



# 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 This Important Date

### Sept. 24 – Webinar

"Thinking Outside the Box: Partnerships" with the Rev. Tom Schlund of Algona, Iowa  
1–2 p.m. CST

### Oct. 15 – Webinar

"Technology and the Church in Rural and Small-Town Areas" with Matthew Bergholt, coordinator of LCMS School Ministry  
1–2 p.m. CST

### Nov. 19 – Webinar

"Deaconesses and the Rural and Small-Town Congregation: Partnership and Ministry Models" with Deaconess Faith Swenson of Fairbank, Iowa  
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

# The Church Shall Stand

**LAST MONTH** I wrote about our inherent need for safety and security, even within our congregations. In a time when that seems in short supply, many congregations, as I mentioned, slip into survival mode. When they are there, it is difficult to get back out and face the world in a winsome way. So, what are we to do?

Simply stated, start planning! In survival mode, congregations simply exist day to day trying to stay alive. That doesn't have to be the reality for our churches. We may still struggle with all those same

things, but when we rediscover the reason why the Lord is keeping our congregation in ministry in the place to which He has called us, it is then that our perspectives can be changed. Instead of consistently thinking that our glasses are nearly arid and dry, we can rejoice over what Jesus says in Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

*(continued on page 3)*



# Thinking Outside the Box: PARTNERSHIPS



by Rev. Tom Schlund

**A**re you a Christian? Do you love your congregation? Does your congregation love other Christians and other congregations? Are you interested in finding the best ways for all Christians and all congregations to receive the Word and Sacrament of God and to grow in their faith?

If you are able to answer yes to all of these questions, then you will benefit from our conversation on congregational partnerships in this month's RSTM webinar!

## Two Congregations with a Shared Need

The story of the congregational partnership between St. John's Lutheran, Burt, Iowa; and Trinity Lutheran, Algona, Iowa, is the story of two congregations who love God and love their neighbor, and who have discovered that they can do both better together.

Our congregational partnership was born out of a need which each congregation faced. St. John's, the smaller congregation of the two, was in need of a pastor, who they weren't certain they could afford. Trinity, the larger congregation, was in need of a third pastor on a part-time basis, who they weren't certain they could find.

We have found above all else here at St. John's, Burt, and Trinity, Algona, that with these two things — **FAITH AND LOVE** — any partnership among God's people will be a successful one.

However, right alongside the needs of both of the congregations was also a desire. Both congregations desired to embrace their fellowship as members of the same circuit, district and Synod. Both congregations likewise desired to give of their unique skills and resources to the service of Christ and His church.

## A Plan to Work Together

During this webinar on congregational partnerships, we will share with you why and how our partnership was formed. We will take you through what the average month and year looks like for us from the perspective of the pastoral staff as well as of the two congregations. We will also share with you some of the things we've learned and adjusted along the way. We don't intend to give you a precise design for how every partnership

should look. Rather, we want to share with you suggestions for exploring if a formal partnership between two or more congregations would benefit you in your particular context.

As you consider now and in the future if a congregational partnership is right for you, it is our prayer that your faith in Christ and love for your neighbor be the guiding principle of your decisions. We have found above all else here at St. John's, Burt, and Trinity, Algona, that with these two things — faith and love — any partnership among God's people will be a successful one.





THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Missouri Synod

Rural & Small Town Mission

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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.

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

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## The Church Shall Stand, continued

The comfort that we have to offer hurting people is real and the work that God has given us is plentiful, yet so are His blessings. Plan now to determine how you can best use the resources God has actually blessed you with in order to share that Good News. To be sure, this doesn't mean there will be a great influx of offerings or members. But what we will be doing is being the best stewards we can be of the gifts God has given us to carry out His mission.

What this also means is we cannot always just keep "doing things the way we've always done them." In fact, we may have to actually be a bit creative. Now, I'm certainly not speaking of altering worship or doctrine in any way, shape or form. These solid foundations are what people are craving. What we might have to look at, though, are new funding sources, congregational partnerships, unique staffing models and others ways in which we can continue the mission faithfully.

Will all congregations be able to continue in ministry following these strange times? The hard answer is no. But that would be the case regardless of what is going on in the world. God gives our congregations work to do for the time He has given them. Some congregations will have to face the tough decision that they must come to a blessed end. That isn't a defeatist attitude. Instead, it is an understanding

that nothing lasts forever in this fallen world. Even Moses, standing on the edge of the Jordan, had to realize that his time in ministry had come to an end.

But God's mission continues even today. Where there are gaps in our mission presence, let us strive to fill them in ways that the Lord of the church makes available to us. All the while, let us remember that the work of the Kingdom is far more important than congregational identity. Let us, then, strive to remain faithful in mission and ministry, using all of the resources the Lord provides for us. Let us remember the words of that famous hymn:

Built on the Rock the Church shall stand  
even when steeples are falling.  
Crumbled have spires in ev'ry land;  
bells still are chiming and calling,  
calling the young and old to rest,  
but above all the souls distressed,  
longing for rest everlasting.

Grant, then, O God, Your will be done,  
that, when the church bells are ringing,  
many in saving faith may come  
where Christ His message is bringing:  
"I know My own; My own know Me.  
You, not the world, My face shall see.  
My peace I leave with you. Amen"  
(LSB 645:1,5).

**Pastor Todd Kollbaum**

## RSTM Events Update

**D**on't forget that Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Thinking Outside the Box: Partnerships** on Sept. 24, followed by **Technology and the Church in Rural and Small-Town Areas** on Oct 15. Find past webinars in our archive. Watch for information on all our upcoming events!

RSTM's newest events, **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 2020!

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