

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Mary Loken

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
People of Faith Oral History project

Interview # PF-A-L-2016-007

Mary Loken, a member of Luther Memorial Church in Springfield, Illinois from the mid-1960s to 2015, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *People of Faith* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Feb 4 & 22, 2016

Location: Loken's office at Prairie Capitol Area Career Center in Springfield

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:42 + 1:20 / 1.7 + 1.33 = 3.03 hrs.

Session 1: Early life and career, and story of Luther Memorial through early 1990s

Session 2: History of Luther Memorial from mid-1990s through its merger in 2015

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on June 1, 2016.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in
Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Mary Loken, *People of Faith*, PF-A-L-2016-007

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Mary (Frisk) Loken was born on August 13th, 1932 in Mason City, Iowa. Mary's mother was Roman Catholic and her father was Lutheran, but the family regularly attended the local Methodist church while growing up. Upon completing high school in 1950, she received a BS degree from Iowa State University. She then received a teaching certificate from the University of Northern Iowa in 1957 and a Masters' Degree from the University of Iowa in Iowa City in 1958. By that time, Mary was very interested in teaching the disabled and began working in this field when it was relatively new. She also began working toward a Ph.D., and met her husband, Dennis Loken while in Iowa City. The two were married in 1963, and they moved to Springfield in 1965, where Dennis had been recruited by Allis-Chalmers and where Mary began a long career with the Springfield School system.

Mary and Dennis joined Luther Memorial Church upon arriving in Springfield, one of several Lutheran Church in America (LCA) congregations in town. Mary discusses the founding of the church in 1941, established in order to serve Lutherans in the southern part of Springfield. She describes the early church's character, as well as the neighborhood and congregational demographics. Mary also provided a chronology of the many pastors who ministered for the congregation over the years. She also discusses the construction of a parsonage from 1946-48 (immediately south of the new sanctuary), and of the new sanctuary in 1961. In 1987 the church joined the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) which merged these synods: the American Lutheran Church, Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church in America. Mary discussed the ministry of several of the more recent pastors in detail, including Jane Jenkins, Julie Hart, Ron Moorman and William Zanton. The last two pastors served only part time, due in large part to the gradually decreasing numbers and the aging of the congregation. This trend started in the 1970s, and continued over the next thirty years. In late 2014 the congregation entered into discussion with two other ELCA congregations with similar demographic trends to discuss the possibility of merging. In September, 2015 the congregations of Atonement Lutheran Church, Faith Lutheran Church and Luther Memorial began worshipping together for the first time at Atonement's location on the west side of Springfield.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Luther Memorial Church in Springfield, Illinois; Lutheran Church in America Synod; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Synod; Dennis Loken; Pastor Ron Moorman; Pastor Jane Jenkins; Pastor William Zanton; Pastor Julie Hart; merging of three ELCA congregations; Mason City, Iowa

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