What’s Inside

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

Pitchers and catchers reported to Red Sox spring training camp on the day before I’m penning this piece for the March issue of LOM News. Is there anything that is a reminder of the goodness of hope more than baseball spring training?

Well yes, there is! For us as Christians, of course, as we enter into this season of Lent that leads us to the Cross, there is nothing that matches the Good News of the ensuing empty tomb and the hope that springs eternal from it. For me, as I have the opportunity to hear what’s going on around the LOM network with the leadership of bold and faithful Christian leaders, I’ve been moved and inspired by the hopefulness about the near and long-term future that I’ve heard universally expressed.

Much of this hopefulness has been lifted up by the generosity, faithfulness, and loyalty of those who pray for and donate time and expertise, and money, to assure the health and vitality of our ministries. Thus, our hopefulness is accompanied by a deep and abiding sense of gratitude to those who know the value and importance of our outdoor ministries.

I have the same gratitude for you – your time and expertise, your prayers for one another, and when it’s possible, your contributions of dollars – that makes it possible for us to share, and grow, and help each other in the ways that we do through LOM.

It’s no mystery to me why there is so much hope and optimism throughout our outdoor ministry sites. It will be, however, very mysterious if the Red Sox win the pennant this year!

I look forward to being with you around the network!

~Don Johnson
Join LOM on Slack!

LOM has a new Resource Sharing workspace on the popular instant messaging platform, Slack. Connect with other LOM professionals from across the country to share ideas and information by clicking this link: https://join.slack.com/t/lomresourcesharing/shared_invite/zt-mle93ceo-vmuZBD-Jrw_ec1m9JS6Ng

Join the conversation in three easy steps:

1. Create a Slack account, if you don't already have one
2. Enter the confirmation code Slack will email to you
3. Start connecting with LOM professionals

We recommend using the Slack app on your computer or mobile device for the best experience, but it can be accessed in a web browser if you prefer. If you have any hiccups joining, please contact director@LOMnetwork.org.

Survey Results


News from Around the Network

From Lutheridge (a NovusWay site, NC) The YMCA of Western North Carolina has contracted with Lutheridge to host day camps for children during virtual school days. This effort serves to help parents keep their children engaged while schooling at home and provides the social-emotional support needed to help them succeed during this time of community crisis.

"At Lutheridge, we believe that bringing young people together in community in the outdoors makes an impact in their lives and the world," said Chandler Carriker, Interim Program Director at Lutheridge. "We see this during the summer in our camps, and we are seeing that now in our partnership with the YMCA. We are grateful for the opportunity to be a community partner with the YMCA and support families, children, and schools during this season of uncertainty."
Submit Journeys

Have you set your adventure camps and servant trips for 2021 or 2022? If so, please submit them for Journeys for Youth. We’d like to list these camps by May 1. For more information and to submit, go to www.journeys.lomnetwork.org.

Start Thinking about Auction

It’s never too early to start dreaming about the LOM Auction! If you haven’t been involved in the last few years, please thoughtfully consider how you might participate this year. There are two easy ways both you and your organization can be involved. Consider putting a trip package together that your organization can provide as part of the auction. This could be a week at a beach front cabin, a backpacking trip, a canoe trip, something that your organization specializes in - you get the idea. Be creative and let’s add some new adventures for people to share. OR you could provide items for the silent auction that will take place at the same time as the live auction. These items can really reflect your camp or the area that you come from. Anything from locally crafted beers to coffee to custom pottery, and jams and jellies. Again, be creative! We would love to offer a wide variety of items for the silent auction. Contact Daniel Kirschbaum at auction@lomnetwork.org for more details and to get a form to register your auction items. Let’s make this the best auction ever! The LOM Auction catalog will start being filled as items come in. See you in November!

Special Members-Only Pricing for 2021

The organizational members of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM) are eligible for this cost-saving program. LOM has partnered with three other denominations to provide special members-only pricing on products used by our camps and retreat centers. These companies are listed at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/partners/vendor-discounts/ These companies and organizations provide a special discount or value-added bonus to our members. You can receive the specifics of these special deals (and the instructions for accessing them) after sending your request to Jon Skogen at administrator@lomnetwork.org. More discounts will be added to this list, so please check the LOM website for updates.

Consider a Monthly Gift

Have you ever thought about being a regular contributor to LOM? You can easily set up recurring monthly donations at www.lomnetwork.org/donate.

Stay Connected!

Do you have other people in your ministry that should be connected to LOM? Have them sign up for this newsletter and other emails from us by going to website and filling out their information at the bottom of our homepage at www.lomnetwork.org.
Total Inclusion! Update

From Nicole VanderDoes, ELCA Program Coordinator, Total Inclusion!

Looking back on the first year of Total Inclusion! I am awed by how God transformed something so good into something even better. The project remains guided by the original vision to help outdoor ministries become more fully welcoming of people who have been marginalized, including people of color, people living with disabilities, and people who identify as LGBTQIA+. But, instead of spending the early stages planning for what will come later, Total Inclusion! evolved to focus on the present. At the end of 2020, 74 outdoor ministry organizations received $9,000 grants to help them survive the challenges of the pandemic while seeking to thrive as fully inclusive ministries that reflect God’s creative diversity. It is a great feeling to know $666,000 is supporting outdoor ministries right now.

Another thing happening right now is we are recording virtual education components to be rolled out this spring. While grant recipients are required to complete a minimum number of sessions, we invite and encourage all LOM staff and board members to complete as many as possible. These educational components are not boring webinars; they include personal stories, honest discussion of challenging topics, and tips for how to become more welcoming to all of God’s children. This foundational education phase will help prepare everyone to attend the LOM 2021 Annual Conference in November that will focus on Total Inclusion! With the vaccine rollout underway, we are encouraged at the prospect of safely gathering together in person.

While we are living in the moment, we are also looking ahead to the Total Inclusion! symposiums that will take place in March and April of 2022 when participants will focus on putting values and ideas into action. Of course, many organizations are already deeply committed to inclusion, are working to expand the welcome, or are courageously taking first steps. We are grateful we can learn from one another and together allow God to transform us further. Total Inclusion! gives thanks for your ministries and prays for you and those you serve.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Great Ideas for Summer Camp Programs from LIRS

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is a Ministry Partner Member of LOM. They have some great ideas for summer camp or retreat programs:

• June 20th is World Refugee Day - Consider the WRD video and prayer service [www.lirs.org](http://www.lirs.org)
• LIRS’ flagship [Hope for the Holidays](http://www.lirs.org) campaign starts in October – but you can collect donations anytime so that children effected by immigration detention can be given holiday gifts to remind them that they are not forgotten. To donate, or have a holiday card writing party see: [www.Lirs.org/hope](http://www.Lirs.org/hope)
Apply for Grant and Awards

Every year LOM announces its annual grant and awards at the Annual Conference. The LOM Recognitions Committee wants you to know that it’s not too early to submit nominations:

**Diversity Grant:** LOM will award a $2,000 grant for an member organization to initiate a new project or a new element of an existing program that promotes diversity within the ministry and community. Applications will be reviewed by the Recognitions Committee. A selection will be made, and the grant will be awarded at the conference in November. The grantee from the previous year will give a presentation about their project at a workshop or similar opportunity during the conference. Applications can be submitted anytime from now until the deadline of October 1. More at: [https://www.lomnetwork.org/diversity-grant/](https://www.lomnetwork.org/diversity-grant/)

**Innovative Program Award:** LOM will present this award to a member organization that has highlighted an innovative program in their organization. The $1,000 award will be for a program that could include but is not limited to: a new program, serving your population in a new way, reaching out to new populations in your area, or something that benefits the environment or teaches environmental issues, etc. Application deadline is October 1. The award will be presented at annual conference. The recipient from the previous year will give a presentation about their project at a workshop or similar opportunity during the conference. More information at: [https://www.lomnetwork.org/awards/innovative-program-award/](https://www.lomnetwork.org/awards/innovative-program-award/)

**The Manlove-Howells Leadership Award:** The Manlove-Howells Leadership Award is presented each year to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in Christ's Church through the field of outdoor ministry. It recognizes those who have provided visionary insight, inspired collaborative efforts among colleagues, and offered valuable guidance to current and future outdoor ministry leaders. Nomination deadline is October 1. The award will be presented at the annual LOM Conference. More at: [https://www.lomnetwork.org/awards/manlove-howells-leadership-award/](https://www.lomnetwork.org/awards/manlove-howells-leadership-award/)

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**Innovative Program: Campfirmation**

*Campfirmation is one of the programs nominated for LOM’s Innovative Program Award last year*

Campfirmation came out of conversations between local pastors and Shetek Ministries (MN) about ways to better support each other as mutual ministry partners. In the face of pandemic, local clergy were struggling to give and find ways that they could engage their confirmation kids in faith in different ways than before. Campfirmation is customized to each congregation’s needs but builds upon camp’s summer curriculum and catechism to engage faith in a more practical, tangible way. It serves as another connection between congregations and camp, as well as keeps kids connected to camp as they grow into their Christian identity more fully.
Compass Points Reflection

The Compass Points certificate continuing education program for outdoor ministry professionals for April has unfortunately been postponed. We had received some reflections from one of our LOM participants who had graduated from the program and still wished to share their thoughts here.

Judy Hakanson Smith, minister of word and service, camp director for families and adults, Calumet Lutheran Ministries (NH), received her compass and Compass Points certificate at a ceremony during the Great Gathering in 2019. She is the first LOM member to complete the whole set of courses. Here, in her own words, she shares her feelings about the value of this program.

Why did I choose to participate in this two-year program? For me, each course became a “time set apart” as a camp professional to broaden my outlook beyond my own outdoor ministry site. The pre-reading, the in-class time, and the final project were opportunities for me to intentionally focus on one topic and take time (which was difficult to fit in at times!) for professional growth without any excuses! As outdoor ministry professionals, we often are so busy, even more so in these pandemic days, that we forget to nourish and deepen our knowledge and our own faith.

How did Compass Points work for me? The ecumenical piece resonated with me. Courses were taught at camp & retreat centers outside of my ELCA world and the instructors were experienced leaders from a variety of denominations. On site courses included Development; Personnel & Leadership; Program Design; Articulating our Mission, Role and Value; Non-Profit Business Management; and Biblical & Theological Foundations. Each course allowed time for devotions, instruction, large & small group discussions, case studies, and best practices. Over meals, the best discussions happened with colleagues as we shared ideas and best practices from our own settings. Class time at another site also allowed freedom to fully soak in the setting and the material without distractions. The Site Administration course was self-directed where I visited another camp and analyzed that site through a new “lens” from my Compass Points experiences...which ultimately helped me look at my own site with new eyes.

What did I take away from Compass Points? By completing the courses, I walked away with a more organized sense of outdoor ministry. I have more tools now to reference and use in my role as a camp director. On topics I thought I knew something about, I found out there was much more to learn! For example, development is much more than raising money but includes strategically developing relationships and fostering faith in our camp communities. My colleagues in my Compass Points cohort have become dear friends and span many denominations. And my own ministry here in New England has been renewed. I came home each time with new devotions, icebreakers, and even some new table graces which I would use immediately!!! My final Capstone project on Sanctuary churches and denominations helped me recognize the continued relevance of the role our LOM sites play within our synods. Best of all, Compass Points gave me a new sense of direction and connectedness with my own faith and ministry profession.
The purpose of the Leadership Training Event (LTE) is to provide an entry-level educational opportunity for outdoor ministry professionals. The LTE helps to develop well-trained, committed, and diverse outdoor ministry professionals; enhance the quality of outdoor ministry programs; support professionals through formal and informal learning; and assist in the retention of professionals in the network.

$550.00 per person (double/triple occupancy)
A limited number of scholarships are available
Registration opens in May
For more information visit us online: www.lomnetwork.org/lte/
LEADERSHIP TRAINING EVENT

Identity & Vision Concentration

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Theology
- Mission and Vision
- Long-Range Planning
- Strategic Planning/Initiatives
- Creation Stewardship
- Self-Care, Work/Life Balance
- Leadership
- Governance Documents
- Inclusivity
- Conflict Management/Style
- Budget and Finance
- Financial Development

Also: Join a small group, learn about LOM, spend time in fellowship and worship, discuss current camp topics, and much more!

"I feel as though I have gained a much broader knowledge of outdoor ministry, and have begun to create a nationwide support group." - LTE Participant

To further expand and deepen your knowledge in camp and retreat ministry, check out the Compass Points Certification Course at http://www.compasspointsprogram.org/
Discover Your Community!
An app to help you find a summer camp job.

LOM is excited to release our new recruiting tool - Camp MatchUp!

Swipe through a variety of camp profiles to discern what the best fit is for you.

Swipe right on your Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Camp!

**WHY CAMP?**
- Develop leadership skills.
- Learn how to listen & adapt.
- Practice effective communication skills.
- Engage in an intentional community.
- Explore the outdoors.
- Be silly & creative.
- Grow in your faith.
- Have fun.

**DOWNLOAD**
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Visit
www.lomnetwork.org/summerjobs/
for more info

Get the app on your device: https://www.lomnetwork.org/summerjobs/
Sign up your camp to be on the app: https://campmatch.prod.acts.media/
The Impact of LOM

(Note from Don Johnson, LOM executive director: Brent Seaks serves as the executive director of Badlands Outdoor Ministries (ND). I had no idea he was in the middle of such a busy week when I asked him to write this article. Thank you, Brent, for taking the time to tell all of us about your experience in LOM. And thank you for all you do to make LOM as strong and vibrant as it can be. And I sure am looking forward to the day when I can really disrupt your schedule with my next visit to Badlands!)

It is Monday afternoon, and I just got an email from LOM Executive Director Don Johnson asking me if I would write a few paragraphs about the impact our Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Network has had on me and the camp I serve.

This is a busy week for me. I have a presentation to finish by tomorrow for the Kiwanis Club. I have three employee evaluations to complete this week, a staff meeting, a meeting regarding plans for a possible equestrian center, and a meeting with folks who want to host a “mudder” event at camp to benefit a cancer charity. We have new cabinet installation at camp this week, and I have a used camp bus that was just donated to pick up and get to camp. I have a Wednesday night worship service to help lead, and drivers to line up for our community food backpack program. To top it off, this Thursday is the online giving event Giving Hearts Day which is now our second biggest fund-raising event, and I have much work to do for that. I have a school board meeting tonight and a high school registration meeting for my son as well as other parent responsibilities including multiple swim practices, basketball practices, basketball games, an orthodontist appointment, and a swim meet. Oh, my wife’s birthday is this week, and it is Valentine’s Day this weekend.

I am feeling a bit overwhelmed with life at the moment, and I am guessing you know the feeling. However, I still said “yes” to Don’s request because I love LOM and would do anything to support this outdoor ministry network that has supported me so completely through the years.

I attended my first outdoor ministry conference as a new director in 2001 and nineteen conferences since then. I attended both administrative and program schools hosted by our network and other learning events over the years, and I have served on LOM committees and task forces. Camp people are my favorite people to be around, and this organization has afforded me the opportunity to meet with, share ideas, learn from, and love many of my colleagues across the country. Whenever I have needed help in anyway over the years, I have gotten it from the folks in our network. I had an opportunity six years ago to take a sabbatical and visit eleven of our Lutheran outdoor ministry sites through my LOM contacts. I was welcomed graciously at each site and filled with complete awe to see the Holy Spirit at work in so many places and in so many ways. LOM provides a wealth of connections, knowledge, and resources. I am a better director because of LOM, and the camp I serve, Badlands Ministries is a better camp because of what my staff and I have learned through LOM.
LOM News

One of the great things about being on the LOM board is the opportunity to occasionally be involved in continuing education and development experiences to help us function better as a board, grow as individual board members and better serve the outdoor ministry network. We had one of these experiences during our recent online board meeting through watching the first of seven LOM Board Leadership videos available for free to the network.

“Watching” isn’t an accurate description; experiencing and participating better describe what happened. Together, we worked our way through the 7-minute “Activating the Board Engine” video produced by Keith Johnson, founder of the Board Coach and someone with 45 years of leadership experience with outdoor ministries and boards. During the video, there were several breaks for discussion and reflection, so the time required to work through each of the 10-minute videos takes a bit longer, but they are flexible and adaptable. A couple guiding questions at each break led us into some interesting reflection, discussion, evaluation and talk about future steps toward maturing as a board. The format makes the content easy to absorb and use.

Keith’s presentations are to-the-point as he addresses how boards and board members function appropriately and responsibly in supporting and guiding staff and outdoor ministry organizations. It’s foundational stuff that every board needs to be attentive to, even the LOM board. I can see how these videos will be of value to any board as a way of reflecting on how it is functioning, orientating new board members, working through times of uncertainty and growth, reviewing best practices or as a simple tune-up from time-to-time. I am looking forward to the LOM board working through more of the videos in upcoming meetings!

You can find and download the seven Board Leadership Videos at: www.lomnetwork.org > Resources > Board Leadership Videos. The topics include:

- “Activating the Board Engine”
- “Good Governance Basics”
- “Recruiting Great Board Members”
- “Leading Through a Strategic Vision & Plan”
- “Four Keys to a Strong Board & Executive Relationship”
- “How A Governance Committee Can Transform the Board”
- “Vital Role of the Board in Raising Funds”

Keith’s volunteer time, skills and insights and the generous gifts from you and your outdoor ministry organizations made this possible. Thanks! It is truly awesome to see what is happening for the benefit of all our members through your generosity, particularly in these challenging and difficult times.
Help Promote the 2021 LOM Curriculum "From Generation to Generation"

The LOM Curriculum Committee would like to ask for your help in spreading the news to the congregations in your area about the 2020 LOM Curriculum. Please take a moment out of your day and share the following information with congregations who support your ministry. LOM has a VBS bundle that we believe could be very useful to many congregations, but we need your help to get the word out! All you have to copy the following and share it!

***Here is wording for you to send to congregations***

As a supporter of our camp, you know about our ministry, but you may not know that we are a part of a larger organization called Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, or LOM. LOM is an organization that exists to empower and equip outdoor ministry organizations, and one of the ways that they do that is by producing an outdoor curriculum each year. Now, the same easy to use and theologically strong curriculum is available for congregations to use for Vacation Bible School.

LOM’s 2021 theme From Generation to Generation will allow campers and their leaders will explore the stories of familiar Bible characters and their responses to God’s call and promised faithfulness in the midst of life’s unpredictability and challenges. The promises of God, first made to Abraham and Sarah, include a place to live, a purpose to live out, and a posterity to carry on God’s promises to all future generations. Freed from fear, we step out, trusting that missteps will not destroy us, that God’s guidance will take us where God has called us to go, creating relationships based on care and compassion. From Generation to Generation focuses on how the enduring love instilled in the promise to Abraham and Sarah continue through Old Testament characters, to Jesus, to the early church, and on to YOU! God’s love endures forever – From Generation to Generation!

Daily themes include:

- Abraham and Sarah (Day 1 focus) were called to step out in faith with a destination unknown, but a promise to assure them of God’s grace and blessing.
- Joseph (Day 2 focus) stepped beyond anger to embrace God’s gifts and use them to bless more people than expected. His story emphasizes that what others might mean for harm, God can use to bring promised blessing.
- David’s story (Day 3 focus) reminds us that God has a propensity for choosing the least expected person to do the most difficult job. God does not call the qualified, but instead qualifies the called.
- Each one of us can be God’s agent of blessing.
- In that same manner, the story of Mary the mother of Jesus (Day 4 focus) shows us that God goes beyond cultural conventions and our understanding to keep the promises made to Abraham and Sarah and their offspring. Mary’s courageous trust is an example of a life narrative to follow.
- The stories of Paul, Timothy, and Lydia (Day 5 focus) extend the promises beyond the descendants of Abraham and Sarah to all the world, including us. We are invited to experience God’s promised blessing, love, and grace and also to share it with those in our world today.

LOM’s VBS package includes all you need to run your own Vacation Bible School program: five full days of Bible Study designed for lower and upper elementary students, crafts, games and graphics. Priced at only $150, your congregation gets the tools that you need to help the children in your community engage with the Bible and their faith. This theme, as well as others, are available on the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries website at www.lomnetwork.org.
New Ministry Partner: Lutheran Diaconal Association

The LDA's mission is to prepare and support the whole people of God in Christ's call to serve. We are a multi-Lutheran organization forming and preparing people to become deaconesses or deacons through a process of education and formation. LDA students study theology, practice hands-on ministry, grow in their own spirituality, and become members of a lifelong community of deaconesses or deacons.

A deaconess or deacon is someone who serves. Jesus washed his disciples’ feet and instructed them to do the same for others. Sometimes deaconesses and deacons do actual foot-washing like Jesus did; but more widely, they serve Christ by walking with those the world easily forgets; the marginalized, the poor, the powerless, the sick. Traditionally, LDA deaconesses were nurses or teachers, but as the organization has evolved, deaconess/deacon ministry has come to mean many things: it means serving others on bended knee and from positions of leadership. It means entering the hurt parts of society and carrying the light and love of Christ in service to others. It means telling the story of God’s love and helping others to hear God in their own story. It means welcoming the stranger in our midst.

We have deaconesses and deacons who serve in and outside of church, as parish workers, camp directors, executive directors of non-profits, attorneys, engineers, professors, teachers, healthcare workers, and many other fields. The LDA is committed to marrying people's call to serve Christ with their passions and skill sets; we form our students into the identity of one who serves over and above the specific ministry that they are doing. The lifelong diaconal communities that our students are formed into are there to pray for, support, encourage, and challenge each other.

Our students range in age from 20-70 and come from around the country. We are distance-based, and our program focuses on flexibility and adaptability. The LDA's education and formation process can work for you regardless of where you live, your age, or your intended area(s) of ministry. If you would like to find out more about our education and formation program, please email Valerie.Webdell@valpo.edu, or go to our website at www.theLDA.org.

PRAYER REQUESTS

For CJ Clark, executive director, Living Water (MI), whose mother passed away on February 15.

Celebration with Jeff Fairfax, youth & outreach program director, Sky Ranch (CO), whose wife, Madeline, gave birth to Calvin Thomas Fairfax on February 12.
From one of our LOM Ministry Partners

Forming Faith Together with the ELCA Youth Ministry Network

Faith formation in a congregational setting, and in our outdoor ministry sites, are two sides of the same coin. The locations and methods may be different, but the mission and goals are the same: for the Holy Spirit to form faith in the lives of those we engage.

The ELCA Youth Ministry Network is deeply grateful for the work of ELCA outdoor ministries, and of the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Network. The ministry that happens in our camps and retreat centers is important. We all know the impact an outdoor ministry experience can have on the faith of a young person, and on the young adults who work on camp staffs.

Partnership and collaboration run deep in the DNA of the ELCA Youth Ministry Network. We believe that deeper collaboration between congregations and camps will only benefit both, and ultimately will create deeper faith in the lives of young people and families we all serve.

For many years, the Network has had different levels of organizational partnerships as a way of connecting resource providers to the Network. Last year, at the suggestion of Don Johnson, we create a new “Lutheran Outdoor Ministry” level, to make partnership even more accessible to outdoor ministries.

If an outdoor ministry site chooses to become an Outdoor Ministry Partner, the Network will provide for them:
- 2 memberships in the Network
- 2 registrations at the Extravaganza
- 1 exhibit table at the Extravaganza
- A listing in the “Partners” section of the Network web site
- A feature in our email newsletter, rotating with the other partners
- Access to the Network database for your region for a once-a-year email or snail mail contract
- Recognition as a Network partner at the Extravaganza

The financial commitment to become a Network partner is $800, which is significantly less than the cost of the individual items listed above, if you were not a partner. In addition, as a part of the Network, partners help give shape to the culture of faith formation in the ELCA.

The Network invites you to become an outdoor partner. We believe it will strengthen your ministry and it will help and support those who are working in congregational faith formation. You can get more information at www.elcaymnet.org/LOMPartners, or please feel free to contact Todd Buegler, the Executive Director of the ELCA Youth Ministry Network at todd@elcaymnet.org.
Recognizing Others

When I was a college student, one of my campus pastors at Penn State Lutheran Campus Ministry taught me a life lesson that sticks with me today. No matter what I did, whether it be read scripture or serve communion at worship, or serve as an officer in the parish, he always thanked me. At first when he arrived on campus and started doing that, I was taken aback. I thought to myself, “I just read the lessons. That was no big deal.” But I really came to appreciate his style of being grateful and recognizing my service. He is now a synodical bishop in the ELCA, and I bet to this day he continues to practice that trait.

Nehemiah, in Chapter 8, reminds us of this practice, too. Leaders celebrate often. Especially, Christian leaders who appreciate the value of celebrating the great things God has done through their organizations. When goals are reached and we see God’s handiwork, we should celebrate and give glory of God!

Nehemiah did this when the building of the wall was complete. He and Ezra read from scripture and the community joined in. In fact, those who were there were honored and recognized by having their name in the Bible!

How often do you recognize those who help you in your ministry? In my setting, in addition to the usual thank you note, we often recognize volunteers in our monthly newsletter and donors in annual giving report. We remind friends that we need the help of a lot of people to do God’s work in our place. We take time to recognize the efforts of the cloud of witnesses who help us do our work.

Nehemiah also added the instruction to "send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared" (Nehemiah 8:10) In other words, he told them to bring the poor to the party. What does this mean for us? We should share the wealth and spread the joy. We are to think of others and look for ways to fulfill their needs. That can be done with all those who we recognized as friends, volunteers, and supporters.

Especially in these days of pandemic, it takes a village to keep a ministry going. Don’t forget to recognize those who have helped you in these days and chart a course for how they can continue to help your ministry long after COVID-19 is in our rearview mirror.

–Chad Hershberger