



EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

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

May 2020

Dealing with Social Isolation

Social isolation among older adults is often a topic of discussion at ALOA and among many involved in older adult ministry. As our communities deal with the pandemic, we have all experienced social isolation to some extent. Older adults have been dealing with its realities in previous days, but the current situation has exacerbated both feelings of isolation and loneliness. The *Humanitarian Disaster Institute*, a faith-based academic disaster research center at Wheaton College, points out that millions of older adults already struggle with loneliness, isolation and lack regular companionship. Now, they have had most all activities suspended and are being flooded with messages that elders are the most at risk from exposure to COVID-19. Constant messages like this coupled with social distancing is further isolating older adults.

A Brigham Young University *study* in 2015 revealed that social isolation can be as bad for health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The best medicine for reducing the negative consequences of social isolation is to **stay**

engaged, stay active and stay connected (both with and without technology). This is especially important for people living alone.

We've compiled a list of tips and resources that can help you or older adults you know. While focused on older adults, many are sound suggestions for people of any age.

Stay Engaged

- **Make a checklist** of daily activities to motivate you and help create a daily sense of accomplishment. The list can even include meals and medications. Be sure to add "talk to someone" on the list, as well as exercise or stretching time.
- **Care for living things**, like pets or plants, provides a sense of purpose that's good for your health.
- **Keep your mind active** with puzzles, reading or art projects. All help to keep the mind occupied and boost cognitive functioning.



*ALO A'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



Carolyn Ross
ALO A President

Greetings! Much has changed in our world since my last update. These are unprecedented and challenging times for us all. We find ourselves regularly using words that we did not in the past such as "social distancing," "stay-at-home order," and "pandemic." I also hear the questions "How can I help?" and "What do you need?" Situations such as these can bring out the very best and the worst in people. I am proud to be part of a community where I

regularly see the very best. I see kindness, courage, selflessness and compassion. I see people giving their time to help those in need, whether it is making a phone call to check on someone they do not know or bringing them food.

At ALOA, we are continuing to work to serve as a resource to our communities and congregations. We are blessed by the leadership of our new Executive Director, Hans Springer, and are eager to move forward with new programming to strengthen and grow ALOA's ministry.

I look forward to all that the future holds!

I'd like to thank each of you for your continued partnership and support. Blessings !

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.

From the Desk of Hans Springer, Executive Director

Vocation

I am pleased to have been chosen to be ALOA's new Executive Director. I am excited to be involved with such an innovative and inspiring board.

As I begin this effort, I wanted to share some thoughts on the idea of vocation. I recently listened to a presentation on research done among a group of seniors in an assisted living facility. The study centered around seniors understanding of vocation. Their initial reaction was, why even study vocation among a group of people who are retired? As the study progressed, this group of people realized that the understanding of vocation is much broader

and includes all ages. Martin Luther was a firm believer in the calling of every believer, no matter what their job (vocation) actually was. Our vocation, or our calling, is to serve our neighbor, to love them and to show mercy. So as I enter on this "new" vocation as your executive director, I want to ask for your blessing and help me to grow in this calling. ALOA is a special ministry and I am happy to be a part of it. God bless your day.



Hans Springer
Exec. Dir.

FRONT LINES: A Report from the Field with Dan Roth

This issue, we vary from our continuing series of interviews with a report on an example of ministry support for congregations provided at the District level

By Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Dan Roth, chair of the Southern Illinois District (SID) Older Adult Advisory Committee, provided a glimpse into the District's work. Dan served for 20 years as an elementary teacher and principal, followed by 23 years as Superintendent of Lutheran Schools for SID. In retirement, he has worked part time for the Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

The Southern Illinois District (SID-LCMS) has maintained an active ministry to older adults since the early 1990's. Dan Roth and Deaconess Ro Williams spearheaded a variety of activities over the years:

- Published a quarterly newsletter for older adults
- Established Older Adult Advocates in 30% of the congregations
- Offered workshops and educational activities for older adults
- Established a Resource Library at the District Office and Speaker's Bureau
- Supplied informational displays on Older Adult Ministry at Senior Fairs
- Provided resources for Older Americans Month each May
- Linked older adults and caregivers in several congregations through a Christian Care Corp
- Conducted a survey to assess the level of ministry to older adults
- Organized a Lutheran Older Adult Retreat every 18 months. The 19th Retreat, scheduled for October 14-15, 2020, will be held jointly with the Missouri District.
- Held a two-day retreat in October, 2016, where ALOA Board member Rev. Ken Holdorf spoke on Best Practices in establishing an Older Adult Ministry.
- Single and multiple day bus trips to historical Lutheran sites as well as other religious churches.



Dan Roth

Dan Roth currently chairs the current SID Older Adult Advisory Committee. The nine member committee of retired persons, which meets quarterly, is appointed and approved by the District President.

Dan says, "We are not included in the yearly Southern Illinois District Budget. But we have an Older Adult Designated Fund which can be used to pay expenses. Over the years, we have been blessed by donors who have contributed to this fund. Often, we make a small profit from a senior event."

Throughout the US, judicatories and congregations often conduct a needs assessment before beginning or expanding services. In 2015, SID gathered information from 50% of congregations through a six-question survey:

1. What is your group name?
2. When do you meet?
3. Where do you meet and what is your purpose?
4. Tell us what activities you plan for seniors.
5. Tell us how you are organized to meet the needs of your older adults.
6. How can the District help with your older adult needs?

Dan summarized findings from the survey: **Some congregations are self-sufficient;** they need no help from the District. These

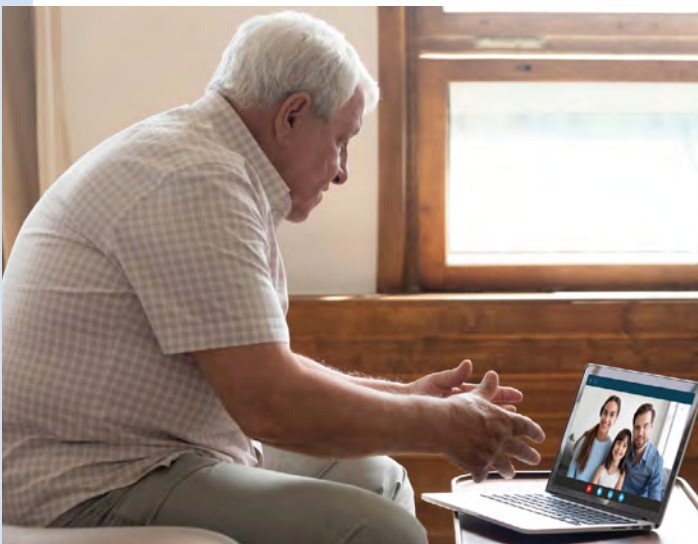
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- **Organize a recipe exchange** with friends or a church group. Choose a theme or share family favorites.
- **Create short videos** to share with friends or family. Try demonstrating a favorite hobby, how to make a family recipe or a take a trip down memory lane (complete with “show and tell”).

Stay Active

- **Exercise daily!** Be it a walk outside or laps inside your home, just keep moving.
- **Take part in a virtual class** from the YMCA. Their online classes are often short and involve equipment you have at home. Their fall prevention exercise class may be a good place to start.
www.ymca360.org
- **Check your local Area Agency on Aging** for online exercise classes, too. You can find your local agency by entering your zip code at www.eldercare.acl.gov
- More than movement, it's a great time to **pick up that hobby** you had in childhood or to dust off a musical instrument and brush up your skills.



In the US, almost 30% of older adults live alone. And, in the midst of “stay at home”

orders and social distance requirements, we need human connection more than ever.

Stay Connected

- **The easiest things are not high tech!** Make a list of 5 people who live alone. Talk to one each day of the week. A simple phone call will do, unless you are both comfortable with video calls. Most important is to call regularly.
- **Plan consistent times to “meet.”** That way the calls become part of your routine.
- **Read scripture** or join together in devotions. You can download the current issue of Hope-Full Living devotional for older adults at www.hopefuldevotions.com
- **Plan to watch (and “play”)** a TV game show together such as Jeopardy! or do a crossword puzzle together.

Phone calls provide a familiar voice, but face-to-face connection, even virtually, makes a big difference. More than ever, technology can help ease the distance.

Explore online resources

It's wise to look for legitimate and secure websites. Those that end in “edu” or “gov” are the most credible. Avoid clicking on ads or buttons as many are scams.

- **Read online** - Many local libraries have free e-books and audiobooks you can borrow without leaving home.
- **Go on a virtual adventure.** Digital tours of national parks, courtesy of the National Park Foundation are at www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/take-virtual-visit-national-park
- **Learn to play a musical instrument** or brush up on your skills. You'd be surprised what you can learn just from videos on YouTube.

Older adults and technology? The facts may surprise you.

A *Pew research* study in 2017 showed:
~ 53% of older adults own a smart-phone and 26% have Skype
~ 1/3 of older adults own a tablet
~ Roughly 1/3 Americans over the age of 65 say they never use the internet and 49 per cent say they do not have internet service at home.

- **Zoos & aquariums** offer virtual behind the scenes tours. Smithsonian's National Zoo is a great place to start: nationalzoo.si.edu/education/educational-activities-you-can-do-home
- **Take in a free theater or opera performance** online. Check out encore performances from The New York Metropolitan Opera www.metopera.org/user-information/nightly-met-opera-streams/
- **Appreciate art?** Take a virtual tour of museum or gallery collections worldwide at artsandculture.google.com/

One Congregations Response to Isolation: Sundays at 6

A few years ago, Ascension Lutheran Church in Landover Hills, Maryland created **Sundays at Six:** a participative worship model for those who unable to attend services. Congregation member Alice Hedt describes it as a simple, affordable way to offer isolated adults and their caregivers an opportunity to worship as well as nurture and support each other spiritually.

A shortened version of morning worship

The Humanitarian Disaster Institute's tip sheet mentioned earlier concludes with this prayer:

Look with mercy, O God our Father, on all those whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace; give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help; and, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

You can find more information as well as other resources at:

Humanitarian Disaster Institute
www.wheaton.edu/media/humanitarian-disaster-institute/Tip-Sheet-Caring-for-Well-being-of-Older-Adults-During-COVID-19.pdf

Administration for Community Living
acl.gov/COVID-19

California Department of Aging
aging.ca.gov

is led by volunteer worship leaders with participants sharing prayer concerns and leading parts of the service. An informal networking time follows the service. By utilizing a conference call service, the call can be initiated from a leader's home. Participants are engaged in leading the program and in making reminder calls to each other. Check out a complete report on Sundays at Six on our website.

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



Ironwood Springs Lutherhostel is Postponed

Our fall Lutherhostel, scheduled for this coming October, is being postponed until May 10 - 14, 2021. We are excited that our 2021 event will still feature Ben & Jennifer Freudenburg leading a study of *Life in the Later Years*. Pastor Frank and Deaconess Jan Janzow will also be with us in May to lead music and devotions on *Kingdom*

Living: A Fresh Look at the Lord's Prayer.

Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch already has procedures in place to safely host this event. We hope you will join us for this week of learning, worship, outdoor activities and fellowship. For updated information, go to the [Lutherhostel page](#) on our website.

Walk in the Footsteps of St. Paul & Cruise the Greek Islands

September 13 - 23, 2020

11-day trip includes sites of St. Paul's missionary journeys and a tour of the Greek Islands via Mediterranean cruise.

Includes sites in: Thessaloniki & Philippi, Delphi and ancient sites of Athens & Corinth. 3-day cruise stops in Mykonos, Ephesus & Patmos, Crete & Santorini.

Cost: \$4,672 per person / double occupancy includes round-trip airfare from Tampa (price varies for other departure points) plus tours & sightseeing, lodging, two meals daily on land, plus shore excursions, lunches and unlimited beverages on the cruise.



For more information, click on the Events tab

on our website or go to aloaserves.org/events/greece-footsteps-of-st-paul/

Questions? Call us or email George Algozzina at georgea@aloaserves.org

The 2020 Passion Play has been rescheduled for 2022!

Experience Italy & the Oberammergau Passion Play

September 20 - 30, 2020

11-day tour of Italy, and experience the Oberammergau Passion Play.



Take in Christian Rome,

Vatican City and the tomb of Paul, as well as the Sistine Chapel and masterpieces of Michelangelo and Giotto. Then it's off to Bavaria for the once-a-decade Passion Play.

Cost: \$4,872.00 per person/dbl occupancy from Tampa. Includes airfare, lodging, two meals daily, transfers and tours, along with tickets to experience the 2022 Passion Play.

Early Bird Savings: Save \$100 with a \$500 deposit received by Sept. 21, 2021.

Find more information by clicking on the [Events tab](#) on our website.

Questions? Call us or email George Algozzina at georgea@aloaserves.org

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FRONT LINES...

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congregations know when a senior needs transportation to the doctor or hospital. If they are sick, their pastor or lay members visit. If they want a senior activity, it will happen. **Some congregations have a formal senior structure** and meet on a monthly basis. They may have a speaker talk about a relevant topic or play board games. These gatherings almost always include a meal.

Almost every congregation said they would like information about events and activities for seniors, i.e. speakers, trips and retreats.

In response to needs identified through the data collection, Dan says, "Our Older Adult Advisory Committee has determined that we exist to provide services that most congregations aren't able to provide."

As a result, the Committee continues to offer numerous single or multiple day bus trips, retreats, presentations on older adults, an older adult booth at district events, resources on the SID website and an article in the monthly district periodical. To learn more about any of the SID initiatives, contact Dan Roth: danmicroth@charter.net.

Want to hear about valuable resources or keep up on ALOA news and events? It's as easy as sending us your email address. Or, sign up on our website: aloaserves.org. Let us know if you prefer to receive this newsletter only by email, too.





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 God's work. Our hands.