

February, 2017

Dear Congo Mission Network Team,

The conference team at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church in Lafayette, California is eagerly planning for your participation at the 2017 Congo Mission Network Conference beginning Thursday evening, Sept 21 through Saturday evening, Sept. 23rd at our church in Lafayette, California.

At this time we encourage you to make a **cancellable reservation** at one of our nearby hotels so as to lock in a good rate. It is a prime time to visit San Francisco, the Wine Country, Yosemite, the Monterey Bay Area, Sea Ranch and the Mendocino Coast not even to mention the Big Sur coast, and points in Southern California. Thus, hotels fill up quickly. Thus, it is better to reserve now than to wait.

We recommend you use your favorite hotel booking site. You might even try Kayak.com which gives you quotes from Booking.com, Expedia, Travelocity, etc. side by side to compare the deals.

We attempted to block a group of rooms; however, the huge financial commitment made this impossible. The demand for rooms in the San Francisco Bay Area is so high that hotels are not willing to do courtesy holds without some kind of financial backing.

There is one lovely hotel in Lafayette, the Lafayette Park Hotel, (2 exits from the church), but the prices can be steep. Thus, we suggest hotels in Walnut Creek, Ca. (about 3 or 4 exits) from the Acalanes Rd. exit. (Church address is 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette, CA 94549).

We recommend you consider looking at the following properties:

3 Star:

Embassy Suites Pleasant Hill

Marriott Hotel

Holiday Inn Express

Concord Hilton

2 star:

Diablo Mountain Inn

We want to caution those of you who might be sensitive to noise from traffic that Diablo Mountain Inn, while cozy and comfortable, sits under the intersection of two

major freeway systems and one could hear the dull roar of traffic despite the air conditioning system. The noise at Motel 6 in Walnut Creek was even worse so we are not listing it. **We suggest that when you book a hotel reservation, you request a room on the quiet side, as the listed hotels are not far from freeways or our rapid transit.**

If you will not have a car while you are attending the conference, you can take our BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) from the following hotels to the Lafayette Station where we and conference attendees could help shuttle you to the church which is about 2 miles away).

Embassy Suites hotel (Pleasant Hill Bart station is just a 5 minute walk away)

Holiday Inn Express (offers shuttle service to Pleasant Hill Bart station—about 8 min away)

Walnut Creek Marriott (offers shuttle service to Walnut Creek Bart Station).

Concord Hilton (1970 Diamond Blvd offers shuttle service to Concord Bart Station.)

Note: From Lafayette Bart, the stations going from closer to further out are: Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Concord, etc. with about 5 min. traveling time between stations.

Note: the Bart System goes directly from the San Francisco Airport to the Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill and Concord Bart Stations on the Pittsburgh-Bay Point line (shown in Yellow on the map below).

If you have a car while attending the conference, **please be aware of parking fees running about \$25 per day** at the Embassy Suites, and the Walnut Creek Marriott. (\$19 at the Hilton in Concord). Please check with hotels for exact rates and in/out privileges/and self-park/valet restrictions. The only ones offering free parking are Holiday Inn Express or Diablo Mountain Inn.

Amenities: Breakfast: Verify before booking that the Embassy Suites, Holiday Express, and Concord Hilton offer a hot breakfast with the room; and that Diablo Mountain Inn offers a continental breakfast with hard-boiled eggs. Marriott charges \$18 for breakfast (without tip or tax).

Of course the church will offer bagels, juice, and coffee for those who choose to skip breakfast.

Other hotels in the area: The booking sites will give you more hotels with more reasonable rates in Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill and Concord. We did not list the Crown Plaza, Clarion, and Extended Stay America in Pleasant Hill and Concord because they do not offer shuttle service to Bart. They are however close to

Highway 680 which feeds into Highway 24 (exit Acalanes Rd. for church) if you have a car. Additional hotels will have more reasonable rates because they are not in close proximity to the 24 and 680 highway corridor. Thus, you will face major traffic on surface roads feeding into these highways. Even traffic on the 680 and 24 corridors is heavy at commute time going westward to San Francisco.

In the next few weeks you will receive more information about the conference and all the special highlights. We look forward to seeing you in California.

Respectfully,

Congo Team at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church

Note: We will be hosting our Mission co-workers and the Louisville staff during the conference in church members' homes. Please email us if you would like to be placed on a waiting list should extra host homes become available. **However, we want to stress the importance of securing a cancellable hotel reservation at this time as we have a limited number of host homes.**

BART: Please go to <http://www.bart.gov/schedules/byline> for more information.



Note: If flying in to Oakland Airport, one must change from the Richmond Line to the Pittsburg/Bay Point line either at the 19th Street or MacArthur Stations in Oakland. This is just an easy walk across the platform. However, in the late afternoon the trains are packed with commuters so try to arrive in the early afternoon at the Oakland Airport.

An Additional Option: The San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, CA

This is the least expensive of the options but one MUST HAVE A CAR if that is a place you would like to consider. Below is the message from our hotel coordinator who has gone out of her way to find reasonably priced yet suitable lodging for us.

The San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, California will most likely have a small number of rooms available for lodging for Thursday, September 21 with check-out Sunday, September 24th. (They are a Franciscan conference center that opens their doors to people of all faiths and backgrounds in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare. As there are two conferences scheduled for their facility on our dates; that is why there is a limited number of rooms).

The center is 14 miles from the church. They are offering us a special rate since there will be no meals offered to you unlike their other guests. (Breakfast is not served till 8 am which would get you to our Church too late. You will need to plan on a 20 to 30 minute commute time to the church due to traffic. There are a couple of breakfast cafes on the way for those who like a hot breakfast before arriving at our church. There is also a Starbucks coffee and Pete's Coffee etc. on the way)

The room rate for a single person is \$60 per night. If two people share the room, the rate would be \$70 per night. There is no tax or charge for parking.

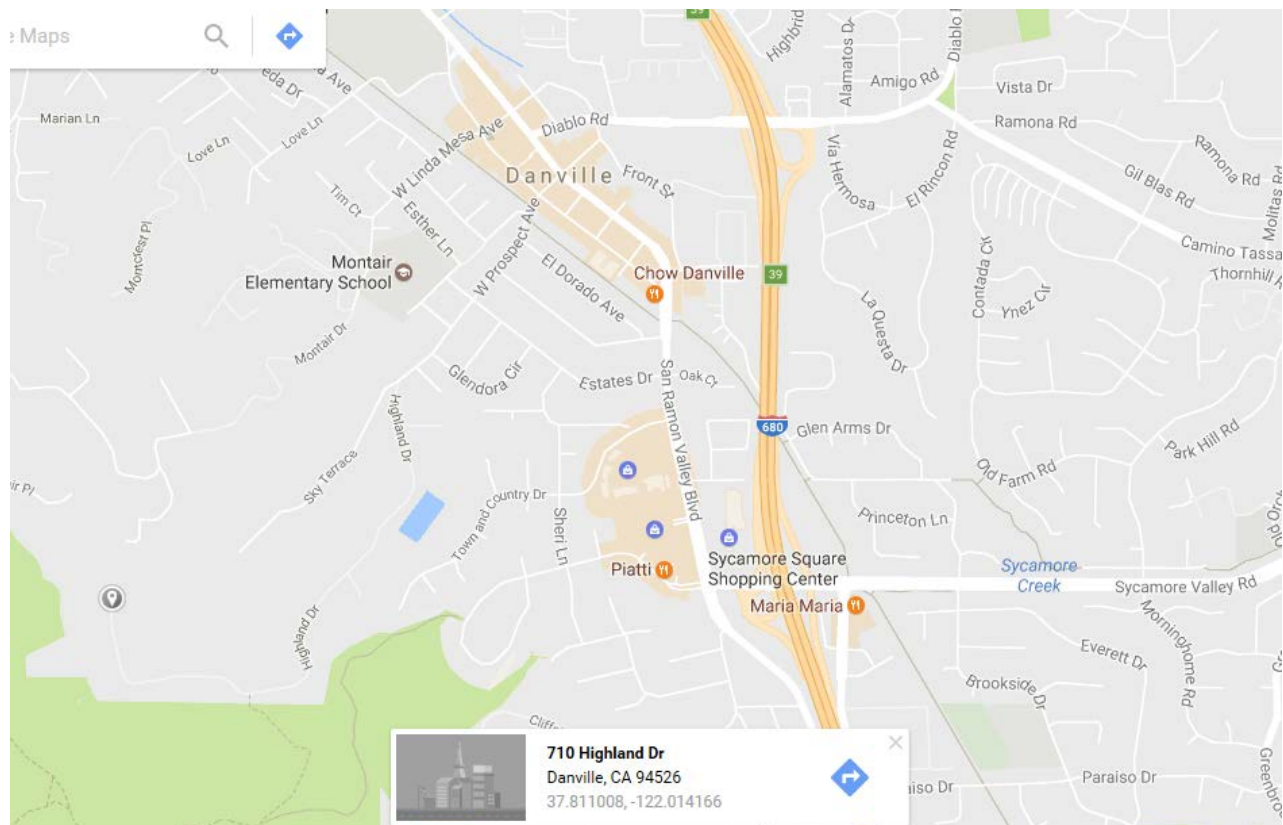
The room must be paid for in full for the 3 nights you would be staying there. THERE ARE NO REFUNDS. ANOTHER CAVEAT IS YOU MUST CHECK IN BY 4 P.M. ON THE DAY OF ARRIVAL. Also, this is NOT the most friendly handicapped accessible place.

Please, check out the website at <http://sandamiano.org/>. To make a reservation, please call rather than doing it online because of the special rate they are offering.

Call 925-837-9141 and ask for Kateri and tell her you are attending the Congo conference at LOPC (Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church). I believe some of the rooms share a bath, much as was done at Union Seminary Guest House. Ask when you call.

There are a limited number of these rooms because they are renting only the rooms not reserved for their own conferences so first come, first served.

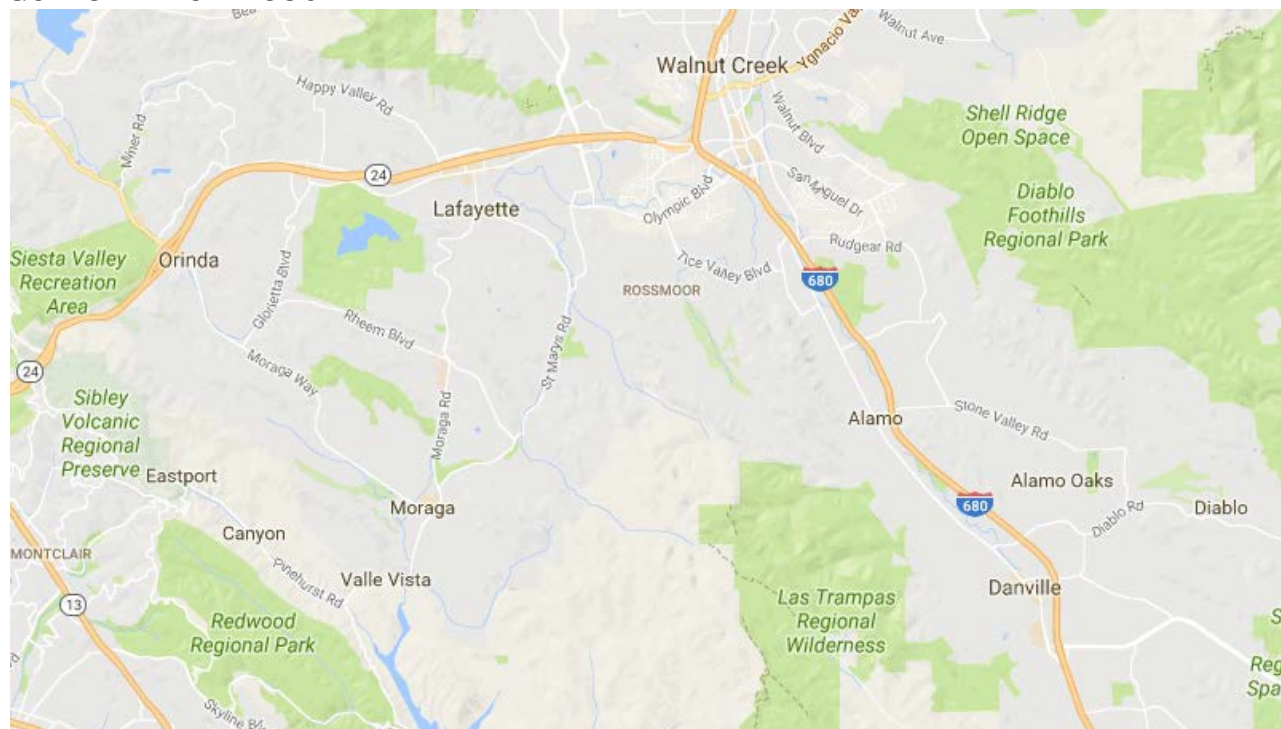
Below is a Google Map of its location in Danville, CA. Below that is a driving map to LOPC from San Damiano.



San Damiano is located at the end of Highland Drive. W. Prospect Drive becomes Sky Terrace after Highland Drive. Turn left (south) onto Highland.

Driving from San Damiano to Lafayette-Orinda Pres. Church

From San Ramon Valley Road go EAST on Diable Road to the I-680 interchange. Go NORTH on I-680



Follow the signs on the freeway so you will be in the lanes that go WEST on Highway 24 towards Oakland and San Francisco.

Take the ACALANES Exit and follow the cloverleaf around so you will be headed SOUTH on Acalanes Road. (On the smaller map above this road is shown as Glorietta Blvd. as Acalanes becomes Glorietta a bit further south.)

Continue south at the stop light and go to the first STOP SIGN.



Turn RIGHT at the Stop Sign and go one very short block. The church sign will be on the corner where you turn.

Turn LEFT onto Knox Drive and follow the road up the hill to the entrance on the right.