



# REACHING RURAL AMERICA FOR CHRIST



## Our "Life Together"

- To follow the core beliefs of the LCMS
- To equip rural professional and lay leaders
- To support congregations in community engagement



## Please Pray for These Important Dates

### May 19 – Webinar

"Preparing Your Grad for the Next Step" with Rev. Marcus Zill, campus pastor at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Ariz. and former director of LCMS campus ministry and LCMS U  
1–2 p.m. CST



"... and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord..."

—Post-Communion Collect, Divine Service, *Lutheran Service Book*

## STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

# A Welcoming Introduction

**A**s I write to you today, we are about to embark upon one of the most joyous times of the church year, our Easter celebrations! Since you will be reading this post-Easter, my fervent prayer is that you all had a blessed one! What a joy it is to gather among God's people to hear again that most blessed refrain, "Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!" It is particularly joyful to see those folks among us whom we seldom see, but who are drawn in to hear the Good News on this special occasion.

Often, when we have "Christmas and Easter worshipers" among us, many among our congregations frown upon their attendance as if they didn't belong or aren't holding up their end of the work. So, I'd like to ask this question of you this Easter season: Did we embrace their presence and "welcome them back," or did we "put them off"? We often consider ourselves welcoming congregations and, in our hearts, that is what we are. However, sometimes in practice we find it challenging to carry this welcoming out. This is why, several years ago, we ran a three-part series of "welcoming" articles. We will again be running these in the coming



months so that we can evaluate our level of welcome. Why not use the things we regularly do to make ourselves more welcoming to those around us whom we would like to know better (or get to know again)? You will find over these next three months articles on welcoming publications, welcoming buildings and welcoming people.

We hope you find these articles to be helpful in your ministry. If you would like more assistance in the art of welcoming, please feel free to contact us, as we would love to work with you and your congregations to help you in your efforts to "Reach Rural America for Christ"!



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## Contact us

We want to hear from you! If you have ideas for future issues, comments, or feedback on articles you've read in *Reaching Rural America for Christ*, please contact the RSTM office.

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## How to Subscribe

To subscribe to *Reaching Rural America for Christ*, contact the RSTM office by calling 888-843-5267 or sending an email to [rstm@lcms.org](mailto:rstm@lcms.org).

## Support This Work

LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission supports and encourages rural and small-town congregations in engaging their communities and growing together in Christ through Word and Sacrament.

Click the Give Now button to support the work of RSTM.

**GIVE NOW**

Thrivent members: Remember that RSTM is eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars!



THIS MONTH'S WEBINAR:

# Disaster Response in RSTM

**“We can’t do everything, but we can do something.”** This is one of the many mantras that permeate disaster response work. It’s simple, encouraging, and helps set a realistic tone when groups assess the impact of a disaster and put together a response plan. Sometimes, the “something” that we can do is quite large and impacts a broad range of people. At other times, various constraints limit our response. Few “projects” span both kinds of response (large and small), but one that does is the Flood Bucket Project.

The Flood Bucket Project engages congregations in the assembly and distribution of basic supplies that families may need after a flood: cleaning solutions, personal protective equipment, etc. — even the bucket that everything goes in can be used by homeowners to help remove the debris and muck that has invaded their home. Of course, it doesn’t include everything that will be needed, but it’s a start — a start not only to providing what that family will need, but also to fostering relationships between the church and those whom they are helping. The buckets should not simply be handed out so we can pat ourselves on the back and wash our hands of a more engaged response. The goal is to follow up

the distribution with regular spiritual care, at the very least.

To get started, all your congregation needs is a small group of volunteers (youth group, ladies guild, etc.) who are willing to spend a little bit of time planning, purchasing the items and assembling the buckets. A document that lists what goes inside the buckets can be found [here](#).

Consider using a Thrivent action grant to stretch what you’re able to do, or speak to a manager at your local retail stores when purchasing the supplies. A quick explanation of what you’re doing can go a long way, as local stores are often looking for ways to support neighbors in need.

Finally, remember to connect with LCMS Disaster Response ([disaster@lcms.org](mailto:disaster@lcms.org)) and your district’s disaster response coordinator (DDRC). We will send you some big Flood Bucket labels so they will be clearly identified, and your DDRC will be able to give you guidance on where your newly assembled buckets can be used, or suggest that you store them for a little while, until the need arises.

We can’t do everything, but when we work together in a coordinated way, we’re able to multiply our efforts and make significant impacts in our communities.

View the recent webinar [here](#).

## RSTM Events Update

**Don’t forget** that Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Preparing Your Grad for the Next Step** on May 19. Find past webinars in our archive. Watch for information on all our upcoming events!

RSTM’s **Welcoming Workshops** are something we think your congregation will love and benefit from. These day-long events will help congregations become more welcoming places, providing God’s Word to both current members and guests. They offer practical resources on having welcoming buildings, welcoming

publications and welcoming people.

Register for one our **Engaging Your Community** (EYC) or **Engaging the Wandering** (ETW) events at [lcms.org/rstm](http://lcms.org/rstm). These partner events offer practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members and our communities with Christ’s love. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you. We are currently scheduling for 2022!

In addition, pray for the **Making Disciples for Life** conferences and watch for information on a regional event coming near you!