



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

Executive Director Report to the LOM 2025 Annual Meeting

August 15, 2015 – November 11, 2025

As I prepare to retire from the position of LOM Executive Director, it is with a great sense of gratitude that I reflect on these past ten years and the opportunity to serve this wonderful association. It has been a privilege and an honor.

When my tenure began in 2015, LOM had been organized as its own separate entity for only ten years. Financial resources were limited but the enthusiasm and commitment of its volunteers was boundless. Today, financial resources are not quite as limited and the volunteers who make this organization run are just as enthusiastic and committed as they (you!) always have been.

Ten years ago, there were four cornerstones that facilitated all that we do together for strong and vibrant outdoor ministry – everywhere. The cornerstones: the Annual Conference, the Leadership Training Event (LTE), the annual production of camp curriculum, and networks of professional collaboration and support. These continue to provide foundational strength for LOM and continue to derive their strength from the fuel of volunteerism.

In the past ten years there have been many ways that LOM expanded its impact by building on the cornerstones. Some of the “building blocks” are summarized as follows.

The Past Ten Years

- Relationship-building has been facilitated by personal visits to almost every site of the LOM organizations and getting acquainted the staff on their own turf.
- Consultation Teams were brought back as a resource for LOM organizations.
- LOM went from a dues-paying association to annual contributions based on capacity and gratitude for what we can all accomplish together through LOM.
- Territories organized spearheaded by the volunteer efforts of “Territory Coordinators”.
- Support for organizations in transition, especially the transition of executive leadership, including facilitation of Board Development retreats.
- With the collaboration of the Lutheran Transitional Ministry Association, development of the Interim Executive Director Training Event (2 so far) and a process of helping organizations to secure the services of interim directors.
- Reserve fund for financial support for organizations in crisis.

- Collaboration with first, the Effective Camp Research Project, and then, Sacred Playgrounds, for biennial compensation surveys and biennial general surveys of outdoor ministry organizations.
- Ecumenical cooperation, especially through the Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC), with other denominational camp associations. This has strengthened our involvement in the Compass Points continuing education certificate program for outdoor ministry professionals and two Great Gathering events.
- Increased collaboration with our ELCA Ministry Partners, especially the Youth Ministry Network (YMN) and their Extravaganza event, the ELCA Youth Gathering, and ELCA Mission Advancement. Also LuMin, ELEA, Faith Formation Network, Global Refuge (formerly LIRS), ELCA Advocacy, LSA. Rescue, Release, Restore (RRR), The Naming Project.
- Conference Swap arrangements with YMN, LuMin, and ELEA .
- Cultivation of relationships with the Major Sponsors of LOM Conferences: MIF, ELCA Foundation, Portico, Seminaries of the ELCA, and GSBFundraising.
- American Camp Association (ACA) and the 15% discount on annual dues for LOM camps that are ACA Accredited.
- Development of LOM podcasts and webinars.
- LOM is currently implementing its second strategic plan of the past ten years.
- LOM Executive Director deployed to facilitate Board Development Retreats for LOM Member Organizations.
- Reestablishment of occasional Executive Director Gatherings.
- Three cycles of the Total Inclusion! initiative, each cycle supported with a grant of \$1,000,000 from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP). Among the highlights of this initiative have been Territory Symposiums, sub-grants to individual camps, an LOM video series on inclusion, and Total inclusion! Visit Teams.
- Outgrowths of the Total Inclusion! initiative are reflected by the addition to LOM's statement of Core Values with: "A Place for Everyone around the Campfire" statement of inclusion; Anti-Racism Statement; Anti-Violence Statement; and the Community Expectations Statement.
- In 2019, for the LOM Day at Lutheridge during the Great Gathering, we celebrated 100 years of Lutheran summer camps in the USA. In 2025, for the same event, we celebrate 20 years of LOM being a legally incorporated organization.
- Added to the annual Innovative Program Award, LOM instituted an annual Diversity Grant. LOM also established the prestigious Manlove-Howells Leadership Award.
- Together, we made it through Covid-19! 48 hours of Resource Zoom in 2020; dozens of Territory Forums; the Covid-19 Resource Team; the LOM Run4Camp 5k to help LOM individual camps make their financial ends meet; MACP adjustments to their original Total Inclusion! grant.

- We worked together to help each other through the lean years of summer camp staff recruiting with, first, the CampMatchUp app, and then the Friends Not Yet Met Campaign.
- Development of the “LOM Resource Sharing on Slack” tool.
- A first, ever, LOM Leaders Forum.

Looking Ahead

My recommendations for matters that need addressing in the immediate future –

- Implement the LOM Communications/Marketing Plan that was developed for LOM by Tic Tac Toe Marketing.
- Continued deepening of ecumenical partnerships, especially through the Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC). Immediate attention to the legal incorporation of OMC and the OMC Educational Summit in April.
- Amend the LOM By-Laws to allow for alternate pathways to LOM Organizational Membership in addition to affiliation with the ELCA.
- Maximize every benefit that we possibly can from the Total Inclusion! Cycle 3 grant.
- If awarded, maximize the benefits that will derive from the ACA Character at Camp Planning grant.
- Provide occasional gatherings for program directors of LOM organizations.
- Explore the possibility of Territory Gatherings becoming more ecumenical.
- Repeat the LOM Songwriters Workshop of October, 2024.
- Develop financial contributions from individuals who are not currently employed by LOM member organizations.
- Ongoing development of scholarship funds for the LTE and Annual Conference – very important.
- Develop a new staffing plan for LOM.
- Develop a plan for LOM to better access the collective wisdom of our emeritus leaders group – those who have retired from professional leadership of LOM member organizations.

The state of our organization

I am often asked, “How are camps doing around the ELCA?” My observations, in response to this question, can be found here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GIIN4MYD4xEHN-zpbmnUL7kp_pU5Bt1/edit

LOM Transitions during the past year

- Chris Stevens stepped down as executive director, Hungry Mother (VA), November, 2024
- Dona Jenkins started in November, 2024, serving as interim executive director, Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center (VA).
- Phil Bramley appointed executive director, Voyageurs (MN) starting 1.1.25
- Kelly Preboski stepped down from executive director at Luther Heights (ID) 12.31.24
- Andrea Scofield retired from executive director, Lutherwood (OR), January 11, 2025
- Robin Eisenbach appointed executive director, Lutherwood (OR)
- Jordan (Valentine) Pfeifer appointed executive director, Tomah Shinga (KS)
- Jim Schmidt retired from executive director, Camp Onomia (MN), December 31, 2024.
- Mir Youngquist-Turow retired, after 28 years in outdoor ministry, from environmental education director, Agape+Kure Beach (NC).
- Jon Skogen stepping down as LOM Administrator 6.30.27
- Randy Youngquist-Thurow stepping down as LOM Events Coordinator 12.31.25
- Mary Lindberg stepped down as Curriculum Development Manager 9.15.25
- Rev. Heather Wigdahl began as executive director, Christikon (MT), 2.15.25.
- Natalie Scheers became program director at Camp Shalom (IA), November, 2024.
- Ben Carlson stepped down as operations director at Camp Shalom (IA)
- Lutheridge (NC) 75th Anniversary in 2025
- Tom Bley retired after 12 years as Executive Director at Camp Shalom (IA). March 31, 2025
- Joel Rude appointed as interim executive director at Camp Shalom (IA)
- Rev. Bekah Boatwright, director of youth and outreach programs at Sky Ranch, left in March, 2025, to be the Pastor of Youth & Family Ministries at a church in South Carolina.
- 80th Anniversary for Luther Crest
- Margie Fiedler retired from serving as executive director at Flathead (MT). She is continuing as the capital campaign director. Judy Engh and John Griebe serving as co-interim executive directors.

- Chris Miller appointed executive director, LOMIK (IN)
- Maddie Glanz named executive director of Luther Heights (ID)
- Lutheranch (NovusWay, GA) no longer operating
- Minnie-Wa-Kan (Pathways, MN) no longer operating
- Messiah Mountain Retreat Center (CO) no longer operating
- Kaycee Cronin stepped down as camp director at Klein Ranch (LOSD). 5.1.25
- Cross Roads 25th Anniversary
- Jim Jacobsen named executive director, LOSD. May, 2025
- Audrey Parnell started as camp director, Camp Ma-He-Tu (NY), June, 2025
- RIP, Rev. Warren Salveson. Died May 23, 2025. He directed Lutheran camps EWALU, Strawberry Point, IA, and Sugar Creek, Ferryville, WI, and served as interim at Holden Village.
- Rev. Joel Asselstine appointed executive director, Flathead (MT)
- Stephanie Engel stepped down as program director at Sugar Creek (WI) to accept the position of executive director at Camp Onomia (MN).
- Elise and Bjorn Peterson started as co-executive directors at Holden Village (WA).
- Sam Campeau stepped down at Luther Point and accepted the position of executive director at LRCC(CA)
- Laurie SoJourneyer was named executive director of NovusWay.
- Sarah Lefler retiring 12/31/25 as executive director, Mar-Lu-Ridge.
- Diana Edelblute named executive director, Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD) starting 1/1/26.

Outdoor Ministry Organizations in executive transition as of November 3, 2025–

- Camp Roig (PR)
- Camp Agape (NC) – Heather Batchelder, interim
- Pathways (MN) – Ira Bailey, interim; Addie Elliott, administration consultant
- Shalom (IA) – Joel Rude, interim
- Luther Point (WI) – Carolyn and Jerry Fritsch, co-interims as of 11/10/25
- Park River (ND)

Other transition notes –

- Agape+Kure Beach Ministries (NC) is divesting itself of the Kure Beach site.
- Mount Carmel (MN) no longer wants to be affiliated with the ELCA or a member of LOM.
- Green Lake Lutheran Ministries (MN) is now known as Water's Edge Ministries..

In conclusion

It has been the joy and honor of my life during these past ten years to serve as your executive director. It has been such a privilege to experience LOM sites, located in some of the most beautiful places in the world, doing some of the most important work for the world, and led by some of the most wonderful people of the world. My pledge to you is that I will do all I can to assure a smooth transition for the next executive director. I will hold you in my heart and prayers as LOM enters into an exciting new chapter, as do I.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Don Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Don Johnson, LOM Executive Director