In this time of transition — from one year to the next, from the season of Christmas to the season of Epiphany — we are reminded that nothing on Earth stays the same. I have had the pleasure of working with congregations throughout the years as they planned and strategized, even working with my own congregation now to do the same. Throughout all of those meetings and conversations, one thing always rises to the top: The past was always golden and it is always seen as better than our present.

Nostalgia can be wonderful, and it serves us well to remember the good of the past and build upon it. However, these are just memories, and there is really no way to recreate the past in our present circumstance. But what we can do is look forward — look at our present circumstance and consider what work there is that God is calling us to do now and into the future.

As I was pondering this, I couldn’t help but think of the words of the great Epiphany hymn “As with Gladness Men of Old.” Here in the lyrics we are reminded that God is with us just as He was in days of old, and that just as He kept His people and guided them, so too He does for us!

As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led by Thee.

(continued on page 2)
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.

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

GIVE NOW

Thrivent members: Remember that RSTM is eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars!

GOOD OLD DAYS, CONTINUED

As with joyful steps they sped,
Savior, to Thy lowly bed,
There to bend the knee before
Thee, whom heav’n and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek Thy mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
At Thy cradle, rude and bare,
So may we with holy joy,
Pure and free from sin’s alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heav’nly King.

Holy Jesus, ev’ry day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
There forever may we sing
Alleluias to our King. (LSB 397)

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 Parish Nursing in Rural and Small Towns on Feb. 18, followed by The Mission Field Outside Your Door on March 4. 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!