an economist with KPMG.



WELCOME new members

Hannah Lofink

Hannah grew up at LOPC, attending the children's ministry Godly Play, middle school, high school programs, and mission trips! Hannah even served as a youth deacon while in the youth programs. She joined LOPC as an active member after attending the confirmation classes as a youth in 2005 and decided to take the membership class as an adult to reactivate her membership. Hannah has a daughter, Madeline (3), and is glad to be raising her at LOPC.



Joe & Stephanie Russell

The Russells moved to Orinda in June 2021 from the Peninsula. Stephanie loves being a mother to their three children – Sloane (9), Kate (9), and Thomas (2). Stephanie is a publisher, and Joe works as a CFO. What attracted them to LOPC were the families, the Seedlings Preschool, faith, and community. The Russells say, "We love the Lamorinda area...and look forward to meeting you and joining the community."

Meehae Kwon

Meehae and her husband, Fred Oh, have been attending LOPC for about four years. They have two sons, Ewan and Eugene. They regularly participate in worship on Sunday mornings and have served in the Young Families



Connect gatherings!

Heather Breen

We moved back to the Bay Area three years ago after spending time in Los Angeles (where my husband went to graduate school) and San Diego (my hometown). I spend every day home-schooling and caring for my daughter, who has a rare form of epilepsy call Landau-Kleffner Syndrome and autism. I also volunteer for and serve on the board of a small start-up nonprofit called Elder Tree, which promotes human health and wholeness by reconnecting people with nature and each other. We love to get outdoors, especially in the spring when the hills are green and the creeks are full of water. On the rare day that I have time to myself I love to thrift and look for things I can salvage or upcycle. I also like to try my hand at sewing, but I haven't had much time for that in recent years. I started looking for a church right after we moved to Walnut Creek and stumbled upon LOPC's Special Needs Ministry. It was an incredible blessing to have staff who understood my daughter's needs from day one. I've also resonated with LOPC's focus on service and inclusion.



Andrei Makhanov

Andrei lives in Walnut Creek and first got plugged into LOPC via the Men's Group (30-50 somethings) over Zoom in the Fall of 2020. He migrated to the East Bay from San Jose in the spring of 2020. He has three children, Beatrissa (11), Peter (10), and Liev (7). He is an engineering manager in maps at Apple and is bent on making their data as accurate as possible. In his spare time, Andrei likes to run, mountain bike, eat with friends, and engage in literature and conversations focused on psychology, religion, existentialism, and environmental science. Andrei was drawn to LOPC by the many kindred spirits in the people he has met. He's also filled with gratitude for all the ministry he's received in recent months and would like to be able to pass that love on into other people's journeys.

session

Session Highlights

By Phil Hunter, Clerk of Session

At October's meeting, Session approved a request to the LOPC Foundation for funds to acquire equipment for Livestream worship services and some facility maintenance.

Giving Sunday was November 7, and in the October Session meeting, Linda Johnson, elder of the Generosity Ministry (formerly Stewardship), encouraged everyone in the LOPC community, not just members, to contribute to the work of this church. Sharing our time, talent, and treasure helps the LOPC community to continue the wide-ranging opportunities to connect and grow in faith: worship and music, small groups for all ages and interests, children and youth programming, Thursday Fellowship for seniors, yoga and exercise on Zoom, First Friday Forum, spirituality groups, knitters and quilt makers, mission work with local partners and supporting international mission partners, plus frequent *love does* activities, and hosting the recently held annual Winter Nights Family Shelter.

With many uncertainties related to the Covid pandemic, many of us have been tempted to turn inward, understandably so, to protect our families. Yet, we are encouraged to put our faith in God that we cannot only take care of our loved ones, but with God's help we can be generous to those in greater need.

The LOPC community is fortunate to have talented and generous people and the facilities to host and sponsor programs which help us live into our mission statement: "A welcoming and loving community of faith that learns, grows, and serves together."

If you haven't yet done so, please consider making a pledge of your time, talent, or treasure to help LOPC serve the local community - and yourself.



**LAFAYETTE-ORINDA
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
49 Knox Drive
Lafayette, CA 94549



IMPORTANT

Dated Material
PLEASE DELIVER
BEFORE 12/1/21
Thank you!

Return Service Requested

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

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Christmas Concert

Dec 11 **4PM** ● Dec 12 **2PM** ● Dec 12 **5PM**

Featuring

**The LOPC Festival
Choir & Orchestra**

with guest artists:

Ben Jones, Tenor • Matthew Szemela, Violinist
Eric Rigler, Piper • Christian Elliott, Organist

Repertoire includes favorite Christmas songs, selections from Bach's Christmas Oratorio, and new works by Brett Strader.

Reserve tickets online at lopc.org/registrations

Suggested donation is \$25. Questions? Email tickets@lopc.org.

Childcare for children six months to 10 years old will be available for the 2:00 p.m. concert on Sunday, December 12, only. Space is limited. Reserve childcare before November 30 by emailing Susan Wentworth at susan@lopc.org.