



Latest information from Don Johnson, Executive Director, regarding Coronavirus:

Announcing an LOM ZOOM Forum for the Executive Directors of outdoor ministry organizations: Thursday, March 26, 11 E, 10 C, 9 M, 8 P. We will be accessing the ZOOM capability to record it in the cloud. This forum, in contrast to our two earlier LOM Forums, will have a more distinct focus, as follows:

- Support one another as each organization works to craft its message for funding and donor solicitation in the fight that each organization has for financial health and sustainability. I've invited Evan Moilan of GSB to provide some framework for this portion of our conversation.
- Encourage suggestions for development of a plan for what we can do together to encourage widespread support for all of our LOM organizations.
- Bring some good news and hear additional suggestions for finding the financial support we will need to make the LOM 2020 Conference affordable for those individuals for whom the Covid-19 crisis will leave in a position to not afford the conference. Because if ever there was a need for all of us to experience the community of outdoor ministry leaders, this will be the time.
- Hear words of support, encouragement, and prayer from and with each other.

The ZOOM Instructions for this Forum –

Don Johnson is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: LOM Executive Directors Forum

Time: Thursday, March 26, 2020 11:00 AM Eastern, 10:00 AM Central, 9:00 AM Mountain, 9:00 AM Pacific

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/246795847>

Meeting ID: 246 795 847 One tap mobile +16465588656,,246795847# US (New York) +13126266799,,246795847# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) +1 301 715 8592 US +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston) +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose) +1 253 215 8782 US Meeting ID: 246 795 847

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/arqc8step8>

And here's why this is important:

A few weeks ago, we may have seen some clouds on the horizon, but I was among the many who had no inkling of the overwhelming crisis that our nation and our world are experiencing today.

In our mission statement as an association of outdoor ministry organizations, we proclaim that we provide for each other what we need in order to be "...bold and faithful outdoor ministry leaders for the Church and the world." In the past few weeks I have witnessed over and over again the boldness and the faithfulness of your leadership of the ministries which have such an important presence in the lives of so many people.

The leadership I've observed around this network has been inspiring.

You have been there for the people served by the ministry you lead. Using a variety of communication tools, most often the technology assisted formats that are not always the ones we most frequently use, you have been a calm and steady voice, reassuring the people your ministry serves that God is always with us, our "refuge in time of trouble." (Psalm 37:39)

Your creativity has been, well, what so many have grown accustomed to expect from outdoor ministry folks.

You've been inviting people to minimize the cabin-fever brought on by social distancing to experience the beauty of the natural creation that's so evident in the wondrous places in which your sites are located. You've adapted camp activities and brought them into the homes of your people with technology from which our camps and retreat centers often are an oasis. You've brought interactive Bible studies and campfire singing and storytelling and craft projects and inspirational messages and...We could go on and on. You've done what outdoor ministry people are so good at doing: you've adapted the activity for a changed context, but the message has stayed the same – God is our refuge in times of trouble.

This is all the more impressive because I know, also, that there's so much to fear.

The uncertainty of it all! When will this end? When will life go back to the normal we knew before Covid-19? How are we ever going to survive the financial impacts of all of this?

There are no answers to our questions – yet. I do, however, have this admittedly opinionated ray of hope to share with you. I don't believe that all the people for whom outdoor ministry has been such an incredible treasure in their lives, will allow for the ministry you lead to just go away. Especially when they see, now, that your first and foremost instinct has been to adapt and be creative in making the resources you steward as a resource for the Church and the world and the communities you serve, rather than putting your own needs first. As our friend and colleague, Joel Abenth, executive director of Voyageurs (MN), has been saying, "We, in outdoor ministries, have been preparing for this for 100 years."

There's no doubt that we have difficult days in front of us. There will likely be parts of our camp and retreat center programs that we will temporarily lose or in some cases even permanently. We will mourn those losses, for sure. And we will also look for the signs that we are so fortunate to see in the natural creation, of the life that springs up in the remains

of that which has been lost. We will celebrate that, because, if nothing else, we are a Resurrection People.

We are also a people who thrive on the experience of community. I know in my heart, that through the thick and thin of this crisis as it continues to unfold, we will be there for each other – bold and faithful as can be!

My prayer for you - God our creator, we give thanks that you have called us and given us gifts for service. Grant us, we pray, wisdom to make right decisions. Teach us patience. Guard us as we deal with the perils that await us. And give us courage to trust in you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

See ya this Thursday on ZOOM!

I also bring to you some thoughts to ponder as you think about our Forum on Thursday, from an LOM emeritus director, Paul Hill –

Dear LOM directors,

*Years ago, as a young director, I was up to my ears in poop and problems. We had a \$650,000 debt at 15% interest (thank you Jimmy Carter). I began to make the rounds of talking to my constituency, and I could watch their eyes glass over as I mentioned my problems. So, I was given good advice (thank you Dick Sayther) to never bring it up unless they asked. Rather, every time they saw me, I talked about vision. It made all the difference. People wanted to give to hope and to the future. So, I did, we developed short and long range vision and goals. It worked. So, my suggestion now is, give your people hope and a reason to give. I'd suggest you go to your donors and ask, **"How many summer staff do you want to pay for because I'm going to give them jobs anyway?"** I'd point out that summer camp staffs are the single biggest young adult ministry program in the ELCA. You could also frame it this way, **"Wouldn't you be excited to give a job to a young adult this summer, knowing it's the biggest investment in the present and future you can make?"** So, my LOM friends, that's my suggestion. You may have lost campers, you don't have to lose the young adult summer staff. And by the way, if you want to talk, need consulting help, want to do strategic planning, or develop your board contact me. No charge ever from me. And I will come to you at my expense if need be. paulghill@me.com, 612-462-2487.*