

# FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Alive!  
In Christ... in the World



# December 2019

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## Pastor's Message

By Jaime Polson, Pastor, Families & Executive Leadership

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'*  
 -John 18:12



I have to admit that most years I feel that all the trees, lights, ornaments, and other things that are a beautiful part of Christmas come too quickly. They arrive in the stores before I even have a chance to take care of Halloween costumes and plan our Thanksgiving for family and friends. But this year, I have found myself (yes, in September, maybe even a little before that) just waiting for Advent and Christmas – feeling a longing for the peace I often feel during the Advent and Christmas season.

As a pastor (and person), I know how very hard the holidays can be for many of us. We are missing family members or friends who are no longer with us. We experience surprising grief that comes out of a place we thought was healed. We see what is happening in our world, and we feel we are carrying heavy burdens. Sometimes the holidays and Christmas involve deep suffering for many.

And then there is another part of this liturgical season – the part I feel is a comfort to suffering, a hope for the healing of the world, and I long for the peace that only Christ can bring. I am ready for the light of Christ to come into the world with the reminder of Emmanuel, God is with us.

During Advent, we lift up the four theological virtues of hope, peace, joy, and love as we welcome and celebrate the light of Christ coming into the world. I encourage you to find a way to prepare for Christmas. LOPC offers a Family Advent Devotional Guide to walk you through each week of Advent, a 10:10 Advent Series led by Dr. Kathy Timppte, an advent devotional guide written by Pastor Lauren, worship services, Christmas concerts, and other ways to connect with God and each other during the Advent and Christmas season.

May you experience the hope, peace, joy, and love of the season and may you share Christ's love with others.



# *Christmas Eve*

*at*

*Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church*

*3:00 & 4:30 p.m.*  
*Family  
Service*

*7:00 & 8:30 p.m.*  
*Traditional  
Service*

*11:00 p.m.*  
*Carols, Candlelight,  
& Communion*

# Advent

We have many exciting opportunities this season to put you in the spirit of Advent!

## Advent Devotional

Available December 1

This Advent season, we will be offering a devotional. These daily reflections include a short prayer, a Bible reading from the liturgical readings for the week, as well as a brief meditation on the Bible passage. These brief devotionals are meant to take 5-10 minutes, and center your day. You can find the devotional online at [lopc.org/advent](http://lopc.org/advent)

## 10:10

Beginning on Sunday, December 8, 10:10 will feature a three-week Advent series this month on the Gospel of Matthew. See description to the right.

## Advent and Hygge

### The Art of Coziness

LOPC invites all families to join in celebrating the season of Advent with Hygge devotional tent cards. Hygge (pronounced “hoo-ga”), sometimes translated as “the art of coziness,” sums up the aspects of Danish life that help bring about happiness. At once an antidote to over-busy consumerism and a lovely reminder of what matters most, hygge is a perfect way for families to live into the season of Advent, lighting candles and snuggling in to what the Danes call “the duvet of darkness.”

“Advent and Hygge: The Art of Coziness” consists of five devotional table tents, one for each week of Advent (Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love), and a fifth for Christmas Eve/Day. Each tent features a lovely little table devotional, including a scripture reading, reflection, suggested practices, and a prayer.

To participate in this unique tradition, please pick up your set of tent cards in the Ministry Center. Contact Michelle Browning at [michelle@lopc.org](mailto:michelle@lopc.org) with any questions.

# 10:10

grow empowered to live in faith

## December 8: OAK ROOM

### Advent Series, Part One

Matthew’s Begats–The genealogy of Jesus serves a greater purpose in foreshadowing his major themes of continuity with Judaism and Jesus as a royal figure. Matthew also mentions four women in his genealogy (a highly unusual choice), and the four women he chooses all have a surprising thing in common... join us for more!

## December 15:

### OAK ROOM

#### Advent Series, Part Two

Be with us as we discuss the importance of showing Joseph’s initial reluctance to wed Mary, as well as the way Matthew crafts the angel’s assurances to Joseph.

### CHAPEL

#### Spiritual Journaling

Bob Finertie will guide us through the spiritual practice of journaling and its importance for expression.

## December 22: OAK ROOM

### Advent Series, Part Three

We will look at who the Magi likely were, what their visit signifies, as well as explore why Matthew chooses to narrate such a devastating story as the massacre of the infants within the story of Jesus’ birth.

Please Note: 10:10 will not be meet on Sunday, December 1, or on Sunday, December 29th.

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## Sermon Series



# What Advent Teaches Us

About... Hope • Peace • Joy • Love

December 1  
TRUE HOPE

December 8  
TRUE PEACE

December 15  
TRUE JOY

December 22  
TRUE LOVE

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## Women's Interfaith Advent Celebration

Thursday, December 12, 7:00-8:00 p.m., Chapel  
(Refreshments and conversation following service)

By Kaaren Rose, LOPC member

Neighbor to Neighbor Interfaith Women's Groups invite women to a special service entitled, "Birthing the Feminine Qualities of God in a World at Risk." Women from Muslim, Jewish, and Christian congregations will share their insights.

Many members of the three faiths will participate with music, poetry, and personal stories. Pastor Lauren Gully will be a featured speaker. All women are welcome to this Advent Celebration where we celebrate our oneness and the mothering aspects of God. Please bring your friends and neighbors.

Although Advent is a Christian tradition—a period of anticipation—we will look at it with the focus of all our faiths, striving for something new and miraculous to happen in our lives and in the world in which we live. Mary said "yes" to God. We believe each of us can say "yes" to bringing forth change by being part of an accumulation of acts to create peace and justice in our community, nation, and world. One of the ways we can do this is to have women of our faith traditions come together and explore the many ways in which we have similar values and how we can act on them.

Considering the feminine qualities of God helps us find a new vision of awakening to the primacy of relationship over power, embracing tenderness, and lovingly enduring the labor pains necessary to bring about forgiveness, solidarity, and community. The feminine metaphor for God might help teach us to grow the life of the spirit inside us. Who better than a mothering God to teach us birth?

# advent

## Introducing LOPC's NEW Advent Wreath Stand!



*W*e are so very thankful that LOPC member, Rick Burris, has once again shared his woodworking talents with our community with this new piece. In addition to this new Advent wreath stand, Rick has also created the Communion table, Baptismal Font, plant stands in the Narthex, crosses, and communion tables in church school classrooms, props for Godly Play, and more.

Rick explains, "If I'm able to create something for others to enjoy, it makes me smile. I grew up working with my hands and building things. It really feels good to help the church in this way."

**Thank you, Rick, for sharing your talents with the LOPC community!**



# mission



## December 8: One World Trade Fair

Beautiful handcrafted gifts (jewelry, art, textiles, accessories, and clothing) from around the globe including Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and United States will be on display in the Chapel Narthex. These items make meaningful holiday gifts as well as improve the livelihood of disadvantaged artisans and help them sustain the daily needs of food, education, healthcare, and housing for themselves and their families.

## December 8: MCC Food Box Collection

What was once an Adopt-A-Child program has transformed into a food program due to the ever-increasing demand. The food boxes allow families in the Monument Corridor to celebrate the holidays. During the week, pick up a food list and a box in the Ministry Center Office. On Sunday December 1, pick up a box on the plaza.

*NOTE: All Boxes **must** be returned on Sunday, December 8. Please deliver your items directly to the truck parked in front of the Oak Room.*

The food list is at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org)>The Latest.

## December 8: Harbor House Toy Collection

This program supports low-income children who reside in the San Antonio district of Oakland. The toy-collection program provides Harbor House with gifts for their on-site store which provides parents the joy of choosing a gift for their own children during the holidays. All unwrapped gifts should be returned to the Ministry Center office no later than Sunday, December 8. You can purchase gifts for infants, children, and even teens! Check out the list is at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org)>The Latest.

## Christmas 2019 Special Offering

**Make a difference in a child's life this Christmas!**

Christmas Eve through December 31

This year's Christmas offering will benefit the children of two of LOPC Mission partners: Fotokids and Children of Faith Missions. Fotokids teaches employable skills to children in the poorest barrios of Guatemala to help them rise up out of poverty. Children of Faith provides shelter, nourishment, healthcare, education, and clothing to more than 100 boys and girls.

Go to [lopc.org](http://lopc.org), click on "Give Back" and go to Online Giving, click on "Christmas Offering" in the dropdown menu.

Use the LOPC app. Click on the "Give" button and select "Christmas Offering" in the dropdown menu.

**Contact Robin at [robin@lopc.org](mailto:robin@lopc.org) with questions.**

# mission

## Turning the Tide on the AIDS Epidemic and Improving Child Health in Zimbabwe.

December 5, 7:00 p.m., Oak Room

By Phil Hunter, LOPC member

Pamela Magande, MD, MPH, program manager for the FACE (Families and Communities for the Elimination) of HIV Program of the Kapnek Trust, will provide a progress report on AIDS prevention and treatment in Zimbabwe. She will discuss the program's significant health and social impact on Zimbabwe culture as a result of the diminishing incidence of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. Dr. Magande and Dr. Dan Robbins, the Kapnek Trust's Executive Director, will report about their exciting and lifesaving work.

LOPC made a decision over eight years ago to help in the fight against AIDS by supporting the J.F. Kapnek Trust in Zimbabwe. The Trust has been on the front lines of the battle to reduce the impact of the pandemic with their effort to reduce the mother-to-child transmission of AIDS.

In her talk, Dr. Magande will address policies and practices contributing to the success of reducing the incidence of HIV in children by over 90% as well as the challenges remaining. She will also provide an update on Kapnek's strategies to improve child health through their Preschool Program and their work to assist children and their families with disabilities. And, yes, with our help the Kapnek Trust still feeds more than 17,000 preschool Zimbabwe children daily.

AIDS has killed over 32 million people worldwide as of 2018. But through years of international efforts the death rate has dropped to 800,000 from a high of 1.7 million deaths per year. An additional 37 million are living with AIDS. The disease is not the death sentence it once was. New HIV infections have been reduced by 40% since the peak in 1997.



## Congo Necklaces

On Sale December 15

The Congo Necklace Team has a wide variety of products that will be offered just in time for Christmas giving. Remember friends, family, teachers, and don't forget yourself. Along with your gift, a colorful brochure is included, which explains how the donations help. Plan on coming to see us on the plaza before and after each service on December 15.

On display will be various kinds of necklaces, eyeglass and name tag holders, and unique new scarves. All proceeds will directly help children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. So far, the Build Congo Schools program has constructed nine brick-and-mortar schools that replace those with thatched roofs and mud walls. Also, the girls class in English and computer skills has enriched the lives of over 200 students, who have graduated and found jobs and/or gone on to college. Many have become college graduates.

We will have special gift cards for you to enclose with your purchase for ether Build Congo Schools or the girls' class. Your continued, generous help for these causes is much appreciated.



## Warm Winter Nights Update

October 21-November 4, 2019



Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church is one of 17 faith communities throughout Contra Costa County that host the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa's traveling homeless shelter. This year LOPC was host to eight families comprised of 10 adults and 15 children ranging in age from 17 months to 17 years old.

This year's program faced a number of significant hurdles—the loss of electricity for more than two days, and the general disruption caused by the presence of fire danger. Despite these barriers, the LOPC community rallied under the leadership of Jim Reiter, Rick Silvani, and countless other volunteers. Warm Winter Night's Program Director, Bill Shaw, commented that LOPC was the perfect spot for his clients during an especially challenging time as LOPC consistently offers a safe and comforting environment for our guests.

More than 250 volunteers provided home-cooked meals, tutored children, shared fun activities including movie nights, animal therapy, bingo night, and even a Halloween Carnival. LOPC's annual commitment to provide shelter and hospitality to the guests of Warm Winter Nights continues to be embraced by congregation and greater community and is vital to combatting the increasing amount of homelessness in the Bay Area.

This was the first year that LOPC has hosted Warm Winter Nights over Halloween. We really wanted to make the children feel special so with the help of Laura Lowell and Elizabeth Ball we rallied volunteers to operate six carnival stations with games like Boo-Bowling and Witch's Hat Ring Toss. Everyone got to get dressed up in donated costumes and play at the carnival. Thank you for everyone who donated goods and volunteered to make this a special event!

# love does

love protects, love hopes, love never fails



The LOPC community once again showed their generosity and support by the overwhelming amount of clothing and food that was donated for Trinity Center. On September 28, a team of 11 people gathered, and together they loaded five cars and one pickup truck with all of the donated items.

Trinity Center director, Carol Lombard, showed us where to place the bags and boxes of clothing and food. We were surprised at how few items they had and were told by Carol that some of their clients were asking when "the church items" were coming!

The LOPC team worked for several hours sorting and organizing the clothing and stocking the food pantry. Needless to say, Carol was overwhelmed at the generosity and spirit of the LOPC community.

Many, many thanks to all those who donated to this project and a very special thanks to the LOPC team who volunteered their time organizing the items at Trinity Center.



# youth



## Lighthouse

Lighthouse is a service program that is designed to connect the youth from LOPC and Contra Costa Interfaith Housing (CCIH) in a way that fosters authentic relationships and deepens faith. A group of youth from LOPC will go to CCIH's Lakeside Apartments complex in Concord on three Sundays: December 8, January 26, and March 8. Participants must commit to at least two of the dates. Activities include sharing lunch together, engaging in an awesome craft, and playing fun outside games!

Interested in learning more?  
Contact Keris at [keris@lopc.org](mailto:keris@lopc.org).

## Progressive "Brinner"

Dec 15



Join us for a fun night of fellowship, food, and worship as we drive to three LOPC youth's homes for a progressive breakfast for dinner! 5-8 p.m. that night! Alumni are welcome.

## Mediocre Talent Night

Dec 18



Come showcase your not-so-great talents at YOW's annual mediocre talent night on December 18! Sing, dance, tell a joke or story! Prizes for the most average performance!



## HS Seniors & Alumni Christmas Dinner

Saturday, December 22

A special dinner reunion for high school seniors, advisors, and BTW alumni! Join us as we enjoy a delicious meal, talk about what life is like after high school, and worship together in the comfort of a local LOPC home. Please RSVP to Keris by Dec. 15.



## Save the Date

### Youth Summer Service-Learning Opportunities

Online registrations open in February 2020!

#### 5th & 6th Grade Service Squad: June 1-5

Youth who complete 5th or 6th grades in May 2020 will serve for a couple of hours each day with a local mission partner in the East Bay, and return to debrief and reflect on their experience. Youth will become acquainted with the many ways in which we can share God's love within our own community! Our dream is that this experience will inspire youth for a life of serving and loving others. Service may include food sorting and packing, yardwork, visiting the elderly and home-bound, running programs for children living in a shelter, and more!

#### 7th & 8th Grade San Francisco Trip: July 12-17

Youth who complete 7th or 8th grades in May 2020, will spend a week in San Francisco and the surrounding area serving with City Service Mission. Through this experience, youth will be introduced to the many ways we can serve people in our own Bay Area community. We'll discover a new side of this familiar city through immersive activities—serving with a variety of ministry partners and a daily debriefing of our experiences.

#### High School Yakima Trip: June 20-27

Youth who complete 9th-12th grade in May 2020 will travel to Yakima, Washington to partner with an indigenous-led organization: S.L.A.M. (Students Learning About Missions). S.L.A.M. is based within the Yakima Nation and focuses on teaching outside groups how they follow 'The Jesus Way' through their native traditions. Youth service teams will witness various ceremonies, learn about the history and culture of the Yakima people, and provide basic housework service in tribe elders' homes. The trip will be mainly relational—aiming to deepen our understanding and connections to the larger body of Christ from a different cultural, historical, and spiritual perspective.



By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC member

Addison Owensby has a full schedule of classes as a high school freshman and is very involved in water polo, but he's also active at LOPC. He says his faith journey began as a preschooler when his parents began attending LOPC. He credits his mom, Katie, for influencing him the most. "She has done this by helping me get involved in many church activities and leading me to take more steps to move me closer to my understanding of God, Jesus, and the church."

Addison continues, "LOPC has enhanced my faith journey by teaching me the word of God and taking me on incredible mission trips to help and serve others."

Right now he is dealing with his best friend's brother's death and feels his faith has helped a lot. "I lived out this experience in sorrow, but I talked to Jesus and God and asked them for help and guidance through this sad time. It was a step out of my comfort zone to help my friend through his tough time, teaching him about Jesus and how He is always there for us and how He is waiting for each one of us to call on Him. I know He is there to help.

"I'm not sure about God's direction for me, but HE was guiding me to help my best friend, and I feel this is where I need to be right now. However, one other thing, I am hoping to join the confirmation class this year to confirm my faith in the church and Jesus."

A Bible verse that has given Addison direction is: Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

# children

## Children's Ministry

### Volunteers Needed on Sunday Mornings!



#### 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

- Room assistant for 1st grade
- Small group leader for 3rd grade
- Small group leader for 4th grade

#### 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

- Storytellers for pre-Kindergarten-1st grade
- Room assistants for pre-Kindergarten-1st grade
- Storytellers for 2nd-4th grade
- Room assistants for 2nd-4th grade



If you are interested in volunteering, contact Lori Robinson at [lori@lopc.org](mailto:lori@lopc.org) or 925-283-8722 x251.

# seedlings

## Seedlings Outreach Programs

By Tina Clendenin, Seedlings Communications Board member

You may have heard that Seedlings Preschool is a wonderful place for toddlers to develop and learn. You also may have heard that their students gain social experiences and confidence through play and exploration. But did you know that Seedlings offers their students a wonderful outreach program as well?



In addition to social and academic development, Seedlings teachers and staff have made it a priority to expose their young learners to outreach opportunities. In October, Seedlings hosted their annual Wheel Day event. They earned almost \$2,000 in proceeds and were able to donate it all to Grateful Gatherings, an outreach program that provides housing supplies to those in need.

In December, Seedlings and LOPC will team up to host a holiday toy drive. After Thanksgiving a "giving tree" will be set up in the foyer of the preschool building. Families are given the opportunity to choose an ornament from the tree that has a child's age and wish list. All collections are then taken to Harbor House in Oakland, a place where families in need go for support and resources.

In March, Seedlings will once again team up with LOPC to offer families the chance to participate in the after-school drop-in service project, Love Does. Children will be able to put together food boxes and organize school supplies into backpacks for the Monument Crisis Center in Concord.

**Seedlings is proud to offer their students many opportunities to give back. If you have any questions or are interested in learning more, please contact Bobbi Cassetari, Seedlings Director of Outreach and Enrichment, [bobbi@lopc.org](mailto:bobbi@lopc.org).**

# community



## FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

First Friday Forum is back in 2020 with an outstanding group of speakers. Mark your calendar now so you won't miss attending. There will be refreshments at 1:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall, with the speaker in the Sanctuary at 1:30 p.m.

### January 3

Mark Sherry – Air Traffic Control Specialist

*Air Traffic Control*

### February 7

Christine Solseng – U.S. Census Bureau

*What We Will Learn From the Upcoming Census*

### March 6

Dan McGovern – President, Eugene O'Neill Foundation

*From Reagan to Bush to Eugene O'Neill Festivals*

### April 3

Raphael Danziger – Doctorate in Near Eastern Studies

*Middle East Update*

### May 1

Michael Baker, MD – Retired Admiral, U.S. Navy

*Crisis on the Korean Peninsula and a Rational Way Forward*

### June 12 (second Friday)

Irene Bloemraad – Professor of Sociology, University of California

*Immigration Facts & Myths: What Everyone Needs to Know*

## Christmas Dreams

**Annual Presbyterian Women's Christmas Tea**  
December 6, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

If a dream is a wish your heart makes, the dream in the hearts of Presbyterian Women is for every woman at LOPC to come to the Christmas tea on December 6. Get your tickets on the Plaza December 1 or in the Ministry Center During the week.

The singing group Encore at Christmas will entertain with Christmas music and a sing-a-long. Our annual Christmas offering will be received, with half going to a local mission and half to a national mission partner.

Tea, coffee, homemade cookies, and tea sandwiches will be served.

Start the Christmas season of love, joy, peace, and dreams by bringing a friend, dressing in your favorite tea outfit, and enjoying Christmas Dreams at LOPC on December 6.



## Fourth Friday Book Group

Visitors are always welcome at the Fourth Friday book group at 4:00 p.m. in the Chapel Counseling Room.

- January 24, *The Day the World Came to Our Town*, by Jim DeFede.
- February 28, *The Library Book*, by Susan Orlean.

Contact Catherine Coleman at [awaitingword@gmail.com](mailto:awaitingword@gmail.com) for more information.

# community

## thursday Fellowship

*A program of Senior Care Ministries*

Every Thursday  
11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

December is upon us and after a wonderful Autumn we look forward to celebrating this month with our Thursday Fellowship holiday traditions and festivities. Join us for a splash of Christmas spirit as we celebrate the Christmas message of love and peace. We're excited to present musical programs each week that will get you in the Christmas spirit! Don't be surprised if you hear some "Ho Ho Ho's" emanating from Fellowship Hall accompanied by the laughter of the Seedlings children who gift us with their joyous enthusiasm.

- **December 5:** Harmony Choir Christmas Program
- **December 12:** at 11:15 a.m., London Town Carolers and at 12:45 p.m., sing-a-long with Jim Pearson and Gillian Roebuck.
- **December 19:** Michael Kistner, vocalist and guitarist, helps us celebrate Christmas in Song.
- **December 26 & January 2:** No Thursday Fellowship. Have a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!
- **January 9:** Thursday Fellowship resumes.

**Come and experience our exciting and varied activities and programs and be a part of our very special caring community!**

**We welcome guests, volunteers, and visitors!**



Julie Peterson  
julie@lopc.org



Clarita Wooldridge  
clarita@lopc.org

**925-283-8722 x281**



### LOPC Sanctuary Flowers

Sponsoring the chancel floral arrangement for a Sunday worship is a beautiful way to celebrate an occasion, or honor your loved ones. Dates for 2020 are now available! If you are interested in sponsoring a Sunday in 2020, please sign up online at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org) and click on the "Event Registration" tab to submit your request. As a sponsor, a donation of \$150 to the LOPC Flower Fund is suggested. The sponsor's name is included in the Sunday order of worship.

**For more information, contact Lexi Morrissey at [lexi@lopc.org](mailto:lexi@lopc.org).**

### LOPC Breakfast

December 18 - 7:00 a.m. in the Davies Room



Executive Director of the Monument Crisis Center, Sandra Scherer, will join us. Monument Crisis Center was recently named a California Nonprofit of the Year by State Senator Steve Glazer. The work of Monument Crisis

Center in Concord is critically important to families in need. It is a community-based nonprofit family resource center that directly confronts the root causes of poverty, delivers immediate assistance, and provides comprehensive wrap-around, safety net services for Central and East Contra Costa County.

We will also have our traditional Christmas Carol sing-a-long led by our own Michael Morales!

**A \$5 donation for breakfast is suggested at the door. RSVP to Lexi at [lexi@lopc.org](mailto:lexi@lopc.org).**



# Moms RETREAT

January 17, 2020  
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Please join us for our Annual Moms' Retreat on January 17, 2020, from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Our guest speaker is the Rev. Sandhya Jha, a highly respected and inspiring speaker, preacher, and workshop leader. She will share insights on how to teach our children about the things that matter most.

New this year is also the option to join us for a Moms Night Out in Lamorinda - as well as to participate in a service project for STAND! For Families Free of Violence. STAND! is one of LOPC's local mission partners committed to building safe and strong families and to providing shelter and resources for victims escaping violent homes. In preparation for this project, we are asking for your help! Please consider donating any unused travel-sized toiletries—such as shampoos, lotions and soaps—for our service project to our Family Ministry team. Please deliver unused toiletry items to the Ministry Center through January 16. Thank you for helping be a part of our service project.

**Additional details about the Moms Night Out and service projects are forthcoming. Contact Michelle Browning at [michelle@lopc.org](mailto:michelle@lopc.org) with any questions and to register. Space is limited. Childcare is available by RSVP to Michelle no later than Friday, January 10.**

## The Parenting Journey

Beginning in January, LOPC invites parents of middle-school age children to join Valerie Hodgskiss on Wednesday evenings for a parent-support and community-building group. This parent circle will provide parents with the opportunity to connect with one another through good discussions and prayer. Possible topics include parent-child relationships, anxiety, and bullying. Valerie is a licensed marriage and family therapist, mother of four children, and LOPC choir member.

This group will meet for six weeks on Wednesdays from 5:45-6:45 p.m., beginning January 15.

**Please contact Michelle Browning at [michelle@lopc.org](mailto:michelle@lopc.org) with any questions and to RSVP. Drop-ins are welcome but please do RSVP in advance for headcount purposes.**

## Sea Kayak and Camp in the Bahamas!

**January 21-28, 2020; 6 days/5 nights on the water**

Sea kayaking and camping in the Bahamas on pristine beaches is an unforgettable experience! Escape winter and kayak to small islands where our tents will be the only structures there, and we the only inhabitants. Once we land, we'll set up camp and then snorkel, learn kayaking skills, or just read and lay out in the sun – all with a supportive and fun group.

The cost is \$1,000 (airfare and pre/post-trip lodging extra). The experience is for novices and is only moderately strenuous. This trip is led by the Rev. Dr. Steve Harrington, former pastor at Sunnyside Presbyterian Church and Livermore Presbyterian Church, who is an ACA certified Sea Kayak Instructor. Steve has guided for many years around the world as an instructor for both NOLS and Outward Bound. Participation numbers are limited.

**Contact Steve Harrington for information at [bebravebewise@gmail.com](mailto:bebravebewise@gmail.com) or 408-835-0601.**

# session

## Session Meeting Highlights

October 2019

By Lois Boyd, Clerk of Session

The highlight of the October meeting was a report from Jody Black who has been leading the Task Force on Volunteerism. He provided an overview of the Task Force's approach that included discussing the theological mandate for lay ministry, the current state of volunteerism at LOPC, and brainstorming ideas for enhancing the church's volunteer strategy and efforts

The church benefits from a very active volunteer community that numbers in the hundreds who are involved in long and short-term ministry activities. Current LOPC volunteers were surveyed and provided very positive and affirming responses about their experiences. Yet we still have room for improvement in some areas with regard to organization, being clear about volunteers' roles and purpose, and ensuring we do not burn out volunteers.

The greatest challenge is the continuing need to add and replace volunteers, particularly in the Children, Family, and Youth Ministry areas. The Task Force made a number of recommendations regarding recruitment and retention of volunteers, effective matching of volunteers to needs, and supporting and celebrating volunteer contributions.

Jaime Polson introduced Session to the process that the Communications Team is undertaking in working with the outside marketing firm that will be helping us to align our communications with the church's mission. The marketing firm will be seeking feedback from a variety of sources so they may better know and understand LOPC. The question Jaime posed to Session was, "What makes LOPC unique?". Responses included the quality and relevance of the sermons, music ministry, authenticity of the church community, interfaith involvement, mission outreach, seniors ministry, and much more. No doubt each of us could add to the list.

To launch this year's stewardship campaign, the Stewardship Team completed a series of 10:10 programs on Talent – how your gifts and abilities can change the world; Treasure – how to share yours in a way to reflect God's love; and Time – how to use it to create impactful and compassionate change. More information about this year's campaign will be presented during services, in *Focus* and on the plaza between services. I had the opportunity to lead spiritual formation, a powerful and humbling experience.





# lopc foundation

## Foundation Reports Strong Fiscal Year Results

By Phil Placier, Foundation Trustee, Treasurer



Phil Placier

LOPC Foundation closed its September 30, 2019, fiscal year with \$10.3 million of invested net assets (also called equity), after deducting \$376,000 of commitments to LOPC. Legacy estate and other gifts in the amount of \$273,000 were received. The comparable year-earlier amount was \$23,000.

A 1.2% investment rate of return for the fiscal year was earned on the two Foundation investment portfolios made up of 23 diversified mutual funds and exchange traded funds.

Foundation trustees appropriated \$271,000 for church ministries, an increase from \$268,000 a year earlier. They also appropriated \$100,000 for the third and final installment of a three-year pledge to the Sanctuary Campaign, and \$149,000 for facilities reserve study project expenses.

### Net asset values of the Foundation's 10 funds and Facilities Reserve Account at September 30, after additions and disbursements to the church:

#### **Unrestricted**

General Ministry Fund	\$ 2,741,000
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#### **Restricted\***

Cranmer Christian Leadership Fund	231,000
Deacons Endowments Fund	226,000
Dornsife Youth Endowment Fund	337,000
Facilities Endowments Fund	5,662,000
Facilities Reserve Account**	508,000
Holman Mission Endowment Fund	98,000
Holman Music Endowment Fund	105,000
Newcomer Women's Endowment Fund	3,800
Steuber Landscape Maintenance Endowment Fund	116,000
Thursday Fellowship Endowment Fund	231,000

\*Restricted funds and account are available for grants for limited or restricted uses designated by donors or Foundation trustees.

\*\*The Facilities Reserve Account provides funds for planned and unexpected facilities and capital equipment projects. In fiscal 2019, \$180,000 was set aside in the account, an increase from \$165,000 a year earlier.

Learn more about donor opportunities for legacy estate and other gifts to stabilize Foundation support of church ministries in the future, at the LOPC website, and from Foundation trustees:

Staci Johnston (President, 925-588-9992), Kristi Haigh (Vice President, 925-890-0265), Dara Youngdale (Secretary, 510-388-4000), Phil Placier (Treasurer, 925-254-7769).

Jim Beckemeyer (925-324-9655), Jen Crocker (925-765-4222), Jerry Ducey (925-997-8839), Dick James (925-323-9046), Mike Ross (925-254-6621); as of January 1, Lois Boyd (925-787-2388).

# giving

## Financial Update

January to September 2019	Actual	Budget
<i>Congregational Giving</i>		
Pledge Income	\$ 1,520,012	\$ 1,579,000
Non-Pledge, Loose Offerings, & Other Giving	259,070	182,151
Mission & other special gifts	100,931	70,394
Faith Component	4,963	4,960
<b>Total Congregational Giving</b>	<b>1,884,976</b>	<b>1,836,505</b>
<i>Other Sources</i>		
Seedlings Offset to Shared Costs	110,000	107,000
User Fees	6,390	6,900
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2,001,366</b>	<b>1,950,405</b>
Expenses	(2,429,141)	(2,416,468)
<b>Net Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ (427,775)</b>	<b>\$ (466,063)</b>

As we enter the last part of 2019, LOPC has a great deal to be thankful for. Year-to-date income through September is \$2,001,366 which is \$50,962 better than budget. Mission and Other Special Gifts is \$30,537 better than budget due to additional deployment of special gifts. The remaining income lines are \$20,425 better than budget due to lower Pledge Income offset by higher Non-Pledge, Loose Offerings & Other Giving. We are still \$67,000 or 3% short on our Pledge Commitments compared to budget, so please take a look at your giving. The staff continues to do a great job managing the expenses, as they are just slightly higher than budget by \$12,674, mainly due to higher Mission Giving and lower personnel expenses.

As in prior years, the 2019 budget includes a Faith Component. This represents giving beyond pledge commitments and historical non-pledge trends that is needed to cover the expense budget. This year's Faith Component is \$200,000. All contributions you make to the church in time, talent, and treasure are appreciated. Thank you to everyone who has given so much to help support all of the great ministries at LOPC.


## Tax Deadline for 2019 Donations

Anyone who plans to make tax-deductible donations to LOPC in 2019 is reminded that the church must either receive your gift by 5:00 p.m. on December 31, or receive your mailed gift postmarked December 31 or earlier. For those giving stock, please note that these gifts must be in LOPC's brokerage account no later than December 31. Please notify Lidia Jesionek (x229 or lidia@lopc.org) or Char Casella (x253 or char@lopc.org) if you are making a stock gift, what stock(s) you're donating, and how it should be applied.

Year-end statements will be mailed in January. To ensure the deductibility of your gifts, do not file your 2019 tax return until you receive this statement. Some of your gifts may not be tax-deductible if you file your tax return before receiving a written acknowledgment of your gifts to LOPC.

# Christmas Eve Poinsettias

This Christmas, we will continue our well-loved tradition of adorning the sanctuary with poinsettias. You may donate a poinsettia for \$15 at the booth that will be on the plaza December 1, 8, and 15 between services from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. 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.



Christmas Eve  
*Poinsettias*

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

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_  
Or  
In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

**\$15**

**Please make checks payable to LOPC.**  
Please fill out and return this form to the Ministry Center Office at LOPC by December 16.

Please Circle  
Cash    Check

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 at 11:00 p.m.

**Questions? Contact Lexi at [lexi@lopc.org](mailto:lexi@lopc.org).**

# Christmas Concert

**Saturday**  
**December 7**  
4:00 p.m.

**Sunday**  
**December 8**  
2:00 p.m. & 5:00 p.m.

**Reserved tickets can be picked up in the Ministry Center through December 4.**



49 Knox Drive  
Lafayette, CA 94549

DECEMBER 2019

IMPORTANT

Return Service Requested

Dated Material  
PLEASE DELIVER  
BEFORE 12/1/19

Thank you!

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

#### PASTORAL STAFF

Peter Whitelock, Head of Staff  
Gerald Chinen, Congregational Care  
Lauren Gully, Mission & Spiritual Formation  
Jaime Polson, Families & Executive Leadership

#### WORSHIP & MUSIC

Brett Strader, Director  
Stewart Scharch, Organist

#### TREASURER

Char Casella

#### MINISTRY DIRECTORS

Chris Baldwin, Community Engagement  
Keris Dahlkamp & Allison Kunz, Youth  
Coleen Moulton, Seedlings Preschool  
Ryan Timpte, Children

#### FOCUS NEWSLETTER

Jon Corry, Communications  
Dick James & Lexi Morrissey, Editing

Thank you to all who contribute to each issue.

#### Monthly FOCUS Newsletter Deadline:

December 1 for the January 2020 issue.  
Email items to [communications@lopc.org](mailto:communications@lopc.org).

#### Weekly CONNECTIONS Deadline:

Every Monday by 5 p.m. for the following  
Sunday's issue.

Submit items at:

[lopc.org/submission-for-connections](http://lopc.org/submission-for-connections)

# Christmas Eve

— at —

*Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church*

3:00 & 4:30 p.m.

**Family  
Service**

7:00 & 8:30 p.m.

**Traditional  
Service**

11:00 p.m.

**Carols, Candlelight,  
& Communion**

**Sunday Worship Services**  
9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Invite Friends & Family!

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and at [lopc.org](http://lopc.org)