AUGUST 2023

# LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FOCUS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

and the set

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

# LOPC.ORG



Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I entrust my life. - Psalm 143:8

# **ENTRUST**

By Jaime Polson - Pastor, Care Ministry & Exec. Leadership

The word "entrust" means to give fully of ourselves to another by bestowing our trust upon them. We entrust ourselves to others because we believe they know what is best for us and desire what is good for us in our lives. When



I think of the word entrust in connection to God, I think of giving of ourselves honestly and fully to God – the parts of ourselves that are flourishing with life and goodness, and the parts of us that are stuck, embarrassing, or shameful, that need work, and transformation. The Scripture above reminds us that God is worthy of our trust because God values us – all of us.

Think about the people you trust most in life – how did you come to trust them? How long did that relationship take to develop? How do you continue to create and sustain a relationship with them? These are a few of the questions we can ask about our relationship with God. What would it take for us to have a deeper relationship with God and to feel more connected with God? How can we live this out in our lives in order to truly entrust God with our lives? There are many ways to answer these questions. For me, seeking these answers begins with committing myself to prayer, studying the Bible, serving with the LOPC community, and deepening my faith by learning alongside each one of you.

This fall at LOPC, there will be many opportunities to keep seeking these questions of faith together – through prayer groups, worship, Bible studies, small groups, speaker series, and through times of celebration, service, and fellowship together. Please stay connected at LOPC by signing up for our weekly email by visiting lopc.org/email to stay up to date throughout the year.

May we continue to seek out an honest, loving, and real faith – together and in community.

### August 2023

Ministry Fair	2
Community	2
Hold in Prayer	3
Special Offering	4
Mission	5
Generosity Corner	7
Youth	8
Session	9
Finance 1	0
Staff Updates 1	0

#### **Pastoral Staff**

Peter Whitelock - Head of Staff Lauren Gully - Pastor, Mission & Outreach Jaime Polson - Pastor, Care & Executive Leadership Chris Baldwin - Pastor, Community & Formation

#### Ministry Directors

Keris Dahlkamp - Youth Coleen Moulton - Seedlings Preschool Bryan Dunnewald - Music

Treasurer Staci Johnston

#### Focus Newsletter Jon Corry - Communications

Dick James & Lexi Morrissey - Editors

### **Submissions & Deadlines**

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



Staying Connected: Sign up for our weekly email to stay up-to-date on all things LOPC! Visit: lopc.org/email.

Need to reach us? info@lopc.org • 925-283-8722



# Ministry

ome get connected at LOPC! Following the worship service, ministry teams will have tables on the plaza inviting you to join a program and volunteer to serve. This is a great way for you to learn about programs and get involved!

# community

thursday Fellowship

# caring • sharing • loving

A program of Senior Care Ministries

### Mark your calendar for Thursday Fellowship's return: September 14 at 11:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

### By Julie Peterson, Coordinator

The Thursday Fellowship team of volunteers are enjoying some welldeserved time off this summer after a very busy year. Volunteers worked hard each week to welcome guests and to provide them with engaging programs and activities. They also prepared tasty salads and cookies which were served on beautifully decorated tables. The team welcomed many new guests and volunteers in 2023, and attendance grew to pre-pandemic levels. Together, we celebrated birthdays and other life events together over the course of the year and ended with our traditional Hawaiian themed party on June 2. The ukulele band and hula performance helped spread the Aloha spirit!

August will be a busy month. Programs and activities for the 2023–2024 year are being planned and finalized. Volunteers will gather at the end of the August for an Appreciation Kick-Off



August 27

on the Plaza

Luncheon. In 2023-2024 we are looking forward to meeting every week (except on holidays) from September through May. We are so excited about the coming year and invite you to join us. We welcome guests, volunteers, and visitors!

There is currently a need for volunteers to help drive seniors to Thursday Fellowship. The scheduling is flexible. Contact Julie Peterson at julie@lopc.org with any questions.

# community

### **Companions for the Journey**

This unique contemplative offering at LOPC provides an opportunity for all to listen deeply to scripture, to God, and to one another. A slow-paced time for meditation invites participants to consider how a short scripture text may intersect with something real and present in their everyday lives. In facilitated small groups, members share their musings with the safety and freedom that results from the sacred commitment to honor each person in confidence. The program is a safe place, free of judgment, advice, or questioning. Many participants have found the experience has opened a new and profoundly meaningful relationship with God and Jesus.

Companions meets monthly from October through May. Participants can choose to meet on a Monday evening or a Thursday morning. Please contact Carl Grant at clgrantsd@gmail.com or Robyn Dean at r2dean@sonic.net for further information.

### **New Members**

### **Rob & Barbara Weikert**

Barbara and Rob are thrilled about joining the LOPC community. Barb grew up in Orinda, and the family has lived in three different houses as their family has grown over the past 36 years. They are blessed with four adult children. Their eldest daughter, Kendall, and her husband, Garrett Ley, live in Austin, Texas; son Kyle lives in New York City; so they're happy their son Neil and daughter Laurel live locally. Rob and Barb met as undergrads at Cal and recently celebrated their 40th Anniversary this past June. Rob graduated from Santa Clara University Law school in 1985, has been practicing law ever since, and is a partner with Nixon Peabody LLP in San Francisco. Barb's professional background is in retail management and human resources, but being a stay-at-home mother will always be her greatest reward. Rob and Barb share similar hobbies: running, biking, gardening, traveling, and they have recently started taking golf lessons. Both are active volunteers in the greater Lamorinda area, share many friends in the LOPC community, and are looking forward to growing their faith by getting involved in ministries.

### Small Group & Program Leaders Training Event

Sunday, August 13 following Worship in the Oak Room

If you are a program leader or are interested in becoming a leader, come learn how to make calendar/room reservations, become familiar with the Fellowship One database, use communications channels, and learn about leader support.

For more information, contact Michelle Browning at michelle@lopc.org.

### Fourth Monday Book Group August 28 at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom

Join us to discuss Klara and the Sun by Nobel Prize winning author, Kazuo Ishiguro. Klara, an Artificial Friend, watches carefully the behavior of those who browse in the store. She remains hopeful that a customer will soon choose her, but Klara is warned not to invest too much in the promises of humans.

Email Jean Fiske at jdfiske@gmail.com to be added to the group.

# hold in PRAYER

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

### David Dodge,

who passed April 3. A memorial will be held September 9 at 1:00 p.m.

### Phil Placier,

who passed April 9. A memorial will be held October 7, time TBD.

#### Mark Bauer,

who passed June 6. A memorial will be held August 12 at 1:00 p.m.

#### **Mildred Hipkiss,**

who passed March 29. A memorial will be held October 14 at 11:00 a.m.

Linda Giacobazzi, who passed July 3.

### Workshop in Prayer

#### August 6 following Worship in the Oak Room. Hosted by the Spiritual Formation Team

Lectio Divina or "Divine Reading" is one of many contemplative practices that can help to develop a conscious awareness of God in our everyday life. Come learn about and experience this way to hear God's voice through prayerful reflection on scripture. Presented by Spiritual Director Robyn Dean, co-director of the Companions for the Journey group.

All are welcome. For planning purposes, we ask that you register at lopc.org/registrations.

## LOPC Special Offering for Fotokids

# Capturing HOPE

## For more information, and to give please visit lopc.org/specialoffering.

Starting September 11, LOPC invites you to support Fotokids in their mission to transform the lives of children in Guatemala. Your generosity will give students the tools and opportunities they need to thrive and make a lasting impact in their community.

ongtime LOPC mission partner Fotokids harnesses the transformative potential of photography to empower students to overcome the hardships of poverty. The program offers children a unique experience through providing vocational skills in photography and digital media arts. This September, LOPC invites you to help support Fotokids during our fall special offering. Your support for will have a profound impact on the lives of these young individuals. At Fotokids, each student needs both an educational and vocational scholarship. Educational and vocational scholarships cost \$600 for a total of \$1,200 per student for the year. Our goal for this fall is to raise enough money to cover educational and vocational scholarships for six students.

#### We can reach this goal if just 72 members can give \$100.



### Here are just some of the ways your donation can help make a difference:

- Through educational scholarships, Fotokids can cover essential expenses such as school fees, uniforms, supplies, and shoes, ensuring that deserving students have the resources they need to thrive academically.
- Providing for professional training and access to state-of-the-art equipment - enabling students to develop marketable skills in photography, graphic design, and multimedia production.
- Supporting for student's projects through public exhibitions and other outreach activities encouraging community engagement by raising awareness about social issues in the student's community.
- Providing for teachers' salaries, media and art supplies, IT training, equipment, food, and transportation to and from the school for students.
- Unlocking a world of possibilities through education to overcome adversity and build a brighter future, especially in Guatemala's incredible unemployment rates.

# mission

### LOPC teams up with Walnut Creek United Methodist Church to provide Support for Refugees

fter nearly a year of research, After nearry a year. the Refugee Study Group decided to begin their work by assisting the Extended Family Program (EFP), a joint partnership between Walnut Creek United Methodist Church and Lafayette Christian Church. EFP has assisted refugee families in Contra Costa County by providing furniture and household items to help transform empty apartments into homes. This year, the program has already furnished 59 households consisting of 98 adults and 116 children. In addition to furnishing household items EFP provides hope and comfort in their new home.

### How Can You Help?

• Donate items to help furnish apartments with essentials (see detailed instructions below). Donations can be made on Tuesday mornings from 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. at the Walnut Creek United Methodist Church located at 1543 Sunnyvale Avenue.

• Sign up to help pick up furniture donations and move furniture and household items to apartments.

• EFP has also reached the point that they critically need more storage space for donated furniture. If you or someone you know has some unused space here in Central Costa County, please email Randi Long.

Contact Randi Long at hrlong13@sbcglobal.net with questions to volunteer.

### **Donation Guidelines:**

- Household donations, including furniture, should only be in clean and good/ excellent condition with no damage. Note: clothing is not currently accepted.
- For furniture, check the list below of requested pieces. Please email a separate picture of each piece of furniture to Randi Long and include dimensions. Storage space is currently limited so if there is already a large inventory of a particular item, the program may not be able to accept your donation. Do not drop off furniture at the Methodist Church without first contacting Randi to facilitate. If your piece of furniture is needed, Randi will send you details about pickup times or a drop off date.

### **Household Items**

- Gently Used Bedding & Towels
- Twin, full & Queen Sheet sets
- Blankets
- Bedspreads
- Towel sets (good condition only)
- Bicycles (adult & child)
- Living room lamps
- Upholstered chairs
- Sofas & Loveseats
- End tables (no glass)

### **Miscellaneous**

- Tools: hammers, screwdrivers, vise-grips, etc.
- Home & Office supplies: paper, pens, scissors, etc.
- Alarm clocks (especially clock-radios)
- Ironing boards & irons

### Small Applicances

(Clean and working order only)

- Books
- Toys
- Wheel-toys
- Stuffed animals (new)

### **Kitchen and Dinnerware**

- Dinnerware (sets)
- Utensils, Cutlery/Silverware (sets)
- Platters, bowls, serving bowls, cups, and mugs
- Glasses (sets)
- Pots, pans, skillets
- Knife sets/knives
- Can openers (manual only)
- Kitchen towels
- Potholders
- Placemats (vinyl)

### **For Children**

- Books
- Toys
- Wheel-toys
- Stuffed animals (new)

### Items not accepted include:

mattresses, bed frames, cribs, large or very heavy dressers or other large/heavy pieces, glass-top tables, counter-high tables/bar stools, sleepersofas, motor operated recliners or chairs, anything in need of repair or cleaning.

# thank you from CHILDREN OF FAITH MISSIONS

#### By Ginny Ross, LOPC Member

Children of Faith (COF) would like to thank the LOPC community for their generous contributions during this year's Easter Special Offering. Thanks to the funds raised, Children of Faith was able to purchase a brand-new van. Rosie and Anand Thandu send their gratitude to everyone at LOPC.

"The new vehicle is here, and we are so grateful to LOPC for helping us yet again with this urgent need," says COF Co-founder Rosie Thandu. "The old vehicle was giving us a lot of trouble

and it was time for us to replace it. The vehicle is used a lot for college children and teacher pickup and drop offs, grocery shopping, supplies, hospital visits, and other errands. The new vehicle has window glass and is completely covered as opposed to the previous one, which will be especially helpful during rain and monsoons. Thank you LOPC pastors, church members, and our U.S. board members for standing with us and helping meet our needs. Your partnership for over a decade means a lot to us. We are blessed to have your support and encouragement; it keeps us doing

what we do. You are a major part of the success of this ministry."

On August 13, COF Co-founder Anand Thandu will visit LOPC personally to thank everyone for this gift and all that the LOPC community has done to support the organization's ongoing work. Look for him on the plaza that Sunday following worship. As an LOPC mission partner, COF has received funding, visitors, and prayers that have helped transform the lives of many impoverished children and their families through education, health care, and Christian teachings.



By making a legacy gift to the LOPC Foundation, you can give the way you live - by making a better future for your loved ones and a lasting impact on our LOPC community.

> To Learn more about legacy giving, reach out to a Foundation Trustee or visit lopc.org/foundation.

"...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" -Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

# the GENEROSITY corner

By Nancy Henderson, Generosity Team Member



### **LOPC Youth in Service**

n June, LOPC's amazing youth generously offered their time and talent in varied team service projects. Fifth and sixth graders, as part of Service Squad, helped at multiple local community organizations. Middleschool youth traveled to Salinas to work alongside the local farm workers and their children. And high-schoolers worked with LOPC mission partner, Fotokids, in Guatemala, building friendships and experiencing firsthand the region's poverty.

"The goal of LOPC's service projects, in addition to filling current needs, is to provide perspective so participants might better discern how to go beyond symptoms such as hunger and poverty, and explore root causes," says Keris Dahlkamp, director of Youth Ministry at LOPC. "We can't 'un-see' a family of five or six in a room, or 'un-hear' fellow teenagers showing how climate change is affecting their subsistence livelihood. As our youth go through life as faithful Christians, we hope these experiences will continue to influence their actions and decisions."



As we kicked off summer, Service Squad student volunteers piled into vans each afternoon and served off campus with Contra Costa organizations such as White Pony Express, Monument Crisis Center, Hope Solutions, Trinity Center, and the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties, Middle-schoolers traveled outside our local community and spent a week in Salinas, working with farm workers in fields, their kids in classrooms, and others in community gardens. LOPC youth also served and helped prepare meals, organized donation closets and food pantries, and even got to wash the windows of the church that hosted them!

In mid-June, high school youth traveled to Guatemala to learn and work alongside LOPC mission partner, Fotokids. Samya Johnson, a member of the high school youth group, celebrated getting to know kids across language differences – not language barriers. "We learned to appreciate a new culture and see our new friends as kids like us. We planted crops with them and prayed for rain with them.



We also learned how conflicts in Guatemala damaged local traditions, and how many are working to keep their Tz'utujil language alive. We were amazed how joyful people were despite these challenges."

Each youth service group participated in daily devotions from staff designed to integrate their experiences with their own faith journeys. Throughout the summer, LOPC youth were invited to "walk humbly with their God" in others' communities, to listen and learn, and to grow deeper in relationship with God, with each other, and with themselves.

And it wasn't just the LOPC youth who participated in these summer mission programs – the LOPC congregation did too! By generously donating to the Youth Mission Scholarship Fund, the congregation raised over \$4,000 to ensure that all students who wanted to participate were able to do so. We thank everyone who gave of their time, talent, and treasure for making this a summer of meaningful experiences for both our volunteers and those we serve.

# **YOUTH** Questions? Contact Keris Dahlkamp keris@lopc.org.

### Youth Sunday August 27

Come see the youth and children from Vacation Bible Camp, Service Squad, the Salinas Middle School Service-Learning Trip, and the High School Service-Learning Trip share about their experiences as they lead the worship service! Join us on the plaza after the service for the Ministry Fair, including music, food, and games!

### BTW

Minis

### (By the Way)

A weekly youth group for 9th - 12th graders which resumes on September 17 from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. Activities include games, worship songs, a devotional, and small groups! No registration is required.

### **Youth Alive**

Sundays at 10:00 a.m. starting September 17 (for 5th - 8th graders)

Youth Alive is a weekly interactive Bible lesson for youth with games and other fun activities. No registration is required.

### High School Fall Retreat at Westminster Woods September 8 - 10

Join us for a great weekend of games, devotionals, free time, and a challenge ropes course! Cost is \$279. Reach out to Keris about registration.

### YOW (Youth on Wednesday)

A weekly youth group for 5th - 8th graders which resumes on September 20 and meets weekly on Wednesdays from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. with an optional pizza dinner at 5:30 p.m. Activities include games, worship songs, a devotional, and small groups! No registration is required.

# session

### **May & June Session Highlights**

By Terry Clark, Clerk of Session

May's session meeting opened with Pastor Chris Baldwin sharing his moving faith journey that started, not with growing up in the church, but instead being first invited to church by his sister. This led to participating in youth events, an altar call at a megachurch, mentoring by strong youth pastors, and, ultimately, feeling called to serve in a ministry where all belong, are welcomed, and beloved. Chris was also congratulated on being voted by the congregation on May 7 from a designated to permanent associate pastor.

**Reports from Pastor Peter Whitelock** and several elders included details of the May 9 San Francisco Presbytery Meeting regarding administrative challenges facing SFP leadership and election of the leaders for the coming year. Additional reports updated session on preparations for the upcoming youth Mission trips, the hiring of Brett Strader as a consultant for training and management of the sanctuary audio-visual system, and the progress being made by Elder Jeff Patton and the Church Nominating Committee on recruiting potential new leaders and volunteers.

Session also received a comprehensive report from LOPC Foundation President, Jim Beckemeyer, and Trustee Dara Youngdale on the deployment of funds to session (over \$500,000 during each of the past four years), with the vision that the Foundation serve as a permanent, reliable source of significant funding for LOPC ministries. Pastor Peter noted that this has been a huge benefit by eliminating the debt on LOPC's buildings and providing for ongoing maintenance so donations from congregation members can be devoted to our ministries.

In June, session gathered. for an informal dinner at LOPC. Consideration is underway for more in-person meetings and, after a hiatus in July and then meeting in August, session will get together in person for dinner again at Elder Lee O'Haver's home.

The formal part of our meeting began with Pastor Jaime Polson sharing her remarkable faith journey. Similar to Pastor Chris, Jaime did not grow up in church, and was invited to church by a friend. Jaime also mentioned being mentored by Southern Baptist pastors on a path to Divinity School, where she met her husband, Zach, of 25 years at Baylor. Growing together in faith, Jaime and Zach decided to get married in lieu of grad school at Duke and ended up at the University of Chicago for Jaime's Master's degrees in Divinity, Social Policy & Health Care – all the while trusting that God was there for her

through friends and others.

Pastor Jaime also gave detailed reports on Vacation Bible Camp (see the *Generosity Corner* article on page 7 more information).

Regarding the Church Nominating Committee, Peter explained that a new elder position is being developed for online outreach for LOPC's digital and live worship programs, replacing the Communications Team elder, now that the church website and procedures to maintain it have been installed. Elder Jeff Patton then reported that the CNC has received nomination acceptances for all but one elder position, and it appears that the open deacon and Foundation trustee nominations will be filled as well.

There will be a congregation meeting September 25 following worship to approve the CNC's nominations for the terms beginning January 1, 2024; and the installation/ordination of the nominees will be conducted during worship November 12.

During the meeting, session members shared feelings that, post-pandemic, LOPC is coming alive again with activities and involvement. Peter commented that staff is readying for a return to two Sunday worship services, possibly in October or November, providing attendance reaches 75-80% of capacity during several weeks.

# finance

### **Financial Update**

By Jim Nagle, Finance Elder

OPC is in a solid financial position after the first six months of 2023. Year-to-date contributions totaled \$1,529,353, ahead of budget levels of \$1,356,859. LOPC is thankful to the congregation, as June was a strong month for pledge giving. Year-to-date pledge giving is slightly below budget by \$41,345, but we are optimistic for the year.

In 2023, LOPC was blessed by a member's gift of thanks and praise of \$70,800 and an estate bequest of \$67,500. These gifts eliminated the need for the budgeted use of the Session Emerging Needs Fund of \$93,210. Mission and special gifts exceeded budget by \$49,779, contributing favorably to year-to-date congregational giving.

Most ministry teams are at or below budgeted spending. Year-to-date expenses of \$1,602,120 are below budget by \$65,509, excluding spending for mission and special gifts. Personnel spending is lower than plan due primarily to the open position in Children's Ministry. Operations' utility costs were higher than plan due to the high price of natural gas.

LOPC ended the six-month period with expenses exceeding contributions by \$70,654, improved from an expected budget shortfall of \$154,208. We are truly blessed to have a supportive congregation and staff that make this possible. Please consider pledging if you haven't yet. We appreciate all those who have heeded our requests to make timely pledge gifts to help us align giving more closely with budget. Thank you to those who have pledged and made contributions in 2023.

Statement of Giving & Expense			
June 30, 2023	2023 YTD	2023 YTD	
Congregational Giving	Actuals	Budget	Fav (unfav)
Pledge Income	\$ 1,104,655	\$ 1,146,000	\$ (41,345)
Non-Pledge, Loose Offerings, Other Giving	275,904	133,918	141,986
Faith Component	2,870	2870	
Congregational Giving w/o Special Gifts	1,383,429	1,282,788	100,641
Giving: Mission & Special Gifts & Offerings	123,850	74,071	49,779
Total Congregational Giving	1,507,279	1,356,859	150,420
Session Emerging Needs Fund	-	93,210	(93,210)
Seedlings	-	-	-
User Fees, Memorials, & Investment Income	18,644	8,000	10,644
Foundation	129,423	129,423	-
Total Giving:	1,655,346	1,587,492	67,854
Expense: Ministry Teams Spending	1,602,120	1,667,629	(65,509)
Spending: Mission & Special Gifts & Offerings	123,850	74,071	49,779
Total Expense:	1,725,970	1,741,700	\$ (15,730)
Expense in excess of Contributions:	\$ (70,624)	\$ (154,208)	\$ (83,854)

# staff updates

Jon Corry, Communications Associate, has resigned to accept a position as graphic designer with The Town of Danville. Jon has worked helping the church get our message to members through producing content for vehicles such as *Focus*, *Connections*, the weekly email, and others.



To the staff and members of LOPC,

It has truly been a privilege to serve the LOPC community these past four years. I have treasured the connections I've made with each and every one of you throughout my time and have considered it an honor to work alongside such a dedicated staff of caring and talented professionals. To the many ministry areas I've worked alongside, it's been my joy to help get the word out about the great work you are doing. All of you have enriched my life in immeasurable ways. To the staff of LOPC, you have inspired me to do my best work in service to your calling each and every day.

I will always carry with me the memories of my time at LOPC and keep them in a special place in my heart.



LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 49 Knox Drive

Lafayette, CA 94549



IMPORTANT

Dated Material PLEASE DELIVER BEFORE 8/1/23

Thank you!

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## Returning to LOPC this fall: September 20 - October 18!

Where children build relationships and learn values of Kindness, Justice & Mercy.

Wednesday afternoon, 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. • Kindergarten - 4th Grade • Tuition: \$350 (scholarships available) •

Sign up: lopc.org/kidsrock <