



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

Executive Director Report to the Annual Business Meeting

2019

For LOM, the year since the last Annual conference has been marked by continuing progress with several expansive initiatives while exploring and developing new ones. Some of the highlights –

- On July 5, 2019, outdoor ministry organizations celebrated the 100th Anniversary of outdoor ministry for Lutherans in the USA. Many organizations had observances during their summer camp programs; others brought the celebration to Synod Assemblies and similar gatherings. All of our organizations, joining together as LOM, will celebrate at a banquet to be held at LOM Day during the Great Gathering. Upon the recommendation of the 100th Anniversary Task Force, the LOM Board has declared the whole anniversary year, through July 5, 2020, as a time to celebrate our history, for sure, and to more importantly, observe this milestone by looking ahead to the next 100 years. One manifestation of this emphasis has been the naming of a Strategic Planning Task Force to shepherd the process of determining the process for strategizing the priorities for LOM during the first several years of our next century. Thank you to the LOM Anniversary Task Force for their continuing work to guide this memorable milestone for LOM: Brent Seaks, Badlands (ND); Kelly Preboski, Luther Heights (ID); Mara Stillson, Lutherans Outdoors in SD; Mark Burkhardt, LOM Board; Meredith Massey Beall, LOM Board; Ralph Yernberg, LOM Emeritus group.
- In October, 2019, the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) announced the award of a grant to the ELCA to underwrite a new initiative of LOM in the amount of \$1,000,000. This initiative - Total Inclusion! - will provide opportunities for LOM organizations to improve even further in all they do to welcome and include persons who are often marginalized, especially those who are marginalized because of race, identification as LGBTQ, or because they live with disabilities. The grant will support the first three years of this initiative beginning on January 1, 2020.
- For the second consecutive year, LOM had its own gathering for executive directors. The event was held at Briarwood (TX), March 18-21, 2019, and attracted 22 participants (down from 31 in 2018). The theme, "Wander with Me" was spearheaded by keynoters

Savanna Sullivan, program director for Young Adult ministries of the ELCA, Kaleb Sutherland, also from churchwide staff of the ELCA. Thank you for a great event to the Planning Team: Deb Roberts, Lutherlyn (PA); Janis Sloka, Camp of the Cross (ND); Lee Lindeman, Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center (NY); Sarah Lefler, Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD); and Tom Powell, Caroline Furnace (VA).

- LOM entered into an official partnership with the ELCA Youth Ministry Network (YMN). We now have a “conference swap” arrangement with YMN that will provide for a cost-efficient way for LOM to be represented at the YM Extravaganza, and LOM organizations will now have a much less expensive way of accessing opportunities that the Extravaganza presents for meeting many prospective retreat, conference, adventure, and servant ministry groups. Thank you to Todd Buegler, executive director of YMN, for so graciously and generously entering into the discussions that led to this partnership.
- At the 2018 LOM Conference, the Manlove-Howells Leadership Award was presented for the second time. It was awarded to Richard Sayther, managing partner of Gronlund, Sayther, Brunkow (GSB).
- The Auction at the 2018 Conference was extremely successful, raising a little over \$40,000. Thank you to Dave Jarvis and the Auction Planning Team from Rainbow Trail (CO) for planning and implementing a great event, and to auctioneers extraordinaire, Paul Hanson and Jake Hanson, both of Lutherans Outdoors in SD. For the first time, LOM made a tithe of \$4,000 to another organization, this time to provide for restoration of summer camp activities following the hurricane destruction at Camp Eduardo Roig in Puerto Rico. The tithe from LOM was matched by a challenge gift of \$4,000 from Sharon and Jack Wineman of Florence, AZ.
- Thanks to generous contributions from Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD) and Lutherlyn (PA), LOM now has a fund reserved for providing relief to outdoor ministries experiencing distress. From this fund, a small token monetary expression of support was provided to Lutherwood (OR) following the destruction of their main lodge/dining hall.
- Keith Johnson of the LOM Emeritus group and founder of BoardCoach is volunteering to provide a sequence of best practices orientation components for outdoor ministry Boards of Directors. This resource was conceived by the LOM Education Committee following a survey taken at the 2018 Conference. The sequence of eight 10-minute components will be intended to supplement, one at a time, the agenda of a Board meeting for discussion around important best practices for non-profit Boards. They will be available starting in January, 2020.
- Another LOM resource to look for early in 2020 – an app to help prospective summer camp staff to find a summer camp program that appeals to them. We expect this will be particularly helpful for so many of our LOM camps during recent years that have had difficulty finding enough summer camp staff.
- The Leadership Training Event- Program Track (LTE) was held, again with great success, immediately prior to the LOM Annual Conference. There was a great turnout of 27

participants. This is truly one of the signature events for LOM. Thank you to Gretchen Bachman, chairperson, all of the members of the LTE Committee, and faculty dean Andrea Scofield for another great event.

- The other hugely important signature event for LOM is the Annual Conference. The 2018 edition once again lived up to our lofty expectations and a good turnout of 127 participants at the T Bar M Ranch. Thank you to the Planning Team: Deanna Christensen and Jessica Pina from Cross Trails (TX); Matt Baumhardt, Briarwood (TX) and Phil Geleske, recently retired from Briarwood; and Matt Kindsvatter and MiLisa Gaertner, Lutherhill (TX). And of course, LOM events coordinator, Randy Youngquist-Thurrow.

An important part of the Strategic Plan for LOM is to cultivate collaboration partnerships. Since the last LOM Conference in November, 2018, we have had the opportunity to cultivate collaboration with many groups these groups and persons, and the following are the most significant of these –

- Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC), the group that I responsible for the 2019 alternative to the LOM Annual Conference – The Great Gathering. Nathan Pile, executive director of Sequanota (PA) and past president of LOM, has served with distinction as the co-chairperson of the Great Gathering. Many other LOM individual members have also served in a leadership capacity for the Great Gathering. Thank you, one and all! Your LOM executive director has been serving on the OMC Coordinating Council, which met in March, 2019, at LOM's own Spirit in the Desert (AZ). OMC was the sponsor of the Interim Executive Director Training Event, spearheaded by LOM, that was to be held in May, 2019. Unfortunately, it had to be cancelled because of low enrollment.
- Compass Points ecumenical outdoor ministry continuing education certification program. Your executive director has also been serving on the Coordinating Council for this endeavor, meeting last March at Columbia Seminary (the issuer of certificates) in Decatur, Ga. The plan is for Judy Smith, camp director for adult and family programs, Calumet (NH) and member of the LOM Education Committee, to begin being the LOM representative to this group. At this year's Great Gathering, it is anticipated that Judy will be the first from LOM to capstone and receive a Compass Points certificate of successful completion.
- Mark Wilhelm, Executive Director, Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities, ELCA. LOM, with a few of our member organizations in the Southeast, explored a possibility of structured college gap year internships when we met at Newberry College in NC. Unfortunately, the colleges and universities were not as receptive as we hoped they would be.
- LuMin (ELCA Campus Ministry Network). Thank you to Julie Kroll, Sales, Marketing and Communication Director - Caroline Furnace (VA), for representing LOM at the LuMin Conference in June at Boston University.
- Seminaries of the ELCA. Thank you to the seminaries for being a major sponsor of LOM Day during the Great Gathering.

- ELCA Young Adult Ministries. Thank you, Savanna Sullivan, program director for Young Adult ministries of the ELCA, for serving as the keynote presenter at the LOM Executive Directors Gathering.
- ELCA Youth Gathering. Thank you, Molly Beck Dean, executive director of the ELCA Youth Gathering, for your good ideas and continuing to explore with LOM the possibilities for positive impact that the Youth Gathering might have for all of our outdoor ministries...
- Mission Advancement Unit - ELCA. What can we say? This unit of the ELCA has been spectacular in working with LOM to procure the grant for the Total Inclusion! initiative. They will be administering the implementation of the grant program and securing the services of a half-time grant administrator. Thank you over and over to Christina Jackson Skelton, executive director, and to our primary point person at Mission Advancement, Jessica Hacker, Director for Stewardship, Operations and Planning.
- *The Living Lutheran* Magazine. Thank you, Erin Strybis, content editor, for all the amazing articles during this 100th Anniversary year.
- *Seeds for the Parish*. Thank you, editor Rod Boriack, for all your help and cooperation. We mourn with you the loss of this resource for the ELCA and look to the digital version to now be just as cooperative.
- Mission Investment Fund. Thank you, Don Hallberg, for all your encouragement of LOM and your assistance with the financial needs of so many of our member organizations. And thank you so much for MIF being the primary major sponsor of LOM Day during the Great Gathering.
- Portico. Thank you, Christine Womack, Business Development Manager, for securing Portico as a major sponsor of the 2018 LOM Conference.
- Rescue, Release, Restore (Camps Simba, Simsa, Myla). Thank you, executive director Rev. Yehiel Curry, for sharing your insights with LOM and congratulations on your election as bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, ELCA.
- Thank you, Ross Murray, executive director of the Naming Project at Bay Lake Camp (MN), for sharing your insights regarding welcome and inclusion for person who identify as LGBTQ.
- ELCA Disability Ministries
- Gronlund, Sayther, Brunkow. Thank you for serving as a major sponsor of LOM Day during the Great Gathering. And for your ongoing sharing of ideas and strategies for LOM development endeavors.
- Deacon (soon to be Pastor) Reggie Price, outreach coordinator, Lutheran Campus Ministries at Morgan State university, for working with LOM to connect with prospective summer camp staff.
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). We feel that the collaborative effort of Sue Ellen Spotts of the LIRS staff, and Andrea Lee, LOM Curriculum Development Manager, to revise the Adult Bible Study chapter of the 2019 LOM curriculum ("Transformed Community") will be a significant gift we provide together to the congregations and other groups of the ELCA as they discern what it means for the ELCA to be a Sanctuary Denomination. They have also worked with LOM for LIRS to be the recipient of the tithe from the auction at LOM Day during the Great Gathering, again matched by Sharon and Jack Wineman, so that LIRS can establish a fund they will

administer for selecting children from migrant and refugee families and unaccompanied minors who can best benefit from a summer camp experience provided by an LOM member organization. Also, part of this collaboration – AMMPARO, the holistic, whole church commitment by the ELCA, as a church in the world, to accompany children today and in the future.

Another part of the current Strategic Plan for LOM calls for LOM to provide assistance and support for member organizations in regard to governance and process matters of outdoor ministry Boards of Directors. Often, this has taken the form of the executive director serving as the facilitator for Board Development Retreats, and in many cases, this has taken the form of a Board Executive Transition Planning Retreat. Group process consultation has been extended to other kinds of opportunities for LOM to be encouraging to outdoor ministry organizations. Since the 2018 LOM Conference, we have had this opportunity with these organizations –

- March 1-2: Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Center (IL): Board Executive Transition Planning Retreat
- May 1 - Koinonia (NY): “Summit Meeting” on the future of Koinonia at the Interchurch Center, NYC, in collaboration with interim bishop Don McCoid of the Metropolitan New York Synod, ELCA.
- September 6-7: Fortune Lake (MI): Board Development Retreat
- September 9-10: Lutherdale (WI): Year-round Staff Planning Retreat
- September 23-26: LOM Consultation Team at Agape (PA): Thank you to Mike Youse, executive director, Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central PA, and Dave Holtz, executive director, Luther Crest (MN), for joining the LOM executive director in providing this resource to Agape.

The current Strategic Plan for LOM also calls for your executive director to make on-site visits and/or face to face consultations with LOM member organizations and individual members. It has been one of the most gratifying aspects of my service on your behalf because it has been so extremely valuable for me to make in person visits to the camps and retreat centers that provide the context for your ministries. During the one-year period covered by this report, I have made visits to the following outdoor ministry sites (first time visits indicated with an asterisk*):

- 1/29 – *Luther Springs (FL)
- 2/22- Caroline furnace (VA)
- 3/1-2 and 9/5 -LOMC (IL)
- 3/4 - *Tomah Shinga (KS)
- 3/5 - *Hollis Renewal Center (KS)
- 3/6 – in Atlanta, Christine Yarnold, Lutheranch (GA)
- 3/18-20 and 10/1-2: Briarwood (TX)
- 3/25-28: Spirit in the Desert (AZ)
- 6/5 – Luther heights (ID)
- 6/6 – *Holden Village Bed & Breakfast (WA)
- 6/7 – *Shoshone Village (ID)
- 6/7 – Lutherhaven (ID)
- 8/14 – Green Lake (MN)

- 8/15 – Emmaus (MN)
- 8/15 - *Patmos (MN)
- 8/15-16 – Bay Lake (MN)
- 8/16 – Onomia (MN)
- 8/16-17 – Good Earth Village (MN), for their 50th Anniversary celebration
- 9/6 – Crossways (WI)
- 9/6-7 – Fortune Lake (MI)
- 9/8 – Luther Point (WI)
- 9/9-10 – Lutherdale (WI)
- 9/13-14 – Calumet (NH), as a van driver for their Reach the Beach Ragnar Relay
- 10/7-9 – Joy Ranch (SD)

A significant amount of your executive director's time is involved with organizations in the midst of executive director transition. It has been invaluable for LOM to have, as a resource for organizations in executive transition, a list of individuals who have been through the Interim Executive Director Training Event. Organizations that have been in executive director transition process this year –

- Agape (PA), Wayne Harrison continues serving as interim
- Pathways (MN), Chris Andreason was interim; now called as executive director
- Crossways (WI), Laurie Wilkinson was serving as interim; Sharon Cook called.
- Fortune Lake (MI), Sara Jonasen served as interim, Amanda Rasner called
- LOMC (IL), Carolyn and Jerry Fritsch were serving as interim; Rob Gieraltowski called.
- Briarwood (TX), Matt Baumhardt was serving as acting executive director and now serves as operations director; Robert Smith called as CEO and director of the Leadership Center.
- Sugar Creek (WI), Jeff Barrow was serving as interim; Jesse Klosterboer called.
- Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota (SD): Paul Hanson was serving as acting executive director and is now called to the executive director position.
- Camp Roig (PR), Idalia Negron elected bishop and now serves as the primary contact.
- Bear Creek (PA), Dan Scharnhorst took a new call to Camp Mount Morris (WI), a Moravian church camp; Rev. Jimmy Lee Werley serves as interim executive director.
- Tomah Shinga (KS), Jacob Spilker was serving as interim; he is now called as the executive director.
- Koinonia (NY), Joanne Knudson stepped down as executive director; Rev. Don Hayn now serving as Transition Team consultant.
- Spirit in the Desert (AZ), Rev. Richard Andersen died suddenly while serving as executive director; Rev. Paul Evenson now serving as interim executive director.

The work of our LOM Territory Coordinators continues to build as an enhancement of resources provided by all of us to each other through LOM. Here's the latest news from the Territories –

- The West: Kyle Lefler, program coordinator, Flathead (MT): Kyle initiated a curriculum recharge and sharing opportunity, April 8, at Lutherhaven (ID) for program directors in the West Territory.

- The West-Midwest: Dave Holtz, executive director, Luthercrest (MN). This Territory had its Gathering October 7-9 at Joy Ranch (SD).
- The East-Midwest: Jeff Thompson, program director, Lutherdale (WI). The Territory Gathering was December 3-5, 2018, at Lake Geneva, WI.
- The South-Central; Phil Geleske, stepped down as Territory Coordinator. His replacement has not yet been named. Texas camps met September 30 – October 2 at Briarwood (TX).
- The East: Karen Hesser, program/development assistant, Bear Creek (PA), stepped down as Territory Coordinator. Sarah Lefler, executive director of Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD), has assumed this position. First Territory Gathering scheduled for December 9-10 at Mar-Lu-Ridge.

During the period covered by this report, LOM Podcasts have been produced with –

- Rev. Jeff Barrow, LOM Emeritus group: Important Traits for Executive Directors of LOM Organizations
- Keith Johnson, founder, BoardCoach: Successful Outdoor Ministry Boards
- Joan Garry, keynote speaker at the Great Gathering: Conversation with Joan Garry about Board Relationships
- Professor of Religion Hans Wiersma, LOM Education Committee member: In the midst of the changing culture around us, how do we keep our Lutheran camps Lutheran.

I cannot imagine serving in the position of executive director of LOM without the involvement of the persons who serve as our contract staff. Jon Skogen, administrator; Randy Younquist-Thurrow, events coordinator; Chad Hershberger, webmaster; Kris Hinkeldey, bookkeeper; Andrea Lee, curriculum production manager; and a big welcome in gratitude for our conference coordinator, Jenny Frantz – thank you so much for your attention to the details, for your support and encouragement, and for your understanding of and advocacy for the importance of outdoor ministry for the church and for the world.

And a shout of gratitude to our Board of Directors. We all appreciate so much your willingness to share from your considerable and collective experience and expertise in ways that assure good decisions for LOM. I am particularly grateful to those Board members with whom I have worked most frequently during this past year – chairperson Rev. Darryl Thompson Powell and treasurer Susan Troutman. Because of increasing needs of Susan's family and the demands of her professional position, Susan has announced that she will be stepping down from the Board and her office of treasurer at the end of 2019. Her knowledge of generally accepted accounting principles and bookkeeping procedures has been extremely valuable for LOM as we have recently transitioned to a new bookkeeper. We will miss Susan very much and it will be a vitally important appointment for the LOM Board to make to the unexpired remainder of Susan's term.

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.

I am so excited to think of the promising times we have in front of us. The future is looking very strong for our association and for the impact we can make for the ELCA, the whole church, and indeed the world around us. The Total Inclusion! initiative presents us with a great opportunity to face issues that have been a challenge for us for a long time. This gives us great hope that we will have resources to face these challenges in a measure greater than we've ever before had. It will be important for us to realize that the grant from MACP will be providing funds for ministry over and above our routine operations. It will be more important than ever before for our routine operations to continue at a continuously expanding level. The need for LOM to have your financial contributions will not in any way diminish because of the MACP grant. In fact, the MACP grant is an example of what we are able to do because of the expanded concept of what LOM can be, as we've developed it over the last several years.

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