

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2023

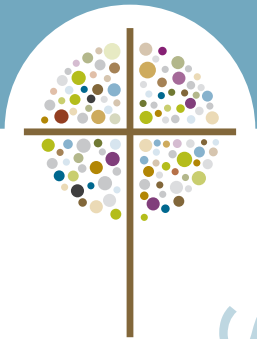
# FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

[LOPC.ORG](http://LOPC.ORG)





# Exploring Anger at God

By Lauren Gully – Pastor, Mission & Outreach

One of the key moments in my personal faith journey was when I had permission to express anger at God. At that point in my life, I didn't know that was what I needed, but when my pastor at the time gave me permission to express my true feelings to God, something in me changed. Allowing myself to voice my anger actually connected me to God in a whole new way and led me to greater intimacy with God. This experience led me into ministry because I wanted to give the same permission to others, in the hope that their faith would be similarly impacted as well.



In my doctoral program at Duke Divinity School, I have been studying anger in a faith context and how anger can potentially be a spiritual ally – even leading to deeper faith. While many theologians, pastoral counselors, and others agree that expressing anger, even anger at God, is helpful for a life of faith, there isn't much literature out there on how someone might actually try to work through their anger with God. A pastor's response to someone struggling with where to place their anger and how to express it, I think, can be the most important theological work and pastoral-care work that can truly change a person's faith forever. This is the topic for my doctoral dissertation, which I hope to complete in the next year.

It has been fascinating to be up to my elbows in research where one encounters anger expressed at God in the Bible, how research studies have mapped people's experiences at being angry at God, and to take all of this information and develop a practical guide that can help a person process anger directed at God. If you are interested in this topic, please join me in my three-part class "Anger and Faith" this coming October. Or, if you are interested in this topic but can't make the class, please reach out for conversation!

## Anger and Faith Series

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

For more information and to register, please go to [lopc.org/registrations](http://lopc.org/registrations).

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### 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  
Susan Wentworth - Children's Ministry  
Emily Austin - Children's Ministry

### Treasurer

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### Focus Newsletter

Pamela Moidel - Design  
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### Submissions & Deadlines

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



**Staying Connected:** Sign up for our weekly email to stay up-to-date on all things LOPC! Visit: [lopc.org/email](http://lopc.org/email).

### Need to reach us?

[info@lopc.org](mailto:info@lopc.org) • 925-283-8722



## care



# thursday Fellowship

*caring • sharing • loving*

## Save the Date! September 14 is our Program-Year Kickoff!

By Julie Peterson, Coordinator

Attendees are welcome with open arms and warm hearts every Thursday (except holidays) from September 14 through June 6. We guarantee they will love being a part of our very special fellowship!

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, beverage, and dessert.
- 12:45 p.m. Entertainment.
- 1:30 p.m. Program ends.

We welcome volunteers, guests, and visitors. Come and experience our engaging activities, exciting and varied entertainment, and friendly and caring community.

### September's Schedule:

- **September 14:** Syria T. Berry, a prominent Bay Area entertainer and versatile vocalist, will perform a variety of popular songs.
- **September 21:** Michael Kistner, singer and guitarist and longtime friend of Thursday Fellowship will perform our favorite oldies as we sing along.
- **September 28:** Accordion player, Dan Cooper, will perform a varied repertoire to complement our Oktoberfest celebration.

Contact Julie Peterson at [julie@lopc.org](mailto:julie@lopc.org) with any questions.

Volunteer opportunities available!



## 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.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Leslie Kernisan, geriatrician, and author of *Better Health While Aging; Preparing for the Journey*.

Breakout sessions will include:

- Legal Tools Necessary for the Journey.
- Retirement & Assisted Living – what is right for you and your family?
- Mild Cognitive Impairment – what to do now?
- Local Resources to support Aging in Place.
- Food is Medicine – individualized for your specific genetic blueprint.

Look for more information and registration coming soon.

Questions? Contact Linda Fodrini-Johnson at [lindafj620@outlook.com](mailto:lindafj620@outlook.com).

# 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](mailto:clgrantsd@gmail.com) or Robyn Dean at [r2dean@sonic.net](mailto:r2dean@sonic.net) for further information.**

## Disciple Bible Study

**Thursdays, September 14 – October 19 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.**

### *Invitation to John*

Join Pastor Jaime Polson for this six-week study of the Gospel of John. The invitation from Christ is: “Come and see, Follow me.” Experience the magnificent passages in John including the “I am” statements (I am the truth, the life, and the way; I am the living water, and more.) Revisit stories only told in John’s gospel, including Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, and the raising of Lazarus.

**To register, please visit [lopc.org/registrations](http://lopc.org/registrations).**

## Fourth Friday

### Book Group

**4:00 p.m. on Zoom**

All are welcome!

If you are interested in being added to the group, please contact Catherine Coleman at [awaitingword@gmail.com](mailto:awaitingword@gmail.com).

**September 22:** *Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese

**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

## Fourth Monday Book Group

**September 25 at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom**

Join us to discuss *The Food Explorer* by Daniel Stone. This month’s title follows the adventures of a late-19th-century food explorer who traveled the globe and introduced diverse crops like avocados, mangoes, seedless grapes, and more to Americans. Along the way, he was arrested, caught diseases, and bargained with tribes. Through him, America became the most diverse food system ever created.

**Email Jean Fiske at [jdfiske@gmail.com](mailto:jdfiske@gmail.com) to be added to the group.**

# Community Life

## SMALL GROUPS

**W**hat is your next step of faith? No matter where you’re at on your journey of faith, there’s always an invitation to take that next step. Next step of serving, next step of connecting, next step of worshiping, and next step of giving. This program year is designed to invite us to think about what our next steps are individually and collectively as a church. Participants will hang out

together, study together, pray together, and ultimately grow more deeply in community with God and one another. So, what are you waiting for? Take your next step...by joining a community life group this program year!

**Session One begins the first week of September. Please visit [lopc.org/smallgroups](http://lopc.org/smallgroups) for detailed program information, dates, and groups to join.**



LOPC Special Offering for Fotokids

# Capturing HOPE

► For more information, and to give, please visit [lopc.org/specialoffering](https://lopc.org/specialoffering).

Starting September 10, 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.

Longtime 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 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 students' 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.

*“Love your neighbor  
as yourself.”*

*-Mark 12:32*

# the GENEROSITY corner

*By Nancy Henderson, Generosity Team Member*



## RACIAL EQUITY & ENGAGEMENT at LOPC

### Celebrating LOPC's Racial Equity and Engagement Team (REET)

**A**s followers of Christ, we are called to love, seek justice for, and care for those who have been pushed to the margins of society.” So begins the Racial Justice page of LOPC’s website and the commitment of LOPC’s Racial Equity and Engagement Team (REET). As noted in May’s Focus, this team’s responsibility is to educate themselves and the congregation about those on the margins, to build relationships with others who seek justice, and to develop ways to advocate for those who need support. This month we celebrate the generous time and talents of those already involved in REET study and leadership.

The much-publicized events of 2020, anathemas to Christians, evoked a strong desire in the congregation to learn about the history and reality of society’s inequities. Team member Linda Rosenthal urges “compassionate

curiosity about others’ truths, so we can relate and act as authentic Christians.” All REET members have opened themselves to a calling from inside, from scripture, and from observation to the faithful work of following biblical teachings of justice and the examples of Jesus. “To follow Christ, we must work to right the wrongs of injustice,” says REET member Sue Gibbons, “little by little, step by step.” We can’t do it all at once, but both the Old and New Testament scriptures call us to do what we can in our day.

“It is a long, difficult journey,” Diane Bianchi reflects, “and it’s humbling to feel the discomfort of not being able to ‘just fix it.’ On the other hand, I’m awed at the sense of hope within this team.”

REET is now crafting the next steps in exploring the systems that place our brothers and sisters at the margins,

discerning where we are at LOPC, and developing a sustainable program to address the issues with respect to our faith. Pastor Lauren Gully reminds us that “REET’s efforts already are enriching LOPC’s culture – in sermons, in seminars, and in planning.” We are promised an energizing joy by responding to God’s call. Thus, we invite the congregation to view upcoming educational opportunities as more than “checking off boxes,” but as interweaving REET’s efforts in LOPC’s mission. Jesus reached out to the disenfranchised, and so must we.

**For more information, visit [lopc.org/racialjustice](http://lopc.org/racialjustice).**

**For conversations about this work, watch for upcoming announcements of educational opportunities this fall.**

**For engagement, we invite you to listen for what calls you.**



## New Foundation Trustee Named



Andy Gill has recently been appointed a trustee of the LOPC Foundation. “We are grateful for Andy’s willingness to serve and welcome his depth of expertise in finance,” said Jim Beckemeyer, president.

Andy and his wife, Margie, have attended LOPC since 2004, joining as members shortly thereafter. As early careers moved them around the country, they always looked for a new church with a good choir to join, knowing friendships and community would happen soon after.

You may have noticed Andy back in the choir loft recently with his daughter, Miranda. Miranda is a preschool teacher in the area. His son, Matt, just moved to Houston to begin his first job in communications consulting. Andy’s wife Margie is an abstract painter, showing and selling her work across the Bay Area and nationally.

Andy recently finished a 23-year phase of his career in financial

services as a leader in product development, advisory, marketing, and communications. The past decade has been heavy on travel, which he won’t miss. He is well known to us after seven years on the Generosity Team (formerly Stewardship), and as many years singing in the choir. He and Margie continue their membership in the Fish Group fellowship, and credit it with numerous close friendships. Andy also loved the many years of coaching kids’ sport teams in the community. Currently, his fun includes time with family, singing, and a brisk hike on the weekend.

**Should you have any questions about legacy giving or becoming a Friend of the Foundation, please reach out to any of the 2023 trustees.**

## Kingdom Values

Bill McGuinness, pastor at the St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, recently sent a devotional that resonated with the LOPC Foundation. Beginning with scripture, he wrote:

“Matthew 6:19: ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

“Yes, people live a lot longer these days than in 1st century Israel. And, no, we don’t want to be a burden on our children. Jesus, I believe, is not talking about making adequate preparation for the future, but rather, of treasuring up, excessive stockpiling of assets. The best investments aren’t the ones with the lowest risk or best returns in the conventional sense, meaning the worldly sense. The best

investments are in kingdom values, trusted institutions and individuals who will carry on your kingdom values in the here and now and likely on into the future. They may or may not be gospel grounded in the sense of specifically Christian, but in Jesus’ kinds of blessing of love, healing, teaching, relief of extreme poverty, research on debilitating disease, quality education and helping our own heirs with genuine needs, and not just wants. These all strike the sweet chords of kingdom values.”

The LOPC Foundation strives to be a permanent, reliable source of significant funding for LOPC’s ongoing and new ministries, expansion of mission outreach, and maintenance of facilities. We are enormously grateful to those who have contributed to fulfilling the mission and kingdom values of LOPC through the support of the Foundation that will last into the future.

**We would love to talk to you about how the Foundation supports LOPC and would be interested in learning what matters most to you for the future of LOPC. Please feel free to reach out to any of the Foundation Trustees:**

**Jim Beckemeyer (President), Dara Youngdale (Vice-President), Jen Crocker (Treasurer), Lois Boyd (Secretary), Staci Johnston, Mike Ross, Linda Fodrini-Johnson, Linda Rosenthal, and Andy Gill.**



# YOUTH



► **Questions?**  
**Contact Keris,**  
**[keris@lopc.org](mailto:keris@lopc.org)**

**YOW** *Youth on Wednesday*  
**Resumes September 20 from**  
**6:00 - 7:30 p.m. in CLC Room 201**

A weekly youth group for 5th – 8th graders with activities including games, worship songs, a devotional, and small groups! Optional pizza dinner at 5:30 p.m.

**Youth Alive**  
**Resuming September 17 at**  
**10:00 a.m. in CLC Room 201**

Youth Alive is a weekly interactive Bible lesson for youth (5th - 8th graders) with games and other fun activities included.

**High School Fall Retreat**  
**at Westminster Woods**  
**September 8 – 10**

Youth Ministry is hosting a great weekend of games, devotionals, free time, and a challenge ropes course! Registration is now closed.

**BTW** *By the Way*  
**Resumes September 17 from**  
**6:00 - 7:30 p.m. in CLC Room 201**

A weekly youth group for 9th – 12th graders with activities including games, worship songs, a devotional, and small groups!



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

# Kids' Rock

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



**Wednesday afternoons, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. • Kindergarten – 4th Grade  
• Annual Tuition: \$350 (scholarships available) •**

**► Sign up at [lopc.org/kidsrock](https://lopc.org/kidsrock) ◀**

## Spotlight on LOPC's Kurth Memorial Garden

Almost 40 years ago, the memorial service of Cecile Kurth started the journey toward the birth of one of the fixtures at LOPC -- Kurth Memorial Garden. Cecile was the wife of Andy Kurth, one of LOPC's pastors at the time. He suggested it would be wonderful if the church constructed a formal facility for internment and a place for the remembrance of loved ones.

Andy and Cecile didn't live to see the completion of the dream. Andy passed away at age of 92 in 1996, but the idea had taken hold, and today, the Garden on the hillside has become a peaceful, beautiful spot for remembering many LOPC families. There are niches for cremains with plaques covering the niches giving names, dates, and a few words of remembrance -- either a double niche for a couple or a single niche for one person. There are also concrete walls throughout the Garden where a plaque space can be purchased for those sprinkled, interred, or buried elsewhere. On those plaque

walls a double or a single plaque can be placed.

The lower part of the Garden where the fountain is located has few niche spaces available, but the expansion in 2011 outside the most forward Sanctuary exit provides more availability.

If you are interested in making some future plans and ready to talk about your wishes, making things easier for your heirs, the four volunteers on the Kurth Memorial Garden Board would be glad to talk with you.

**Lynn Trowbridge, Board Chair**  
925 876 1196  
lynntrw@comcast.net

**Kristi Haigh**  
925 890 0265  
akhaigh3@comcast.net

**Judy Kronmiller**  
925 284 4525  
bkron244@gmail.com

**Linda Downing**  
ldowning145@gmail.com

Since many people buy niches or plaque space well before they're needed, consider contacting one of the above volunteers so they can tell you what space is available.

There is also a Memorial Book kept in the church library where people memorialized in the Garden have a page which contains a picture or two and genealogical information, as well as often a story or two or simply more information about the person.

For the past two years the Kurth Memorial Garden Board has been working with architects and contractors to expand the Garden as the current space fills up. Brochures in the church office and information on the LOPC website reflect the current pricing as there will be a price increase effective January 1, 2024.





## finance

### Financial Update

*By Jim Nagle, Finance Elder*

**L**OPC is in a solid financial position after the first seven months of 2023. Year-to-date contributions totaled \$2,213,312, ahead of budgeted levels of \$2,114,124. LOPC is thankful to the congregation, as July was a good month for pledge giving. Year-to-date, pledge giving is below budget by \$62,483, 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 Reserve Fund of \$93,210. Mission and special gifts exceeded budget by \$138,338, 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.

Most ministry teams are at or below budgeted spending. Year-to-date expenses of \$1,869,504 are below budget by \$57,187, excluding spending for mission and special gifts. Most ministries teams spending are below expected levels.

LOPC ended the seven-month period with contributions exceeding expenses, resulting in a surplus of \$205,470. The budgeted surplus was \$108,362. 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.

## 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, 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 will be held September 30 at 11:00 a.m.

**Jeanette McClean,** who passed July 16.

**LOPC**  
**FALL•Fest**  
**October 8 • 11:00 a.m.**  
**Crafts, food, games & more!**

There will be music, arts, crafts, games, prizes, a free food truck courtesy of the LOPC Foundation, and much more!  
Save the date and invite family, friends, and neighbors.



**LAFAYETTE-ORINDA  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
49 Knox Drive  
Lafayette, CA 94549



info@lopc.org  
925-283-8722

IMPORTANT

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BEFORE 9/1/23

Thank you!

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**LOPC**  
FOUNDATION

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.

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](http://lopc.org/foundation).**