



EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

CELEBRATING
30
years of ministry

September 2021

ALOA: A Gift of the Saints

ALOA begins its 30th year of ministry on September 9, 2021. What better way to mark this milestone than to hear from someone who saw the need for an organization dedicated to older adult ministry. As President of Wheat Ridge in the early '90s, Rev. Robert Zimmer was integral in the founding of ALOA and served as its first President. He has been an enthusiastic and influential supporter ever since.

By Bob Zimmer

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ALOA! It has been an exciting 30-year journey...and I was privileged to 'tag along' the entire way!

It all began in 1990 as the staff of the former Wheat Ridge Foundation grappled with what they saw as an emerging dilemma facing the LCMS and ELCA. Actually, two intersecting dilemmas:

1. the imminent arrival of some 72 million Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) – the first reaching 65 in 2001
2. the growing financial shortfall in both church bodies resulting in budget cuts for older adult ministries

By the mid-nineties, budget support for older adult ministry at the national church level virtually dried up.

It was a combination of the above factors that prompted Wheat Ridge to convene a brainstorming session,

of knowledgeable Lutheran leaders in older adult ministry, to help strategize a way forward that would assure

the future of ministry for, with and by Lutheran older adults. Out of these discussions, Adult Lutherans Organized for Action (ALOA) was born.

Initially, ALOA was provided a modest start-up grant from Wheat Ridge, but for most of its 30-year history, ALOA has relied on the generosity of individuals, a few congregations, and grants from foundations and other funding entities in the church. While financial stability

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Rev. Robert J. L. Zimmer, one of ALOA's founders.



First issue of ALOA's newsletter

[Read it here](#)

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.



Hans Springer

BURNED OUT

Recently my pastor preached a sermon about burnout. He implied we all get tired and burned out from time to time but that our sustenance is in our faith in the Lord Jesus. That got me thinking about ALOA. September marks our 30th year of serving older adults and Lutheran congregations. After 30 years one might ask the question, "Is ALOA approaching BURNOUT?" Bob Zimmer's reflection on ALOA's history demonstrates ALOA's rich heritage. And that history is not yet over. There are many exciting years ahead for ALOA to serve the Lutheran church.

ALOA is blessed with a unique board, with members willing to step out and take leadership roles in various aspects of what we do. They contributed mightily to the developing *Toolkit for Older Adult Ministry*, having just reviewed the first draft. During our 30th year you will hear much more about this resource for ministry. Soon to come, there will also be 3 brand new videos to tell ALOA's story.

Burned Out? Not yet by a long shot!

And with ALOA's 30th year there is also a great opportunity for you to celebrate with us. I have been challenging our friends and supporters to consider a gift of \$300 to celebrate not only 30 years past, but also 30 years ahead. There is an envelope enclosed with this newsletter. If you are so inclined, you may use that to send in your anniversary gift.

I hope you are having a blessed summer. May the Lord grant you every blessing!

...Gift of the Saints, continued from page 1

has been an ongoing challenge, ALOA has steadfastly pursued its mission, spurred on by compelling needs and many outstanding volunteers. Creative programs have come and gone, and some have stayed...like the SeniorFests, Luther Hostels, adult ministry workshops, pilgrimages to faraway places, Celebrate and Serve Awards, *Best Practices* materials, video resources, webinars and much more.



Bob Zimmer, William Seeber, Walt Schoedel and Douglas Fountain consider plans for ALOA in 1992.

For all the Saints who from their labors rest is a favorite hymn of mine, and as I reflect back over ALOA's 30-year history, with all its challenges and joys, I find myself ever so grateful to God for the 'saint-ed' Lutheran leaders who served so faithfully as staff, Board or volunteer leaders. It is altogether appropriate that on this special anniversary we recognize and give thanks for these Saints. They have moved on to

Continued on next page

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COVER STORY

from page 2

receive their *promised crown of life*...but they are certainly not forgotten.

Some of the names I mention below may be unfamiliar to you, but if you do recognize one or two, it is sure to put a smile on your face. They have all moved on to the *Church Triumphant*:

- Charles (Charlie) Mueller and Omar Otterness were the very first volunteer co-executive directors
- Also serving as Executive Director were Karl Lutze, Art Constien and Ed Naylor
- Board members who “from their labors rest” include Florence Montz, Walter Morris, Bill Seeber, Willis Gertner, Will Erikson, Chris Haaland and Stan Enlund.

Without these “Saints” there would be no ALOA. And there are so many more individuals who served in volunteer capacities or used their gift of music, teaching, preaching or serving, to help make ALOA what it is today.

And what about tomorrow? I am 88 years old, but not too old to dream. I can still get excited about the potential of ALOA as a blessing to the older adult population of our



Mueller



Otterness



Lutze



Constien



Naylor

Lutheran churches. The funding challenge will, no doubt, continue to be there. But the rapidly growing older adult population in America and in the church also continues to be a challenge - 10,000 Boomers reaching the age of 65 every day!

What excites me and gives me hope about ALOA's future are the *saints alive!*

Yes...that same Boomer generation that has proven every bit as gifted and committed to their Lord and the church as the ‘saints who from their labors rest.’ It is gratifying to read about all the creative ideas, activities and program plans that continue to flow from the staff

and Board of ALOA. Who would have thought 30 years ago that by 2021 we would be living in a brand-new age...the age of technology...where paper has almost become obsolete? I applaud ALOA for staying on the cutting edge of communications and up-to-date on the concerns of older adults while remaining grounded in the *spiritual heart* of the Gospel.

So, as I think about all of ALOA's past saints...and especially about ALOA's present and future saints...I want to break out in song, especially the last line of *For all the Saints*, “...singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Alleluia, Alleluia!” **GO ALOA!**

Support ALOA

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

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Support older adult ministry by making **ALOA** your organization of choice!

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

By Dr. Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

A graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Pastor Ken Holdorf served congregations in Alabama, Louisiana and Texas before retiring from fulltime ministry in 2000. For the past 21 years, he has served part-time as Director of Senior Adult ministry at Prince of Peace, Carrollton, Texas.



Ken Holdorf

No stopping this “Senior senior”

Ken’s response to the first question, below, offers a glimpse of the legendary humor that has brought smiles to ALOA Board members since Ken joined the leadership team in 2014. This interview focuses on Ken as a “senior senior,” or older person above the age of 80. A future interview will highlight Ken as an example of an emerging trend among older adults: extended employment post-retirement.

From your perspective (having just celebrated your 83rd birthday), when does a person enter the “old age” category?

Holdorf: There is a lot of debate about when a person enters “old age.” I answer that question by saying that a person is old if they have an air bag on their stroller or if their blood type has been discontinued!

You ask a child, “How old are you?” and you ask an adult the same question. You are as old as your age. Or you are as old as you think you are. Most people today would say that you enter old age at 75. I believe old age begins when you think you are old.

You have been employed part time for 21 years after retirement. How has growing older during that time impacted your performance as a leader?

Holdorf: Early in the 1970s I set out a plan that I would be involved in continuing education every year for the rest of my life. God supplied the opportunities to grow through reading, workshops, conferences, retreats, and life experiences that helped me to lead Bible studies as well as conduct

workshops and retreats. I am still growing and thanking God for all the opportunities he has given me.

As a “senior senior,” what do you and others age 80 and above want from your congregation?

Holdorf: I want my congregation to present the Gospel of God’s loving forgiveness in the person and work of Jesus, my Savior. I want assurance that I am valued, with the realization that God has a plan and a purpose for my life not only in the congregation, but also in my everyday life as a disciple of Jesus. I look for my congregation to be a place where I am never alone, but have the joy of fellowship with others

How can congregations demonstrate respect for those in their 80’s and 90’s?

Holdorf: A congregation can identify members with a passion to plan ministry for those over 80. Compile a list of all “senior seniors” with their age, birthday, address, telephone and email. The volunteers can make contacts and involve “senior seniors” in small groups. The older members can be encouraged to discover

ways to be served and serve others. This assures them of their significance as one of God's chosen and loved people who will not be alone. Celebrate the gift of all who are 80 and above!

In what ways have you seen parish ministry change in the past 50 years?

Holdorf: We can't do ministry in the same way we did in the '60s and '70s, so I have experienced a great many changes in how a congregation carries out ministry. We make sure that the person and work of Jesus lies at the heart and center of ministry. Parish ministry exhibits joy, laughter and cooperation driven by a concern for people of all ages that results in no one being alone. I see a fellowship of love and care for one another, alongside a passion to share Jesus in word and actions.

What can older adults offer to their congregation?

Holdorf: We need to hear their faith stories. They can share how God has blessed them and has gotten them through difficult times. Their stories are a valuable witness to God's faithfulness. Many specific resources about faith stories are available on the ALOA website.

What will give you joy today?

Holdorf: I have great joy whenever I hear that congregations are faithfully carrying out ministry that enhances ministry to, for and by our senior fellow believers in Jesus. I have joy when I see a congregation including people of all ages in the important ministry of equipping them to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the congregation, in the community, and in all nations.

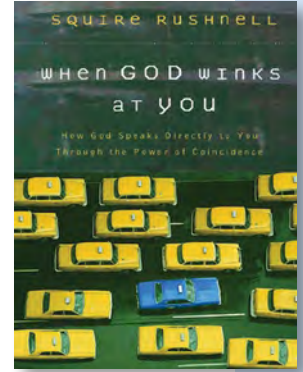
Growing older has enhanced my joyful journey with Jesus.

BOOK REVIEW

By Deaconess Penny Cedel,
ALOA Board

When God Winks at You

by Squire Rushnell is a book my husband, Tom, thought I'd find it of interest. I quickly framed it as an "easy read of short life stories." Further into it, I realized that the book tied into a Ladies Bible Study I was doing on the less understood work that the Holy Spirit does in our lives today.



Squire Rushnell poses the question, "Could God be showing you He cares about the details of your life?" Or is it just coincidence? Think about times that something happens to answer a prayer (sometimes even before you know to pray about it). Or in times of uncertainty, you feel peace in a decision.

Interjecting scripture and hymns, Rushnell recounts real life stories and events in people's lives that reflect personal experiences, transitions, comfort, prayer or unanswered prayer and the timeliness of "God winks."

For example, in the Transitions section, he shares the impact on both a musician (person helping another) and a woman impacted by that music and scripture (after hearing her recently deceased daughter's favorite hymn). A "God wink" experience like this offers comfort and heals the pain of loss.

The author challenges the reader to go back through personal life experiences and think about how things resolved themselves, life changed abruptly, or the impact from those we encounter. He closes with Matthew 13:35, asking the reader to be aware of God's Hand (by the work of the Holy Spirit), being present, guiding and helping us through daily experiences.

FALL LUTHERHOSTEL

Ironwood Springs LH October 4-8, 2021

There's still time to register!
Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville, Minnesota has developed appropriate measures to safely host this week of learning, worship, outdoor activities and fellowship.

We will welcome Ben & Jennifer Freuden- burg to lead a study of *Life in the Later Years*, helping us to better impart God's love and grace to future generations. The Freudenbergs serve at Concordia Center



for the Family in Ann Arbor, Mich., where Ben is Exec. Director. Pastor Frank and Deaconess Jan Janzow will lead devotions and music on *Kingdom Living: A Fresh Look at the Lord's Prayer*. The Janzows served Ascension Lutheran in Waukesha, Wis. for 37 years.



Each day will include topics of local interest and optional outdoor activities. Try the zip line or the cornhole tournament, hiking and more. Lodging is in comfortable hotel-style rooms in the camp's Miracle Lodge.

Cost: \$575 per person/dbl occupancy includes program, lodging and meals. Bring your camper: \$525 per person. Commuters: \$350 per person (no lodging or breakfast). For information or to register: aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostell/

IN FLORIDA

Empowering Elders October 7-9, 2021 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Postponed to Spring, 2022

This joint Conference between ALOA and POAMN (Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Network) will feature inspiring speakers, breakout sessions and lunch. The conference will take place at **Christ Lutheran Church, 2715 Lakeland Hills Blvd, Lakeland, FL.**



Hear **Roland Martinson**, Emeritus Dean of Luther Seminary, speak on Expanding Older Adulthood. **Pat Baker**, President of POAMN, will share insights for Care Partners. Breakout sessions include a deeper dive with the speakers, plus creativity, coping with dementia and seniors serving others.



Cost: \$35 per person (includes lunch) Register online or with the registration form at: aloaserves.org/events/aloa-poamn-conference/

Holy Land & Passion Play June 18-30, 2022

ALO A Board member Rev. Dr. David Maack will lead a trip to the Holy Land, followed by travel to Germany for the Passion Play. The 13-day trip will include sites from Bethlehem to Jerusalem and to the Dead Sea Scrolls, then on to Innsbruck, Salzburg and Oberammergau. Cost from \$4,998 per person/dbl occupancy from Newark. Contact dmaack@lutheranmissionsociety.org for a brochure.

COMING IN 2022

Experience Italy & the Oberammergau Passion Play

September 20 - 30, 2022



Join us for an 11-day tour of Italy that's followed by a chance to experience the renowned Oberammergau Passion Play.

We'll take in Christian Rome, Vatican City, the tomb of Paul and the Sistine Chapel. Then, travel to Assisi, Florence, Padua and Venice to marvel at cathedrals and the masterworks of Michelangelo & Giotto. Finally, it's off to Bavaria for the remarkable Oberammergau Passion Play.

Cost: \$4,872 per person/double occupancy from Tampa. Includes airfare, lodging, two meals daily, transfers and tours, along with tickets to experience the 2022 Passion Play.

HURRY! Early Bird Savings end soon! Save \$100 with a \$500 deposit received by Sept. 21, 2021.

Find information, videos and how to register under the [Events tab](#) on our website.

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

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We are grateful to donors from mid-May thru August 20, 2021

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- Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)



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

