



Adult Lutherans Organized for Action

FORMING AN ADULT MINISTRY TEAM

What is ALOA? ALOA was founded in 1991 to support adult ministry in Lutheran congregations and to encourage events which foster intellectual, social and spiritual growth. ALOA enlists interested congregations as partners in this ministry and produces materials for use in churches. Adult Lutherans Organized for Action remains the only inter-Lutheran organization focused on ministry by and for persons age 50 and above.

ALO A members serve God's mission by...

Equipping mature adults to become disciples of Jesus Christ and leaders,
Celebrating opportunities to put faith to work in life's second half, and by
Serving others in their congregations and in the daily places of their lives.

Why focus on adults in this age group?

The "age wave" is upon us. The number of people in the U.S. over age 65 is now larger than the entire population of Canada. Increasingly, congregations are comprised of older persons with more time available for leadership and volunteer activities, including church and community service. Also, as people age there are "windows of receptivity" when they are more open to the good news of the Gospel and to Christian service.¹

Why an adult ministry initiative?

Many congregations are poorly prepared to respond to the aging of adults outside the church and in their own congregations. The church's ministry and outreach emphases have traditionally focused on children and youth or young families. While an attractive ministry for younger persons is important, it is equally vital to have a ministry by and for middle and older adults. One out of three persons age 50 and above in the United States is now unchurched and, middle adults are increasingly choosing not to be involved in the life of local churches.

Why an Adult Ministry Leadership Team?

While many congregations have ministries for children, and some have youth and family ministry teams, less than 5% of "main line" churches have functioning adult ministry teams. It has been ALO A's experience that when a pastor trained in adult ministry leaves, or a skilled laity leader steps aside, the program often plateaus or grinds to a halt. Teams provide a core of committed leaders and a continuity of oversight and assistance.

ALO A believes that a functioning and energetic Adult Ministry Team is the key to creating and supporting an effective adult ministry in local congregations.

¹ Such windows of receptivity include, but are not limited to: death of a spouse or close family member, marital separation or divorce, major physical problems, loss of a job, financial challenges, and feelings of not being needed or lack of purpose.

But my church already has adult groups.

Most congregations do have established guilds, circles, and classes that attract a limited number of new members, and as a result these tend to decline over time. Research suggests that most new groups unintentionally shut down to “outsiders” within twelve to eighteen months after they are started. Ironically, the very intimacy they provide for members contributes to a perception by outsiders that they wouldn’t fit in.

What do Adult Ministry Teams do?

- Teams provide support and assistance to existing adult groups while enabling congregations to engage the ongoing strategy of adding new groups and intergenerational ministries.
- Teams assess the needs and desires of adult members and potential members and assist churches to respond to these.
- Teams enlist volunteers to lead and maintain each activity. Teams help to identify persons interested in affirming the gifts, strengths, and assets of adults.
- Teams provide opportunities (events/programs) that serve both the church and its immediate community, where possible partnering with other churches and community groups to equip, offer fellowship, and serve area adults.
- Teams advocate for the special needs—physical, friendship, spiritual—of frail, elderly persons. These may include such things as surveying the accessibility of the congregation’s facilities, providing transportation to special events, making large print worship and devotional materials available.
- Because the times and the environment continue to change, ministry teams regularly seek the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. What is God doing in and through this congregation? What is the next chapter in the life of our church, and how do middle and senior adults participate in its realization?

FORMING AN ADULT MINISTRY TEAM²

1. **Begin by consulting** with the pastor and congregation leadership (Council). Consult with existing groups that already involve adults to determine needs and avoid duplication.
2. **Establish a team of** five to ten persons with active adult ministry groups in the congregation represented. The success of this ministry will be directly related to finding, selecting, and training team leadership. Determine what training is required and how it will be provided.
3. **Conduct a survey** of adults in life’s second half. Learn how many people in your church and community fit in this age category, their family and relationship status, common concerns. Conduct several focus groups. Listen carefully as participants describe their interests and needs.
4. **Conduct a demographic and a service analysis** of your local community. Know the needs of middle and older adults in your area and what services are available for them.
5. **Develop a purpose statement**, which includes an intentional focus on the key areas of fellowship, Christian faith formation, outreach, and service by and to older adults. Without a purpose statement to guide and check progress, activities may become self-serving and self-centered.
6. **Begin to shape a program.** Use this information to help create a shared vision for adult ministry. One size does not fit all. Paths and programs are planned to respond to the unique needs and interests of members and potential members.

² This list is adapted from one originally prepared by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., Director, Center on Aging & Adult Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

7. **Plan two high-visibility events each year** targeted to persons age 50 and above. A high-visibility event is a church-sponsored activity to which nonmembers feel comfortable attending and members feel comfortable inviting their friends (e.g. seminars on aspects of retirement planning).
8. **Survey the people who attend** and learn about their interests and needs. Then plan the year's activities based on those needs and congruent with the stated mission of your congregation.
9. **Communicate!** Regularly report activities and progress to the congregation and community. Strengthen connections with neighboring churches and share learnings with the adult ministry movement.

Stronger together!

Adult Lutherans Organized for Action is a key expression of the adult ministry movement in the United States and Canada. ALOA is looking to partner with others in this mission.

ALOA SUPPORT for PARTNER CONGREGATIONS

1. **Communication channels.** Congregational stories, feedback and research data are shared via ALOA print and on-line.
2. **Website.** The website *aloaserves.org* provides for both free distribution and the sale of print and digital resources for adult ministry.
3. **Adult ministry resources.** ALOA provides partner congregations with articles and materials dealing with deepening Christian discipleship, passing on the faith, mentoring, etc.
4. **Mentoring.** ALOA can assist congregations to develop, nurture, and maintain adult ministry and outreach programs.
5. **National events.** ALOA can provide assistance in organizing national educational and fellowship events for seniors (e.g., Lutherhostels and Pilgrimages).
6. **Regional and local events.** ALOA encourages close-to-home educational and fellowship events (SeniorFests, Adult Ministry Fests, Tools for Renewal conferences).
7. **Boomer programs.** ALOA will develop study series, retreats, and conferences that speak to the special interests and needs of middle adults, age 50-65 (e.g. Boomer Blasts).

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YES, my congregation desires to Partner with ALOA!

Congregation: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Signed: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

Return to: ALOA OPERATIONS CENTER, PO Box 4367, Clearwater, FL 33758