



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

July 23 – Webinar

"Agribusiness and the Rural and Small-Town Congregation"

with Sharon Oetting, Stan Oetting and Steve Krause, agribusiness experts from the Concordia, Mo., area

1–2 p.m. CST

Aug. 6 – Webinar

"Grace Place"

with the Rev. Dr. Darrell Zimmerman, interim president/CEO of Grace Place Wellness Ministries, 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

We Are in God's Hands

In recent months, we have seen a time of unprecedented transition and stress. Pandemics, lockdowns, reopenings — the list could go on and on. What I'd give at this point to just have things be "back to normal." But reminiscing about how things used to be or how we would like them to be, while somewhat temporarily comforting, really doesn't get us anywhere. At some point, we must face our reality and deal with what is directly in front of us.

In fact, we can always be looking forward to what is to come for the work of the church, since it has not yet reached its end. Throughout these most challenging days, we must always remember that the fields are ripe for harvest! We may feel like we are consistently reinventing the wheel as we transition, but we can always find solace and comfort in that the Lord of the church and His Word of salvation remain the same regardless of world events! This is why/how we can rejoice in



what God has done for us and in the work our eternal Lord has called 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 the 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.*

(continued on page 3)

I keep seeing people on Facebook bemoaning the fact that 2020 has been one rough year. The fact is, they aren't in the least wrong. This has been a particularly challenging year! Imagine, then, being a new pastor or church worker just starting the ministry God has called you to in the midst of this crazy, crazy year! It will be especially important for our congregations throughout the Synod to welcome our newest workers into their new families with an extra measure of care and grace. To that end, I wanted to give you some helpful advice that we shared several years ago in an article entitled "Welcoming Your New Pastor," which was written by the Rev. Matthew Mau of St. John Lutheran Church in Waco, Neb. Here is what Pastor Mau had to share with us:

Welcoming Your NEW PASTOR

by the Rev. Matthew Mau

Transition comes in many forms. But for a pastor, and possibly his family, one of the hardest transitions is when he moves to take his place as pastor of your church. Now this man is your pastor. As you anticipate his arrival, there is one BIG question: What are you going to do? As I thought about this question from the point of view of that pastor, here are some ideas I thought may help you, the congregation and your new pastor deal with this transition.

First of all, and most important, is patience and forgiveness. He will fail. He will forget. He will fall short of your expectations. He, like you, is a sinner. He is not there to be the savior of your church. He is there to lead you to the Savior, Jesus. He will offer you forgiveness every

Sunday and beyond, and you are to offer that same forgiveness to him. He needs it just as much as you do. Be patient with his family. His children are not perfect, and yes, they may even squirm and make loud comments in church sometimes. We try to teach them to make good choices, but sometimes they don't. But, sit next to them, talk to them, share your wisdom! They'd love for you to share in their joy!

Second, be there for him and his family. I was overwhelmed with the support from our congregation! When it came time to move into our home, those pick-up trucks rolled in with men of the congregation there to help us unload our moving truck, along with their wives to serve food and help clean and put away our belongings. It showed my wife and

me that we had come to a congregation that cares about us. Even now when a member stops by just to see how we are, or to say "Pastor, I thought you might like..." or "We're doing this event and we'd love to see you there," it warms our hearts. We need that. It helps us more than you can imagine. We're not up on a forbidden mountain. We are families just like you and yours and we love to be involved and included!

Third, pray for your pastor, for his wife and family. They have their burdens to bear, just as you do, and sometimes it can be difficult for them to balance everything. In addition to loving and supporting him, pray for discernment, for wisdom and sometimes just for blind faith! Pray that your pastor will lead you with a shepherd's heart, be faithful and courageous in preaching the Word of God and gain wisdom and knowledge to counsel those who have need. Prayer is a huge blessing, and sometimes just knowing that you are praying for them can make a difference. Transition is something that can be difficult. Thanks be to God, that he sent his Son Jesus to care for us in all times, even in transition.

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**JUST LIKE YOU
AND YOURS**
and we love to be involved
and included!



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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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In God's Hands, continued

*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)

Pastor Kollbaum

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 **Agribusiness and the Rural and Small-Town Congregation** on July 23, followed by **Grace Place** on Aug. 6. 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 will offer practical resources on 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!