

Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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Rural & Small Town Mission

Our "Life Together"

- To follow the core beliefs of the LCMS
- To equip rural professional and lay leaders
- To support congregations in community engagement

Remember: RSTM is eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars!

Please Pray for These Important Dates

July 12 - Webinar

"Regional Youth Partnerships" with Leland Jackson, director of Christian education, Garden City, Kan. 1-2 p.m. CST

Aug. 16 - Webinar

"Pastors Leading Churches with Schools" with Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador, pastor, St. John Lutheran Church, Plymouth, Wis., and assistant coordinator, LCMS Stewardship Ministry 1-2 p.m. CST

Nov. 8-10

National RSTM Conference
Hilton Kansas City Airport,
Kansas City, Mo.
lcms.org/rstm/conference

If you have an idea or story for Rural Outreach, contact Amy at the RSTM office.

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"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, Setting One-Five, *Lutheran Service Book*).

STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

Our Youth

Leading youth ministry in rural and small-town congregations (or just about anywhere for that matter) is a challenge. We are challenged by numbers, time, money, help, leadership and

most likely any number of other issues. However, the Lord of the Church has given us this great opportunity for ministry whether we have a lot of youth or none at all. That is, sharing His message of hope to those around us, including young people. When we view it as just one more struggle, we may determine that it just isn't worth the fight and give up. In fact, I've seen that over and over. Yet, when we reframe your various challenges as opportunities, we might just find that the Lord opens up for us something we never expected. This is why I share the following,

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RSTM Events Update

Don't forget: RSTM provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Regional Youth Partnerships** with Leland Jackson on July 12, followed by **Pastors Leading Churches with Schools** with Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador on Aug. 16. Find past webinars on our website as a free resource for use when you need it.

Watch for information on all our upcoming events! You can register for our Engaging Your Community events (EYC) as well as our Engaging the Wandering (ETW) events at lcms.org/rstm. Meant to partner together, each event offers practical resources and skills for reaching out to wandering members and our communities with Christ's love. Online registration is available for both types of events. The next

EYC event will be Sept. 29 in Cookeville, Tenn., in partnership with the LCMS Mid-South District. More EYC and ETW events are being planned. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Register now for the **2018 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference**, with the theme "Have No Fear," Nov. 8-10 in Kansas City, Mo. This conference is meant for anyone living in, serving or interested in rural or small-town areas. Learn more at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

For more information about our events or to see the rest of our calendar, visit lcms.org/rstm. Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.





Regional Youth Partnerships

by Leland Jackson

“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Heb. 10:25).

A recent article in *Reporter* highlighted the importance of relationships when working with youth. Western Kansas churches have been providing opportunities for collaborative youth events, with the hope of creating stronger friendships and stronger faith among the participants, for over 40 years.

One such event is the winter Confirmation Retreat, hosted by Circuits 15 and 16, which draws participants from the western side of Kansas. This is an annual event, and not only do the youth learn about the Catechism, but they also learn that the Body of Christ is larger than their rural congregation.

Larger churches with multiple staff are often able to invite smaller churches to participate in their events. For instance, Trinity Lutheran Church in Garden City invited churches within the circuit/district to their annual Mexico mission trip and annual canoe trip. Other events have included the Fall Junior High Rally; the Wild, Wild West Paintball event; Youth Quake and the Mystery Bus Tour, an all-night event.

The LCMS Kansas District also sponsors events for youth, such as Senior High Summer Camp at Lutheran Valley Retreat

near Divide, Colo. and District Youth Gathering. Often, one key person receives information of such events and forwards it to the smaller churches. Usually, a bus is used for transportation and picks up youth along the way to the event. Sharing transportation is another way for youth to gather and build friendships.

When churches collaborate, several outcomes occur: First, the workload can be spread among a larger group of people. If there are 13 pastors and two directors of Christian education (DCEs) represented in the circuit, then each can take a part of the planning process. Secondly, smaller churches that don't have resources to do events on their own can join an event that has already been created. Also, youth have an opportunity to interact with a variety of their peers and adults.

One key factor in collaborative events is the involvement of parents in the local congregation. Youth need to be encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and participate with others, and parents can serve as the contact person within that congregation rather than the pastors all the time.

As a DCE of 35 years, 25 of those spent in Western Kansas, it has been encouraging to see youth make new friends from



The annual paintball event at Rexford, Kan.

a different part of the state. Youth friend each other on Facebook and encourage one another to participate with the next district or circuit event. I heard a story told of college students who met on a college campus and recognized one another as past participants of a circuit youth event.

In Western Kansas, we have worked hard to build relationships with one another and with Christ, who empowers us to live lives that make a difference in our churches and in our community. Our chief aim is to bring glory to God through collaborative youth events.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Leland Jackson is a director of Christian education in Garden City, Kan.

STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE, continued

taken from LCMS Youth Ministry's youthESource (youthESource.com):

“The more available religiously grounded relationships, activities, programs, opportunities and challenges are for teenagers, the more likely they will be religiously engaged and invested. In other words, ‘congregations that prioritize youth ministry and support for their parents, invest in trained and skilled youth group leaders and make serious efforts to engage and teach adolescents seem much more likely to draw youth into their religious lives and to foster religious and spiritual maturity in their young members. This appears to be true of local congregations, regional organizations such as district conventions and entire religious traditions.’ Stated negatively, churches that do not invest in their youth find that youth are unlikely to invest in them.”

God's blessings to you as you look for those opportunities to share Christ's love with the youth among whom you have been sent.

Pastor Todd Kollbaum

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.

Learn more about RSTM at lcms.org/rstm or by calling Amy at 888-463-5127. “Like” us on our Facebook page at facebook.com/lcmsrstm.

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