

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

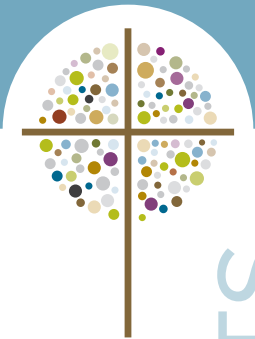
MARCH 2024

FOCUS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

LOPC.ORG



New life is coming!

By Chris Baldwin — Pastor, Community & Formation

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!
-2 Corinthians 5:17



Whenever March rolls around, I'm reminded of the changing of seasons. I look around and see the season of spring beginning to make itself known with nature awakening from winter slumber. It's subtle for our East Bay area and yet Mt. Diablo dons a green blanket of freshly grown grass and even batches of bright wildflower patches can be spotted in the distance. The Lamorinda rolling hills' trees are clothed with new leaves, and birds return to make their homes high above the canopies. There's a freshness and a newness of life in the air along with the increase in my allergies from the yellow pollen that floats by (a-choo!). The witness of new life is all around us.

Perhaps you've entered this time of year needing your own reminder that new life is possible. Sometimes just pausing to look around at what is taking new form or returning from being away can be a hopeful sign of new life...or even resurrection. Are there hopes that you have for this time of year that might bring about a new life, new career, new relationship, or even new rhythm of life?

For the church, we continue to walk through season of Lent, but we get subtle hints of the resurrection of Jesus as we approach March 31—Easter! I encourage you to use this month to look for and experience the new life found in the resurrected Jesus. We observe Lent by fasting, studying our devotion readings, and attending Holy Week events, all with the hope of the promise of new life. May this changing of the church calendar season be filled with the anticipation of new life in our church, homes, schools, workplaces, and our very lives.

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Submissions & Deadlines

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



HOLY WEEK & *Easter*



Palm Sunday, March 24
Worship Service at 10:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday, March 28
Worship Service at 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday, March 29
Worship Service at 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday, March 31
Sunrise Service at 6:30 a.m.
Worship Services at 9:00 & 10:30 a.m.

**PALM SUNDAY
EGG HUNT**
ALL ARE WELCOME

March 24 
11:00am-12:30pm

**games, treats
& lots of fun**

Palm Sunday Egg Hunt March 24 after Worship

There will be age-appropriate egg hunts, breakfast/dessert bites, live music, arts and crafts, games, and a lot of fun! This is a free event for the community, and all are welcome!

**Register at lopc.org/registrations.
If you would like to serve as a volunteer at this event, or if you have any questions, please contact Michelle Browning at michelle@lopc.org.**

Easter AZALEAS

This Easter, we will continue our well-loved tradition of adorning the sanctuary with beautiful white azaleas. To sponsor a plant, return this form with your payment to LOPC in person or by mail to 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette, CA 94549 by Friday, March 22, or purchase after the Sunday service on the Plaza on March 10, 17, or 24. A list of flower dedications will be published in the Easter Sunday bulletin. Those who have donated azaleas may take them home following the 10:30 a.m. service, or they may be picked up in the sanctuary narthex April 1–3.



Easter Azaleas

Yes! I/We would like to donate a white azalea to adorn the sanctuary on Easter.

Given by: _____

In Memory of: _____

OR

In Honor of: _____

Email: _____ Amount: _____

Paid by (circle)

Cash Check

Azalea donations are \$20 each. Please make checks payable to LOPC.
Please fill out this form and return to the Ministry Center Office by March 22.

special offering

Monument CrisisCenter

 **FOOD
BANK**
of Contra Costa & Solano

Easter Special Offering

Addressing Food Insecurity

Every Easter, LOPC has a tradition of raising funds for one or more mission partners. This year's Easter Special Offering addresses hunger and will benefit the Food Bank of Contra Costa/Solano and Monument Crisis Center. Both organizations work tirelessly to address food insecurity in our community.

These organizations have been deeply affected by the pandemic and the incredible increase in food insecurity that followed since 2020. The Food Bank has risen to the task of meeting the increased need and now feeds more than double the families and individuals it did before the pandemic by continuing to leverage their ability to buy food at reduced cost.

Similarly, the Monument Crisis Center now ensures that over 4,000 people in our community do not go hungry every month. Because of this increase, the center needs more space to store food for weekly distribution. They are currently raising funds through a capital campaign to expand their food pantry by 2,000 square feet to better meet the skyrocketing need in our community.

If you would like to help fight food insecurity in our community this Easter, please consider giving to these essential organizations.

Here is an idea of what your gift can do!

A gift of \$30 provides dinner for a senior for a month.

A gift of \$100 provides an Easter feast with leftovers for a family.

A gift of \$200 provides one "supporter's circle" brick towards the MCC pantry expansion.

A gift of \$1,300 helps to build and source a new cornerstone for the pantry expansion.

Our goal this Easter Special Offering is to raise \$20,000 for both organizations!

To give, please designate your gift by writing "Easter Offering" on your envelope or in the memo line of your check. If you wish to give online, or to find out more information, please visit lopc.org/specialoffering.



the GENEROSITY corner

Generosity of Time, Talent, and Treasure

By Nancy Henderson, Generosity Team Member



“One of the most important things that we can do as Christians is to demonstrate God’s love for the world and our community. *love does* is LOPC’s aptly named

program that provides opportunities to serve locally and globally and show our love to those who are in need. Serving others is a demonstrable way to say we care for them and love them as Christ encourages us to do.” So begins LOPC’s *love does* webpage.

Funded in part by your pledge dollars, *love does* has been able to provide diapers, hygiene kits, and breakfast kits for Monument Crisis Center (MCC) clients. Can you picture having to choose between diapers or food? LOPC has also donated shopping carts so MCC clients who can’t drive and can’t afford a ride can at least wheel their groceries home on foot.

Your pledges help not only local community organizations like MCC, but also global efforts in Zimbabwe providing preschool nutrition, in India supporting children in their journey

to become adults, and in Guatemala providing educational and vocational support to low income children.

When we consider how tight our budgets might be after Christmas and before tax time, we must also recognize how much tighter are the budgets of those who are struggling to survive and need our support. LOPC is a church of DOING, because you make it possible to merge the generosity of time and talents with the treasure.

Jesus told us not to close our eyes to the realities in our greater community: look at the young man who walked into MCC recently, and sat down exhausted. He was newly on his own, after aging out of foster care, and just wanted the simplicity of walking to the refrigerator for a glass of milk. Imagine—that’s what he missed the most as result of being homeless!

Thank you for your generosity and be grateful we can respond to Jesus’ reminder in Matthew 25:40, ‘*Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*’

Kurth Memorial Garden is Expanding

Kurth Memorial Garden (KMG) is looking forward to a refurbishment and expansion beginning in April 2024. This will include the installation of additional niches on the outside of the Sanctuary walls as well as along the low wall opposite. This expansion will increase the capacity of the Garden by approximately 75%.

Construction will take about a month, weather permitting. During this time, there will be no access to the Garden and no sales or interments.

Currently, there are 59 double niches and 90 single niches available in the existing Garden, in addition to plenty of plaque wall space throughout. The current prices will stay in place until KMG is closed for construction. When the Garden reopens, increased prices will go into effect throughout.

If you are a member of LOPC and are interested in making a plan for yourself or immediate family members at the current price—either for a niche with plaque or wall plaque—please contact Lynn Trowbridge, chair of the Kurth Memorial Garden Board, or board members Kristi Haigh, Judy Kronmiller, or Linda Downing. The Ministry Center office has KMG brochures with contact information and a price list.



If you are interested in waiting for a greater choice of location when the Garden reopens at increased prices, please contact Lynn Trowbridge to be put on the waiting list for an appointment when construction is complete.

For details and contact information, visit lopc.org/kurth.



YOUTH



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

Confirmation Sunday, March 3

Please join us as we welcome in this year's new confirmands! They will make their declarations of faith before the congregation on this very special day. Confirmation is a faith milestone where LOPC youth directors and adult volunteers support youth as they explore their faith, ask questions in a safe environment, and seek to actively explore their own faith journey. Through this program, youth confirm the promises made by their parents at their baptism: to share their intent to live as faithful followers of Christ. In January and February, we explored what Christians believe and how we all help to form the Body of Christ.

2024 Summer Service-Learning Registration

Registration is open for the youth ministry summer service-learning experiences!

Short-term mission experiences can have a big impact. Youth in 5th–12th grade who choose to spend a week of their summer vacation dedicated to service will:

- Discover where God is already at work in communities in need.
- Act as the hands and feet of Christ to share God's love with the world.
- Learn that those who seem different are not very different at all.
- Practice putting others' needs above their own desires.
- Lean on God to realize their ability to overcome new challenges.

June 10–14 Service Squad: A Service-Learning Day Camp for youth completing 5th–6th grades in spring 2024.

June 16–21 SLAM (Students Learning About Mission) Trip to Wapato, WA, for youth completing 7th–12th grades in spring 2024.

July 7–14 High School Service-Learning Trip to Salinas and USA/Mexico Border for youth completing 9th–12th grades in spring 2024.

To register, visit lopc.org/service-learning.

Last YOW

Youth on Wednesday

March 20

This will be our final YOW of the program year! Be in on the fun as we wrap up this amazing program with a great evening of worship and fellowship.

BTW By the Way Senior Night

March 24

Seniors will be invited to share their wisdom and foundational memories of the youth ministry with the whole youth group. Don't miss it! We will continue BTW through April 28.



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



CHILDREN

Dive into Vacation Bible Camp at LOPC!

By Emily Austin, co-director of Children's Ministry

Get ready to “splash” into fun this June. At Scuba Vacation Bible Camp (VBC), kids dive into friendship with God. Scuba is filled with awesome Bible-learning experiences kids see, hear, and touch! Hands-on science experiments, team-building games, standout songs, and tasty treats are just a few of the engaging activities that help energize each day. Parents and friends are invited to join us at our Fin-tastic Finale each day at 4:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary for a wrap-up of the day's adventures.



Questions about VBC?

Email Emily Austin:
emily@lopc.org or
Susan Wentworth:
susan@lopc.org.

We'd love to open camp to as many families as possible, but we are dependent on our volunteer capacity. Not only are volunteers essential to our program, but the relationships that are built during this week can last a lifetime. Come celebrate God's greatness and consider volunteering your time this year at Vacation Bible Camp! Contact Susan Wentworth at susan@lopc.org to find out more about this opportunity.

Who: Kids 4 years old (by September 1, 2024) to completed 4th graders (June 2024).

Dates: Monday, June 10–Friday, June 14, 2024

Times: 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Cost: \$150 per child.

Priority registration opens March 1 for returning campers. General registration begins April 1. Capacity is determined by how many volunteers participate and will be enrolled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

For more information, visit lopc.org/vbcamp2024.

*thursday*Fellowship

caring • sharing • loving

A program for Senior Care Ministries

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

By Julie Peterson, Coordinator

February was Fantastic! Daphne Stoermer graced us on February 1 with a super program on stretching and balance in the morning. After lunch, David Briggs, Director of Operations and Maintenance for EBMUD, presented a fascinating program on the infrastructure and processes required to bring water from its source to our local taps.

On February 8, “This and That,” our grown-up version of show-and-tell, was equally entertaining as we enjoyed the unusual, treasured, and amusing items people brought to share. We also decorated Valentine cookies with the help of LOPC’s receptionist and baker extraordinaire, Ciara Bird.

With a nod to Mardi Gras, mask decorating was a big hit, and we enjoyed a sing-along with Michael Kistner on February 15.

On February 22, we used the whole day to create a special arts and crafts project and also offered games.

We ended the month with a morning talk on full moons by Penny Meyerhoff. In the afternoon, eclectic guitarist Jean-Paul Buongiorno wowed us with Flamenco, Brazilian, and Latin music.



What a fabulous month of Thursdays! The programs, birthday celebrations, activities, and friendships blended together to make each Thursday special.

“March Madness” is upon us, and we look forward to another month of engaging programs, made even more special when shared. The warm friendship of our caring community makes Thursday Fellowship a day not to miss. We look forward to celebrating St. Patrick’s Day, the coming of spring, and Easter. Please join us!

March Schedule:

- **March 7:** Flutist and composer Sherry Finzer performs her music for relaxation, specializing in alto and bass flutes.
- **March 14:** A speaker from the spectacular Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek will present a slideshow featuring climate resilient plants from around the world.
- **March 21:** Thursday Fellowship favorite, Michael Kistner, will lead a sing-along.

- **March 28:** From Carnegie Hall to Thursday Fellowship, San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Yale graduate Julie Kim will play her violin with piano accompaniment by St. Mary’s and UC Berkeley faculty member Sharon Lee Kim.

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, bring a friend, or volunteer! We look forward to welcoming you!

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



journey of Faith

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen



Spiritual Journey of Sue Farmer

"My spiritual journey differs from many others due to my Catholic upbringing. However, during my college years, I made the decision to leave the Catholic Church as I found myself disagreeing with various teachings. Decades later, I discovered LOPC, a community that captivated me with its open-mindedness and inclusive nature.

"The paramount value for me is to embrace and love one another, regardless of our beliefs, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. We will never forget the loving support we received from LOPC when we lost our youngest son a few years ago. Another reason LOPC enticed me was its exceptional music program. While I have a deep appreciation for classical music, I am grateful that our church strives to incorporate diverse genres of music to touch each individual's spirit.

"As a member of the LOPC interfaith group led by Terry Clark, I have had the opportunity to foster connections between different faiths. Our aim is to learn from one another and

cultivate respect for our differences. Surprisingly, we often discover that despite distinct rituals and services, we share similar values with other religions. Additionally, I actively participate in the LOPC refugee group alongside Phil Hunter (LOPC member). Our collective endeavor involves finding effective ways to assist those facing arduous journeys while escaping war, poverty, and other atrocities. It is truly unimaginable to contemplate the challenges of leaving one's home for a foreign country with only a few belongings stuffed into a backpack. We have been hosting a Ukrainian family of five for more than a year.

"I find great enjoyment in attending LOPC's First Friday Forum, a remarkable event supported by the church. This platform enlightens us on various pressing global issues, and it isn't uncommon for our own members to share their knowledge or captivate us with their travel experiences. LOPC's values inspire me to serve the community, and I am immensely enriched by the remarkable friendships I have forged through my involvement. Currently, I am president of the Lamorinda Arts Council, and I hold the position of president-elect for Orinda Rotary, an organization whose motto is 'Service above self.'

"Lastly, life at LOPC is not solely centered around work and projects. My husband and I have been active participants in the Voyager Laser Group for decades, creating cherished memories with our Laser friends as we navigate life's triumphs and challenges together."

A Bible verse that speaks to Sue:
John 3:18

"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

staff



Please join us in welcoming as temporary pastor, The Reverend Jane Doty MacKenzie, who will be providing pastoral

support to the LOPC community during Pastor Lauren's maternity leave and Pastor Peter's sabbatical later this year.

To learn more about Pastor Jane, visit lopc.org/jm/.



A familiar face in a new place! Emily Austin has been with the LOPC staff since fall of 2022 as our Campus Facilities Coordinator as

well as in Children's Ministry. She now joins Susan Wentworth where Susan and Emily will act as co-directors of Children's Ministry.

To learn more about Emily, visit lopc.org/ea/.

hold in PRAYER

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

Charlotte Huntley, who passed January 2. A service will be held on April 6 at 1:00 p.m.

Peggy Hartz, who passed on January 6.

Don Atherton, who passed on January 9.

Lois Salem, who passed on February 6.



FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

This month, Carolyn Chen will deliver her presentation entitled “Work Pray Code: When Work Becomes Religion in Silicon Valley.”

Silicon Valley is known for its lavish perks, intense work culture, and spiritual gurus. Work Pray Code explores how tech companies are bringing religion into the workplace in ways that are replacing traditional places of worship, blurring the line between work and religion, and transforming the very nature of spiritual experience in modern life.

Over the past 40 years, highly skilled workers have been devoting more time and energy to their jobs than ever before. They are also leaving churches, synagogues, and temples in droves—but they have not abandoned religion. Carolyn Chen spent more than five years in Silicon Valley, conducting a wealth of in-depth interviews and

gaining unprecedented access to the best and brightest of the tech world. The result is a penetrating account of how work now satisfies workers’ needs for belonging, identity, purpose, and transcendence that religion once met. Chen argues that tech firms are offering spiritual care such as Buddhist-inspired mindfulness practices to make their employees more productive, but that our religious traditions, communities, and public sphere are paying the price.

We all want our jobs to be meaningful and fulfilling. “Work Pray Code” reveals what can happen when work becomes religion, and when the workplace becomes the institution that shapes our souls.

Carolyn Chen is a professor of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley, co-director of the Berkeley Center for the Study of Religion, and executive director of

the Asian Pacific American Religions Research Initiative (APARRI). Her publications include “Getting Saved in America: Taiwanese Immigration and Religious Experience” (Princeton 2008), “Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation,” co-edited with Russell Jeung (NYU 2012) and “Work Pray Code: When Work Becomes Religion in Silicon Valley” (Princeton 2022). She’s written for the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, CNN, and other publications.

This event is open to the community. It will be held March 1 at 1:30 p.m. in the LOPC Sanctuary and will be available on Livestream. For more information and to watch online, visit lopc.org/first-friday-forum.



A look ahead at the upcoming First Friday Forum speakers:

April 5: William Jagust, professor of Public Health and Neuroscience at UCB, “Untangling Alzheimer’s.” Dr. Jagust discusses the difference between dementia and Alzheimer’s, the development of Alzheimer’s in the brain, and the challenges in developing effective treatments.

May 3: Laura Beth Nielsen, professor of Sociology and director of the Center for Legal Studies at Northwestern University. “Northwestern University’s Prison Education Program.” Prof. Nielsen describes a path to a university education for maximum security prisoners. She says, “My students are amazing people living in squalid conditions, and they still do all their homework.”

June 7: Gordon Chang, Oliver H. Palmer Professor in Humanities at Stanford University, “Forgotten, Even Ignored, the Chinese Who Built the Western Portion of the Transcontinental Railroad.” Dr. Chang says, “They should be remembered and honored for their contributions; my talk will help restore their lives, work, and sacrifices to our history.” His published research has focused on the relationship between race and ethnicity in America and its impact on U.S. and Asian diplomatic and cultural relations. *This program is available on Zoom only.*



Special Thanks to Dr. Jonathan Lee Walton!

LOPC was blessed to host Dr. Jonathan Lee Walton, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, in early February. Dr. Walton facilitated LOPC's annual leadership retreat, which was titled *Expanding the Table: Prayer, Purpose, and Possibility for a Renewed Church*. On Sunday, Dr. Walton delivered an inspirational sermon reminding us that though we may be weary, God is not done blessing us.

Visit LOPC's new YouTube channel to watch the sermon in its entirety at youtube.com/@lopcYoutube.

finance

Financial Update

Submitted by Jim Nagle & Staci Johnston

LOPC was blessed to end the 2023 year strong with contributions exceeding spending by \$52,952, which has been placed into the session reserves for future ministry.

The church closed the first month of 2024 with pledge income of \$396,739 which is ahead of budget by \$63,739 due to the generosity of donors who prepaid \$300,297 of 2024 pledges. Non-pledge and loose offering giving were slightly stronger than plan by \$10,925. Total giving for the month was \$447,499.

Ministry team spending of \$232,101 was less than budget by \$16,314. No unusual items were noted in ministry expense.

January 2024 closed the month with actual net contributions of \$215,398 favorably exceeding ministry budget by \$92,106.

The Finance Team would like to thank all who have pledged so far. We encourage anyone who has not pledged to consider making a pledge so that we can plan and continue our great ministry.

Giving at LOPC

One of the most practical ways you can help during times like these is through your financial support.



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

There's still time—pledge *today!*

the
**GENEROUS
HEART**



2024 Pledge Campaign



So far, our community has pledged **\$2,066,394*** for 2024.

Our goal is **\$2,425,500.**

Your pledge will help LOPC plan and budget for 2024.

Visit lopc.org/pledge to learn more about how to pledge. For questions, please contact LOPC Treasurer Staci Johnston at staci@lopc.org.

*As of February 20.



SEEDLINGS SPOTLIGHT: MISS JEN

By Kaylin Deutscher, Seedlings Board, Communications

Say hello to Jen Paschall, one of the awesome teachers here at Seedlings! She's the heart and soul behind our Snapdragon class for 3-4-year-olds. Jen's not just a teacher; she's a big part of our Seedlings family. This month, we're putting her in the spotlight so you can get to know the person who brings so much fun and learning to our little Snapdragons.

Kaylin: *How long have you been with Seedlings, and what was your background before joining?*

Jen: I joined Seedlings in 2005, so it's been almost 19 years. Initially, I was supposed to substitute for just three months at the end of the year, but I fell in love with the job and stayed on. I did take a year off when my son was born. Previously I've worked in event planning and as a catering coordinator. After moving to the Bay Area, I started working at Seedlings and went back to school to further my education in this field. I've always been fascinated by studying people, and now I focus on studying little people!

Kaylin: *Can you tell us about the Snapdragons class? What makes this age group special?*

Jen: The Snapdragons class is my favorite age group to teach. I've worked with nearly every age group, except for infants, and I find this one the most rewarding. They experience so much growth, gaining autonomy, and beginning to understand and communicate their feelings and needs. Their independence and communication skills are really blossoming, as are their play interests and ability to collaborate. It's incredible to witness their development from the beginning to the end of the year, especially when they start to self-regulate and recognize their emotions.

Kaylin: *What does a typical day or week look like for you at Seedlings?*

Jen: Our schedule at Seedlings is quite stable, which is important for the children. However, we remain flexible and let the kids lead some of their play and learning. While we have a general plan, we're always ready to adapt

based on the children's interests. If they're not engaged with an activity, we'll move on, or if they show interest in something else, we'll explore that direction. Our days are filled with play and art, focusing on process art and open-ended activities. We also emphasize following instructions and respecting their interests.

Kaylin: *What do you enjoy most about working at Seedlings?*

Jen: The sense of community at Seedlings is what I cherish the most. The staff has changed over the years, but we've always maintained a close-knit environment. We engage in many fun activities across different classes and collaborate closely with each other, the kids, and the parents. Some of the first children I taught have now graduated high school or are in college. It's these long-lasting relationships with families and staff that make Seedlings special. We're also very supported here; any creative idea we have for our class is always welcomed and encouraged.

foundation

Foundation Announcements

By Linda Rosenthal, Foundation trustee

Thank You Staci Johnston!

After eight years of extraordinary service, Staci Johnston is stepping off the board of trustees of the LOPC Foundation.



Foundation board members speak of Staci's contributions. Dara Youngdale says, "We are very grateful for Staci's dedicated years of service to the Foundation. She was a real visionary, developing policies that streamlined the ability to financially support LOPC, and served as a wise fiduciary in the management of our growing funds." "Her broad range of skills, institutional knowledge and passion for ministry combined to serve the Foundation so effectively," says Lois Boyd. Mike Ross adds, "It was always a pleasure to work with Staci because her energy and positive attitude always facilitated reaching a sound resolution efficiently. She was consistently thoughtful, insightful, and persuasive whether in board or team meetings or in separate conversations."

"I am incredibly grateful for Staci's faithful leadership with the Foundation," adds President Jim Beckemeyer. "She dedicated a tremendous amount of time to this important work, bringing structure and focus that helped the Foundation advance its mission and message. The Foundation is in a much better place today—financially and operationally—because of Staci's efforts."

The board and the congregation offer heartfelt thanks for Staci's service and wish her well in the future.

Meet Gwenn Lennox, new trustee

Gwenn Lennox has begun a new term as a trustee on the LOPC Foundation. We are grateful for her expertise, experience, and enthusiasm to serve.



Gwenn and her husband John have been members LOPC since 2000.

Currently, Gwenn secures philanthropic support for UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital's most urgent and compelling needs. Before joining Children's, she was the campaign director for building the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, preceded by a 17-year career at PG&E. She is a UC Davis Engineering graduate.

Gwenn is known to us as one of the core parents to resurrect the midweek children's ministry, LOGOS, now known as Kid's Rock. She served on the youth ministry team many years, including joining youth mission trips to inner L.A., Seattle, and the first youth trip to India at the Children of Faith Missions in 2016. She enjoys building community and truly values LOPC's work whether it be intergenerational, interfaith, or for social justice causes.

Her husband John is an physician, and they enjoy "adulting" with their two 20-something children, Ian and Brooke. Gwenn loves to travel in her spare time, is a bridge enthusiast, and enjoys reading and most outdoor activities.

Please join in welcoming Gwenn as a new Trustee.

Should you have any questions about legacy giving or how to become a Friend of the Foundation, we encourage you to reach out to any of the 2024 Trustees: Jim Beckemeyer (Pres.), Dara Youngdale (Vice Pres.), Lois Boyd, Jen Crocker, Linda Fodrini-Johnson, Andy Gill, Gwenn Lennox, Linda Rosenthal, and Mike Ross.

Kaylin: How has Seedlings evolved during your time here?

Jen: Seedlings has grown significantly. When I started, we had about five classes, and since then, enrollment has more than doubled. While our schedules have become a bit more structured, the essence of our teaching remains the same. The availability of resources has changed, especially with the advent of platforms like Pinterest, providing endless ideas and inspiration. However, we also recognize the importance of simplicity and ensuring our activities are developmentally appropriate. I like to think that "out of boredom comes creativity," so sometimes it's essential to step back from the overload of information and focus on fundamental concepts.

Kaylin: Do you have any favorite memories from Seedlings?

Jen: There are many, but it's often the little sayings from the children that stick with me the most. For instance, there was a young boy who, when he was done with something, would simply say "the end." It's these moments of humor and the unique personalities of the children that really resonate with me and other teachers.

session

January Session Highlights

By Mark Weaver, Clerk of Session



The January session meeting was an in-person gathering that welcomed our temporary pastor, Jane MacKenzie, who will provide support to the congregation while

Pastor Lauren Gully is out

on maternity leave and Pastor Peter Whitelock is taking his sabbatical later this year. Jane, a long-time member of LOPC who was called to become a pastor after a 35-year career at Chevron, lifted up Psalm 46, which begins “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” while recounting her faith journey.

We then discussed the Leadership Retreat which was held on February 3. It was led by Dr. Jonathan Lee Walton, President of Princeton Theological Seminary and attended by elders, deacons, and Foundation members of LOPC, as well as our counterparts from First Pres Berkeley. Following the Saturday retreat, Dr. Walton delivered an inspiring sermon during our regular worship service on February 4.

The annual meeting for LOPC was held on February 11 immediately following worship. Elders Jim Nagle (Finance) and Royce Nicolaisen (Personnel), along with Andy Gill (Foundation) and Linda Rosenthal (Congregation Nominating Committee) presented to the congregation. During the meeting LOPC members approved the pastor salaries for the coming year and the CNC nomination of Susan Cliff to serve as a deacon.

Session noted that the Presbytery will be holding two of their four meetings in person in 2024; LOPC will have the honor of hosting the meeting on May 21 and elders were encouraged to volunteer with meeting logistics. Because the Presbytery meetings in May and August conflict with the originally-scheduled session meetings those months, meetings will be moved to the fourth Tuesday in May and August.

At the request of Pastor Jaime Polson, session accepted with regret the resignation of Deacon Stephen Kiyoi, and accepted the nomination of Susan Cliff for a replacement three-year term. In addition, Jaime brought the good news that Emily Austin will become LOPC’s new co-director of Children’s Ministry, filling a long-standing vacancy, and will serve alongside Susan Wentworth.

Jim Nagle, elder for Finance, reviewed the 2024 budget, which was approved by session. The budget calls for income and expenditures of \$3,725,476 each, representing a roughly 3% increase over actual income and expenditures in 2023. Jim reported that we were blessed by robust year-end giving that allowed us to finish 2023 with a surplus of \$52,952 -- which were added to session reserves -- and put LOPC in a strong position for 2024. Session also approved and received designated gifts to be used in part for LOPC’s worship program, mental health wellness, and to support added expenses during Pastor Lauren’s maternity leave. In addition, session approved special offerings for 2024 for to benefit LOPC’s mission partners Hope Solutions, Food Bank of Contra Costa/Solano, Monument Crisis Center, Atfaluna, Children of Faith, and Fotokids.

Lastly, Brian O’Shea, past elder for Personnel (filling in for Royce Nicolaisen who was traveling) asked session to recommend that the congregation approve a 3.5% salary increase for called and installed pastors (Pastor Peter Whitelock, Pastor Lauren Gully, and Pastor Chris Baldwin). He explained that the salaries of our pastors and staff are benchmarked against other churches; the proposed raises are in line with those of other churches. (Indeed, we regularly are in the 75th percentile of pay and benefits offered by local churches, which is one reason we have long-tenured clergy and staff.) Session closed in prayer led by Pastor Whitelock.

care

Dementia Caregivers Support Group

March 6 and 20

Join this one-hour support group for those caring for someone with dementia. The group meets on the first and third Wednesdays of the month at 10:30 a.m. on Zoom.

To register, please contact Linda Fodrini-Johnson at lindafj620@outlook.com.



The Deacon Ministry consists of LOPC members that have been elected by the Congregation to serve as beacons of care. Deacons offer support in the following ways:

HOME VISITS

Deacons arrange and participate in visits to members who are homebound, hospitalized, or in various types of care facilities.

HOME COMMUNION

Upon request, home communion kits are available to members not able to attend worship services in person.

MEAL DELIVERY

Deacons order and deliver food to persons recuperating from illness, those recently discharged from the hospital, new moms, grieving families, or anyone who might need a meal in a time of crisis.

To request any of these services, please leave a message on the Deacon Line at (925) 283-8722, ext. 274. Messages are responded to in a timely manner daily.

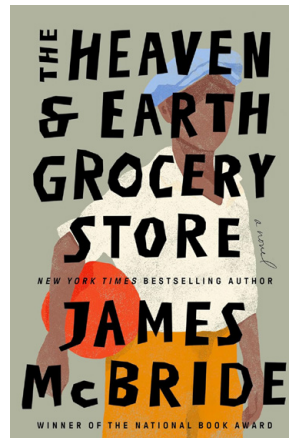
community

LOPC New Member Class

March 3, 11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m.
following Worship in the Oak Room

Are you ready to make LOPC your church home? We would love to invite you to consider joining the church as an active member. Attend this 90-minute class to learn about LOPC's vision, our pastors, rub elbows with Pastors Peter Whitelock and Chris Baldwin, and learn about how to get more deeply connected to the community.

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

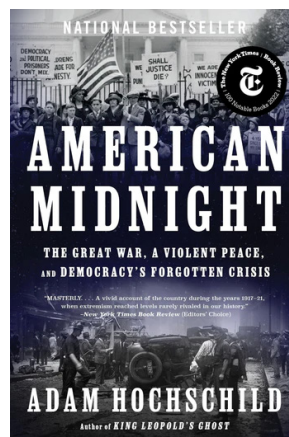


Fourth Monday Book Group

March 25 at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom

Join us to discuss *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride.

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



Fourth Friday Book Group

March 22 at 4:00 p.m. on Zoom (occasional in person gatherings to come):

The group will discuss *American Midnight: The Great War, a Violent Peace, and Democracy's Forgotten Crisis*, by Adam Hochschild (First Friday Forum speaker for February 2).

All are welcome. Please contact Catherine Coleman at awaitingword@gmail.com to join.



Young Families Connect

First Sunday of the month following Worship

Are you a family with young kids (infant–4th grade) looking to hang out with other families? Join us on the back playground where kids can play on the playground and parents can hang out with each other enjoying breakfast bites and coffee.

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



PLEASE JOIN US

Sunday, March 10, 10:00 a.m.

for a special Sunday Sermon & Worship Service

Guest Preacher Anne Stewart

Mark 8:27-30 “Revealed”

Anne is the Executive Vice President of Princeton Seminary and Project Director of Iron Sharpening Iron. She is a proud alumna of Smith College, Princeton Seminary (MDiv), and Emory University (PhD, Old Testament). She combines these experiences through the Iron Sharpening Iron program, which joins women's education with service to the church and a name that comes from the Old Testament. She is a Presbyterian minister and the author of *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs: Wisdom Literature and the Shaping of the Moral Self*.



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