

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MARCH 2022

# FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

[LOPC.ORG](http://LOPC.ORG)



# lenten BLESSINGS

By Lauren Gully - Pastor, Mission & Spiritual Formation

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year,” is not the song refrain that people share as we head into Easter or celebrate the season of Lent. Lent tends to carry a more serious tone and focus, than the joy of a baby and gift giving.



Lent is an important season in the church calendar. Preparation leading up to Easter can remind us of the importance of Easter as well as the remarkable events of Holy Week that conclude Jesus’ earthly ministry.

But...

Lent also can feel holy, really holy, and we can feel as if we don’t know our place in the season of Lent. We are separated by the life and teachings of Jesus as well as the events of Holy Week by more than 2,000 years. So, why is this arguably the most-important season of the year as Christians?

Because the events of this season remind us that God works through the ordinary—ordinary things, ordinary people.

Jill Duffield, the author of this year’s Lenten study book *Lent In Plain Sight*, writes:

*“Often it is in hindsight that God’s providence becomes recognizable and events previously considered mundane become evidence of God’s presence and work in our lives. The question for us becomes: Do we have the eyes to see God’s near presence?...Will we open ourselves to the holy not only in heaven but also on earth and right in front of us? Can everyday objects remind us to stay awake and pay attention?”*

Lent has saved you a seat. I invite you to join one of our Lenten study groups to discover what holy things God is up to in what seem to be ordinary around you in your life.

## CONTENTS

### March 2022

- Lent ..... 2
- Mission ..... 3
- Children..... 4
- Youth..... 5
- Staff ..... 6
- Racial Equity ..... 7
- Community ..... 9
- Care..... 10
- Journey of Faith..... 11
- Finance .....12
- 2022 Leadership.....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

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#### Treasurer

- Staci Johnston

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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](mailto:communications@lopc.org)  
no later than April 1 for the May issue.

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

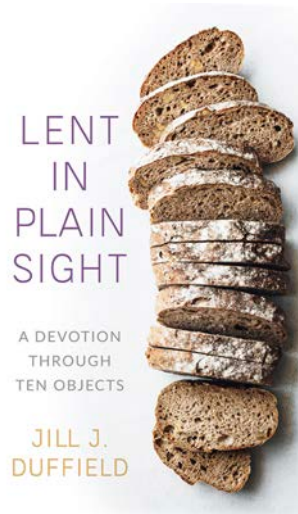
# lent IN PLAIN SIGHT

## Six-week Lenten Study - Beginning March 1

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.

Groups will meet at different days and times weekly starting March 1 through Holy Week, April 11. Group registration will open on February 7.

Visit [lopc.org/lent2022](http://lopc.org/lent2022) for more information and to register.



## Preaching and Worship:

- **3/2 Ash Wednesday - Dust** - Genesis 2:4b-7, and Psalm 119:25-32
- **3/6 Bread** - Matthew 6:7-15
- **3/13 Cross** - Mark 8: 31-38
- **3/20 Coins** - Mark 12:13-17
- **3/27 Shoes** - Exodus 3:1-6
- **4/3 Oil** - Psalm 23

## Palm Sunday

- **4/10 Coats** - Luke 19:29-40

## Maunder Thursday

- **4/14 Towels** - John 13:1-15

## Good Friday

- **4/15 Thorns** - John 19:1-11

## Monday

Men's Group (30-50) with Pastor Chris Baldwin/Jonathan Nolen:  
**March 7 - April 11 at 6:30 p.m. in person.**

With Pastor Peter Whitelock:  
**March 7 - April 11 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.**

## Wednesday

With Judy Clark:  
**March 9 - April 13 at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom.**

## Sunday

With Nancy Henderson:  
**Sundays from March 6 - April 10 at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom.**

## Tuesday

With Jim Davis:  
**March 1 - April 5 at 10:30 a.m. on Zoom.**

With Pastor Jaime Polson:  
**March 8 - April 12 at 9:00 a.m. on Zoom.**

## Thursday

Women's Group with Sharon Bartlett and Heather Logan:  
**February 24 - April 7 at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom.**

With Darlene James at LOPC:  
**March 3 - April 7 at 9:00 a.m.**

Thursday Women's Group with Sue Nagle:  
**March 3 - April 7 at 9:30 a.m. in the Davies Room.**

# mission

## Atfaluna Update

By Chris Johnson, LOPC Member

**A**tfaluna Society for Deaf Children in Gaza City, Palestine, empowers children with hearing disabilities of every faith to have a fulfilling life through preschool, education, rehabilitation, advocacy, vocational training, and employment opportunities. LOPC has been a partner and supporter of Atfaluna since 2003, helping build relationships with our brothers and sisters in this part of the world.

The Atfaluna School has an average enrollment of 170 students annually, ranging in age from 6 to 17. Most of the children come from families below the poverty line, and many have additional disabilities. The curriculum includes hearing-loss rehabilitation (auditory training and auditory speech training) and a well-rounded general education curriculum. Class size is limited to no more than 12 students, allowing teacher and student to have close one-to-one communication. Atfaluna employs 137 permanent staff, 60% of whom are deaf. The school features:

- Development of special educational curriculum tailored to the needs of hearing-impaired students.
- Non-curriculum activities including library sessions, arts and crafts classes, and recreational field trips.
- Healthy meals for all students to mitigate deteriorating conditions in Gaza affecting most of their families.
- Social support and counseling for deaf children and their families.

Approximately 15,000 persons are served annually through a myriad of programs.



### Early Intervention Program

This program works to guide and assist families of newly diagnosed children with hearing disabilities during the early critical days through individually implemented plans. The early intervention program consists of a group of educational, rehabilitative, and protective services offered to children with and without disabilities in need of extra developmental and educational assistance and is linked to early identification of problems or disabilities among young children.

### Atfaluna Inclusive Nursery

Newly established in 2017, it offers the necessary healthcare, personal hygiene, and nutritional and behavioral guidance for 15 children with and without disabilities aged younger than three years.

### Sign Language

Palestinian sign language is considered a cornerstone for deaf culture in Palestine, which helped establish their independent identity. Year after year, the language develops, carrying with it the history of generations of people with hearing disabilities.

The school's sign-language-training program welcomes all persons of the community, with special emphasis on family members of people with hearing

disabilities and other service providers, including doctors, social workers, private and public-school teachers, police officers, and university students.

### Vocational Training Program

The program offers short- and long-term training courses in a range of fields, including product design, sewing, embroidery, carpentry, furniture production, furniture painting, upholstery, painting on wood, pottery production, pottery painting, arabesque design, jewelry making, photography, fabric and rug weaving.

### Audiology Clinic

The Audiology Clinic, which offers its services to the local community, employs audiology specialists in evaluating and diagnosing hearing problems and hearing-aid fitting.

### Community Center

The Community Center provides technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and building employability skills based on local market needs.

### Crafts Production Unit

The crafts production unit includes carpentry, sewing, embroidery, pottery production and design, painting on wood, and rug and fabric weaving.

## Hygiene Kits for Harare Children's Hospital Are Needed

Children's Hospital in Harare, Zimbabwe, is striving to gather hygiene kits for its young patients during their stay. It is the country's sole children's hospital with over 250 pediatric beds available for seriously ill children. Most of the patients come from rural areas, and a parent often stays with them in the hospital.

Anyone interested can help out by purchasing supplies listed below and assembling care kits. The kits will be delivered to LOPC's mission partner, JF Kapnek Trust, which will ship them as part of a larger-relief container to the hospital. This is a great hands-on project for a family with kids to help other kids a world away.

### Hygiene Kits for Pediatric Patients and Parents All contents should be placed in a gallon size Ziploc bag.

- Adult toothbrush
- Child toothbrush
- Travel size tube of toothpaste
- A full-size bar of soap, preferably Dove or similar
- A travel-size container of shampoo
- A travel-size container of hand sanitizer
- A simple get-well message or drawing

Go to [lopc.org/lovedoes](http://lopc.org/lovedoes) to sign up.

# love does

love protects, love hopes, love never fails

The congregation enthusiastically responded to *love does* this year by working at home assembling breakfast and hygiene kits and polar-fleece blankets, as well as in the community at two LOPC mission partners: White Pony Express and the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties. The focus of *love does* this year is helping those agencies that are classified as "essential" and therefore must support the community 365 days a year. Both the Food Bank and White Pony Express fall into this category and rely heavily on volunteers to accomplish this feat. Similarly, organizations like the Trinity Center and Operation Dignity support those experiencing homelessness and benefit from the breakfast and hygiene kits that were made.

Additional *love does* opportunities focused on helping children. The 70 polar-fleece blankets that volunteers finished will be delivered to Calico and given to sexually abused children for comfort and support while testifying against their abusers. LOPC youth focused on helping newborns by sorting and packaging gently used baby clothing for Loved Twice, which distributes them to hospitals and clinics for low-income mothers throughout Oakland.

Thanks to all those that participated in *love does*!

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## children

### Vacation Bible Camp Registration Coming Soon!

June 6-10, 2022

At Vacation Bible Camp, we explore God's goodness and celebrate how God helps us through songs, stories, games, activities, and more. Camp is where kids experience the love of God, grow in the values of kindness, mercy, and justice, and learn to change the world around them by being the hands, feet, and heart of God.

- **Who:** Kids who are 4 years old by June 1 through fourth grade (completed June 2022)
- **Dates:** Monday, June 6 – Friday, June 10
- **Time:** Monday/Tuesday & Thursday/Friday 2:00-5:00 p.m.; Wednesday 2:00-4:00 p.m.
- **Cost:** \$85 per child (before May 1); \$100 per child (after May 1)

Registration for kids and volunteers will open April 1. This is a parent-participation program, and camp capacity is determined by volunteer participation. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Preference is given to families who sign up with an adult volunteer for all five days of camp.





# LOPC youth

## Fourth Grade Preview

March 13

On Sunday, March 13, youth currently in fourth grade will have the opportunity to visit YOW and see what it's like to be a part of LOPC's youth ministry! Fourth graders, led by Lori Robinson, will join YOW youth in fun games, participate in worship, and listen to a short devotional. There will be a fourth-grade parent meeting beforehand at 5:30 p.m. We hope you can join us! Optional dinner from 5:30 – 6:00 p.m., program from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

**Questions? Contact Allison Kunz at [allison@lopc.org](mailto:allison@lopc.org).**

## YOW Water Games & BTW Senior Night

March 27

On Sunday, March 27, YOW will hold its annual and ever popular Water Games Night, and BTW will hold its cherished Senior Night. YOW participants can plan to have fun, get really wet, and end the program year with a great splash! BTW participants will have the chance to hear from and send off our lovely outgoing high school seniors! Please be sure to join us for this wonderful evening. Optional \$10 dinner from 5:30 – 6:00 p.m., program from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

**Questions? Contact Allison Kunz at [allison@lopc.org](mailto:allison@lopc.org)  
or Keris Dahlkamp at [keris@lopc.org](mailto:keris@lopc.org).**

## Lighthouse

March 19

Lighthouse is a program designed to connect the youth from LOPC and Hope Solutions (formerly Contra Costa Interfaith Housing) in a way that fosters authentic relationships and deepens faith. On both Saturday, March 19, and Saturday, April 23, a committed group of youth from LOPC will travel to the Lakeside Apartments for an afternoon of food, crafts, and fun games together. Upon returning to LOPC, the youth will debrief and pray over their new friends together. Applications are due on Sunday, March 6.

**Contact Keris Dahlkamp at [keris@lopc.org](mailto:keris@lopc.org).**

## Service Learning Weekend in Salinas

This March

A small group of youth will travel to Salinas, for service and fun with some of our longstanding mission partners in and around Salinas. This is always an excellent way to learn how we are connected to the Central Valley in so many ways, and to be of service to the people and communities of that area.

**To learn more info and/or sign up, contact Keris Dahlkamp at [keris@lopc.org](mailto:keris@lopc.org).**

# staff announcements

## A Fond Farewell

LOPC's Director of Worship and Music Brett Strader has announced his decision to leave LOPC to pursue a wonderful opportunity to serve as the CEO of Music In Place, a local nonprofit organization focused on expanding public access to the Bay Area musical community.

Brett will continue in his current LOPC role through Easter, as the church works towards a smooth transition of Worship and Music leadership over the coming months. LOPC's commitment to excellence in music and the choral arts will be at the fore as it plans for the future; it will provide additional information to the congregation as it moves forward.



Brett Strader

### Here are a few words from Brett:

*LOPC friends,*

*The past nine years of ministry together with you have been one of the most enriching seasons in my life and career. Krista and I pray for God's continual blessing on this special congregation and we look forward to enjoying every moment of our remaining time with you.*

– Brett

The church will provide a time of celebration with Brett in late April, so the congregation can send him on to his new and exciting opportunity with love and blessing. "We are so fortunate Brett has spent the past nine years leading LOPC's Worship and Music ministry," said Pastor Peter Whitelock.

"Speaking on behalf of a grateful congregation, there is no amount of thanks that can properly express our gratitude for the significant contributions and high standards of excellence that Brett has brought to LOPC's worship and music programs."

**If you have questions about any of the information shared above, please contact Peter at [peter@lopc.org](mailto:peter@lopc.org).**

## LOPC Names New Church Accountant

LOPC has named Farah Mohammadzai as the new church accountant. Farah assumed the position November 15, 2021, and has been closely working with Lidia Jesionek, who is retiring from LOPC after 17 years of service. "We are blessed to have Farah join our staff. She is a perfect fit for the accounting role and is helping us smoothly transition the accounting and finance functions as well as navigate through the pandemic," says Jaime Polson, pastor of Family Ministries and executive ministry leadership.



Farah Mohammadzai

Her strong 10 years of professional background includes working as a senior finance officer for state government development projects and as an accountant for private companies. Farah received a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in accounting and also has studied law. She brings to the position strong technical and analytical skills, experience in human resources, as well as fluency in five languages.

Farah is looking forward to meeting members and working closely with staff and ministry teams. She has assumed all the responsibilities related to accounting and finance including accounts payable, payroll, contribution records, and tax filings. Farah joined at a very busy time of year and is also working closely with Staci Johnston, church treasurer.

Farah and her husband relocated to the East Bay to move closer to LOPC. She is the mother of an active 1-year-old son, who keeps her very busy.

**Farah can be reached via email ([farah@lopc.org](mailto:farah@lopc.org)) or 925-283-8722 x229. Please feel free to stop by and introduce yourself when you have time. We can't wait for you to meet her!**



# Racial Equity & Engagement Team Survey Results

By Andrea Hilsabeck & Sue Gibbons, REE Team Members

As part of the Racial Equity & Engagement Team's charge from session to examine and strengthen justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion work at LOPC, the team invited the congregation to complete a survey addressing interest and top priorities in the areas of social justice as they impact racial equity.

Thank you to all who have responded. As of January 31, there were 186 responses. You may still complete the survey at [lopc.org/racialjustice](http://lopc.org/racialjustice). Paper copies are available at the front desk in the Ministry Center.

Respondents marked their top three choices from a list of nine areas. Education, Housing and Voting Rights garnered the most interest.

Three major choices plus a space for Other were given. Engagement/service with racially diverse communities was first, followed by Education/Speakers about racial justice; third was Advocacy on issues that primarily affect racially diverse communities.

The team is conducting interviews with a sampling of respondents for greater understanding and depth. Based on this information, opportunities for the congregation to work with community partners will be forthcoming.

**The team encourages LOPC members and friends to consider joining us in this work.**

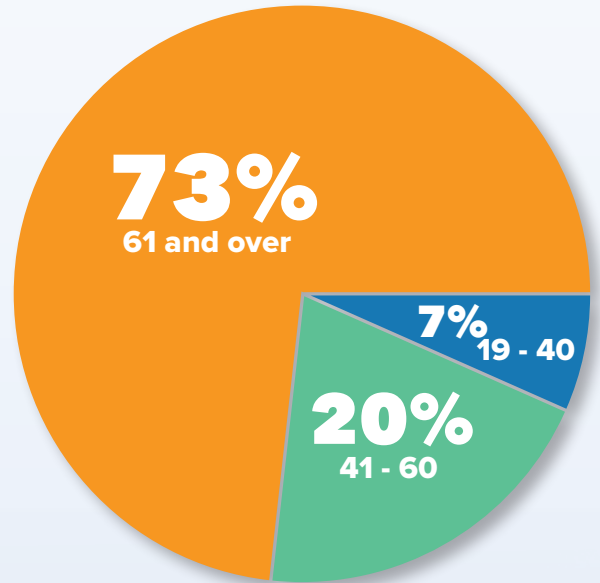
**For more information, contact Pastor Lauren Gully at [lauren@lopc.org](mailto:lauren@lopc.org).**



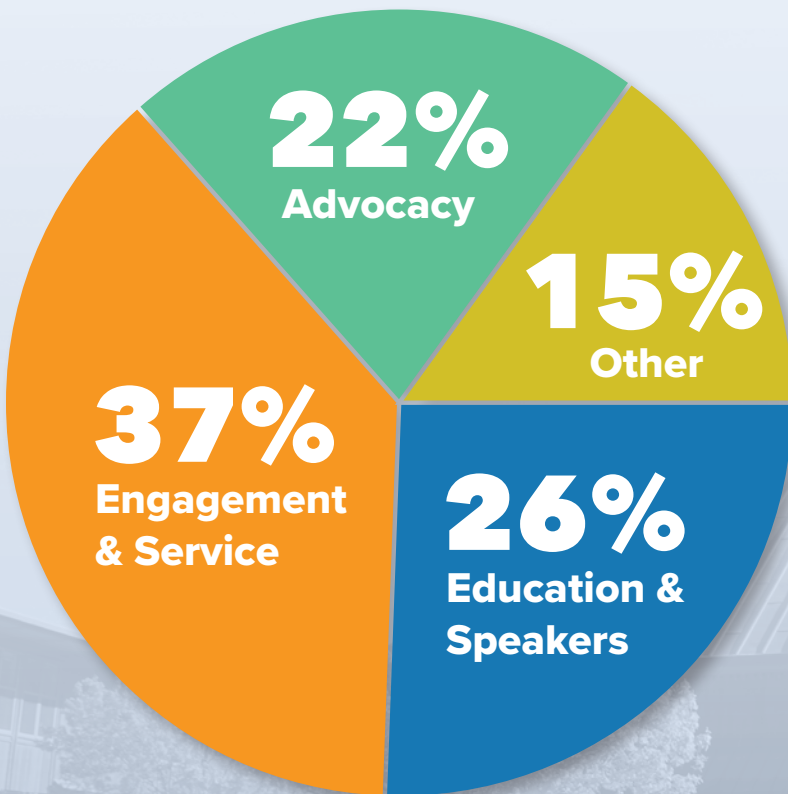
Select your top three social justice issues:

- 55% - Education
- 47% - Housing
- 45% - Voting Rights
- 35% - Gun Violence
- 33% - Health Care
- 30% - Immigrant Justice
- 16% - Mass Incarceration
- 15% - Environmental Racism
- 13% - Other

Which age group are you in?



Which type of activity are you interested in participating in?



# community



## FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

What do we really know about the neighboring country to the south of us? To help us better understand, Dr. Juan Carlos Ruiz-Guajardo, cultural diplomat and college professor, will present “Mexican Culture in the Context of the United States-Mexico Relationship” at LOPC’s First Friday Forum (FFF) on March 4 at 10:00 a.m.



Juan Carlos Ruiz-Guajardo

communities and to facilitate effective conversations concerning migrants and human rights organizations. Because of his passion for diversity, equity, and social justice, he became a racial healing circle practitioner. He actively participates in dialogues regarding race and reconciliation.

Dr. Guajardo serves in the office of the Consulate General of Mexico in Sacramento as cultural and educational attaché. His duties include supporting the work of Mexico and showcasing the rich and ethnic heritage and practices of Mesoamerica. He is helping plan a celebration for the 500 years of Mexican history.

In the other aspect of his work, he is a professor at UC Davis, holding a master’s degree in applied ecology and a doctorate in evolutionary ecology.

**Come with your questions for Dr. Guajardo as he explores US-Mexican relations. Please visit [lopc.org/first-friday-forum](http://lopc.org/first-friday-forum) to register.**

Dr. Guajardo also works to develop a strong network to protect vulnerable

### Respite Night

For parents who have children and youth with special needs, ages 2-22.

March 4, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Drop off your kiddos for an outdoor evening of fun while our trained, background-checked, and fully vaccinated staff will care for them. Advanced registration is required.

Please email Michelle Browning at [michelle@lopc.org](mailto:michelle@lopc.org) to register.

### Hospitality as Witness

Presbyterian Women Event  
March 5, 9:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Join LOPC’s PW for an event to connect with other women and explore how to serve from one’s belovedness.

To register, email Jeanette Huie at [jeanette\\_huie@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanette_huie@yahoo.com) by March 1.

### Thursday Fellowship

caring • sharing • loving

A program of Senior Care Ministries

By Julie Peterson, Coordinator

In February we were not able to meet, but we still managed to spread the Thursday Fellowship LOVE! Volunteers delivered festively decorated bags of candy hearts and kisses accompanied by special Valentine’s Day cards. While it was disappointing not to gather in person, there was excitement about our prospects for spring.

Spring always brings the hope and the promise of renewal. The daylight hours increase, and we see our beautiful world with fresh eyes. We are hopeful for renewal of our Thursday Fellowship program as we actively plan to host more in-person gatherings in 2022.

Watching the Covid numbers decline and as county health guidelines become more favorable to gather in person, we are closer to our objective. Currently, plans are in the works for a gathering on March 17 to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. This will be an in-person gathering and all attendees will be required to show proof of vaccination and a booster shot.

For further questions contact Julie Peterson at [julie@lopc.org](mailto:julie@lopc.org). or call 925-283-8722 ext. 281.

### Fourth Monday Book Group

March 28 at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom

Join us to discuss *The Art of Fielding* by Chad Harbach.

Contact Jean Fiske at [jdfiske@gmail.com](mailto:jdfiske@gmail.com) to be added to the group.

## care

### Prayer Requests

The Prayer Team meets every Monday at 11:00 a.m. and lifts your prayer requests as well as your joys.

To submit a prayer request online, visit [lopc.org/prayer-requests](http://lopc.org/prayer-requests).

**You can also call the LOPC office at 925-283-8722 and leave a message, or send an email to [info@lopc.org](mailto:info@lopc.org).**

### Communion Kits

LOPC Deacons can deliver a communion kit to you so that you can participate with the Livestream service on the first Sunday of each month. The kits are prepackaged two-part containers including both the juice and communion wafer. A gluten-free option is available.

**If you would like to receive a Communion Kit, please contact Laurie Miles at [rlmiles@comcast.net](mailto:rlmiles@comcast.net) or 925-283-6109.**

### Stephen Ministry

Trained Stephen Ministers are waiting to be assigned to walk beside you safely in-person, on Zoom, or over the phone. You don't need to go it alone. Conversations are confidential. Stephen Ministers are ready to meet with you weekly for as long as you need.

**To learn more, contact Pastor Gerald Chinen at [gerald@lopc.org](mailto:gerald@lopc.org) or Leslie Finertie at [leslie-finertie@comcast.net](mailto:leslie-finertie@comcast.net).**

### Helping Hands

This team of deacons have a variety of ready-to-heat, nutritious meals that can either be picked up or delivered when needed. Special diets can be accommodated.

**Call the Deacon line at 925-283-8722, ext. 274.**

### Faith 'n Fun on Friday

The Care Team sponsored a very successful Faith N Fun Friday program on January 21 where several of our LOPC authors shared a part of their work with the audience and opened it up to Q & A. A wonderful morning was had by all, and we look forward to holding another author's event sometime in the spring. If you are an author and are interested in participating, please reach out to any member of the Care Team.

#### March 25 at 10:00 a.m.

Join us for a spiritually uplifting morning as Jennifer Davidson leads us through a re-imagined poetic interpretation of the Psalms. Jennifer will help us breathe new life into our prayer experiences in the tradition of the book *Psalms for Praying* by Nan C. Merrill.

Jennifer is professor of theology and worship at the Berkeley School of Theology. She is a passionate educator with extensive experience teaching in a multicultural setting. She has taught courses such as "Women Studies in Religion," "Constructive Theology," and "Theology as a Living Conversation." Jennifer is also a published author of several contemporary theological works.

**Find out more at [jenniferdavidson.com](http://jenniferdavidson.com). Depending on registration, we will meet in the Oak Room or on Zoom. Look for reservation sign-ups in upcoming Connections.**

### Keep Moving!

Please join us for another month of Gentle Yoga over Zoom with Sophia Colette. Classes are offered Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m. For those not familiar with Sophia, she is a student at Cambridge University, studying literature and creative writing. We are blessed to have this energetic young woman from LOPC leading our exercise for another month!

**Sign up for a class at [lopc.org/care-events](http://lopc.org/care-events).**

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## hold in PRAYER

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

**Arlene Glynn, who passed January 13.**

A service will be held on March 5 at 1:00 p.m.

**Nancy Placier, who passed January 18.**

A service will be held on April 23 at 1:00 p.m.

**Bill Barnard, who passed February 6.**

A service will be held on March 12 at 3:00 p.m.

**Bruce Johnson, who passed February 9.**

A service will be held on March 19 at 11:00 a.m.

**Bev Thompson, wife of Dick Thompson, who passed February 16.**



# journey of Faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

Tom Welte's faith journey has been one of adventure. When Tom was a teenager, he, his parents, and three siblings took a trip around the world—an amazing thing to do in those days, and maybe even now. "It was a life changing trip for all of us," Tom says. "It really inspired me to go into the Peace Corps in later years after seeing all the hunger and poverty in India, Thailand, and the Arabian Peninsula."

Fast forward, and on his first date with Mary, he found they both had a passion for joining the Peace Corps. It took four years, but they married in the spring of 1968, and by fall, they were on their way to becoming volunteers. They went to Louisiana for language training where they shared a one-room cabin with three other newlyweds. "There were no doors on our 'rooms' nor bathrooms. Plaster-board partitions part way up to the ceiling separated us. One could call this quite a honeymoon trip!

"We flew to Malawi, completed our final month of training, then took a two-day bus ride toward Mponela, where we would live and work for the next two years. The bus driver let us off in the middle of nowhere, but after a few minutes several young boys arrived and motioned for us to follow them. We walked through six-foot-high grass and soon came to a clearing. They had taken us to the office of the headmaster of the school."

The Weltes were pleasantly surprised by their living conditions, which might

not seem all that good to most but were good for Mponela. "The building was cinder block. There was no gas or electricity, but we had running water in the bathroom and kitchen. However, we had to boil and filter all the water before drinking it because of widespread disease there. We cooked with a wood fire and relied on two kerosene lamps for light at night.

"During our time there we felt we were carrying out the vision of Matthew 25:40: 'And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, you did it unto me.' God wants our lives to be filled with mercy, love, and compassion. This was our way of doing that for the impoverished people of Mponela, Malawi."

Tom joined the board of directors for Friends of Malawi on his return. It's a non-profit group which provides financial assistance to the people of Malawi for their welfare, health, and education.

Growing up, Tom remembers his family worshipping at a large Lutheran church in Long Beach, California, as the beginning of his faith journey. "The six of us sat in one row, and I remember it as a very formal, ritualized process. However, the youth group, led by Associate Pastor, George Johnson, was a different story. He had an engaging way with the youth and used stories to bring God's and Jesus's messages to us. He became



Tom Welte

an important person in my life in later years when he contacted us wanting to learn about our experiences in the Peace Corps. We were intrigued by his church's global interest and focus on social justice issues and joined there. In later years, I traveled around the Los Angeles area with George to raise consciousness about social justice issues."

Other influences on Tom's spiritual journey were observing the spiritual lives of people of all faith traditions. "Early in my adult years I read all I could about Mahatma Gandhi. I was intrigued by the way he integrated his Hindu faith with other faith traditions. Now I'm looking forward to getting involved in the interfaith efforts at LOPC with our Muslim and Jewish community members. I believe we can learn so much from others.

"My faith journey also has been enhanced by the numerous opportunities LOPC has offered to get out into the community and work with others, to improve all our lives. It helps us see the world through other people's eyes and better understand their concerns.

"I especially remember when LOPC had meetings with members of Oakland's Allen Temple Baptist Church. We were to meet alternately in their church and ours. Members of Allen Temple shared their concerns that they would be pulled over by the police in Orinda, because they didn't 'look right.'

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# journey of Faith

continued from previous page...

That brought a new awareness to me in the realm of social justice, or lack thereof.”

Tom adds that he and Mary participated in several mission projects through LOPC, working to rebuild homes destroyed by tornadoes or fires in Moore, Oklahoma, Joplin, Missouri, and Weed, California. “We sometimes had the opportunity to work alongside the homeowners and learn more about the harrowing experiences they’d endured. Again, we hope they felt our Christian love and compassion.”

In his adventuresome life, Tom has stepped out all over the world to put his faith into action – a lesson for all of us.

For Tom’s favorite Bible verses, he chooses Matthew 5:3-12, the Beatitudes.

## session

### Session Highlights - January 2022

By Jeanette Shearer, Clerk of Session

#### Onsite, Offsite, Online

These three words are key to understanding what the post-pandemic church will look like. As we begin the process of returning to normalcy, in-person attendance is slowly rising. Those who have become accustomed to the comfort of their own couch, while LOPC pastors, elders, and deacons all met the last weekend in January for a morning-long retreat. The meeting itself was a true indication of these three key words: some of us met onsite; we were also on a Zoom call, with many offsite; and Pastor Peter Whitelock facilitated it all in person and online.

Worship will take many different forms as we begin to come back to our physical facility. Livestream remains as well, as it has become a flexible, safe, and stress-free way for many to hear a sermon and beautiful music, while still participating as a community. Are we ever going to be up to two services again? As a session, we hope so. In the meantime, we have the great good fortune of having professionals seamlessly provide an amazing video production.

Making time for extra Bible studies or classes at church has gotten easier, too. There is no need to hire a babysitter if you’d like to attend an event online.

## finance

### Financial Update

By Jim Nagle, Elder for Finance

We are truly fortunate and thankful for everyone who has given of their time, talent, and treasure to LOPC this past year. LOPC is blessed to be in a strong position financially, after another very difficult year. The Finance Team has had a challenging time, but also a rewarding one. The LOPC staff has done an incredible job, pivoting to hybrid programming and reallocating our resources to meet the needs of the congregation and our mission partners. We are truly thankful to have a great staff in the way it has used our resources.

#### January to December 2021

	Actuals	Budget
Income		
Pledge Income	\$ 2,335,771	\$ 2,160,000
Non-Pledge Gifts, Loose Offerings	334,207	440,000
Faith Component	195,663	200,000
Foundation Support	385,615	385,948
Seedlings	(5,896)	54,000
Employee Retention Credit	329,809	0
Session Emerging Needs	0	110,505
Special Gifts & Other Income	241,604	126,145
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,816,773</b>	<b>3,476,598</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>3,735,825</b>	<b>3,476,598</b>
<b>Total Surplus</b>	<b>\$ 80,947</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>

Overall, net income came in strong with an \$80,947 surplus. Total income was \$3,816,773 and exceeded budget by \$340,175. Congregational giving was \$171,499 stronger than planned. LOPC also received unbudgeted Employee Retention Credits from the federal government of \$329,809, which were used to offset some one-time expenses. Because of the higher income, LOPC was able to cover an unexpected loss of (\$59,896) for Seedlings, related to the pandemic, and didn’t have to draw on the Session Emerging Needs Fund of \$110,505, which was originally budgeted to supplement income shortfalls.

Expenses of \$3,735,826 were higher than planned by \$259,228. Mission giving and expenses were stronger by \$97,068. Personnel and Worship expenses were higher than budget, related to several transitions in 2021/2022 and the impact of the pandemic.

Our congregation generously contributed \$195,663 for the Faith Component as well as \$175,771 in higher Pledges, both of which helped LOPC finish in a solid position to start 2022 and allow us to do more in all areas of our ministry

**Thank you again for all you do to support LOPC.**

# finance

## the GENEROSITY corner

Sharing our Time, Talents, and Treasure



### It's About Time

By Nancy Henderson, Generosity Team Member

One of the God-given gifts with which everyone starts life is time. Each can choose how to use it—waste it, save it, spend it. As some anonymous person once said: “Time is precious. Make sure you spend it with the right people.”

At LOPC, all gifts of time are valued. Spending time with kids at LOPC is a Ministry of Presence, says Children’s Ministry Director Lori Robinson. “What kids need most is our willingness to learn their names, a commitment to see them as important members of the church family, and an openness to include them in the life and worship of the church.”

LOPC needs all sorts of folks who are interested in the relatedness of kids to the church family, and are willing to provide a caring investment in kids’ nurture and guidance. They are called to be curious about what the kids are doing, to support them in their faith journeys, and welcome their loving natures in those journeys.



Some adults think that once they’ve raised their kids, it’s time to move on to other things. For you, perhaps, could one of the “other things” be volunteering in LOPC’s Children’s Ministry? Volunteers are essential to ministering to children. There are plenty of opportunities, such as small-group leadership, sharing an interest or skill, or program preparation. Last summer, the vacation Bible camp had to limit enrollment due to lack of adult helpers. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if enough could be secured this summer so that any child who wants to attend can do so.

If adults with kids of any age were to help in LOPC’s Ministry of Presence, spending some time walking side by side in faith with the children, those volunteers could become the face of God in the world, answering God’s call to love one another. And, like most types of generosity, when volunteers answer that call, they often get more than they give.

In Mark 10:14, Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

## Still Time to Submit Your 2022 Pledge!

So far, our community has pledged **\$2,068,752 for 2022.**

Our goal is \$2,400,000. Your pledge will help LOPC plan and meet our 2022 budget. It is not too late to participate in our 2022 Pledge Campaign.

Pledges can be made online at [lopc.org/pledge](http://lopc.org/pledge) or with a Stewardship pledge envelope.

Contact Farah Mohammadzai, LOPC accountant [farah@lopc.org](mailto:farah@lopc.org) or x229 if you need assistance or have any questions. Thank you!



## 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](http://lopc.org) and select **GIVE BACK** and the Online Giving Tab, or scan the QR code on your mobile device.



# elders, deacons, & foundation trustees

**Contact information for elders, deacons, and foundation trustees may be found in the LOPC directory. Please contact [info@lopc.org](mailto:info@lopc.org) if you need assistance.**

## 2022 Elders

Julie Atkinson  
**Family Ministry**

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Stephanie Bontemps  
**Mission**

---

Rick Burriss  
**Mission**

---

Patrick Chen  
**Membership**

---

Judy Clark  
**Worship**

---

Terry Clark  
**Spiritual Formation**

---

Catherine Coleman  
**Senior Adult**

---

Jim Davis  
**Communication**

---

Bill DeWolf  
**Personnel**

---

Leslie Finertie  
**Care**

---

Nancy Grabow  
**Youth**

---

Jerry Hook  
**Fellowship**

Cheryl Miller  
**Care**

---

Patrick Morrissey  
**Membership**

---

Jim Nagle  
**Finance**

---

Lee O'Haver  
**Youth**

---

Brian O'Shea  
**Worship**

---

Jeff Patton  
**CNC**

---

Brianne Riley  
**Fellowship**

---

Jeanette Shearer  
**Clerk of Session**

---

Peter Shumaker  
**Children**

---

Pat Stevens  
**Spiritual Formation**

---

Liz Voelker  
**Seedlings**

---

Mark Weaver  
**Generosity**

## 2022 Deacons

Jane Balg

Sandy Barnett

Carolyn Bealmear

Jim Boyd

Lassie Colebourn

Tory Courtney

Lyle Deck

Bonnie Doughty

Stephanie Eukel

Michele Fixel

Margaret Ann Fowler

Kay Goodyear

Bettie Graves

Linda Groobin

Kathy Hallock

Sue Handy

Andrea Hillsabeck

Jake Jacobsmeyer

Esther Kim

Todd Maiden

Laurie Miles

John Minney

Marilyn Mulhollan

Judy Nielsen

Elizabeth O'Shea

Kay Poullos

Eddie Reiter

Sally Roberts

Yuji Shibuya

Linda Snyder

## 2022 Youth Deacons

Alice Ball

Jonathan Evans

## Foundation Trustees

Jim Beckemeyer

Doug Bontemps

Lois Boyd

Jen Crocker

Linda Fodrini-Johnson

Kristi Haigh

Staci Johnston

Mike Ross

Dara Youngdale



**LAFAYETTE-ORINDA  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
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Save-the-Date

Palm Sunday

**egg hunt!**

**Sunday, April 10**  
at LOPC