



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

February 18 – Webinar

"Parish Nursing in Rural and Small Towns"
with Marcy Schnorr, education consultant for LCMS Parish Nursing and the LCMS Parish Nurse Council
1–2 p.m. CST

March 4 – Webinar

"The Mission Field Outside Your Door"
with the Rev. Max Phillips and Wanda Pritzel, CEO and director of Perry Lutheran Homes
1–2 p.m. CST

April 15 – Webinar

"Compassion Fatigue and Burnout"
with the Rev. Dr. Rick Marrs, director of the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) and Residential Alternate Route (RAR) Programs and associate professor of Practical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
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 Word of Hope

"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience..." (1 Peter 3:15–16).

As I write this article, I'm sitting at my dining room table on the downside of my 10 days of isolation following a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. These 10 days or so have been neither the best nor the worst 10 days of my life so far, but they did give me the opportunity to slow down a bit and contemplate how things are going, in life and in the church. We have been besieged as of late with more chaos, illness, craziness and changes than at any time in recent memory. So, it begs the question: How are we responding to it? How are we as individual Christians and as the church gathered in local congregations responding to these unprecedented times? It seems that the easiest response would be to bury our heads in the sand, try to withdraw from all the craziness, and cordon ourselves off in an attempt to insulate ourselves from what's going on.

This, as I said, might be the easiest response. However, perhaps the more faithful response would be to recognize this



time as one of great opportunity to engage those around us with the Gospel message of hope. There has been a dearth of hope lately, and it has caused many to despair. Too many are isolated with these emotions and need to hear the reason for the hope that we have. While the world and

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PARISH NURSING IS A BLESSING TO THE CHURCH

Although parish nursing is no longer new, it continues to be a misunderstood and underused vocation. State nursing laws require that parish nurses (also known as “faith community nurses”) must have an active license in the state in which they serve.

Modern parish nursing began in the mid-1980s with the Rev. Dr. Granger Westberg, a Lutheran theologian who was serving as a chaplain in a medical center in Chicago. He recognized that many nurses “spoke the language of medicine and theology” and could translate both to the patient. He developed wholistic health clinics where pastors, physicians and nurses served with the patient as a team. In time, staffing the clinics became difficult, and the modern parish nurse movement was born.

The Rev. Howard E. Mueller, former director of health and healing for the LCMS, called me late in 1988 and asked me to consider being the coordinator for LCMS Parish Nursing. It did not take long for me to discern that this was something the Lord was calling me to do. A small task force was formed, and the LCMS officially began parish nursing in February 1989. I was privileged to serve as coordinator or co-coordinator for 30 years. Leadership for LCMS Parish Nursing is now by an all-volunteer council, but I continue to serve as education consultant and international liaison.

Right: Colette Eckhardt, RN, checks the temperature of her husband, Butch, as a part of COVID-19 precautions at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Rochelle, Ill., where she serves as a parish nurse.

Above: Lyle Warner, a Project Compassion volunteer, arranged for a tractor parade to go by a local nursing home and assisted living complex.

Parish nurses are not a replacement for a home health nurse. They are not a replacement for a clinic nurse. Parish nurses are registered nurses who have completed a special course that prepares them to serve in a congregation or other church-related setting and to work in team ministry with the pastor. The parish nurse provides wholistic care for people of any age. Parish nursing roles include health education, personal health counseling, serving as a community liaison, volunteer coordination and integrating faith and health.

Most parish nurses serve part time, but some are full time. Most parish nurses are in solo positions, but some serve with one or more other parish nurses or congregational health advocates. Many parish nurses are unpaid, some receive a small salary, and others receive a salary and benefits.

Parish nurses may serve in congregations of any size. I have consulted with a parish nurse in a congregation with an average attendance of ten people. I have also

consulted with parish nurses in congregations where it is not unusual for a thousand to worship over the weekend. Parish nurses are found in urban, suburban, college town and rural/small-town settings. The specific tasks will vary according to the setting, but the roles remain the same.

On Feb. 18, I will lead a free webinar highlighting parish nursing in rural and small-town settings. Special attention will be given to parish nursing during a pandemic. For more information about parish nursing, you may contact me at marcyschnorr2009@gmail.com.





THE
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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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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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A Word of Hope, continued

our society are warring over thin security, we are uniquely poised to bring that Word of hope, healing, restoration and God's magnificent love to the very people who have none of it.

Now is a great time to take a look at what our purpose is as congregations and to discern to whom has the Lord of the church called us to proclaim His love.



These are definitely uncertain times —
SO WHAT BETTER TIME IS THERE
to bring the eternal message of the certainty of
the Gospel to those around us?

Now is the right time to think how we can strategically plan out the what, how and why of our mission and ministry in our various settings.

These are definitely uncertain times — so what better time is there to bring the eternal message of the certainty of the Gospel to those around us? If it is resources or manpower that are holding you back, remember this: The Lord of the church has equipped you with what you need to do the work He has called you to do for this time. This may require us to be creative with how those resources are employed, or perhaps even to look at how we can partner with others in order to carry out our mission and ministry. But, where there is the Word and Sacraments, there is life and life to be shared!

So, in these uncertain days and times, let us boldly and intentionally consider what the Lord of the Church has planned for us and seek to faithfully carry out that mission to which we have been called.

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 **Parish Nursing in Rural and Small Towns** on Feb. 18, followed by **The Mission Field Outside Your Door** on March 4. 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 2020!

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