

Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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Rural & Small Town Mission

Our "Life Together"

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

Remember: RSTM is eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars!

Please Pray for These Important Dates

May 3

Engaging Your Community Event
Immanuel Lutheran Church,
Honeycreek, Mo., presented with
the LCMS Missouri District
8 a.m. – 3 p.m. CST

May 10

Engaging Your Community Event
Trinity Lutheran Church, Mount
Ayr, Iowa, presented with Iowa
District West
8 a.m. – 3 p.m. CST

May 15 - Webinar

New and Invigorating Approaches to
Witness and Outreach, presented
by Lee Larsen, ministry coordinator,
Acts 1:8 Ministry
1 – 2 p.m. CST

If you have an idea or story for
Rural Outreach, contact Amy at
the RSTM office.

Phone: 888-463-5127

Email: amy.gerds@lcms.org

Strong Faith, Fervent Love

"We implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord ..."
(“Post-Communion Collect,” *Lutheran Service Book*)

I recently heard a very interesting little tidbit on the radio about “selfies.” A selfie is when people or groups use a cell phone or other device to take a picture of themselves (unfortunately, often in a restroom mirror) so that they can post it on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or some such social media. While I find this practice a bit silly and often simply ridiculous, this little article shined a new light on the practice. According to the author of the article, the dramatic rise in the occurrence of selfies has brought about a rise in the demand for plastic surgery, especially among young people. It seems that placed under the microscope of the selfie, they are dissatisfied with how they look, how they present themselves to others. So the natural conclusion to this problem is to undergo a superficial fix.

This got me thinking about how incredibly focused we are on the self. I am

so important that I need to be the center of attention and that attention must be positive, so I’m willing to do whatever I can to make it that way. Unfortunately, in our “selfie” world, we take no time to figure out what is truly at the heart of the problem here. We will never be all that we want to be, regardless of how hard we try to make ourselves that way! It is only when we are brought into the truth of this reality that we can let go of the “selfie” mentality and receive that which God has intended for us all along ... to actually be made perfect in Christ. No superficial fix here, but wholly and totally made new. This is what He bought and paid for us on the cross. Through faith, we are made so that we might show fervent love to those around us. So when we are looked upon by others, it is Him that they see in us.

— Pastor Todd Kollbaum

RSTM Events Update

Don’t forget: Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. *New and Invigorating Approaches to Witness and Outreach* presented by Lee Larsen, ministry coordinator, Acts 1:8 Ministry, on May 15, 1–2 p.m. CST, followed by *Rural Schools — Effective and Functional?* on June 12. You can find past webinars in the webinar archive on our website as a free resource for use when you need it. Engaging Your Community (EYC) events will be held May

3 in Honeycreek, Mo., for the Missouri District and May 10 in Mount Ayr, Iowa, for Iowa District West. National conference registration is now open on our website as well! For more information about webinars, the EYC events or to see the rest of our calendar, visit www.lcms.org/rstm or contact our office at 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.



Open the Doors and See All the People

CONTRIBUTED BY AMY GERTS

PROJECT COORDINATOR, LCMS RURAL & SMALL TOWN MISSION

We all know this little children's rhyme: "Here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors and see all the people!" Our home congregations are where we are enriched by the Word of God and enjoy the fellowship of believers, but we still need to open the doors of our churches and step out into our communities to engage those around us with the love of Christ. We want those who don't know about Him to have the opportunity to see His love through our actions. With that in mind, here are some community engagement examples that rural and small-town congregations are using across the country:

- In Columbus, Ind., the small rural church at Bean Blossom partnered with two larger churches to hold their first summer Bible camp in more than 20 years.
- The Rev. Dean Hanson and the Grace-Faith Partnership Ministry of Hazard, Neb., have an old-fashioned float in the local parade. They make sure to use it for outreach, and every year the theme is linked to their upcoming vacation Bible school. The children ride on the float, singing songs about Jesus and inviting others to join them.

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.

If you have a good idea for outreach or a story you'd like to share so that we can share it with others, please email Amy Gerdtts at amy.gerdtts@lcms.org.

Learn more about RSTM at www.lcms.org/rstm or by calling Amy at 888-463-5127.

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They are also excited to open a new day care and after-school program to meet community needs this year.

- In Burt and LuVern, Iowa, the congregation helps Pastor Peterson maintain a race track ministry, and in Rockville, Mo., congregational members collect packages of new diapers, attach information about the church and its ministry, and take them to the local diaper bank.
- For the last several years, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Concordia, Mo., has hosted "Grace Day" for the community, where everything is free, just like God's grace. The congregation puts on a lunch; has health screenings; gives haircuts, hand massages and car washes; and offers free musical entertainment.
- In Sylvan Grove, Kan., they are using their Midweek program for outreach, as well as to partner with the local school district to get buses to drop kids off after school.
- Pastor Heinecke makes sure to eat lunch at the public school with his own children frequently and then uses the time before and after to reach out to teachers and students.

“We still need to open the doors of our churches and step out into our communities to engage those around us with the love of Christ.”

- St. John's, Reinbeck, Iowa, sponsors a fall hayride with a pumpkin hunt and bonfire that includes lots of family fun.
- The members of Trinity, Creston, Iowa, use their outreach fund to adopt a family.
- Other ideas that have been tried include hanging door hangers at Easter; getting people involved in Lutherans for Life teams or Laborers for Christ; and holding harvest, hunter or tractor blessings to ask for God's blessing

and protection, usually including a wonderful fellowship meal!

Don't forget that many of the things we already do can be tweaked for outreach simply by looking at our events with a visitor's eyes. How do we make people feel welcome and included? Be sure to have good signage on your property, and never forget to include dates, times and places. This means on your signs, in the bulletin and in any other place people might find information, such as on flyers, websites or Facebook. Never assume that they will "just know." The important thing to remember is to make people feel welcome, have fun, use your imagination and reach out for Christ!