Connecting with our Ecumenical Partners in Ministry

Two members of the LOM Board, Meggan Manlove and Lindsey Scheid, represented LOM at the recent meeting of the Outdoor Ministry Connection in Idaho. Outdoor Ministry Connection is made up of these outdoor ministry organizations: American Baptist Camps, Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers (ECCC), Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM), Outdoor Ministry Association – Church of the Brethren (OMA-CoB), Outdoor Ministry Association – United Church of Christ (OMA-UCC), Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association (PCCCA), and the United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries (UMCRM) Association. These organizations collaborate on a number of programs. One example of our collaboration is the upcoming Interim Executive Director Training Event which will be sponsored by LOM and done in collaboration with the whole Outdoor Ministry Connection.

Meggan Manlove, LOM Board member, was excited to represent us at this event. "It was an honor to represent Lutheran Outdoor Ministries at the annual Outdoor Ministry Connection meeting at Ross Point Baptist Camp, up in the panhandle of my state, Mar. 6-8. The highlight of the week for me was hearing about the Great Gathering at Lake Junaluska in Nov. 2019. All our networks will come together for one joint outdoor ministry conference. I so appreciate the planning committee’s work thus far. Like LOM, the Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers network recently completed its own strategic plan. The group spent about an hour on a conference call with new American Camping Association CEO Tom Rosenberg, most recently the director of Camp Judaea in North Carolina. Much of that conversation was about how we can collaborate on research. Other networks represented included United Methodist Camp Retreat Ministries, Outdoor Ministries Association: UCC, Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association, and the United Church of Canada."
“Compass Points” is a continuing education certification program for camp and conference leaders. It is a cooperative program of the Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association, Outdoor Ministries Association of the United Church of Christ, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, and United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries in partnership with Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. It is designed for those looking to deepen their understanding of camp and conference ministry. In the case of LOM, we recommend it as a next educational step after completion of both the program track and administrative track of the LOM Leadership Training Event.

The most recent Compass Points event was held in March 2017. Two experienced and well-known LOM members were on the faculty for that event – Randy Youngquist-Thurow of Agape/Kure Beach Ministries, and Susan Troutman, recently retired as COO of Novus Way. Two LOM members participated in the March event. They were Jake Hanson, site director of NeSoDak, one of the sites of Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota, and Judy Smith, director of family & adult programming and worship & music coordinator at Calumet Lutheran Ministries in New Hampshire.

Here’s what Jake had to say about his experience. ‘Over the past few years in outdoor ministry, I’ve often wondered if we’re in a time of an identity crisis. And by that I’m referring to the ongoing questions that often come up in conversation at conferences and gatherings: “What new groups can we reach out to and bring to camp?” “What new programs can we offer to get kids to camp?” “How can we reach out to different denominations of churches?” I think it’s important to ask these questions in order to have a vision towards the future and vision towards growth. But when we forget to put our "WHY" and our organization's reason for existing first and foremost it’s almost like we are selling out on our identity just to fill our bunks or discover new revenue streams. My participation in Compass Points has given me a new set of knowledge and skills in articulating our identity, mission, and vision while strengthening my personal outdoor ministry philosophy. And I believe the Compass Points experience is not only for directors but would benefit all outdoor ministry professionals of all roles and titles. What I've taken from the Compass Points experience will make an impact on my work facilitating our capital campaign, visiting schools and congregations on a daily basis, recruiting and training our year-round and summer ministry teams, and telling the story of the powerful impact of camp. There’s already a tangible correlation from this experience and what’s happening here at NeSoDak and within Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota. We're in the business of transforming lives through unique encounters of God’s love. I mean, c'mon. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?’

And Judy had this feedback regarding her experience. ‘I participated in “Articulating Our Mission, Role, and Value” and “Personnel and Leadership”. Both courses deepened my understanding of “why” we do what we do in outdoor ministry. Using the assigned reading, WHY, by Simon Sinek, we explored in the first course several examples of how a leader’s inspiration/passion developed into a company or organization and how passion defines an organization’s vision, mission, core values, and goals. This concept of WHY continued in the second course where we focused on team leadership as ministry and how to develop tools for leading from the inside out. Through large and small group discussions, in-class presentations by students, games, Ted Talks, and faculty presentations I left even more excited about what I do in my own camp setting and left with tools to add to my work or ways to tweak what I do now! Best of all was hearing fresh ideas from colleagues including faculty and students (who became good friends!) and realizing we are always learning and growing no matter our age or experience! It was a bonus to be with fellow Lutherans too. In the first course my classmate was Jake Hanson from Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota and one of our instructors was Randy Youngquist-Thurow from Agape + Kure Beach Ministries. In my second class my instructor was Susan Troutman, recently from Novus Way Ministries. It was a treat to be at another camp too...thank you to the staff at Bethelwoods, a Presbyterian camp and conference center, for hosting a great week and especially feeding us delicious food with a Southern touch. Last words: Go buy and read the book, WHY by Simon Sinek. It will inspire you.’

The next Compass Points event will be this October 15-17 and October 18-21. Here’s the link: http://www.compasspointsprogram.org/batfpdai/
“Wanna Get Away?”
3 Benefits to Immersed Learning at Camps
by Tom Schwolert - Partner for Children, Youth & Family Ministry & Coach

It’s a great little slogan that Southwest Airlines uses. “Wanna Get Away?” When we hear it, it’s easy for our minds to wander to a remote beach or relaxing mountain villa. It is good to get away from our daily routine to re-group, relax and spend time with those we love.

But I want to talk about a different kind of getaway. This getaway might be just as important as a vacation for ministry leaders and can be life transforming. I’m talking about immersion and intensive learning experiences. I think camps are the best place for these kinds of immersions. In my 30 years of ministry leadership and after experiencing all kinds of continuing education such as conferences, certification programs, online courses, seminary classes, workshops and seminars; nothing compares to the immersed learning experiences that I have had at camps. I consider an immersed learning experience to be anywhere from 3 days to two weeks (and sometimes longer). At these immersions, the leader dives deeply into a particular area of leadership interest. I want to take a moment to share three benefits that leaders can glean by jumping in to some immersed learning. I’m not saying these things don’t happen in other types of educational experiences, I just think they often happen more profoundly in immersed learning.

1. **A Renewed Perspective** – On one leadership immersion where I was with a group going through a high ropes adventure course I remember one leader say, “I’m totally afraid of heights, my goal is to make it halfway up the pole.” She proceeded to go all the way up the pole and even step out on to the rope element 30 feet in the air. Later that evening during a dinner discussion she shared with the group that the activity gave her confidence that she has the ability to lead in her congregation in the midst of some changes that before seemed impossible. Her perspective was changed. We can often do much more than we think we can. Being together with other leaders and receiving encouragement is sometimes exactly what we need to lead into the future.

2. **Everyday Experts** – I now often lead immersion experiences at camps. What I love the most is that it is not just one expert giving information to the students. In an immersion, I believe everyone is an expert. You know stuff! When you spend a long period of time with people, what is on the surface tends to fall away and you discover the depth of each person, the uniqueness of their experiences and the wealth of knowledge that they bring to the group. Drawing upon the gifts, strengths and knowledge of other leaders is what makes you a better leader. There is a natural network that is created and often in those unplanned times having coffee or a meal together, our world is expanded and enriched by a conversation that is truly transformational. It is sometimes hard to find these kinds of experiences in the fast paced lives we live or at a two hour workshop.

3. **Vulnerability** – This one might seem a bit strange to include here. But I’ve learned over the years how significant personal change and renewal can happen when people have the courage to be real with what they think and how they feel. As leaders we often feel like we have to have it all together and be strong. Yet, often what people want is authenticity in leadership. Are you being real and honest with who you are? In one immersion experience the participants were asked to tell a bit of their life story. One woman spoke of losing a child and at that moment my presence there was affirmed because I too have lost a child. Throughout the extended time we spent together we were both able to experience continued healing through our conversations. Extended time together where we can take off our masks and be who we really are is one of the greatest benefits of an extended learning experience at a camp.

There are many more benefits to getting away for an immersed learning experience, but these are a few that have been very profound for me. At Vibrant Faith we want to partner with camps and retreat centers to create unique, immersed learning experiences. It’s one of the greatest gifts you can give to leaders of the church. If you would like to explore partnering with Vibrant Faith on an immersed learning experience at your camp, contact Tom Schwolert at tschwolert@vibrantfaith.org or 214-995-1720.
TRANSITIONS AND REMINDERS

• Best wishes to Jeff Thompson who just started in his new position as program director at Lutherdale (WI).

• Welcome to LOM, Matt Miller! Matt was just appointed executive director at Camp Frederick (OH), and thank you, Dick Iverson, for your service there as the interim executive director.

• Welcome to Rev. David Dykes who recently began serving as interim executive director at Mount Cross (CA).

• Coming up soon (Wednesday, April 12, 2:00 p.m. Eastern; 1:00 p.m. Central; 12:00 p.m. Mountain; 11:00 a.m. Pacific) – an LOM brainstorming teleconference. We will be sharing ideas for celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in the context of outdoor ministry. The meeting will be moderated by Don Johnson, executive director of LOM, and we will be joined by Rob Campbell, Manager, 500th Anniversary Communications – ELCA. To participate, contact Don Johnson (director@lomnetwork.org) to get instructions for logging in.

• Notice - There's still a few spaces, but only a few, for the Interim Executive Director Training Event, May 8-12, at Lutherdale (WI). Contact Don Johnson director@lomnetwork.org for information and registration.

SUPPORT LOM

To make a gift to LOM, visit http://www.lomnetwork.org/donate.html. If you would like to explore the possibility of including LOM in your will or other planned giving strategies, please contact Executive Director Don Johnson at director@lomnetwork.org or 603-848-9904.

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