LOM Board Approves a New Collaboration with ELCA Youth Ministry Network

At its meeting on September 12, the LOM Board of Directors approved, with enthusiasm, an agreement with the ELCA Youth Ministry Network (YMN) for a new level of collaboration for our two organizations.

In making this announcement simultaneously with the YMN, Todd Buegler, executive director of the YMN, said, “The Network has had both ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ partnerships for a number of years, allowing for organizations, resource providers, colleges, seminaries and other groups who share Network values to enter into an intentionally supportive relationship. And while this has created wonderful new opportunities to work together, the sheer economics sometimes made it a challenge for outdoor ministries to participate. And outdoor ministries are critical to the work of the church. Faith is formed through the ministry of our camps in ways that are deep and dynamic. For young people, the presence of Christ can become tangible at camps in ways that are hard to experience in other settings. And when congregations and outdoor ministries work together to bring that experience “home,” it becomes a powerful faith experience. So Lutheran Outdoor Ministries and the Network decided to work more closely together.”

In this new arrangement, YMN has created a third “Outdoor Ministry” level of partnership for camps and retreat centers that are affiliated with the ELCA (all of the organizational members of LOM). Many of the same partnership benefits are available in this new form of partnership, and the cost ($800) is significantly lower than the other forms of partnership.

In addition, the YMN and LOM will now provide opportunities for the two organizations to interact in meaningful ways at the Extravaganza and the LOM Annual Conference.

In making comment on this new level of partnership for the two networks, Don Johnson, executive director of LOM, said, “I know there are many leaders throughout LOM who will be very excited about this new arrangement. We can all be very grateful for the way Todd Buegler, executive director of YMN, has so graciously and generously entered into the discussions that have led us to this place. Thank you, Todd and to the whole YMN, for your partnership that I’m confident will continue to grow as we move forward. And a shout of thanks to CJ Clark, executive director of Living Water Ministries (MI) for advancing the resolution at last year’s LOM Conference that provided the impetus to get these discussions rolling. It didn’t come out exactly as the resolution called for, but we can be very excited where it’s ending up. Thank you, one and all!”

More information, from the YMN perspective, can be found on an “Outdoor Ministry Partnership” page at https://www.elcaymnet.org/
LOM/YMN Partnership: The Details

- YMN will provide LOM a complimentary Gold Level Organizational Membership (value of $2,585/year). This will include exhibit space at the Extravaganza and program participation for 2 at the Extravaganza (this does not include room and board).
- YMN will extend the opportunity to LOM to plan and lead a pre-Extravaganza “LOM Mini-Intensive” course to take place in the morning and afternoon of the day of the evening opening of the Extravaganza. This will be an event of particular interest to LOM members and open to all Extravaganza participants. For the 2020 Extravaganza, this is dependent on available space.
- LOM will provide YMN with a Ministry Partner Membership (value of $100/year). This will, for YMN, include exhibit space at the LOM Annual Conference ($450 value) and conference participation for 2 at the double occupancy rate (about $500/person).
- YMN will extend to LOM organizational members the opportunity for Network Organizational Partnership: LOM Level for an annual fee of $800. Benefits include:
  1. Support and prayer
  2. 2 Network memberships (value $170)
  3. 1 Exhibit table at the Extravaganza (includes 1 event registration; value $415)
  4. 1 additional Extravaganza exhibitor registration (value $150)
  5. Being listed in the “Partners” section of the Network web site
  6. Access to the Network database for the region of the church the outdoor ministry is located within for a once per year email or snail mail communication (Value $200)
  7. Recognition as an “Outdoor Ministry Partner” at the Extravaganza
  8. A $100 discount on a half-page ad in the Network’s “Connect Journal” (value $100)
  9. Participation at the LOM pre-Extravaganza “Mini-Intensive,” led by LOM. (Value $80)

Another Reminder: LTE Next Month

Learning Events give Lutheran Outdoor Ministry professionals the opportunity to learn new skills, enhance their understanding of administration and programming of camps, and network with others across the country in similar job positions. 2019 Leadership Training Event (LTE) Administrative Track will take place at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center, Lake Junaluska, NC, from Wednesday November 6, to Sunday, November 10, 2019. Cost is $600 for double occupancy, $700 for single occupancy with a late fee of $100 in effect after midnight EDT October 10. Shuttle service of $25 to and from the Asheville Airport is also available. Get more information, including financial assistance, course descriptions, and to register, go to https://www.lomnetwork.org/lte/.
2019 Curriculum Now Available

With this curriculum, From Generation to Generation, campers and their leaders will explore the stories of familiar Bible characters and their responses to God’s call and promised faithfulness in the midst of life’s unpredictability and challenges. The promises of God, first made to Abraham and Sarah, include a place to live, a purpose to live out, and a posterity to carry on God’s promises to all future generations. Freed from fear, we step out, trusting that missteps will not destroy us, that God’s guidance will take us where God has called us to go, creating relationships based on care and compassion. From Generation to Generation focuses on how the enduring love instilled in the promise to Abraham and Sarah continue through Old Testament characters, to Jesus, to the early church, and on to YOU! God’s love endures forever – From Generation to Generation!

Daily themes include:

- **Abraham and Sarah** (Day 1 focus) were called to step out in faith with a destination unknown, but a promise to assure them of God’s grace and blessing.
- **Joseph** (Day 2 focus) stepped beyond anger to embrace God’s gifts and use them to bless more people than expected. His story emphasizes that what others might mean for harm, God can use to bring promised blessing.
- **David’s story** (Day 3 focus) reminds us that God has a propensity for choosing the least expected person to do the most difficult job. God does not call the qualified, but instead qualifies the called. Each one of us can be God’s agent of blessing.
- In that same manner, the story of **Mary** the mother of Jesus (Day 4 focus) shows us that God goes beyond cultural conventions and our understanding to keep the promises made to Abraham and Sarah and their offspring. Mary’s courageous trust is an example of a life narrative to follow.
- The stories of **Paul, Timothy, and Lydia** (Day 5 focus) extend the promises beyond the descendants of Abraham and Sarah to all the world, including us. We are invited to experience God’s promised blessing, love, and grace and also to share it with those in our world today.

You can now purchase and download the curriculum on our website at www.lomnetwork.org under the “resources” tab. Products this year include: the entire curriculum, and bundles for Curriculum Development, Youth Ministry, supplemental items, and VBS. LOM Members get a discount, so be sure to click the right price when ordering. And, multi-site organizations will use a discount code, listed on the website, to get a multi-site discount. You pay full price for your first site and a discounted price for other sites.

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Help Wanted! Take a Survey

For any Program Directors at religiously affiliated camps or Camp Directors who supervise full-time program staff, consider taking about 10 minutes to complete the attached survey. They are part of a data gathering project to prepare a workshop for the Great Gathering in November. The workshop deals with how camps often don’t set full-time program staff up for success through job descriptions, support, and benefits. This is the link for Program people themselves: https://forms.gle/thQgDZqbZG8sWTvPa. Here is the link for for their Directors: https://forms.gle/ega1n8eqJ5Hti1K9A

Questions can be directed to Troy Taylor, Director at Camp Magruder troy@campmagruder.org.
Reminder: Great Gathering Registration

Late fees went into effect on October 1st, but you can still register. Here are the details!

An event that’s been over three years in the making is finally coming this fall! It’s the Outdoor Ministry Connection’s Great Gathering. The Great Gathering will bring together innovative outdoor ministry partners of mainline denominations – United Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian (PCUSA), United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, and others. Through the theme, "RelationSHIFT," we will celebrate our variety of gifts, find common ground, explore the changing landscape, and prepare to journey together to meet the vital needs of God’s people.

Because we are partnering with other denominations, we can bring keynotes and worship leaders who would be hard to afford as a single organization. We’ll hear from nonprofit guru Joan Garry, inspirational activist Shane Claiborne, and uplifting preachers Barbara Brown Taylor and Luke Powery. Music will be led by the talented Ken Medema. (Do you know the song “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying?” He wrote it!) Camping community-builder Jim Cain will lead us in large group activities as well as present several workshops, and the incredibly creative Lisle Gwynn Garrity will serve as resident artist.

PLUS, there will be over 40 workshops to choose from AND over 60 vendors on-site. Childcare is available. We’ll have a 5K race and several field trip opportunities. And we’ll be able to network with ecumenical partners from other camps and conference centers – maybe some of them will be your neighbors. The possibilities with this event are so exciting! Find details for the event and register now at omcgreatgathering.org.
From the LOM Board of Directors

The LOM Board of Directors met on September 12. Some of the notable actions included:

- Enthusiastic approval of an agreement with the ELCA Youth Ministry Network (YMN) for deeper and more specific collaboration of LOM and YMN (see the more detailed article in this issue about that agreement).
- Encouragement for the LOM executive director to continue the exploration of collaboration initiatives with the ELCA Youth Gathering. Among the initiatives being explored is the possibility of congregations sending youth to the Youth Gathering getting a discount on their Youth Gathering registration fees based on the number of campers signed up for camp during the year of a Youth Gathering.
- Jake Sorenson, secretary of the LOM Board and founder of Sacred Playgrounds, led the Board in a discussion about the recently released report in the 2018 survey of church camps. The survey was the third biennial survey commissioned by the Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC) of which LOM is a member (along with the Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, UCC’s and United Church of Canada). The full OMC report and the LOM breakout report is on the LOM website under the resources tab/research. There is much to be learned from both reports, and much value to be gleaned for LOM organizations.
- LOM had a one-year CD with the ELCA Mission Investment Fund (MIF) that reached maturity on the day of the Board meeting. LOM secured this investment one year ago with a deposit of $72,500 from its Board designated restricted funds. Its value is now $73,893.80. One-year, variable interest CD’s are no longer available from MIF. The Board decided to redeem the original CD; apply the interest earned to the general fund, and secure a new 2-year fixed interest of 2.25% CD.
- As it does routinely, the Board reviewed the written financial report from the treasurer, Susan Troutman, with follow-up discussion.
- The Board also reviewed the written report from executive director Don Johnson with follow-up discussion. There was considerable positive feedback particularly in regard to the emerging collaboration of LOM with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS).

Compass Points Classes for 2020

Compass Points is a continuing education certificate program for outdoor ministry professionals, it’s a cooperative program of the Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association, Outdoor Ministries Association of the United Church of Christ, LOM, and United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries. The certificate is provided by Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.

Four certificate courses have been scheduled for 2020. Two will be offered at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center (Little Rock, AR) in March and two will be hosted by Pilgrim Center (Ripon, WI) in September/October. You can learn more about these classes (and the whole certificate program) by going to www.compasspointsprogram.org.

LOM 100 Banquet

The 100 Year Anniversary Committee has been making plans for the Banquet that will celebrate this milestone when we gather for LOM Day at the Great Gathering. It’s going to be an awesome event! LOM Day at the Great Gathering will be absolutely no charge for all who are participating in the Great Gathering. And that includes the bus ride to Lutheridge for the BIG event. And even if you’re not participating in the Great Gathering but you plan to be at Lutheridge on Tuesday, November 12, for the LOM Day, make sure you let us know so we can save a place for you at the Banquet table – director@lomnetwork.org. Also, please fill out this form here: https://forms.gle/fmu7DMigCS2UGPdx5
THE LOM AUCTION:  
Plan Ahead!  
Great Items to Bid on!

The LOM Auction is coming! There are some amazing trips and packages along with great silent auction items being gathered by our outdoor ministry sites for this year’s auction. You will literally get a chance to go to all corners of the USA. We have a South Dakota pheasant hunt; we have two tickets to a Packers’ home game at Lambeau during the 2020 season; a Colorado mountain ski trip including lift tickets; we have a trip to New York City; a music and dancing trip to Austin, TX; a 5 day stay at the Coastal Retreat Center in South Carolina; a fishing and hunting package with Camp Metigoshe in North Dakota; a Texas Wine Country Ranch Get-away; and experiencing Northwest Montana with Flathead just to name a few. We also have GSB donating a survey and analysis package again that will greatly improve your ministry. In addition to the trips and special services, we will have some of the iconic auction items that have made the auction so fun: Christmas cookies from Luther Crest; pottery from Holden Village; and the infamous custom cribbage boards from Rainbow Trail. Go to the auction page on our LOM website to see a current list of items for this year’s auction.

There is still time for your organization to put together a live auction package or to create a fabulous silent auction bundle to share. All you need to do is download either the live auction form or the silent auction form from the auction page on the LOM website, fill it out, and send it to Dave Jarvis at auction@lomnetwork.org. The page is https://www.lomnetwork.org/auction-2019/.
The Impact of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM)

Jessica Pina is the outreach director at Cross Trails (TX). She currently serves as a member of the LOM Education Committee. Her story of how LOM has had an impact on her professional career is a powerful one. Her gratitude for the impact of LOM in her life is echoed by the gratitude all in this network have for your contributions of time, energy, expertise, experience and financial contributions to support all that is possible through LOM. THANK YOU!

It was a hot summer day... in July... in the heart of Texas... and I could be found in a fifteen-passenger van with about ten other teenagers. We had been on the road for about five hours thanks to all the “needed” pit stops and I was ready to not be surrounded by so many sweaty, loud, and “too cool for school” teenagers. We were heading to church camp at Camp Chrysalis in Kerrville, Texas and I couldn’t wait to get there! Up until this point, the furthest I had been from home was a couple of hours when I would stay with cousins that lived out of town. So, traveling this far was an adventure and I was ready to experience camp in a new way and in a new place.

We drove down a gigantic hill as we turned onto Upper Turtle Creek Road and I’m fairly certain we could have made one last pit stop just after that hill because many of our stomachs ended up in our throats. Thankfully we all kept it together and the excitement was mounting as we took the curves and made our way to camp. Just before reaching the entrance, the site opened up to our van of passengers and the iconic view that was seen then and that is still seen now, is a large field that leads to a hill (that at the time I thought was MASSIVE) called the bluff with a cross on top. I was still in the van, but this would be first of many mountain top moments I have been blessed to have since my time in camping ministry.

When I was asked to answer the question “What does LOM mean to me?” this first-time camp experience was the first thing that popped into my head. It was in that summer that I experienced God in ways that I never had and those “too cool for school” kids that I came to camp with became the jumping, dancing, screaming, singing till you’re blue in the face campers that the rest of us were. But it is also that mountain top experience and feeling that comes to mind when I think about what LOM means to me.

Although this camp experience happened over 20 years ago, it made a huge enough impact that I find myself in Lutheran Camping Ministry and have been here professionally for ten years. The feelings of excitement and the unexpected encounter with God that we sometimes get by going to camp also happens within the LOM network.

When I joined Cross Trails Ministry in 2009, one of the first orders of business from my executive director was to get me to “school” officially known as the Leadership Training Event. I remember having the same feelings driving myself to east Texas for this event as I did when I went to camp for the first time. I was excited but nervous. I was going alone and the only advice that I had going into this was “just pretend like you are going back to camp and make friends”. Although the only advice, it was enormously helpful. It was at this event that I made friends, built professional relationships with others in Lutheran camping, and experienced God in a new way. It was there that I realized that the Lutheran camping world was much bigger than the three camp systems in Texas that I was familiar with, and that was exciting for me.

LOM, much like camp, opens doors to relationships, learning, and experiencing God in ways that we hadn’t before or in a way we had but needed reminding. And, much like camp, LOM has provided a foundation for growth. Since joining the network ten years ago, I have attended two Leadership Training Events, several conferences, local camp gatherings, served on a committee for a LOM conference, and have been asked to serve on the education committee for LOM. Because of this organization, I have grown as a confident, but still open to learning and gathering new ideas camp professional.

Sometimes it’s in the relationships, sometimes it is in the learning, and sometimes it is in my own camp context that I am reminded of the love and power of God working through people like us. LOM is an
organization that not only encourages us to provide the “camp experience” but in many ways gives it to its professionals, as well. This is a true gift that LOM helps to provide. It would be very easy to turn camping into a “job”, but LOM helps remind us that it’s a call to profession where we get to learn, play, serve, and be God’s hands in the world.

If I could continue living my life as one big camp experience, I would be one jumping, dancing, singing, happy camper. But until I know where the future takes me, I am thankful for an organization like LOM that helps to provide relationships, learning, and the mountain top experience that we all need from time to time.

Words from Don

Collaboration!

There’s lots of it going on for LOM these days.

This will soon become very apparent when we meet in November with our denominational outdoor ministry colleagues in the context of the Great Gathering. This is historic because of being the first of its kind. It promises to be epic because of the quality of the program that’s been organized.

This issue of the LOM News describes another epic collaboration – a newly deepened collaboration with the ELCA Youth Ministry Network. The Extravaganza will never be the same again with so many more LOM members participating!

And there are some exciting impending initiatives that are starting to take place with the ELCA Youth Gathering. Molly Beck Dean, the director of the Youth Gathering is a longtime and ardent advocate for outdoor ministry, and many of the ideas being generated for improving summer camp enrollment during Youth Gathering years are coming from Molly. What a gift!

The emerging partnership of LOM with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services is exciting and a testimony to the quality of the annually produced LOM Curriculum. Thank you, Curriculum Committee, for the oversight you give to this signature piece of the work of LOM.

The list goes on...But perhaps the most outstanding piece of collaboration in regard to LOM is LOM itself. Isn’t that what we’re all about in the first place? Collaborating with each other so that outdoor ministry will be strong, robust, and relevant – everywhere – throughout the ELCA!

I’m looking forward to seeing you around the network!!!
--Don Johnson, Executive Director

A REMINDER: Camps were sent the forms for this year’s board elections. Please return them to Jon Skogen, LOM Administrator, by the deadline!
Your Outdoor Ministry Can Do More with a Mission Investment Fund Building Loan

Expanding the capacity for inspiring ministry work— that’s what every outdoor ministry hopes to achieve. And that’s what the Mission Investment Fund (MIF) hopes to deliver with our loans for building projects. MIF, the lending ministry of the ELCA, provides loans to ELCA-related ministries, including camps and retreat centers, as well as ELCA congregations. MIF funds these loans with investments it offers to ELCA members and ministries. With the new, expanded and refurbished buildings MIF loans help build, outdoor ministries are able to welcome more guests and enhance the outdoor experience.

The Mission Investment Fund has been a partner to dozens of Lutheran outdoor ministries, from Pennsylvania to Texas to California, for many years.

Consider our recent refinancing of a loan to Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry (VLM), home to two sites in northern Minnesota. A couple years back, VLM completed the addition of a new, year-round retreat center—with a lodge that sleeps 40, a commercial-grade kitchen and a 120-seat dining hall.

“Once we finished construction, we wanted a longer-term loan with a more favorable interest rate,” says Joel Abenth, VLM executive director. “We knew MIF because of its presence at the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry conference. The partnership between MIF and Lutheran Outdoor Ministries is huge, and we wanted to leverage that.

“The new retreat center has allowed our ministry to blossom. The new space and increased capacity have allowed us to host many more guests and a variety of new groups.”

LOM Executive Director Don Johnson agrees. “MIF has been a strong and loyal and responsible partner. MIF understands our culture and the way we work. MIF’s partnership has helped make our outdoor ministries stronger and more robust. We can trust MIF to provide the financial resources for our organization to expand and grow,” Johnson said.

The Mission Investment Fund is delighted to be a sponsor of LOM’s upcoming Annual Conference. For more information about MIF loans and investment opportunities, visit MIF’s website, mif.elca.org.
From one of our LOM Business Partners

For the past year, CampBrain’s development team has been hard at work building a cloud-based fundraising module for camps.

CampBrain is excited to announce that the Fundraising module will be launching later this Fall!

The Fundraising Module is a great addition to the Camper and Conference Center modules and is perfect for the LOM community. Allowing you to create unlimited donor mailing lists, quick and easy online giving, simple receipting and acknowledging, while at the same time knowing everything about your donors in one integrated system.

For more information check out CampBrain’s website, and schedule a demo with Jeff, Josh or Jared today to see how Fundraising can work for you!

The donor view, that ties all donations together onto one unique profile for each person in the system.

The Giving Portal, that organizations can quickly setup to accept donations online.
Learning from Nehemiah

About 20 years ago, I regularly attended a home Bible Study with a friend of mine. The teacher, who went to my friend’s church, was very knowledgeable on scripture. I learned so much from him. This man lived and breathed his faith and felt it was a calling to share God’s Word with others. A few years back, he died, and I grieved that his knowledge also went with him.

Fortunately, we did tape many of his studies. And when I say tape, I do mean on a cassette tape. I’ve wanted to digitize those tapes for years, so that I could hear his voice again and learn from his words.

Fast-forward (pun indented) to a little over a year ago when my dad retired from pastoral parish ministry. Before he left his congregation, he told me to look at his books in his office and see if I wanted any of them. He was leaving the majority of his theology library at church upon his retirement. I found a few gems I wanted to keep. One was a commentary that included the Old Testament book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was my favorite Bible study that was done by the first man I introduced you to. I learned a lot about the context of the book as well as the characters and symbolism. Now, in this commentary that was my dad’s, I see that they used the book of Nehemiah to look at leadership lessons we can learn from the namesake of this scripture book. So, I thought, “I can use this for my series of articles on leadership.” So, I dug out the book and got the tapes digitized on my computer and started to study this interesting book of the Bible.

In Nehemiah 1, Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary reminds us that leaders have a sense of mission. Nehemiah knows that Jerusalem needs to be rebuilt. He determined that he would be the one to see that it was accomplished. It was not just a mission dreamt up by one’s own agenda or self-interest. It was a response after tears, prayer, fasting, humility, and seeking God’s will.

Nehemiah shows us, too, that leaders need to make their interests secondary. When his brother, Hanani, came to visit, he wanted to know how things were in Jerusalem. He was told the wall was broken down and the gates were destroyed by fire. Nehemiah weeps, fasts, and prays for four months. He didn’t turn his back to the problem because of his own interests. He put others first, which is a good leadership trait.

A third leadership lesson in this first chapter of Nehemiah is that he does not find fault with others; but, takes responsibility for the part of failure. He puts himself right in the middle of his prayer. “We’ve sinned,” he says. He doesn't point fingers.

Nehemiah decided what needed to be done. He knew he was the man to do it. Next, he had to go to the king to set his plan in motion.

–Chad Hershberger