

# LOPC NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2023



From Jeff Birch, Senior Pastor

## *Learning to Lament*

***Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? (Psalm 10:1)***

***How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? (Psalm 13:1-2)***

Now, be honest. Have you ever felt this way? At times, we should feel this way. If you look at the world honestly, and think Christianly about the world, I will say you should. These are, after all, inspired Scriptures. God has chosen to put them there for a reason. Thus, we ignore them at our peril.

I have been thinking about writing a pastoral letter to you after the horrible attack upon Israel by the terrorist organization Hamas and the atrocities that have been brought to our attention. The attack was evil, and a terrible injustice has been committed. After prayer and reflection, I thought it best just to write up this short piece highlighting just one aspect of a Christian's response to events in the world.

I am not qualified to speak on all the issues related to the history of the struggles in the middle east. Nor do I believe that these current events have significance prophetically. The issues of prophecy and the Israel of the Bible are deeply

important, and we will be taking up some of these in connection with a Sunday School class that Mike Palombo will be leading on December 3. Providentially, this topic goes hand-in-hand with what our adult class is currently studying in *God's Big Picture*, and, thus, we will be addressing it. I encourage you to mark your calendars and attend that class on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

For now, I simply want to highlight one aspect of a Christian's response, and that is the topic of lament. Lament is extremely important, and I am afraid too often neglected in our discipleship. One of the reasons I believe we avoid lament is that it is uncomfortable. We would rather focus on the positive, be optimistic, be hopeful. But when we bypass lament, I am afraid we can miss the true power of hope. We are to cultivate hope in our lives, but we need to cultivate a true hope, and not a panacea or a false power of positive thinking. And in this way, lament is a discipline we need to practice.

See, it is too easy for us to miss God's Big Picture. We need to remember that we were created for God's kingdom. We were built to live under God's rule and reign and to experience perfect union, communion, love, purpose, and security. These are all found only in God's reign or kingdom. This is another way of saying that we were created to live in Eden. Since the Fall and our first parents' expulsion from the Garden, we all long and work feverishly to get back into the Garden. But we still live outside Eden, outside the experience of shalom, and although with the first advent of Jesus the kingdom has been inaugurated and is present among us, it is certainly not yet complete or consummated. That is why theologians say that we live in the tension of the "Already and Not Yet." And practically, this is why Jesus taught us to pray, and we pray every Lord's Day in the liturgy, "Thy kingdom come..."

So, what is my pastoral advice to you? Please do not bypass lament. Feel the pain of waiting for the consummation of the kingdom. Feel the longing for Jesus' triumphant return when He will put all things to rights. Resist the urge to try to connect all the dots to have some sort of certainty and security. Pray with King David, "How long, O LORD?" And realize that although the world is broken and can be very ugly, that the gospel is true, Jesus has been raised from the dead, is ascended, and ruling from heaven, and will return one day to put everything to rights. The more we are realistic about the nature of this world, the more that hope explodes in our hearts and lives.

So, maybe the most practical thing I can ask you to consider is to take a break from the news (I know we need to be aware of what is going on, but we need to be on guard against obsession), take out your Bible and maybe even a journal, write out some of your own prayers of lament, feel the weight of the world's darkness and let it drive you to a powerful hope that cries out to the Lord, Thy Kingdom Come!

Pastor Jeff Birch

## Pastor Appreciation Videos

### **From the Pastors**

*It is such a joy and privilege to be able to serve you all. And you made it extra*

special for us this past month with all the cards, gifts and remembrances during Pastor's Appreciation. We are grateful to Meagan for the very special videos and for all of you for giving us this encouragement. Thank you again for the joy of worshiping and serving together.

Jeff and Evie

Mike, Whitney, and Ellie

Travis, Ellen, and Leah

Did you miss out on viewing any of our three-part video series during Pastor Appreciation Month? If so, find them through the following links:

- [Jeff & Evie Birch](#)
- [Mike, Whitney, & Ellie Palombo](#)
- [Travis, Ellen, & Leah Skillingstad](#)

## Inquirers' Class



**LO**  
Lake Oconee  
Presbyterian Church  
**PC**

# INQUIRERS' CLASS

Learn more about LOPC  
and church membership!

**Friday, November 17 (6 - 9 pm)**  
**Saturday, November 18 (9 am - 3 pm)**

**The next Inquirers' Class is scheduled for November 17 & 18.** This will be a weekend class beginning with dinner Friday night (6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.) in the home of Jeff & Evie Birch followed by teaching. The class will reconvene Saturday morning (9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.) at the church. Lunch will be provided. Childcare is available upon request. There is no pressure to join the church, although the class is a prerequisite for membership at Lake Oconee Presbyterian Church.

If you are interested in attending, please contact the church at 706-484-0600 or [lopc@lopc-pca.org](mailto:lopc@lopc-pca.org) to register.

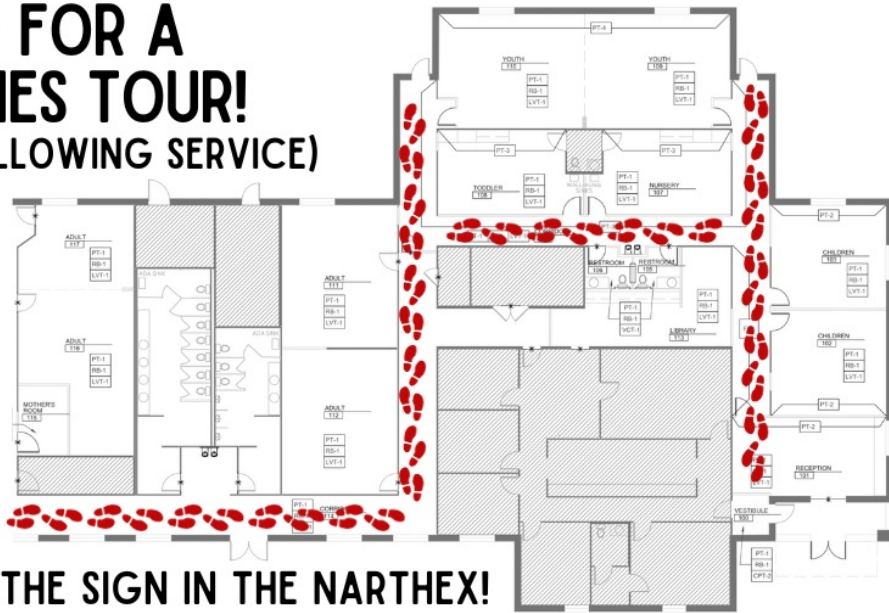
## Facilities Tour

Following the morning worship service on November 19, join our pastors in the narthex for a tour of the education wing remodel.



# JOIN US FOR A FACILITIES TOUR! NOV 19 (FOLLOWING SERVICE)

meet  
in  
narthex  
★



LOOK FOR THE SIGN IN THE NARTHEX!

## Operation Christmas Child



# Now - November 19

Thank you for your generous response to Operation Christmas Child. You may return your filled boxes to the Narthex by **November 19**, for delivery to a collection point. There are MORE empty boxes to be filled, so please come by the OCC table in the Narthex on Sunday morning to be a part of heart-warming-salvation-joy!

## 'Tis (Almost) the Season



Women's Ministry

**LOPC Women's Ministry**  
*Service Project*

**Kids' Hygiene Kits & School Supplies**  
Thursday, Nov 16 @ 1pm



Ladies come join us Thursday, November 16, as we assemble Kid's Hygiene Kits and School Supply Kits for MNA Disaster Response Center. Meet us in the Pavilion, weather permitting, at 1:00 p.m.



LOPC WOMEN'S MINISTRY

# Annual Advent Tea

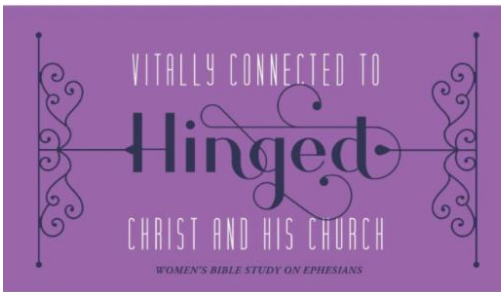
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5 @ 6:30 PM

AND MARY SAID, "MY SOUL GLORIFIES THE LORD  
AND MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD MY SAVIOR..."

Ladies of LOPC and guests are invited to our annual Advent Tea on Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 6:30 pm in the church narthex and sanctuary. Our theme this year will be on Jesus and his coming and has been chosen to reflect Pastor Jeff Birch's Advent sermon series on the first two chapters of Luke. **Interested in participating?** This year, the ladies are asked to bring two dozen Christmas cookies, plated and ready to serve.



LOPC will be collecting monies during the month of November in support of the First Call Pregnancy Center. The money raised from the Baby Bottle Campaign helps support anyone who is in a crisis because of an unplanned pregnancy. First Call provides the following services: pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, adoption referrals, counselling, pregnancy classes, parenting mentors, and material support for mom and baby. Simply take a baby bottle home and fill it with loose change, cash, or check (made payable to FCPC) and return the bottle back to the church by **December 3**. Will you help save a life?



# HINGED BIBLE STUDY BOOK OF EPHESIANS

## A New Women's Wednesday Morning Bible Study Coming in January - "Hinged"

A hinge is a piece of hardware that connects two things for a useful purpose. When a door hinge is working, we rarely notice, but there are other hinges in life that are far more vital; being vitally connected to Christ and His Church. **Women of all ages** are invited to come and study the book of Ephesians which "hinges" on those two ideas. Being vertically connected to Christ and focusing on what God is calling us to do to live covenantally. When we get things backward, life becomes unhinged. Infact, almost any struggle or failure in our lives can be traced back to forgetting who God is and what He is calling us to be. We are signing up women now so we can order books in time for our study which will begin on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. to noon

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## Women Connecting to Women in Prayer

The next women's prayer meeting will be in January 2024. Check the [website calendar](#) for upcoming details!



## 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. Please contact Brenda Roberts at 404-316-8579.

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 podcasts and social media!



**MISSED A SERMON? SHARE A SERMON!**



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





## Sheds of HOPE

The next shed build is **November 10 and 13-14**, and we would love to see **some new faces!** No experience is necessary, and on-site training is provided. This opportunity is open to the public, and lunch is provided! **Working with the scheduled installation of LOPC's new pickleball courts, the Sheds of HOPE timeline has been slightly adjusted. See below for details.**

### Monday, Nov 13

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Cut materials, assemble kits and begin component assembly

### Tuesday, Nov 14

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Complete component assembly and stack shed kits, store equipment and cleanup

### Wednesday, Nov 15

9:00 am – noon

(if needed) Complete unfinished work.



Over the next several months, we would like to introduce the various LOPC ministry teams to our newsletter readers. We hope that this will help newcomers learn more about us and will provide additional information for those looking to serve.

## Missions Ministry

The Missions Ministry connects LOPC to local and global missions who partner with us to spread the gospel. These organizations range from pregnancy crisis centers and adoption agencies to collegiate ministries, FCA, and parachurch

organizations and families serving refugees in the U.S. and people groups throughout the world. The Missions Ministry team members maintain correspondence with our supported partners, sharing updates through our Sunday bulletins and scheduling in-person presentations that usually take place during a combined Sunday School hour.

### **Missions Prayer Booklet**

**The Missions Team has put together a Prayer Booklet of the LOPC-supported missionaries and local outreach ministries. Copies of the booklet are available at the coffee bar (near the Mission Map). Pick up a copy to take home with you and join with us in prayer support for our missionaries out in the field. The booklets are hard copy versions of the information available on the tablets underneath the Mission Map.**

## Children's Ministry



During the Doxology, children ages 4 years - 2nd grade are dismissed for Children's Worship. We will be using the curriculum from Grapevine Studies. Grapevine's mission and vision are to, "Provide teachers a tool to confidently teach God's Word to their students while introducing them to the Gospel. We believe all students can understand the Bible and respond to the Gospel. Our desire is to see all students learn the process of Bible study in order to become confident and skilled in studying and eventually teaching God's Word."

*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...*

*Psalm 78:5-7a*

## November Calendar of Events

**The best way to see upcoming LOPC events is by visiting our website.** You can view upcoming events in three user-friendly formats.





# Events

Click on any of these three for viewing options.



Featured Events

Calendar View

List View

March 2022 Filter by Category

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Morning Ladies' Bible Study <sup>01</sup></li> <li>(CBS) Men's Community Bible Study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mid-Morning Ladies' Bible Study <sup>02</sup></li> <li>Parker Home Fellowship Group (HFC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(CBS) Ladies' Community Bible Study <sup>03</sup></li> <li>Choir Practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bulletin Helpers <sup>04</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><sup>05</sup></li> </ul>

## 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.

Lake Oconee Presbyterian Church | 113 Scott Rd., Eatonton, GA 31024

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