



EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

Intentional ministry by, with, and for adults in the second half of life

Keeping You Posted

November 2023

Mr. Daniel Reichard has resigned as ALOA's Executive Director, and while we are grateful for his leadership, we wish him all the best. We are pleased to announce that the ALOA Board of Directors has called Mr. Joe Young to lead

ALOA as Executive Director. Prior to taking on that role, Joe served several years as a member of the ALOA Board. Joe is well qualified to take on the leadership of ALOA, having retired from the churchwide offices of the ELCA after nearly 20 years of service.

Before his retirement, he served as Director for Community Development Services where he administered World Hunger funded programs such as Domestic Hunger Grants and Loan Fund programs, as well as Lutheran Services Grants and Loan Funds. In addition, he supervised the Lutheran Disaster Response Program and administered the Social Ministry Affiliation process.



Joe Young, Executive Director

As Executive Director, Joe brings significant experience advising congregations regarding the creation and management of social ministry programs and organizations. Through this work, he created the Missional Sustainability Program and its curriculum, and has coached Social Ministry Organizations on governance and strategic planning, grant writing and fundraising.

In the coming months, Joe will primarily focus on creating a network of Congregational Centers for Vital and Resilient Aging programs and promote a dynamic array of older adult services.

Joe obtained his undergraduate degree (Bachelor Social Work) from Wartburg College, Waverly, IA, and his graduate degree (Master Social Work) from the University of Iowa. Joe and his family have lived in northern Illinois for the past 36 years. He is an active member at Holy Cross Lutheran, and in his spare time he mentors students and volunteers at area food banks.

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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.

COVER STORY: Keeping You Posted

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In other news....

On September 18, 2023, a spiritually energized group of people flew to Greece as part of an ALOA-planned trip to “Follow the Footsteps of the Apostle Paul.” Our Director of Administration, George Algozzina, led the group on this all-inclusive trip that featured first class hotel accommodations, a 3-day



Greek Isles cruise, internationally acclaimed tour directors and sightseeing in every destination. The trip provided a worry-free travel opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Paul in Greece and experience his legacy.

As tour leader, George has guided numerous groups on spirit-filled trips including cruises, river cruises, land and river tours celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and more recently, a tour of Italy and the world-renown centennial Passion Play.

What's next? 2024 is just around the corner and there is a once-in-a-lifetime tour to the Holy Land September 10 – September 19, 2024. The itinerary is wonderful, with 5-star hotels and life-impacting destinations. Who could think of a better place for an Affirmation of Baptism than the place where Jesus walked and to be able to experience what Jesus saw.

A trip to the Holy Land is an extraordinary experience; and although the recent events in the

middle east have been heartbreaking, our tour / travel company, *Imagine Tours and Travel*, along with their overseas partners and local officials have noted that Gaza is the area impacted. They have assured us that the remainder of Israel, including sites of tourism, remain unaffected. Our prayers are with all the people of the Middle East who have or are suffering losses during this conflict, and we pray for peace. We are blessed that the planned tour visits unaffected areas and many historic sites, including: Caesarea, Mt. Carmel, Nazareth, Megiddo, the Sea of Galilee (with a boat ride on a replica wooden “Jesus Boat”), the Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum, Caesarea Philippi, Tel Dan, Jericho, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the opportunity to swim or float in the Dead Sea, The City of David, the Church of St. Peter Gallicantu, the Israel Museum, Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, Temple Mount and the Southern Steps.



Steeped in history and culture, and shaped by different faiths and communities, the Holy

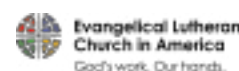


Land is not only the oldest pilgrimage destination, but also a truly fascinating

corner of the world. We invite you to travel with ALOA to this fascinating land that is at the root of Christianity. Look for information to be released in the coming weeks on tour prices and early bird discounts.



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



Upskilling At Home

By Dr. Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

You're never too old to learn.

This familiar line, a core value of older adult ministry, is a reminder that learning is a life-long process. Research from The National Institute on Aging has demonstrated that regular cognitive and social activity reduces the risks of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Yet upskilling, loosely defined as adding and improving skills, is sometimes an afterthought on the personal level. Although it's easier to doze in front of the TV than complete a crossword puzzle, older adults have unexpected resources.

In the last several years, toy and game companies have been developing products for people at all ages and stages of life. Understandably, the pace of creation accelerated during the pandemic. This intentional inclusivity paid off for corporate America: last year, "kidult" products accounted for 25% of U.S. toy sales.

This eldertainment trend is obvious. Card games are labeled for "ages 7-77+." Game board pieces are easier to grasp. Directions are printed in large typeface, for young and old to read at a glance. Trivia games capitalize on nostalgia.

Cynics might comment that companies are all about profitability. That statement is true. Businesses want to ride the "silver tsunami" as 10,000 Americans turn 65 each day.

But let's be realistic: the journey through aging can be stressful. Healthy aging takes

effort. Age-related challenges demand we embrace a growth mindset. Why not take advantage of fun opportunities to upskill? Use these five tips to tap into the power of play to stay sharp:

- 1. Focus on product benefits.** Packaging identifies benefits. Does a game require hand-eye coordination? Memory? Vocabulary? Amplify learning in areas that matter to you.
- 2. Start simply.** In the fitness center a wise beginner always chooses the lightest weight. The same is true when building brain power: take it easy, especially at first.
- 3. Practice patience.** Upskilling isn't always easy. Learning can take effort. Remembering the rules to a new game might take time. Give yourself and others some grace.
- 4. Play across generations.** Games and toys bring people together. Social interaction contributes to healthy aging.



When relatives ask, "What can I buy for your birthday?" suggest games and puzzles. And of course, invite them to play with you!

- 5. Get recommendations.** If you've lost motor control or have repetitive behaviors, ask a caregiver or medical provider which fidget toys might be helpful. Animatronic pets can become companions. Trade puzzles with friends. Ask other older adults, "Which games make you smile?"

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Bounce Back

By Dr. Mary Manz Simon, ALOA Board

Age is a number that comes with emotional backstories, years of experience and well-defined skills and abilities. It is a number that also comes with harsh realities. We might have problems recalling names, climbing stairs or sleeping through the night. But whether a birthday cake has 60 or 90 candles, we can build a mindset that equips us to bounce back or simply cope more effectively with the challenges of growing older. Which of these traits do you bring to the aging process?

Building a community. Intentionally include people of various ages, as each generation will bring a unique perspective. Call on this support network for assistance, insights and advice. These deeply-rooted relationships will give you a sense of connection regardless of other changes. *Who is in your network?*

Tuning into yourself. Our emotional landscape includes how you interact with others, manage relationships, express emotions and make decisions. Humor, optimism and drawing on faith can help us manage what happens. *What internal coping mechanisms are effective for you?*

Being adaptable. Look for lessons. We live in the “Information Age.” Resources are as close as your computer screen. Look at how others have handled a similar situation. Be willing to consider various perspectives and ideas. *What idea sources have proven to be reliable in the past?*

Controlling what you can. Be realistic. Acknowledge limitations. Avoid talking “around the problem.” Confronting issues head-on will accelerate your move to a productive state of mind. Pick yourself up and carry on as you are able. *What challenging*

situation have you plowed through in the past?

Focusing on others. Zoom out. See the bigger picture. Giving to others triggers the reward center in your brain. *What action can you take today to encourage or help someone?*

Anticipating the future. We know from experience that life doesn't always follow a script. We don't know the exact path forward, but we do know exactly where we're headed. As Christians, our journey through aging will end in a happy place. That means we can hang on to hope. *Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*

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Joe Young
Executive Director
Carol Murphy
Publications Editor

Contact Us
1-800-930-ALOA (2562)
aloe4u@gmail.com
ALOA.serves.org
PO Box 4367, Clearwater, 33758