LOM Execs Gather

The LOM Executive Directors Gathering was a great event! It took place March 18-21 at Briarwood Retreat Center, a member organization of LOM. Savanna Sullivan, Program Director, Young Adult Ministries – ELCA, and Kaleb Sutherland, Program Director, Scholarship Administration & Student Engagement of the Global Ministry Unit of ELCA, were the keynote presenters. They were professional, informative, patient, and challenging as they deepened our appreciation for and understanding of the characteristic qualities of the young adults who are so important for providing leadership for outdoor ministry throughout the ELCA. One of the highlights of the event was a Tuesday evening session with 8 young adults who helped us to understand what can contribute to good working relationships among the ministry teams we lead.

Matt Baumhardt, director of operations at Briarwood, Robert Smith, executive director, and Sarah, Kyle, Maddie, Carlos, Tito, Noah, and Christy of the Briarwood staff were incredibly gracious hosts. Briarwood is such a good place for an event like this. The weather was beautiful, especially for those from the North. Thank you to all who came to participate.

A HUGE shout of thanks to the Program Planning Team for this event: Sarah Lefler, Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD); Deb Roberts, Lutherlyn (PA); Lee Lindeman, Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center (NY); Tom Powell, Caroline Furnace (VA); and Janis Sloka III, Camp of the Cross (ND).

The next LOM Executive Directors Gathering is now planned for March 23-26, 2020, at Coastal Retreat Center, located on beautiful Isle of Palms, one of the sites of the organization known as South Carolina Lutheran Retreat Centers, another member organization of LOM.
100th Anniversary Logo Now Available

The official LOM logo for the 100th Anniversary of Lutheran Camping in the USA is now available. It will soon be sent to the primary contact person for each LOM organization by email blast. If you need to have it before you get the email blast, contact Don Johnson (director@lomnetwork.org).

The 100th Anniversary Task Force has already had a few ZOOM meetings. The logo represents one of aspects of the anniversary celebration around which there is unanimous consensus – that the year of celebration should focus at least as much on the future of LOM as it does on the past 100 years of organized Lutheran camps and retreat centers.

The Task Force will soon be making suggestions to all our LOM organizations for observance of the 100th Anniversary on the actual day of July 5, 2019, and for the ensuing year. And they invite you to share your ideas for the celebration so your ideas can be shared throughout the network.

Words from Don

I’m still experiencing the glow of another wonderful LOM event – the LOM Executive Directors Gathering that took place March 18-21 at Briarwood in Texas.

It was exemplary in so many ways of what LOM is all about. It was a great opportunity for learning. There were three executive directors participating new to their role as executive director and what a great way to get connected with colleagues. The networking and collegiality, so characteristic of times when LOM people get together, was on display at this event. The worship and devotional times were uplifting and inspiring. Laughter and story-telling and just plain fun were all abundant.

Everyone at this event had many reasons to feel gratitude for the work that the Planning Team contributed to making this event a wonderful time for all who participated. That, too, is an example of how more and more of the volunteer efforts, so important to LOM, are being provided by short-term task forces and steering committees. Another example of one of these task forces currently in place is the 100th Anniversary Task Force.

As important as these task forces and steering committees are, we are o less thankful for all of the LOM members who serve on standing committees: Education, LTE, Diversity, Recognitions, Curriculum, Financial Development, Nominating, and, to be sure, the LOM Board of Directors.

It’s all about doing what LOM is all about – contributing our time, experience, and expertise to work together for strong and robust outdoor ministry – everywhere!

Thank you, one and all, for making LOM what we are and what we are becoming!

--Don Johnson, Executive Director
Register Now for Interim Director Training

This is an event under the auspices of the Outdoor Ministry Connection (OMC) spearheaded by LOM.

When: May 13, 2019, beginning with the evening meal, and concluding on May 17, 2019, mid-morning

Where: Briarwood Retreat Center, Argyle, TX. Ground transportation will be provided from the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport (DFW). Briarwood Retreat Center is a ministry of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For more information about Briarwood, please visit their website at www.briarwoodretreat.org.

Cost: $750/person includes room, board, and program. Participants are encouraged to inquire with their denominational association if a financial assistance grant is necessary in order to participate.

Accommodations: Overnight accommodations will be provided in single accommodation hotel-style rooms with private bath. Meetings will be in the Streng Center at Briarwood. Meals will be served in the Shalom Dining Room. These accommodations are comfortable, well appointed, and designed for adults.

Enrollment deadline: Enrollment will be on a first come- first served basis, and enrollment applications will be accepted through April 15.

Sponsor: Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM), the organization of camps, retreats, and conference centers affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is spearheading the planning and implementation of this endeavor. The event is being sponsored by the Outdoor Ministry Connection – the outdoor ministry Associations of: 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. We are grateful for the collaboration of NALIP – the National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors.

The need: The time of executive transition is often a period of considerable stress for many organizations. Whether or not it's a stressful time, it is a time that presents an organization with not only a significant challenge, but also an opportunity to take a fresh look at evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, clarifying its mission, and identifying its needs for the next several years. During this time of ministry assessment, more and more outdoor ministry organizations are engaging the services of an interim executive director. An intentional interim executive director provides the organization with leadership for the day to day affairs of the organization while also building a strong platform for the success of the permanent successor. This event will be an opportunity for individuals to be better prepared to serve as an interim executive director of an outdoor ministry organization when confronted with such an opportunity, and it will give the outdoor ministry associations of OMC a roster of persons to contact when outdoor ministry organizations decide to seek the services of an interim.

The content: This event will provide an overview of the interim ministry process and the opportunity to explore skills and strategies related to this process. The time-tested best practices of interim ministry will be presented within the unique context of outdoor ministry organizations. Included in the course content will be core philosophies of interim ministry, process tasks of the interim executive director, and the organizational development tasks of coming to terms with history, identity, vision, and future leadership. It is assumed that participants will have experience that has led to outdoor ministry leadership expertise; this event will not, therefore, provide training in the fundamentals of outdoor ministry management and leadership. The intentionally small group size will provide opportunities for interactive discussion and learning. This will be a rigorous educational experience and will provide only minimum blocks of free time. Participation in the complete experience of the event is expected.

The faculty: There will be two members of the faculty for this event. The trainer will be Rev. John Czarnota, who has significant experience as an interim ministry trainer with NALIP – the National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors. The outdoor ministry reality-tester will be a seasoned process facilitator with GSB, a consulting firm that does lots of work in the outdoor ministry world. She is Margie Fiedler who is currently serving as the executive director of Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp in Montana.

To enroll: Register and pay $750 online at https://www.lomnetwork.org/interim-executive-director-training-event-registration/. Your enrollment will be confirmed with an email including more detailed information about the event and Briarwood Retreat Center. If you need that information, it is also here: https://www.lomnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-Confirmation-of-Enrollment.docx

Questions about the event? Contact Don Johnson at director@lomnetwork.org or 603-848-9904
Save the Date: LOM at the Great Gathering

Join us for the Great Gathering in November of this year. This "replaces" our annual conference and is a joint gathering of many denominations of outdoor ministry leaders who are part of the Outdoor Ministry Connection. The Great Gathering will be held on November 10-14, 2019, at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.

The Great Gathering will have fantastic speakers. Two of them are Joan Garry and Shane Claiborne. Joan Garry started her career as a part of the management team that launched MTV for eight years then moved on to Showtime Networks as an executive. In 1997, Joan was named the executive director of GLAAD, one of the largest gay rights organizations in the U.S. Joan is currently Principal of Joan Garry Consulting, which works first hand with nonprofit across the country. You may know Joan from her #1 ranked podcast for nonprofits: Nonprofits are Messy. Another speaker during this event is Shane Claiborne. Shane is known for being a speaker, activist, and best-selling author. He founded The Simple Way in Philadelphia and heads up the Red Letter Christian Movement. Shane has authored many books including Jesus for President and Red Letter Revolution. More information about Joan Garry and Shane Claiborne are available on The Great Gathering Website. These are just two members of our impressive lineup!

Travel information and costs are available here: http://omcgreatgathering.org/sample-page-2/lodging/
Lodging information and costs are available here: http://omcgreatgathering.org/sample-page-2/lodging/

Planning for the Future of the Compass Points Certificate Program

On March 6-9, the Coordinating Council for the Compass Points Certificate Program met at Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, GA). This meeting brought together representatives from the four outdoor ministry associations (PCCCA, UMCRM, LOM, and OMA-UCC) that share this program. The Council's gathering featured very productive meetings with the President and the Associate Director of Admissions of Columbia Theological Seminary.

The Council's work included bringing on new members of our committee, the evaluation of previous classes, scheduling of upcoming courses, lining up new faculty for these classes, and setting up the capstone process for the fall (we could have as many as 11 people graduate in November!). The Council is excited about the future of Compass Points and we hope you will help us spread the word about the program. There will not be classes offered this fall (so they will not conflict with the OMC Great Gathering), but will start back in March of 2020. Please go to www.compasspointsprogram.org to learn more about the overall program.
Innovative Program:  
Caroline Furnace Roanoke Stars Campership Program  
This is one of the programs nominated for LOM’s Innovative Program Award last year.

In partnership with Lutheran churches from Roanoke, VA, underprivileged campers receive transportation and scholarship for a week at camp. Each camper is provided a backpack, toiletries, a water bottle and camp store money, and are loaned a sleeping bag for the week from this ministry. Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp provides ten spaces for three weeks, for a total of 30 campers each summer. One week is available for 6th to 8th grade campers, with the other two weeks for 4th to 6th graders. These weeks are scheduled to provide on-site classic camps and specialized camps such as crafting, canoeing and fishing. Campers benefit from new experiences, an uplifting community, socialization with kids from other backgrounds, and an opportunity to take ownership of their faith. Many of these campers haven’t spent time in the outdoors and may have never been out of the city of Roanoke.

Since this program began 60 years ago, over 1000 campers have come to Caroline Furnace on “campership” from Roanoke. This program is a partnership between eight Roanoke area Lutheran churches, Caroline Furnace, and other social service agencies. Each year, 20 to 30 campers experience summer camp due to the generosity of these congregations. Campers come from a variety of situations, to include single parent, incarcerated parent, low income, and refugee families. Not all campers have access to a computer (for online registration) and may not use English as their first language. Many benefits have arisen through these campers’ experiences at Caroline Furnace. Outdoor ministry allows those from varied socioeconomic backgrounds to grow close in community with one another – to come as strangers and leave as friends. Outdoor ministry is also proven to form friendships that can last a lifetime.

These campers arrive at Caroline Furnace with no previous experience or prior knowledge of camp culture. While at camp they grow in community together, spend time outdoors, and discover new things in a safe environment. We give them an opportunity to take ownership of their faith by encouraging them to ask questions, explore scripture, and learn fun camp songs. Through this loving and supportive community, campers learn to communicate respectfully, resolve conflict, practice emotional self-control, and work cooperatively in a small group.

The structure of this partnership has evolved over the years and is currently led and managed by a committee of volunteers. There is one primary coordinator who serves as the point of contact between Caroline Furnace, the local churches, the camper applicants, local social services, and the scholarship committee. The committee raises scholarship money with fundraisers throughout the year. They work to fill the camper slots with kids who are recommended by pastors, teachers, social workers, and relatives, and who they determine will benefit from a camp environment. They help each family complete registration paperwork, typically by paper copy and scanning or faxing those forms to us to input into our database. Transportation is also arranged by the committee, typically through use of Roanoke area church vans, with Caroline Furnace vans and trucks as needed. The scholarship program is charged only $370 per registration as opposed to the usual $450 base rate for camp.
Your Spring Assignment: LOM Auction

Think about a cool donation for this year’s LOM Auction, on Tuesday during LOM Day at Lutheridge as part of the Great Gathering! It could be a small item you could bring for the silent auction that showcases your camp OR it could be a bigger item you bring for the live auction. Or, how about a trip or excursion that everyone will be talking about? So, get thinking about who you know and what resources they may have to donate cool, new items to the 2019 LOM Auction! Dave Jarvis is once again chairing the Auction Planning Team. He’s looking for volunteers to be part of the team. If you would like to be part of the team that makes all the plans and arrangements for this exciting event, please contact Dave Jarvis: dave@rainbowtrail.org

Another Journeys Reminder

Have you set your adventure camps, servant trips, and senior travel programs for 2020? If so, please submit them for LOM’s Journeys for Youth website. We’d like to list these camps by May 1, 2019. For more information about the website and to submit, go to http://journeys.lomnetwork.org/about

Consider a Monthly Gift

Please consider including LOM as you plan your charitable contributions for 2019. More and more LOM contributors are finding it helpful to make their contributions on an automatic monthly basis. It’s easy to do and whether you choose to make your contribution this way, or with just one contribution at any time, you can do this online at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/donate/
Or, if you prefer, you can send a check payable to Lutheran Outdoor Ministries to:
  Jon Skogen, LOM Administrator
  1218 W. Addison St.
  Chicago, IL 60613

Thank you to the following current automatic monthly contributors:
- Meredith Beall
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- Meggan Manlove
- Lindsey Scheid
- Darryl Thompson-Powell
- Luther Crest Bible Camp

In March, two Compass Points classes were held at Columbia Theological Seminary in Georgia: "Biblical & Theological Foundations," and "Program Design & Implementation." Judy Smith of Camp Calumet (NH) attended her last face-to-face class (Program Design and Implementation) and is very close to graduating from the program. LOM collaborates on this program with ecumenical partners from United Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and UCC outdoor ministries. The program is intended to equip new and veteran camp/retreat ministry leaders for thoughtful and effective ministry. The next round of courses will be offered in Spring 2020 -- please consider participating!
The Impact of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM)

This is one in what will be a series of occasional testimonies to the value and importance of LOM to the camps and retreat centers affiliated with the ELCA. We are including them as a way of letting you know that your involvement in LOM, and your financial contributions, are indeed making a difference. Throughout the outdoor ministry network, there is boundless gratitude for what you and so many others are accomplishing because of what we do together to ensure strong and vibrant outdoor ministry everywhere throughout the church. THANK YOU!

From Sarah Erickson, co-executive director, Mount Cross (CA)

I dislike few things more than stuff that’s sappy and cliché. I tend to ignore whatever the (possibly very intelligent and profound) remark is, simply because it fits those categories.

What I’m going to say will potentially (probably) come off as sappy and cliché.

The LOM community has truly made all the difference in being able to do our job well. Adam and I started as Co-Executive Directors of Mt. Cross in January of 2018. It’s a calling that originates in one of those “small Lutheran world”, friend-of-a-friend stories that makes you think the whole Lutheran enterprise is suspect. But the bottom line is that neither of us had worked at camp before. We’d interacted with camp in a whole variety of ways, but working at camp wasn’t on the resumé, and suddenly we were leading one.

I’d like to think that we possessed some of the requisite skills for the job, though the lens of hindsight tends to tell me otherwise. With no camp experience we took on a camp that was in dire financial straits. Where participation numbers had been declining and the facilities were deteriorating. Where there had been massive amounts of staff and leadership turnover the past fifteen years. We told ourselves that there were people who still loved this place and were willing to work for its rebirth and, anyway, we liked a challenge. But of course, as anyone sane could have predicted, two months in we were barely treading water.

In comes Don Johnson, with his joyous, yet persistent, attitude, welcoming us to the LOM community but repeatedly insisting that we attend the Executive Directors’ Gathering the next month. Barely treading water, spending time and money to go have fun at a conference didn’t seem the best decision. We declined. Undeterred, Don kept calling anyway and, eventually, we gave in. Booked the flights, registered for the gathering, and got on the plane.

It was the best decision we made all year.

I have rarely, if ever, felt so genuinely welcomed into a particular community. The other directors took time to get to know us and ask about the camp. They gave us a voice at the table despite our lack of experience. They let us pick their brains. And most of all, they made us feel as though we were truly in it together. Not one person inferred that we couldn’t hack it or made us feel inept or questioned our decision-making. In fact, whether out of true empathy or their own need to decompress, they told us stories of their camps that not only created deep laughter but made us feel like we weren’t alone. We left feeling renewed and as though maybe this was, actually, our calling, that maybe we could do it, and that maybe we had finally found “our” community.

We now budget for this gathering. We insist on going.

I’m aware that there’s much more to LOM than just the community – resources, Facebook pages, recruiting events, territory gatherings, the general conference – but for me, all of these simply facilitate the ability to come together and receive the renewal and support that’s so necessary for this work. And I’m incredibly grateful for it. I’m honestly not sure where we would be without the conversations and relationships that we’ve begun to have here.

It’s sappy and cliché. But for us, the LOM community truly has made all the difference in being able to do our job well. So thank you.

Sarah Erickson together with her husband, Adam Erickson, serve as co-executive directors of Mount Cross (CA)

Sarah Erickson
Valparaíso University

Valpo Spark, a student run group on Valparaíso University’s campus, has three goals:

1. support those Valpo students who have worked at a summer camp during the summer.
2. encourage students to consider working at a camp during the summer and,
3. connect with Lutheran camps around the country to let them know Valpo students are amazing candidates for their various camp positions.

Valpo Spark is addressing each goal by hosting a dinner at the beginning of the academic year to which all summer camp employees are invited to come and share their experiences and get to know others who worked at camps. A social media campaign is underway to highlight different camps and people who have worked there. Spark is going to be encouraging current counselors on the email list to use #valpospark to tag their camp pictures in order to show others how camp can lead you anywhere. Spark is also developing a monthly newsletter, which will consist of a short devotional, job opportunities at camps and leadership updates. Valpo Spark also hosts Camp Week every year, which consists of camp-themed worship services at the Chapel, workshops led by camp staffers, and finally a camp fair which brings in several camps to talk specifically about job opportunities for those looking to spend their summer serving in outdoor ministry. Finally, before students leave campus for the summer, the Chapel of the Resurrection has a sending blessing for all those students who will be working at camps.

Valpo Spark would love to engage with Lutheran camps about their job opportunities or interest in coming to Valpo to talk with students. E-mail Eric or Maredeth at valpospark@valpo.edu
Servant Leadership

If I asked the question, “What makes a good leader?” everyone who answered the question probably would have a different answer. But, I think we can all agree that there are some qualities that are important to have in a leader. And, one of those qualities which most could agree on probably would be that the person has a servant’s heart.

Jesus had some radical ideas about leadership. From his perspective, the one who leads is not the one who is served, but the one who serves. This represents a marked departure from many concepts of leadership where greatness was equated with getting others to do what you want them to, often for one’s own benefit, or to be seen as successful. In the midst of work to be done, a servant leader is there with his/her sleeves rolled up and hands as dirty as anybody’s! Few things sour the leadership dynamic faster than an “us versus them” supervision mentality. No job is too small or insignificant.

In the Bible, Jesus is a model for us as an obedient servant. To learn more about this radical leadership idea from Jesus, read Mark 10: 35-45 and ponder these questions:

• Why did the disciples want status and power? How about you?
• What is good about serving others? What is difficult?
• Whom are you called to serve as a Christian leader?
• Imagine this: Jesus comes to visit you today. What three things would you ask him for? Why?

I think servant leaders also need to be role models. They need to show others what they need to do. As a role model, leaders show what good behavior is, set the tone, and put their organization’s needs above their own. They don’t always “go with the flow” but stand up for what is right and best. Leading by example means that what you do is in line with what you say.

Being a role model also means that you are a team player. You don’t say, “Get going!” but rather “Let’s go!” Your staff should feel that you are on the ground doing what they are doing. They should see you role modeling everything you teach, train, and expect of the staff.

To do all that, I think servant leaders need to be pray-ers. It is important for leaders to be a role model in the area of prayer. The Apostle Paul is a good role model for us as a leader who prays (read Ephesians 1 and 3). Paul prayed for the people and called on God for assistance. He showed his faith in the Lord. This is an important quality to have in servant leaders. In fact, Paul wrote in his book to Galatians the following. It reminds me that we need to show servant leadership in the church today: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.” --Galatians 5:13

-Chad Hershberger

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