

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2022

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

LOPC.ORG



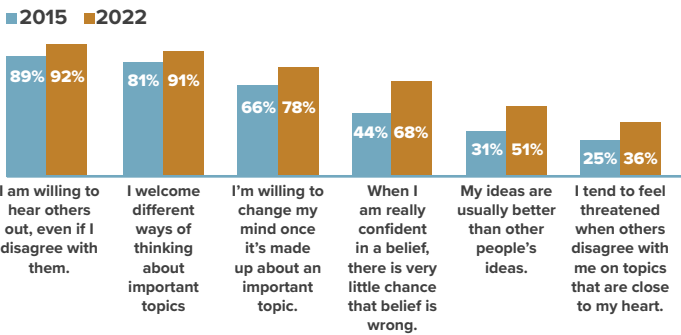
POLARIZATION

By Peter Whitelock - Pastor, Head of Staff



Just about every day I encounter someone lamenting the deep divisions and distrust which presently exist in our nation. As we start the ramp-up to midterm elections in a couple months, one can only wonder how the situation might deteriorate further. In the midst of such polarization, the church has not been unaffected. In a recent article from Barna Research, it was revealed that one of the main reasons clergy are thinking about leaving full-time ministry is political division. While I have heard nothing along these lines from your LOPC pastors, I have heard this lamentation from a few peers serving other churches.

I was intrigued by a chart in the article mentioned above, which illustrates a shift from 2015 regarding how Americans deal with differences:



This data seems to indicate that since 2015 Americans are more willing to listen and hear people out, even if they disagree with them. On the other hand, though, people today are more likely to be threatened by tough conversations and more certain of their own convictions. So, there is an observable rise in polarization, but hidden behind it is an openness to thoughtful engagement.

I don't think we can snap our fingers and just wish away the current level of polarization in our nation, but I've always liked Paul's instruction from Philippians 2:3-4 as to how we can better engage one another across lines of difference. He states, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." Paul's conviction was that as we seek the mind "that was in Christ Jesus" we can find unity even in our diverse ways of seeing the world.

Source: New Data Shed Light on Polarization in America Articles in Culture & Media • © Barna Group, July 20, 2022. barna.com/research/polarization-2015-2022.

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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!*

special OFFERING

Food Crisis Affecting Children in Zimbabwe

By Phil Hunter, LOPC Member

The world economy has been challenged with lingering effects of Covid, and now, the repercussions of the warfare in Ukraine. Zimbabwe, home to J.F. Kapnek Trust, was struggling even before Covid. Like many nonprofits, J.F. Kapnek has managed to continue its programs through the generosity of others, partnerships with various government programs, and being awarded foundation grants. Unfortunately, a major multi-year grant focused on early childhood development efforts recently ended, and the timing could not have been worse. Combined with a poor harvest, increased transportation costs, increased demand and cost for critical goods, a loss of a major funding source has put this essential program in dire straits. In response, this September LOPC will have a special offering to help purchase and deliver vitally important fortified porridge to children in need.



J.F. Kapnek Trust's Preschool-Child Health Program offers a breadth of services to preschool aged children in over 150 primary schools comprised of approximately 200 classrooms in Zimbabwe. This program offers training for teachers, refurbishing of schools, health check-ups (with immunizations), and a daily serving of fortified porridge. It is this daily fortified nutritional porridge prepared and served by parents at preschools many think is the keystone of the program.

This nutritious serving helps children:

- have a nutritious meal once a day, reducing the rate of malnutrition;
- focus on learning; not listening to their empty stomachs;
- develop normally to better fight off childhood illnesses which lead to a high rate of child mortality;
- ensure better physical health to fight off adult illnesses such as the recent pandemics that have swept through Sub-Saharan Africa.

Members of LOPC have traveled to Zimbabwe numerous times over the years in an effort to improve child health with a focus on orphans and vulnerable children. During our most recent trip in 2018, the team spent time at several preschool program sites, helping with all aspects of the program. The experience of helping feed these bright-faced young children was one of the highlights of the trip.

Historically, LOPC has been generous in supporting J.F. Kapnek's Early Childhood Development program. Most recently, LOPC provided over 600 hygiene kits to children discharged from the only children's hospital in the country. For quite a few years, LOPC has helped provide nutritional porridge, even during the pandemic when the schools were not operating, by repacking it into smaller quantities which could be distributed to families in need.



When you give:

- \$25 provides the fortified porridge for one classroom for two weeks.
- \$100 supplies the porridge for one classroom for two months.
- \$500 provides a year's supply of the porridge for a classroom.

Know that whatever you are able to give is very much appreciated. J.F. Kapnek Trust will continue to be excellent stewards of your generous gifts.

How to Give:

- Go to [LOPC.org](https://lopc.org) and click "Giving" and then click on "Online Giving" and be sure to select "Give one time" and then "JF Kapnek Trust" in the dropdown menu.
- Write a check to LOPC with "JF Kapnek Trust" in the memo line and place in collection box in the Narthex or the black mailbox in front of the Ministry Center.
- Visit lopc.org/specialoffering for more info. This special offering begins on September 11 in worship.

mission

Excerpts from the **FOTOKIDS** Summer Newsletter

By: Nancy McGirr, Fotokids

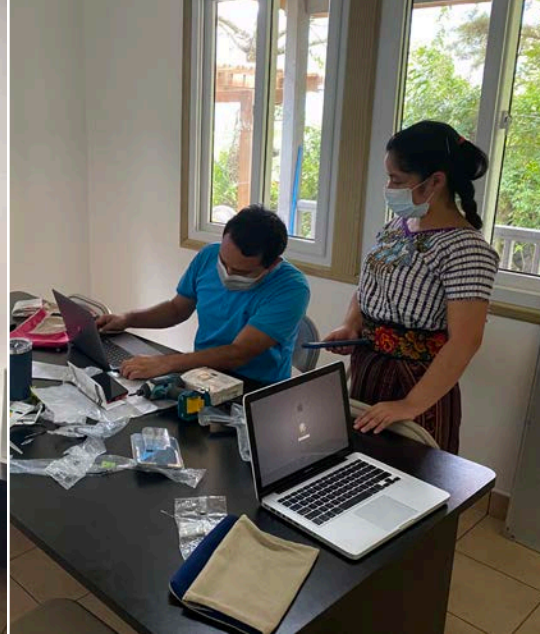
Rainy season is here in the mountains and nature bursts forth a lush, vibrant green. Gardens become jungles, and you can smell the earth. Birds are singing and parrots clacking above.

October 27 is the inauguration date for Fotokids' 30th year retrospective exhibit. The Hispanic Cultural Center in the city of Antigua, Guatemala, has ostensibly given us most of the building. It is, to state the obvious, a lot of work -- with more than 225 photos that we print ourselves, mat and frame, and add text. The Fotokids team will put them up on the website gallery after the opening, and they will be for sale online.

This being Fotokids' 30th year, it's given me time to reflect upon how many times we have had to change our course of action in order to stick with our goals. What really distinguishes us from other non-profits is our long-term commitment to students, nurturing them for at least 10 years. In the process, we provide them with an academic educational scholarship and a curriculum that gives them unique vocational skills in IT and media arts that gives them an extra advantage looking for a job.

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← from previous

Photos by: page left - Samanta Phaniagua, page right, bottom - Claudia Amelia Ixbalán Tacaxoy.

Along the way, we focus on critical thinking and writing skills as well as what it means to be a good person and give back. Some groups design their projects for three years or less in order to get funding and scale up to serve thousands of people, hoping they will get lasting results. From my experience, that model isn't enough time. Fotokids, instead of looking at serving large numbers, signs on for 10 to 15 years. I guess you could say we are in it for the long haul.

This year, Fotokids has 150 children studying with us. We get to know the families, their struggles, and limitations, and can help guide a child and give them the support of knowing someone really is interested, cares, and has their back. We will be there: tutoring, providing a place to study and use of computers for homework, paying a medical bill, helping the neediest of families with food baskets, and being someone to talk to when they have a problem. Many of you have supported individual kids or the project year after year.

Fotokids can point to the success of our many graduates in areas such as human rights, education, design, communications, business, art, social work, and physical therapy -- and we can confidently say, "hey, it works". This year alone, we have nine students graduating from our Vocational Program after eight years of time invested -- three of whom will receive a university scholarship for 2024 after they serve a year working as teaching assistants for Fotokids. That will bring our total to 10 university scholarships, each costing approximately \$3,000 per year. We will need six new university scholarships. By early next year, 80 students will be eligible for the middle and high

school scholarships, if they keep their grades up and have satisfactorily completed the Fotokids program. A full year of funding for that group could be nearly \$48,000, and that's in addition to the 56 who have been supported this year. Like everywhere, costs keep going up, but I think our results show it is a good investment.

The second thing that distinguishes Fotokids from other non-profits is our flexibility in problem solving. Living in areas where violence is part of daily life, including gangs and extortions, I don't need to tell you that kids we work with live in fear. It invades and permeates the psyche, inhibiting it, and making the idea of taking risks just too scary. Exhibiting curiosity, one of the keystones of learning, becomes tenuous. An exploration of new ideas and new opportunities becomes a no-go, it being easier simply to not take any chances. Fotokids endeavors to take students out of such an environment, providing them a safe space and exposing them to many initiatives that a kid living in poverty wouldn't even know existed. You have got to know what's out there to even have a dream.

This month, Fotokids staff in the town of Santiago Atitlán will visit 13 public schools, looking for promising students who have the drive and tenacity to take advantage of the Fotokids program. Their goal is to interview 130 interested students and their parents hoping to accept 50 to begin later this year.

How You Can Help:

Fotokids has two fundraisers each year; however, to support the growing scholarship costs of additional qualifying students, they are going to introduce a third fundraiser. This September's fundraiser will be held through the Fotokids website and will be hosted live on Zoom! Look for the link in October's issue of Focus and how to participate in this vital initiative.

To learn more on how to help go to fotokidsoriginal.org/about.



community

The Impact of the Pandemic on Children and Families: A First Friday Forum Recap

By Catherine Coleman, Seniors Ministry Elder



FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

Ryan Timpte, LOPC's Director of Children's Ministry until he left to become a stay-at-home dad this spring, has insight and suggestions of importance to every one of us related to the effects of the Covid pandemic on children. Ryan's June First Friday Forum video presentation is available on the LOPC website (see link below).



raged. For some, trust in leaders and experts has diminished. However, we must avoid a tendency to conclude that our differing opinions carry as much weight as those of experts we may disagree with.

Ryan offers parents a way to thoughtfully assess and respond to behavior of younger members of the family. Nevertheless, he emphasized that his remarks are meant for all of us. We all play a role in the lives of the children around us, intentionally or not. Ryan asks us to be intentional about children and not abdicate our share of the responsibility.

Using an interdisciplinary approach can assist anyone involved with children to carefully exercise our role as the responsible adult. Ryan points to specific references in his Princeton Theological Seminary training in Practical Theology to explain a comprehensive path to figuring out how to objectively help youngsters with pandemic related challenges.

The "descriptive task" is to look at

what is going on. The "interpretive task" is to consider what expert voices from several disciplines are saying. The "normative task" is to look at what should be going on, as opposed to focusing on symptoms evidenced by youngsters. The "pragmatic task" is what we, the community, can do to help: to be present and to be advocates. Ryan's video expands on this process.

Not everyone has a young child. Ryan urged every person to look for opportunities to be involved in the lives of a child or children and to support parents, even on a casual basis. As Ryan noted, "Every child needs at least five adults in their lives; there are tons of opportunities to come alongside kids." Everyone has been challenged by the pandemic – isolated or forced to significantly alter our lives. Reminding ourselves of the satisfaction and importance of being actively attentive to children and youth can be a good thing for us all.

Visit lopc.org/first-friday-forum to watch Ryan's video presentation, easily viewed while making dinner or taking a walk.

Pastor's Roundtable:

Abortion/Reproductive Choice and the Presbyterian Church (USA)

September 25, 11:00 a.m., Fellowship Hall following worship

Abortion has been a complex issue that Presbyterians have been wrestling with for decades. In 1970, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) declared "the artificial or induced termination of a pregnancy is a matter of careful ethical decision of the patient . . . and therefore should not be restricted by law . . ." Pastors Peter Whitelock, Lauren Gully, and Jaime Polson will guide a discussion on the Scriptures, denominational statements, and the effects of recent changes to the law. There will be time to discuss and share, as we seek to understand and strive for unity in Christ even as we struggle with complex matters.



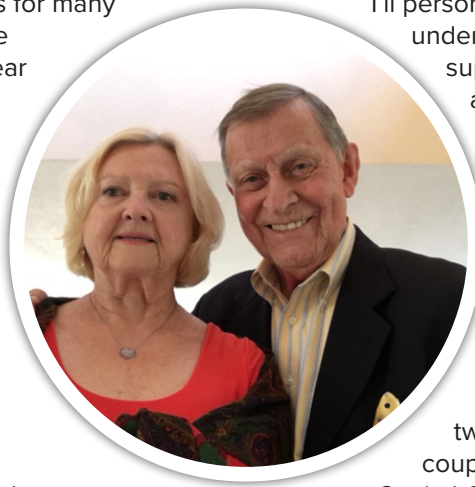
Reflections

on Serving Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church

Faithful LOPC members and lay leaders for many years, Gerda and Johan Snapper have recently moved to Southern California near their son and his family. Their presence at LOPC will be greatly missed. Gerda and Johan, with the help of Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, member, friend, and writer, have graciously agreed to sit down and share a bit about their time at LOPC.

Johan was co-chair, with former Session Clerk Phyllis Bell Stover, of the search committee for a senior pastor. Recalls Johan: "This meant several successful interviews with Peter Whitelock, though we thought he was perhaps a bit young for the job. However, we were impressed with his historical and theological depth and breadth, and we enjoyed the encounter. LOPC has been the blessed recipient of this brilliant pastor ever since." During a period of significant and challenging transition, LOPC was grateful for Johan's leadership as Clerk of Session at that time.

Johan says, "Gerda and I have fully enjoyed being part of this church for more than 40 years, including the sermons, the music, talented clergy, and LOPC's inclusive worship style.



"I'll personally miss the support of the Men's Group, under the leadership of Andy Amstutz, that has supported me in my faith. Gerda and I will always miss LOPC."

Gerda recalls that even before joining LOPC, they wanted their newborn son baptized while his grandmother visited from Austria, and it happened, with two LOPC clergy participating. "The Rev. Dr. Jim Little welcomed us warmly, with the Rev. Andy Kurth performed the baptism." Gerda was heavily involved in Sunday School, both as a teacher and twice as Director of Children's Ministry. The couple also served as team leaders during a Capital Campaign.

The Snappers were active in various social groups, most recently the Explorers, where they developed many close friendships through the years. Gerda also served, in her second term as elder, in Community Involvement, working with Pastor Chris Baldwin. They organized the Luau Luncheons, Easter Egg Hunts, and numerous other events. Concludes Gerda: "Years ago, we bought a niche in the Kurth Memorial Garden. So, while for now, we are not present, we shall visit occasionally, and someday, eventually return."



Community Life

SMALL GROUPS

Starting Soon!

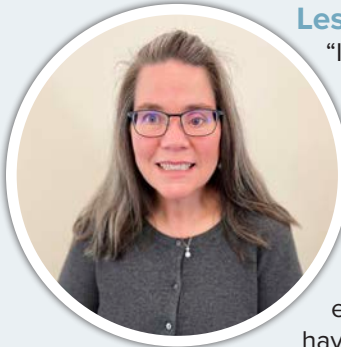
Join one of our Community Life small groups this program year to explore themes of faith, mercy, and kindness. This year's selected studies continue LOPC's goal toward inclusivity and diversity. Delve deeply into community and grow in your faith this season. Groups launch in September.

Sneak peek:

- Session One - (September 12 - October 17): Wholehearted Faith by Rachel Held Evans & Jeff Chu.
- Session Two - (October 24-December 5) Hallelujah Anyway: Rediscovering Mercy by Anne Lamott.
- Session Three - (January 23-February 17) In Defense of Kindness: Why it Matters, How it Changed Our Lives, and How it Can Save the World by Bruce Reyes-Chow.
- Session Four (February 22 - April 3) The LOPC Lenten Book Study.

Contact Michelle Browning at michelle@lopc.org for a list of group times and meetings.

WELCOME new members



Leslie & Ray Vallee

"I am Leslie Vallee, a San Francisco native, and I moved to Moraga in 2016 (in search of good high schools) when relocating back to the Bay Area from Connecticut. I am a director at Genentech in South San Francisco and am responsible for clinical-trial data collected for hematology and early development oncology studies. I have two sons, Jack (22), who is a graduate student at Saint Mary's, and Ray (20), who is a student athlete at Diablo Valley College. My husband of 32 years passed away in February, and attending worship at LOPC has helped me during this time of transition. I like to garden, travel, watch football, and socialize with friends."

"My name is Ray Vallee, son of Leslie Vallee, also a new LOPC member. I'm 20 years old and have been a Moraga resident for six years. I was born in New London, Connecticut, and grew up living in both San Francisco and Connecticut. I am a 2020 Miramonte graduate and a current student athlete at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill. I play football for the DVC Vikings and recently placed on the national top-12 list for kicker/punter recruits for 2022. Outside of school and football, I'm an avid golfer and enjoy riding motorcycles. My interest in joining LOPC stems from wanting to be a member of strong community and a congregation that sees itself as more than just a church."



Andrea McEvoy

Andrea McEvoy, a long-time Lamorinda resident, says she joins LOPC from First Presbyterian Berkeley. She currently works at UC Davis where she advances MBA students' careers and previously developed learning programs for companies at UC Berkeley. Her two children, Grace and Dillon Barosky, who are now in their 20s, attended schools in Orinda. Andrea enjoys British mysteries, hiking with her dog, Griffin, and gardening, as well as studying contemplative practices. She is looking forward to getting to know the LOPC community.



Al Warmerdam

Al & Lori Warmerdam live in Lafayette and were married at LOPC in March by Pastor Lauren Gully. Together they have four children and six grandchildren. Both Lori and Al are respiratory care practitioners. They sold their Home Respiratory Equipment Company (Est. 1994) in 2021 and are enjoying retirement. Lori and her family have been members of LOPC for many years. Lori's father served as an usher. They enjoy exploring the Napa Valley and spending time at their home in St. Helena. They are proud of their common Dutch heritage. They both love music. Al plays guitar and Lori plays piano. The aspect of LOPC that is most special to them is the wonderful worship services and sermons.



Rose Laymon

"I'm Rose Laymon and I have lived in Walnut Creek since 1988, and before that in Danville. I'm single and have two adult children. Some of the things I enjoy are my succulent garden, going for walks, and attending activities at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center. One thing that really attracted me to LOPC was the 10:10/11:11 classes for adults with guest speakers."



Lynn Gudnason

“My mother insisted that when I married at age 21 that I get married by Rev. Karl Thomas at LOPC. At that time, I knew nothing about God, Jesus or becoming a Christian. Fast forward, I married and lived in Montclair for several years. My husband and I became Christians by studying the word through Bible Study Fellowship. We raised our two children Cari and Casey, now grown. I taught at

Orinda Intermediate School and Campolindo

High School for several years. Later, I worked as a paralegal in San Francisco. Now I am retired. After my husband passed away of a heart attack, I married a dear Christian friend, Krist Gudnason, and moved to Montclair again, where I still live. He passed away from cancer two years ago.

“I am choosing to become a member of LOPC primarily because the truths found in God’s word are presented every Sunday by each speaker, and then the application of the truths being taught are clearly given to all of us to live out each week as we go on our journey with the lord. Secondly, I like that you have a woman’s spiritual group as well as discipleship classes. I also love the music; it moves my heart and mind to worship.”



Elaine Lind

“Bill and I moved to Moraga in 1968, shortly after our marriage. Over the years, we raised our two children, now

married with families and

living in Walnut Creek. Following his passing in 2017, I have rekindled interests in hobbies and volunteering. I enjoy working at the Monarch Habitat in Moraga as a Moraga Garden Club volunteer, singing with the LOPC choir, participating in a few book groups, and playing bridge. I look forward to participating in choir and other activities that LOPC offers, as the spirit leads.”



Debbie Witz

Debbie and her husband, Keith, live in Danville, and were married by the late Rev. Jim Little at LOPC in 1979. Keith worked for PG&E for 39 years as an electrical engineer in San Francisco and now is retired.

Debbie worked as a neuro/trauma/open-heart ICU nurse for 24 years at John Muir Walnut Creek Hospital.

She graduated from UCSF with a MS degree in nursing as a critical care/trauma clinical nurse specialist. Debbie retired in 2020 after 39 years at John Muir. They have two children, Jennifer and Sheryl, both baptized at LOPC, one in 1985 and one in 1989. Each is now married and has one child. Debbie and Keith are proud grandparents to Haley (two years old) and Luke (20 months old). They are looking forward to having them baptized at LOPC. In their spare time as a family, they love to travel, waterski, snow ski, and go to Warriors’, 49ers’, and Sharks’ games. Debbie and her family are looking forward to getting back involved with LOPC.

“LOPC always felt like home to us,” they say.



Don & Barbara “Bobbi” Scott

Don and Bobbi Scott have been married 25 years and live in Martinez. Between them, they have six married

children and 16 grands! They’re

both retired from careers in education - Don as a middle school band teacher for 39 years, and as a high-school-sports official for 50 years. Bobbi worked as a behaviorist with children from pre-school through junior high school for 28 years. For many decades, they’ve sung in church and community choirs, separately or together, and continue to sing with the choral group Cantare Con Vivo, as they have for the past 17 years. Music, worship, service, and a chance to create new friendships brought them to LOPC.



LOPC is also excited to welcome **Laura White** as a new member of the congregation!

community

Upcoming Bible Studies

- **Women's Bible Study:** Beginning September 15, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., Davies Room. Join Pastor Jaime Polson every other Thursday evening to discuss *Wholehearted Faith* by Rachel Heard Evans. The program will kick off with an optional social gathering on September 7 at 6:30 p.m. at The Cooperage in Lafayette.
- **Invitation to Romans:** 6-week Bible Study, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m., Oak Room.

Please contact Lexi Morrissey at lexi@lopc.org to register.

Attention Quilters:

The annual Sanctuary Quilt Display is scheduled this fall for Sunday, October 30, through Sunday, November 20. Please bring your quilt and its story to the LOPC Ministry Center no later than Sunday, October 23.

For questions contact Nancy Henderson at nghenderson@comcast.net or Carol King at caking53@pacbell.net.

Fourth Friday Book Group September 23, 4:00 p.m., on Zoom

Join us to discuss *Endurance* by Alfred Lansing.

Email Catherine Coleman at awaitingword@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

care

Grief Support

September 13 – November 15, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. in the Davies Room

Have you or someone you know experienced the death of a spouse recently or within the last few years? Sharing our experiences during this 10-week class is extremely helpful to the healing process. This course is open to all widows and widowers. Pre-Registration is required. The workbook is \$15.

For registration or questions, please contact Bev Fellows at 925-949-7628 or beverlyfellows@comcast.net.

thursday Fellowship

caring • sharing • loving

A program of Senior Care Ministries

Thursday, September 8 and 22, Fellowship Hall 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Please join us as we begin our 43rd year of Thursday Fellowship! Our volunteer teams have worked hard to organize exceptional activities and entertainment for the 2022-23 program year. Our volunteers are committed to creating an experience that will enrich our lives, and we hope you will join us on September 8 and September 22. Thursday Fellowship always welcomes volunteers, guests, and visitors.

September's Entertainment:

September 8

Imagine the warmth of a tropical breeze and swaying palms as we enjoy the sounds of the Caribbean with the "Spice Islander" Paul Snagg.

September 22

Expect your toe-tapping to get a workout when Virginia Tichenor lets her fingers fly over ragtime tunes on the piano.

Volunteers needed!

Volunteer opportunities include providing a salad or baked cookies, and/or providing a ride for a senior who no longer drives. This is an ongoing need and can be a weekly or a monthly commitment. Substitute drivers are needed as well.

Questions? Contact Thursday Fellowship Coordinator Julie Peterson at julie@lopc.org.



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

John Peterson, (husband of Julie Peterson) who passed June 30. A celebration of life was held August 20.

Winnie Watson, who passed July 26. A memorial will be held September 10 at 1:00 p.m.

Don Jenkins, who passed August 4. A memorial will be held September 15 at 3:00 p.m.

soul shop

Faith-based suicide prevention workshops:

Presented by The Presbytery of San Francisco

Soul Shop™ for Leaders

A one-day workshop designed for clergy, staff, lay pastors, and faith-based clinicians to develop soul-safe communities by equipping members to minister to those impacted by suicide and be a source of hope and healing. **Cost: \$50.**

Soul Shop™ for Communities

A 1½ to 2-hour community-oriented program designed to increase suicide awareness and discuss steps that can be taken to reduce risks. Open to parents, teachers, public servants and anyone interested in learning about the prevalence of suicide in the community, and become more engaged with how to be part of the solution. **Free to attend.**

Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church

49 Knox Dr. Lafayette, CA 925-283-8722

Soul Shop for Communities

Thursday, October 20, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Register at: lopc.org/registrations

Soul Shop for Leaders

Friday, October 21, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Register at: lopc.org/registrations

burlpres (Burlingame Presbyterian Church)

1500 Easton Dr. Burlingame, CA 650-342-0875

Soul Shop for Communities

Wednesday, October 19, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Register at:
burlpres.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1350745

Soul Shop for Leaders

Thursday, October 20, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Register at:
burlpres.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1350773

Questions?

LOPC: Pastor Jaime Polson • jaime@lopc.org  burlpres: Pastor Jane MacKenzie • jmackenzie@burlpres.org

soulshopmovement.org



By the Way (BTW)

9th – 12th Grade
Sundays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Kickoff: September 18

At BTW, we connect with each other through worship, teaching, games, service-learning projects, and small groups. We cover a wide range of topics throughout the year, including our relationship with God, how to grow in our faith, and what it means to live as a follower of Christ. Throughout the year, small groups gather several times for Home Groups, enjoying food, fellowship, and conversation together outside of the youth group. Upper Youth Room (CLC 201), September through March. Registration not required.

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



Youth Alive

5th – 8th grade
Sundays from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

At Youth Alive, we learn about how God's word in Bible has impacted the lives of its characters and discuss how we can actively apply it to our lives today. We also have time for games, fellowship, selected service-learning projects, and snacks. September through May. Registration is not required.

Questions? Contact Allison Kunz, allison@lopc.org.



Youth on Wednesdays (YOW)

5th – 8th grade
Wednesdays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
(Optional 5:30 p.m. pizza dinner)
Kickoff: September 21

At YOW, we gather for a fun evening of games, worship, service-learning projects, small groups, and discussion. This is the place for youth to connect with students from other schools who are having the same experiences. Throughout the year we focus on topics such as seeing God in the world, who God calls us to be, growing in faith, friendships, dating, school, family, and much more. Upper Youth Room (CLC 201), September through March. Registration is not required.

Questions? Contact Allison Kunz, allison@lopc.org.

journey of Faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member

“Remembering that God is trustworthy and deciding to trust him is what defines my faith journey,” Theresa Gonzales says. There have been many ups and down in her life, but God has always been there for her in times of need.

She remembers her childhood as belonging to a devout Catholic family where she learned Catholic Catechism, sang in the children’s choir, and loved special “Feast-Day” services because, as children, they got to dress up in poofy frocks and parade around the sanctuary behind the priest, carrying calla lilies.

“While in high school I believed in God, believed he created and loved us, that Jesus died for us and that it was good to want to please God. But it was mostly about duty to a loving God who was out there... somewhere.”

An event in high school gave Theresa a statement of faith, which she says carries her to this day. She wanted a certain boy to ask her to a dance, but he did not. “Consoling myself through my tears, I reasoned that God didn’t give me what I wanted because he had something better in mind for me.”

During college, Theresa found she had strayed from God and church. That was, until her first child was born. “I was far from family, my husband was consumed by his work, and I was very lonely. I heard God calling me back, and I started taking my baby to church on Sundays. The Catholic Church didn’t feel very welcoming. God took pity on me, introducing me to someone

who invited me to a Women’s Bible Study group in her Protestant church.

“I was hooked from the first day. During those first few months, as we read through and talked over parts of the Bible, I began hearing something new. They spoke about God as if they had just had lunch with him. They knew him in a way I had never heard of.

“As time went on, I grew to understand that not only was it possible to have a personal relationship with God, but that this was precisely what God wanted with each of us. I learned that although Jesus had died for us, in order for us to experience the great benefits of his gift of salvation, we had to choose to trust him. So, I stopped sitting on the fence and surrendered to a God who was intimately concerned with me, and who intervened in my life regularly, wanting only good for me. I began to know God, not just know about God.

“I began to have a better understanding of God, the nature and depth of his love and aspirations for me. I learned God wants my thinking life to be holy, just as he wants my actions to be holy. Over the years, as I studied the Bible and spent more time in prayer, I drew closer to God through an endless cycle of learn, trust, obey.”

Theresa was influenced heavily by the autobiography of Corrie ten Boom who survived the prison camp, where she was sent for harboring Jews during World War II and went on to have a thriving ministry in the years that followed. “I wondered what God might be preparing me for. I got my answer.



Theresa Gonzales

After 17 years of marriage and four children, my husband left us. But God had prepared my heart to trust him on this new journey. I trusted that God had a plan for us and that he intended to bless us. That trust enabled me to forgive my former husband, show the children we were still amicable, and to move my children 3,000 miles back to California, where we had a large family waiting to embrace us.

“In the years since, God’s blessings have overflowed all expectations. Again, the endless cycle of learn, trust, obey, experience the consequence, and rejoice.”

Theresa shares three verses important to her:

Fear not, for you will not be put to shame... For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts.
-Isaiah 54:4a & 5a

For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future with hope.
-Jeremiah 29:11

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusts in Thee.
-Isaiah 26:3

finance

GENEROSITY TEAM Fall Preview



As we step into the fall season, LOPC's Generosity Team is busy finalizing materials for the upcoming pledge campaign. This is a time to read about and appreciate all the wonderful things LOPC has accomplished this past year in addition to learning about new and exciting plans for 2023. This October, there will be two opportunities to interact with ministry leadership about the present and future direction of our church. Please mark your calendars for these events. No registration required.

Building a Post-Pandemic Church

Sunday, October 9 at 11:00 a.m. (after worship) in Fellowship Hall. Presented by Peter Whitelock, Head of Staff.

Looking around at the church these days, it's evident that much has changed as we return to in-person ministry and programs. What are the long-term trends we are tracking and how is the church responding? Come and hear a brief presentation by Peter Whitelock with plenty of time for Q&A.

Building a Faithful Budget

Sunday, October 23 at 11:00 a.m. (after worship) in Fellowship Hall. Presented by Jim Nagle, Finance Elder and Jaime Polson, Pastor of Executive Leadership/Families.

Budgeting is all about getting the right resources to the right places at the right time. LOPC has a history of careful planning and deployment of the gifts that you give, but what challenges and changes are we seeing with the budget these days? How has giving held up through the pandemic? Join Finance Elder Jim Nagle, along with Executive Ministry Lead Jaime Polson, for the presentation followed by Q&A.

Financial Update

We closed the period ended July 31, 2022, in a good position relative to budget. Year-to-date congregational giving was lower than budgeted levels by approximately (\$142,000). 2022 Pledge giving trails budgeted levels by (\$103,000). Historically, pledge giving commitments are met by year end. Non-pledge giving was lower than plan, offset by stronger non-member giving. Mission Special Gifts and Offerings were higher than planned levels by \$204,426. Session approved a \$39,000 cost-of-living bonus for staff, using the Session Emerging Needs Fund.

Ministry teams continue to spend lower than budgeted levels. Personnel has experienced many unplanned staff transitions and open positions relative to budget. Year-to-date expenses include \$204,426 of unbudgeted Mission spending, with over \$110,000 to Ukraine and \$50,000 to Hope Solutions.

LOPC closed the period ended July 31, 2022, with a shortfall of (\$46,767) which is slightly higher than the budgeted shortfall of (\$13,684). We look forward to increased participation in fall programming with the start of the new ministry year.

Giving at LOPC

One of the most practical ways you can help during times like these is to continue to support LOPC financially.

To give, visit lopc.org/giving, or scan the QR code on your mobile device.



Pastor Gerald's Retirement Love Gift

Contributions to this fund may be sent to the church office through September 10 and can be paid by a check (please note "Gerald" in the memo) or online.

If you are able, help us send Gerald into retirement with a generous gift!



the GENEROSITY corner

by Nancy Henderson, Generosity Team Member

Creativity, laughter, and generosity of Time and Talent abound in two LOPC groups – Chicks with Sticks and LOPCiders. They sew, knit, and collect newborn supplies for members of our broader community, in addition to spreading warmth, color, and love among the recipients.

Chicks with Sticks originated by knitting squares for afghan blankets for seniors at Elmhurst Pres as well as for patio sales to support the hospital in Gaza. The group expanded to hats, scarves, and fingerless gloves distributed through Loaves and Fishes and Winter Nights Family Shelter. In coordination with Hillcrest Congregational Church, the group's current focus is The Layette Project. The team added baby blankets, baby sweaters, and more to their output. Blankets are given to area nurses who include LOPC's donations in a bundle of 55-60 items for newborns to help moms through the first year. The

Chicks' most recent LOPC patio shower generated more than 500 baby goodies, as part of their annual 3,000 - 4,000 donation items. "Even during the pandemic," reports Dianne Schneider, the Chicks' fearless leader, "we made and collected 2,500 baby items for these precious little ones."

The Quilters, also known as LOPCiders, celebrate their creative process with the supportive camaraderie of weekly gatherings, offering personal connection to both LOPC members and non-members alike. LOPCiders, simply by doing what they love, share a wealth of experience and knowledge to serve the larger community. Even during the pandemic, Louise Tanno, leader extraordinaire, held the group together via informative emails and social Zooms. As a result, the group



was able to maintain their standard 200+ cheerful and useful handmade donations. The Quilters support Winter Nights Family Shelter, Hillcrest, and others, including individuals in disaster situations. For example, after the Paradise fire, Judy Kronmiller personally took quilts to families who had lost everything – the looks of joy and delight on their faces brought tears to our eyes.

"We pray for our recipients as we make things to keep them warm," says Ellena Bloedorn, former Chicks co-leader. "Creating is a meditative process." Both groups' love of giving responds well to Jesus' call in Matthew 25:40:

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."



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lopc.org/aloha

\$20 suggested donation. Due to space
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