



# EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

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

March 2020

## In Support of Care

**As we continue to focus on ALOA's five key ministry areas, we** take on the subject of Caregiving and Care Recipients. Former ALOA Board member Marty Richards has focused her work on aging persons and developing the support of the relationship between caregivers and care recipients. She explores how congregations can support both of these Care Partners.

### Supporting Care Partners through The Congregation

*By Martha Richards, MSW, LICSW*

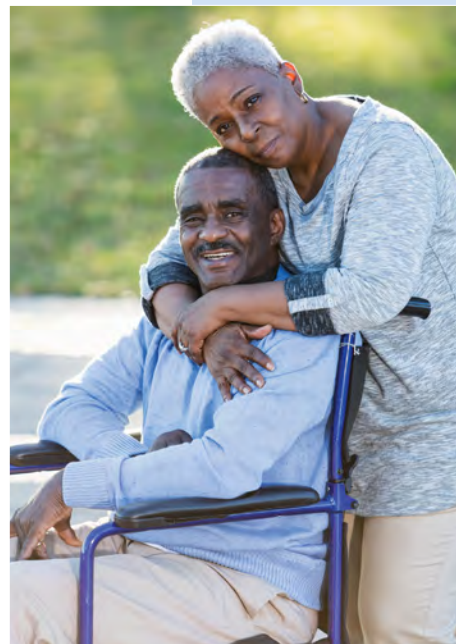
As congregations age, members often face overwhelming challenges in giving and receiving care. Some are “hands-on” carers; others are involved more indirectly (caring long distance or caring for someone in a nursing home). Church communities are a natural setting where a sense of caresharing can be built. While one person may need assistance and another might be identified as the person to give assistance, these care sharers are equal as children of God. They become partners in care, and the nurture and support of both individuals is an important ministry. It's also one in which pastors and congregants may feel ill-equipped to be helpful.

Along with a myriad of physical and emotional pressures, care partners

may struggle with spiritual questions revolving around faith or a sense of meaning. Issues of loss, grief and changes are constant companions. Sometimes stigma is attached to being cared for or being a carer, especially if there is dementia. Persons with dementia have been asked to leave worship or other events because they are “disruptive.”

Practical considerations in daily caring often make it impossible for care partners to attend church functions. Efforts need to be made to intentionally include care partners in congregational life.

Congregations can be communities where carers can share unique concerns without fear of judgment.



**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.*

*Continued on page 3*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings! I write this having recently returned from representing ALOA at the Best Practices for Ministry Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Board Vice-President David Maack and I were able to provide



Carolyn Ross  
ALOA President

ALOA resources and information to attendees at the conference. It was a great opportunity to share the mission and resources of ALOA with congregations and ministry leaders from around the country.

During this season of renewal and new possibilities, I am excited

by the opportunities provided to us with the award of the ELCA Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment Grant. This funding will allow us to develop new programming to strengthen and grow ALOA's ministry. The ALOA Congregational Centers for Vital and Resilient Aging program will develop an ALOA Older Adult Ministry Toolkit to serve as a guide to congregations in their work with older adults, both in their own congregations and in their local communities. It is our goal through this program to provide congregations with resources to develop and strengthen intentional older adult ministry. The toolkit will address four main components: spiritual, educational, community building, and intergenerational programming.

I want to thank each of you for your continued partnership and support. I look forward to all that the future holds!

## One Congregation's Adaptive Worship Model

By Rev. Jefferson Cox, Grace Lutheran Church  
Grace Lutheran Church in Clearwater, FL, created a new worship opportunity based on the idea that there are people in our communities who want to attend Sunday morning worship, but find it difficult to make it to (or make it through) a typical worship service. Some are born with or have challenges from day one. Others encounter issues in their later years. This is often the experience of those requiring care and their care givers. Whatever the special needs, too often these individuals encounter subtle or even overt messages that a typical worshipping community cannot adapt to their needs.

Our congregation was inspired by the story of the healing of the paralytic in the second chapter of the Gospel of Mark. As the only time in scripture that Jesus is shown forgiving the sins of a person based on the faith of others, we take this to mean that our faithfulness can make a positive difference – spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally – in the lives of others.

In the spirit of that story, we've tried to remove barriers that might keep those who want to be in the presence of Christ apart from him. We work to make the service as accommodating as possible by things like:

- an 11:15 am start time
- 30 minutes long
- movement accepted, as needed
- flexible seating with tables available
- a copy of the bulletin in Braille
- a new sound system to make normal volumes as clear as possible

Most importantly, we emphasize a welcoming and adaptive spirit so that all who attend know there's *always* a place for them at Grace Lutheran Church in Clearwater.

...continued from page 1

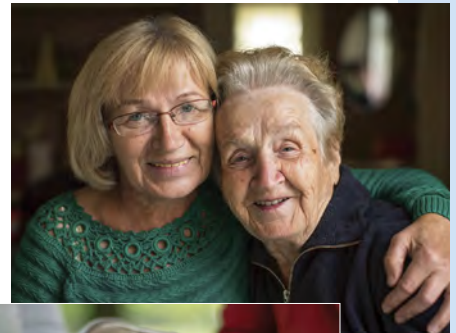
There are challenges in maintaining the dignity of the care receiver even as the realities of the carer are shared. Welcome and support from pulpit and pew to those with physical, mental and memory losses can assist care partners and provide them with the feeling that the church community is with them in their concerns.

Carers report that sometimes potential “helpers” may focus only on needs of the carer or on those of the care receiver. Physical, emotional and spiritual needs of **both** need acknowledgement. Even with tough challenges, resilience, love, hope and creativity can emerge. Care partners may make choices, some quite intimate, that others do not understand, such as moving a loved one into a long-term care setting, and it is important not to judge such decisions. Listening carefully is one of the most important aspects of ministry by, with and for care partners. Ask “What do you need from the church community? How can the congregation best support you?” Care partners can teach those who would assist them.

Proactive support by a congregation is key:

- A church building that's accessible for persons with physical, sensory and memory limits is a good starting point .
- Using such space for events for care partners (i.e., memory cafes, support groups, respite care or special worship) provides concrete assistance.
- Actively challenge the stigma of the caregiving situation through worship, preaching, pastoral care and education for all ages, to undergird connections to care partners. Hearing a word about caregiving from the pulpit and in the prayers can be welcoming and affirming.

Knowledge of community resources and assistance in making contact are concrete ways to aid care partners. Resource partners often have pamphlets and books available about their services. Creating a library of these resources is a great education tool for the congregation and enables church staff and laypersons to better reach out to care partners.



Other helpful ways to assist include:

- Periodic educational seminars
- Providing respite care, offering a much needed break for care givers as it provides socialization, stimulation and generally improved quality of life for those receiving care.
- Regular check-ins to home-centered persons keep contact with those who might otherwise feel forgotten by the community. This can also be a good way to listen to the person's daily concerns and struggles.
- Assure that care partners have regular access to worship (even online or recorded) along with the sacraments and bulletins.

Recognizing the needs and assisting care partners carries out our Christian mandates to heal, reconcile and to minister to the needs of those who struggle. Clergy and laypersons alike can assist by walking alongside care partners on their journey.



A continuing series of interviews with leaders in ministry.

By Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Rev. Art Simon is best known as founder of Bread for the World. A prolific author, at the age of 88 his twelfth book, *Silence Can Kill; Speaking Up to End Hunger and Make our Economy Work for Everyone*, was released in 2019. Art has been granted 14 honorary doctorates.



Rev. Art Simon

This interview for ALOA focused not on his exemplary life and work, but to represent the rapidly growing psychographic of actively engaged "senior seniors."

**Mobility issues are common for adults after age 85. In what ways have you seen churches shifting to accommodate physical needs of worshippers?**

**Simon:** The congregation in which my wife Shirley and I are active is currently costing out the building of an access ramp for seniors with mobility challenges. We hope to build one if it is financially within reach.

**How can a congregation make older seniors feel valued?**

**Simon:** Develop personal relationships. Our congregation makes us feel welcome and wanted, but some folks on the fringe may not feel that way.

**Our churches are rapidly graying. What should church workers prioritize as they anticipate serving congregations tilted toward older adults?**

**Simon:** Elderly people want to be loved--don't we all?--so, love us well. But we want to feel loved as part of that wonderful range of people from birth to death.

So you serve us best if, in your sermons and your life, you help all of us--kids, young people, young adults and old adults--relate the Gospel to special struggles that we have at various stages in life. Engage us with specific examples! We are in this great journey together. We oldies learn from (and feel included by) stories about what challenges school kids, and they in turn learn from challenges that face us.

**How is your faith life different from a decade ago?**

**Simon:** I don't sense a difference as much as a *ripening of faith*, or so I hope. More welcoming of others. Less judgmental of those who are culturally, nationally or even religiously different. More accepting and forgiving of others, as God is accepting and forgiving of me.

**Based on your experiences of the last decade, how would you have changed your preparation for becoming a "senior senior" (i.e., a person above the age of 85)?**

**Simon:** The last decade? How about the last six decades?

I wish I had been a wiser, more balanced workaholic, which by definition is an imbalance. I loved my work, felt called and led to do it. I regret that I often put my work, as an extension of myself, ahead of others, especially family members, in ways that led to missed opportunities. That's not good living or good preparation for aging.

Aging, however, has a way of slowing us down, prompting us to reflect and giving us better perspective. "Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom," the Psalmist urges. I pray for that.

From On the Front Lines...

from page 4

**Have any faith-related challenges become easier as you've aged?**

**Simon:** Yes, but always with new twists. Two life-shaping challenges came when I was a 16-year old high school junior and my father gave me two books.

One was the brand-new 1946 *Revised Standard Version of the New Testament*, which awakened me to see how real and alive the NT writings are. For the first time I read them from start to finish as living documents, not just depositories of proof passages. That was exciting.

So was Dad's other gift: Andrew Schultze's *My Neighbor of Another Color: A Treatise on Church Race Relations*. I was shocked to discover that my own church body harbored deeply rooted racial prejudices that ran all the way from local congregations to the highest offices in the LCMS.

Reading these books stirred me to the core and did more to shape my faith commitments than any other two books I can think of. They steered me on a path that guided me well, though always presenting me with new challenges.

**At the age of 89, what strategies do you use to find a healthy balance between "slowing down" and using the gifts God has given you?**

**Simon:** I'm still trying to figure that out. The slowing that age imposes dictates some of this. Placing life more consciously in God's hands helps me see things through the heart and mind of Christ. The Lord's Prayer is a compass for me in doing this. I want to receive each day as a gift, reflect the love of God to others in whatever ways open. And because I do this so poorly, I find peace in the mercy of our Lord Jesus.

## ALOA Awarded Three Year Grant by ELCA Endowment

ALOA is pleased to announce that the organization has been awarded a three year, \$75,000 grant from the Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment Grants Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The grant will fund a new initiative, **ALOA's Congregational Centers for Vital and Resilient Aging**. The program is comprised of three components, all of which will impact the lives of older adults in our congregations and communities.

Older Adult Ministry Toolkit - a Toolkit will be produced in 2020 that will serve as a guide to congregations in the development or strengthening of intentional older adult ministries. The goal for the toolkit is to provide resources in four main areas: spiritual, educational, community building and inter-generational programming.

Congregational Consultations - in the second year of the program, development of an ongoing series of opportunities for congregational consultations is planned. These would be either via video conferencing or in person, depending on the needs and size of the congregation.

Congregational Cohort groups - finally, the program includes creation of regional cohort groups in which congregations can share experiences and become resources for each other.

We are grateful for the support of the ELCA and the Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment in providing financial support that enables ALOA to offer a new and vital program for congregations and the older adults they serve.

# COMING EVENTS

## Ironwood Springs Lutherhostel October 5-9, 2020

Our fall Lutherhostel will welcome Ben & Jennifer Freudenburg to lead a study of *Life in the Later Years*. The Freudenburgs serve at the Concordia Center for the Family in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Ben is Executive Director. Pastor Frank and Deaconess Jan Janzow return with their meaningful devotions and music. This year, they'll focus on *Kingdom Living: A Fresh Look at the Lord's Prayer*.

Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville, Minnesota will host this week of learning, worship, outdoor activities and fellowship. The camp offers private hotel style rooms in their Miracle Lodge. In addition to our study and worship, we'll enjoy presentations on topics of local interest and optional



outdoor activities that include a zip line, cornhole tournament and hiking.

**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 per person (no lodging or breakfast). For more information

or to download a brochure and registration form, go to [aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel/](http://aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel/) You can also register online by clicking the online registration link on our website.

## New Trip for 2020! Greece - the Footsteps of St. Paul

September 22-October 7, 2020 - Join ALOA on a 10-day trip that includes the sites of St. Paul's missionary journeys, plus a tour of the Greek Islands via Mediterranean cruise. For information, go to [aloaserves.org/events/greece-footsteps-of-st-paul/](http://aloaserves.org/events/greece-footsteps-of-st-paul/)

## Oberammergau Passion Play Trip Rescheduled for 2022

The entire 2020 season of the Oberammergau Passion Play has been postponed until 2022. Our new trip dates are September 20-30, 2022

Join ALOA for the same tour originally planned. This 11-day tour takes in meaningful sights in Italy, including Christian Rome, Vatican City and the tomb of the Apostle



Paul, the Sistine Chapel and treasured masterpieces of Michelangelo, Giotto and more. Then it's off to Bavaria for the once-a-decade experience of the Passion Play. Brochure with costs will be available in April. For information, go to [aloaserves.org/events/oberammergau-passion-play](http://aloaserves.org/events/oberammergau-passion-play)  
**Questions?** Email [georgea@aloaserves.org](mailto:georgea@aloaserves.org)

**Your faithful giving makes everything we do possible. We are grateful for the support of these individuals for donations received November 2019 - February, 2020**

**15+ Year Supporters**

Robert Andersen	Olinda Fink	Norman & Susan Kendt	Patsy Rugh
Mary Baumann	Virginia Fisher	Loren & Arlene Kramer	Herman & Gayle Schmidt
Helen Benson	Darrel Gilbertson	Theodore &	Walter Schoedel
Harold &	Paul Haberstock	Helen Krenzke	Arthur & Judy Schroeder
Margaret Bernthal	Richard & Marianne Hafer	Harvey &	Diana Sornborger
Richard & Hazel Bimler	Doris Hanson	Dolores Kroening	Imogene Treichel
Ken & Karen Black	Fred & Alice Hedt	Harvey & Carol Lange	Willard & Grace Wagner
Edwin & Margaret Boger	Hazel Henry	Roy & Ann Maack	John & Marian Wuertz
Ruth Brighton	Dorothy Hildebrandt	Dennis & Shirley O'Brien	Carol Zimmer
Peter & Faith Dunne	Robert &	Carl Prostka	Robert & Shirley Zimmer
Betty Epie	Dona-Lee Hughes	Bruce Radtke	

**10+ Year Supporters**

Myrna Andersen	Kenneth Frese	Alfred & Laura Luehmann	Elvina Miller
Earl & Shirley Carpenter	Philip & Sheila Ilten	Jack & Sue Martin	George &
Cordelia Degner	Tom & Phyllis Jacobson	Robert &	Dorothy Ohlendorf
Ann Doering	Michael &	Judith Mickelson	James & Patricia Palecek
Ernie &	Carolyn Konnert	John &	Marty & Larry Richards
Kathy Freudenburg	Charles Laabs	Connie Mittermaier	Donna Walz

Earl Alton	Elizabeth Engbrecht	Judy Keyser	Carol Reisinger
Dale Bartel	Gilberto & Carmen Falcon	Keith & Mary Leeseberg	Nancy Rhoads
Florence &	John & Eileen Frerking	N. Jo Lidbom	Carolyn Ross
Frank Bencivenga	James & Kathleen Hahn	Robert & Patsy List	Jeanine Roth
Philip &	Lyle & Marie Hanson	David & Carole Ludwig	Daniel & Mickey Roth
Mary Anne Caltagirone	Robert Hanson	Jan & Donald MacInness	Robert & Ruth Schmoltd
Andrew Carlsson	Jane Harrison	Roland Martinson	Eileen Schumann
Joyce Carroll	Kenneth &	Donna Meister	William & Elizabeth Smith
Penny & Tom Cedel	Barbara Holdorf	William Moller	Robert & Freda Steinke
Joyce Davis	Paul & Chris Holmer	Roxanne Moses	Richard & Dawn Stewart
Thomas &	William & Loretta Horne	Daniel Oetzman	Robert & Julie Stuenkel
Elizabeth DeMik	Frank & Jan Janzow	Diane Partridge &	Walter & Ione Tietjen
Douglas &	Warren &	Larry Swift	Margo Walbolt
Shirley Dougherty	Christine Jennison	Jan Regulski	Fred & Jane Wittlinger

**Eligible for Thrivent Choice® Dollars?**

Make ALOA your organization of choice if you have Choice® Dollars. Go to [www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/](http://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/) or call 1-800-847-4836 to make your Choice®.

**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.

**A  
L  
O  
A**





Adult Lutherans Organized for Action  
 PO Box 4367  
 Clearwater, FL 33758

NONPROFIT ORG  
 U S POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 TAMPA, FL  
 PERMIT NO. 1736



This news-  
 letter is a  
 publication  
 of Adult  
 Lutherans  
 Organized  
 for Action

**Carolyn Ross**  
 President

**Carol Murphy**  
 Publications Editor  
 © 2019

**Contact Us**

1-800-930-ALOA (2562)  
 Email: [aloa4u@gmail.com](mailto:aloa4u@gmail.com)  
 Web: [ALOserves.org](http://ALOserves.org)  
 Mail: PO Box 4367  
 Clearwater, FL 33758

**Special Thanks to our Dedicated Partners**

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

Partner Congregations

- Bethlehem Lutheran Church,  
Ridgewood, NJ
- Christ Our Redeemer,  
Temple Terrace, FL
- Grace, Clearwater, FL
- Holy Trinity Primetimers, Dubuque, IA
- Hope, The Villages, FL
- Immanuel, St. Charles, MO
- First, Kingsville, ONT
- Luther Memorial, Erie, PA
- Mt. Olive LWML, Poway, CA
- Our Savior, Nokomis, FL
- Our Savior, Edison, NJ
- Prince of Peace, Carrollton, TX
- Prince of Peace, Largo, FL
- Redeemer, Westfield, NJ

**St. Armands Key, Sarasota, FL\***  
**St. Paul's, Clearwater, FL\***

Trinity, Walnut Creek, CA  
 Zion, Bethalto, IL

**Zion, Dallas, TX\*** \*20-year Partner

Partner Districts/Synods

New Jersey District  
 Florida-Bahamas Synod

Partner Organizations

Austin & Central TX Senior Fest  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church  
 in America (ELCA)  
 Lutheran Church  
 Missouri Synod (LCMS)  
 Village On The Isle, Venice, FL



ALOA is a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of the LCMS and an affiliated Social Ministry Organization of the ELCA.



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
 God's work. Our hands.