



# Adult Lutherans Organized for Action

*An inter-Lutheran ministry by, with, and for adults age 50 and older*

## Introductions and Conversations

*August 2018*

**Let me introduce myself. I'm Mark Schoepp** and I'm the new Executive Director of ALOA. I'm excited and honored to be chosen for this position - with thanks to all those who are supporters of the Lutze Visionary Leadership Fund which made the hiring possible. I'm hoping I can live up to that fund's name! I'll need your help to do it.

My background in ministry includes serving in both parishes and a ministry organization. You can find some more information about my ministry history at [ALOAServes.org](http://ALOAServes.org) under the "ABOUT" tab. I have some early thoughts about how to help ALOA move forward and make an impact. I've shared those with the search committee and the Board of Directors, but my plan is to spend lots of time in the early weeks and months listening and learning, from the Board of Directors, from Partner Congregations, and from *YOU* the supporters and members of ALOA.

ALOA has a rich history of leadership in ministry for and with older adults. I've posted on the ALOA Facebook page about 'impact' ([face-](https://www.facebook.com/ALOAServes)

[book.com/Adult-LutheransALO](http://book.com/Adult-LutheransALO)).

Both organizations and individuals can make an impact. I'm inspired by the 3 words from the ALOA logo that help us focus: **Celebrate, Equip and Serve.**

- We **Celebrate** who older adults are as contributing, important members of congregations and members of the world.
- We **Equip** older adults and the congregations where they worship for stronger ministry. I believe congregations are key places for multiplying impact.
- We **Serve** - we are active agents, Christ's hands and feet in the world as servant leaders today; and we are also served ourselves in times of challenge and need.

I'd love to hear from you. There are some specific options available

*Continued on page 2*



*Mark Schoepp*

***ALOA's purpose:***  
***Equipping persons in the second half of life as disciples of Jesus Christ for their service to family, church, community and world.***

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Earl Alton  
ALOA President

**We welcome Mark Schoepp** who began as ALOA's Executive Director on July 1. The selection of Mark to this position reflects the continuity of ALOA and the commitment of new energy as we move forward in serving the LCMS and ELCA in senior ministry. This position has been part of the ALOA organization from its beginning when Karl Lutze so ably served.

A few years ago, when the existing executive director, Judy Baker, retired and ALOA underwent structural changes, the position was merged with the office of the president of the Board. While we were well served by several presidents, along with other Board leaders and part-time office staff, ALOA was, in the words of my good friend Bob Zimmer, "lacking a quarterback." This, along with the discussions from those involved with the Karl Lutze Visionary Leadership fund drive all pointed to once again having an executive director leading the organization.

In April of this year, the ALOA Board modified its Bylaws to provide for the hiring of an executive director. Initial funding for the position was made possible by your generous contributions to the Lutze Visionary Leadership Fund. This change in organization brings new energy and insight into ALOA. Mark's article highlights his passion for our ministry and his immediate plans to interact with members and move ahead to carry out the mission of ALOA. I affirm Marks' closing by saying I, too, am praying the Lord will bless our work together, and I invite you to hold ALOA in your prayers.

## COVER STORY

...continued from page 1

1. You can engage with me on the [ALOA Facebook](#) page where I will be regularly posting about topics of interest. I hope you "like" and "follow" that page - and I really hope you reply to the posts. I'll often ask specific questions for feedback. Let me hear from you there. And also help spread the word by re-posting any of them you think others might like to see.
2. I'm going to make contact with a random sample of ALOA members and donors (perhaps every 10th person on our list). I'll invite you into a phone conversation about ALOA to hear your thoughts about where ALOA has been and where we should be heading.
3. If you have something to share and you're not in the above group, contact me anyway! Email at [mark@aloaserves.org](mailto:mark@aloaserves.org) is a good way to connect. Or, call the office at 800-930-2562 and leave a message for me. I welcome the conversation.

Exciting times ahead! I'm praying the Lord will bless our work together as we lift up the importance of ministry for & with older adults.

### In Remembrance

ALOA recently learned of the passing to life eternal of these servants of our Lord:

**Rev. Arthur J. Constien** passed away on July 2, 2018. He served ALOA from 1997-2002, succeeding the retiring Karl Lutze as Executive Director.

**Rev. Edwin B. Naylor**, who passed away on June 17, 2018, succeeded Constien as Executive Director and served until late in 2004.

We are grateful for their dedication & service.

[aloa4u@gmail.com](mailto:aloa4u@gmail.com)

## COMING EVENTS

### Ironwood Springs Lutherhostel

September 24-28, 2018

#### Reflect • Connect • Grow in Faith

Our Fall Lutherhostel returns to Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville, Minnesota. The camp offers private hotel style rooms in their Miracle Lodge, along with many indoor and outdoor amenities.

Dr. Robert Holst will present *The Wonderful Witness of Women in the Gospel of John*. Robert served as a pastor, missionary in Papua New Guinea and college professor. He retired as president of Concordia University, St. Paul, MN. Music and devotions will be led by James Coe, who served congregations in Michigan and Florida for 40 years.

**Call for room availability:** 800-930-2562

**Cost:** \$575 per person/dbl occupancy includes program, lodging and meals. Camper sites are \$525 per person and some space is available for commuters for \$350

### Experience Italy & the Oberammergau Passion Play

September 22 - October 2, 2020

Join ALOA on an 11-Day tour with stops in Rome, Assisi, Florence, Padua and Venice, and highlighted by the world famous Oberammergau Passion Play. This once-a-decade event has been performed every 10 years since 1633 by the residents of this lovely Bavarian village.

Take in the sights in Italy before the play, including highlights of Christian Rome, Vatican City and the tomb of the Apostle Paul, the Sistine Chapel and treasured master-

[aloaserves.org](http://aloaserves.org)



per person (no lodging or breakfast). For more information or to download a brochure and registration form, go to [aloaserves.org/events/luther-hostels/](http://aloaserves.org/events/luther-hostels/)

#### SeniorFest

**Lafayette, IN - Sept. 29, 2018** - The Indiana District Senior Ministry Task Force will hold a SeniorFest at St. James Lutheran Church. Dr. Reed Lessing will speak on "Why Am I Here?", based on Psalm 71:18.

pieces of Michelangelo, Giotto and more.

**Cost:** \$4,722 per person/dbl occupancy from Tampa. Includes round-trip airfare, lodging, 2 meals daily, transfers, tours and sightseeing, along with guaranteed tickets to experience the Passion Play.

**EARLY BIRD savings of \$150 if initial deposit of \$500.00 received by Sept. 22, 2018!** Save \$100 if payment received by Sept. 22, 2019.

For more information or to download a brochure and registration form, go to [aloaserves.org/events/passion/](http://aloaserves.org/events/passion/)



## IN THE WORDS OF... BOB ZIMMER

*A continuing series of interviews with veteran leaders in senior adult ministry.*

By Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Bob Zimmer chaired the initial Joint-Lutheran committee that studied older adult ministry and he served as the first president



Bob Zimmer

of ALOA's Board of Directors. He continues to be active with the Florida Region of ALOA, as well as serving on the leadership team of the Karl Lutze Visionary Leadership Fund and the search team for our new Executive Director.

**How did you develop an interest in senior ministry?**

**Zimmer:** As President of Wheat Ridge (1973-1990), proposals addressing the rapidly expanding aging population were crossing my desk with increasing frequency. We could see that even as the membership in Lutheran churches was aging, the national church offices were reducing support for older adult ministry; it seemed ironic. By the early '90's both the LCMS and ELCA ended almost all financial support for this ministry.

The Wheat Ridge staff and Board decided to try a different approach to augment ministry by, with and for older adult Lutherans. A seed money grant was approved in 1989 to launch an innovative joint Lutheran ministry and chose the name Association of Luther-

an Older Adults (ALOA), later changed to **Adult Lutherans Organized for Action.**

**What are the biggest changes you've seen through the years in the attitude toward senior adult ministry by congregational leaders and pastors? By church body leadership??**

**Zimmer:** 1) The greatest change is that most folks in their 70's and 80's are still going strong and taking a more active role in every aspect of ministry. Necessity is one reason – in many congregations, older adults are basically what's there; congregations are aging!

2) A more positive reason is a desire to serve. More older adults are realizing "they are not done" and use their considerable abilities and resources in Christian service.

3) Another significant change is in the attitude and actions of the national church bodies. As the church has aged, you might expect that corresponding resources would be devoted to those efforts. What happened was just the opposite! With the overall decline in membership and contributions, the national church bodies chose to focus on the younger generations...to the almost total exclusion of ministry to older adults. "Over-the-hill folk" are too easily dismissed or ignored. For too many, the aged population is "where it was" not "where it's at"!

**Delivery systems for senior adult ministry have changed through the years, but has the message itself changed? Should the message change?**

*Cont. on next page*

### Support ALOA

Your donation helps ALOA provide more support & resources for older adult ministry. Use the enclosed envelope or click the blue [Donate Now](#) button on our website to donate online.

[aloa4u@gmail.com](mailto:aloa4u@gmail.com)

In the Words of Bob Zimmer...

from pg. 4

**Zimmer:** Aging is an uneven process – some people are old at 50 and others are young at 80. Today older adults are being defined and challenged in ways that they never were before. Many aspects of our culture are adapting to these trends, especially with regard to second career activity, volunteerism, fitness and recreation, health care, travel, marketing, etc. Certainly, the church needs to take seriously these "new trends in aging" and adapt its ministry by, with and for older adults at every defined level.

**How can congregations communicate the importance of senior adult ministry?**

**Zimmer:** We need to provide opportunities and encouragement for involvement in all areas of church life: *in the worship services, in the task of passing on the faith, on action teams and service projects, in pastoral care, etc.* Specific programs and events should intentionally "spotlight" older adults, i.e. intergenerational services and services and activities that **celebrate aging**.

### NEW Video Resources



**10 new videos** have been added to the Video Resources page on our website. Created under the guidance of Dr. Mary Manz Simon and with the partnership of Prince of Peace Christian School in Carrollton, Texas, the short format clips were produced by the school's video class. Bible Studies, created by Rev. Ken Holdorf, are paired with a number of the videos. The Bible Studies can be downloaded from our website and are suited for individual or group use.

View all 30 of ALOA's videos at [aloaserves.org/resources/videos](http://aloaserves.org/resources/videos)

[aloaserves.org](http://aloaserves.org)

## BEST PRACTICES

An idea shared by a congregation involved in *Equipping 21st Century Disciples*.

At Grace Lutheran, Somers Point, NJ, church secretary Diana McArdle had recently lost her husband and was dealing with the complexities of resolving his estate when the congregation looked to develop a new program. Witnessing her experience and the disadvantage of not "having one's affairs in order" was the motivation for the church to address preparedness in organizing the final chapter of one's life.

**Formation** – With guidance from Rev. Bob Hughes and Pastor Jeff Rickards, they developed *The Last Hurrah!* The 5-part series focuses on equipping persons to face issues that confront adults in the senior years or after a loved one passes away. A government website with free materials was discovered, which provided templates used to structure the content of the series.

**Implementation** – *The Last Hurrah!* was offered in 30-minute presentations on the first Sunday of the month. Topics included personal and medical information, legal and financial arrangements, living wills and funeral planning. Handouts and a binder were provided to the 30-40 participants.

**Result** – The series was enthusiastically embraced by the congregation, and the subject clearly resonated with participants across diverse age groups. In the future, the series may be offered to the community, with Grace Lutheran serving as the host location.

Want to learn more? Contact the church at 609-927-3082, or email [office@gracelutheranspnj.com](mailto:office@gracelutheranspnj.com) or [comcastbiz.net](http://comcastbiz.net) for a pdf of handouts.



## BOARD NEWS

The ALOA Board of Directors recently voted to add two members to its Board of Directors. In addition to their skills, experience and passion for older adult ministry, their



Sue Lennartson

church affiliation helps the Board to better maintain balance among its membership.

Susan Lennartson, Stillwater, Minnesota, brings a background as a chaplain, ministry leader, life coach, author and speaker.

She also leads a ministry in her congregation for those in the "third chapter of life."

Carolyn Ross, Huntington, California, is the Executive Director of Care Connections

Network, a non-profit organization formed to empower older adults to age in their own homes and communities. The organization is an outgrowth of a ministry she developed within her congregation.



Carolyn Ross

**Your faithful giving makes everything we do possible. We are grateful for the support of these individuals for donations received May - July, 2018:**

### 10+ Year Supporters

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## EQUIPPING PROJECT UPDATE

By Rev. Dr. Robert Hughes, for the Program Team

**Each day in the U.S. more than** 10,000 adults turn 65. As well, congregations are "graying," with approximately 45% of Lutherans age 50 or older.

**Refocusing** – Through our *Equipping 21st Century Disciples* project, ALOA is working directly with Lutheran congregations willing to try a fresh approach to adult ministry. The central aim of the program is to create an environment that God can use to produce disciples, persons equipped to live more like Christ and to serve Christ in family, community, church and the wider world.

### Tactics For Effective Leadership

In place of a single-leader approach, the "adult ministry team" (or whatever a congregation chooses to label it) is to be a visioning, planning, praying team supporting older adult ministry. New leadership enlisted for each component or event is key to building the church's leadership base.

**Networking** – Since Pentecost, congregations have been God's way of connecting believers. Participating congregations connect with one another online or by phone to share challenges, learnings and "best practices," as a way to make Lutherans stronger together.

**Challenge** – ALOA challenges each adult ministry team to hold at least one high-visibility event each year. This would be a church-sponsored activity that nonmembers feel comfortable attending and to which members feel comfortable inviting friends. This makes adult ministry both a "journey inward" of deeper commitment to Christ and a "journey outward" of service to church and community.

### ALOA's Progress

**Tool Kit** – A program team of ministry leaders has developed a printed "Tool Kit" to assist planners to identify both the strengths of a congregation's existing programs as well as needs a ministry team can highlight for near term and future action.



**Connecting** – ALOA has identified and invited a number of congregations whose pastors and people wish to engage actively with others in adult ministry. These networks of 6-8 similarly-minded churches are embarking on a pilot year of fresh ways to equip adults in life's second half for more effective ministry. A key learning so far is that some congregations test the waters of this process gingerly and edge in, while others dive in and swim ahead rapidly. There is no "one way" to play.

### The Response?

Regularly, congregations involved have expressed appreciation for...

- **The freedom of a pilot year** to experiment, try different things and to share learnings while moving ahead.
- **This serious effort to build leadership** among clergy and laity, making the adult ministry team concept central to the model.
- **The opportunity to join an interdependent Lutheran network** of congregations that transcends geographic and ecclesiastical limits, doing ministry and growing stronger together in God's service.





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## Special Thanks to our Dedicated Partners

ALOA depends on the generous support of our partner congregations. ***They are leaders*** in their mission for adult ministry!

### Partner Congregations

Calvary, Green Bay, WI  
Christ Our Redeemer,  
Temple Terrace, FL  
Emmanuel, Venice, FL  
Good Shepherd, Tampa, FL  
Grace, Clearwater, FL  
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Luther Memorial, Erie, PA  
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