LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2021

FOCUS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

LOPC.ORG





LIMINAL people

By Lauren Gully - Pastor, Mission & Spiritual Formation



While currently immersed in my doctoral-studies program, as I am, I've observed there are a variety of Christian leaders across the country all facing similar quandaries. Some have shared the incredible amount of loss in their communities due to COVID-19, and

many of us discuss what the future of the church will look like. Meanwhile, everyone has been in this liminal space far longer than anticipated.

In light of today's complexities, I keep reminding myself that while everything is new and different, the work of the church and of God remains the same. In fact, the church is grounded on living in liminality–existing somewhere between the "now" and the "not yet" when it comes to a full realization of God's Kingdom. Many such stories can be found in scripture of waiting, wandering in the wilderness, starting the church awaiting the return of Christ, the waiting time between Christ's death and resurrection, and more. Actively waiting for what will come is something that people of faith know quite well.

When prophesying to a people in exile, Jeremiah says:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jeremiah 29:4-7 NRSV)

As people of faith, we still live according to our values, even through seasons of liminality. Soon we will enter into a season of gratitude and may find that many things in our lives have changed. I encourage you to focus on the gifts you have received this year. There is something to be learned in returning to the idea that God always provides. This year is both different, and may in some way be the same as last year. You might have challenges or perhaps a loss that you have experienced, or this might be a time of great joy in your life. Continue to live a life as people of faith and notice how God is continuing to bless us, despite the many challenges that remain before us.

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Submissions & Deadlines

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



Behind the scenes of **WORSHIP at LOPC**

By Staci Johnston, Foundation Trustee



The ability to worship online (and more recently, in person) has been so important to me and many in our LOPC family, especially during the pandemic.

Worship is so grounding in these uncertain times and we are thankful for the quality of the experience every Sunday. To understand what goes on behind the scenes, in preparing and leading a worship service every week, I talked with Brett Strader, Director of Worship and Music. Here is what I learned...

"When the pandemic forced churches to pivot to online worship in March 2020," says Brett, "LOPC was fortunate to make that transition smoothly literally overnight! During the previous seven years, the Worship Team had incrementally improved LOPC's videoproduction capability to offer a highquality streamed worship experience."

The transition mostly appeared seamless to the faith community. However, the amount of time and effort involved to provide online worship is extremely impressive! Did you know that more than 70 hours of prerecorded services were produced? Each hour-long Sunday service required 120 person-hours by the Worship team. Other churches in our community reached out to our cuttingedge LOPC worship staff to help them get started or improve their own streaming services.

It's incredible what was accomplished each week:

- Preproduction work: service planning, scheduling, sermon preparation, and music composing, arranging, and rehearsal;
- Production work: audio and video recording in the Sanctuary, recording studios, various outdoor locations, and individual homes;
- Post-production work: video and audio editing, audio mixing, and computer-generated graphics.

A single, three-minute song with band and vocalists required 20 hours of production work!

When in-person worship resumed in April 2021, the Worship Team committed to maintain a high-quality offering both in the Sanctuary and on Livestream. This past year, the Foundation funded two phases of Worship's ongoing media upgrade project: an audio mixing board for the Sanctuary, replacing 10-year-old equipment that failed; and a dedicated pastor camera (to be installed soon) that will allow speakers on the chancel platform to connect with both the in-person and Livestream communities.

Over the years, the Foundation has granted money for many Worship projects, including the initial investment in Livestream technology; an upgrade to Livestream; a remote-controlled HD camera with professional videoswitching capability; an HD sanctuary video projector and screen; and a video-production package with cameras and editing equipment to create the interviews and ministry spotlights seen in worship each week.

LOPC is blessed to have the resources and staff expertise to make our worship services available online to those in our local community, who are unable to attend in person, as well as our extended community all over the world. The LOPC Foundation, has been an essential partner in this ministry that has provided comfort and joy to thousands of people during this challenging season.

If you would like to learn how you can include LOPC in your estate planning and help LOPC continue to thrive in the future, please contact one of our Foundation Trustees: Jim Beckemeyer, Lois Boyd, Jen Crocker, Jerry Ducey, Kristi Haigh, Staci Johnston, Mike Ross, or Dara Youngdale.

mission



LOPC to Host Winter Nights Family Shelter

Winter Nights Shelter (WNS) is a traveling homeless shelter that moves among faith communities throughout Contra Costa County from September to May. Many of its clients have explored all options of staying with family and friends and rely on the Winter Nights Shelter program to provide a temporary home.

Every year, LOPC hosts families on campus in the fall for two weeks and provides meals, tutoring, and other activities, with the help of LOPC volunteers. As many probably remember, last year due to Covid, LOPC was unable to host clients on campus but partnered with Walnut Creek United Methodist Church, providing meals during their two-week stay.

This year, we look forward to having the Shelter back on campus for two weeks and will need volunteers to help. For the safety of all, both volunteers and clients will be required to be fully vaccinated. In addition, everyone will be required to wear a mask per County guidelines.

LOPC will host WNS this year from November 8 - 22. Save the dates! To learn more about ways you can help, go to lopc.org/lovedoes.

Partnering with CHILDREN OF FAITH MISSIONS

Children of Faith Missions (COF) provides a secure home and valuable education to more than 120 vulnerable school-age children in Visakhapatnam, India. Many of the children served come from broken homes and are at risk for living on the street if not for the home provided by COF. Most were in the care of extended family and are orphans or semi-orphans (no parent present, or just one). COF provides shelter, nutrition, health care, and a Christian-based education to all the children it houses. COF was founded by Rosie and Anand Thandu in 2004. Rosie and Anand were members of Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church and living a comfortable life in the Bay Area when they felt God's calling to return to India to work with children.

In 2010, Children of Faith came to the attention of LOPC's Mission team and subsequently became a formal Mission Partner. Since partnering with COF, LOPC has provided financial help to build a second dormitory, repair a typhoon-damaged dining hall roof, improve playgrounds , and buy equipment for the school, in addition to sponsoring individual children.

In 2014 and 2017, LOPC sent two high-school youth groups to work directly with children of COF. Not only did LOPC benefit from these mission trips, but it gave COF children an opportunity to interact with native English speakers and receive individual attention. These trips impacted LOPC's youth in countless ways and cemented LOPC's commitment to support the work of Children of Faith.

Children of Faith has had to tackle new challenges that have arisen from the pandemic. Covid-19 hit India particularly hard, and now many more families are seeking support for their young children and have turned to COF for help. The cost of almost everything is increasing in India as businesses strive to recover economically. Please keep COF in your prayers and consider helping them through the Christmas special offering in December.

To learn more about Children of Faith Missions go to childrenoffaithmissions.org.

Changing the Face of Deafness in Gaza

Growing up with a disability is hard even in the best circumstances, but in the Gaza Strip the challenge is even more profound. The



Atfaluna School for the Deaf, a longtime LOPC Mission partner located in Gaza city, provides an oasis for those with hearing challenges. The school's mission is to improve the lives of deaf persons in the Gaza Strip by empowering them socially, economically, culturally, and civilly.

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. Atfaluna strives to educate the community and increase awareness surrounding deafness. Twenty years ago, Palestinian attitudes toward deaf people were negative, says Naeem Kabaja, director of Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children in Gaza. "It was perceived by many as a mental disability. But we've been able to change that, and it has since improved, through our work, the spread of sign language, activities by the deaf, and raising public awareness about this disability."

This past year-and-a half has been an extraordinarily difficult time for our friends in Gaza at the Atfaluna school. Most of its students lived in homes below the poverty line before the pandemic struck, and many have suffered additional economic hardships. Most, if not all, of the students and staff were directly impacted by military airstrikes in May 2021; some were physically injured in the attacks, several others displaced from destroyed or damaged homes, and most sustained psychological trauma. Medical facilities were damaged and medical equipment and supplies were blocked. Fortunately, the children are back in school today, and faculty and staff are providing education, care, treatment, and meals.

Please keep Atfaluna in your prayers and consider providing help through the Christmas special offering in December.

To learn more about Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, please visit atfaluna.net/en.

Update on Congo Healing Hearts Ministry

By Herb Long, LOPC Member

OPC supports the Healing Hearts (HH) trauma-healing curriculum for children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Presbyterian Church (USA) is a principal organizer and supporter of this Bible-based ministry. PC(USA) is a major mission partner for LOPC with its work in the Congo through its mission co-workers and the local Presbyterian community. LOPC's support in 2016 of HH was a key driver in getting this ministry started in the Congo. Since then, over 2,500 children have received this curriculum designed to help heal their emotional wounds from the violence and destruction they have witnessed.

A portion of LOPC's special mission offering during this Lenten season was for training new facilitators to deliver this curriculum in their local communities. The next round of training was in the East Kasai region



of the Congo where PC(USA) is active through its education and health ministries. Originally, the training was scheduled in September. But the COVID pandemic has severely restricted , if not totally halted the work. Many faiths, not just Presbyterian, participate in the training, but nowit will be deferred into next year.

However, what has made Healing Hearts a success is that it has been sustained in other regions where it has been implemented. For example, one of the leaders, Annie, who first trained as a HH facilitator in 2016, worked with 26 children affected by the COVID-19 situation and the devastating volcano eruption earlier this year and led them through HH lessons.

Here are a few of the children's testimonials:

- "We have learned to forgive quickly (or more freely: to be ready to forgive)."
- "We have learned how to build our lives well."
- "We have seen there are people who care about us."
- "We have seen we are important to/before God."

The children of the Congo say thank you to LOPC for its support.



SEEDLINGS PRESCHOOL Up & Running!

By Coleen Moulton, Director of Seedlings Preschool

OPC's Seedlings Preschool is up and running with our 38th class of students ranging in age from 12 months to 5 years. Seedlings is providing quality care to 98 children this year, with 47 of them new to our program. Overall, this year we welcomed 32 new families to our campus! Word of mouth in the Lamorinda area about our preschool brings over 30 inquiries every month from families who are interested in getting into our program, creating long waiting lists.

After closing two classrooms last year due to licensing restrictions related to the pandemic, we added back our program for three-year-olds in August and had hoped to reopen our infant program early this school year as we searched for new teachers. However, like many businesses, we have had trouble finding quality candidates to hire for this growing program. In my 30 years here, this is the first time there has not been a pool of candidates to choose from.

Thankfully the amazing staff we do have continues to provide developmentally appropriate experiences and care despite strict protocols amidst the continuing pandemic. Mask mandates and outdoor drop-off and pick-up protocols have limited parent interactions with the staff. To circumvent this, Seedlings' teachers send daily communications to each family, sharing pictures and information about what the class did that day. "I've had such positive feedback from parents around the emails they receive, and although I miss the longer interactions with parents, the daily emails give them a sense of what their kids are doing," said longtime toddler teacher Maddy Pasjuta.

Teachers in every age group plan curriculum that includes the following learning areas: social and emotional development, physical development, language development, early literacy, early mathematics, science, technology, health and safety, creative expression, and social studies. They base curricula on children's interests and facilitate many opportunities for free play to enhance their social and emotional development.

When children leave Seedlings, they are ready for the rigors of elementary school and have gained appropriate classroom behavior. They also have the confidence to ask questions, follow multi-step directions, join a group, resolve conflicts, and have gained a love of learning!

Interested in volunteering, working, or sending your children to our preschool? Email us at seedlings@lopc.org.

youth

Operation Christmas Child Service @ Youth Alive (5th – 8th grade)

Sunday, November 14, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Join us as we assemble Christmas gift boxes for children in another country. This is an annual event within the Youth Ministry and is a special way to customize a gift for someone out in the world who could really use some care and compassion. Youth are afforded the opportunity to write notes of encouragement and love, while hand-selecting toys and games for the recipients.

Contact Allison Kunz at allison@lopc.org.

Primera Iglesia Service with YOW & BTW Sunday, November 14, 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Join us to help prepare Christmas gift bags for the children of our sister church, Primera Iglesia. This activity was enthusiastically received last year and is an important ministry for the families involved. We will pack and pray over the bags that night, then deliver them just in time for Christmas.

Questions? Contact Allison Kunz at allison@lopc.org or Keris Dahlkamp at keris@lopc.org.

Winter Nights Family Shelter Service @ BTW (high school)

Sunday, November 14, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Join us for this special night of service and fellowship as we prepare dinner for our guests at Winter Nights Family Shelter in Fellowship Hall. Participants will play with the children and connect with the parents throughout our time together. To conclude the evening, the entire group will share a meal. It is a wonderful experience and something not to miss. All volunteers must show proof of vaccination.

Questions? Contact Keris Dahlkamp at keris@lopc.org.

Homegroups @ BTW (high school) Weekend of November 20-21

High school small groups will gather at offsite locations to share a time of fellowship instead of meeting for youth group on Sunday night at LOPC. Activities can include an outdoor adventure, a visit in a park, or in someone's home. This is a great way to get to know one another better, establish trust, and have fun! All Covid-safe regulations will apply.

Questions? Contact Keris Dahlkamp at keris@lopc.org.

session

Session Highlights

By Phil Hunter, Clerk of Session

At September's meeting, Session approved:

- A special offering for victims of Haiti's earth quake, and a special offering for Afghanistan due to their political crisis;
- A 'Mission, Vision, and Values' document from the Racial Equity and Engagement Team;
- A designated gift for mission from the Wang family in thanks for the support they received from LOPC, and especially Pastor Gerald.

For decades LOPC has had a strong commitment to Mission, contributing its time, talent, and treasure whenever and wherever there has been a need. It is heartwarming to know this continues as demonstrated by the LOPC community's response to the Covid virus. As Pastor Peter Whitelock mentioned in a recent sermon, LOPC has dramatically increased our giving over the past eighteen months, to various mission partners serving those impacted by Covid..

More recently, LOPC members conducted a book drive for Superstars Literacy (over 500 children in Oakland); a diaper drive for the Monument Crisis Center (MCC); a weekly food bridge for Primera Iglesia church; bagged beans and rice for MCC; and donated preschool supplies for the JF Kapnek Trust to distribute to children in Zimbabwe.

At an earlier Session meeting (prior to the recent contributions mentioned above) Pastor Lauren Gully expressed the Mission in Society (MIS) leadership's continued commitment to the legacy of international generosity. And as the church focuses on racial justice, Lauren reported the MIS team will work with current and future Mission partners to make justice a priority in our shared work. Additionally, through increased communication, MIS plans to educate the LOPC community on the breadth of services LOPC provides, increase awareness of and participation in volunteer and giving opportunities, recruit volunteers in leadership roles, and develop virtual opportunities to serve the community.

Service opportunities for individual and family involvement can be found in Connections, Focus, and at lopc.org/lovedoes.



By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

s with many of us, Carol King says Ashe grew up in a family where church was an important part of her upbringing. They belonged to a rather strict Methodist Church where attendance was expected at Sunday morning and evening services and one mid-week service. "I was taught by the church and my family that I had to prove myself worthy by adhering to 'God's Rules'. They included no dancing, movies, card games, or alcohol, though she says her father kept his alcohol in the basement club room." Both her parents sang in the choir. She says, "By the time I joined my first choir at age 8 I knew the words to most of songs in the Methodist Hymnal. Music was, and still is, a large part of how I can express my faith."

After she graduated from college and married Tom, whom she met as a freshman, they joined Tom's Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. It was a big change for her and caused some tension in her family. "The Lutheran Church was much more formal, including kneeling for prayers. I'm sure there would have been tension for any church other than Methodist," she says.

"We had three children, each in a different city, as Tom's career with General Electric necessitated a lot of moving. During those years I still talked to God with prayers for my family, and we attended sporadically, but church was for our children."

When Carol was pregnant with her second child, Tom discovered skiing, and it became the focus of their lives for the next 20 years. "Our work as volunteer ski patrollers led us to teaching first aid, CPR, and EMT classes in Connecticut. We helped establish an all-volunteer ambulance service, serving on it for four years. Although we had no formal church home, we often attended services at the top of the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort and found ourselves praying for those we helped. Somehow God was still at work in our lives."

Carol says 1985 was "the year I went back to God." They had moved to Walnut Creek. Tom was with a new company, and she had begun teaching in Piedmont Middle School. Then his company faced a hostile take-over. "There were so many decisions that I couldn't face alone. A friend suggested we try going to St. Matthew's Lutheran church, and we did.

"We knew we wanted to stay here so Tom went into consulting work and I was promoted to school administration, so we made it work. We joined St. Matthew's. I sang in the choir, and Tom served as an usher and communion server. It seemed we had found a church home, and it was important in our lives. But when St. Matthew's vision began to change, we started to search for a new church home. On Good Friday, 2004, we attended LOPC's service, left in silence, and never spoke until we got home. I'll never forget the words, 'God found us a home.'"

Since that day, Carol says, she put her faith entirely in God's hands. "Tom and I both served as deacons, worked on One Sunday (*love does*), ushered services and concerts, worked on the church safety plan, and I sang with the choir. We joined a social group and



Carol King and husband, Tom

a Bible-study group and developed lasting special friendships.

"But then, five years ago God really tested my faith. Tom's illness, his passing, and my own cancer diagnosis were life changing. Throughout it all I knew God was with me. He had led me to LOPC where we are cared for by so many. When I look back over my life, I believe God was always there and that He will continue to watch over me."

Carol chooses Psalm 121 as her favorite passage from the Bible:

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore (NRSV).

Care A 'Touch of Love' for Some Older and Wiser LOPC Families

By Leslie Finertie, LOPC Member

The Congregational Care Team at LOPC organized another "Touch of Love" bag delivery during September to about 70 seniors. Collaboration enriched the experience with Stephen Ministers and Deacons joining the elders to plant the succulent pots and assemble the bags. With Lassie Colebourn's expertise, we spent an enjoyable morning in her garden arranging the small plants she donated. Family ministry joined in to help organize the delivery of the bags, with 10 families participating. Children decorated the bags with colorful fall leaf stickers and added their own personalized notes in addition to those already prepared by the Explorer Voyager group. The seniors also received an informative note about LOPC happenings, a background article about succulent plants, and a word-search puzzle using succulent vocabulary words. All deliverers were encouraged to spend time visiting with the seniors, inquiring about their lives, families, and interests, and sharing their own experiences of school, sports, and summer activities.

The project demonstrated that young to older, all are vital contributors to the LOPC community.



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

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

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

Norbert Schurhoff, who passed October 10.

Martin Lyle, who passed October 14.

Charlotte Cranmer, who passed August 22, 2020. A Service will be held November 6 at 11:00 a.m.

Barbara Stalker, who passed December 24, 2020. A service will be held November 6 at 3:00 p.m.

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. community

first friday FORUM

Speakers Series Resumes in January

The LOPC First Friday Forum series will begin its new season on January 7, 2022, with an impressive slate of speakers. The programs will be offered online monthly, at 10:00 a.m. the first Friday of each month.

The program's goal is to provide lectures of importance and interest to help inform the community about this ever-changing world. "We are happy we can reach out to the Lamorinda public, and beyond, in this way," says Mike Rusk, FFF team leader. "We have worked hard to provide a wide variety of topics with top-notch presenters. We always welcome suggestions as to topics or speakers."

2021 series includes:

January 7: Popular repeat presenter, Michael Baker, retired U.S. Marine Rear Admiral, titles his talk, "Crisis on the Korean Peninsula and a Rational Way Forward."

February 4: Marilyn Chase, author and former *Wall Street Journal* reporter, on "Everything She Touched: The Life of Ruth Asawa;"

March 4: Juan Guajardo, UC Davis evolution and ecology scientist, on "Mexican Culture in the Context of the Complex US-Mexico Relationship;" **April 1:** Larry Toy, retired college science and technology scientist, on "The 5% We Know and the 95% We Don't Know;"

May 6: Amos Guiora, University of Utah law professor, on "Armies of Enablers: Survivor: Stories of Complicity and Betrayal in Sexual Assaults;"

June 3: Ryan Timpte, former LOPC Children's Ministry director, on "The Impact of the Pandemic on Children and Families."

For the foreseeable future, programs will be presented as webinar events with the possibility of adding on-campus, in-person lectures in the future, depending on the status of Covid-19 regulations and resolution of technology issues. Look for the program link at lopc.org/first-Friday-forum. To attend online, registration is required.

2022 Flower Calendar Opens November 15

OPC is so grateful for its weekly Sanctuary flower sponsors and our talented Flower Team that creates these beautiful arrangements for our Sunday services.

Sponsoring the chancel floral arrangement for worship is a way to celebrate a special occasion or honor loved ones. Sponsors can choose to have their dedication printed in that week's worship bulletin. The suggested donation is \$150 to the Flower Fund to sponsor an arrangement.

Please visit lopc.org/flowers beginning November 15 to choose a date for your 2022 flower sponsorship. Please 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.



THANK YOU

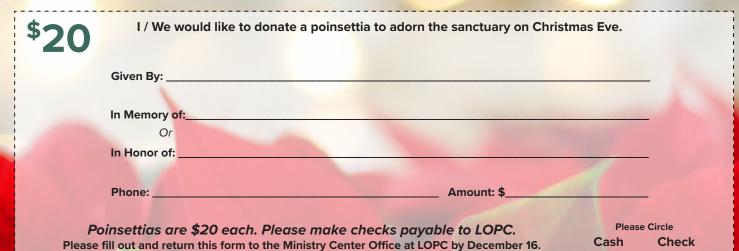
to everyone who helped make the Fall Fest on October 17 such a success! We had a beautiful day filled with great entertainment and lots of fun activities for families. Special thanks goes to the LOPC Foundation for providing the delicious food!

christmas eve POINSETTIAS

FALL-Fest

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 a poinsettia(s) may bring their plant home after the final Christmas Eve service.

Questions? Contact Lexi at lexi@lopc.org.



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49 Knox Drive Lafayette, CA 94549

WHAT

MATTERS

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QUESTIONS ABOUT PLEDGING? CONTACT LIDIA JESIONEK AT (925) 283-8722 X229 • LIDIA@LOPC.ORG