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

Executive Director's Report
2026 Annual Meeting

What a first year it has been! Throughout this first year, I'd first and foremost like to say that I'm inspired and grateful for the ways that you have welcomed me into this position. Thank you!

I've spent a lot of this year trying to connect with as many different outdoor ministry organizations as possible. Whether that be through Zooms and phone calls, visits, open house conversations, or seeing y'all on the staff recruiting trail or at other events, I've been grateful to have gotten to connect with many of y'all in one way or another. And, I also know that there are many that I have not yet connected with. My intention is to keep reaching out and connecting in the weeks, months, and years to come.

Through these conversations and some intentional surveys and interviews, we've tried to listen to the network to discern what is next for LOM. You've hopefully seen information about LOM's proposed Strategic Priorities that the LOM Board discerned together in May. We will spend some more time discussing these priorities at the Annual Meeting. I believe that these five priorities are responding to the conversations and feedback that I (and others) have heard from you all, but look forward to more conversation with y'all to be sure of that.

The LOM Board also made updates to the Bylaws and PPM. It was a big undertaking that started before I began and included the thoughts and wisdom of many individuals across this network. Thanks to those of you who provided feedback, guidance, and perspective in this work. We will be voting on these proposed 2026 Bylaw revisions at the Annual Meeting.

LOM is also involved with two different grants. The Total Inclusion! grant is in partnership with the ELCA. This year we hired a new Program Manager and launched the Total Inclusion! Leaders sub-grant. We received many great applications, and have awarded 12 grants of $50,000 each to outdoor ministry organizations across the network. LOM also received an American Camp Association Character at Camp Planning Grant. This $75,000 grant allowed for us to hire a Program Manager, send them to a handful of sites to do site visits, and think thoughtfully with many stakeholders about how to submit an application for a 3-year $300,000 implementation grant. We submitted that application at the end of September, and hope to hear news of their decision by the end of the year. These grants are significant to LOM's work, and I look forward to seeing how these grants continue to shape our ministry moving forward.

In other news around the Network, I'm proud of some of the new ventures that we have embarked on in the past few months.

- We have a variety of different intentional affinity cohorts that have begun this fall. These cohorts are in partnership with our ecumenical partner associations of the Outdoor Ministries Connection.

- We hosted conversations about Health Insurance and the ELCA's requirements for 501(c)(3) group exemption. Neither of these conversations are easy topics nor do they have immediate solutions, but they've been important conversations for LOM to help in facilitating.
- The Education Committee hosted a Workshop Wednesday in October with the topic around, "Connecting with Congregations." It was led by Education Committee Chair Kaitlyn Blend at LCLC. We plan to do this every other month throughout the fall, winter, and spring seasons each year.
- The Imagine More curriculum was published and is available for purchase.
- In September, I along with two other LOM representatives had a chance to meet with Faith Formation Stakeholders from across the ELCA. This meeting brought together people from all parts of our church to think about ways that we can partner together, share in our communications, and use our collective calls to do this work more effectively together in the future.

One of the things that I feel passionate about is that LOM must be in partnership with many others. I think there are many organizations and groups that we can be intentional about connecting with. I'm grateful to have started to build some of those relationships in the last few months, and expect much more of this work to happen in the future.

Looking ahead to the rest of the year, I am eager for the Leadership Training Event and the LOM Conference. There is so much intentionality with both of these events, and they will be great because of all of the thoughtful leaders who have put it together and the gracious participants who will be joining.

November and December are also big months for LOM in regards to member organization giving. I hope that each LOM organization will prayerfully consider the gift that you will send to LOM to ensure that we can continue to do all of the important work that we are called to do together. If there is one thing that I have learned more than anything since starting in this position, it is that LOM does nothing alone. It is constantly working and walking together with many people and organizations. Your member organization's financial contribution is a testament to that, and is essential to this ministry. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to this process.

There is so much more to share and discuss. I know that I didn't name all of the work and all of the intentionality that I see in individuals who are helping to lead LOM. As the Executive Director, I want to thank you again for your thoughtfulness and connectedness with this ministry. There is plenty more work to be done, and I look forward to doing it with y'all together.

In Peace,



Nate Berkas
LOM, Executive Director