



LOPC NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2021

From Jeff Birch, Senior Pastor

Beholding Glory

I remember taking a class one time with Tim Keller where he was teaching on worship. He stated that the essence of worship was surprise. Not surprised where somebody says, "Boo!" to you and you jump, but surprise in the sense that the Holy Spirit, working through His Word, impresses upon you something that can either challenge, comfort, teach or in some way show you something about God in a new way. Your being is engaged and as God reveals Himself to you, you are changed in some way.

Maybe this has something to do with coming to Jesus like a little child, for children have a unique capacity to be surprised, to look at life with a wide-eyed wonder, a sense of adventure, that - if we're honest - we often need to recover. Jesus instructs us that we are to come to him like little children. How open are we to being surprised by what we discover in God's Word as we worship, whether privately or corporately? Do we need to recover a sense of that wonder as we engage with God?

That's where Christmas comes in. Not that we should read this verse only at Christmas, but John 1:14 speaks to us of the inbreaking of God into this fallen world to accomplish salvation. It says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father,

full of grace and truth.” Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, puts it this way: “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.” Tim Keller calls the incarnation, “The ideal becoming real.” I don’t know about you, but this utterly astonishes me with surprise.

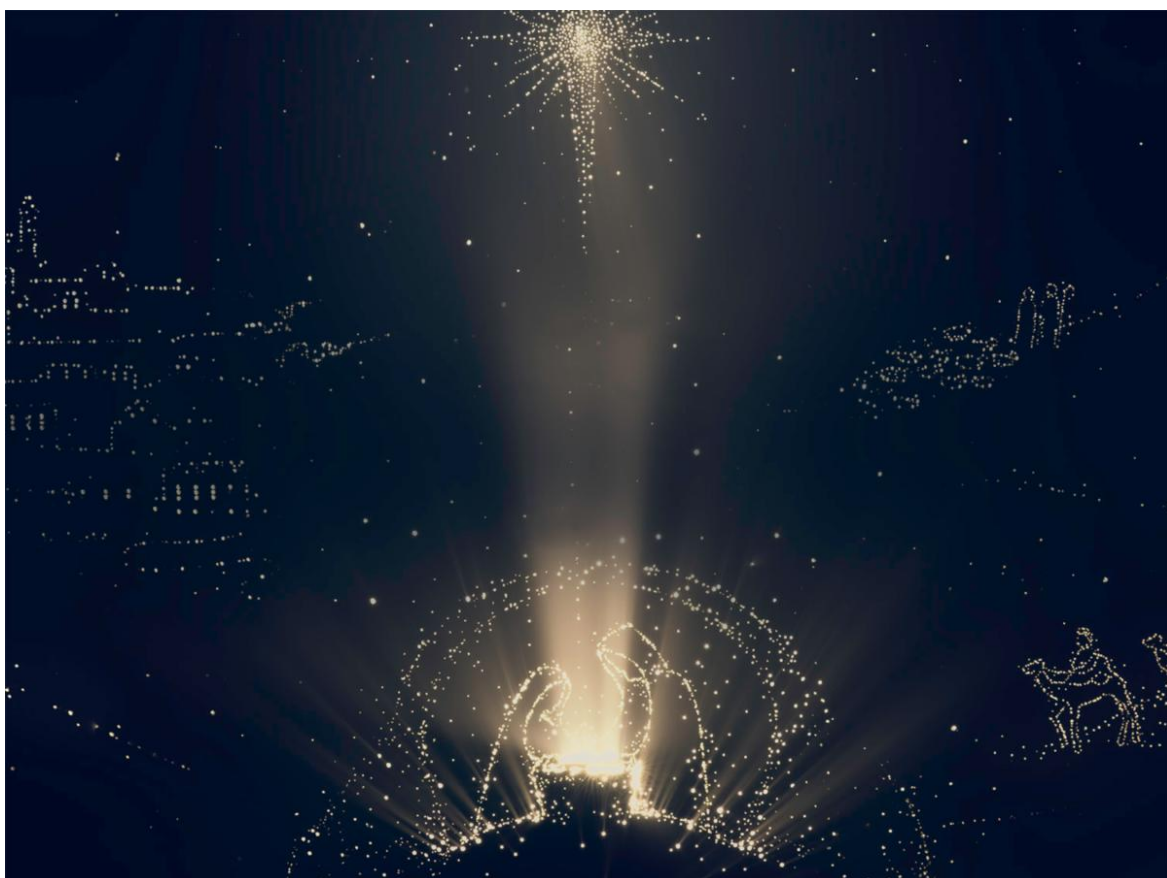
Has the Christmas message become old hat to us? Oh, I pray not! What does a word do? It communicates, it reveals. Jesus communicates to us who God is so that we behold his glory. He has come in a way we can understand. In the flesh. Peterson calls it moving into the neighborhood. He comes to us. He doesn’t expect that we come to him. This should all blow us away.

Scholar and theologian N.T. Wright puts it this way. “How can you live with the terrifying thought that the hurricane has become human, that the fire has become flesh, that life itself has walked into our midst? Christianity either means that or it means nothing. It is the most devastating disclosure of the deepest reality in the world or it is a sham, a total nonsense. Most people, unable to cope with saying either of those two things, are condemned to live in the shadow world in between.”

Friends let’s not live in the shadow world. May our lives be given to worshipping, “...this hurricane that has become human, this fire that has become flesh.” May we continually be amazed that He has done all this for us, and may we recover our child-like wonder that we get to behold His glory.

May you all have a most Christ-filled Christmas!

Christmas Eve Service



Plan to bring your family and friends to our Christmas Eve Service on **Friday, December 24, at 5:00 p.m.** in the church sanctuary. This is a wonderful opportunity for outreach in our community, so invite others to join you for this special event.

Sermon Series Through December

We are taking a slight detour from our series in Romans and will be spending several weeks in Isaiah during the Advent season. If you've missed any sermons from this series and would like to catch up, you can find our archive on our [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channels, and you can also visit our [church website](#), where Sunday sermons are posted the following day with a link to the worship bulletin.



Advent Devotions

ADVENT

..... *at LOPC*



It's not too late to start your Advent devotions with LOPC! The devotions are recommended daily readings and come with weekly videos made with Pastor Jeff Birch. Each set of reading plans and corresponding devotions and videos are shared on Facebook and through eblast.

Community Christmas Concert



Community Christmas Concert

Directed by Dr. Martha Braswell

Featuring:

Greensboro FUMC Chancel Choir
Episcopal Church of the Redeemer Choir
Greensboro First Presbyterian Church Choir
Lake Oconee Presbyterian Church Choir
Greensboro FUMC Handbell Choir
Cross Walk Children's Music
Collaborative Orchestra

DECEMBER 5, 2021
4:00 PM

Greensboro FUMC
South Campus
4741 Carey Station Rd
Greensboro, GA 30642

ADMISSION IS FREE!
Donations to the Greene County
Christmas Stocking Fund are
encouraged

MASKS OPTIONAL
Reception to Follow

This year, LOPC will be participating in a Community Christmas Concert that includes the host church, Greensboro First United Methodist, and two others (First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro and Episcopal Church of the Redeemer). Join us for a fantastic evening of worship through music on Sunday, December 5, at 4 pm. **The concert will be held at Greensboro FUMC's South Campus: 4741 Carey Station Rd, Greensboro GA 30642.**

Happy Birthday Party for Jesus



Sunday, December 12, during the Children's Worship time, children ages 4-9 will join together to celebrate Jesus' birthday at the Happy Birthday Jesus Party. Please RSVP to Yvonne at the church office at 706-484-0600 or lopca@lopca.org if your child(ren) and/or grandchildren plan to attend.

Women's Ministry

Lake Oconee Presbyterian Church

Ladies' Advent Tea

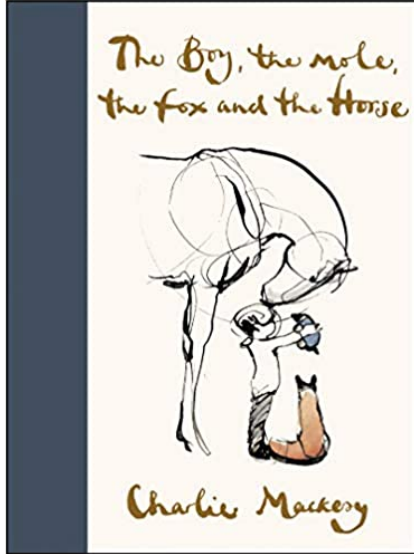
December 7, 2021

6:30 pm



Book Binders

Book Binders will meet Friday, December 17, at the church at 10 am in Room 111 for a



Christmas celebration. Our selection is a delightful illustrated book about friendship, ***The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse*** by Charlie Mackesy. Emma Anderson and Paula Dickerson both brought this book to our attention, and I have already given away four copies to friends and family. It is a great book for sharing. Please feel welcome to join us even if you have not read the book.

Mary Ann Johnson



Meal Support

The Women's Ministry will coordinate meals to be provided for those in need due to illness, injury, recovery from hospitalization, or after childbirth.

GriefShare: Loss of a Spouse

Do you dread the lonely days and nights? Wonder what to do with your spouse's belongings? Feel like your brain is in a fog? Unsure of how you'll go on?

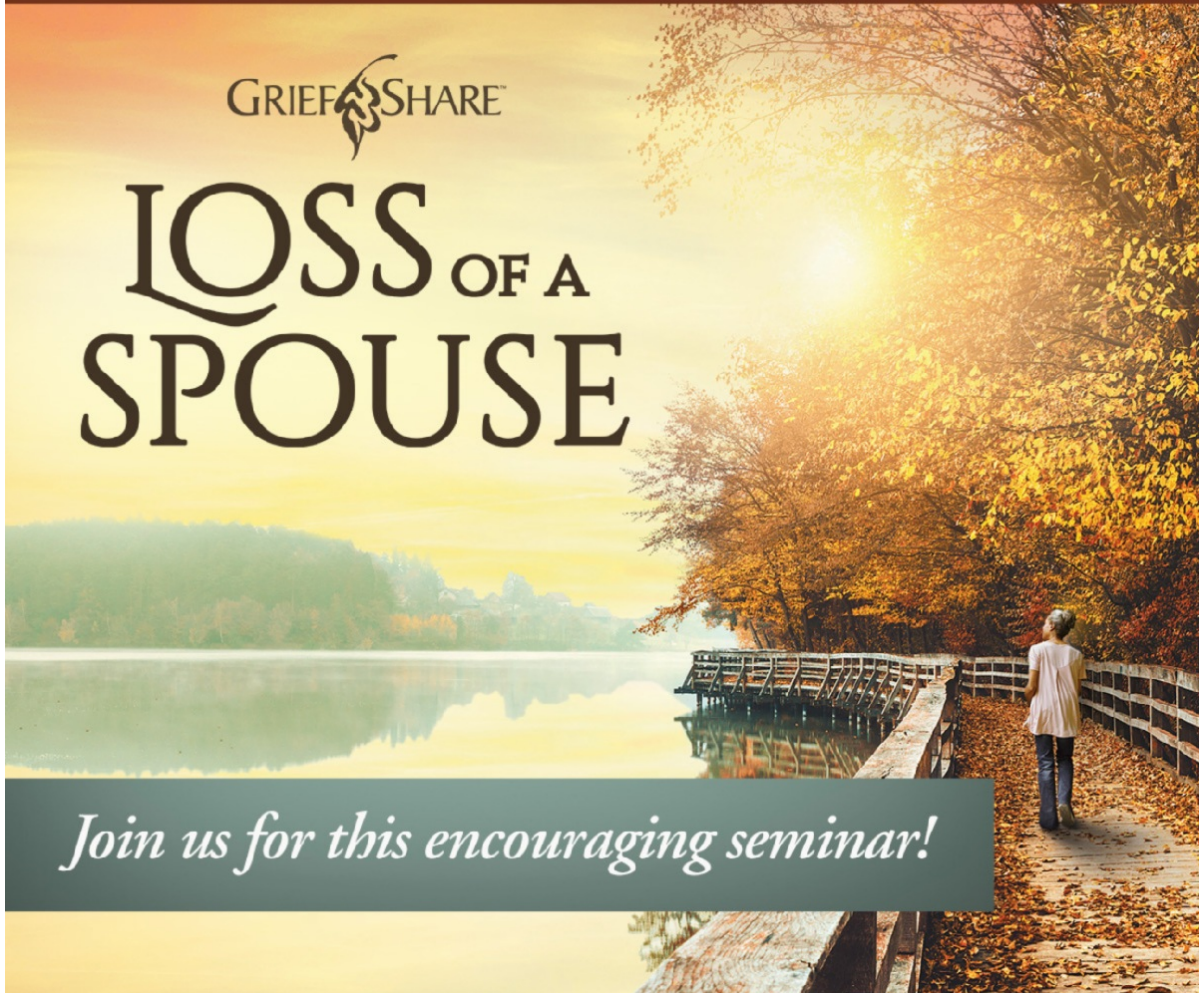
At a Loss of a Spouse seminar you'll discover:

- Other people understand and have found ways to make it through
- Why it won't always hurt so much
- Reasons for hope
- Practical tips for coping with the death of a spouse

GRIEVING THE DEATH OF YOUR SPOUSE?

GRIEF SHARE

LOSS OF A SPOUSE



Join us for this encouraging seminar!

Thursday, December 9

6:30-8:30 pm

Rooms 110-112

Cost: FREE (workbook provided)

Registration is encouraged.

Contact Norma Graham at 478-234-2287.

[Click here for more details and/or to register through the GriefShare website.](#)

If you missed hearing the "Community Spotlight" interview on Dock103.9 with

Doug Hesse and GriefShare Director, Norma Graham, [click here to listen to parts 1 & 2.](#) (Scroll down to the links underneath the GriefShare graphic.)

LOPC Bingo

How many of these December favorites - past and present - have you participated in and/or attended? See if you can get Bingo (vertical, horizontal, or diagonal)!

LOPC Bingo



Ladies' Advent
Tea

putting
up/taking
down church
Christmas
decorations

Christmas
Eve
service

Christmas
Cantata

Christmas Day
service (when
Dec 25 falls on
a Sunday)

Sunday
Advent
readings

Christmas
party for
senior
residents of
Oconee House

collecting
turkeys for
food bank
holiday meals

making a
special gift
toward one of
our supported
ministries

Church App



Join realm[®]
and stay connected!

*Call or come by the church office for assistance
with installing the church's mobile APP!*

Check us out on social media!

facebook

[facebook.com@lakeoconeepca](https://facebook.com/lakeoconeepca)



[twitter.com@lakeoconeepca](https://twitter.com/lakeoconeepca)



[instagram.com@lakeoconeepca](https://instagram.com/lakeoconeepca)

MNA Disaster Response

SHEDS OF HOPE



His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

A Psalm for giving thanks.

1 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

3 Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

5 For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

To honor our Father in Heaven, we commemorated the completion of our 100th Shed of HOPE by posting Psalm 100 inside the back wall of the shed. As the psalm encourages us, we give thanks to God for making it possible for us to reach this milestone in 2021 and for the bountiful blessings he has showered upon the LOPC Sheds of HOPE ministry since we began building sheds in January 2017. What a privilege it is to serve our Lord by helping our brothers and sisters in need!





2021 has been another year of blessings and challenges for the LOPC Sheds of HOPE ministry. Within days of our first build in March, a large tornado struck the small town of Brent, AL. As it turned out, the sheds we built hadn't yet been unloaded at the MNA Disaster Response warehouse in Rome, GA; instead, the MNA response team took them straight to the disaster site and trained local setup teams while delivering and setting up the sheds for families who needed them.

Our young friends who joined us for our first Youth Build in April proved to be quick learners and hard workers – and they had fun! We enjoyed meeting and getting to know them, and we appreciated their help. We were especially pleased that they helped us complete our 100th Shed of HOPE during the weekend. More Youth Builds are planned in the future.

Our greatest challenge this year reared its head in June. When supplier bids for materials came in, due to the sharp increase in prices of building materials had nearly doubled our cost. This depleted our available funds, casting doubt on our ability to complete shed builds scheduled for 2021. But God had a plan. When we requested permission from the LOPC Session to conduct a fundraiser, the Session not only approved our request – they appropriated \$5,000 “seed money.” Reviewing projected costs, we set a goal of \$25,000 which we felt would provide for 2021 and help continue building in 2022. But God had bigger plans – thanks to his providence and the generosity and support of the LOPC congregation, total funds raised exceeded \$35,000!

We were blessed to have representatives from a PCA church in the Birmingham, AL, area join us for our November shed build. They are planning to create a disaster response ministry including building Sheds of HOPE. They visited us on the recommendation of MNA Disaster Response to gain first-hand experience in building sheds. We enjoyed meeting and getting to know them by working and enjoying fellowship together. We hosted a similar visit from a PCA church in Auburn, AL, last year. It's a privilege to be able to share the Sheds of HOPE

experience with new friends and help build the church-wide ministry.

The LOPC Sheds of HOPE team built 24 shed kits this year, bringing our overall total to 118 shed kits. We're pleased and humbled to report that the Sheds of HOPE ministry is healthy and well positioned to continue our service. We are blessed not only with financial resources but in so many other ways, including the talent and dedication of our volunteers and your prayers and encouragement. We look forward to continuing to serve our Lord by helping our brothers and sisters in need.

"...For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."

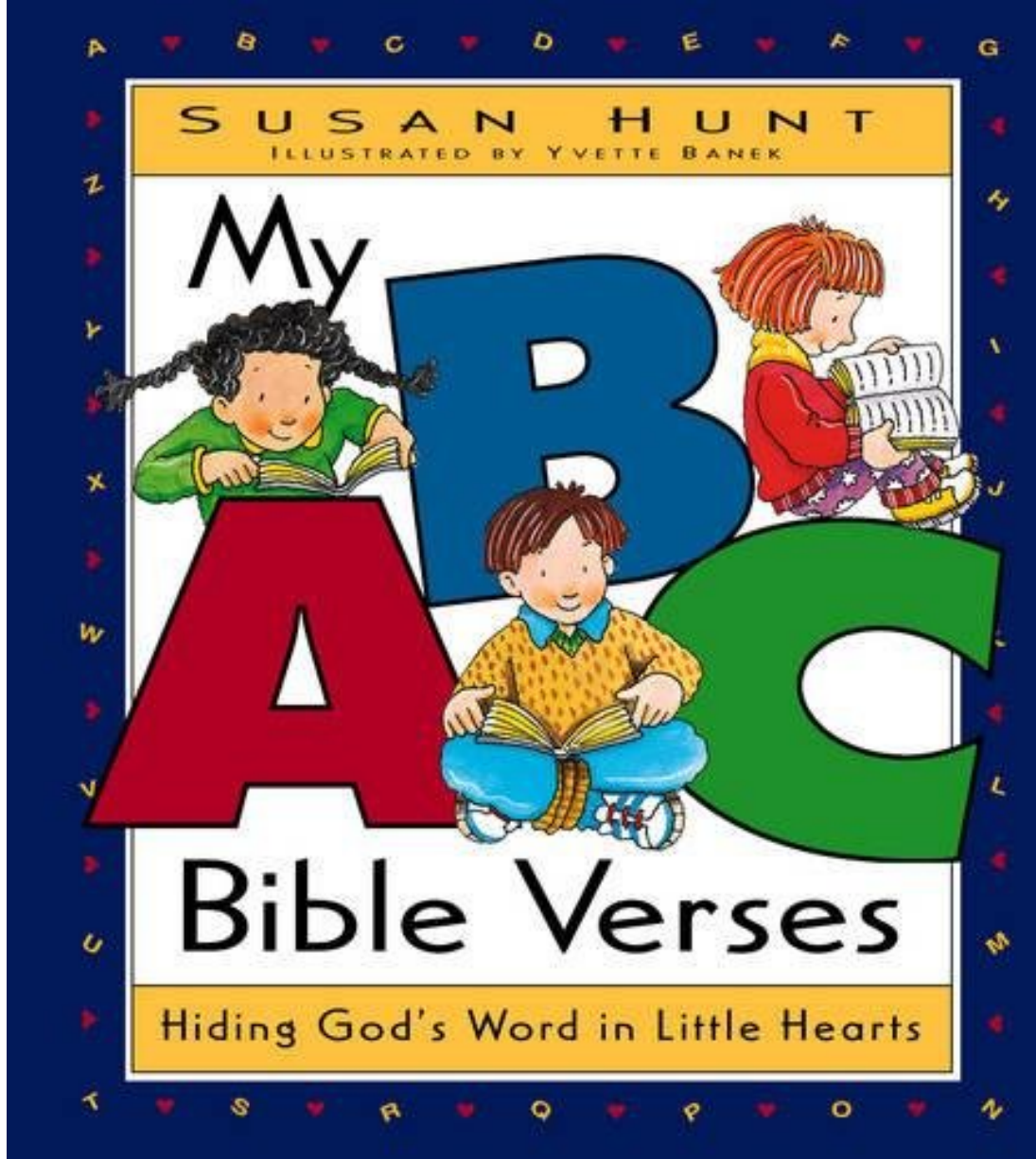
If you would like to volunteer to serve, we have room for you! [Click here](#) for a video introduction to Sheds of HOPE. For more information, please contact the church office at 706-484-0600.

Youth Ministry



The LOPC Youth Group meets on **Sundays from 5-7 pm at LOPC** where there is food, fun, and Bible Study - and we WANT YOU to join us! We are looking for all middle and high school kids in and out of LOPC. Youth Group is for rising 6th grade students through high school.

Children's Ministry



During the Doxology, children ages 4-6 are dismissed for Children's Worship. We are using Susan Hunt's ***My ABC Bible Verses*** for curriculum.

Knowing the Bible can help you know God better. Here is a colorful, story-filled way for even the youngest child to take God's Word to heart—and learn the alphabet too! Presented in an easy-to-use story format that applies individual Bible verses to real-life situations, this illustrated book for 3- to 7-year-olds is perfect for reading to your children or grandchildren, and great for use in churches, Christian schools, Bible clubs, or home schools. It can also be easily adapted for family devotions with young children. The ABCs are building blocks to your child's formal education. And these verses are the building blocks of the soul—the building blocks that can lead to eternal life.

-Crossway.org

God established a testimony...which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children that the next generation might know...so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God...

Psalms 78:5-7a

Love God, Love One Another, Love the Community

Our Vision

Lake Oconee Presbyterian Church exists to worship God, nurture and equip God's people, and mobilize the church to build his kingdom.