



REACHING RURAL AMERICA FOR CHRIST

“... 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*



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

April 21 – Webinar

“Disaster Response in RSTM”

with Rev. Michael Meyer, director of LCMS Disaster Training
1–2 p.m. CST

May 19 – Webinar

“Preparing Your Grad for the Next Step”

with Rev. Marcus Zill, director of LCMS Campus Ministry and LCMS U
1–2 p.m. CST



STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

Looking Forward to What Is to Come

As we transition from one year to the next, from the season of Christmas to the season of Epiphany, we are reminded of just how transient our time here on earth truly is. There isn’t anything in this world that remains the same consistently over the course of time. Several years ago at a congregational revitalization event I was leading, I had the opportunity to listen to a member of the host congregation who was reminiscing about the good old days of the congregation. Long gone were the fellowship gatherings, the parties and celebrations along with fellowship times when the church was packed to maximum occupancy and sometimes even beyond. It is always a joy to consider these “good times.” However, we must always remember that they are and remain memories of times and seasons which have passed. Too often, we spend our time not only reminiscing, but also lamenting how things will never be that good again. This attitude is definitely a major impediment to accomplishing mission and ministry into the future.



If all we ever do is look back, we can’t move into the future in faithfulness and trust in the Lord of the Church. Indeed, we must look forward to what is to come. The church exists for the work of the Kingdom until that time that Jesus returns. Until then, no matter our congregational circumstance, our work has not yet ended. He is still calling us to faithful mission and ministry, however that may look in the present and into the future. In fact, the harvest fields even in this mid-winter are ripe! This is why/how we can rejoice in what God has done for us and in

(continued on page 3)

It's *Still* All About Jesus

In my travels and work with congregations and districts throughout our Synod I have the great privilege to bring support and resources to rural and small-town congregations. In doing this, I am always amazed at the fortitude of so many of these congregations. They have seen wars, internal struggle and external strife; they have lived through good times and bad. Yet, through it all, multitudes have found respite in the comfort of Christ's Gospel proclaimed and delivered in these places.

Yet, too often in today's climate, they have slipped into a feeling of hopelessness, a general sense that they have little to offer the church and the world. What is forgotten here is that it isn't about any particular place or time. In fact, *it's still all about Jesus!* That is what got them this far in the first place, and it will be the hope that sustains them. In fact, it's the hope we are privileged to share with a hopeless world.

Throughout the world, even in our own back yard, there will always be persecution, bloodshed, hatred, malice and evil. Yet, it is our call to continue in the hope of the Lord and to proclaim His loving-kindness to all people. This is why I said in a blog post a couple of years ago, "From LWML to men's clubs, Sunday schools to VBS, youth groups to older adult ministries, these congregations are uniquely



situated to provide hope and healing to areas often forgotten and often ignored. Hardships and roadblocks can make these ministries a challenge to remain viable, but there are many who are addressing this challenge head on. They are creatively maintaining their mission presence so that the lost might hear about Jesus."

So, in an effort to continue mission and ministry, have you ever considered these questions?

- Did you know that, on average, more than two thirds of people living in rural and small-town areas have no connection to a Christian church?
- 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 you reach out to the lost and wandering around your congregation, all while dealing with the realities of an aging congregation with seemingly fewer and fewer resources?

On Thursday, Jan. 13, from 1–2 p.m. Central time, the Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM), explored these topics and more in a free webinar on "Rural Ministry Resources."

Kollbaum discussed the resources available to support your ministry and provide practical, relevant ideas for engaging your community with the Gospel. View this webinar at resources.lcms.org/multimedia/rural-small-town-mission-webinar-rural-ministry-resources.





Reaching Rural America for Christ is published monthly by LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission.

Reaching Rural America for Christ may be reprinted with acknowledgment given to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

© 2022 LCMS

Staff

Rev. Todd Kollbaum
Director, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission, and pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Madison, Neb.

Deaconess Sandy Bowers
Administrative Assistant

Chrissy Thomas
Designer

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.

LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission
1333 S. Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122

800-248-1930, Ext. 1396
rstm@lcms.org
[lcms.org/rstm](https://www.lcms.org/rstm)
[lcmsrstm](https://www.facebook.com/lcmsrstm)

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.

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!*

Looking Forward, continued

the work our eternal Lord has called to us to accomplish. For He sent His Son into the flesh that we might be saved and shine His light into this bleak world, singing with Psalmist:

“O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

*what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?*

*Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8)



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 **Disaster Response in RSTM** on April 21. 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](https://www.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!