Connecting The Word Of God With The World Of God.

Freedom Tree Village

• LOMC • Oregon, IL 61061 •

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- Enable the person Christ creates in us "to be caught up in the way of Jesus Christ."

This commitment is to people of all ages and to people regardless of their economic capabilities.

The commitment by LOMC is to make possible adult-friendly spaces for eating, meeting, and lodging — *Freedom Tree Village*. These buildings for single adults, married adults, families, and seniors will provide opportunities to strengthen relationships with God, one another, within families, marriages, ourselves, and the world.

This commitment by LOMC is also to construct facilities within the financial capabilities of the constituents and facilities that can pay for themselves. It is also the intent of LOMC that the construction not begin until cash and pledges are in hand to make this project possible. Also, the plan is that expenses for this endeavor be paid in full within five years.

You are invited to make a commitment as well, a commitment of gifts, participation, and decision making.

One commitment depends upon the other. Donors are dependent upon the commitments of LOMC. LOMC is dependent upon the commitments of the donors. Both involve sacrifice, character, the power to change (metanoia), and the trust that integrity triumphs over skepticism. It is a commitment borne of the Spirit of God and acted out for the good of others.

Would you prayerfully join with the LOMC Board of Directors and staff in this mission and commitment? Would you consider a generous gift for ***Freedom Tree Village***? A commitment to **Faith, Truth, and Victory?**

A 13-minutes video is available upon request, describing activities at LOMC and the capital campaign. Please contact: LOMC • P.O. Box 239 • Oregon, IL 61061 • 815-732-2220.

LUTHERAN OUTDOOR MINISTRIES CENTER
Oregon, Illinois

THE CASE STATEMENT

Mission Statement

The purpose of LOMC is to be the Church in outdoor settings, nurturing Christian faith and providing experiences connecting the Word of God with the world of God.[1]

Facilities and Program

LOMC is a facility and a program driven by its Mission Statement.

The property is a picturesque 650 acre site near Oregon, Illinois with a kaleidoscope of natural wonders. Its prairies and woodlands, rock formations and pond, and various types of flora and fauna provide a diverse setting for learning and recreation.

Structures on the site include five air-conditioned retreat houses, two meeting buildings, an air conditioned dining hall and lounge, a swimming pool, a dairy barn, several pavilions, an office with rooms for year-round staff, an old home for some summer staff, a program storage building, and a home and garage for the property manager.

As a program, LOMC utilizes a decentralized approach giving individuals, congregations, and school groups opportunities for camping, retreats, and outdoor education throughout the state of Illinois and eastern Missouri. The delivery of program services, however, is concentrated at the Oregon site.

Summer camps and confirmation camping provide youth with opportunities to develop a greater awareness of the marvels of God's activity in all of creation, experience community in "a place apart and a time apart," and grow in their faith. This is only part of the story. LOMC is a year-round camp and conference facility serving people of all ages. Weekend retreats for youth and adults are held during the fall, winter, and spring

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[1] Adopted by the LOMC Board of Directors, October 15, 1988.

through direct program leadership or rental of facilities and services. Congregational, synod, and church-wide groups also use the facilities for a variety of meetings and events. Outdoor/environmental education programs are also facilitated and organized for public and private schools.

Governance and Financial Support

LOMC is a corporation composed of four member synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for which it provides services: Central/Southern Illinois, Central States (formerly Missouri/Kansas), Metropolitan Chicago, and Northern Illinois. Five members from each synod with five members-at-large compose the Board of Directors.

In addition to user fees, the LOMC operating budget is supported by Synodical benevolence as well as individual and congregational gifts:

77% - User Fees

13% - Individual donors and congregations

8% - Synodical Support

2% - Farm Land Rental

History

For almost 20 years LOMC has been serving the church connecting the Word of God with the world of God in an outdoor setting. It is a continuation of church camping programs that began over 65 years ago. Camp Augustana at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin was established by the Central Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Church in 1927. Camp Alpine at Richmond, Illinois was established by the Illinois Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America in the mid 1950's. The two camps became a part of the Illinois Synod of the Lutheran Church in America in 1963. The two programs were consolidated and relocated to Oregon, Illinois in 1974. In 1988, LOMC was incorporated as an expression and agency of the four ELCA synods.

Benefits

There are many benefits in this project. The additional beds make LOMC more financially viable. By arranging lodging there can be accommodations for youth during specific summer programs to provide more camper opportunities. For adult usage each room would accommodate a couple, a family, or three single persons.

Parking, walkways, rooms, and services would all be set up to make the facility as user friendly as possible and also comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The surroundings, amenities, and services would be inviting, comfortable, and take as much advantage of the natural location as possible. There would be every effort to protect the environment and to be operationally sound.

The facility would have flexibility so several types of adult and/or family groups can be undisturbed by each other. They are also designed with intent that the people can choose to include the out-of-doors in their program.

By providing employee housing in this facility, year-round staff would find their accommodations more inviting and personal. They would also be able to provide food service for small groups of individuals who would seek a place for personal retreat.

With an attractive and comfortable facility the adult population can be encouraged to participate in enriching experiences and spiritual renewal. Church leaders can also feel comfortable and confident in bringing and sending people.

An Invitation for Support

LOMC has made a commitment through its Board and staff to

- Be the church in outdoor settings
- Nurture the Christian faith
- Connect the Word of God with the world of God
- Lead others to maturity in Christ
- Look at the world through the cross

The Campaign Goal
$1,750,000.00

There are three parts of the goal: construction of the facility, administration of the campaign, and an endowment for camperships. The first two parts are obvious in terms of needs. The third part is an affirmation of a continual service to assist those who need financial assistance to have a quality place to go and a quality program in which to participate.

CONSTRUCTION (Estimated Cost)			
Buildings	3 Lodges (2,300 sq. ft.) @ $182,395 each	$547,185	
	Hospitality Building (4,350 sq. ft.)	353,861	
	Additional Building(s)	208,954	
	Sub Total		1,110,000
Other	Site Work	90,000	
	Site Utilities	30,000	
	Furnishings	75,000	
	Furnishings for Additional Buildings	25,000	
	Contingency	80,000	
	Sub Total		300,000
Architectural & Engineering	Basic Fees	80,000	
	Additional Building(s)	20,000	
	Sub Total		100,000
	TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST		$1,510,000
ADMINISTRATION			
Consultation		62,000	
Other Costs		78,000	
	Sub Total		140,000
ENDOWMENT FOR CAMPERSHIP			100,000
***** GRAND TOTAL *****			**$1,750,000**

Distinctive Aspects of the LOMC Program

There are three distinctive aspects of the LOMC program that reflect and expand the Mission Statement: the setting of people and space, the content that describes God's work in all of history (both human and non-human), and the purpose of developing responsible Christian people.

1. The Setting - the World

The setting for LOMC is the world which is often perceived as the out-of-doors. In part that is true. This natural world is the arena in which God acts, where God's self is made known, and where God interacts with all of creation to bring about its fulfillment.

Jesus says to his followers in the Sermon on the Mount:

> *"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet our heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* (Matthew 6:26-33 NRSV)[2]

This natural world is not exclusive of humans. Natural history embraces human history. Both natural history and human history are characterized by adaptation, diversity, ecosystems, interdependence, mutualism, and profession.

By its very character, the LOMC setting is recreational. To many, recreation means pastime and play. Fun is a necessary component, and play is a way of physical, social, and intellectual learning. Such experiences are forms of renewal.

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[2] A paraphrase of this passage is along the side of the Entrance Road at LOMC.

Being in this recreational setting, it is possible to redefine the meaning of recreation and challenge behaviors that are wreck-creational and destructive to the environment and to people.

Recreation has a deeper meaning as well — re-creation. Time can be dedicated to personal renewal and self-reflection. This is retreat in the classical sense of the word. Silence, meditation, prayer, and solitude are its hallmarks.[3]

The Psalmist gives sound advice when saying:

> *Come, behold the works of the Lord;*
> *see what desolations he has brought on the earth;*
> *He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;*
> *he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;*
> *he burns the shields with fire.*
> *"Be still, and know that I am God!*
> *I am exalted among the nations,*
> *I am exalted in the earth."*
> *The Lord of hosts is with us;*
> *the God of Jacob is our refuge* (Psalm 46:8-11 NRSV).

The setting becomes an embodiment for the mission statement: LOMC is the Church in outdoor settings, and the world of God is the place of encounter with God and with others.

2. The Content - The Cross

Though the natural history of the setting may appear to be the source and content of LOMC, the true source of the LOMC program is the sacred history of the Christian faith that serves as substance and focus for all programs. This is the historical record of the incarnation of God in Christ, Christ's life, death, and resurrection. This emphasis, however, is not done at the expense of the remainder of sacred history as recorded in Scripture nor at the expense of the other two persons of the Trinity.

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[3] The term "leisure," which is often time used to describe time that is not occupied for work, really refers to a style of life whereupon one gives one self permission. This is what the word means in Latin. Thus, re-creation is the opportunity for one to take hold of oneself, let God be God, and to let go, let God. This is the classical understanding of retreat.

A Proposed Facility

To accommodate the needs and vision, an adult-friendly facility — *Freedom Tree Village* — is being planned. The LOMC site has a beauty and richness to which this addition can be a compliment.

It is intended that *Freedom Tree Village* be compatible with the land architecture, fit into the present program usage of the site, be designed for efficiency and economy of operation, and function on its own without additional subsidy. Consideration should also be given to the types and sources of materials selected.

Information acquired in a feasibility study conducted in 1988, respondents presently using LOMC favored facilities that are comfortable and motel-type in character with adequate meeting space for overnight groups of 20 to 30 people. Interest was also expressed in facilities for families.

The meeting space would handle up to 60 guests for daytime use. Meals could be served in this space or the dining hall.

A hospitality/reception area would also greet guests.

Outdoor walkways, benches, and shelters would invite people outside.

The location of this facility would be conveniently located on the lower level of the site, near the dining hall isolated from the other camping activities, and be accessible to the present underground utilities.

The long-term vision will include several other additions:

I. Administration
   A. Added office space
   B. Improvement of infirmary (increase number of beds to accommodate additional youth)
   C. On-site housing for another staff family
II. House
   A. Large maintenance and storage building
   B. One more village (like Meadows and Timbers)
   C. Additional rustic facilities (covered wagons and the like)
III. Food - Additional wing for added persons
IV. Program
   A. Multi-purpose facility for 150-200 persons
   B. Nature Center(s)
      1. A primary spot with display with hands-on experiences
      2. Secondary locations at natural gathering points, e.g., reception area, dining hall, etc.
      3. Portable display(s)
      4. Library for
         a. Books
         b. Photographs, slides, video tapes, etc.
      5. Possibly Green House attached
   C. High Ropes court (in a controlled area)
   D. Tennis Courts
   E. Disabled paths to
      1. Freedom Tree
      2. Pond (along with a fishing deck)
   F. Amphitheater
   G. Arts and crafts center that is year around
   H. Increase size of change area at pool bathhouse
   I. Planetarium
   J. Simple farm and vineyard
   K. Sculptures
   L. Toboggan run
   M. Play area(s) for small children
   N. Children's activity equipment (on wheels)
   O. Replacement of Kukawa for program equipment (camping gear and cross country skis) if Kukawa commandeered by the new facility.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. I Corinthians 15:3-4, NRSV)

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. (II Corinthians 5:17-18, NRSV)

(He) emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death -
even death on the cross. (Philippians 2:7-8, NRSV)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rules or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. . . . For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:15-16, 19-20, NRSV)

The setting of the out-of-doors, the human world, and recreation are perceived from this perspective. We look at the world through the cross.[4]

It is the intention of the LOMC programs to provide opportunities for participants to connect the Word of God with the world of God.

[4] The description of the sign at the entrance to LOMC on Highway 2.

3. The Purpose - Maturity

The ultimate intent of what LOMC is about is to **L**ead **O**thers to **M**aturity in **C**hrist.[5] Paul shares this same agenda:

> *"I am now rejoicing in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me."* (Colossians 1:24-29, NRSV)

The maturing process is for the individual and for the Christian community. Persons and groups change, encounter new experiences, deal with new information, become older, reflect, and take hold of their own destiny. From cradle to grave there is the developmental process.

When an individual or a group matures it is open to conversion, free to deal with complexity, willing to enter into conflict, accept challenge, strive to restore broken community, able to be interdependent and cooperative, and unafraid of repentance. The intent is that such maturing impacts the Christian person and the Christian community.

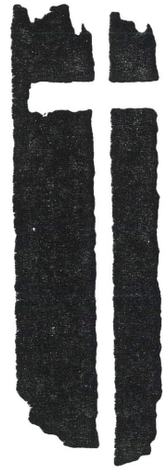
Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it this way:

> *To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a penitent, or a saint) on the basis of some method or other, but to be a man — no a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us. It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life. That is metanoia: not in the first place thinking about one's own needs, problems, sins, and fears, but allowing oneself to be caught up into the way of Jesus Christ, in the messianic event, thus fulfilling Isa. 53. Therefore 'believe in the gospel', or, in the words of John the Baptist, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'* (John 1.29) ...

[5] Notice the play on the letters LOMC.

Retreats for senior citizens (a growing population) could be conducted concurrently with spring, summer, and fall events. At present only a few dates in the fall and spring are available for adult activities due to the outdoor education programs during the weekdays.

Adult groups could have their own space for meeting, lodging, food, amenities. This would encompass all the groups referred to above.



Marriage encounter events could also be held. Present sleeping arrangements are not conducive to these programs.

Professional groups, church leaders, business persons, and so on, could benefit from special accommodations that would be provided in such a facility.

Elder-hostels and continuing education for lay people and clergy could be carved into a very promising schedule of learning opportunities for adults.

A significant component of this plan is that individuals and very small groups could be accommodated in a bed and breakfast motif. They could enter into their own personal retreats, study times, and/or reflective modes with accommodations provided and food prepared by resident staff.

A program that is in the embryonic stage is one that enables people to learn about and be trained in the interdiscipline of theology and ecology. Maybe the adult-friendly facility can be the site for a dramatic program of a national stature.

These facilities would also be used by youth during the summer programs where they are supervised by trained LOMC summer staff. The meeting areas would also serve as rehearsal space for the summer choral and theater programs. Under present circumstances the dining hall lounge must be rearranged between meals each day during music camp weeks.

Needs of the Present and Visions for the Future

The major components of an outdoor ministry facility exist at LOMC:

- fine facilities (all air conditioned)
- excellent food
- well-conceived programs
- a safe and secure environment (accredited by the American Camping Association)
- a beautiful and rich setting with many environmental learning opportunities

There are four needs that must be addressed immediately. First, LOMC has operated with 150 beds year around for twenty years. This is below the minimum amount of bed space needed for financial survival. More beds are necessary to make the operation more economically viable and a balanced budget a realistic objective.

Second, LOMC has turned away potential campers during the peak weeks of the summer, namely July and early August due to the lack of bed space.

Third, the present lodging facilities are designed primarily for youth and do not serve the needs of adults who desire more comfortable and private accommodations. At the same time, there is growing interest for adult programs.

Fourth, housing for year-round single staff must be upgraded. The present staff housing in the Administration Building is rather crude and uninviting.

LOMC is committed to providing modern, comfortable, and suitable facilities for conferences, retreats, and summer programs. To serve the needs mentioned above, an adult user friendly facility is envisioned. It would open doors to and encourage more adult and family usage and programs.

The summer family camps would have their own space. In the past it has been difficult to foster such events because the guests prefer not being mixed in with summer youth campers.

This being caught up into the messianic sufferings of God in Jesus Christ takes a variety of forms in the New Testament. It appears in the call to discipleship, in Jesus' table-fellowship with sinners, in 'conversions' in the narrower sense of the word (e.g. Zacchaeus), in the act of the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7) *— an act that she performed without any confession of sin, in the healing of the sick* (Matt. 8.17; ...), *in Jesus' acceptance of children. The shepherds, . . . stand at the crib, not as 'converted sinners', but simply because they are drawn to the crib . . . just as they are. The centurion of Capernaum (who makes no confession of sin) is held up as a model of faith (cf. Jairus), Jesus 'loved' the rich young man. The eunuch* (Acts 8) *and Cornelius* (Acts 10) *are not standing at the edge of an abyss. Nathaniel is 'an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile'* (John 1.47). *Finally, Joseph of Arimathea and the women at the tomb. The only thing that is common to all these is their sharing in the suffering of God in Christ. That is their 'faith'. There is nothing of religious method here. The 'religious act' is always something partial; 'faith' is something whole, involving the whole of one's life. Jesus calls men, not to a new religion, but to life.*[6]

LOMC will make opportunities available to nurture the Christian faith and provide experiences to connect the Word of God with the world of God and thereby enable the maturing process.

Why Is Outdoor Ministry Important?

Why is it necessary that outdoor ministries be engaged in this process? Are there not other settings in which this mission can take place? Yes and no.

The initial answer is that LOMC is both an extension of the local congregations and their unique ministry and the expression of the synods as they seek to enable activities and programs which can be accomplished when congregations work together.

More particularly the Church, as congregation, synod or world community, must provide time and space for people to grow. Thus, the phrase is often used of an outdoor ministry center — "a place apart and a time apart." It benefits the individual, the church, understood as local congregation and greater church body, and the family.

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[6] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, Eberharda Bethage, ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 361-362.

What is important for individuals is that learning must encompass understanding, attitudes, and behavior. To "know" something, in the biblical sense, is to be interactive with it. Knowledge and wisdom are not simply mental functions. They have to do with a person's style of life as motivated by their faith system.

The educational process must engage the mind, the body, the emotions, and other entities outside of oneself interacting with it. The learning methods need to involve spoon feeding and hands on approaches, interaction and community reflection. These all take time.

Current education relies upon stimulation from various media. Typical of today's teaching methods is the use of highly sophisticated technological equipment. As valuable as these tools may be, these techniques remove learners further from the natural. Education should rely more on the natural world as a resource for learning.

If people are to learn, they need an opportunity to practice their learnings, to reenforce the connection between what one thinks and what one does. This, too, takes time and space.

The environment of an outdoor ministries center also gives participants the chance to integrate learnings intellectually, emotionally, and in practice:

- one's faith and experience
- the Christian faith one holds with other truths
- the uniqueness of the faith in view of other expressions
- the science of nature and the nature of religion
- the connectedness with God (theology) and connectedness with all of creation (ecology).

If maturity and metanoia (repentance and conversion) are to occur, a community is absolutely necessary.

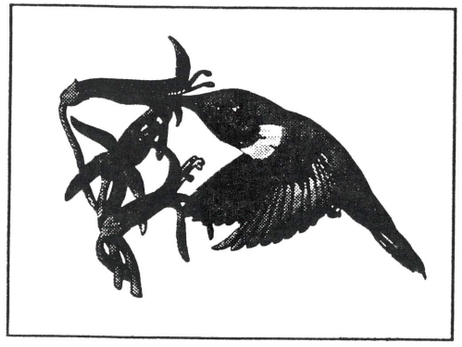
For the church it is important that individuals learn to live and behave in community. We are reminded that we are "the body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12).

To live in this community requires practice in group life skills.

Statistics for 1993-1994

		Persons	Nights/ Days	Meals
LOMC	Retreats	3,317	4,400	10,199
	Outdoor Education and Weekend Events	1,218	3,076	7,188
	Confirmation Camping	420	2,358	6,133
	Summer Resident and Camp Trips	993	5,653	14,825
	Other Programs	1,772	1,991	2,389
	Sub-Total	**7,720**	**17,478**	**40,734**
Off-Site	Retreats	24		
	Resident Camping	68		
	Confirmation Camping	67		
	Day Camps	690		
	Sub-Total	**849**		
Special Programs	Cross Country Skiing	65		
	Canoeing	58		
	Stress/Challenge Course	201		
	Picnics	459		
	Tent/Trailer	427		
	Sub-Total	**1,210**		
	GRAND TOTAL	**9,779**	**17,478**	**40,734**

Through the remainder of the year (September through May) various events are offered for pre-confirmation age, confirmands, high school youth, families, married couples, single adults, senior citizens, Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, church councils, and public and private schools.



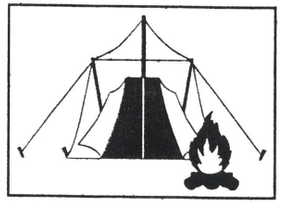
LOMC also rents the facilities to groups wanting to conduct their own programs. An excellent food service is provided. There are also options for specific outdoor activities led by the LOMC program staff: nature studies, night hikes, stress/challenge teams course, cross country skiing, canoeing, etc.

It is the intent of the administration that LOMC be occupied as fully as possible all year around. There tends to naturally be low attendance periods in December and around Easter. However, these are good opportunities for major maintenance to take place.

LOMC has program and will travel to many off-site locations for day camping (Decatur to Deerfield), residential camping (in southern Illinois and central Missouri), and confirmation camping (for congregations in the St. Louis area).

Two annual events draw youth and adults to LOMC. In the spring during Memorial Day Weekend about 125 youth and adults engage in building projects and perform some basic maintenance. Over the years several buildings have been constructed: Kukawa, a metal storage building; meeting facilities in each of the retreat house villages; and the tent/trailer pavilion. The dairy barn was also remodeled.

In the fall on the second Sunday of October, there is an Autumn Fest, a full day of celebration, which draws about 1,000 people each year.



A tent/trailer area which exists on the site gets limited use throughout the summer.

The outdoor ministries center is also a place and time where individuals and the church (congregation or extended community) can tackle contemporary problems that challenge our religious thinking as well as afford people the opportunity to reach deeply into our religious tradition for resources to deal with these contemporary issues. Critical to the learning process is the "diversity" of other's views, feelings, and experiences. To engage in this requires a time commitment from the participants.

There are four contemporary issues that need careful reflection by the Christian community and can be creatively studied in an outdoor setting:

- the explosion of the human population and the sustainability of the Earth,
- the meaning of progress, achievement, and success within the human and non-human communities,
- the relationship of Christians with others in a diverse world of races, cultures, and religions, and
- the ability to handle new information and insights that may require paradigm shifts on the part of individuals, the church, and the world.[7]

Outdoor ministries can also be advantageous for families. By withdrawing from daily routines and participating in common experiences for a weekend or a full week, families can focus on the spiritual and social relationships of a family.[8]

Though the disparity between living in the world of God and the world of the "human spirit"[9] is experienced by individuals and groups it is most noticeable in family life with the diversity of ages, experiences, and the interpretation of events. Not only is there the question of how to connect these two worlds, but how does one connect these worlds with the Word of God?

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[7] The source of these issues is Dr. Gerald Barney of the Millennium Institute, 1993.

[8] Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes a distinction between spiritual and human realities in a community. It is interesting to apply these same thoughts to the family. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, John W. Doberstein, trans. (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1954), 31-39.

[9] Bonhoeffer's words.

There are no easy answers nor simple pieces of advice. But over a period of extended time families can engage in a faithful community of love and genuinely encounter the Word of God. In this context of worship, Bible study, recreation, and living together families can make an effort to cultivate their relationships and strengthen their bonds.

The benefits cover a wide span of individual situations and needs.

How can outdoor ministries claim this agenda for itself? It cannot! This agenda is for the church. However, it becomes the unique agenda of outdoor ministries by virtue of the time and setting that outdoor ministries provides. LOMC is the Church in outdoor settings.

How Is This Mission Fulfilled?

Fulfilling the mission covers a spectrum from the preparation of resource materials at the one end and renting facilities and providing services at the other end.

One of the hallmarks of LOMC is the prepared materials for summer programs, weekend retreats, and outdoor/environmental education. These materials take seriously the out-of-doors, the nature and diversity of the audience, and our religious tradition.

Each year a resource is prepared for the summer program that can also be used throughout the year. Each year one of the articles of the Apostles' Creed is emphasized. The specific themes and thrust change from year to year:

NOW? Is Christ Risen
The Wakan of the Coyote
What Did Noah Do about Trash
(a theology of garbage)
Ants and Bats and Things Like That
(ecology of the Spirit)
The Crossing that Changed the World
(a joyous exchange)
Birth of the Earth — Natural Wild Free

Retreats have also been designed for weekend events for people of all ages:

Get Lost!
Prayer as a Subversive Activity
Epiphany Confirmation Retreat
Fungi and Us — or *Why Has the Spirit Called Us Together?*

The programs offered have concern for:

- the development of community for the entire group,
- the building of community within congregational groups, and
- use of the outdoor environment as a laboratory for learning.

The summer youth program is very diverse. Confirmation Camping using the LOMC resource and summer staff leadership is the style of program in which youth participate as congregational groups. For various summer camps youth register as individuals. These camps provide experiences in such things as the fine arts, rustic camping, sports, and several specialty types of programs. Children in grades one through twelve have a plethora of options.

During the summer program in particular, small groups and inter-grouping are practiced. Inter-grouping is the process whereby the small group is intentionally composed of youth from the many represented communities. Each child is assigned to a small group depending upon gender, age, and grade in the camp program of their own choosing. They live with other campers throughout the camping session with a college age staff person as the small group leader. This person is equipped to work with the youth as the teacher, parent, friend, special skill developer, etc.

Children with special needs are also mainstreamed.

During the summer, college-age persons are employed by LOMC to lead the programs. Professional staff orient, instruct, and prepare them in the many facets of working with campers.

Because of their concentration for 10½ to 12 weeks, members of the summer staff have a tremendous personal growth experience. By the vary nature of their work they must learn to live within an intentional Christian community.