

Transition: Seminary to Urban & Inner City or Rural & Small Town



by Rev. Todd Kollbaum and Rev. Dr. Steven Schave

Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is a collaborative effort of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Pastoral Education department and LCMS districts to help pastors and their wives in the transition from seminary to congregation. To learn more, visit lcms.org/pals.

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The Rev. Todd Kollbaum was installed as Director of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission on April 1, 2013. Prior to that call, he had served as senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Cole Camp, Mo., since August of 2004. Pastor Kollbaum is a 2004 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and a 1990 graduate of Dana College in Blair, Neb., and is currently working on a Ph.D. in Missiology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Pastor Kollbaum has been happily married to his wife, Angela, for nearly 28 years. They are blessed with five children, three of whom are now married—Zachary (Clarissa), Jordan (Stephanie), and Emily (Dylan). Ryan is a sophomore at Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb., and Abigail is an eighth grader at St. Paul’s Lutheran School in Concordia, Mo.

The Kollbaums currently reside in Concordia, Mo.

The Rev. Steven Schave was named the director of LCMS Urban & Inner-City Mission in January 2014 and also director of LCMS Church Planting in January 2015. Schave is a second-career pastor, formerly a business executive, with a decade of experience in entrepreneurship, business systems and executive leadership. His church work began in church planting with a focus on outreach through human care and then church revitalization with a focus on neighborhood renewal in the inner city. Previously, he served as the regional vice-president in the Southwest region of the LCMS Ohio District and was third vice-president of the presidium. He also has served on the board for Lutheran Housing Support for several years. Pastor Schave has years of experience in connecting Word and Sacrament ministry with engaging communities. He received his D.Min at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., with a dissertation that focused on church planting resources for the synod based on a *Witness, Mercy, Life Together*® framework for doing missions.



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Introduction

If you're using this PALS resource, chances are your first call is either Urban & Inner City or Rural & Small Town. Regardless of your ministry context, the transition from seminary to first call brings with it many challenges, a huge learning curve, situations you never expected, and emotional and spiritual adjustments for you and your family.

Prayer

O Lord God, dear Father in heaven, I am indeed unworthy of the office and ministry in which I am to make known Your glory and to nurture and to serve this congregation.

But since You have appointed me to be a pastor and teacher, and the people are in need of the teaching and the instruction, be my helper and let Your holy angels attend me.

Then if You are pleased to accomplish anything through me, to Your glory and not to mine or to the praise of men, grant me, out of Your pure grace and mercy, a right understanding of Your Word and that I may also diligently perform it.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, shepherd and bishop of our souls, send Your Holy Spirit that He may work with me to will and to do through Your divine strength according to Your good pleasure. Amen. (*Pastoral Care Companion*, xviii)

Every Ministry Is Contextual, Whether Urban or Rural

1. Step outside of the front doors of your church building. Walk all around the building. How would you exegete the community into which you are called?

- a. What do you see?
- b. What do you hear?

- c. What do you smell?
- d. What ethnic groups are represented within a five-mile radius?
- e. What is the median income of the neighborhood? If you don't know, take a guess.
- f. What occupations are represented?
- g. What are the favorite foods of the people represented?
- h. What are the main topics of conversation at the local coffee shop, café, or gas station?
- i. What other factors define the specific context of your ministry?

2. Read Mark 6:30–44.

- a. What is the context of this event?
- b. How did Jesus view the people in this context (see v. 34)?
- c. While Jesus fed the people physical bread (mercy), how did He use this event to feed them the greater Bread (see John 6:25–35)?
- d. In this pericope, Jesus desires to find a desolate place and to rest a while. Yet, when He sees the crowds coming toward Him, “he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things” (Mark 6:34). Every pastor's context is the ministry of Christ in the place where he is called to serve, and it is indeed Christ's miraculous gifts that feed the people whom the pastor serves. How do you view the people in your ministry context? What comparisons are there in your ministry where you have compassion on your people? How do you use the events and situations of your people to feed them the greater Bread?

Session 1

Interview with the Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission and the Rev. Dr. Steven Schave, director of LCMS Urban & Inner-City Mission

Session 1 gives you the opportunity to react to Todd and Steve's interview. These men have devoted their lives to urban and rural ministry. As you consider their words of knowledge and experience, the following questions are meant to help you process your ministry context, talk about your experiences, and encourage one another in the call in which God has placed you.

Prayer

May God bestow on us His grace,
With blessings rich provide us;
And may the brightness of His face
To life eternal guide us,
That we His saving health may know,
His gracious will and pleasure,
And also to the nations show
Christ's riches without measure
And unto God convert them.

Thine over all shall be the praise
And thanks of ev'ry nation;
And all the world with joy shall raise
The voice of exultation.
For Thou shalt judge the earth, O Lord,
Nor suffer sin to flourish;
Thy people's pasture is Thy Word
Their souls to feed and nourish,
In righteous paths to keep them.

O let the people praise Thy worth,
In all good works increasing;
The land shall plenteous fruit bring forth,
Thy Word is rich in blessing.

May God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit bless us!
Let all the world praise Him alone,
Let solemn awe possess us.
Now let our hearts say, "Amen!" (LSB 823)

The Pastor's Call – The Dearest, Most Beautiful, and Most Precious Spot on Earth

1. Describe a ministry experience you've already encountered in your current call that speaks to your urban or rural context. How would you react to this statement: "Passion for your ministry context develops with time and ministry encounters"?
2. Were you prepared for your first-call ministry context? How do you find Steve's or Todd's advice helpful in that conversation over coffee?
3. What challenges have you already encountered in your urban/rural context?
4. What joys have you already experienced in your urban/rural context?
5. What would you add to Steve's and Todd's advice concerning context and balance?
6. What do you see as common in the urban and rural ministry contexts?

Session 2: Transition — Urban and Inner-City Mission

Steve Schave

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Urban & Inner-City Mission boosts revitalization efforts in city ministries while sharing the Gospel across cultures, and UICM provides resources to help churches provide a spiritual home for people searching for hope and healing.

Prayer

O Christ, our true and only light,
Enlighten those who sit in night;
Let those afar now hear Your voice
And in Your fold with us rejoice.

Fill with the radiance of Your grace
The souls now lost in error’s maze;
Enlighten those whose inmost minds
Some dark delusion haunts and blinds.

O gently call those gone astray
That they may find the saving way!
Let ev’ry conscience sore oppressed
In You find peace and heav’nly rest.
(LSB 839:1–3)

Reaching the City with Christ

1. There can be no doubt that caring for the poor and bringing the forgiveness of sins are important aspects of urban ministry, but the posture we take with the least and the “sinners of the city” is important.

a. Read Luke 16:19–22 aloud. Beyond not caring for Lazarus, what is the rich man’s physical posture as he encounters this beggar at the gate each day?

b. Read Luke 7:36–50 aloud. How do the religious elites view the woman of the city compared to themselves?

c. Read Job 4:7 and John 9:1–2. What is the attitude of Job’s friends and Jesus’s own disciples? What is their assumption about those who suffer or are “down on their luck”?

d. What do we know about God’s mercy and who is deserving? If one had to be holy enough, who would receive it? Ultimately, how are we all beggars, as Martin Luther testifies at his death?

2. Read the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20:1–16.

a. If this event were to happen today in a business district, how might we say the business owner is showing mercy while also giving dignity by hiring the unemployed?

b. Why do you think the Church should be involved with mercy in a way that does not create harmful dependencies?

c. How does the motivation of the Church affect the outcome of merciful acts?

d. Do secular programs transform the heart or only focus on lifting people out of poverty?

3. Read Matthew 25:31–46.

a. In v. 40, what title does Jesus use for himself? What does this title say about how Christ regards the least, and how we should view them as well?

b. What is the stern warning of the Law in not caring for the poor and needy?

c. What is the Good News regarding why we care?

4. Read Romans 15:5–9, 20–21.

a. What is radical about the mission of the Church in Paul’s missionary journeys?

b. What does St. Paul mean by not building on someone else’s foundation?

5. Read Acts 4:29–37.

- a. Describe the mother church of Christianity in Jerusalem.
- b. How are these Christians set apart?
- c. See also John 17:21–23. How does this unity across various backgrounds affect our witness when the world sees this diversity?

6. Read the Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:12–24.

- a. Who declines the invitation to the banquet and why?
- b. Where does the master send his servants to make invitations? When there is still room, where do they go?
- c. God certainly wants all men to be saved. There is to be no favoritism shown, so the invitation to His feast is for everyone. The feast on the Lord’s Day is a foretaste of the feast to come. However, like the Pharisee, we, too, might wish to invite only the *more desirables* to the feast. Yet whom does the master send us (His servants) to invite?

7. Read Luke 15:1–10.

- a. Jesus receives sinners and sits at table with them, much to the chagrin of the Pharisees. To the religious elites, these sinners were a lost cause and beneath them. What does Jesus say about lost causes? Are 99 sheep enough when there are 100 of them?
- b. When do we stop looking? When the lost are found, what happens in heaven?
- c. Is it ever a waste of effort to witness the faith to the *undesirables*?



Answers

1.

a. The rich man walked right past and looked down his nose at Lazarus, who lay there. “Looking down on someone” is how we describe seeing someone as lesser than ourselves.

b. The Pharisees acted as if the sinful woman of the city’s sin would rub off on their holiness. They felt superior to her in their righteousness.

c. The assumption was that if one were disabled or went through hardships, this was a particular judgment against the person.

d. No one is worthy of God’s mercy; we receive everything by grace. We are all beggars who come into this world with nothing and have nothing to give to God to earn merit.

2.

a. Charity can often take someone’s dignity if it is simply a one-way transaction, not just assistance for an emergency need, and if it becomes an ongoing dependency. A business owner is showing mercy with dignity by giving someone the opportunity to work. Vocation is a First Article gift.

b. The Church does not wish to strip people of their dignity by merely giving aid in an unhealthy, dependent relationship.

c. The Church is motivated by love for the neighbor and sees each person as created in the image of God with God-given capacity. The outcome is that the focus is on the individual, with nothing expected in return.

d. Sadly, there are those who capitalize on poverty for either monetary or political gain. Some think the Church should not get involved in ending poverty because people simply take advantage of Christian charity. But whether people do so through greed or

sloth, these are matters of the heart. Only the Gospel can transform the heart of man.

3.

a. Of the three common titles of Prophet, Priest and King, Jesus specifically says, “the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’” As you did it to one of the least ... you did it to Me ... the King. Jesus connects the least to His kingly title. We, too, view our neighbor as royalty whom we have the honor to serve.

b. Not having compassion for the poor is an outward sign of unbelief. Jesus says of those demonstrating this lack of faith, “And these will go away into eternal punishment” (v. 46). This is a stern condemnation which hopefully leads to repentance.

c. By grace through faith, we are declared righteous. As a new creation in Christ, we can do no other than to help the poor among us when they are in need. Thus Jesus says, “Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (vv. 45–46).

4.

a. The inclusion of the Gentiles in the Church would have been a radical change from the accepted teaching of Judaism. Paul himself once saw Gentiles as unclean, but ironically, he is sent to evangelize them in particular.

b. We can’t evangelize where we are not. Paul is speaking of planting new churches. His missionary journeys are primarily to major metropolitan cities or urban communities. Even if you are not called to plant a new church, opportunities abound in urban areas to reach new people in new places with new missions.

5.

a. In his commentary, Lenski writes, “In this regard the mother congregation of Christendom serves as a model for all time, a rebuke to all her daughters who followed heresies and errors and caused rents in the church, and a rebuke likewise to all members in any congregation that cause strife and disturbance; but a shining example for all congregations that hold in unity to the one faith and doctrine (2:42) and in one mind to the things that make for peace. The condition of the first congregation was one that made for healthy inner and outer growth.”¹

b. These Christians are set apart as an example of true unity in faith, doctrine and practice. This unity shook the foundation of where they prayed. They were bold confessors of the faith in word and in practice, examples of communion and community that crossed ethnic and socioeconomic lines.

c. This multi-ethnic, multi-socioeconomic church is so at one with each other and with Christ that it will be a testimony to the world. Jesus said, “that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (John 17:23). The unified Church will be a witness to the love of God the Father and the sending of His Son into the world.

6.

a. The well-to-do ask to be excused because they are too busy with other things to attend the banquet.

b. “Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame” (v. 21). The master sends his servants into the city streets and alleys, and when there is still room, he sends

them to travel the highways and byways, for he wishes his house to be full.

c. The poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame represent the least of society, those most associated with sin or being unclean. When the invitations are declined by the upper crust of society, the master sends us out into the streets and alleys to invite the least and the lost and the brokenhearted. Everyone is invited, both rich and poor, but only those who wear the wedding garment will enter in.

7.

a. The Good Shepherd says clearly that 99 are not enough when there are 100 sheep. We never stop looking. We look well into the night for the precious coin that is lost. We wait with vigil for the prodigal child to be brought to their senses. We sweep for the coin in the deepest, darkest crevices and corners. We cannot ensure the outcome, but we will faithfully keep seeking the lost until they are found.

b. When just one sinner turns back and repents, then all of heaven rejoices. To be sure, the devil will stop at nothing to prevent this celebration in heaven and earth, but the Father welcomes home His prodigal child with open arms.

c. It is never a waste of effort to seek the lost. This person is someone’s classmate, someone’s child, our brother or sister ... this is one who is so precious that God the Father would send His one and only Son to suffer and die and rise again for that person’s salvation. This is the apple of God’s eye, one created in His image, overcome by the wolf, deceived by the serpent — but no cause is too great.

¹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 187.

Resources for Urban Ministry

- › Harrison, Matthew. *Christ Have Mercy: How to Put Your Faith in Action*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008.
- › LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Mercy Tracts: “On the Duties of Ministers of the Church,” “Theology For Mercy,” “What Does It Mean To Be a Lutheran in Social Ministry?,” “On Almsgiving,” “The Church’s Role of Mercy in the Community,” “The Church is a Mercy Place!,” “Loeche on Mercy,” “Theological Reflections on Confessional Lutheran Involvement in Neighborhood Renewal,” “The Twelve and the Seven in Acts 6 and the Needy,” “Sanctification and Charitable Works in Lutheran Theology.” store.lcms.org.
- › Lupton, Robert. *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help, and How to Reverse It*. New York: Harper One, 2011.
- › Nunes, John. *Voices from the City*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993.
- › PovertyCure DVD Series, produced by Acton Media, 2012. povertycure.org.
- › Uhlhorn, Johann. *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007.



Session 3: Transition — Rural and Small Town Mission

Todd Kollbaum

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Rural & Small Town Mission supports pastors, professional church workers and lay leaders to meet the challenges of leading Christ-centered outreach in their unique communities.

Prayer

How clear is our vocation, Lord,
When once we heed Your call:
To live according to Your Word
And daily learn, refreshed, restored,
That You are Lord of all
And will not let us fall.

But if, forgetful, we should find
Your yoke is hard to bear;
If worldly pressures fray the mind,
And love itself cannot unwind
Its tangled skein of care:
Our inward life repair.

We marvel how Your saints become
In hindrances more sure;
Whose joyful virtues put to shame
The casual way we wear Your name
And by our faults obscure
Your pow’r to cleanse and cure.

In what You give us, Lord, to do,
Together or alone,
In old routines or ventures new,
May we not cease to look to You,
The cross You hung upon —
All You endeavored done. (LSB 853)

Providing Guidance and Support to Rural and Small Town Pastors and Churches

1. How is Rural & Small Town (RST) defined?
2. C.F.W. Walther says this about a pastor’s call: “When a place has been assigned to a Lutheran candidate of theology where he is to discharge the office of a Lutheran minister, that place ought to be to him the dearest, most beautiful, and most precious spot on earth. He should be unwilling to exchange it for a kingdom. Whether it is in a metropolis or in a small town, on a bleak prairie or in a clearing in the forest, in a flourishing settlement or in a desert, to him it should be a miniature paradise. Do not the blessed angels descend from heaven with great joy whenever the Father in heaven sends them to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation? Why, then, should we poor sinners be unwilling to hurry after them with great joy to any place where we can lead other men, our fellow-sinners, to salvation?”²

How might this outlook shape your transition to an RST congregation? Ministry? Mission? Relationships?

3. How might a new pastor in an RST congregation make the best of his transition in terms of ministry?
4. How might a new pastor handle change in the RST congregation?
5. How might a new pastor become involved in the community and the life of the place to which he has been called without sacrificing the mission and ministry of the church?

² C.F.W. Walther, “Twentieth Evening Lecture,” in *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel: Thirty-nine Evening Lectures*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), 207.

Answers

1. What is Rural & Small Town?
 - a. Rural and small town (RST) areas are classified as those with a population of 15,000 or less.
 - b. RST congregations make up over half of LCMS congregations as well as membership.
 - c. Primary economies are typically agribusiness or extraction industries.
 - d. A helpful guide to RST areas is ruralhealthinfo.org/am-i-rural.
2. Answers may vary.
3. How might a new pastor in an RST congregation make the best of his transition in terms of ministry?
 - a. Pray and trust in the Lord.
 - b. Know who you are and learn the assets of the congregation. A formal or informal process of asset mapping is vital.
 - c. Learn the congregation's history, its past high points and challenges. Get to know the congregation's story.
 - d. Learn the families. Make sure you have an updated directory.
 - e. Don't listen to gossip; form your own opinion of things based on your careful observations.
 - f. Put in your time. Many new pastors jump too far too fast and end up crashing. Take your time. Let the congregation know you're there for the long haul. Be patient.
 - g. Visit people and then visit some more. Ask questions of leaders and non-leaders.
 - h. Know who is around you. Get a copy of the demographics of your area and study it with leaders in the congregation.
 - i. Look for partnerships. Seek ideas from those around you, and look at what has worked for others.
 - j. Be strategic and have a plan. This is both for you personally and for the congregation.
 - k. Communicate, communicate, communicate!
 - l. Pray and trust in the Lord.
4. How might a new pastor handle change in the RST congregation?
 - a. Take baby steps, don't rush, take your time.
 - b. Determine what it is that needs to be changed. Is this just your opinion/preference, or is change really required?
 - c. Determine the desired outcome of the change.
 - d. Develop a plan for the steps that need to be undertaken to implement the change.
 - e. Build support among the leaders of the congregation.
 - f. Develop a shared vision.
 - g. Communicate.
 - h. Take action.
5. How might a new pastor become involved in the community and the life of the place to which he has been called without sacrificing the mission and ministry of the church?
 - a. Church alliance groups
 - b. Rule of thumb: Participate where possible (e.g., food pantry, clean-up days, philanthropy opportunities).
 - c. Local service organizations

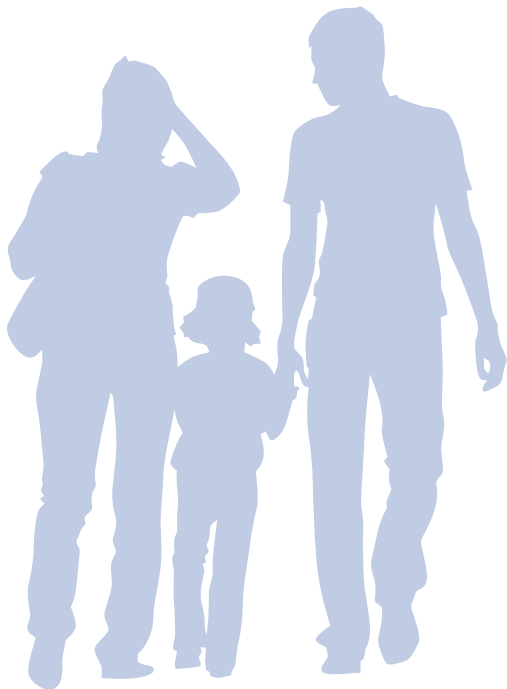
d. Rule of thumb: Presence speaks volumes. You can get involved with Meals on Wheels/senior dining services, or Kiwanis/Lions/Rotary Clubs. Seek them out, as people won't always come to ask you to join.

e. Local schools

f. Rule of thumb: Set the stage. Kids are drawn away by many activities, but being a part of the system helps your voice to be heard. Try to engender a culture where young people want to be involved in church so that it isn't just a "have to." For example, support activities as they are sources of community pride — athletic events, drama production, and concerts. Be bold; if you don't try, nothing will happen.

g. Community activities

h. Rule of thumb: Your presence (or absence) is noticed. Attend fairs and community celebrations. Get to know citizens by name, know the price of corn and beans, learn what is important to the community, have fun.



Resources for Rural Ministry

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- › Pearcey, Nancy. *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2015.
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1333 S. Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-THE LCMS (843-5267)

infocenter@lcms.org
lcms.org