What’s Inside: Words from Don

Don’t have time to read the whole issue right now? Here’s a quick summary from our Executive Director Don Johnson:

This issue of the LOM News is full of information about the virtual activities that will be taking place during the next couple of weeks as an alternative to the LOM 2020 Annual Conference that had to be cancelled. We didn’t have our typical conference last year, either. We had something much bigger – the Great Gathering with our ecumenical colleagues of the Outdoor Ministries Connection. We did, however, get some time to ourselves, as LOM, when we gathered for Lutheran Day during the Great Gathering. We celebrated the first 100 years of outdoor ministry for Lutherans in the USA. There was much to celebrate, and celebrate we did!

This year of 2020 marks the first year of our second century. One of the things we said last year is that outdoor ministry will undoubtedly continue to look and be different as we adapt to the changes in the world around us. I don’t know about you, but never did I dream the first year of our second century would be so dramatically different!

There’s one thing that I’m convinced will be the same, and LOM will be a big part of this. I’m convinced that outdoor ministry leaders will continue to find ways to stay connected for the sake of sharing the experience and expertise each of us brings to the table so that outdoor ministry throughout the church will continue to thrive with growth, relevance, and resilience. We will meet unforeseen challenges together and we will celebrate together the ways in which our campers and retreaters are touched by the Holy Spirit.

In the next two weeks, that’s how we will be sharing and celebrating. I look forward to joining with you in all the great events that are lined up for us.

Also, Inside...

First Run4Camp is November 1 to benefit LOM and your camp!

Virtual LTE and LOM Annual Meetings in November

The Auction is Coming, too!

LOM is important to Dianna
LOM Run4Camp 5K

On Sunday, November 1 (All Saints Day), LOM is sponsoring a 5K everywhere there's an LOM camp or retreat center. Seventeen (17) outdoor ministry organizations will be taking part, and collectively they have over 300 participants - runners, joggers, paddlers, wheelchairers, skiers and walkers - doing the 5K on All Saints Day for all the saints of outdoor ministry who have endowed us with the treasures of sites and ministries that we love so much.

The 17 camps that are taking part are doing this not only for their own camp, but also as a celebration of the powerful ministry of all of the camps and retreat centers of LOM. The 300 participants representing their camps will be doing their 5K in many different locations, but they will be joining together for a big Run4Camp party on November 1, 3-6 Eastern, 2-5 Central, 1-4 Mountain, 12-3 Pacific. Everyone is invited because it’s a party for all of LOM!

Please come to the party!!! The broadcast will be live-streamed on https://www.facebook.com/lomnetwork/

Curriculum “Boundless” Moves to 2022

The LOM Curriculum originally produced for 2021 will not be available until 2022. That’s because it is tied to the ELCA Youth Gathering, which has been postponed.

Next summer, camps are encouraged to use "From Generation to Generation” which was produced for 2020. Or, if you used that curriculum, why not dig out an older LOM curriculum and use that in 2021? We have lots available on our website (and you probably have even more in your own camp’s libraries!)
It’s Virtual Leadership Training Event and LOM Meeting Time

Like all things in 2020, the Leadership Training Event is going VIRTUAL and everyone is invited. And, it’s FREE! (Donations to the work of LOM are always appreciated). Since you already had time carved out in November for the annual conference, we are going to use that same timeframe to offer conversation, insight, learning, and connecting with others who do what we do. And let’s be honest, we’ll all be ready to talk, laugh, cry, share, and dream about what comes next for Lutheran Outdoor Ministries! Each session will be roughly 60 minutes long. Some will have a presenter with time for questions, others will be facilitated conversation. Small group breakout times will be included as needed for topics that have a lot of interest. While we can’t cover everything, we do hope we are offering something for everyone. And like all Leadership Training Events, this is a time to learn from each other and be inspired for the ministry we do. To register for LTE or LOM annual meetings, go to https://forms.gle/u1DWfpbMD7bULwPz5

Thursday, November 5 - 4:00 p.m. EST: Welcome to LOM!
A session for those new to LOM (in their position less than two years). The LTE committee and Don Johnson will be available for conversation and support geared specifically for those who are still relatively new to Lutheran Outdoor Ministries. The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Friday, November 6 - The LOM Silent Auction begins

Sunday, November 8 - 8:00 p.m. EST: Virtual Social Hour...or more.
Grab your favorite beverage and join us for fellowship, laughter, and maybe even a few games. The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Monday, November 9 - 10:30 a.m. EST: Morning Devotions
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85417972449?pwd=bC9RKzB5bm85cW5WSlIQQjI5b0Nudz09 Meeting ID: 854 1797 2449    Passcode: LOM2020

Monday, November 9 - 11:00 a.m. EST: What did camps learn this summer?
What worked, what didn’t, and what can we start putting in place for 2021? The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Monday, November 9 - 4:00 p.m. EST: Planning for Crisis
Why it is important to have a plan when facing a crisis? Hurricanes, forest fires, building fires, pandemics—the crisis might vary but having a plan is key to facing all of them. The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Tuesday, November 10 - 11:00 a.m. EST: Mental and Spiritual Health
When every decision is something new how do we do self-care and feed ourselves spiritually? The link for this will be provided to you after you register.
Tuesday, November 10 - 1:30 p.m. EST: Devotions followed by LOM Annual Meeting 1
LOM Annual Meeting (grab your favorite beverage and listen in – hey, it’s 5:00 somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic!). The link for this will be provided to you after you register. Materials for the meeting can be found here:  [http://app.lomnetwork.org/meeting/](http://app.lomnetwork.org/meeting/)

Wednesday, November 11 - 11:00 a.m. EST – Staffing
It was already a bit of a challenge, but what might it look like moving forward? What does staying on the cutting edge look like as we respond to change brought by COVID-19? Does your current structure make sense? And how do you budget for staff when you don’t know what next month will bring, let alone next summer? The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Wednesday, November 11 - 1:30 p.m. EST – Devotions followed by LOM Annual Meeting 2
The link for this will be provided to you after you register. Materials for the meeting can be found here:  [http://app.lomnetwork.org/meeting/](http://app.lomnetwork.org/meeting/)

Wednesday, November 11 - 3:00 p.m. EST – LOM Awards Ceremony
Presentation of the Innovative Program Award, Diversity Award, and the Manlove-Howells Leadership Award.  [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81460559746?pwd=Vm1rbmZTdzY5aTJNVUhKZVBFVTIHUT09 Meeting ID: 814 6055 9746 Passcode: 031813]

Wednesday, November 11 - 4:00 p.m. EST – Camper Recruiting
What is your message after a different type of summer? How do you build/work with trust of campers, parents, congregations, etc.? The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Thursday, November 12 - 11:00 a.m. EST - Communication
You are putting your 2021 plans together, but what is the best way to keep your congregations, parents, campers, and donors informed? The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Thursday, November 12 - 12:30 p.m. EST - Devotions
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85417972449?pwd=bC9RKzB5bm85cW5WSIQ0Qjl5b0Nudz09 Meeting ID: 854 1797 2449 Passcode: LOM2020]

Thursday, November 12 - 4:00 p.m. EST - How Do We Do Program Planning in 2021?
What will camp look like in 2021? How do we program within COVID restrictions and parameters? The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Friday, November 13 - 11:00 a.m. EST – What is Next in LOM?
We have a rich history and strong foundation of ministry. How does this sustain us as we lean into whatever comes next for Lutheran camping? Come ready to dream and brainstorm as we look ahead to 2021 and beyond. The link for this will be provided to you after you register.

Friday, November 13 - 12:30 p.m. EST – Devotions
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85417972449?pwd=bC9RKzB5bm85cW5WSIQ0Qjl5b0Nudz09 Meeting ID: 854 1797 2449 Passcode: LOM2020]

Saturday, November 14 - 9:00 p.m. EST – LOM Live Auction

Sunday, November 15 - 2:00 p.m. EST – Closing Worship
Our leader for closing worship is Pastor Jodi Houge, pastor of Humble Walk Lutheran Church in St. Paul, MN. She will also serve as worship leader for the 2021 LOM conference. Closing worship will premier on the LOM Facebook page.
Our Virtual LTE Sponsors

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ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza Looking for Host Sites

This year’s Youth Ministry Extravaganza will be, for the most part, a virtual experience. It will take place February 4-6, 2021. The event leaders are inviting camps to consider hosting small gatherings to view and participate together in the On-Line Extravaganza. Each site will provide internet access, hospitality (varies by site), and safety guidelines for gathering. For more information - https://www.elcaymnet.org/Host-Sites
Major Research Underway that will affect LOM

Jake Sorenson is the founder of Sacred Campgrounds, an organization that does lots of research, much of it focused on outdoor ministry. LOM is very fortunate to have Jake as a member of our Board of Directors. This is what Jake recently announced about one of his current research projects, one which will provide outdoor ministry organizations with extremely important and relevant data.

The Camp and Church Leadership Project survey is currently underway! We are currently surveying all rostered ministers in the ELCA, discovering how many went to camp, worked at camp, currently support camp, and how these experiences have impacted their faith and call story. There are two action items for all of our LOM members: FIRST, if you are a rostered minister (deacon or pastor), complete the survey. It should be in your email from churchwide and, if not, message Jake Sorenson. SECOND: encourage all of your associated rostered ministers to complete the survey. You can greatly increase the response rate among your associated churches by sending a message with the survey link to your list of ELCA pastors and deacons. We are incentivizing participation at the synod level by providing an individualized data report to the top 3 synods in terms of response rate. If one of your associated synods is in the top 3, your camp will receive (for free!) data about the impact and support of camp among rostered ministers there. This is a huge opportunity and will benefit all of us in LOM! Contact Jake about receiving the survey link and language to be sent to your rostered ministers: jake@sacredplaygrounds.com.

THE LOM AUCTION

Soon, you will be getting more detailed information via email about the LOM Auction which is happening in November.

A silent auction will be the larger part of our event this year and open widely. The silent auction will begin on November 6, 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time, and conclude at 12:00 AM Eastern Time on November 14.

The live celebration will include a small number of items for bid, fellowship, and foolery and be for LOM members and friends of LOM. The live auction is going to take place (virtually, of course) on Saturday evening, November 14, beginning at 9:00 PM EST, 8:00 PM CST, 7:00 PM MST, 6:00 PM PST. One of the featured items will be a hand-sewn LOM Quilt that will include the tee-shirt from every LOM camp and retreat center.

Instead of a financial goal this year, the auction’s goal is to have 100% participation from every LOM partner organization. In regard to contributions of items for the auction and your offer to help in any way with the auction, please contact the chairperson of the LOM Auction Committee – Daniel Kirschbaum, Director of Retreat Ministries, Rainbow Trail (CO): daniel@rainbowtrail.org
LOM is Important to Me Because...

We all know that what we do together through LOM for strong and vibrant outdoor ministry everywhere is absolutely important and sometimes it’s good to be reminded why LOM is so important. Dianna Parks serves as the executive director of Good Earth Village (MN) and she serves on the Board of Directors of LOM. Here’s what she has to say about the importance of LOM.

“LOM has been supportive of Good Earth Village and me, personally, since I began in 2015! Don Johnson and I began in our current roles around the same time, and Don came to visit GEV on one of his first trips. I was new to outdoor ministry, and Don took an immediate interest in helping me to connect to the network and all of our colleagues. The community of LOM was important in that first year, and its value just increases exponentially every year. From regional gatherings to the national conference, mentoring from more seasoned outdoor ministry professionals to friendships and peers developed through more casual encounters, the network is a huge blessing. In this extraordinary year of loss and struggle, I am beyond grateful for the extra efforts to maintain our community and establish shared resources and new ways to support each other. The network also feeds my faith, bringing Spirit into every facet of every effort and conversation. I have been fortunate to offer some service back to the organization and am grateful for the ways that work has deepened relationships, too, and provided more learning opportunities. Thank you, LOM, Don, and all of you across the network for your Christ-centered examples and friendship.”

A new LOM Podcast is now posted on the LOM website at https://www.lomnetwork.org/podcasts/. It’s an interview with LOM LTE Committee members Dana Isaacson, program director, EWALU (IA); Anthony Briggs, executive director, Cross Roads (NJ); and chairperson Gretchen Bachman, operations director, Voyageurs (MN). The latest podcast features all the news about the virtual educational opportunities being planned in lieu of the in-person LTE for November that had to be cancelled because of COVID-19. There are also five recently posted podcasts you can check out on the same page!
Generations to Generations

By Kelly Preboski, Executive Director, Luther Heights Bible Camp

Our outdoor ministry theme for summer 2020 was “Generations to Generations” based on Psalm 100:5. In a summer season that was so drastically different than typical or anticipated, this in many ways was a perfect theme. Written in November and published by LOM, the curriculum team had no idea what was ahead, but I believe our God who guides us knew there were lessons in these verses for the months ahead. My time was different this season, my time allowed for more reflection spaces throughout a week and moments to linger into deeper conversations with people I was blessed to be able to interact with. Through this summer season amongst a pandemic, we were able to allow small groups of volunteers at Luther Heights Bible Camp and lessons were learned. Here are some lessons I learned from various generations these past 10 weeks.

Observations from the Young: We had youth two weekends at camp, from 2-16 years old and wisdom and joy were shared. My two-year-old friend, Gracie, taught me the value of keeping others safe from our actions and showing God’s love in tangible ways. She wore a mask with little struggle and even toddled around camp with her baby doll wearing a mask, further showing me the value of modeling for other’s behaviors of love. One Saturday evening for campfire worship, our invocation, a call to worship to help ourselves enter into a space of prayer and acknowledge God’s presence around us, we were going to launch a simple model rocket. A group of 4 youth spent the better part of the afternoon working together to figure out how to build this rocket. They worked together, ages 6 to 13 helping each other, problem solving and even asking for help when they needed it. Something we all can learn from, to lean in those around us and not be afraid to ask for help. So, there we were … waiting for the big launch and as you can guess … it didn’t work the first time or the second. And so, as adults we waited patiently, encouraged, helped a little and they persisted. At one point we broke out into a camp song that goes, “I Will call upon the Lord.” But you know what, we laughed, we kept trying, and we did acknowledge God can help us in every moment. And then, finally lift off; the rocket went flying to the sky, there were many shouts of joy from all ages and the kids went running through the meadow to get the rocket when it landed.

Structure & Joy in the Little Moments from the Millennials: We were blessed by two staff this summer that served focusing on many work projects, hospitality needs for when we had volunteers, and program options to continue to help people in our community connect to camp and our grace-filled God. Early on in our eight weeks together, I saw how much they valued our team meetings. They valued this dedicated time to gather in prayer, check in with each other and plan for the week. They thrived when we set goals together, discussed projects and delegated tasks as needed. When we paused and took some moments to check in with ourselves and each other, we were better able to think about what was ahead. When we had a plan and some structure to our weeks, we were more productive and focused. I find that in myself these days as I try to adjust the fall rhythm, balancing my job demands, virtual learning for my two children, and some moments for self-care that thinking through the week, creating a plan, and setting some goals help greatly. The other piece this generation taught me was how important it was to find joy daily and often, sharing jokes or puns to create a laugh, enthusiastically singing a camp song at the top of our lungs and dancing because we were outside and we could, and finding moments to play, to recreate whether it be a bike ride or looking at the stars or a weekly game night.

Wisdom from our Elders: Many of the volunteers this summer were older than me, having been around this camp for decades. One Saturday night we sat outside with one of these couples and listened to stories while looking at photos from the past. We all sat listening and wanting more details from the past, details of how cabins came to be or funny stories of volunteer work weekends or unique animal sightings. As I sat there listening, one thing I realized was the joy and community volunteering had brought to these volunteers. Volunteering at Luther Heights Bible Camp for years have given this couple a faith-filled community that helped them be their best selves. It gave them a community to share life with and lean into God through the ups and downs throughout the years. Serving a non-profit whose mission they believed in gave them purpose and meaning. Another experience always looked forward too is when this couple comes to camp we will get to see shiny rocks and gems and learn about where they are from and some geology. One of Chuck and Sharon’s hobbies is rocks and the joy they find in that hobby they share, creating more curious minds about geology. One thing that left me in awe with many of our older volunteers was their dedication to this mission and openness to new ways God will call us to connect with all. They shared a deep hope in the future, of what is to come and of the younger generations with unique gifts who will experience the grace of God here in this special place.

So, the past three months were different than I ever would have anticipated and yet, full of wisdom from the generations. Thank you, LOM, (and God) for the perfect theme this summer; focusing on a God whose love does endure forever. This week connect with someone from a generation other than your own, I promise there will be lessons for both of you.
In Conclusion

Parting Thoughts from the LOM Webmaster/Communications Coordinator

Spiritual Self-Care

Last month, we talked about unity and building consensus. In the fifth chapter of Nehemiah, the Biblical book we’ve been studying in these articles to get some leadership advice, there was great internal strife. As we look this month at the sixth chapter, we have some strife from outside sources.

How do we take care of ourselves spiritually as leaders? We see in this Biblical chapter that God is working in Nehemiah. His enemies are afraid of what God is doing. He is able to do the impossible because God is on his side.

In several verses of this chapter, we see Nehemiah praying. He was seeking God’s will for his life and seeking direction from the Lord. He was connected to God.

How do you, as a leader, stay connected to God? If you can get God into anything you are dealing with, I think it will be good! Let God be your guide as you make decisions and chart a course for your organization.

Engaging in our own spiritual self-care helps us to be more connected to God and maybe better see the course we need to take. In ministry, we are so often consumed with providing faith formation to those we serve. But we also need to feed ourselves through normal faith practices.

In this passage, we hear about people wanting Nehemiah to go a village in the plains. Plains in the Bible speak of going away toward God. Mountains speak of people going toward God. Often, we talk about “mountaintop experiences” of our faith. When have you had one of those recently?


–Chad Hershberger

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