



# EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

*An inter-Lutheran ministry by, with, and for adults age 65 and up*

August 2019

## Health & Wellness Ministry

*by Mark Schoepp, Executive Director*

**In this issue of our newsletter,** we are continuing our walk through the **five key ministry areas** we've identified as ALOA's focus for providing practical resources for congregations. This time we focus on Health and Wellness.

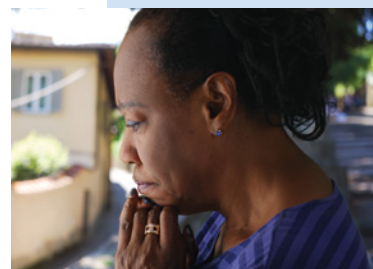
I don't know how you keep track of things you want to remember or come back to and read more intentionally. I use a program called *Evernote* that works across all my devices. It has a great search function to easily find 'stuff' I've stored. That is where I put all the links and articles I want to keep. In a quick search there, in the articles and links I stored with ALOA in mind, I found LOTS of articles on health and wellness that covered a very wide range of subtopics, such as:

- Many articles on various chronic diseases and their heavy toll on our lives
- The challenges of access to health care in rural areas
- Dental care and how dramatically that affects our overall health

- Dealing with balance issues and falls, and the heavy toll they take on overall health
- What to look for in a health care provider as an older adult
- Hearing loss, and the loss or lessening of other of our faculties
- Exercise and brain function
- Exercise and the prevention of Alzheimer's disease
- Exercise and its affect on mood/emotional balance and mental health
- Malnutrition among older adults
- Caring for yourself while being a caregiver for others
- and the list goes on...

Health and Wellness covers a lot of turf! I'd suggest we might be able to

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**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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reduce it to a simpler concept and think of it all as “stewardship” and a joyful response to a gracious God. **How do we give God our best?** So much of our ability to do that is affected - either limited or facilitated - by our health.

*Love the Lord your God with all your HEART, SOUL, MIND and STRENGTH... and love your neighbor AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF.*

It is important to take stock of how we are doing in that area of our life. The stats that

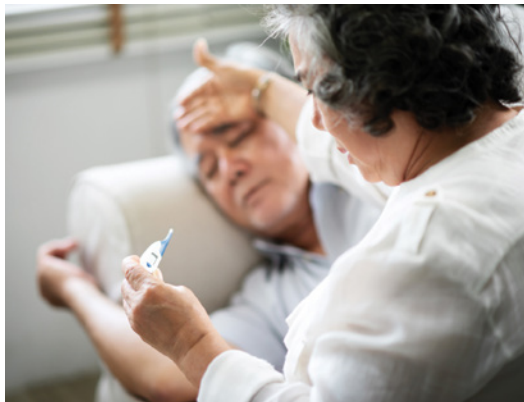
get shared in the news are not encouraging, but it's an important question to ask with some regularity.

From personal experience, and from years of tracking health and wellness information for various work positions I've held, it is amazing how much difference some small steps in the right direction can make. I'm always careful to say that it is not 'easy' but working for good health proactively is surely not complicated....and worth the effort.

## The Church's Role in Health Care?

**Health Care**—there are a wide range of opinions on the subject these days, and much is being said by the national political candidates all around. Should the church weigh in? Good question.

If you want to see how the church has gotten involved in one city, check out the Church Health Center in Memphis, TN at [www.churchhealth.org](http://www.churchhealth.org). Twenty-five years of hard work, led by Dr. Scott Morris, has resulted in an amazing network of care for those who can least afford it. The whole community is involved, and prevention is high on the list of priorities with not only health, dental care, vision care, mental health, family and pediatrics, physical therapy and pharmacy coverage at an amazingly affordable cost.



Nutritional classes and affordable exercise programs and more, add to the mix.

ALOA's website lists Dr. Morris's book: *Health Care You Can Live With* on the Health & Wellness Resource page. The Church Health Center adds a quarterly newsletter - The Church Health Reader ([www.chreader.org](http://www.chreader.org)), with lots of helpful information for all ages. Explore this faith-based response to health and wellness from Memphis and see if there is a possibility of a similar ministry in your community, with your church as the spark. Consider how important healing ministry was in the work that Jesus did (you'll find lots of resources under the “Faith and Health” tab at [www.churchhealth.org](http://www.churchhealth.org)) and open yourself to how the Spirit might lead you and your church locally.

## Health & Wellness Resources

**Check out some of the resources** available on ALOA's website. Go to: [aloaserves.org/key-resources/health-and-wellness/](http://aloaserves.org/key-resources/health-and-wellness/)

This is by no means an exhaustive list of what is available on this subject of health & wellness but it's a great start. You'll find:

- 1. Short format videos** on health and wellness. These 2-3 minute video clips, were created for ALOA and made possible by our partnership with Prince of Peace Christian School in Carrollton, Texas, and are an excellent way of introducing health & wellness topics or getting conversation started in a small group discussion or Bible class. A number of the topics are have an associated Bible study suited for individual or group use.
- 2. Blue Zones** — Explore this resource for a well-developed look at how lifestyle changes can make a dramatic difference in health & wellness. **Power of 9** demonstrates lessons from key places around the globe where people are living long, healthy lives. You'll also find **Blue Zone Projects**. These are cities, large and small, who are taking community-wide steps to make a difference in the overall health of their residents. You can check out small towns like Spencer, IA or large cities like Ft. Worth, TX (which has transformed from one of the nation's unhealthiest cities to one of the best). Imagine your church being a catalyst for you community in this area!
- 3. Start an exercise/health club** in your church. There are many resources from
- local YMCAs or health clubs, or that can be found online to get you started. Helping each other with accountability and encouragement are good ways for everyone to take steps forward.
- 4. Consider a workshop on health and wellness** offered through ALOA. Executive Director Mark Schoepp developed this workshop during his years of serving Wheat Ridge Ministries (now We Raise). It is a simple but practical look at three areas: Exercise, Diet and Play/Rest/Sleep, and how profoundly those can affect health for the better. This is especially important as we seek to be good stewards of God's amazing gifts.
- 5. Aging Grace** — A book by Tom Hafer, a Minister and Physical Therapist. The book is an excellent exploration of connecting health life with faith life all life long. His tag line is “Caring for yourself to better care for others”

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## ON THE FRONT LINES: An Interview with Tom Perry

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

By Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Thomas Perry serves as Senior Ministry Leader at Trinity Lutheran Church in Mission, Kansas. He is also a member of the Older Adult Ministry Task Force of the Kansas District (LCMS).



Tom Perry

### Ministry to older adults is often an afterthought. How do we begin to change that way of thinking?

**Perry:** ALOA Board member Rich Bimler suggests we

look at older adults as an asset ministry, not a liability ministry. Scripture does not include an expiration date for followers of Jesus. Seniors in our congregations have studied scripture for lifetimes. They have experienced most facets of the world up close and personal. They have known the highs and challenges of following Jesus. What they want most is to be a significant voice and instrument that the Holy Spirit can use. I don't remember the words "well done faithful servant" being followed by the words "now you are done."

**Historically, Lutheran congregations have been "front end loaded," seriously committed to nursery/early childhood/Sunday school. A new focus on older adults would require a paradigm shift. Realistically, how do we make that shift?**

**Perry:** The Lutheran church does not like change. When the youth movement started in the 50s it was a brilliant and needed ministry. It remains so today. Christian churches and the Lutheran church has been

declining for decades. Statistics show and Pew research supports the fact that we are experiencing an age tsunami in our country and our church. How we as Christians and more specifically Lutherans respond to this huge influx will reflect our effectiveness as stewards. I believe we try to put new faces on old programs and call it progress.

### What are practical steps forward?

**Perry:** In Kansas, we are in the active process of coming up with a program which will provide the needed resources for enhanced Older Adult ministry. We wrote a resolution which was passed at our District convention. That resolution created a task force which has met numerous times. The task force is finalizing the report which will go to the District Board for approval and implementation. It is my prayer that this will all come about and I believe that it will.

### Does enhancing ministry to older adults come down to money?

**Perry:** When I talk of resources I am not overly concerned with dollars and cents. In our electronic world, idea sharing is made easy. We need leadership at the congregational, District and Synodical levels that will promote and provide guidance.

**Some are critical of expanding older adult ministries. The premise is that seniors have a limited time to serve before they need to be served, while children and youth have years of potential service ahead of them. How do you respond?**

**Perry:** I have a problem with the premise that there is a limited time to serve. It is

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From On the Front Lines...

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true that seniors cannot do all that they were once able to do. What they can do changes, but there is always a way to serve. It is up to leadership to bring that out with congregational programs. Pastors generally do a great job serving the spiritual needs of their congregations in the traditional sense. The challenge is to find ways senior adults can serve in a hands-on manner. This gives the senior a sense of self worth and aids them in fulfilling their call as a Christian.

### At Trinity, you want to give older adult ministry a "more equal status" with youth ministry. In what way are you addressing potential feelings of competition between ministries?

**Perry:** We are not in competition with the youth or any other ministry. We fully support the effort and resources put into the youth programs of our congregations. We need to put the same amount of effort and resources into enhanced senior ministry. Some have suggested that it is possible that the future of the church lies with our mature Christians. I know that is not popular but, if you look at where the growth in the church is coming from, you will see that much if not most of the growth comes from seniors. All ages can learn so much from each other.

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

## ALOA ON FACEBOOK

You'll find a wide variety of resources on ALOA's Facebook page ([facebook.com/pg/Adult-LutheransALOA/posts/](https://facebook.com/pg/Adult-LutheransALOA/posts/) is



the best place to start) including some excellent articles on health and wellness subjects. You'll find a search box on the right side of the page, just under the large photo at the top. Type in "health" to get everything we've posted about in that subject area so far.

The post from March 6, 2019 - *11 Things to Look For In A Health Care Provider*, shares practical suggestions when considering a health care provider. This is one time in particular that a specialist - a Geriatric Doctor - makes a measurable difference. A second resource that backs up the importance of a good Geriatric Doctor is on ALOA's website. *Being Mortal*, by Atul Gawande, and specifically Chapter 2, *Things Fall Apart*, is helpful. This chapter includes the shocking news that, in spite of rapidly increasing numbers of older adults, there is a significant reduction of actual Geriatric Doctors in training. Check it out at: [aloaserves.org/key-resources/end-of-life/](https://aloaserves.org/key-resources/end-of-life/) and look for the accompanying Study Guide as well.

Be sure to check out other ALOA Facebook posts on a wide variety of subjects and if you "Like" and "Follow" the page (you can adjust your Facebook settings so that ALOA shows up in your news feed), you will get regular notice of ALOA's posts in the future.

## BOARD NEWS

**The ALOA Board of Directors** is pleased to announce the recent addition of three new members. Their skills, experience and passion for older adult ministry are a wonderful addition to the Board.

Penny Cedel, Sunset Valley, TX, is a registered nurse, and has worked with hospice care programs as well as parish nurse groups. She recently completed her Deaconess training and is now serving at Lutheran High School in Pflugerville, TX.

Roland Martinson, New Brighton, MN served as a parish pastor prior to becoming a seminary professor and academic dean at Luther Seminary. In his retirement, he as devoted his energies to research with older adults, working as a consultant and writing and speaking on vital and resilient aging in churches and communities.

Hans Springer, Fenton, MO served for many years in fundraising, marketing and leadership capacities. He served at Concoria College, Bronxville, NY as well as with the LCMS Foundation, LCMS World Relief and Human Care and the Mission Advancement department.

### Passion Play & Trip through the Holy Land

**June 18-30, 2020**

Follow the footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land, then fly to Germany for the Passion Play. 13-day trip led by ALOA Board member Rev. Dr. David Maack. Contact [dmaack@lutheranmissionsociety.org](mailto:dmaack@lutheranmissionsociety.org) for more information and to book your reservation.

Your faithful giving makes everything we do possible. We are grateful for the support of these individuals for donations received May 24 - July, 2019

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**Want to hear about valuable resources or keep up on ALOA news and events?**

Sign up on our website: [aloaserves.org](http://aloaserves.org). Let us know if you prefer to receive this newsletter by email, too.

**Interested in a congregational consultation to review your older adult ministry plans?** Indicate that when you sign up and we'll be in contact to set up a phone or Zoom conference. From among those who signed up that month, we'll select one person to receive a free on-site consultation for their congregation, along with an evening community outreach program for the evening.

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

## COMING EVENTS

### Ironwood Springs Lutherhostel

**September 23-27, 2019**

Our Fall Lutherhostel is set to take place, with Rev. Dr. Paul Schwartzkopf as

presenter and Pastor Frank and Deaconess Jan Janzow leading worship & music. Lodge rooms are filled at Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville, Minnesota, but camper and commuter spots are still available (though limited). For more information, go to [aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel](http://aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel)



### Coming Events in Florida

**ALOAFest - October 19, 2019**

**Grace Lutheran Church, St. Petersburg**

Check our website for more information.

**Grands Weekend - March 6-8, 2020**

**Luther Springs, near Gainesville**

Grandparents & grandchildren enjoy faith-filled activities together

**Living Forward - January 14-16, 2020**

**Luther Springs, near Gainesville**

Explore your passions and calling in the second half of life.

### Support ALOA

Your support helps ALOA provide more consultation & resources for older adult ministry. Use the enclosed envelope or click the blue **Donate Now** button on our website to donate online.

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

### Experience Italy & the Oberammergau Passion Play

**September 22 - October 2, 2020**



**Join ALOA on an 11-day tour of Italy, followed by the world famous Oberammergau Passion Play.**

The once-a-decade experience of the Passion Play has been performed since 1633 by the residents of this lovely Bavarian village of Oberammergau.

The trip includes sights in Italy meaningful to many Christians, including Christian Rome, Vatican City and the tomb of the Apostle Paul, the Sistine Chapel and treasured masterpieces of Michelangelo, Giotto and more.

**Cost:** \$4,722 per person/dbl occupancy from Tampa. Includes airfare, lodging, two meals daily, transfers and tours, along with tickets to experience the 2020 Passion Play.

**EARLY BIRD savings of \$100 if initial \$500 deposit received by Sept. 22, 2019!** For more information or to download a brochure, go to [aloaserves.org/events/oberammergau-passion-play](http://aloaserves.org/events/oberammergau-passion-play)

**Questions?** Call us or email George Algozzina at [georgea@aloaserves.org](mailto:georgea@aloaserves.org)



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