



Adult Lutherans Organized for Action

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

Engage At Any Age: A look at Grandparenting

May 2018

by Dr. Lydia Manning, ALOA Board

Grandparents play a pivotal role in the lives of their grandchildren. They are often viewed as traditional figures in family life and are frequently the cornerstones of the family. As our life expectancy lengthens and more people live longer, the number of grandparents increases. MetLife reports that numbers of grandparents are at record highs and growing at more than twice the overall population growth rate.

- There were 65 million grandmothers and grandfathers in 2010
- By 2020, that number is projected to reach 80 million. .nearly 1 in 3 adults
- Nearly 75% of people over the age of 65 are grandparents
- Approximately half of all grandparents become great-grandparents

Increasing numbers of grandparents implies that greater numbers of younger generations will know their grandparents well into their adolescence, young adulthoods, and even as young parents.

Grandparent-grandchild relationships are important and result in frequent interactions between them.

- Nearly half of all grandparents report weekly contact
- Roughly 75% have monthly contact
- Advances in modern technology (Skype, FaceTime, Facebook, and texting) are changing these interactions

Studies on grandparent satisfaction show they derive pleasure from the role and that adjustment to grandparenthood is positive. Grandparents often feel valued in their relationships with grandchildren. Older adults are able to fulfill a sense of legacy as they reminisce about the past.

These relationships provide grandparents with the opportunity to break norms regarding age-appropriate behavior. For example, they feel free to act foolish, giggle and play games that their age normally forbids. The hugs and cuddles that children expect from grandparents also give those grandparents opportunities for personal contact that is generally restricted in our culture.



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

Admonitions to do things in “good order” are commonplace and recent changes to the Bylaws of ALOA, approved by the Board, follows this admonition. To better carry out our mission, the structure of the organization will be

simplified to remove the position of Board Chair and an executive director will be the face of and direct the operation of ALOA. It is expected that a part-time person will be hired in the near future. This is being made possible by the results of the Lutze fund drive. Shirley Carpenter (who was Board Chair) has agreed to serve as Interim Executive Director until the search is completed.

A second change was to simplify our Board election processes. Our formal Annual Meeting has, in recent years, been held wherever the Board had a meeting. Participation was minimal. The Board has returned to its original procedure of electing members and officers at its spring meeting (whether meeting in person or by electronic means). Your input as an ALOA member remains important, and I invite you to submit the names of individuals who can share their passion for older adult ministry as potential candidates for the Board. We strive to balance Board membership, and are presently in need of individuals who are members of ELCA congregations.

On a personal note: While I remain as President, I want to recognize and give a heartfelt thank you to Shirley Carpenter. A longtime Board member, she has been a pro forma executive director and these changes allow ALOA to maintain her active role. We have been blessed!

Did you know....

May is Older Americans Month! The Administration on Aging celebrates this event annually. Its 2018 theme, **Engage at Every Age**, emphasizes that you are never too old (or young) to take part in activities that enrich your physical, mental and emotional well-being. It also celebrates the many ways in which older adults make a difference in our communities.

No matter where you are in your life, there is no better time than now to start.

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

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COVER STORY

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People become grandparents at ages ranging from their early 30s to 60s or 70s. This age diversity contributes to the diversity of grandparenting styles, such as formal, fun seeker, distant figure, surrogate parent, or reservoir of family wisdom. In most cases, these relationships occur naturally and effortlessly. In other instances, the connections may need cultivation and effort to be fruitful and meaningful.

Overall, intergenerational relationships are alive and well. Four simple characteristics can be kept in mind to build and strengthen relationships between grandparents and grandchildren: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and resiliency. We know that younger generations respect the wisdom

72%

think being a grandparent is the single most important and satisfying thing in their life

and life experience of their grandparents, particularly as the younger generations age and experience life. Younger generations express wanting to be responsible for their older loved ones, wanting to make sure that everyone is

receiving the care, love and support they need. Reciprocity is also important; both generations do well when all parties feel needed, valued, and connected. Creating intergenerational exchanges and opportunities for grandparents and grandchildren to form coalitions to deal with hardship and adversity within families is also important and bolsters these relationships and family resilience.

Creating nurturing connections between grandparents and grandchildren is fun and easy. Here are several simple strategies that will help

68%

think being a grandparent brings them closer to their adult children

grandparents interact with their grandchildren. These approaches to connection are valuable across all age ranges.



- Arrange for regular visits with grandchildren. Alternate travel or meet at a destination desirable by both parties.
- Plan time to talk frequently. Grandparents can ask insightful and provocative questions that invite discussion with their grandchildren and share experiences about their own lives.
- Sharing is crucial. Grandparents can share something about their past or a recent experience.
- If you're a distance away, send your grandchildren something in the mail. They will recognize your packages and appreciate them.
- Describe for your grandchildren what inspires or awes you and what matters most in your life and in your relationship with them. In turn, inquire about what inspires and awes them. Enjoy being able to see life through younger eyes.

75% of grandparents go online

Grandparents have the added benefit of not being the parent. Enjoy this role. Take it easy and smell the roses together.

Give to ALOA when you shop Amazon.



Go to smile.amazon.com & designate your charity as Adult Lutherans Organized for Action. Amazon will donate .5% of your purchase amount to ALOA...and at no cost to you!

IN THE WORDS OF... DORIS HANSON

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

By Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Dr. Doris Hanson has been involved in ALOA nationally, and senior ministry initiatives in Florida for many years. As a member of the ALOA Board from 2001-2006, and



President from 2003-2006, Doris took an active role in building the organization. She was actively involved in an inter-Lutheran Older Adult Ministry Initiatives team in Florida that evolved into ALOA's first organized region in 2012, the ALOA - Florida Region.

Doris, you were involved with ALOA from nearly the beginning. How was the message about senior ministry received 25 years ago?

Hanson: Leaders and thinkers in the church were receptive to ideas for senior ministry, but just as today, many churches really felt a youth staff and program was more important. Folks were just waking up to the fact that a lot of people were living a lot longer.

What was the thought behind the acronym ALOA?

Hanson: ALOA was the Association of Lutheran Older Adults. We envisioned a three pronged program: Adventures in Learning, Adventures on Travel and Adventures in Service. The motto was Celebrate and Serve. But then we came to a crossroads: the Boomers didn't want to become older adults. So ALOA dropped that designation

and became Adult Lutherans Organized for Action. That was a pretty good solution, don't you think?

ALOA began as an idea. How did the concept become the national organization we have today?

Hanson: The organizers were forward thinking enough to start as an "inter-Lutheran" movement. Teams of one ELCA and one LCMS retiree --- were selected and sent out as Regional Volunteer Associates in locations around the country. Our only instructions were to listen, learn, tell about ALOA and start programs. Do something.

Did that work well?

Hanson: Explaining senior ministry was elusive. Older Lutherans everywhere were already folding bulletins, ushering and going out to lunch together monthly. I think today most pastors and congregations understand that there is more than that to senior ministry.

So from your perspective, have we made significant progress?

Hanson: I have seen changes in attitudes toward senior adult ministry, but we are still struggling. The need for church in later life can be even more crucial to older folks than to youth. **I still see some congregational leaders who don't realize that a youngster or more mobile millennial may only be there for a few years, but a new member at 60 can often be a worker and contributor for another 25 years.**

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.

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The Village Way to Age

By Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Senior adults are changing the real estate market. While retirement communities are popular, many older adults are choosing to remain in their homes instead of relocate. That's why the Village Movement is growing.

Veteran ALOA leader Doris Hanson is a strong supporter of this initiative that supports seniors as they age in place. She says, "I believe these virtual villages will take a place on the continuum of senior services, just as assisted living facilities and multi-level retirement communities have."

She explains that the Village Movement "is a niche where we fit as Lutherans. In rural areas where the church is the community and everyone is a neighbor, the village idea often exists informally – folks help each other."

With Doris at the helm, ALOA – Florida Region is actively engaged in developing a Lutheran Intentional Village in Upper Pinellas county (on Florida's west coast). Designed to help seniors navigate the challenges of growing old while living at home, LIV-UP is one of two Lutheran associated Villages among more than 200 active Villages nationwide. Grants from the Florida-Bahamas Synod and the Pinellas Community Foundation are helping to make development possible. *LIV-UP.org* details membership and volunteer opportunities, and extensive information about the Village Movement is at *vtvnetwork.org*.

Villages differ in their services, structure and sponsorship. However, with 10,000 individuals turning 65 everyday for the next 20 years, this option has special appeal for independence-loving Boomers.

"Aging in place through the Village Movement won't be the choice of everyone, but it can be one of the possibilities," says Doris.

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COMING EVENTS

Ironwood Springs Lutherhostel

September 24-28, 2018

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. He retired after serving for 40 years in Lutheran congregations in Michigan and Florida.

Cost: \$575 per person/dbl occupancy includes program, lodging and meals. Camper sites are \$525 per person and limited space is available for commuters for \$350 per person (no lodging or breakfast). For more information or to download a brochure and registration form, go to 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.

WALT'S WORDS

What Congregations Can do to Nurture Grandparents

By Rev. Walter Schoedel

Grandparenting is a holy calling...

given by God to care for and nurture young lives. It leaves a lasting legacy for families, too. This takes work. It takes planning. It takes commitment. And, it takes cooperation. I like what Solomon wrote, "A good person leaves an inheritance for his children's children."

Faith communities have the privilege of helping grandparents build relationships that enhance and enrich their grandparenting role. Here are a few suggestions for a congregation's ministry. It ought to be a high priority as more and more baby boomers are becoming grandparents.

A congregation can:

- honor grandparents by celebrating Grandparent Sunday (2nd Sunday in September)
- sponsor Bible classes, seminars or retreats that focus on the role of grandparents
- encourage relationships in a ministry where grandparents and grandchildren serve together (both are on the ushering team); study together (connecting faith stories); play together (a recreational evening); worship together (organize a choir to sing at special services)
- support a Grandparents Day in the Parish School and/or Sunday School
- promote a plan that seeks to build understanding through open communication as generations grow old together

"Do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come." Psalm 71:18b

Recommended Resource



A book that, according to Walt Schoedel, describes grandparenting as a little bit parent, a little bit teacher, and a whole lot of best friend is **GRAND DAYS** by Joy Elizabeth Lawrence and Keith B.

Trujillo. It is available from ALOA for \$12. Contact the ALOA office to order a copy.

Intergenerational Families Increase

By Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

The number of Americans living in multigenerational households is continuing to increase. This fact headlined the Pew Research Center report in April, 2018. At least one fifth of the population has two or more adult generations, or grandparents and grandchildren under the age of 25, living under a single roof. This 20% includes Americans aged 55-64 and those 65 and above.

Does your grandchild live with you? You are among the 3.2 million households that includes grandparents and grandchildren.

Although loneliness is a recurring issue for older people, in a "full house," the sheer number of residents can result in a lack of privacy.

💡 Older adults who live in multigenerational homes might be more attracted to programs on mindfulness, meditation or prayer than potluck meals at church.

Congregations typically offer child care during events targeted to families with children.

💡 Be alert to grandparents raising grandchildren who would appreciate similar services.

Bridging generations to avoid a potential communication gap has become increas-

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What Congregations Can Do...

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ingly important now that children grow up "breathing digital." Whether or not we like it, screens impact every aspect of life.

💡 Developing a level of tech literacy helps avoid isolation that can result from an inability to click. Digital fluency allows generations to speak the same language.

During ALOA's on-going cross-generational video project at Prince of Peace, Carrollton, TX, teens are exposed to issues which face older adults. Personally working with older adults was added to the curriculum after observing that some teens rarely talk with older adults. The students there are even attending a Senior Adult luncheon at the church.

One Prince of Peace student reflected on his experiences with the ALOA project last

year: "I am still a bit afraid to accidentally insult them (older adults), but I'm getting more confident by the day. I absolutely love talking with senior adults now." That's a win for everyone!

In what ways can your congregation intentionally foster communication across generations? Strong interpersonal connections contribute to healthier families and stronger congregations, regardless of our age.



Empowering Vibrant, Grace-filled Living Across Generations

By Rich Bimler, ALOA Board

The Dream — To see aging as a blessing to celebrate rather than a burden to endure.

The Challenge — To see every older adult as a **Vintage VASE**.

Vintage, "denoting something of high quality"

V – Vision – wisdom
A – Availability
S – Skills
E – Experiences

The Focus – To create a more positive perspective of older adults. "Disrupt the concept of Aging"

The Joy – To EncourAGE people to celebrate aging! To laugh at oneself and focus on the Promise instead of the Problem.

The Task – To enable individuals and congregations to affirm old age and to connect God's people of all ages. Who is

responsible for older adult ministries in your congregation?

The Next Steps – Age out Loud! Be a spokesperson. Help people celebrate their age, however old they may be!

The Way to begin is to Start – to talk and share and pray and forgive:

1. One thing I like about being older is _____.
2. When I was younger, one person who supported me was _____ by doing _____.
3. One thing I can do for someone younger than me is _____.
4. One thing I still want to do in life is _____.
5. Being older is a _____ experience.
6. Three characteristics I like about myself are _____.
7. One thing I can do to change the negative mindset of aging is _____.



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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!

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