

# LOPC NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2023



***The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Psalm 19:1***

The cover art for this month's newsletter has been supplied by photographer Ken Johnson. Ken and his wife, Mary Ann, are longtime members of LOPC and will be moving to the Atlanta area in September to be closer to family. At our request, Ken shared one of his favorite photos that reminds him of 30+ years at Lake Oconee. On **Sunday, September 10**, there will be a farewell fellowship to honor the Johnsons. It will be held in the narthex after the worship service. All are invited to attend.

From Jeff Birch, Senior Pastor

## ***Spiritual Theology***

One of my favorite authors is Eugene Peterson. And of the many books he has written, one of my favorites is *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. From time to time, I like to reflect on books that stimulate my thinking. Now, before I make a few comments and reflections, let me make a quick qualifier. Speaking about books can be edifying, but it can also be dangerous. Just because I am reading a particular book and may be learning quite a bit from that book, does not mean that I necessarily agree with everything written in the book. Please, please take my recommendations with

discernment. I am sharing books that have resonated with me or stimulated my thinking. They may or may not resonate with you.

Now, with that qualifier out of the way, let me make a few comments. One of the things which I appreciate in this book is the emphasis on God as Creator. And as we are currently going through Phase 1C of our building renovations, it has me thinking about creation and God as Creator, salvation and new creation, and the church and the theme of community.

Peterson writes: *Three representative texts mark the range of the formative work of the Spirit in the world we find ourselves in: Genesis 1:1-3, Mark 1:9-11, and Acts 2:1-4. Each of these texts marks a beginning and in each text, it is the Spirit that initiates the beginning....The three texts mark the three beginnings, the beginning of creation, the beginning of salvation, and the beginning of the church: holy creation, holy salvation, holy community.* (pp.20-21). In other words, using Peterson's image, Christ plays in creation, in history, and in community.

The first text is Genesis 1:1-3. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light."* Peterson makes the point that God begins by creating. He says only God creates. And then he mentions the role of the Spirit, the same Spirit that Jesus referred to when he spoke with Nicodemus at night in John 3. In John 3, he compared the action of the Spirit to the wind, and Peterson writes, *"God breathes or blows over these waters. The breath is life and life-making. We see the wind moving over these anarchic waters, these dark and lethal waters, God-breathing life into this unlife, this nonlife."* (pp.21-22) The same word that is used for spirit is also used for wind or breath, and it is this spirit-wind that creates life.

The second text is Mark 1:9-11. *"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.'" Here is Jesus coming to bring about God's new creation. Peterson writes, "God begins again. A second beginning: Jesus is baptized and identified as God's beloved Son....Baptism is a replay of Genesis. As Jesus is lifted out of the water, God breathes life into him. The breathing is given visibility this time by means of what looks like a dove descending out of heaven."* (p.23) Peterson's thesis here is that Jesus has come to work out salvation in history. God is creating in history. He is once again defeating death and bringing about life. And notice the agency of the Spirit once again. You may not have the word trinity directly mentioned, but here in this account is the voice of the Father, speaking about the Son and the descent of the Spirit. Salvation is the work of the triune God.

The final text is Acts 2:1-4. *"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they*



rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” Peterson writes, “And yet again God begins. A third beginning, as God breathes on a company of 120 followers of Jesus and creates the holy community, the church.” (p.24). One of the things I love here is that, just as in Genesis, we see that life is created through language (the Spirit is moving and God speaks), here also the Spirit, who is experienced by the company as a powerful wind, produces language by which the wonders of God are spoken and life is the result.

How awesome. God is all about life. Peterson says, “The three texts function like a tripod, grounding every aspect of life – creation, salvation, community – in the living (breathing) God.... These three texts stand as authoritative: sooner or later something is said, reality is spoken into being.” (p.26).

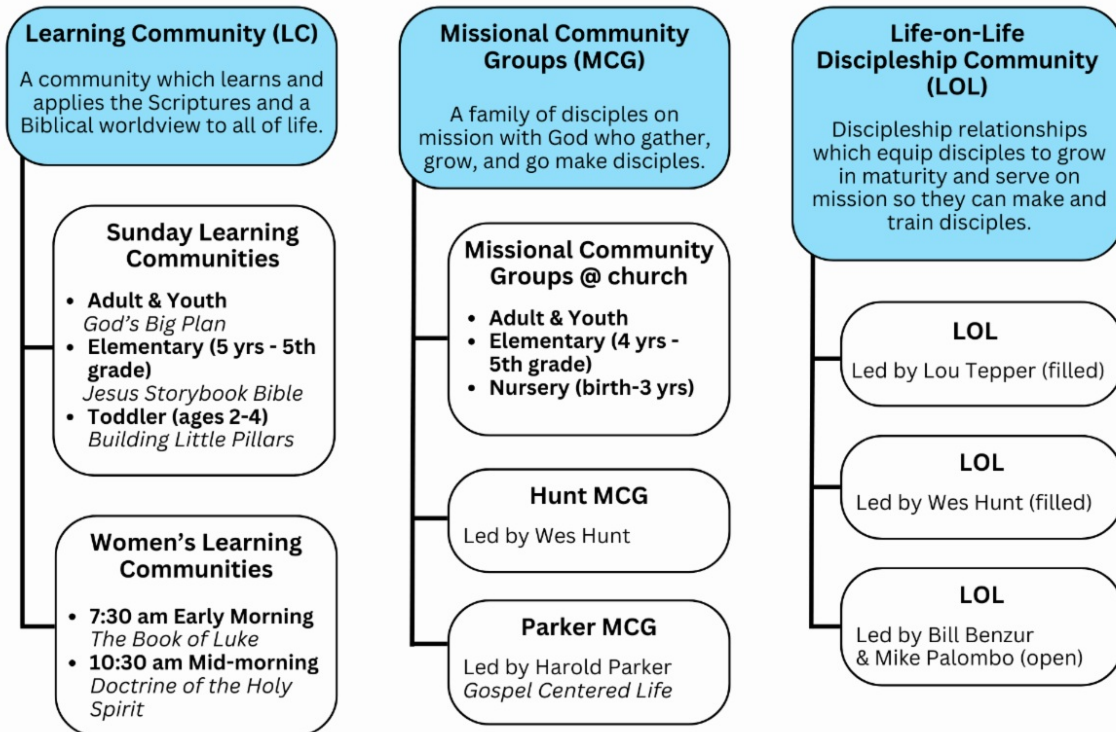
This is the God we worship. The God who creates, who saves, and the God who places in community, in a new family. A God who is the center of all things, the center of all reality and the God around whom our lives ought to orbit. Why don't we make our prayer the prayer of David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew as steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10).

Pastor Jeff Birch

## New Sermon Series



## FALL DISCIPLESHIP (ALL AGES)



For a higher resolution image, click [here](#).

### Missional Community Groups Launch

Missional Communities are a family of disciples on mission with God who gather, grow, and go make disciples through Gospel demonstration and conversation.

- **MCG @ Church: Starts September 20.** We will launch new Missional Community Groups on September 20. They will meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday nights from 5:30-7:00pm through December 6, in the Narthex/Sanctuary. We will share a potluck meal at 5:30pm and continue with small groups for **Adults** and **Youth** (6-12 grade), an **Elementary Kids Club** (age 4 – 5th grade) with a Bible Study, and **Nursery** for kids' (birth-3yrs) at 6:00pm.
- **Hunt MCG: Restarts September 6.** Led by Wes Hunt, they meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in various homes.
- **Parker MCG: Restarts September 20.** Led by Harold Parker, they meet the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Sebastian Cove Clubhouse. This group will study *The Gospel Centered Life* by Robert H. Thune.

Our Sunday School ministry called Sunday Learning Communities will begin **September 10**, for all ages. Adults and Youth will meet in the Sanctuary at 9:15am, Infants-Toddlers will meet in Room 102, and Elementary will meet in Room 103.

- **Adult/Youth Learning Community:** The adults and youth will meet together in the sanctuary and study *God's Big Picture* by Vaughn Roberts. Vaughn Roberts gives you the big picture--showing how the different parts of the Bible fit together under the theme of the kingdom of God. For more information on our study go to [www.godsbigpicture.co.uk](http://www.godsbigpicture.co.uk).
- **Elementary Learning Community:** Elementary-age (age 5 – 5th grade) children will study the *Jesus Storybook Bible: Old Testament* section.
- **Toddler Learning Community:** Toddlers (age 2 – 4) will explore God's creation and utilize a curriculum called *Building Little Pillars: Teaching the Foundations of the Christian Faith*.

For information about children's studies contact Ellen Skillingstad at [ellen.skillingstad@lopc-pca.org](mailto:ellen.skillingstad@lopc-pca.org).

### Women's Learning Communities

- **Tuesday Early-Morning Ladies' Bible Study – Restarts September 12.** Led by Karen Hildebrand and Jan Murray, they meet **every Tuesday** at 7:30 a.m. for deep study in the Word, discussion, and prayer.
- **Wednesday Mid-Morning Ladies' Bible Study – Restarts September 20.** Led by Sue Burmeister, they meet every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. at the church in the conference room. The group will continue their study on *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. All women are invited.

### Life-on-Life Discipleship

**Life-on-Life Discipleship:** A discipleship ministry designed to help a disciple maker develop mature and equipped followers of Christ, who will be able to do the same with others. LOL is a global Christian ministry reaching nearly every continent and 14 countries. To learn more about LOL Discipleship, contact Pastor Mike Palombo (434.944.0012 or [mike.palombo@lopc-pca.org](mailto:mike.palombo@lopc-pca.org))

- **LOL led by Wes Hunt** class is filled
- **LOL led by Lou Tepper.** class is filled
- **LOL led by Bill Benzur & Mike Palombo:** class is open

Last Family Fun Night of the Summer!





# FAMILY FUN NIGHTS



- ✓ FREE DINNER
- ✓ FUN ACTIVITIES
- ✓ FOR KIDS & FAMILIES OF ALL AGES
- ✓ REGISTRATION APPRECIATED
- ✓ TOTALLY FREE!



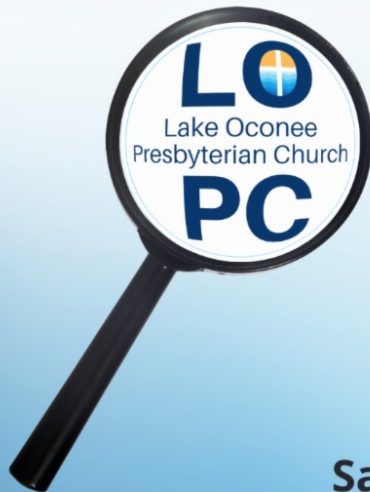
REGISTER AT:  
LOPC-PCA.ORG

## SEPTEMBER 22 : SUBS & SPORTS



Due to the heat advisory last month, we had to postpone our last Family Fun Night of the summer, but it's back on for **Friday, September 22, at 5:30 pm!** The theme is "subs & sports." This is for both our church family and the community, so please invite friends and neighbors! **[Click here to register.](#)**

## Inquirers' Class



# INQUIRERS' CLASS

New to LOPC?

Interested in church membership?

Want to know more about being a Christian?

**Join us for the Inquirers' Class!**

**Friday, October 20 (6 - 9 pm)**

**Saturday, October 21 (9 am - 3 pm)**



Contact the church office to register.

The next class will be October 20-21. 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.

## Christmas Cantata

# Christmas Cantata



**REHEARSALS BEGIN  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7  
7:45-8:30 PM**

**Rehearsals for Sunday services are the same nights from 7:00-7:45 PM.**

The LOPC Christmas Cantata is scheduled for Sunday, December 17, and rehearsals\* begin this week! New faces and voices are welcome.

\*Thursday rehearsals include practice for the Sunday morning worship from 7:00-7:45 pm, followed by practice for the Christmas Cantata from 7:45-8:30 pm.

## Women's Ministry

LOPC WOMEN'S MINISTRY

# Save THE Date!

Saturday, September 23 @ LOPC

**TAMI RESCH**

FOUNDER,  
TRAINER,  
COACH, &  
COHORT LEADER  
AT ALONGSIDE U



Hope is timeless and always in style!  
Come learn how to wear yellow -  
even when it's not your color!

Rapidly changing social mores, cancel culture, our own inner critic...where can I find solid footing in a world that seems so unsettling? With so many voices and verdicts in my ear critiquing what I do, how I do it, and who I am, where can I find hope to live freely, lightly, and confidently? On **Saturday, September 23, from 10 am - 12:30 pm**, Tami Resch will facilitate a workshop to help us gain renewed hope and freedom that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ and one another.

## Women Connecting to Women in Prayer NEW TIME IN SEPTEMBER

All women are invited to join Women Connecting to Women in Prayer on Tuesday, September 12. **We are trying a new time - 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** as we use A.C.T.S. to offer our prayers to God. Bring your lunch as we gather in the Narthex to pray.



### 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**

**MNA Disaster Response**



Sept  
11-15



## Sheds of HOPE

This isn't just any shed; it's one built by the Sheds of HOPE team, and it stores items salvaged from the loss of a home to a disaster. Within its walls, it holds mementos of weddings, baby photos, vacations, birthdays, graduations, and family traditions. But Sheds of HOPE is more than just dry storage for what has survived. It's a tangible reminder that families are not forgotten and that we mourn with those who mourn. It's also a beacon of hope because we serve a God who restores and renews, and we want to join him in bringing healing to our communities. **Next week (Sept 11, 12, 13, 15), our Sheds of HOPE team will gather at the pavilion from 9am-4pm to build more sheds, and they could use some extra hands.** No experience is necessary, and on-site training is provided. This opportunity is open to the public, and lunch is provided!



*Ministry Team*

**SPOTLIGHT**



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.**

## Education Ministry

The goal of the Education Ministry is to collaborate with ministry plans to promote education for all ages. They focus on growth and discipleship from infants to mature adults through teaching, events, and small group development.

## 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*

## September 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</li> <li>(CBS) Men's Community Bible Study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mid-Morning Ladies' Bible Study</li> <li>Parker Home Fellowship Group (HFC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(CBS) Ladies' Community Bible Study</li> <li>Choir Practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bulletin Helpers</li> </ul>	

Click here for the LOPC website calendar.

## 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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