



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

Nov. 19 – Webinar
"Congregational Partnership Training"
with Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director of
LCMS Rural & Small-Town Mission
1–2 p.m. CST

December 10 – 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

Partnership Models

Several years ago, I observed the following about our rural and small-town populations and our RSTM congregations:

One of the greatest attributes, in my opinion, of those who make up the populations of rural areas and small towns around our nation is their rugged independence. As I have traveled around the country, I am frequently amazed when I consider how and why different groups decided where they would settle and just how much grit and determination they had to have in order to "make it work." That resolute spirit didn't just bring about success in livelihoods, but also strong families, close-knit communities, strong educational systems and thriving places of worship.

Put into today's context, though, I find that this great attribute is often our biggest stumbling block as well. Oftentimes, we view ourselves as so fiercely independent that we forego the great value of working together in partnership. This shortcoming is easy to see when we watch our favorite sports teams full of athletes more interested in self-aggrandizement than the success of the team. We also see this play out in other arenas, from those who entertain us to those who make



our economy run: What's in it for me? Unfortunately, this also plays out the congregational context. Churches become more concerned with identity than mission, independence than outreach, survival than Christian care.

One of the greatest attributes we could retrieve from our ruggedly independent ancestors is the value they placed on working together. Partnerships in ministry allow us to do more for the Kingdom than we ever could on our own. They open doors, strengthen relationships and create avenues for sharing Christ's love. While we have long entered into traditional partnerships such as multi-point parish arrangements, these were often established with budgets as the sole motivator. I encourage you to take a look around and see if you can identify with whom you are in partnership and with whom you could



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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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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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be in partnership with the sole motivation of sharing the Gospel.

To that end, here are some partnership models to consider. These are nothing new, nor is it essential for every congregation to partner in these ways. However, these models have been found to be a helpful starting point as we look to how we can partner together to spread God's Word.

- **DUAL PARISH** — Two congregations of similar size partner in ministry.
- **HELPING HAND** — A larger congregation assists a smaller congregation.
- **CIRCUIT RIDER** — One pastor serves several small churches.
- **REGIONAL** — One larger congregation partners with 2+ smaller churches.
- **MULTI-SITE** — Congregations form one entity with multiple ministry sites.
- **CONNECT WITH TECH** — Congregations use technology to share mission and ministry resources.
- **BLESSED END** — One church closes, with the potential to help ministry elsewhere.

THIS MONTH'S WEBINAR: Partnership Possibilities

As we face so many new "normals" in our world today, we are often struck by how creative we have had to be in carrying out ministry. Through shutdowns and quarantines, upticks and decreases in virus spread and the tightening up and easing of restrictions, we have had to ensure that we will continue to spread God's Word and take care of His people regardless of our circumstances. Sometimes, however, it gets very difficult to do that on our own. Wouldn't it be nice if we could work together for the good of the Kingdom, partnering with one another to share our burdens and our joys? This month's RSTM webinar will look at possibilities and models of partnership which might just fit the bill of equipping us to better carry out the ministry God has called us to do.

For more information on these models, please contact us at LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission or check out this handy reference tool which can be found on the Kansas District Website: kslclms.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Partnership-Doc-7.2.20.pdf.

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 **Congregational Partnership Training** on Nov. 19, followed by **Deaconesses and the Rural and Small-Town Congregation: Partnership and Ministry Models** on Dec. 10. 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!