



# EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

CELEBRATING  
**30**  
*years of ministry*

May/June 2022

## Fall Prevention Goes to Church

*Dr. Lydia Manning is on the frontlines of healthcare IT. A social gerontologist and ALOA Board member, Manning works with high tech innovations designed to prevent falls, especially among older adults.*

By Dr. Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

**This emphasis is a critical reality.**

Consider these facts:

- An older adult falls **every second of every day.**
- **70 percent of deaths** among older adults are fall-related.
- If fall rates continue to rise, in eight years, the CDC anticipates **seven fall deaths will occur every hour.**

However, technological innovations are becoming more available and affordable, even for cash-strapped churches. Here are Manning's observations from her position on the frontlines.

**What types of fall prevention devices do older adults currently use?**

**Manning:** The most common prevention strategies include installing grab bars, bathroom safety aids such as



bath benches and raised toilet frames, non-slip socks with treads and proper footwear, as well as the use of mobility aids and assistive devices such as a cane or walker.

However, fall prevention has come a long way in the last decade due to technological advances. These devices include wearable/inflatable hip protectors, unique watch-like wearables, wireless fall and exit alarms, and wireless caregivers.

**How have churches integrated fall prevention strategies and devices into their ministries?**

**Manning:** Church settings may provide a protective, psychosocial buffer for older adults which can help people better understand and manage their fall risks. We know that community-based programs effectively



**Social gerontologist Dr. Lydia Manning shares her expertise in fall prevention.**

*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



Hans Springer

**DONOR ADVISED FUNDS**

I want to thank all ALOA's supporters and share a few reminders. One of the more frequent ways of giving had been from a donor advised fund that you may have. You can make

a wonderful impact if you have such a DAF or other type of charitable giving account. At ALOA, we greatly appreciate gifts (grants or distributions) from these accounts.

You can also choose to have any remaining DAF funds distributed after your lifetime by naming ALOA as a beneficiary of all or a part of the remaining funds.

There are other ways to support ALOA as well. You can help advance the work of this ministry through your:

- Bequest in your will
- Monthly gifts
- Gift of a percentage of your estate or a specific asset
- Life insurance or retirement plan naming Adult Lutherans Organized for Action as a beneficiary

I encourage you to contact ALOA at [aloa4u@gmail.com](mailto:aloa4u@gmail.com) for more information or any questions you may have.

May the Lord grant you every blessing through this spring and coming summer days.



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

# Update on Congregational Centers for Resilience & Aging

Now that we are finally able to meet in person with groups and at regional and national conferences, we have finally had opportunities to introduce the ALOA Congregational Centers for Vital and Resilient Aging Project. These include Best Practices Conference in Phoenix and a number of judicatory meetings.

Progress on the project was seriously impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic, but we have been hard at work gathering resources for ALOA's Toolkit for Older Adult Ministry. We've developed four main components: Spiritual, Social, Education and Intergenerational, and have discovered and incorporated a significant number of resources in each area. Creation of the Toolkit as an electronic resource gives ALOA the ability to easily add new resources to the various component sections as they are discovered. This should make it a relevant resource for congregations to utilize on an ongoing basis, enabling them to provide more intentional older adult ministry.

With restrictions on gatherings being lifted in many areas, we are now able to begin in-depth conversations with congregations about conducting in person consultations. This will be a major focus of our work going forward. We are thankful for the continued support of the ELCA Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment for providing a grant in support for this project.

## 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.

# COVER STORY: FALL PREVENTION

*Fall Prevention.... from page 1*

decrease fall risks in older adults. We also know that faith-based programs can improve health behaviors, so it is plausible that faith-based initiatives can help reduce fall risks for older adults.

A congregation can help people manage fear of falling and fall risk with a program that looks similar to other social service or health informed initiatives. If nothing else, churches can work to make sure that their physical spaces are fall safe with proper and safe lighting and flooring and are up to ADA code.



## At the congregational level, who generally leads fall prevention initiatives?

**Manning:** This type of health and wellness-based programming is usually headed up by the parish nurse.

## What prevents congregations from being more proactive in fall prevention efforts among older adults?

**Manning:** The level of interest reflects the congregation and whether people are asking for this type of information and programming. For example, a member at Grace Lutheran, River Forest, IL is a physical therapist who specializes in falls. She leads workshops on the importance of balance in preventing falls.

## How can congregational leaders alert others to fall prevention?

**Manning:** Bring awareness to the issue by including free information from the CDC's STEADI program in newsletters and in church email communications.  
[www.cdc.gov/steadil/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/steadil/index.html)

## What fall prevention resources are currently available to churches?

**Manning:** Insurance companies that provide coverage to churches have fall prevention information ([www.churchmutual.com/17522/Slip,-Trip-and-Fall-Prevention](http://www.churchmutual.com/17522/Slip,-Trip-and-Fall-Prevention)) as do other organizations dealing with church leadership ([churchexecutive.com/archives/clear-your-path-to-a-safe-church](http://churchexecutive.com/archives/clear-your-path-to-a-safe-church)).

## How can congregations stay up-to-date on the latest advances in healthcare IT, and specifically fall prevention among older adults?

**Manning:** Follow the conversations of National Council on Aging

([www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/](http://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/)



[prevention/falls-prevention](http://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/prevention/falls-prevention)) and CDC on fall risk and aging ([www.cdc.gov/falls/](http://www.cdc.gov/falls/)).

To learn more about Age Tech, digital tech that's built around the needs and wants of older adults, follow Keren Etkin's blog at [www.thegerontechnologist.com](http://www.thegerontechnologist.com)

## More on Fall Prevention

Note: This interview follows up a webinar Manning presented for ALOA in August 2021. You can view a recording of the webinar and download resources at:

[aloaserves.org/archive-fall-prevention](http://aloaserves.org/archive-fall-prevention)

# CONTINUITY CULTURE

By Dr. Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Has your congregation's older adult ministry embraced a "continuity culture"?

A traditional succession plan staggers terms of office for key positions. This allows leaders to be trained and mentored in advance of planned transitions.

However, after living through a pandemic, congregations have been rudely reminded that advance planning can protect against unexpected disruptions. Any church might face a crisis situation, whether it's the most recent virus variant, a hurricane or power failure.



Adopting a "continuity" culture is critical in older adult ministry. As older adults living through a pandemic, we have personally experienced the reality that uncertainty

increases anxiety. When we aren't certain of what's happening, we crave stability. Planning ahead allows ministry to continue in the event of unexpected change, regardless of the cause.

A continuity culture begins at the top with professional church staff. A measured level of preparedness filters into all aspects of ministry, so that even volunteers are aware of basic channels of communication. When facing an unexpected situation, everyone becomes a key player.

How will your older adult ministry maintain the current degree of energy and vitality

**Ministry that continues to function during times of unpredictability reflects God's promise that, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."**

when the unexpected happens next time? Take these four steps:

- 1. Plan and prepare.** Does your congregation host a senior day care in the fellowship center on weekdays? Provide drivers for Meals on



Wheels each Wednesday? Identify critical roles and services. Your older adult ministry goals answer the "Why?" question. Now ask "Who?" "What?" "Where?" and "How?"

- 2. Share your communication plan.** Clarify reporting relationships. For example, who tells attendees there is no heat at church and therefore no senior Bible class? Identify specific roles and responsibilities.
- 3. Address all formats.** Technology can simplify or complicate communication. A crisis tends to accelerate the pace of notifications. Facts and misinformation can easily get tangled. Are decisions shared via email? Posted on the church website? Sent through text messages? Shared through the telephone tree?
- 4. Revisit your plan.** The older adult population is fluid. Keep information current. Continuity plan updates are commonly made every six months.

During the past two years, we have been reminded re-

*Continued in next column*

*Continuity Culture.... from previous page*

peatedly that everyday life can be stressful. Older adults confront so many unknowns during the normal aging process, that every attempt should be made to minimize the stressors that accompany periods of unpredictability or crisis. Ministry that continues to function during times of unpredictability reflects God's promise that, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Older adults need to be wrapped in this comforting message.

Embracing a "continuity culture" is an investment that demonstrates an empathetic approach to being served and serving, hallmarks of an effective older adult ministry.

## Make Moments Count

Every minute someone leaves this world behind. We are all in "the line" without knowing it. We never know how many people are before us.

We can not move to the back of the line.  
We can not step out of the line.  
We can not avoid the line.  
So while we wait in line -

Make moments count.  
Make priorities.  
Make the time.  
Make your gifts known.  
Make a nobody feel like a somebody.  
Make your voice heard.  
Make the small things big.  
Make someone smile.  
Make the change.  
Make love.  
Make up.  
Make peace.  
Make sure to tell your people they are loved.  
Make sure to have no regrets.  
Make sure you are ready.

*Attributed to Marianne Baum*

## Save the Date!

We will gather  
to celebrate  
ALOA's 30 years  
of ministry



**November 5, 2022**  
**Tampa, Florida**

Watch for more information soon!

## ALOA Webinars

Our webinars share insights of older adult ministry leaders and experts on aging, with opportunities for questions. Past topics have included aging, wellness and care resources, along with congregational topics. You can check out our library of more than 25 previous topics, along with their associated resources at [aloaserves.org/webinars](http://aloaserves.org/webinars)

All ALOA webinars are offered free of charge and last about an hour.

### What's Up Next?

#### Engaging Older Adults in Ministry

**Thursday, June 23, 2022 – Noon ET**

A panel of ministry leaders share their expertise on engaging older adults in ministry and explore the potential that older adults bring to the congregation as life long learners. There is energy and encouragement as we continue to stretch our learning capacity through the simple and some more challenging experiences. Sue Lennartson, Director of Adult Ministry at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi, MN will lead the discussion. She'll be joined by Pastor Roland Martinson, professor emeritus at Luther Seminary and author of *Elder Rising*; Pastor Chris Olson Binga, Senior Pastor of First Lutheran Church in urban St Paul, MN; and Pastor Kelly Chatman, a national teacher for the church in multicultural leadership, community engagement and congregational revitalization.

## Ironwood Springs Lutherhostel October 3-7, 2022 Stewartville, Minnesota

Join us for a week of learning, worship, outdoor activities and fellowship at Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville, Minnesota.

Rev. David Buegler will lead our spiritual study, sharing **The Rest of the Story** about bible stories we think we know. He is a retired pastor who motivates through entertaining and inspirational bible study. Pastor Frank and Deaconess Jan Janzow will once again lead devotions and music, exploring **The Lost Parables of Luke**. 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 corn-



hole tournament, hiking and more. Lodging is in comfortable hotel-style rooms in the camp's Miracle Lodge.

**Cost:** \$600 per person/dbl occupancy includes program, lodging and meals. Bring your camper: \$550 per person. Commuters: \$375 per person (no lodging or breakfast). For information or to register: [aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel/](http://aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel/)



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If you are eligible for Choice Dollars® direct them to ALOA. It's easy:
  - Go to [thrivent.com/thriventchoice/](http://thrivent.com/thriventchoice/)
  - Or, call 1-800-847-4836
2. Anyone Can Make a Personal Donation  
Use a credit card or direct it from your bank account. Either way, make a donation to ALOA thru Thrivent and Thrivent will pay all fees.

### Do you shop on Amazon?

Each purchase can benefit ALOA if you shop through **amazon smile**

Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and use your Amazon log-in. Then designate Adult Lutherans Organized for Action as your charity. Amazon will donate .5% of each purchase you make to ALOA....at no cost to you!



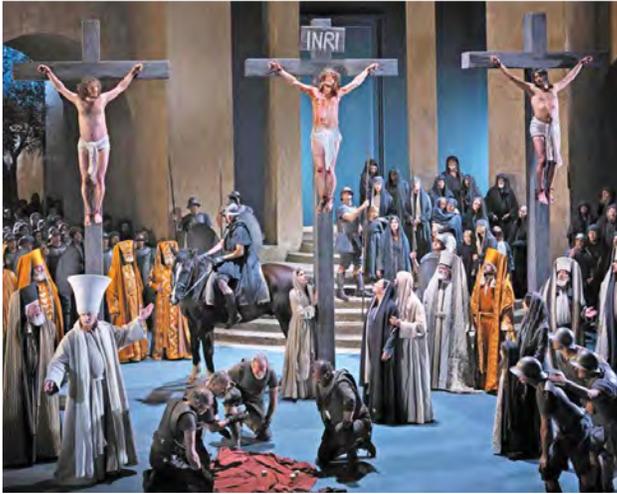
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Send us your email address or sign up at [aloaserves.org](http://aloaserves.org).

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

# TRAVEL WITH ALOA

## 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.

Find information, a video of the Passion Play and registration links under the Events tab on our website or go to [aloaserves.org/events/oberammergau-passion-play-2022/](https://aloaserves.org/events/oberammergau-passion-play-2022/).

**Questions?** Contact George Algozzina at [george@aloaserves.org](mailto:george@aloaserves.org) or call us at 800-930-2562.

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

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