



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

Executive Director Report to the Annual Conference

2017

This has been an excellent year for Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM). Our organization has continued to make great strides in our primary endeavor of working together as ELCA-affiliated outdoor ministry organizations to assure strong and vibrant outdoor ministries throughout the whole church. LOM made a great stride forward by securing the services of a full time executive director. I am eternally grateful for the honor of serving in this capacity, affirmed by the action of the LOM Board to move this from a temporary term contract arrangement to the more permanent current arrangement.

Very early in this year, the LOM Board approved of the Strategic Plan that was unveiled at the 2016 LOM Conference. This Strategic Plan is providing the direction for the vast majority of the leadership I have been seeking to provide for LOM. I am pleased to report that our major initiatives as an organization are, for the most part, on schedule or ahead of schedule for advancing our major ministry result strategies for LOM to:

- Have a strong and positive impact on the formation of faith and vitality of the Church.
- Provide continuing education and support through expanded and dynamic program delivery.
- Resource our expanding capacity for mission.

A major project for which I'm confident all who are actively engaged in LOM will be grateful is the overhaul and redesign of the LOM website. This involved a team effort of all of our contract staff, but the bulk of the heavy lifting for this project fell on the shoulders of Chad Hershberger, our LOM webmaster. Consider this a great big shout of thanks on behalf of all of LOM to Chad for sticking with this project – sometimes we wonder if Chad really has a full-time job – which he does have; a very demanding one at that.

All of which is a reminder of how diligently all of our contract staff persons work on our behalf. Over and over again they go beyond the requirements of job description. Thank you to Jon Skogen, administrator; Randy Youngquist-Thurrow, events coordinator; Aurice Worley, bookkeeper; and Andrea Lee, curriculum production manager.

LOM is fortunate to have a cadre of many skilled leaders volunteering time and expertise to serve on committees and task forces – truly exemplary of the LOM concept that we are all about working together to assure strong outdoor ministry everywhere. One of the most visible results of such voluntary activity is the annual production of summer camp curriculum. The 2017 curriculum, “The Water of Life”, has had very positive feedback from within LOM and among our ELCA and ecumenical partners. Offering the VBS Bundle from prior years free of charge has not brought us financial contributors but has brought us over 200 new and grateful friends. The 2018 theme, “This Changes Everything” is identical to the theme of the ELCA Youth Gathering and will, I’m confident, continue to open channels of collaboration for many of our member organizations.

One of the major ways by which I have endeavored to serve LOM has been to continue to visit our outdoor ministry sites in order to become as familiar with this network as possible, and to facilitate stronger networking and connecting our leaders with each other. Since the time of my last annual report in November 2016, I have visited the following sites (*indicates a first-time visit):

- *Waypost (Crossways, WI)
- *Imago Dei (Crossways, WI)
- *Pine Lake (Crossways, WI)
- *Lutheran Lakeside (IA)
- *Shetek (MN)
- *Chrysalis (Cross Trails, TX)
- *Ebert Ranch (Cross Trails, TX) X2
- *Zion Retreat Center (Lutherhill Ministries, TX)
- *Lutherhill (Lutherhill Ministries, TX)
- *Lutheran Hills (LOMIK, IN)
- Bethel Horizons (WI)
- Camp Frederick (OH)
- *Emmaus (Pathways, MN)
- *MinneWaKan (Pathways, MN)
- *Spirit in the Pines (MN)
- Chi Rho (MN)
- Mount Carmel (MN)
- Luther Crest (MN)
- Green Lake (MN)
- Calumet (NH)
- Bear Creek (PA)
- *Vanderkamp (NY)
- Wilbur Herrlich (NY)
- Koinonia (NY) X2
- Cross Roads (NJ) X2
- *Red Willow (ND) X2
- *Park River (ND)

- *Metigoshe (ND)
- *Camp of the Cross (ND)
- *Upper Missouri (ND)
- *Badlands (ND)
- *Sugar Creek (WI)
- Luther Point (WI)
- *Luther Park (Danbury, WI)
- *Fortune Lake (MI)
- *Amnicon
- *Camp House (Green Lake Ministries, MN)
- *Vermilion (Voyageurs, MN)
- *Hiawatha (Voyageurs, MN)
- Wapo (Lake Wapogasset Ministries, WI)
- *Ox Lake (Lake Wapogasset Ministries, WI)
- *Agape (Agape/Kure Beach Ministries, NC)
- Carol Joy Holling (NE)
- *Riverside (IA)

Since the time I began serving as executive director of LOM, I have visited 96 of the 128 sites owned by the 98 organization members of LOM.

During this past year, we have seen a significant number of organizations turning to LOM as a source of support and guidance, especially during times of executive director transition or impending transition. One of the manifestations of the support LOM provides during such times has been the consultation provided by the executive director to the Boards of organizations in transition. Often this has taken the form of the LOM executive director serving as the facilitator for Board development retreats. During the past year, I have led such retreats with:

- Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Indiana-Kentucky (LOMIK)
- Mount Cross (CA)
- Camp Frederick (OH)
- Green Lake (MN)
- Luther Point (WI)
- Koinonia (NY)

One of the ways LOM has been called upon to provide support during times of executive transition has been to help secure the services of an interim executive director. For this reason, we developed for the first time an LOM sponsored Interim Executive Directors Training Event. It was held May 8-12 at Lutherdale (WI). We invited our ecumenical partners of the Outdoor Ministry Connection (OMC) to join in on this event, so in addition to the 14 Lutheran participants, we also had participants from our Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist, and UCC counterparts. This project has been of particular interest to LOM Board member Rev. Meggan Manlove, and she served as the host of the event and chaplain. Margie Fiedler from Flathead (MT) served as co-facilitator with Rev. John Czarnota from the National

Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors (NALIP). The feedback and evaluations from participants was very positive.

Here is a status report on LOM organizations recently experiencing executive transition Most of these organizations have sought the consultation of LOM in varying degrees. –

Continuing in Transition

- Amnicon (WI): Jeff Barrow, interim
- Green Lake (MN): Loren Tieg at end of term contract; search in process for new permanent executive director

Recently Entering Into Transition

- Caroline Furnace (VA): Reuben Todd resigned early in the summer; Heather Lutz serving as interim
- Agape (PA): Lavinia Wingert announced retirement as of 12/31/17; seeking an interim
- NovusWay (NC, GA, FL): Keith Johnson retiring early in 2018; announcement of new permanent soon to be made public
- Lakeside (IA): Carolyn and Jerry Fritsch retiring as of 12/31/17; search underway for permanent
- Luther Heights (ID): Eric Olsen retired 8/31/17; Bob Kuehner serving as interim

No longer in transition

- Bethel Horizons (WI): Rev. John Swanson was acting executive director; Eric Knueve starts 11/1 as permanent
- Camp Frederick (OH): Dick Iverson was interim; Matt Miller now permanent
- Luther Point (WI): Jon Hoyme was interim; Sam Campeau started 10/1 as permanent
- Lutherlyn (PA): Don Hayn was interim; Deb Roberts now permanent
- Mount Cross (CA): David Dykes serves as interim; new executive director soon to be announced
- Koinonia (NY): Joanne Knudson was acting executive director; recently appointed as permanent

Yet another way that LOM now has the capacity to serve our member organizations is to, on the invitation of the Board of Directors of an organization, form a “Consultation Team” to help the organization assess its current status and guide the vision for the future of the organization. Such a team was organized for a consultation with Bethel Horizons (WI) and took place February 6-10, 2017. The team was chaired by Don Johnson and included Joel Abenth, Voyageurs (MN); Lauri Egertson, El Camino Pines (CA); and Hayden Anderson, an experienced board member and treasurer from a variety of outdoor ministry and other non-profit organizations.

There are a few sections of the country where it’s feasible for LOM organizations to gather for networking and educational opportunities. Where it’s feasible it has an advantage of allowing for more of the year-round staff members to be included. During this past year, I’ve had the privilege to take part in gatherings with: ELCA Region 5 LOM; Texas LOM organizations; ELCA Region 3 LOM; ELCA Regions 7&8 LOM, gathering as part of a “Faith Formation Summit.” We were fortunate this year for LOM to

have a grant of \$5,000 from the ELCA to consider the ways that LOM organizations can more effectively serve as schools for lay ministry and collaborate more deeply with the ELCA Schools for Lay Ministry Network.

A recent initiative by ELCA Region 3 LOM to become more fully integrated into systems of the overall LOM organization will inspire a new chapter for the expanding capacity of LOM. We are looking forward to developing the concept of LOM coordinators for five “territories” of the USA; expanding the Region 3 project of collaborating on summer staff recruitment to include all of LOM; and expanding our ability to be nimble and responsive in the development of more frequent educational events in varieties of locations.

An important part of the LOM Strategic Plan is to seek collaborative relationships with organizations within the ELCA family, with ecumenical organizations, and with professional organizations within the camp and retreat family and elsewhere. During the past year, some of the significant conversations have taken place with these organizations:

- Outdoor Ministry Connection - OMC (a collaboration of the outdoor ministry organizations of mainline Protestant denominations). A major part of this collaboration will be the 2019 “Great Gathering” – similar to the LOM Annual Conference but involving many denominations – for which LOM past president Nathan Pile is serving as co-chairperson.
- Compass Points (in depth continuing education certification program spearheaded by PCCCA, OMA-UCC, OM-UMC, and LOM)
- Seminaries of the ELCA
- ELCA Fund for Leaders
- ELCA School for Lay Ministry Network
- ELCA 500th Anniversary of the Reformation Communications
- Living Lutheran Magazine
- Seeds for the Parish Newsletters
- American Camp Association (ACA) – both the fees discount program for LOM camps and now the participation of LOM as one of the ecumenical partners in the church camp oversample that will be part of the ACA’s major new research project.
- ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza
- ELCA Youth Ministry Summit
- ELCA Youth Gathering
- Gap Year Service Programs, especially Lutheran Volunteer Corps and Urban Servant Corps.
- Women of the ELCA (WELCA)
- Lutheran Men in Mission
- LuMin (the ELCA network of campus ministries)
- Effective Camp Research Project
- Kuwaa Mission – exploring the possibility of a Kuwaa Mission/LOM partnership that would provide outdoor ministry staff with the opportunity of a 21 day cultural immersion and service experience with the Kuwaa people of Liberia.

The LOM Education Committee, on behalf of LOM, approved the endorsement of two events this year:

- The event in February at Agape (NC) for environmental education and group challenge initiative staff was well attended and well received.
- The “Welcomed and Included” retreat in September at Carol Joy Holling (NE) for church professionals was well so well received that another has been scheduled for February and endorsed by LOM. This greatly needed retreat focused on the assurance that our congregations, organizations, and outdoor ministry sites are safe for all persons especially, in this case, members of the LGBTQ communities.

As we look to the year ahead, we are committed to strengthening all that LOM has been involved in during this past year and moving forward with several new commitments. We are especially excited about:

- The committee formerly known as the Education Committee to continue with a focus on the Leadership Training Event (LTE) and to now be known as the LTE Committee. We will soon be forming a new Education Committee that will have a scope of the more general picture of expanding educational opportunities of LOM and at the outset to work on a plan for LOM educational opportunities for Boards of Directors.
- A steering committee has been working on a plan for reinstituting an LOM Executive Directors Gathering and plans are now being finalized for such an event to take place at Lutheranch (GA), April 23-26, 2018.
- We are looking forward to establishing the concepts and structures of the “Expanding the Capacity of LOM” initiative.
- The Communication and Technology Committee will be spearheading a frequently called for survey on budgets and allocation of funds for outdoor ministry organizations.

What’s especially impressive about LOM is the dedication of so many who volunteer so much to the success of this organization. There is definitely a growing sense of gratitude among our members for what we can all do together to assure strong and vibrant outdoor ministries throughout the whole church. Hats off and thanks to all who have been working so hard to make sure we can do for each other what would be difficult to provide on our own – to the Boards and committee members, all who help with events and task forces, and to all who make individual financial contributions and make sure that their organizations make financial contributions – all of LOM is so grateful.

It is my honor and privilege to serve in the capacity that I do. Thank you for this opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Johnson, Executive Director
Lutheran Outdoor Ministries