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

January 7 – Webinar
“Life Ministry Overview”
with Deaconess Tiffany Manor,
Director of Life Ministry
1–2 p.m. CST

STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

King of Kings

The opening stanza of the Advent hymn “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates” (LSB 340 & 341) echoes Psalm 24 when it says,

“Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits. The King of kings is drawing near; The Savior of the world is here. Life and salvation He doth bring; Therefore rejoice and gladly sing. To God the Father raise Your joyful songs of praise.”

Here, God’s people are called to worship and to call out to the gates of Jerusalem to be opened to them so that they might indeed worship the King of Glory. What a glorious way to start out the season of Advent, calling out for God’s people to gather around the Word and receive those good gifts the King of Kings has to give to His people, and to respond to those gifts with rejoicing, gladly singing joyful songs of praise.

Yet, this Advent doesn’t seem altogether joyful. Not that our Savior isn’t still granting His good and gracious Gospel gifts, but that the circumstances that surround our gatherings have been changed, restricted and, in some cases, stopped altogether. It would be easy to forget in these latter days that the King of Kings is drawing near, for there has been an awful lot over which we might even hang our heads in despair.

But now is not the time for weak resignation. The Lord of Lords has called us as His people to continually bring Him

(continued on page 3)
Can Our Small Congregation REALLY Support a DEACONESS?

"OUR CHURCH IS IN DESPERATE NEED of an organist.” “Our pastor is great at visiting our 25 shut-ins on a monthly basis, but they need visits more often. He just does not have that kind of time!” “No one is stepping up to be Sunday school superintendent!”

These are just a few of the many talking points overheard at LWML rallies, RSTM events, LWML national conventions, district conventions, and other Synod gatherings. Another sentiment many deaconesses hear is, “A deaconess seems like the perfect thing for our ministry. We just cannot afford one! You see, we are a ‘small church.’” And another — “Well, deaconesses seem like an awesome asset, but we only need this one specific position filled in our congregation right now.”

These statements and many others have led to talks across the Synod, including among deaconesses, about how LCMS congregations and organizations can team up to have deaconesses serve them.

In the past seven years, Deaconess Faith Swenson has served six congregations and one Recognized Service Organization, mostly in rural contexts. In every case, she has always shared responsibilities between at least two entities — so she has experience with these partnerships!

We as a church have the opportunity to work together. Having multiple congregations team up to call a deaconess (or other church worker!) to serve them and care for their specific needs is a great solution. Deaconess Swenson plans to talk about her experiences serving multiple congregations and the goal is to help you think “outside of the box” about ways a deaconess might be able to assist the pastors of your local congregations and organizations.
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.

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

King of Kings, continued

honor and glory, praise and thanksgiving. So it is good that the hymn goes on, “A righteous Helper comes to thee; His chariot is humility, His kingly crown is holiness, His scepter, pity in distress. The end of all our woe He brings; Therefore the earth is glad and sings. To Christ the Savior raise Your grateful hymns of praise.”

We have the righteous Helper who lifts us up in our time of woe so that we might continue the ministry of reconciliation that we have been called to carry out as the Body of Christ, the Church.

The ministry which points to the hymn’s next verse:

“How blest the land, the city blest, Where Christ the ruler is confessed! O peaceful hearts and happy homes To whom this King in triumph comes!

The cloudless sun of joy is He Who comes to set His people free. To God the Spirit raise Your happy shouts of praise.”

Therefore: “Fling wide the portals of your heart; Make it a temple set apart From earthly use for heav’n’s employ, Adorned with prayer and love and joy. So shall your Sov’reign enter in And new and nobler life begin. To God alone be praise For word and deed and grace! Redeemer, come and open wide My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide! O enter with Thy grace divine; Thy face of mercy on me shine. Thy Holy Spirit guide us on Until our glorious goal is won. Eternal praise and fame We offer to Thy name.”

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 Life Ministry Overview on Jan. 7. 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!