



## LOPC NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2022

From Jeff Birch, Senior Pastor

### *New Beginnings*

Happy New Year, LOPC family! I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and that you enjoy the onset of another year. I have to admit that I love New Year. It is one of my favorite holidays. I think at least a part of it, you might have guessed, is my love of new beginnings. I love starting a new Bible reading plan, getting (or at least trying) to begin again at eating healthy while enjoying the celebration and fellowship that feasting provides. I will have to do another article sometime on the practice of feasting.

New beginnings get me thinking about hope and how we all need hope and how our ultimate hope is found in Jesus Christ. Hope, for the follower of Jesus, is not wishful thinking, like hoping our favorite sports teams win or that something works out for us. No, hope with Jesus is a certainty, the guarantee that Jesus is in charge, that He rules over all, and that one day everything will be put to rights. As my favorite hymn "O Holy Night" so beautifully proclaims, "And in His name all oppression shall cease."

Hope is not a return to some sort of new normal. The last two years most

definitely have taught us this. And, let's face it, we lost normal a long, long time ago in a garden when our first parents decided they knew better than God what was best for them, and that God wasn't altogether good and was withholding something from them. They decided to determine their own happiness, and normal (communion with God, others, and the world) was lost.

But not forever. That first gospel promise, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel," (Gen. 3:15) tells of a time in the future when a seed of the woman (fulfilled in Jesus Christ) will crush the serpent, defeating and triumphing over sin and death. And that triumph, accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus, guarantees us, as followers of Jesus, a "normal" that will be way better than the original garden. As the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him," (1 Cor. 2:9).

So, LOPC family, let's embrace new beginnings. I have been so blessed to be with you since May, and I can't wait to begin a new calendar year with you. I am excited about the start of Sunday School, the installation of a new women's council, the election and installation of new officers, our visitors' lunch and so much more. More than anything, let's make this a new beginning in our desire to cultivate a gospel culture in our lives and in everything we do here at LOPC. May the Lord bless all of you as we journey together on this great adventure of following Jesus wherever He wants to lead us. May our hearts be rooted in and saturated with His love that surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:19).

May your New Year be filled with the joy and peace of Christ!

Jeff

## Community Bible Reading Plan



# Community Bible Reading Plan

— BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2022 —

## WAYS TO PARTICIPATE:



hard copies  
(available at the church)



weekly eblast



weekly Facebook post



## Called Congregational Meeting

The Session has called a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 23, 2022, for the purpose of electing officers of the church. Biographical information on each of the officer candidates is available in the Sunday bulletins. New officers will be installed on Sunday, January 30, 2022.

Jim Hildebrand  
On behalf of Session

The Return of Romans

We resume our series in Romans beginning Sunday, January 9. If you've missed any sermons from this series (or our Advent series, "Hope According to Isaiah"), and would like to catch up, you can find our archive on our [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channels. You can also visit our [church website](#), where Sunday sermons are posted the following day with a link to the worship bulletin.



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.

## 2021 Highlights

Check out our video of 2021 highlights here at LOPC!





## Lakeliffe Article on LOPC Member

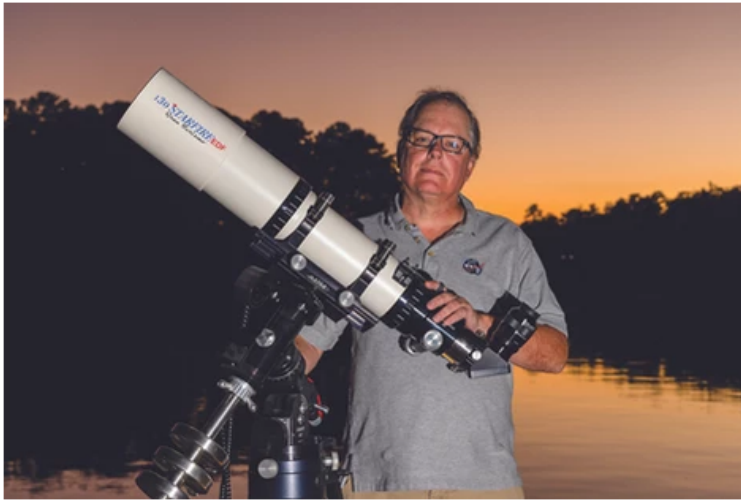
If you are a regular reader of Lakeliffe Magazine, you probably recognized LOPC's own Chris Hetlage featured in a December 2021 article that highlights his passion (and undisputed talent) for astrophotography. If you'd like to read the entire column, [click here](#).

---

# The sky's not the limit

One of the best amenities of Lake Oconee is the dark sky above it, according to Chris Hetlage.

Chris and his wife, Sandra, moved to Lake Oconee about eight years ago. Golfing, fishing, scuba diving, woodworking, photography, and a saltwater aquarium are a few of his many hobbies. He currently owns and operates 44 Horizons Photography real estate and drone photography studio. Before retirement, he was director of a software company specializing in the development and implementation of electronic medical records for some of the most notable health care facilities in the world.



Chris Hetlage sets up one of his telescopes beside Lake Oconee.

But all that shifts to the background once the sun dips below the horizon and the celestial bodies are visible. "When we moved here, the first thing my wife and I did was go out on the dock and just lay down and looked up to see all the beautiful stars," Chris said. "The lake is a beautiful place to see the stars because it's very dark out here."

He does more than just gaze at the stars. Chris is a freelance astrophotographer who has been featured in or whose works have been published by NASA, CNN, The New York Times, National Geographic, The Weather Channel, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Amateur Astronomy magazine, Sky and Telescope magazine, and Astronomy Technology Today, among others.

## Women's Ministry



### From the President

Ladies,  
As the new Women's Ministry Council prepares to take office on January 16, I wanted to take a moment to thank you for allowing me the honor of serving as your President for the last two years. I loved every minute of it and made new friends along the way.

The Womens Ministry works hard in planning events that y'all will enjoy, so

please support them by attending the events. You are guaranteed to receive a spiritual blessing, and you will probably end up being a blessing to someone else.

**Your 2022-2023 Council is:**

**Lynne Fowlkes, President**  
**Sue Burmeister, Vice-President**  
**Renee Benzur, Secretary**  
**Carol Johansen, Treasurer**  
**Karen Tepper, Spiritual Growth Advisor**

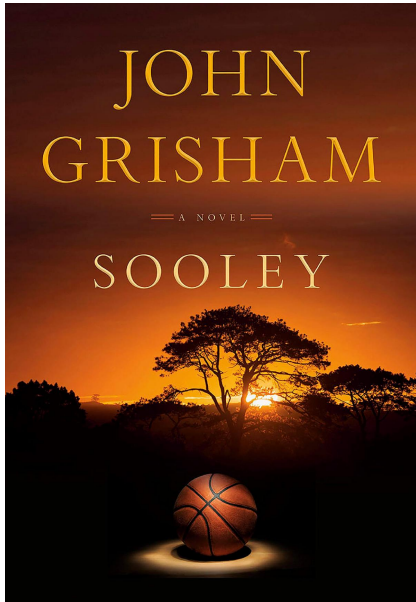
I ask that you add these ladies to your prayer list and give them your full support throughout the year.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Blessings,  
Brenda Roberts

---

## Book Binders



What a wonderful Book Binders sharing we had on December 17. Charles Makesy's *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse* is a delightful, heart-warming book about love and friendship written by a former atheist who regularly shares his testimony with non-believers. All of us had shared the book with others this Christmas. Our next meeting is **Friday, January 21**, from 10-11, at LOPC. Our book is *Sooley* by John Grisham – Christian fiction by a popular writer? Read it and come discuss it with us or come anyway and decide if you want to read it. See you there!

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



Help and encouragement after the death of a  
spouse, child, family member, or friend

# GRIEF SHARE<sup>®</sup>

**Monday evenings (13 sessions)  
beginning January 17\***

**6:30 pm - 8:30 pm at LOPC**

**\$15 (includes workbook)**

\*delayed one week from original start date

For more details, contact Norma Graham or  
scan the QR code with your phone camera.

Register online using your phone!



SCAN ME

[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.)

## Little Free Library

One of our members alerted us to this social media post about the Little Free Library on our campus. We love being a resource for young readers!



My kiddos don't care that its raining, or that its 43 degrees. 🤔🤔 They begged to get a book from the Little Free Library at Lake Oconee Presbyterian when we dropped some off, so... :-)) thankful for this little resource!

## Church App





*Join* realm<sup>®</sup>  
*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





## Why Aren't You Doing Something?

by Mike Kennamer

**(MNA DISASTER RESPONSE SPECIALIST, TAG AND DISASTER RESPONSE  
WAREHOUSE MANAGER)**

The top article last month was one that described how MNA Disaster Response serves local churches and how we, as a ministry, often have to wait until churches in the disaster zone are ready for us to help. After all, we plan for this all year, so we are eager to respond when disasters strike. But for the people in the path of the storm, it doesn't matter how prepared you are, it is still a shock to the system. Think about your life now. You are busy, figuratively spinning a dozen plates at any given moment. But what happens when a disaster strikes? You might think that all those plates fall to the ground and your sole concern is recovery from the storm. However, that is usually not the case. While there may be delays and schedule changes, most people still have to go to work, get their kids off to school, care for aging parents, shop for groceries, etc. Their intense routine is not stopped, but just disrupted by power failures, transportation delays, and interruptions in the supply chain.

As disaster responders, we are ready to go. The gas tank is full. We have our Go Bag ready. Sleeping bag is in the truck. Tools are ready. We have cleared our schedule for the next week or two. Let's go!

It's not about us.

While our zeal to serve is admirable, we must remember that we do this work for the glory of God and the benefit of those who are hurting.

It's not about us.

Recovery takes time and while there are disaster response groups on the ground before the dust settles, we need to respect the wishes of the churches in the area who need more time to process, to plan for the next steps, and to grieve.

It's not about us.

When tornadoes hit our area there were immediately people out ministering to those who were impacted. There were enough sandwiches given prepared the day after the storm to feed the entire state. But I sat on my front porch and prayed.

A year later, all the sandwiches were gone, and a small team of dedicated churches continued to serve those who had been devastated by the storms. If you get frustrated that the PCA is not out in force in Mayfield, KY, or any of the other places that storms hit, just know that MNA DR staff are in contact with the churches and presbyteries in the area and are ready to roll whenever the invitation is given.

But until it is, we will continue to faithfully pray for those affected and pray that

God would place us where we need to be, when we need to be there. And we trust that He does.

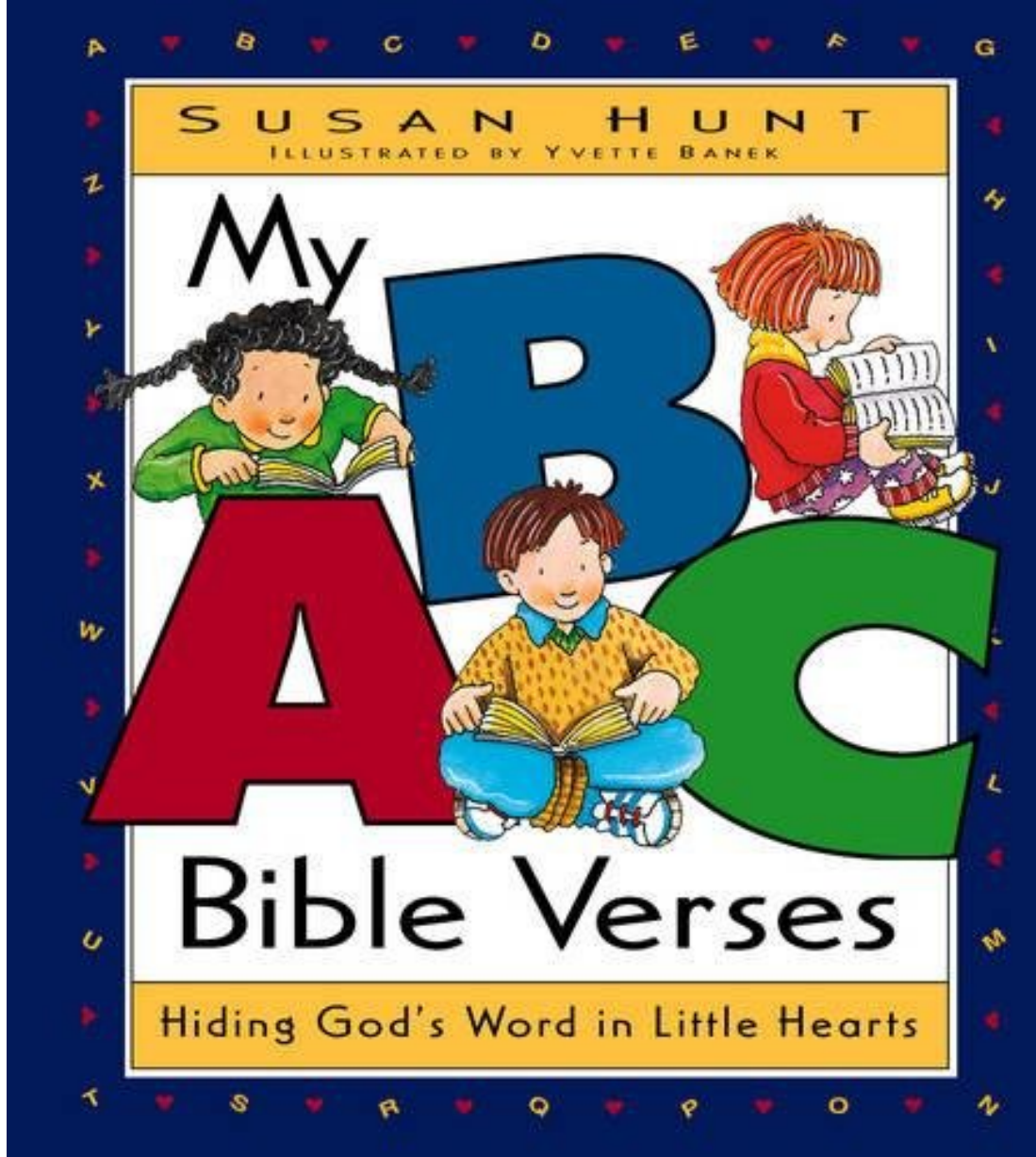
## Youth Ministry



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 will be using curriculum from **Teach Me to Worship** through April 2022.

Teach Me to Worship is adapted from a curriculum originally developed by the staff at Orangewood Presbyterian Church in Maitland, FL. The curriculum presents and explains common elements of worship that the universal church has used throughout the ages. The material is available in PDF format which allows ministry leaders to download and print the material according to their schedule and need. A subscription to the curriculum includes unlimited access to the curriculum, handouts and activities for the children, letters to parents, training videos and worship music.

*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.

## Newsletter Archive

Missed a newsletter? [Use this link](#) to visit the archive at the member portal on our website. If you don't have the password, contact the church office, and we'll be happy to provide it.