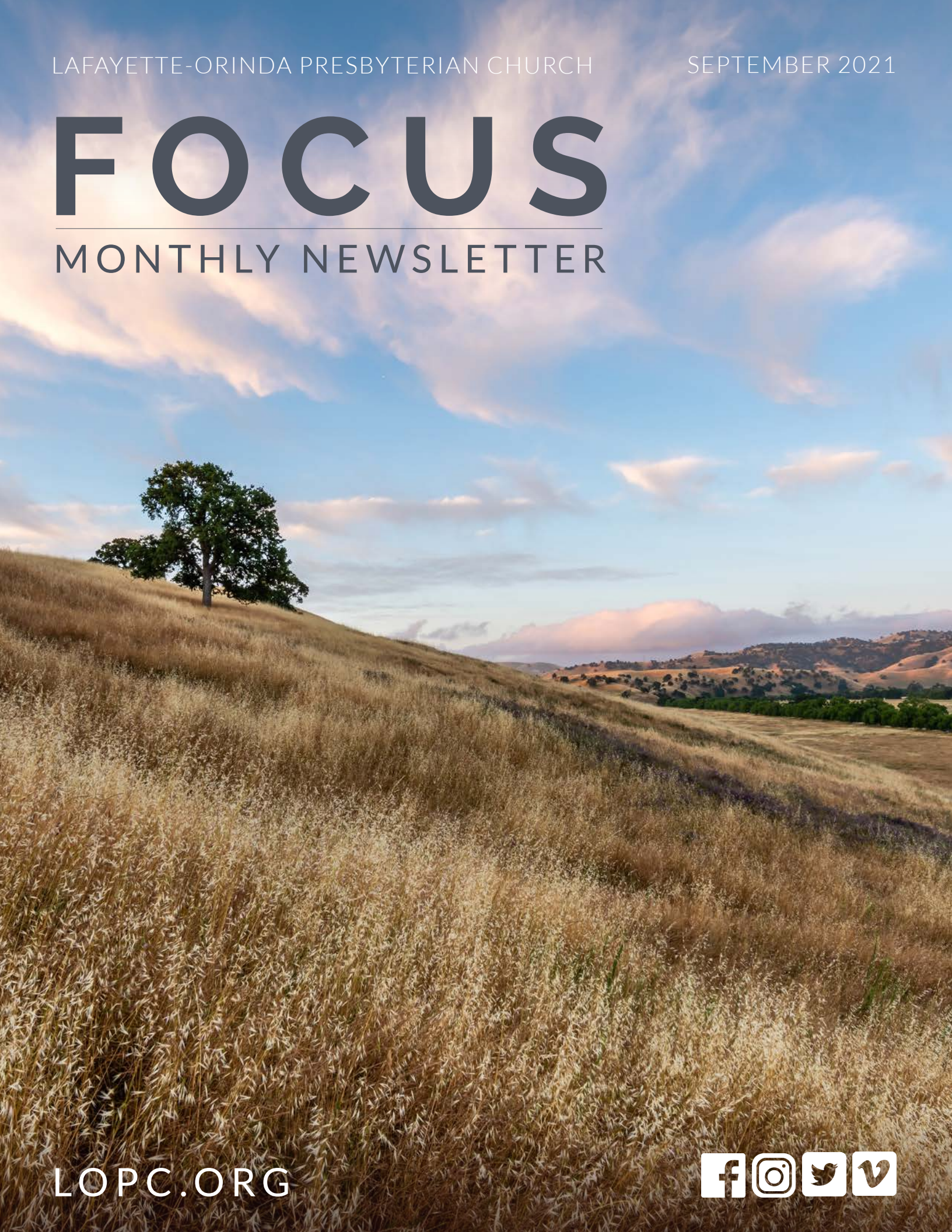


LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2021

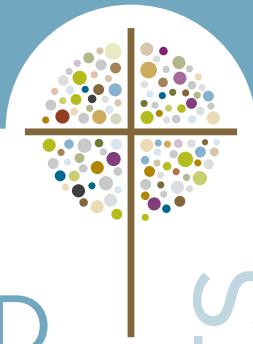
FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



LOPC.ORG





hold fast to WHAT IS GOOD

By Jaime Polson, - Pastor, Families & Executive Leadership

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good.



-1 Thessalonians 5:16-21

So much has changed in the past 18 months with the pandemic and the new lives we are living. I have truly had to rearrange and make peace with a new way of being in the world and living my day-to-day life. I am a planner by nature, often looking years ahead with plans for the future and what is next for ministry, my family (holidays, trips, school, etc.), and every other part of my life.

One of the lessons I will take with me from the past few years of life is to focus more on each day, hold fast to what is good, and less on what the future holds. I felt life was firmly in my control (insert laugh here), and if I planned well enough, most things would go according to plan. Well, I continue to do some planning but with a renewed focus on the importance of being present in each day.

What I have learned in this pandemic is to hold fast to what is good. Rejoice always, or at least do my best even when it is a struggle with the overwhelming daily news of Covid-19, the realities of climate change or the deepening divides in our country and world. For me, holding fast to what is good has meant clinging to my faith and remembering that God promises not to forsake us, God promises to bring meaning and purpose to our lives, even in the hardest times, and that the best way to show our love to God is to practice our love for others.

LOPC pastors will preach a new sermon series this fall called, "The Pandemic, My Teacher" We will share insights, both the things we have rejoiced over and the things we have mourned during this time. We will share the lessons we have learned, how we have struggled to have faith in certain ways or act faithfully and how we have grown in our faith. We hope this preaching series will be a time of connection and learning as a faith community.

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Pastoral Staff

- Peter Whitelock - Head of Staff
- Gerald Chinen - Congregational Care
- Lauren Gully - Mission & Spiritual Formation
- Jaime Polson - Families & Executive Leadership
- Chris Baldwin - Community Life

Worship and Music

- Brett Strader - Director
- Stewart Scharch - Organist

Treasurer

- Staci Johnston

Ministry Directors

- Keris Dahlkamp & Allison Kunz - Youth
- Coleen Moulton - Seedlings Preschool
- Ryan Timpfe - Children

Focus Newsletter

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

Submissions & Deadlines

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

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

Spiritual Practices for Anti-Racism

Ready to continue or start your journey towards anti-racism?

We are too!

Please join us for LOPC's October 2021 Program Series developed by the Rev. Riana Shaw:

God's Grace in Our Stories: Spiritual Practices for Anti-Racism.

Four-week small group gatherings beginning the week of September 26, followed by a half-day retreat on October 30.

Registration will open on September 7 and will be available on the LOPC website.

By Pastor Lauren Gully, with Elders Terry Clark and Kara Yu

As have many LOPC ministries this past year, the Spiritual Formation Team has focused on issues of anti-racism and how Spiritual Formation provides a unique way to engage this topic. Our work has led to a new program offering for the congregation entitled: God's Grace in Our Stories: Spiritual Practices for Anti-Racism.

The series will begin with four weekly small-group gatherings starting the week of September 26. Groups of four or five will be led through guided exercises and dialogue by trained facilitators to explore personal experiences and responses to racism. From week to week, the topics will provide the opportunity to confidentially reflect upon individual and collective stories of race, power,


privilege, and understandings of what is meant by white supremacy.

Engagement in these small groups will prepare participants for a half-day retreat on October 30, 2021. Our Series Coordinator, the Rev. Riana Shaw Robinson designed the small-group and retreat series so that we may grow in our faith as we work towards anti-racism.

The retreat will build upon the specific weekly exercises to help participants reflect on what we can learn individually and collectively from personal ethnic stories, as well as provide a scriptural basis to strengthen and inform individual and church community commitments to anti-racism in order to prepare participants to

respond to God's call to action. The Rev. Robinson is a preacher, pastor, and prophet, who is passionate about speaking the truth in love, constantly inviting people to see themselves as beloved, and providing meaningful ways to respond to the command to love God, self, and neighbor. Her positive energy and enthusiasm are contagious; and this entire series, from small-group gatherings through the retreat, promises to be a very rewarding journey.

If you are interested in becoming a group facilitator, please contact Pastor Lauren Gully at lauren@lopc.org. All facilitators will be trained by the Rev. Robinson in September.



The Reverend Riana Shaw Robinson is a preacher, pastor, and prophet. She recently served as the Associate Pastor of Formation at Oakland City Church where she led efforts to help the community live more deeply into its anti-racist values. As the Minister of City Engagement, she expanded the church's community partnerships and commitment to solidarity with marginalized communities in Oakland. Riana is ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Reformed Church in America. She holds a Master of Divinity degree from Pacific School of Religion and a B.A. in Ethnic Studies from Mills College. Before stepping into vocational ministry, Riana worked at various non-profits focused on racial, social, and environmental justice.

spiritual formation

Companions for the Journey

Companions is a contemplative program intended to provide an opportunity in a small-group setting to intentionally slowdown in order to experience, see, and feel how God might be working in their lives... It allows each of us to explore the Word of God in the Bible with others in a way that provides insight into whatever might be impacting daily life! Some would say it is counter-cultural. It differs from a regular Bible-study

program in which one strives to better understand the meaning of the stories; rather, it invites participants to listen to scripture, to hear words or phrases that catch our attention that day. It differs from a social gathering in that no one is trying to figure out how to 'fix' others' problems.

Rather, God is encouraging each of us to notice something unique going on in our own life. The Companion's confidential process lends itself to

making time and space to reflect on whatever might come up for you. Then, in turn, it helps to develop a closer relationship with each other and our Creator.

Companions meets monthly on Monday evenings or Thursday mornings from October through May. For questions or to participate in the next session, please contact Carl Grant at clgrantsd@gmail.com.



Coming this Fall!

LOPC's worship time is changing! LOPC is changing the 10:10 to 11:11. Please join us after worship in person or online!

Visit lopc.org/1111classes to register

- **9/12 "My Sabbatical"**
Pastor Lauren Gully, Come and hear about Lauren's travels and learnings as she has started her Doctorate of Ministry program.
- **9/19-No 11:11!**
- **9/26-10/24-"God's Grace in Our Stories: Spiritual Practices for Anti-Racism"**
See article on pg. 2 for more information.

Life Groups are starting back up in September and we invite you to delve back into small group community! Life Groups are designed to create conversations based on Christian discipleship, mission, community, and inclusivity. Now is the perfect place for you to connect with others, grow in your faith, and get rooted at LOPC.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Can I still join if I don't want to read a book?**
Yes, there will be a study linked to each session, but the point will be to grow in faith and in relationship with one another. Definitely still join a group.
- **Can I start my own group with my friends?**
Absolutely! We'd love to share the program resources and discussion questions so you can gather your own group.
- **What if I can't make every meeting?**
Come for what makes sense for your schedule! Just let the group leader know what you can make and we'll accommodate you.

Visit lopc.org/lifegroups for more information. Contact Chris Baldwin at chris@lopc.org with questions.

foundation

By Mike Ross, Foundation trustee



Mike Ross

Many of us have read how charitable contributions increased significantly during the pandemic. Now, it will be interesting to see how donors and prospective donors react to the progress in containing the pandemic, at least in this country. Even as society opens up and the economy improves, there continue to be a myriad of critical needs that deserve funding. How will people and institutions respond? Will there be “donor fatigue” or enhanced efforts to support those in need?

I would like to share some of what I picked up from a Men’s Group session several months ago regarding charitable giving. These are excerpts from a chapter entitled “Yeshua” from the book *Unapologetic* by English author and teacher Francis Spufford. (“Yeshua” in Hebrew is a verbal derivative of “to rescue” or “to deliver,” and the word from which the name Jesus is derived.) The author offered numerous instructions that Jesus gave to those around him and to us. Here are some that got my attention.

Don’t be careful.

- Behave as if nothing you gave away could ever make you poorer.
- Behave as if this one day we’re in now were the whole of time, and you didn’t have to hold anything back or to plot or scheme about tomorrow.
- Don’t try to grip your life with tight anxious hands.
- If someone asks for your help, give them more than they ask for.
- God does not want your careful virtue. He wants your reckless generosity.
- Try to keep what you have, and you’ll lose even that. Give it away, and you’ll get back more than you bargain for; more than bargaining could ever get you.

These guides for Christian generosity are by no means easy to follow and may seem downright idealistic. They may cause us to take a deep breath and wonder how anyone could become so unbound by worldly concerns. They do, however, offer us “food for thought” and worthy goals for our philanthropy.

For information about the LOPC Foundation please check the LOPC website or contact one of the Foundation’s Trustees: Jim Beckemeyer, Lois Boyd, Jen Crocker, Gerald Ducey, Kristi Haigh, Staci Johnston, Mike Ross, Phil Placier, or Dara Youngdale.

finance

Financial Update: June 30, 2021

By Jim Nagle, Finance Elder

Thank you again for contributing your time, talent, and treasures during this unprecedented time. The Finance Team is working closely with LOPC staff to allocate the resources needed for many ministry areas.

In June 2021, LOPC received unbudgeted income of \$204,422 from an Employee Retention Credit (ERC); the credit stemmed from government pandemic restrictions of church operations. As a result, year-to-date income exceeded budget by \$256,131.

| January 1 - June 30, 2021 | Actual | Budget |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Congregational Giving | | |
| Pledge Income | \$ 1,230,219 | \$ 1,184,215 |
| Non Pledge Gifts, Loose Offerings | 99,188 | 143,499 |
| Total Congregational Giving | \$ 1,329,407 | \$ 1,327,714 |
| Session Emerging Needs Fund | 52,000 | 52,000 |
| Mission Special Gifts | 107,842 | 63,633 |
| Total Income Before ERC | \$ 1,489,249 | \$ 1,443,347 |
| Employee Retention Credit | 204,422 | - |
| Total Income | 1,693,671 | 1,443,347 |
| Expenses | 1,730,934 | 1,736,742 |
| Net Surplus (Deficit) | \$ (37,263) | \$ (293,395) |

Before the credit, year-to-date June 30 income totaled \$45,902 over budget, the result of several items, both above and below budget: generous late-2020 giving of \$44,476, special-gifts income of \$44,210 over budget, offset by reductions, likely related to worship restrictions, of \$44,311 in non-pledge, loose offerings, per capita, and grants.

Year-to-date expenses are tracking very closely to budget. Many ministry areas are trending at or below budget due to delays in spending related to end-of-pandemic restrictions. Use of special gifts exceeded budget by \$44,210 because Mission deployed gifts to mission partners, Youth Service Squad donated \$20,000 and built 10 Habitat for Humanity playhouses, and Worship used designated gifts to help build a mixing studio to enhance Livestream audio. There was a corresponding offset of these expenditures in income.

The Finance Team will continue to provide financial updates as LOPC moves through the second half of the year. Thank you for your faithful support of LOPC.

staff UPDATES

new OPPORTUNITIES for Ryan Timppte



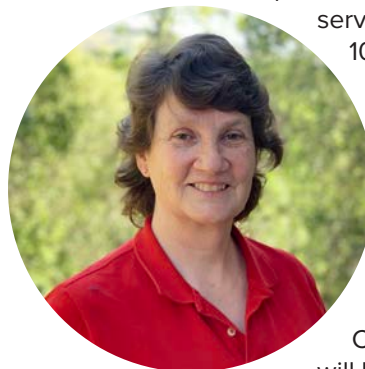
LOPC has been so blessed to celebrate 10 years of ministry with Ryan Timppte as Director of Children's Ministry. Thank you for your 10 years of service to LOPC! Ryan has blessed the congregation with his dedication and care for teaching children about the love of God. He has modeled how to ensure children are welcome in community, and he has been a faithful advocate in teaching children how to be leaders and teachers in a community of faith. It is bittersweet to announce Ryan's transition from LOPC this fall. Ryan has the wonderful opportunity to pursue a much-desired new path to be a full-time caregiver to his two boys. This blessing to him and his wife, Dr. Kathy Timppte, is possible because of her opportunity to become the Director of College Ministries at First Presbyterian Church Berkeley. Ryan will continue on LOPC's staff through the fall. We do have plans in place for this transition, and we will be sharing them soon with the congregation. Our Personnel Team has been involved in the process with Pastor Jaime Polson.

We are so thankful to have Ryan's support and guidance during this transition. LOPC will host a wonderful celebration of Ryan and his family this fall at LOPC.

planning AHEAD



We are thrilled to announce that **Lori Robinson** will be the new Director of Children's Ministry. Lori has served alongside Ryan Timppte as our Associate Director of Children's Ministry for five years, and we have been impressed by her leadership. Prior to coming to LOPC, she was the director of family ministry at a church in Danville for 10 years.



Susan Wentworth, the Preschool and Special Needs Ministries Director, has served at LOPC for more than 10 years; she will continue in that role. We are grateful for Lori's and Susan's continued leadership. Pastor Jaime Polson, Children's Ministry elder, Peter Shumaker, Lori Robinson, Susan Wentworth, and several Children's Ministry volunteers will be working together to hire a new associate director of Children's Ministry.

happy RETIREMENT!



LOPC's beloved Accountant, **Lidia Jesionek**, announced her retirement this past spring after working for LOPC for 17 years. Lidia has been a vital part of the LOPC staff and those that have worked with her have enjoyed and benefited from the special care she has given to her work. Lidia will retire at the end of September.

As is tradition at LOPC, we will give the congregation the opportunity to contribute to Lidia's 'Love Gift', which is a special way we can recognize and express our appreciation for her years of service to the church. If you would like to contribute to Lidia's Love Gift, please write 'Lidia' on the memo line of your check.

Since we don't want Lidia to process her own gifts, please send payments to Elizabeth Ball's attention. Checks may be put in the offering boxes, dropped off at the Ministry Center (in person or secure drop box) or mailed to Elizabeth's attention by September 26.



Stewart Scharch, LOPC's talented organist, also has announced his retirement. The LOPC congregation has enjoyed Stewart's musical gifts over the past nine years, and we are very thankful that he will continue to provide musical accompaniment for memorial services in the near future. Stewart's last worship service at LOPC will be on September 5.

If you would like to contribute to Stewart's Love Gift please write 'Stewart' on the memo line of your check and send it to the church by September 1.

The LOPC Accountant position has reopened.



After a month of employment our new LOPC Accountant, Emilyn Russo, made the difficult decision to resign for personal reasons. Emilyn expressed such gratitude for the warm welcome she received at LOPC. We wish Emilyn all the best as she focuses on other opportunities.

The current job posting can be found at lopc.org/about/job-opportunities

a chance to DREAM

By Nancy McGirr and Evelyn Mansilla

Editors Note: Focus asked Fotokids Founder Nancy McGirr and Executive Director Evelyn Mansilla to share the impact of Fotokids' 30 years and the effects of Covid-19 and how they have had to pivot their focus and instruction. They shared the following report:

Fotokids celebrates its 30th anniversary this year! We began our journey by giving cameras to six children living in Guatemala City's garbage dump to document their lives. From the beginning, the program's purpose has been to help young people from the poorest of barrios develop useful, employable skills as a means of self-exploration, expression, and discovery. Through intensive, long-term personal relationships with teachers and mentors, participating children learn to use photography, creative writing, and computers as tools to examine their lives, families, communities.

Fotokids graduates have found work in education, social work, design, video editing, business, and similar fields. The children's work has been exhibited in galleries and museums in more than 14 countries. The project has since expanded and reached thousands of children all over the world, including Guatemala, a poor jungle area of Honduras, Polisario children in Algiers, in Spain, England, and the children of migrant workers in California's central valley. Fotokids has inspired similar projects in Kenya, Ecuador, Colombia, East Timor, the U.S., the U.K, Nepal, and Mexico.

We have been able to do all of this because of the help and support we have received from Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church over the years. LOPC families have hosted Fotokids students in their homes, and some members have visited our schools in Guatemala. Through LOPC's generous funding, we have been able to continue teaching and helping families who otherwise couldn't afford to send their child to school. You have given these kids a chance to dream.

Sadly, Covid-19 is raging in Guatemala where less than 5% of the population is vaccinated. Currently, with the new variant, cases have risen to approximately 3,000 a day from 600 before Easter. Vaccines are scarce and will continue to be so for the near future. Covid-19 has touched all of our



*Photo by: Alma María Sosof, 15,
Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala.*

families in some way. Many are in mourning or have sent children away to live with relatives. They have lost jobs and as most were renting, they have lost their housing, humble as it was.

Though Fotokids receive scholarships that provide funding to attend Guatemalan public schools, during Covid we are keeping the children in our vocational Fotokids program. Keeping the children in our program, excited about learning, means we must be innovative in our approach to education. We are recording video lessons that can be replayed on their digital cameras, although tablets would be very useful.

The training in IT, Web design, photo, writing, and video editing continues to give young people a niche in which to find a job and arm them with skills in critical and creative thinking, self-discipline, and the confidence to succeed. The courses are taught by our staff (all being Fotokids graduates) in both Guatemala City, with children from the poorest, most violent barrios, and with the indigenous children of Santiago Atitlán where hunger has always been an issue. Paying for educational costs, transportation for students, food baskets, and keeping the staff fully employed during the pandemic, which enables them to support their families, has been made more difficult during these challenging times. We are so grateful for your continued support and thank you from the bottom of our hearts for providing the opportunity for Fotokids children to dream!

FUTURE DREAMS

fotokids testimonies

“The training in IT, Web design, photo, writing, and video editing continues to give young people a niche in which to find a job, and arm them with skills in critical and creative thinking, self-discipline, and the confidence to succeed.”



Beverly, 12

My dream in the future is to be a veterinarian because I love animals, and effort like my mom because she continues studying to be a nurse. I know it is difficult what I dream, but I can achieve it if I study hard.



Brandon, 13

My dream in the future is to be an auto mechanic and a heavy transport driver, to be able to help my family, buy a bigger house, a car, and also a motorcycle.



Julio, 14

My dream in the future is to be able to get a job and save some money, so I can build a second floor and thus be able to have my own room.



Alma, 15

My dream is to travel to developed countries for cultural exchange. My goal with all of these is to be able to help my parents because they are working hard.



Diego, 12

My dream is the pandemic ends and to go to school with my friends and to be with my family, grandparents, and all the people I know. Also, that my dad recovers because he has a stuffy nose from an accident at work.



Antonia, 17

I want to continue studying graphic design at university, graduate, and work in an advertising agency because I like everything, I learn in Fotokids. My dream is to be able to help my siblings to achieve their study goals because my parents are older adults and the work they do requires a lot of physical effort.



Emely, 14

My dream in the future is that (we) no longer cut down trees because when it rains there are landslides, and it can affect my community.



Otoniel, 14

My dream in the future is to help my family in whatever is necessary. Have a job in which I can help the neediest people in our town and the grandparents who suffer from climate change every day.



Jennifer, 13

My dream in the future is to be an architect to be able to help my parents and my family, so my mom doesn't have to clean other houses.



Samantha, 12

My dream in the future is to be a great lawyer so I can buy a house for my parents and live together.



BUILD CONGO SCHOOLS

LOPC, through its Congo Mission team, financially supports ministries that address education and trauma healing in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Most of the education funding goes to Build Congo Schools (BCS), an arm of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Build Congo Schools has an amazing record as they have constructed nine schools, all on time and all within budget. But the best part is that with brick-and-mortar schools, students can go to school, rain or shine. In the days of thatched roofs and mud walls, water poured in, so classes stopped. And it rains a lot in Congo! Providing latrines and water-catchment systems has improved hygiene and led to more girls attending school as they enter their teen years.

It is estimated that each year over 5,000 students attend the nine completed schools. The total cost for these schools is \$809,000. Of this, LOPC sent \$120,000, about 15% of the cost. George Collins, treasurer of BCS, wrote, "Praise God and a BIG Thank You to LOPC."

Our Presbyterian partners operate over 900 schools in Congo. We and the Catholic Church provide most of the education needs of the country. However, most of these

schools still lack adequate buildings, textbooks, and school supplies, and many teachers are not paid by the government as they should be. There is great need in all areas of the lives of the Congolese due to their extreme poverty (they are ranked last in the world in per capita income) and lack of government support. The churches have taken over the responsibility for education as well as other aspects of community development. Currently, BCS only needs \$15,000 more to meet the goal of \$94,500 to start construction of the tenth school named Tshiabantu. Construction is never begun until total funds for the building are on hand.

The Congolese help wherever they can and have provided labor as well as food and water for the construction workers and security for materials. They have also learned how to make the bricks of which the schools are built.

The Congo Necklace Team provided funds for a motorcycle as that means of transportation can more easily take teachers and supplies to remote villages. Since their beginning in 2013 the team has raised over \$53,000 mostly with 12 dollar necklaces. That's a lot of crocheting!

community *thursday* Fellowship

caring • sharing • loving

A program of Senior Care Ministries



Traditionally, September is a time of new beginnings. The school year begins, and our Thursday Fellowship program year coincides. All the volunteers that help to create Thursday Fellowship were so hopeful to start this September, our 42nd year. Plans were being made in earnest, but now, we find ourselves having to postpone again and wait.

The safety of our volunteers and guests is our primary concern and therefore, we will wait until we can gather unmasked and inside to enjoy each other's company and witness some great entertainment. Our volunteers are engaged in creating programs and entertainment for everyone's enjoyment and enrichment. We look forward to the time we can once again provide the caring community for which we are known. In the meantime, stay safe, and know we are monitoring the current situation closely and will keep you informed.

Quilt Display

LOPC's annual quilt display in the Sanctuary will be held during November. Start thinking now about what quilts you would like to share! Letters will be going out this month with details.

In the meantime, if you have any questions contact Ginny Gifford at ginnygifford123@gmail.com.

youth

Youth Ministry Fall Kickoff Sunday, September 12

- **Youth Alive:** Sundays at 10-11 a.m. (concurrent with the worship service)
- **YOW:** Sundays at 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.
- **BTW:** Sundays at 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., (optional pizza dinner at 5:30 p.m.)



We are so excited to welcome youth back to campus for youth ministry programs! There's a fun year ahead as we seek to love, guide, and empower youth while growing in faith together. Best practices for Covid safety are carefully monitored and implemented, so please be prepared to wear a mask indoors.

Please contact Directors Allison Kunz at allison@lopc.org or Keris Dahlkamp at keris@lopc.org for questions.

session

Session Highlights - July 2021

By Phil Hunter, Clerk of Session

Elders heard an update on LOPC's pivot and return to in-person activities. The challenge has been finding the balance in safely following state and local regulations for both staff and visitors. This 'balance' is a moving target dealing with new variants of Covid and the ever-changing needs for protection.

Emilyn Russo has been hired as LOPC's new accountant. Seedlings' budget was accepted. We acknowledge the receipt of the outside-auditor's financial report (all is well). The personnel budget was expanded. The increase reflects the changes in staff and the need for overlap in some positions as new staff is trained by those retiring.

The Rev. Chris Baldwin gave an update about the Community Life program. Even with Covid restrictions limiting church activities, 18 new members have joined in the past year. Chris noted that unlike 30 or 40 years ago, where newcomers first joined the church and then became involved in its life, people now get involved in church activities and then join. So, if you see new people working in a program, please welcome them. Remember our new mission statement: a welcoming and loving community of faith that learns, grows, and serves together.



journey of Faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

Graham Wiseman says he hopes others find encouragement and help by sharing his story:

“In 2013, our son, Colin, at age 15, lost his battle with depression and died by suicide. We called our family, 911, and then LOPC. That afternoon we sat at our table with pastors John Weems and Zach Walker who had brought other LOPC members who had lost loved ones. On one of the worst days of our lives, God brought calm into our hearts in just the right way. Jesus was at the table with us. I was not alone.”

Graham does not want others to be alone either. This is how he was led to a life of helping others with mental health issues.

“After losing Colin, two parents contacted me about how our schools supported mental health. We agreed there was plenty of

room for improvement. I learned that 18% of Lamorinda kids had seriously considered suicide that year. Researching for a positive solution led us to establish Wellness Centers on school campuses for mental health support. Our work to make a difference took four years, and lots of prayers, but our efforts led to Wellness Centers in all Acalanes Union High School District schools. The San Ramon Valley School District has committed to 30 of them. Their purpose is to provide a physical space for the establishment of mental health support, positive behavior, intervention, and the social culture needed for all students to thrive.

“Suicide has been identified as the second-highest cause of death for youth. This silent epidemic does not recognize income, ethnicity, culture, or zip code. Talking is the first step to addressing mental health issues in our schools and community.

continues next page →

continued from previous page...

I quit my corporate job to devote time to mental health issues and have spoken to over 30,000 students about life's choices." Graham also has founded a non-profit, BeingwellCA. Its mission is to reduce anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation in our youth. They do so by providing schools, parents, students and communities with workshops, tool kits, and training to improve mental health support.

He says, "2021 marks an exciting chapter at BeingwellCA. Our initiative for a CA Mental Health Awareness License Plate is now Senate Bill 21 carried by Senator Steven Glazer and supported by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and 20 others. Monies raised by the legislation will fund on-campus Wellness Centers through the California Dept. of Education. "This is my mission, and it will provide a legacy in Colin's honor to help tens of thousands of students when they are feeling alone," Graham says.

He feels his faith has sustained him through his life's journey. For instance, as a small boy, living on Victoria Island in Lagos, Nigeria, the political situation was tense with an armed-military uprising. "On the first day, two rafts of Igbo soldiers pulled up on the riverbank. I stood 'alone' watching. Upon seeing me they asked who lived here, and since we weren't Nigerian, they said, 'thank you' and left. This was the first time I can remember God standing beside me at a time of desperate need. "

He adds, "Throughout my life God has never left me 'alone'. My faith in his presence has calmed and guided me through very trying times when it could have been easy to doubt."

Talking about his life, he explains, "I was one of five children born on four different continents. My father was a UN Consul which took us from Kingston Upon Thames, England, to Iran, Ghana, Nigeria,

Switzerland, Boston, Vancouver, BC, and Sydney and Canberra, Australia. We arrived in Lafayette in 1973. Throughout these many moves, God remained a constant. I was raised in the Church of England (Episcopal) attending their schools. My wife, Caroline, daughter of Barbara and David Pogue, has been at LOPC since infancy. I took her faith when she took my name. We raised our two children, Colin and Nicole, in the church family."

Becoming a youth advisor in LOPC's By the Way program, Graham took his first mission trip, going to the Children of Faith orphanage in India. "It was an amazing experience to watch our young people share their faith and bask in the faith of others. The trip demonstrated the universal message of Jesus, love, redemption, salvation, and hope."

Graham concludes, "Remember, suicide is the second leading cause of death for

college, high school, and middle school students in the US. Anxiety, and depression are responsible for untold suffering by millions of people. With Christ's love, we can remove the stigma of mental illness and make real changes in our society. There were only three parents who campaigned for Wellness Centers in our schools. Think of what all of us can do by simply talking about mental health so people know: You Are Not Alone."

For his favorite Bible verse Graham chooses Deuteronomy 31:8, "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."



To help with the passage of Senate Bill 21, or to arrange for presentations to your school or organization, contact beingwell.ca.org , or Graham at 925-209-6685, or by email, graham@beingwellca.org.



care

What is The Rossmoor Parish?

By Bev Fellows, LOPC Member

Rossmoor is an over-55 community in Walnut Creek of about 10,000 residents. Residents and non-residents alike enjoy the many amenities including 18,000 acres of lush grounds and trails as well as multiple clubhouses, swimming facilities, golf courses, tennis, pickleball, and table tennis courts. Multiple park areas and meeting spaces are available, and there have been many LOPC picnics and other meetings hosted there!

There are approximately 110 LOPC church members who live in Rossmoor and comprise what we call the Rossmoor Parish. Rossmoor residents enrich LOPC with their deep history, grace, and opportunities for growth and service. The Rossmoor Parish members hold Bible studies and hymn sings. They check in on each other. The residents enjoy Love Does service opportunities and look forward to returning to post-pandemic Rossmoor Parish social and cultural events.

During pandemic isolation Deacons, Barnabas, and Care Team volunteers including young families have treasured making calls and delivering small gifts to Rossmoor residents needing to remain at home. The Senior Ministry and the Congregational Care teams continue to explore ways to both serve Rossmoor Parish residents and, just as importantly, create new ways to benefit from their wisdom and experience.

The Congregational Care Team Moves Forward

Looking back over the past year, the Care Team feels fortunate to have been able to provide exercise classes and speakers from July 2020 through June 2021. Morning exercise classes were taught via Zoom on 42 Tuesdays: Yoga by Sophia Colette Kofeod; Stretch and Strengthen by Keris Dahlkamp; and Tai-Chi by Norma Chan. Speakers, mainly LOPC members, conducted 28 weekly informative Faith 'n Fun sessions each Friday. Besides staying fit in body and mind through exercise and interesting information, we rejoiced to see our fellow members on Zoom. What a blessing!

Moving forward, we will continue to offer a new Keep Moving! Zoom exercise series on Tuesdays in September, led by Amy Lynch from ARM of Care; these will continue in October if interest permits. Faith 'n Fun on Fridays will also continue beginning on September 10 with LOPC member, Nancy Henderson, on "Creativity Thrives – My Art Journey." Please visit lopc.org/care-events for details and to register.

We also hope to resume our yearly Season of Care conference in October. In addition, planning has begun for a group to visit the Chinatown Presbyterian Church to meet with Norma Chan and others whom we met virtually during Tai-Chi. Looking ahead to February, we're discussing a fair, with various vendors, for seniors and families.

hold in
PRAYER



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

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

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

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

Gladys Schaible, who passed November 26, 2020. A Service will be held September 4 at 1:00 p.m.

Sharon de Villers, who passed December 9, 2020. A Service will be held October 23 at 1:00 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.

Rob Schock, who passed August 1.

Jack Smith, who passed August 5.

in memoriam

JIM HINCH: Perspective & Remembrance

By Dick James, LOPC Member

The life of a church in some respects isn't too much different from other lives, whether personally or organizationally. All experience times of tumult and times of tranquility. Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church has followed a similar path. For roughly the past two decades, LOPC has been moving smoothly through a period mostly of calm and harmony, with Peter Whitelock as our "senior" pastor and head of staff.

Peter's arrival came after one of the bumpier periods of transition in LOPC's life. Importantly, it had been smoothed significantly thanks to Jim Hinch, or, more properly, the Rev. C. James Hinch, who served as interim pastor in 1998 and 1999. Jim passed away not long ago in Pasadena where he was living at the Monte Vista Grove Homes, an enclave of former pastors and professional church workers. Coincidentally, while there, he became best of friends with another resident, the Rev. Gary Demerest, Anne Whitelock's father, which opened a direct pipeline to the goings-on at LOPC.

With the arrival of Jim and his lovely wife, Joanne, in early 1998, came the seeds of welcome healing, which Peter and the rest of the pastoral staff have lovingly and skillfully nurtured to this day. In other words, Jim was the perfect interim pastor for LOPC for the time. Jim had an infectious laugh and rich sense of humor, and a curiosity about the Christian faith that led to intriguing answers – sometimes with a wink -- to parishioners questioning

about things they had read in the Bible. Resurrection of the body? Jim could provide enough space and guidance to allow people to figure it out for themselves—and maybe himself, too.

Jim chose life as a church pastor while still a high school sophomore in rural Illinois. Born on a farm near Greenville, he co-pastored five small



congregations from age 16 through the end of his college career. It meant preaching three sermons each Sunday for seven years. He later wrote: "I'm often asked why did I think I could do this at age 16? The answer is easy. At age 16, I knew everything!"

From there it was on to Princeton Seminary, student body president during its 150th anniversary, and his

first ordained call at Beverly Hills Community Presbyterian Church, where he met Joanne. Three years later, the two began crisscrossing the country, first to New Jersey for 11 years, to Great Falls, Montana, for 12 years, on to Sarasota, Florida, for eight years, and then interim positions in Chatsworth, Calif., and Buffalo, N.Y., before LOPC.

"Jim used that experience to help us prepare the way to call a new head of staff," says Lynn Trowbridge, a member of LOPC's Interim Pastor Search Committee. "While patiently learning our history and the way we were currently operating, he helped us see ways we could be more inclusive and dynamic. He led worship and built community while nudging everyone toward embracing change when it came. He showed he could move from his years of being the spiritual and administrative leader of congregations to being a mentor and coach preparing the way for new leadership."

A former LOPC Clerk of Session, Johan Snapper, remembers him this way: "Jim was an enjoyable extraordinary candidate for interim pastor: a good listener, with a fine sense of humor, and an articulate conversationalist."

In summation, prior to his death, Jim wrote: "This country boy from Greenville has always felt directed (shoved may be a better word) to be the right person, at the right place, at the right time. What a joy it's been."

Amen, Jim.



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Beginning Sunday, September 5.

in-person + livestream

