



Encouraging, Educating, Equipping,
and Empowering Camp and Retreat Leadership

May 14, 2020

Friends and colleagues,

From a prayer on the homepage of Bread for the World: *"God of Mercy and Grace, You have called us from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north to be your body in this world. Keep us connected through you even in our physical distance."* This is my fervent prayer today as I announce a decision of the LOM Board at its meeting last week.

Announcement: The Board voted unanimously, upon recommendation of the executive director, to cancel the 2020 LOM Annual Conference.

I'm sure you can appreciate how difficult and painful this decision is. Throughout all of LOM, our member organizations have been wrestling with similar and much more far-reaching decisions in regard to your summer camp programs. Through LOM, we have been staying connected in ways that have provided support and resources so that none of us will have to wrestle alone.

During the last two months, you have often heard me say that never in our first 100 years of outdoor ministry for Lutherans will we have ever needed more the opportunity to gather together and experience face to face our LOM community. I still believe that and I know our Board of Directors shares in that feeling. Alas, there are other needs that are preempting our need for being together in the same room. Here are some of the factors we considered in making this decision:

Our primary concern must always be the safety and health of all who participate in any LOM event. There are too many uncertainties for us to confidently assure the health and safety of all who would participate in the 2020 conference.

- It is uncertain that groups of more than 50 persons will be able to gather by this November.
- It is uncertain that hotels will be able to be open for groups such as ours.
- Even if it is allowable for groups to gather in this way, there may be substantial number of our members who will not feel comfortable traveling and gathering at that time.
- The site of the conference, the Great Wolf Lodge in Bloomington, MN, has advised us that they will be willing to use our deposit for a future event.

The Conference Planning Committee and the Total Inclusion! Steering Committee have already indicated enthusiasm for providing virtual resources for building the enthusiasm for the conference theme of Total Inclusion! during the additional time that would lead up to the 2021 conference with the same theme and much of the same program that had already been planned for 2020. The conference in many ways was to have been the kick-off for the Total Inclusion! initiative in 2021. There is concern that there will be so many organizations struggling with sustainability issues in 2021 that it will be difficult for them to fully concentrate on the Total Inclusion! events. A result of canceling the 2020 Conference and having the same theme and program for the 2021 conference will be to move the Total Inclusion! Symposia from early 2021 to early 2022. The Total Inclusion! Steering

Committee, ELCA Mission Advancement staff, and Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies have all indicated support of this decision.

Please contact me with questions, comments or concerns with this decision or its consequences (director@lomnetwork.org 603-848-9904). I am planning on joining in on the next round of LOM Territory ZOOM Forums with the same purpose in mind. Two of those meetings have already been scheduled with ZOOM instructions elsewhere in this letter.

To summarize: this is heartbreaking and important all at the same time, for me and you. I started participating in the annual gathering of the Lutheran camp ministry network in 1970. In all the years since then, we've never had to cancel this event. There's much going on throughout the LOM network in spite of, or perhaps because of, the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Ministry Partner Member of LOM: Next time you check out the list of LOM Ministry Partner Members (<https://www.lomnetwork.org/ministry-partners/>), you will notice a new one: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). In their words, "LIRS is delighted to become a ministry partner member of LOM. As a witness to God's love for all people, we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice. We recognize the transforming ways in which the Spirit also works through the people, programs, and relationships that are the heart of Lutheran outdoor ministries. We are excited for the possibilities that will emerge from these two communities in mission together!" Welcome to the LOM family, LIRS! <https://www.lirs.org/>

Compensation Survey: Executive Directors of LOM member organizations, if you have not yet already done so, please complete the compensation survey the Sacred Playgrounds (LOM Board member Jake Sorenson) is doing for us. <https://www.research.net/r/LOMComp2020>

Reminder: Send me your Video Clips by May 15! Send me a 10-15 second video clip of one person from your community of participants (camper, parent, counselor, retreat guest, pastor, board member, etc.) saying why they love their camp so much. We are going to put it together into one video that all LOM organizations can use to uplift the importance of supporting their local outdoor ministry, and the importance of supporting the glue that keeps all our outdoor ministries connected - LOM. You can use your phone camera to do the video. Please upload using this link <https://bit.ly/LOMvideos> If you have any technical problems please contact me. director@lomnetwork.org Thank you.

Virtual Camp Portal: Our Presbyterian camp colleagues (PCCCA) are developing a very slick and easy-to-use platform for those who are planning virtual camp programs and activities to be accessed by campers and their families who will not be able to participate in summer camp. They are making it available to the other associations in the Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC) so each of our LOM camps will be able to have a portal in this platform if they so choose. It will be especially helpful for camps with a limited capacity to handle the technology necessary to deliver such programs. The program directors from three of our LOM camps have been involved in a committee of program directors providing advice on the development of this program. They are, Amy Mambu, Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD); Amy Ecklund, Lutherwood (WA); and Jeff Thompson, Lutherdale (WI). If you are interested in having a portal, contact Joel Winchip, Executive Director of PCCCA joel@pccca.net

Recording of LOM ZOOM Forum with ACA on May 12, and ACA Virtual Town Hall, May 8: From Henry DeHart, COO of ACA, following our ZOOM Forum with ACA: "Thank you so much for the opportunity. I know you all have hard days ahead of you and decisions have to be made. We will make sure you are connected to all of these resources once they come out." Recording and password for the LOM ZOOM Forum with ACA: <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/6txUcpzcpnpIGLPctkjuB-kfGKX1eaa82nVL-PoKmk04V8FAClh0I9pmKasdTJjs> Password: 6p^h?kL

Also, the recording Link for the ACA Virtual Town Meeting last Friday: <https://vimeo.com/416546048>

Newly Scheduled LOM ZOOM Forum for May 19

Tuesday, May 19, 12 EDT, 11 CDT, 10 MDT, 9 PDT. Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82200371972?pwd=dzVaQ2tjNG1mU1owT3JPeU0rMmF6UT09>
Meeting ID: 822 0037 1972 Password: LOM2020 Find your local number:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82200371972?pwd=dzVaQ2tjNG1mU1owT3JPeU0rMmF6UT09>

This forum is a result of a suggestion from Joel Abenth, executive director of Voyageurs (MN). He had read an article on a similar subject as the theme for this Forum, on the website of The Union for Reform Judaism. Since that time Pastor Janelle Rozek Hooper, Program Director for Ministry with Children, ELCA, has been working with us to provide the LOM adaptation of that article, which will soon be ready for distribution. The theme for the ZOOM Forum on May 19 is "What Guidance and Advice Can We Be Giving Parents on How to Talk with their Kids about Not being Able to Go to Camp This Summer?" Our guest resource person for this live podcast forum will be [Janelle Rozek Hooper](#), Program Director for Ministry with Children, ELCA. This is an issue near and dear to Janelle's own heart and experience as she prepares to talk with her own 9 and 11-year-olds who want to go to camp so badly! Please join us.

LOM West Territory ZOOM Forum

Wednesday, May 20, 10:00 AM Mountain, 9:00 AM Pacific. Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81005776819?pwd=ZlFYZ2dBc1ZKRy9LWDFQQRkODI2QT09>
Meeting ID: 810 0577 6819 Password: LOM2020 Find your local number:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81005776819?pwd=ZlFYZ2dBc1ZKRy9LWDFQQRkODI2QT09>

LOM East Territory ZOOM Forum

Thursday, May 21, 1:00 PM Eastern. Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81034480980?pwd=UGhzQjRlY2RMbmRkRXZtb2FwWFpFZz09>
Meeting ID: 810 3448 0980 Password: LOM2020 Find your local number:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81034480980?pwd=UGhzQjRlY2RMbmRkRXZtb2FwWFpFZz09>

In closing, another prayer on the homepage of Bread for the World: *We pray for parents and children who are struggling with the continuation of the new normal of homeschool, especially those who rely on school meal programs. We pray for children and parents and counselors who mourn that they won't be going to camp this summer and for those who are still wondering if they will. We pray for everyone struggling with these rapid changes. And we pray for our leaders. May they be guided by your wisdom. May they be courageous and make the bold decisions necessary for protection from this pandemic. May we be comforted by God's peace and your presence. Amen.*

Take care, stay well. I look forward to seeing you around the network!

Don Johnson, Executive Director
Lutheran Outdoor Ministries