



The Network of Camps and Retreat Centers
Affiliated with The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Executive Director Report to the Annual Conference

November 1, 2023 - November 1, 2024

This has been a full and good year for LOM. It has been a year that has generally been good for most of our organizational members, a few of which have experienced significant crisis during their summer camps. Transition in year-round leadership positions continues to be prominent throughout the LOM network. This report is intended to provide highlights of the life of this dynamic association during the past year.

LOM Leadership Training Event (LTE) – November 1-6, 2023. Lutherdale (WI). 30 participants, 6 faculty.

LOM Annual Conference – November 6-10, 2023. Abbey Resort, Lake Geneva, WI. 138 participants, presenters, workshop leaders; 22 Ministry Partner and Business Partner exhibitors.

LOM Curriculum – Another successful year of producing an exceptionally high-quality resource that is found to be invaluable for many of our LOM camps and those of other denominations. “God’s Word Comes Near” for the 2025 season was ready ahead of schedule in early September. We have already seen 16 purchasers of the 2025 curriculum and we expect many more because of the opportunity it provides for documenting ongoing strategies for building character among children at camp in anticipation of the ACA grants that will start becoming available in 2025. . “Created to Be” has had great reviews during the 2024 season, with lots of good feedback about having the same theme as the ELCA Youth Gathering. There were 48 purchasers of the 2024 curriculum.

LOM Board of Directors, Committees, and Task Forces

Dave Jarvis, Board president, has submitted a report with details of much of the work of the Board this year. This is also the case with many of the committees.

- Board of Directors – November 10-11, 2023 (in person); February 8, May 9, July 11, September 12, October 31.
- Auction Committee – many meetings!
- Conference Planning Team – many times!

- Curriculum Committee – December 13, April 9, June 4, September 17
- Development Committee – January 10, February 28, April 29, May 9, August 13, October 15
- Ecumenical Task Force – January 17, February 18, March 27, May 8
- Education Committee – May 23, August 15, October 17
- LTE Committee – November 30, January 31- February 2 (in person), May 9, October 17
- Membership Criteria Task Force – December 13, January 16, April 3, May 15, July 11
- Nominating Committee – December 18, January 25, May 9, July 1, August 27, October 28
- Recognitions Committee – January 25, March 14, May 20, October 1, October 11
- Community Expectations Task Force – June 3, June 24, July 3, August 28, September 12, October 30

Total Inclusion!

56 Camps continued work on projects with funding from Total Inclusion! Sub-Grants.

Executive Directors and Program Staff Members gathered in four locations for Total Inclusion! Symposiums.

- March 4-7, Camp Agape (NC): 32 participants from 16 camps + 7 presenters/staff
- March 18-21, Spirit in the Desert (AZ): 30 participants from 12 camps + 7 presenters/staff
- April 8-11, Bethel Horizons (WI): 30 participants from 12 camps + 7 presenters/staff
- September 23-26, Metigoshe (ND): 45 participants from 20 camps + 7 presenters/staff

The first Total Inclusion! Visit Team took place September 8-11, at Bethel Horizons (WI). Thank you to Emily Schmidlin, Rev. Darryl Thompson Powell, and Rev. Matthew O'Rear, for their service as Visit Team members.

An LOM Diversity Committee is being reconstituted. Its charge will be to brainstorm what to include in a grant application for a third grant from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) and strategies for LOM moving forward with our total inclusion initiatives that are mandated in the current strategic plan for LOM.

LOM Strategic Plan –

The strategic plan continues to serve as the roadmap for development and implementation of LOM programs, activities and initiatives. Details of our progress are presented in Appendix A to this report – “Executive Director Progress Report” regarding the strategic plan. You can access it here - <https://www.lomnetwork.org/downloads/executive-director-report-to-annual-conference-11-13-24-appendix-a/>

Territory Activities –

Thanks to our dedicated Territory Coordinators (volunteer positions), outdoor ministry leaders were able to cultivate collegial networks through zoom meetings and territory in-person gatherings. The Territory Coordinators are serving as the Planning Team for the Executive Directors Gathering that will be March 30-April 3, 2025, at Wapo (WI).

- East: Deb Roberts, executive director, Lutherlyn (PA).
- Eastern Midwest: Eric Knueve, executive director, Bethel Horizons (WI); Gathering December 4-6, Wartburg Seminary.
- Western Midwest: Jim Schmidt, executive director, Camp Onomia (MN), passed the baton to Joel Abenth, director of donor engagement, Wapo (WI). Gathering December 5-7, Onomia (MN).
- West: Margie Fiedler, executive director, Flathead (MT).

Consultations

- LCLC (NY) – phone consults regarding their executive director transition
- LOMC (IL) – Consultation Team, February 5-9, with Margie Fiedler, Matt Kindsvatter, and Jon Halvorson
- Pathways (MN) – Board Retreat, April 12-13
- Amnicon (WI) – ZOOM with Executive Committee, April 18
- LOSD – ZOOM Devotions with Board
- Red Willow – ZOOM with Board, crisis management
- Idaho Ecumenical Camps Committee – ZOOM, June 13. To discuss the scheduled OMC Consultation Team with 5 camps of different denominations. This endeavor was ultimately postponed
- ND LOM Camps – ZOOM, June 19. To arrange staff assistance for Red Willow and Park River.
- Springbrook Bible Camp (ND), formerly Camp UMM – Board ZOOM, October 20, Best Practices for Non-profit Boards

Site Visits –

- Onomia (MN) – December 5-7
- Red Willow (ND) – April 12
- Camp Emmaus (MN) – April 12-13
- Caroline Furnace (VA) – June 4
- Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD) – June 5
- Wapo (WI) – October 8
- Good Earth Village (MN) – October 8-9
- Sugar Creek (WI) – October 9

Podcasts –

- March 13 - Kaleb Sutherland, Director of ELCA International Camp Counselor Exchange Program
- October 2 – ELCA Foundation: Josh Kerney, Director of Gift Planning; Marianne Brock, Regional Gift Planner
- October 24 – American Camp Association: Grechen Throop, Membership Director; Director of Research and Education

Ecumenical Outdoor Ministry Relationships –

Most of the LOM energy and attention to ecumenical relationships is invested in our involvement in the Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC). This is a group of outdoor ministry associations, specifically, in addition to LOM: Presbyterian Church, Camp and Conference Association (PCCCA); United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries (UMCRM); Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers (ECCC); Outdoor Ministry Association of the UCC (OMA-UCC); Outdoor Ministry Association of the United Church of Canada.

Notable accomplishments of the OMC have been: the first OMC Great Gathering and now the next one being planned for 2025; Interim Executive Director Training Event; semi-annual camp surveys; semi-annual compensation surveys.

The executive directors of these associations meet virtually every 6-8 weeks. There is an annual live meeting of the Coordinating Council (the executive director and Board president or designee from each association); this year it was April 22-25 at Episcopal Camp McDowell (AL). There is also a virtual meeting of the Coordinating Council each year; this year it was on October 16.

The OMC is moving decisively toward being a legally incorporated organization.

The LOM president's designee to the Coordinating Council is currently Nathan Pile. Nathan also chairs the LOM Ecumenical Task Force. This group has been spearheading an initial draft of Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws for this endeavor. These documents have now been approved by the LOM Board of Directors and most of the other Boards. LOM will, therefore, be a charter member of the legally incorporated OMC!

LOM is also spearheading a plan for the annual LOM East Territory Gathering to be divided into 5-6 smaller geographical regions that will have OMC gatherings that are a totally ecumenical. The idea is to have this strategy carried out during the first quarter of 2026, in order to capitalize on the momentum that will be generated by the OMC Great Gathering in November, 2025.

LOM Finances –

It's too early to have a clear picture regarding LOM finances for the year 2024. We do know that it will be important for the organizational members and individual members of LOM to be generous in their end of year contributions.

We also know that LOM Reserve Funds have increased because of the \$20,000 bequest from the estate of Arden Norum.

The year 2023 ended with contributions that represented a modest increase over the prior year. As a result of that, and another successful auction, we were able to increase the amount of funds available for scholarships to \$20,000. This has been crucially important in making the LTE and the Annual Conference in 2024 a reality for 39 participants.

Working with some LOM camps in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, LOM provided some of the travel expense reimbursements that made it possible for Red Willow and Park River to have substitute staff and stay open for two weeks in June while they were dealing with the crisis that they experienced at that time. This depleted the reserve fund that LOM had for that purpose; the auction this year will make it possible to restore and expand upon funds reserved for that purpose.

A complete set of financial report documents for 2023 can be found here: <https://www.lomnetwork.org/annual-meeting-documents/>. The LOM outside auditing firm, Eldridge and Gillespie of Wolfeboro, NH, has completed a financial review for 2023 and identified no issues to be rectified.

Transitions (those that have been reported to me) –

- LOMC (IL) celebrated 50 years in 2024
- Ingham Okoboji (IA) 100 years
- Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD) 65 Years
- Agape (NC) 50 years
- Luther Point (WI) 75 years
- Pathways (MN) 90 years
- Dick Peterson stepped down as interim CEO, NovusWay, December 31, 2023
- Mike Ward and Mitzie Schaefer become interim co-CEO's at NovusWay
- Tyler Stewardson stepped down from Director of Operations, Lutherwood (OR) and became High School Program Director, Sky Ranch (CO). January, 2024
- Nick Johnson left Camp UMM (ND) after 20 years as executive director
- Joel Abenth stepped down as executive director, Voyageurs (MN) and became director of donor engagement at Wapo (WI), December, 2023.

- RIP Mary Stutz. Died December 24, 2023. Mary served 36 years in year-round outdoor ministry positions. The Lutheran camps where she worked include Lutheran Memorial Camp (OH), Sky Ranch (CO), Koinonia (NY), Camp Emmaus (MN), Camp Mowana (OH), and 22 years at Outlaw/Atlantic Mountain Ranches of the LOSD organization.
- Evan Moilan appointed to serve as interim executive director, Voyageurs (MN).
- Matt Baumhardt left his position of associate director at Koinonia (NY) to become director of hospitality at Green Lake (MN).
- Carolyn and Jerry Fritsch served as the interim administrative team at Koinonia (NY), January 7 - April 10.
- RIP Roger Sasse, executive director NLOM 1988-2008. Died January 5, 2024.
- Hannah Johnson appointed interim executive director, Springbrook Bible Camp, formerly Camp UMM (ND), January 1, 2024
- CJ Clark leaves Living Water as executive director after 18 years to become DEM of the Southeast Michigan Synod
- Nicole McCarthy, interim executive director, Living Water (MI)
- Bay Lake Camp (MN) sold to Northern Pines Mental Health Center
- Kaycee Cronin started as site director at Klein Ranch May, 2024
- Clyde Walter began serving as interim executive director, LOMC (IL) June 3, 2024, and has now been appointed the executive director.
- Kristian Wold named executive director, Kuriakos (Alberta, Canada), June, 2024. Art Weiss stays on to guide through transition through August
- Mark Donald left Christikon (MT) in October, after 11 years as executive director.
- Michelle Wandersee stepped down after 6.5 years as program director at LOMC (IL) to become Synodically Authorized Minister at All Saints, Byron, IL
- Wayne Harrison retires from executive director, Camp Agape (PA).
- Shyanne Zitkovic appointed executive director, Camp Agape (PA).
- Taylor Johnston appointed program director, Camp Agape (PA).
- Paul Hanson steps down as executive director, LOSD, August, 2024, and becomes director of development, Green Lake (MN)
- Rev. David Zellmer appointed interim executive director, LOSD, August, 2024
- Sara Anderson starts in November as associate executive director, Calumet (NH).
- Lee Lindeman completed his tenure as interim executive director, Agape-Kure Beach (NC) in October; Rev. Heather Bachelder will assume that post in December.

- Jay Miller stepped down as operations director after 18 years at Cross Trails (TX)
- Megan Myers stepped down as Ebert Ranch Program Director (Cross Trails, TX)

Looking to the Immediate Future –

1. The LOM Board has now made a decision on this question: Moving forward, will the Mission of LOM remain as it has been since the origin of LOM, or will it be expanded and, if so, in what ways? Should the mission be expanded to include serving as an agency for the advocacy of outdoor ministry – sort of a “Chamber of Commerce” for LOM’s organizational members? A provider of outdoor ministry programs and activities that are similar to what member organizations might be providing on a local level? An outdoor ministry staff recruiting agency?
The LOM Board of Directors has gone on record stating that the mission of LOM should continue to focus primarily on what the mission has been since LOM was formed – encourage, educate, equip and empower the leaders of LOM member organizations. This paves the way for LOM to deal with these next issues.
2. Decide: In consideration of the revised criteria for outdoor ministry organizations to be affiliated with ELCA, will the criteria for membership in LOM be changed in any ways? In addition to being affiliated with ELCA, will annual contributions be required? Will there be minimal expectations for engagement with LOM programs, activities and events?
3. Based on the above decisions and current realities, propose to the membership changes to the LOM By-Laws and make concurrent changes to the PPI that will ensue.
4. Based on above decisions, make incumbent revisions to the LOM staffing plan. Realities that impact on this step include the announcement from Lindsey Scheid and Angie Pile that they will no longer be available to serve as LOM Co-Conference Coordinators after the conclusion of the 2024 conference and from Randy Youngquist-Thurrow that he will no longer be available to serve as LOM Events Coordinator after the conclusion of the 2025 OMC Great Gathering. Also, Mary Lindberg will be stepping down as LOM Curriculum Development Manager at the end of the 2026 curriculum season (September 15, 2025).
5. In accordance with our current Strategic Plan, continue to spearhead the development of OMC as a legally incorporated organization with a growing menu of programs, events and activities that be better accomplished by all of our associations working together.
6. Work with Tic-Tac-Toe Marketing to finalize the LOM Communication & Marketing Plan.

Thank You to our LOM Staff – Independent Contractors all –

- Administrator – Jon Skogen
- Events Coordinator – Randy Youngquist-Thurrow
- Conference Co-Coordinators - Lindsey Scheid and Angie Pile

- Communications Coordinator – Tom Reddinger
- News Editor – Rod Boriack
- Curriculum Development Manager – Mary Lindberg
- Bookkeeper – Ginger Brownell

In Closing -

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:12-13

Our LOM organization has made some good strides this year as we continue to develop and refine the effectiveness of what we do together for strong outdoor ministry throughout the ELCA and indeed the whole church. We can do this because of the opportunities we have for learning from the experience and expertise so freely shared by our colleagues. We can also do this because of the friends we have in this network to whom we can in our times of greatest need. There have been times this year when I have witnessed outdoor ministry leaders making sacrifices in order to come to the assistance of colleagues in crisis. What could be more gratifying than that? Thank you, one and all, for making LOM an organization of “all for one, one for all”.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Johnson, Executive Director
Lutheran Outdoor Ministries