

Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

Volume 9, Issue 9 • Newsletter

September 2018



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

Sept. 13 – Webinar

“Teaching the Faith: Adults” with Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe, pastor, Faith Lutheran Church, York, Neb. 1–2 p.m. CST

Sept. 29

Engaging Your Community Event Cookeville, Tenn. with the LCMS Mid-South District 8 a.m.-3 p.m. CST

Nov. 8–10

RSTM National 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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Intentionality, Consistency, Relationships

Angie and I recently had the privilege of presenting at this year’s National Youth Workers Conference in Minneapolis. From that presentation, I pulled out three helpful words that might provide some guidance in many aspects of our various ministries.

The first word is “intentionality”: Too often we simply float along and hope things work out for the best. However, this is pretty much a recipe for failure, or at least disappointment. Instead, let us prayerfully consider the path that God has laid out for us and then be intentional about moving along that path in our ministries. When there are road bumps and hiccups along the way, having a mindset of intentionality allows us to weather those without derailing the whole process. Now, intentionality doesn’t mean bullheadedness but simply that we are being deliberate and purposeful in what we are planning and doing.

The second word is “consistency”: In ministry, we often look for the warm body who won’t say “no” when asked to serve in one capacity or another. While this might seem to fulfill our obligations, it is not a good way to do ministry. In order for anything to have a lasting impact, it is important for there to be consistency, both of program and people. That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t change or even that a person should cease doing a particular job. What it does mean is that we don’t serve until it isn’t convenient or until “our turn” has been completed, we serve until the Lord calls us to serve in a different way. (Notice we continue to serve.) In this way, we provide consistency for those among whom we serve as well as consistency in what we are doing. Consistency also involves “consistent” evaluation of what, why and how we are doing things. It is with this type of consistency that we can best serve the Lord and His church.

The final word is “relationships”: In rural and small-town settings, it sometimes seems a bit crazy to worry about creating relationships since often our congregations and communities are made up of family and folks we have known our whole lives. However, the relationships I’m talking about here go beyond those kind of surface level relationships we often find. What we’re talking about here is loving our neighbor enough to develop relationships that allow us to share in their lives. To celebrate with them in their joys and help them in their times of trouble. Especially, we are talking about relationships which foster honest conversations about our faith, their faith and how God’s grace is the most important thing we have! May God bless you in all of your ministry endeavors!

Pastor Todd Kollbaum



Worshippers greet each other at Salem Lutheran Church in Springdale, Ark.



Kansas City, Here We Come!



As I go about my work with LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission, I often hear from both congregation members and church workers how important it is to prepare and equip our church workers and lay leaders to live and serve in the communities God has placed them. This preparation work allows the church workers, congregations and communities to build strong, healthy relationships that lead to many opportunities to share God's Word.

The Rural & Small Town Mission National Conference offers an incredible opportunity to serve participants. This single event is the culmination of our work each year and allows us to share the biggest selection resources suited to town and country settings. Every year the conference offers area-specific support, training and networking to those called and living in these unique communities across the country. Often, it seems that many programs and resources available on the market are geared toward suburban church settings. RSTM recognizes that

while the work to which God has called congregations is the same, the context in which that work is carried out can be very different—even in rural America. RSTM seeks and shares the expertise and experience of ministry leaders who know and understand rural and small-town ministry challenges. It is always a pleasure for me to see all these people gathered in one place, excited about rural and small-town congregations, sharing their knowledge and building relationships that will be used to support God's kingdom.

Over the years, some of my favorite moments at the RSTM National Conference have included talking with people from all over the country and sharing ministry ideas that have worked, and sometimes haven't worked, so that another congregation can learn. Nothing beats the joy and excitement of a heart on fire for the mission field out their own front door! I've had the opportunity to work with congregations that have seen their numbers go from 12 to 24, doubling their attendance! I've been privileged to watch new

partnerships establish between congregations. The conference has also offered the chance to learn from incredible teachers; establish new skills in areas such as stewardship, outreach, witnessing, youth, family and older adult ministry; and the opportunities to make new friendships, all of which are rooted in the common ground of rural/small town congregations.

I'm often asked which resource RSTM offers that would be the most helpful. While there are many things, such as our webinars and Engaging Your Communities and Engaging the Wandering events, in my opinion, the RSTM National Conference offers the most "bang for your buck." Over the course of three days, you have the chance to immerse yourself in all things rural and small town, explore both the blessings and challenges and perhaps most importantly, connect with others in similar situations. So, come and join us! Bring your pastor, your wife, your friend. We look forward to seeing you in November!

Amy Gerdts
RSTM Coordinator



Memories of past RSTM Conferences





Registration is only open until Sept. 15! The 2018 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference will be held Nov. 8–10 in Kansas City, Mo., at the Hilton Kansas City Airport. Register now!

Guest Speakers

Keynote speakers will include:

- Rev. Timothy Koch, pastor, Concordia Lutheran Church, Cresbard, S.D. and Immanuel Lutheran, Wecota, S.D.;
- Rev. Dr. Robert H. Bennett, Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Ind.;
- Rev. Tom Schlund, pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Algona, Iowa; and
- Chaplain Craig Muehler, director, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces.

The Rev. Roosevelt Gray, director, LCMS Black Ministries, will lead the conference bible study.

The blessings and challenges facing rural and small-town congregations today will be addressed. Congregations will be encouraged to cultivate ways to become healthy churches, eager to bear witness for Christ, able to show mercy to those in need in communities and develop a robust life together with fellow members.

Sessions

This conference is meant for anyone living in, serving or interested in rural or small-town areas, with topics and resources specifically suited for this unique mission field. Breakout topics include:

- Ministry to inactives
- Hope during grief
- Stewardship
- Opportunities with recognized service organizations

- Family ministry outreach strategies
- Many other topics affecting our rural and small-town congregations

New this year will be a special track for LERT Disaster Training and one for Youth Ministry. These options will have a limited number of seats and require attendance in all six sessions.

There is something planned for everyone ... from layperson to pastor, student to teacher! Plus, another new bonus is the opportunity to earn Continuing Education credits through Concordia Theological Seminary!

Registration

Adult registration for the conference is \$215/person and includes all plenary and breakout sessions, materials, Thursday dinner, Friday lunch and dinner and more. Special rates available for couples, meals only and groups. Please contact our office with questions or help with group rates.

Lodging

Don't forget hotel reservations must be made separately from conference registration.

The Hilton Kansas City Airport is offering our group a rate of \$106/Single, or \$114/Double (plus applicable taxes), including breakfast buffet per day per occupancy level; complimentary self-parking; complimentary airport transportation on request. Be sure to ask for the LCMS

Rural & Small Town Mission Conference special rate.

The deadline for hotel reservations is September 30, but we have filled our hotel block the last few years, so don't delay! More information and online registration can be found at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

Shirt Orders

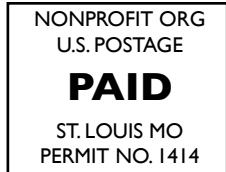
We are happy to report that we are again making the snazzy Reaching Rural America for Christ shirts available for purchase! Order online when registering or by contacting our office by Oct. 15 and you can pick up your shirt at the RSTM National Conference. Available in gray or white, men's and women's polos sizes S to XL are \$19 each, and sizes 2XL–6XL are \$21 each. (Other styles, different prices.)

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.

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

Give Now



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Upcoming RSTM Events

Don't forget: Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is *Teaching the Faith: Adults* with Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe, pastor, Faith Lutheran Church, York, Neb., on Sept. 13 from 1–2 pm CST. This one is followed by *Ministry to Inactives* with Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission, on Oct. 18 from 1–2 pm CST. Find past webinars in our webinar archive on our website as a free resource for use when you need it.

Watch for information on all our upcoming events! Consider registering for one of our Engaging Your Community events (EYC) or our Engaging the Wandering (ETW) events at lcms.org/rstm Meant to partner together, each event offers practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to our

wandering members and our communities with Christ's love. Online registration is available for both types of events.

The next events are scheduled in Cookeville, Tenn. (an EYC event), in partnership with the LCMS Mid-South District, on Sept. 29, and in Hastings, Neb. (an EYC event), in partnership with the LCMS Nebraska District, on Oct. 6. More events are on the horizon as well. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Register now! The 2018 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, with the theme "Have No Fear," is Nov. 8–10 in Kansas City, Mo., at the Hilton Kansas City Airport. To register and for more information, visit lcms.org/rstm/conference.

For more information about our events or to see the rest of our calendar, visit lcms.org/rstm or contact our office at 1-888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.

