



A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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

July 28 – Webinar

"Welcoming Publications" with
Rev. Jonathan Conner, pastor of Zion
Lutheran Church, Manning, Iowa.
1–2 p.m. CST

October 13 – Webinar

"Making Disciples for Life Resource
Center" with Rev. Dr. Mark Wood,
director of LCMS Witness and Outreach
and LCMS Revitalization
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

Ambassadors for Christ

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:17–20).

Did you know that, on average, more than 2/3 of people living in rural and small-town areas have no connection to a Christian church? Consider these questions:

- How can congregations deal with the challenges and issues that rural and small-town congregations face and still be faithful to the mission of the church?
- How can we reach out to those lost and wandering in our communities all while dealing with the realities of an aging congregation with seemingly fewer and fewer resources?

These, plus a host of other questions, should be ones we are contemplating on a regular basis. So many congregations have settled into the mode of maintenance or survival. While this might seem like a nice, comfortable place to be, it isn't what our Lord has called us to do and to be about in His church. Whether we are

an aging church in a community with declining population or a burgeoning new start in an area where people are moving in, we have the same call and the same mission ... to be "ambassadors for Christ."

In fact, each and every day we as a new creation in Christ have the opportunity to share the Good News with neighbor, friend, coworker, former members and complete strangers alike. We do so not because we desire to "grow" our congregation's

membership but because it is what we as Christians do.

Consider then, how gathering and contemplating these questions just might spur us to action as the Body of Christ gathered together. How could we use this information and brainstorming to get out and do that work we have before us? Perhaps we might just find that this provides us with the jumpstart we need to be the active and dynamic congregation God has given us the opportunity to be.



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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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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.

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



THIS MONTH'S WEBINAR

Trains: Mighty Metaphors for Mission and Ministry in Motion

Trains. From the mighty moving engines to the varied freight cars being towed along — flat cars, auto carriers, tank cars, box cars, hopper cars, gondolas and more — trains are a key part of rural America's story. Like you, I have watched them pass, mesmerized by their remarkable variety and the thought of a mile of metal in motion.

Why are we talking about trains? Think about your congregation. Have you ever imagined it as a train? One car is your ladies' group. Another is your congregational suppers. Another is your confirmation program. Still another is your Sunday school or older adult ministry or homebound ministry. Each "car" makes up a key part in the train that is your church. Each "car" is a part of the larger train, your mission and ministry in motion. And it's amazing!

But how many people in your congregation really appreciate all the "cars"? How

many are even aware of the amazing mission and ministry in motion? Shouldn't they know? Shouldn't each "car" be celebrated for its place in the mission and ministry of your church? And shouldn't people be invited to participate?

I think so and I hope you do, too! So, how are we going to do it? How are we going to help our congregations see and celebrate (and participate!) in the mission and ministry? We need to show and tell them what's happening! They need to see the train.

In this webinar, "Welcoming Publications," I'm excited to share several very practical, doable and exceedingly affordable (most of them are free!) communication platforms, resources and tips for showing, telling and celebrating God's magnificent mission and ministry in motion among you!

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 **Welcoming Publications** on July 28, followed by **Making Disciples for Life Resource Center** on Oct. 13. 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. 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!