

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2022

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

LOPC.ORG



sometimes we need a GOOD RAINSTORM

By Gerald Chinen - Pastor, Care

California's recent rainstorms have been a welcome sight! Our drought may still have long-term impact, but the rain was truly a blessing.



In 1977, I moved to Pasadena, California, to begin my seminary education. Then, there weren't sufficient laws or guidelines about exhaust fumes, so it was often very smoggy. On high-smog days, an alert was issued warning those with respiratory problems to stay indoors. The smog was so bad I had no idea the San Gabriel mountains were outside my back door because I couldn't see them! That is, not until a rainstorm and winds cleared the air, and there they were -- not very green, but still beautiful!

Rainstorms can be dangerous, but also helpful. Sufficient rain, the good kind of rain I call it, nourishes our planet. It keeps us human beings alive. And there are heavy rains that cause damage and unearth all the junk which needs to be cleared out. I liken it to the "storms" we face in life. Our life challenges will stir up things that have often settled, and we've been only too happy to simply ignore. When things begin to surface, however, we must do our best to remove the debris that obstructs the health of relationships and the good we can do.

I appreciate the gospel's account of Jesus asleep in the boat as his disciples not only try to stay afloat in a storm but keep their wits about them. I think the disciples remembered this event the rest of their lives because it must have been quite the storm to terrify these seasoned fishermen. Besides remembering their fear, they also remembered the composure and confidence of Jesus as he calmed the storm. If Jesus could help them through one of the fiercest storms they faced, Jesus could help them weather any storm.

As individuals, and collectively as a church family, we've had to weather quite a few storms recently, and it appears there are more to come. Let's lean upon each other. And let's be open to the changes we need to make in our lives, getting rid of obstacles which prevent us from living with hope, grace, and love.

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Lauren Gully - Mission & Spiritual Formation
Jaime Polson - Families & Executive Leadership
Chris Baldwin - Community Life

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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 March 1 for the April issue.

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

a month of **love does**

love protects, love hopes, love never fails

Sign up to volunteer at lopc.org/lovedoes



LOPC continues to be committed to serving our community! While we have mission projects throughout the year, each February we recommit our congregation to mission work alongside local organizations. Over the past two years our mission work has been central to how we have responded to the needs of our community in the middle of a pandemic. Last year, while sheltering in place, our congregation rose to the challenge of making an impact while staying safe. In fact, part of our service last February led our congregation to receive the Rosie-Mullen Award for exceptional volunteer support at Stand! This year we will continue to promote health and safety while remaining true to the value of “loving our neighbors” – because Christ’s love binds us together. Please join us in our efforts!

We kicked off the month of service in worship on January 23, and encourage everyone to choose at least one act of service during the month. Projects will include assembling breakfast and hygiene kits for those experiencing homelessness, making polar-fleece blankets, and collecting clothing that provide warmth and comfort.

Off-campus opportunities will include working at the Food Bank and White Pony Express preparing food for distribution in the community. Both organizations are considered essential businesses, and volunteers are vital to their efforts. Please note that only healthy people who are not displaying any symptoms of being sick or living with anyone who is sick should volunteer in person.

For more information, please visit lopc.org/lovedoes.

Ways you can participate:

At Home Opportunities

- Breakfast Kits
- Hygiene Kits
- Polar-fleece Blankets

Off-Campus Opportunities

- Food Bank of Contra Costa/ Solano Counties
- White Pony Express

Warm Clothing Drive for Trinity Center

Men's Needs:

- Winter jackets & sweatshirts (all sizes)
- Warm shirts & sweaters (large, X-large)
- Pant, jeans, sweatpants (all sizes)
- Tennis shoes (all sizes)

Women's Needs:

- Warm shirts & sweaters (large, X-large)
- Jeans and sweatpants for women, sizes 10, 12, 14, 16, and 18
- Tennis shoes (all sizes)
- Warm knit hats and scarves
- Backpacks, rain ponchos, umbrellas



love does Special Offering **Beginning on February 20.**

The Food Bank's mission is to provide emergency and supplemental food to those in need throughout Contra Costa and Solano counties.

The Food Bank has been open throughout the pandemic seven days a week and is considered an essential business serving the greater community. It continues to serve more

than 80,000 additional people per month than prior to the pandemic with no decrease in sight.

To respond to the unprecedented demand, the Food Bank relies heavily on volunteers to sort and prepare food for distribution throughout both counties. In addition, donations are important to its ability to continue keep up with demand. Every dollar provides enough food for two meals!

For more information, please visit [LOPC.org/specialoffering](https://lopc.org/specialoffering).

Donate beginning February 20:

All donations received will benefit the Food Bank of Contra Costa/ Solano Counties.

- **Go to [LOPC.org](https://lopc.org) >GIVE BACK>ONLINE GIVING and select “Food Bank” in the dropdown menu.**
- **Write a check to LOPC with “Food Bank” in the memo and place in collection box in the Narthex or the black mailbox in front of the Ministry Center.**



the GENEROSITY corner

Sharing our Time, Talents, and Treasure



Talent

By Nancy Henderson, Generosity Team Member

Gifts - hospitality, leadership, analysis, collegiality, teaching, caregiving, creativity, music – God values each of our gifts and invites us not to compare ourselves to others, because we each bring offerings that matter. As LOPC focuses this year on Time, Talent, and Treasure, this month, we'll consider our talents as a means of giving to God.

Take the Thursday Work Crew, for example. It's estimated LOPC saves more than \$150,000 a year from their devotion and expertise in building

and repairs. They maintain the lighting around the campus to keep it safe, install grab-bars in the restrooms to make them easier for seniors and disabled people, and much more. They built the amazing playhouse in the back play area – imagine the joy of the children climbing up the ladders, sliding down the slide, and playing with each other inside and outside this magnificent (and safe) structure!

We are a talented community and all benefit from the skills others contribute so generously. We don't need to

master every gift because we operate in community. (God made us that way.) The Apostle Paul celebrates our unique talents in 1 Corinthians 12:

Now about the gifts of the Spirit ..., I do not want you to be uninformed. ... There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ... Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ... the body is not made up of one part but of many.

community

thursdayFellowship

caring • sharing • loving

A program of Senior Care Ministries



By Julie Peterson, Coordinator

The Thursday Fellowship team is still feeling the glow of its Christmas party on December 16. It was wonderful to see everyone in person and share the Christmas spirit with one another. The timing of the party was fortuitous because within days afterwards the Contra Costa County Health Services masking mandates became more restrictive. Therefore, we are in a holding pattern until we can gather again. Our greatest desire is to meet in person, but keeping everyone safe is our primary concern. In the meantime, the team has met to plan alternative ways to keep our volunteers and guests connected and engaged and to show them how much we care. As plans take shape and become more concrete, we will inform all guests via announcements in the *Sunday Connections*, the monthly *Focus* magazine, and our Thursday Fellowship Newsletter. We send New Year's greetings to all and wishes for a happy, healthy 2022!



FIRST FRIDAY FORUM



The iconic works of Japanese American artist, Ruth Asawa, will be featured in a talk by Marilyn Chase for First Friday Forum (FFF) on February 4 at 10:00 a.m.

Registration is required for this event, lopc.org/first-friday-forum.

Chase tells the inspiring story of how Asawa rose from being born as farmer's daughter, and

one interned during World War II, to a world-renowned sculptress. Chase, a Stanford graduate, wrote the book, *Everything She Touched: The Life of Ruth Asawa* which is richly illustrated with reproductions of Asawa's work.

On March 4 at 10:00 a.m., join us as Dr. Juan Carlos Ruiz Guajardo speaks on Mexican Culture in the Context of US-Mexican Relationship.



Science and Religion Postponement

Due to rising concerns about the new Covid wave, the Science and Religion steering team has decided to postpone the January 21 in-person Science and Religion meeting. Despite county permission to meet with masks and vaccine verification, and despite its eagerness to reconnect and to rebuild its program community, this delay seems prudent.

The Team is committed to gathering as soon as possible, and to enjoying this vibrant discussion in person. Please watch *Focus* and *Connections* for information on a new meeting date.

youth

Confirmation Sunday

February 6

Please join us in the morning worship service on Sunday, February 6, as we celebrate the youth confirmands for 2022! 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. The youth have learned more about Jesus and the Trinity, prayer, the Bible, creation, sacraments and worship, and God's justice, all in a welcoming and relaxed environment. This is a huge milestone in the life of the youth, their families, and the entire congregation. We hope to see you there as we lift up these amazing young disciples of Christ!

High School Small Group Gatherings

February 13

Instead of traditional BTW on this date, we will hold Covid-safe small group get togethers that advisors and their respective small groups coordinate together. These meetups foster more trust and relationships in a fun and non-threatening environment.

Questions? Contact your small group advisor or Keris Dahlkamp
keris@lopc.org

love does

Sunday, February 27

Youth and adult advisors at Youth Alive, YOW and BTW will all participate in service projects as part of LOPC's wider love does ministry. Middle school youth will be preparing Easter Baskets for children living at Hope Solutions, a partner that provides low-cost and permanent housing for local families. High school youth will be folding and packing baby clothes for Loved Twice, a not-for-profit organization that provides clothing to new parents who are in need. This is always a highlight experience for everyone involved. Please join us!



2022 Summer Service-Learning

Registration is open online for the Youth Ministry summer service-learning experiences: lopc.org/ministry/youth/summer-mission.

Short-term mission experiences can have a big impact. Youth just completing 5th-12th grades who choose to spend a week of their summer vacation dedicated to service will:

- Discover where God is already at work in communities in need;
- Act as the hands and feet of Christ to share God's love with the world;
- Learn that those who seem different are not very different at all;
- Practice putting others' needs above their own desires; and
- Lean on God to realize their ability to overcome new challenges.

June 6-10 Service Squad:

A Local Daycamp for youth completing 5th-6th grades in spring 2022.
Questions? Contact Alison Kunz at allison@lopc.org.

June 18-25 High School Mission Trip:

Wapato, Washington, service-learning trip for youth completing 9th-12th grades in spring 2022.
Questions? Contact Keris Dahlkamp at keris@lopc.org.

July 10-15 Middle School Mission Trip:

Los Angeles service-learning trip for youth completing 7th-8th grades in spring 2022.
Questions? Contact Alison Kunz at allison@lopc.org.

Poppies & Tulips

classroom update

By: Sarah Bennett, Seedlings Communications

Poppies

The Poppies students (24 to 36 months) and teachers were busy during December! They did numerous art projects in just a few weeks, including painting big trees as a group and using various materials to make ornaments and gingerbread people. Teachers Miss Mari and Miss Meghan said, “When the Poppies create art, they are also working on strengthening their fine-motor skills. For example, students strengthen their skills while peeling stickers and placing them on their papers, while holding paintbrushes, while squeezing glue bottles, and when picking up beads or jewels.

“The students also enjoy circle time very much, [which is] a time when the children often share what they would like to do or sing.” The teachers reported that other fun included monthly themed yoga (December’s yoga theme was ‘Winter Animals’) and movement songs such as Reindeer Pokey (just like ‘okey Pokey’). In December, students especially loved singing “Old Mac Donald had a Christmas Tree.”



A wall in the Poppies classroom showcasing student artwork

Tulips

In one of the upper-age classrooms, teacher Dawn and her four-and five-year-old students have been learning about Community Helpers, and talking about what careers the kids want to have when they grow up. The Tulips have also been learning about fire safety and firefighters.

In December, the Tulips finished their “Star Student” project and continued their Alpha friends curriculum.

For the holidays, the Tulips first celebrated with a Halloween party followed by a Friendsgiving Feast, and they finally wrapped up the season with the annual Pajama Day hot cocoa movie party.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

journey of Faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

Jenny Barnett Champion's memories of her faith journey go back to her junior high days. "I absolutely loved the junior high program. The leader, Tim Mooney, was really cool. We learned about the Bible through music. I remember singing 'King Jesus is All' and loving the inclusiveness of the junior high crew. That was how I built my faith as an early teenager. I felt like I was part of something bigger than my tiny self.

"Faith, in my estimation, is a combination of spirituality and having love in your heart. That leads to having compassion for people who are not like you and for people who don't have the resources you have. I was influenced in my faith journey by my parents at an early age as they were both very active at LOPC. Currently, my mom [Sandy Barnett] is a deacon."

Indeed, Jenny has been a part of LOPC since she was a baby. She has a special place in her heart for the cupola in the Chapel as her brother, Christopher James Barnett, died as a baby and the stained-glass windows there were placed in his memory.

She says one of the biggest reasons she continues to be a part of the church is the focus on service and mission. "It's important that LOPC supports so many organizations and provides resources and funding to people in need in such countries as Zimbabwe with Mama Stella and the children, or meals for those in Contra

Costa County through the Monument Crisis Center. We have bins always ready to be filled with essentials for them.

"Since mothers are really important to me, as are children, anytime I can be involved in service with them I look for a place. LOPC's Children's Ministry program is outstanding. My daughter loved Vacation Bible Camp and the reminders we get every month on 'virtues' and how we can carry those into our lives."

Jenny is concerned about the current state of our world and the difficulty people have experienced because of the pandemic, including so much personal loss. "As I go out into the world, one of my beliefs is to try to be empathetic for people living on the street. Although for some it's not popular to engage with people who are homeless, from time to time I bring water or a few dollars when I go into Oakland or San Francisco because I always encounter somebody who needs something. Whether it's small or big, showing them you care when they are down and troubled can help them know that not all hope is lost."

Knowing it is important to be involved, Jenny is glad that LOPC offers so many opportunities. "Jesus would be happy to see the work we do shining through our congregation. My most cherished memory with my daughter, Stella, was serving families through Winter Nights Shelter. We prepared a meal and



Jenny Barnett Champion & Family

had conversations with the children living at our church. Kids were simply playing with kids, and it was special to see them bonding without any previous friendship.

"Our Family Ministry Team, led by Pastor Jaime, spearheaded a book drive twice through Super Stars Literacy, whose mission is to disrupt the cycle of poverty. It was an amazing success. Our community stepped up and donated thousands of books for children in Alameda County. While I appreciate serving people in other countries, it is important to remember that people in need are not far away from the LOPC campus."

Speaking of Stella, Jenny says her daughter worked with Youth Director Allison Kunz and Children's Ministry Director Ryan Timpte last year to create a sermon around Jesus and the Good Samaritan. "I believe she tries to live her life as a person who cares for others. Her time at LOPC has helped teach her that, for which I am grateful."

Jenny's favorite Bible verse is Philippians 4:15, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "It seems God magically appears in my life when I really need Him and gives me courage to face the world when I am scared and questioning why the world is sometimes upside down. God's love is everlasting. When we know He is going to be there for us, we can face any challenge with an open heart."

finance

What is Per Capita?

Per Capita is a Latin phrase that means “for each head”. We use it to refer to an annual fee that our congregation pays to higher levels of the Presbyterian Church based upon the number of active members in LOPC. For 2021, the Per Capita amount is \$38.00, or \$76.00 per couple. We encourage members to make an extra contribution to help defray this expense in addition to their other gifts. To facilitate this, you will find a blue Per Capita envelope in your box of giving envelopes. You can also give a check to the church with “Per Capita” noted on the memo line. We have budgeted \$68,210 this year for our Per Capita obligation. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if a significant portion of this could be covered by your extra contribution enabling us to add additional support to LOPC ministries?

2022 Stewardship Campaign



So far, our community has pledged \$1,927,210 for 2022. Our goal is \$2,400,000.

Please consider making a pledge for 2022. Your pledge will help LOPC plan and budget for the following:

- Growing Mission Ministry
- Working for a better, more just world
- Expanding our special needs ministry
- Providing youth with service learning and spiritual growth opportunities
- Taking care of LOPC staff
- Developing new spiritual formation opportunities

Thank you to members and friends who have made a pledge for 2022. Pledge envelopes are available in the Chapel during weekdays and on Sundays.

Visit lopc.org/pledge to pledge or contact Farah Mohammadzai, LOPC Accountant, to pledge or for assistance, farah@lopc.org, 283.8722 x265.

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 QR code on your mobile device.

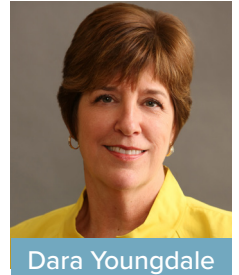


foundation

Caring for Aging Parents – Love and Listening on Life’s Journey

By Dara Youngdale, Foundation Trustee

One of the greatest gifts we can give to our families is the comfort that, as our parents age, they will be loved, supported, and respected. The need to address this important topic has been raised by many in the church and the greater community as many of us are seeking tools and resources to help us along this journey.



Dara Youngdale

The LOPC Foundation is pleased to sponsor, “**Caring for Aging Parents – Love and Listening on Life’s Journey**”, to be presented at the hour-long **11:11** gathering following the worship service on **Sunday, February 13**. We are fortunate to be able to feature two speakers that have significant expertise: **LOPC member Linda Fodrini-Johnson MA, MFT, CMC** whose book *The Empowered Caregiver* was recently released on Amazon, and **Maggie Harmon Esq., Presbyterian Foundation Ministry Relations Officer**, who consults with churches on living our faith throughout life’s journeys.

Linda and Maggie will share information and tools for engaging in meaningful discussions and allow time for questions on the following topics:

- Are you worried about aging parents? How you address each person’s concerns can make all the difference in successfully developing a shared strategy to provide the support they need.
- We all should have a plan for the “what ifs” of a longer life. What are the key issues that you and your parents need to address?
- How to celebrate parents’ stories and values and those of generations that preceded us in a loving way that continues to honor them.
- Learn how to respect your family members’ values in your conversations that might encourage honest discussions about health concerns and hope.

We will offer the program live in the Oak Room and online via Zoom. It will also be recorded to be available on the church’s website. All ages are welcome to attend what we believe will be an insightful and valuable program.

session

December Session Report

By Phil Hunter, Clerk of Session

Typically, December's session meeting addresses end-of-year "housekeeping" matters, and this year was no exception.

Session approved:

- the assignment of the Ruling Elders (elected by the congregation in November) to the various ministry areas of the church.
- the acceptance of a gift to be used for student mission-trip scholarships.
- the deployment of a portion of a previous gift to be used for the Habitat for Humanity project near the Pleasant Hill BART station.

Session also was pleased to receive the report regarding LOPC's successful Christmas Concerts. Despite the challenge of Covid safety concerns, the concerts were well attended.

Although you will be reading this report a month after the Christmas holidays, it is being written in December, as we celebrate the birth of Christ, a time of Hope. Hope is the word I associate with the past year and year ahead.

In 2021, the God who gives us hope gave us the opportunity to serve people in our community – to look beyond ourselves while we struggled to face the challenges of managing Covid and its repercussions. It has been with hope that the LOPC community has responded to the needs of our community AND of the world.

As your Clerk of Session for 2021, this will be my last monthly report. The Clerk of Session for 2022 is Jeanette Shearer, and she will be writing these reports in the future. For me, this past year has been a humbling experience.

Prior to becoming Clerk, I sat on a variety of LOPC committees. Despite the variety of my committee work, it's been as Clerk that I've become more aware of the inter-workings and talents of the LOPC staff and volunteers. In the past year, I've become more aware of the myriad of ways the greater LOPC community has continuously and consistently responded to God's call to help those in need. There have been countless gestures of giving time, talent, and treasures, and to look beyond oneself and think about "the other" in a loving and caring manner: gestures of love and hope.

I am excited for our future, as I truly believe we are a welcoming and loving community of faith that learns, grows, and serves together.

spiritual formation

2022 Lenten Study

Group registration will open on February 7 at lopc.org/lent2022.

What is the difference between what is Holy and what is ordinary? Lent is a time that we set aside as holy in our church year, but as we study how God works and communicates to us and in our world, God uses many ordinary people and things. LOPC would love to welcome you into a Lenten group during this Holy season as we join as a church in studying *Lent in Plain Sight*, a Lenten devotional book written by Jill Duffield. In this book, Jill reminds us that God works through ordinary things and ordinary people to accomplish incredible things in our world and to communicate incredible love to us.

Groups will meet at different days and times weekly starting March 1 through Holy Week, April 11. Class participants are asked to purchase their own book. If you need assistance with purchasing a book please contact Lexi Morrissey at lexi@lopc.org.

LENT
IN
PLAIN
SIGHT

A DEVOTION
THROUGH
TEN OBJECTS

JILL J.
DUFFIELD



care

Caring for AGING PARENTS

Love & Listening on Life's Journey

Sunday, February 13, 11:11 a.m. – 12:11 p.m.

Please join us for a conversation with LOPC member Linda Fodrini-Johnson MA, MFT, and Presbyterian Foundation Ministry Relations Officer Maggie Harmon Esq., on the topic of “Caring for Aging Parents – Love and Listening on Life’s Journey.”

One of the greatest gifts we can give to our families is the comfort that, as our parents age, they will be loved, supported, well cared for, and respected. Sharing their significant expertise, Linda and Maggie will invite discussion related to aging parents

and help develop a shared strategy to address each person’s concerns. They will provide tools to plan for the “what ifs” of a longer life, encourage honest discussion about health concerns, and demonstrate how to celebrate our parents’ stories, values, and faith. This event is being hosted by the LOPC Foundation and all ages are welcome to attend what we believe will be an insightful and valuable program.

Join us in person in the Oak Room or online via Zoom. Visit, lopc.org/registrations to register.

hold in PRAYER

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

Alice Booth and Don Booth, who passed in 2020.
A combined service will be held on February 12 at 11:00 a.m.

Dick Abel, who passed December 16.
A service will be held on February 12 at 3:00 p.m.

Gerry Robey, who passed December 17.

Suzann Goodhue, who passed December 19.

Leeanne Orjuela, who passed December 29.

Arlene Glynn, who passed January 13.

Nancy Placier, who passed January 18.



Long-time LOPC member Bob Hoots, and friend.

Senior and Congregational Care Team Christmas Fun

By Catherine Coleman, LOPC Member

Collaborative December efforts to spread holiday joy were the highlight of the season for the Senior and Congregational Care Team ministries. Personal notes and over 80 waxed amaryllis flowers requiring no watering were delivered by Thursday Fellowship, Rossmoor Parish, and younger family volunteers – all great fun for everyone.

Lassie Colebourn’s December Christmas centerpiece design class yielded festive holiday bouquets for participants, and our team enjoyed thanking our supportive LOPC staff by gifting them some of the arrangements.

Julie Peterson and the loving Thursday Fellowship volunteer crew planned a very successful December in-person event for about 70 enthusiastic guests who were delighted to be together again. Detailed plans kept everyone safe for the musical entertainment and carol sing, a holiday craft, and a catered lunch. Fingers are crossed for more in person gatherings soon.



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IMPORTANT

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sermons is available on
the LOPC website!**

► lopc.org/livestream

