

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OCTOBER 2023

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

LOPC.ORG



I Give Thanks

By Peter Whitelock — Head of Staff

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.



1 Corinthians 1:4–7

The Apostle Paul was in the habit of continually giving thanks to God for people. The above statement is one long sentence, and a beautiful example of this gratitude. There were stresses and strains in relationships along the way, of course, but in his heart of hearts there existed a level of gratitude for fellow believers with whom he shared his work. Paul marveled at the ways in which God gifted the believers in Corinth and provided them with everything requisite to build something beautiful together. He saw God’s grace and giving as the source of all confidence and hope.

Each year, as we head into October, we begin a new cycle of gathering pledges and establishing plans for the coming year. We also share how this year is closing fiscally, and how we are working to end positively. I find this work encouraging and uplifting because of the grace and generosity that comes forward each year from you, our members and friends. Thank you for the ways in which you use your many gifts to support and build up our witness to the love and justice of Jesus Christ! These gifts are, indeed, the grace of God made visible in our midst.

Grace and peace,

Peter Whitelock

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Pastoral Staff

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

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Keris Dahlkamp - Youth
Junha Kim - Youth
Coleen Moulton - Seedlings Preschool
Bryan Dunnewald - Music
Susan Wentworth - Children’s Ministry
Emily Austin - Children’s Ministry

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Focus Newsletter

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Submissions & Deadlines

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



care

*thursday*Fellowship

caring • sharing • loving

By Julie Peterson, Coordinator



Our first meeting in September had all the excitement of a “first day of school” with guests and volunteers eagerly greeting one another after summer recess. Our entertainment in September ranged from the versatile vocalist Syria T. Berry to our favorite Michael Kistner, as well as the sounds of Dan Cooper on accordion, playing tunes that complimented our Oktoberfest theme. What a fabulous and festive start to our year!

We are excited to be able to continue to offer our Thursday Fellowship program each week in October. We will look forward to a variety of programs and activities this month that are not to be missed.

October's Schedule:

- **October 5:** Bob Lewis, Golden Gate Audubon world traveler, lecturer, and photographer will present a talk on A Bird's Rainbow.
- **October 12:** Sue Farmer, LOPC member, musician, and musician educator will perform Broadway hits accompanied by pianist Gabe Togneri.
- **October 19:** We are joined by Mike Kistner for a sing-along of our favorite oldies.
- **October 26:** Professional magician Cosmo will amaze and entertain us as we have some Halloween fun.

A program for Senior Care Ministries

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

Our typical daily schedule is as follows:

- 11:00 a.m. “Meet and Greet” with snacks and beverages.
- 11:15 a.m. Creative arts and crafts, activity, or light exercise program.
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch: Bring a sandwich and we will provide salad, beverages, and dessert.
- 12:45 p.m. Entertainment.
- 1:30 p.m. Program ends.

We invite you to join us and look forward to welcoming you in person.

There is currently a need for volunteers to help drive guests to Thursday fellowship. The scheduling is flexible.

Contact Julie Peterson at julie@lopc.org for more information.



The Family Circus: Walking the Tightrope of Aging & Eldercare

Saturday, October 21, 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.



Learn how to prepare for a person's older years or to be a family caregiver. In this half-day seminar, gain legal awareness, learn about entitlements and benefits, and get support and answers to questions and concerns. Sponsored by Senior Ministry and the LOPC Foundation.

Speakers:



Dr. Leslie Kernisan,
Geriatrician,
and author of
*Better Health
While Aging;
Preparing for
the Journey*

Linda Fodrin-
Johnson,
author of *The
Empowered
Caregiver*



Breakout sessions will include:

- **Legal Tools for the Aging Journey**
What is necessary and what is optional for having life "my way!"
- **The Great Debate**
Should I stay in my home or move to retirement living? What are the choices and their costs? When should we or our parents make a move?
- **The Basics of Memory Loss, MCI and Dementia**
Learn the difference between the three and discuss ways to maintain brain health. New research will help keep your brain healthy and possibly even slow the progression.
- **Food is Medicine**
How diet and lifestyle can change the trajectory of an illness and bring about quality of life. Amazing how small changes can alter a life course.
- **Life Happens: How to Deal with the Unexpected!**
Families are often overwhelmed and feel like they are in deep water with a sudden illness or life change. Crises do happen. This workshop will "open your eyes" to what is needed now. We will talk about "practical preparation" as well as discord and resistance.

A light breakfast will be served.
Register at lopc.org/registrations.

Questions? Contact Linda
Fodrin-Johnson at
lindafj620@outlook.com.

Keynote:

How to Prepare for Successful Aging or your Parent's Aging: Avoiding Common Pitfalls!

with Dr. Leslie Kernisan,
MD, MPH, Geriatrician

- What is successful Aging?
- How to optimize your health & wellbeing now.
- How to prevent or delay common age related problems.
- How to plan for successful interdependence.

community

Anger and Faith Series

October 9, 16, and 23 at 6:30 p.m.

Have you ever felt angry at God, or wondered if anger can play a role in a life of faith? It might surprise you that learning how to reflect and express anger towards God can be incredibly transformational and can lead to a deeper life of faith. Come learn about anger in scripture, how anger can lead to transformation, and how you might be able to practically reflect about your anger in a three-part class with Pastor Lauren.

Register at lopc.org/registrations.

Alpha Course

October 15 through November 19,
11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in the
Davies Room

What is Alpha? A six-week course experience, Alpha is a series of conversations about things we all question in life: Why do bad things happen to good people? What's the purpose of life? What's next? If you're looking for a judgment-free space to ask hard questions and share your own opinion, there's a place for you. Everyone is welcome!

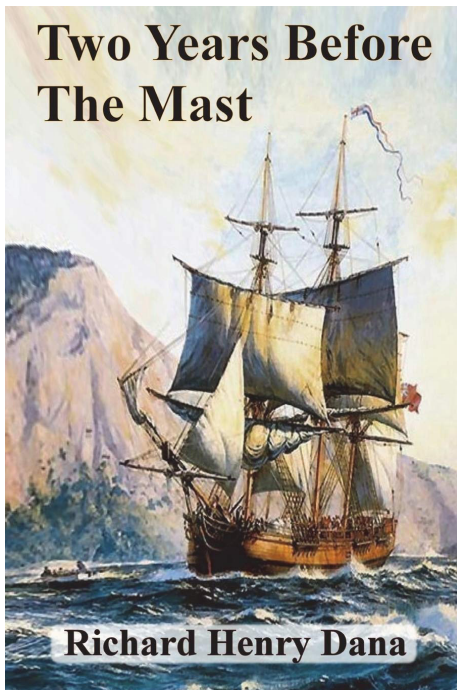
Email Michelle Browning at
michelle@lopc.org for additional
information.

Courageous Christianity and the Journey toward Racial Justice Book Study

Thursdays, October 26 –
November 16, 2023
10:00 – 11:30 a.m. Oak Room

Please join Pastor Jaime Polson for a four-week study on the book *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice* by Rev. Jemar Tisby. This study will provide a practical framework for pursuing racial justice with hands-on suggestions and real-world examples of change. The study is geared to help the group engage in conversations about racial justice and learn about perspectives from the Bible about the call to mercy, forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation.

Register at lopc.org/registrations.

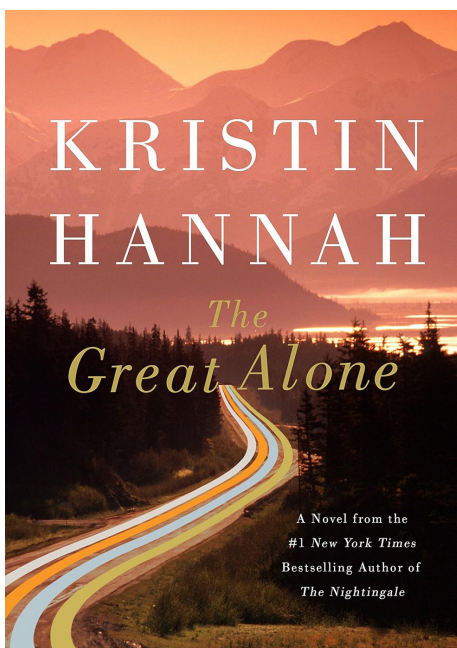


Fourth Monday Book Group

October 23 at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom

Join us to discuss *Two Years Before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana Jr., a vivid account of a two-year sea voyage from Boston to California on a merchant ship starting in 1834. Dana describes the port settlements up and down the California coast, the indigenous peoples, and life aboard the ship.

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



August Session Highlights

By Terry Clark, Clerk of Session

Spiritual Formation to open the meeting was presented by Pastor Lauren Gully regarding her difficult experience with an abusive high school coach. She discussed how she worked to process that in college and how she was paired with a pastor at a grief service who invited her to express her anger to God. That helped her to move on from the anger, become part of what called her to do this for others, and transform her life. Lauren is currently writing her doctoral thesis on the subject and will be teaching a class on anger and faith this fall at LOPC.

Session approved its consent agenda, including the Seedlings 2023/2024 budget and its use of contributions, as well as \$6,000 for funding related to our Digital Outreach Program through a YouTube Channel project.

September's session meal and meeting will be in person at Lee O'Haver's home, when session also will vote on the slate of Church Nominating Committee's (CNC) nominees for terms beginning January 1, 2024.

There will be a congregational meeting after worship on September 24 to approve those CNC nominees, and their installation/ordination will be on November 12 during the worship service. Elder Jeff Patton confirmed that all required positions for new elders are filled with quality candidates, and the CNC is in the process of finalizing candidates for the deacons and the LOPC Foundation.

Pastor Peter Whitelock reported on several structural changes: the Communications team is being

sun-setted, and LOPC is creating a new Digital Outreach Elder (Jim Davis); the elder for Seedlings is being re-purposed, and Seedlings will now report to session once a year; proposed by-law changes (voted on by Session in September) would restate the structure of deacons to have a maximum of 30 and a minimum of 20 members, including two active youth members; and LOPC's Director of Communications, Jon Corry, has left to join the City of Danville, and this position is being re-examined, especially regarding design work. Considerations are also underway to determine when LOPC might return to two Sunday worship services, with the intent that the congregation will be provided three weeks' notice prior to any change.

On behalf of the Personnel Team, Pastor Jaime Polson announced that LOPC has officially hired a Co-Director for Youth: Junha Kim has extensive experience working with youth and was well-received in all his interviews, including with our youth, who were enthusiastic about him.

Elder Jim Davis provided details on the Digital Outreach Program for which the YouTube project budget of \$6,000 was approved. Many videos are currently on the LOPC website, and the objective is to make them available to a larger audience, for example by posting sermons and daily devotions on YouTube, with the goal of involving more people and programs in the church's ministries.

Fourth Friday Book Group

4:00 p.m. on Zoom

October 27: *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah.

December 1 (note the date; November and December meetings are combined): *Rules for Commuters* by Claire Poole.

All are welcome!

If you are interested in being added to the group, please contact Catherine Coleman at awaitingword@gmail.com.

Attention Quilters

The annual Sanctuary Quilt Display is scheduled for Sunday, November 6 – 26. This display is always warmly welcomed by the congregation. If you would like to include a quilt this year, please drop it off, along with its story, to the LOPC Ministry Center no later than Sunday, October 29.

For questions, contact Nancy Henderson at nghenderson@comcast.net.

A message from LOPC's new Youth Ministry Director, Junha Kim

To the communities, families, and youth of LOPC,

It is a joy to formally introduce myself! My name is Jun Kim, and I will be joining Keris Dahlkamp as Director of Youth Ministry this upcoming year! Born in South Korea, and primarily raised in Southern California, I first moved to the Bay Area for my undergraduate education in Philosophy and in Peace and Conflict Studies.

After a few years of working in various ministry and non-profit spaces, I eventually moved to Tennessee to pursue a Master of Divinity, where I studied Black Religion and Culture. Prior to joining LOPC, I was pastoring a small community at a church, speaking for various local churches, and I advanced into candidacy within the PCUSA. At each stage of this vocational journey, God's imprint upon my heart for justice, compassion, and reconciliation has been evidently clear, and I am returning to the Bay Area with an open heart and vision for the youth ministry and broader community at LOPC. I am very much looking forward to connecting with the youth and you all, deepening our faith lives and engagement with Jesus, and participating in the work of the in-breaking Kin-dom together.



-Junha Kim

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

presents

A Musical Remembrance

November 5, 2023

4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Sung by the LOPC Chamber Singers, featuring C. Hubert Parry's *Songs of Farewell*, readings, and memorials to those gone before us in the community.

The names of those loved ones lost will be read during the Remembrance; if you would like to submit the name(s) of a family member or loved one who has died in the past 18 months, please email worship@lopc.org with the name and pronunciation.



the **GENEROUS HEART**



2024 Pledge Campaign

**Your generous giving keeps this church
moving forward in so many ways.**

Stay tuned for more information coming later this month!

Please join us for
GIVING SUNDAY
on November 5.

Questions?

Contact Staci Johnston, LOPC Treasurer, at staci@lopc.org
or call the church office at 925-283-8722.



YOUTH

► **Questions? Email**
Keris Dahlkamp:
keris@lopc.org
or Junha Kim:
junha@lopc.org

October 4

YOW Youth on Wednesday **Big Games Night**

Join us for a great time of fun and laughter as small groups play interactive games together! We'll have games geared for different learning types and skills sets, so everyone can contribute. This is a wonderful evening to meet new people and invite friends. We hope to see you there.

October 8

BTW By the Way **Photo Hunt**

This is an annual event that does not disappoint. Youth will be sent out in small group teams to solve riddles, find clues, and work together to score the highest number of points – all for fabulous prizes. The hunt will be on location in a local area and youth will run around on foot along with their adult advisors.

October 14

Lighthouse at Hope **Solutions**

On October 14, a committed group of youth and advisors will visit Hope Solutions Lakeside Apartments in Concord for an afternoon of fellowship, food, crafts, and games. Lighthouse, now in its sixth year of activities, is an ongoing program that establishes a deeper, long-term relationship with resident families at Hope Solutions. It will be wonderful to watch the friendships and understanding continue to grow between the youth from LOPC and the children from Hope Solutions.

If you are interested,
contact keris@lopc.org.

October 15

High School Leadership **Team (SPLASH)** **Reflection Forms Due**

Our high school leadership team is resuming again! In monthly meetings held just before BTW youth group, student leaders will be given the chance to share their input, design programming, and lead various activities at youth group.

Students interested in serving on this team can contact
Keris, keris@lopc.org.

October 25 & 29

YOW & BTW **Harvest Parties**

Join us as we have a festive time celebrating the start of the holiday season with our harvest parties at YOW & BTW! Fun games, prizes, food!



LOPC FALL • Fest

FOOD FUN FRIENDS

SUNDAY OCTOBER 8 • 11:00 AM

LIVE MUSIC, PUMPKIN DECORATING, FACE PAINTING,
FELLOWSHIP & MORE! JUMP IN A BOUNCE HOUSE,
PLAY GAMES, & ENJOY ABEL'S TACO TRUCK
COURTESY OF THE LOPC FOUNDATION!

**FREE
EVENT**

..... 

QUESTIONS? CONTACT MICHELLE@LOPC.ORG

mission



WINTER NIGHTS Family Shelter

Winter Nights Family Shelter relies on multiple faith communities throughout Contra Costa County to provide a safe environment, allowing families to stay together during a challenging time in their lives. Whether due to job loss, death in the family, divorce, domestic violence, or

Winter Nights Family Shelter Comes to LOPC This Fall!

unfortunate personal decisions, the shelter welcomes families with grace.

Winter Nights offers families hope by providing stability and daily support along their journey to independence. Clients who are employed go to work while school age children attend their home school. Adults who are unemployed are transported to a day center that offers clients access to case management, counseling, resume assistance, and computer classes. At the end of the day, students return to find healthy snacks waiting before they work with tutors for an hour before dinner is served. After tutoring is complete, children reunite with their parent(s) to share a hot meal together in community. After dinner, clients

prepare their lunches for the next day and get ready for bed. This is a snapshot of daily life in the Winter Nights Family Shelter.

The good news is LOPC gets to host Winter Nights again this fall. Our community is thrilled to partner with this organization! Just as in years past, there will be volunteer opportunities available including preparing meals or tutoring. Winter Nights families arrive October 23 and will stay on campus until November 6. Don't miss a chance to volunteer as an individual, with family and friends, or within a fellowship group.

Go to lopc.org/lovedoes to sign-up to serve and get involved!

What we need to know about the Food Bank of Contra Costa/Solano Counties

By Jerry Ducey, LOPC Member

Why do we all need to donate and volunteer? Hasn't Covid passed? Aren't more people back to work at higher wages? Are people in our community still hungry?

What we may perceive from news reports may be quite different from reality. The facts are that in the past year the food bank has seen a 64% increase in need at each of the community produce distribution centers, an 87% increase of need at the senior distribution centers, and a 36% increase at the drive-through distribution centers. The Food Bank is serving twice as many clients as before the pandemic.

Many families will see their food-buying power decrease again with CalFresh benefits being cut in half and Pandemic EBT, which provides food to children, expiring this school year. Food benefits are falling, but prices for food, gas, housing, and other necessities continue to go up. The cuts to CalFresh and

"We're serving twice as many people as we did pre-pandemic—more than 350,000 of our neighbors each month."

-Joel Sjostrom, President and CEO



Pandemic EBT, combined with inflation, mean more new faces will arrive at the doors of the Food Bank, looking for help.

As the demand for food grows, so does the need for more volunteers to sort food. Without them, distribution is gravely affected and the arrival of food to the community is delayed. Even volunteering once a quarter can make a difference.

Besides fulfilling needs locally, many don't realize the role the Food Bank of CC/Solano plays in Feeding America's west coast hub for disaster relief. Currently, the local Food Bank is working with the Food Bank of Hawaii

to support those affected by the Maui wildfires. The Food Bank of Contra Costa/Solano has responded thus far by sending 5,000 ready-set meals boxes, 840 cases of water, as well as backpacks and blankets. This help is vital to the welfare of those that have lost so much.

Food Bank Workday October 14

Ages 16 and over welcome! Join others from LOPC as we work together sorting and packaging food into boxes to be distributed at various sites throughout Contra Costa and Solano counties.

To learn more about the Food Bank and how you can help, go to foodbankccs.org.



Children of Faith Service Opportunity

Informational Meeting October 29

Children of Faith Missions (COF) in Visakhapatnam, India, has partnered with LOPC for more than 10 years. Founded in 2004 by Rosie and Anand Thandu, COF is a Children's Home and School that serves 120 school-age children, preparing them for a better future by promoting their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.

The children served by COF are orphans, with no living parents or "semi" or "half-orphans," meaning they have one living parent. Any family they have is unable to care for them. The children live at COF and attend school on the grounds under supervision of

the founders and staff. The school provides first through 10th grades, after which the children attend junior college in the nearby community for 11th and 12th grades. After twelve years of education, most children go on to college or technical school with support from COF. At Children of Faith, education is emphasized as the key to helping break the cycle of poverty.

Rosie and Anand Thandu are grateful for the support and visits they've received over the years from LOPC. More than 100 youth and advisors have had the opportunity to visit COF. LOPC has not been to COF since the pandemic and now feels like it's time

to return. An adult trip is scheduled for February of 2024 (Dates TBD). The trip will consist of a small group of adults who will go to COF and work with the children on a variety of activities.

Service projects will include working directly with the children in the Home School and Christian education as well as facility improvement projects (no special skills required!). For more information, email Ginny Ross at VLFRoss@aol.com or join us on October 29 in the Oak Room at 11:15 a.m. for an informational meeting. Please consider if God is calling you to serve in India.

Trinity Center Warm Clothing Drive

Trinity Center located in the heart of Walnut Creek acts as a safety net for those experiencing homelessness in Walnut Creek and the surrounding neighborhoods. As the weather begins to cool down, the need for warm clothing for its clients goes up. Please look at what items are needed and if you would like to donate, **drop off your items in front of the Oak Room on Saturday, October 28.**

- Men/Women Sweaters
- Pants, Jeans
- Sweatshirts & Sweatpants
- Coats and Jackets
- Underwear (new)
- Socks
- Shoes

**All clothing should be gently used and free of stains*





BACK TO SCHOOL AT SEEDLINGS

By Kaylin Deutscher, Seedlings Board, Communications

Seedlings is back in session for the new school year, and this year marks a milestone: Seedlings is turning 40!

Seedlings began in 1983 as a “mother’s day out” program. Over the past 40 years, Seedlings has evolved into a premier preschool in the Lamorinda area, offering a unique infant, toddler, preschool, and pre-kindergarten program for children 6 months to 6 years of age.

This year we have more than 100 families whose children attend Seedlings across our nine classrooms. Many families are continuing with

Seedlings from last year, and we’ve also welcomed 26 new families to our community.

We kicked off the year with a back-to-school night for families to visit with their children’s teachers, see their classrooms, and learn about some of the goals and routines for each class. It was a great opportunity for families to get acquainted with the school and our larger LOPC campus, as well as meet and make connections with other families.

The first few weeks of school have gone by quickly as the children have adjusted to their classrooms and

started to build their friendships with each other.

“I love the beginning of each new school year! Getting to know new families and their children is such a privilege,” said Coleen Moulton, director of Seedlings. “The children are settling into their new routines and bonding to their new teachers. It can take a little time for some kids, but the teachers are so patient and nurturing. The kids will be running into school before we know it!”

We are all excited for a fun school year ahead!

the *Faith* journey of Fred Toth

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen, LOPC Member



I grew up in Lafayette, and my parents were members of LOPC," remembers Fred Toth. "However, we did not attend church regularly. We only attended Christmas and Easter services. As a child growing up, I really didn't understand faith. When I was 10 years old, my parents got divorced. When I was 13, my sister died in a car accident. At that point in my life, I really didn't have any faith because I could not understand why those things could happen if there really was a God.

"It took several years for me to 'discover' my faith. In college, I met and fell in love with my wife Lisa. In 1992, we were married at LOPC since my mom, Liliane Heydt, was a member, and it was the church I grew up in. At the same time, I was ready to 'discover' faith. We were living in Fremont and tried several other local churches. However, LOPC provided the spirituality we were looking for so we joined at that time. We drove most Sundays from Fremont to LOPC and moved to Lafayette in 2000.

"Over the past 30 years, LOPC has brought so much joy and happiness to our family. We raised our daughters, Melanie and Olivia, in the church where they participated in all of the youth programs – Godly Play, Kids Rock, LOGOS, YOW, and BTW. As our children went through the programs, I accompanied them teaching Godly Play and was an advisor for all the other programs. Working in the youth program was a real blessing in my life. Teaching Bible stories and talking about faith with children and youth provided a great opportunity for me

to discover my own faith as well as help them "discover their own. I really enjoyed traveling on many mission trips with them because it gave me a chance to serve different communities in so many ways. I served as an elder representing Children and Youth to provide a voice and share the awesome programs and activities.

"LOPC is such a wonderful community with many ways to learn about God and serve others. Being a deacon enriched my faith by allowing me to reach out and help others. I enjoyed being a part of One Sunday/Love Does, and our family always looked forward to the annual Mt. Hermon retreats. The friendships we made and the programs we participated in have given me and my family many blessings. I now feel God is there and with me during the good and the bad times. I am fortunate to have discovered my faith here at LOPC and look forward to continuing my faith journey."

hold in PRAYER

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



Phil Placier,

who passed April 9. A memorial will be held October 7 at 4:00 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. A memorial was held September 30 at 11:00 a.m.

Jeanette McClean,

who passed July 16.

Elizabeth Takao,

who passed September 9.
A memorial will be held
October 21 at 2:30 p.m.

spotlight Women's Spiritual Journey Group

The Women's Spiritual Journey Group is a Christian fellowship of women who seek spiritual growth and a closer relationship with God. Its mission is to welcome and bring these women together in a unique spiritual experience. They gather monthly in the LOPC Chapel to spend a creative morning of study, guided spiritual practices, prayer, reflection, meditation, music, art, and discussion. Exploring issues of inner life in faith and trust, the women bond together in the Spiritual Journey Group where they deepen their faith and friendships.

The guiding principle of Women's Spiritual Journey Group is "We meet in a safe place, striving to remember that each of us is loved tenderly and unconditionally by God." Alone and together the women examine the transcendent source of spirituality as fundamental life energy and look for ways to experience that energy and live in a spiritual relationship to self and others.

Prayer Partners are a special part of the Group. Prayer Partners come together during meetings and offer an opportunity to develop a spiritual relationship with someone new for the month ahead. Prayer Partners honor a commitment to each other to be available through prayer and communication in ways mutually agreed upon - including by phone, text, email, letters, and by meeting in person.

Members were asked why they joined Group, and they agreed: "To meet others with a common desire to grow in faith."

When asked why they have stayed, answers included the following:

Friendship: "I have become friends with many of the women in this group - we support and encourage one another in hard times and celebrate good times." "I make interesting new friends with whom I look forward to exchanging thoughts and ideas."

Participation: "I join stimulating conversations." "I like to do a reading from our book or the Bible in a meeting when I am asked." "I am happy to bring refreshments for the social time before our meetings." "I have a chance to play the piano." "I am always encouraged to add my thoughts to our discussions."

Prayer and Prayer Partners: "My prayer life has expanded." "My faith has become more relevant in my daily life." "Having a Prayer Partner is a rich experience." "We pray for others in and outside of our group who are dealing with difficult situations."

Study: "I have deepened my spiritual journey with God by studying alone and in small and large groups." "Our books are written by excellent scholars who cover a variety of spiritual themes and thoughts." "Our presenters are knowledgeable and inspiring - they offer challenging exercises and ideas."

Fellowship: "I like the social aspect of getting together with one another both at LOPC and outside of church. Ours is a very relational group." "I appreciate our yearly Retreat." "I always feel welcome."

Format: "I like the format of this group - alone time as well as sharing in small and large groups." "In our quiet time I walk the Labyrinth on the patio." "I enjoy having the time to journal."

Women's Spiritual Journey Group was founded in 1996 when LOPC member, Sue Gibbons, collaborated with Pastor Janet Russell to create and lead a study based on the book, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* by Richard Foster. Today we are a vibrant fellowship of forty-plus women under a shared leadership core group of four team leaders led by Mary Lou Browning. A small sampling of books we have studied over the years includes: *The Friendship of Women: A Spiritual Tradition* by Joan Chittister; *Learning to Pray* by James Martin, SJ, and *The Book of Joy* by The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Most (but not all) of the women in the Women's Spiritual Journey Group are members of LOPC. Guests and visitors are welcome to join us throughout the year. We meet in the LOPC Chapel September - June on the second Monday of each month from 9:30 a.m. to noon, and began a new year on Monday, September 11. Our book for 2023/24 will be *Braving the Thin Places - Celtic Wisdom to Create a Space for Grace* by Julianne Stanz. More information about the Women's Spiritual Journey Group can be found on the LOPC website under Spiritual Formation.

finance

Financial Update

By Jim Nagle, Finance Elder

LOPC is thankful for our generous congregation! LOPC is in a solid financial position after the first eight months of 2023. We raised over \$27,000 for Maui relief, which was deployed in September.

Year-to-date contributions totaled \$2,401,520, ahead of budgeted levels of \$2,316,500.

Many components factor into the higher year-to-date net contributions. Year-to-date, pledge giving is below budget by \$89,980, but we are optimistic about pledge giving for the year. LOPC was blessed by a total of \$138,328, from a member's gift of thanks and praise and an estate

bequest. These gifts eliminated the need for the budgeted use of the session reserve fund of \$93,210. Non-pledge and loose offering giving, and other income, are \$19,287 ahead of plan for the year, offset by a \$8,085 reduction in user fees and memorials' proceeds. Mission and special gifts exceeded budget by \$69,741, contributing favorably to year-to-date congregational giving. Seedlings closed the 2022-2023 school year with an additional contribution to LOPC for shared costs of \$23,541, resulting from higher summer tuition rates. LOPC has \$25,398 of investment income for the year, which was not budgeted.

Most ministry teams are at or below budgeted spending. Year-to-date expenses of \$2,097,468 are below

budget by \$72,317, excluding spending for mission and special gifts. Much of the favorable variance relates to reduced spending, relative to budget, for personnel, children's ministry, and worship teams, offset by higher spending for utilities.

LOPC ended the eight-month period with contributions exceeding expenses, resulting in a surplus of \$155,240. The budgeted year-to-date surplus was \$67,644. LOPC is truly blessed to have a supportive congregation and staff that make this possible. 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.



Widow/Widower's Grief Support

Monday, October 2 – December 4,
2:00–4:00 p.m.

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 our healing process. The course is open to all widows and widowers. Pre-Registration required. The workbook is \$20.

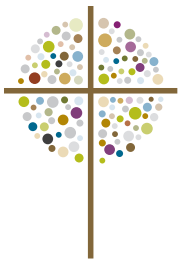
Register at lopc.org/registrations.

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.



**LAFAYETTE-ORINDA
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
49 Knox Drive
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info@lopc.org
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Legacy giving is not about the end of life—it's an affirming and joy-filled decision that lets *you* celebrate the people, values, and faith community that *you* cherish most.

If you want to build on THE LOPC FOUNDATION and the gifts already given, please consider naming the Foundation in your estate plans.

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