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

April 23 – Webinar
“re:Vitality”
with the Rev. Dr. Mark Wood, director, LCMS Witness & Outreach Ministry and LCMS Revitalization
1–2 p.m. CST

May 14 – Webinar
“Counting Your Blessings: Hope for Rural and Small-Town Congregations”
with the Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, LCMS RSTM
1–2 p.m. CST

June 18 – Webinar
“Opioid Abuse in Rural and Small-Town Settings”
with the Rev. Dr. Steven Schave, director, LCMS Urban & Inner-City Mission
1–2 p.m. CST

Springtime is typically such a joyous time of year, as the grass greens and the flowers bloom. Yet, this spring has had a troubling pall of pandemic cast over its brightness. While the situation is difficult and troubling, it really comes as no surprise as it is part and parcel of living in this fallen world. That cloudy shadow of death hangs ever over us as we walk through this earthly valley. Yet for us, the church, we have light even in this dark space. The prophet Isaiah reminds us: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone” (Is. 9:2). Whether by the time you read this we are able to be out and about without restriction or are still limited to watching a worship service on the internet, our Lord is with us, shattering the darkness of this world’s sin and death.

No matter the situation, we can remember these words of our Lord: “And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you”” (Matt. 6:25–33).

What a joy to know it is this God of provision Who gives, sustains, redeems and delivers this life unto eternal life for us who by His grace believe. So, serve the Lord in boldness, care for those around you that they might see His light reflected in you and most of all, stand firm in faith!

May God bless you in Christ, in this troubling time and always!

Pastor Todd Kollbaum
God has placed your congregation in a place, at a time, and with the people of His choosing. Do you know why? Do you understand and agree with God’s purpose and mission for your congregation? How can you faithfully respond to what the Lord is calling you to do?

re:Vitality helps you better understand where your congregation currently is, determine what areas of ministry to address, and take intentional action toward improving the health and well-being of your congregation.

Although re:Vitality was initially developed to meet the needs of declining congregations, the resources available through re:Vitality are helpful to congregations in all stages of development and decline because it focuses on “doing the things that we do because we are the church, not because we are a church in decline.”

The recommended starting place in re:Vitality is completing a congregational self-assessment. Our survey-based self-assessment tool, called CADDs (Congregational Assessment of Development/Decline Status), is conducted by and for your congregation. There's no need for outside experts to conduct the assessment. After all, you're the people who know your congregation and context best.

The CADDs self-assessment report is a simple, graphical report that provides guidance on what actions might best help your congregation improve your overall health and well-being by focusing on the factors that are having the greatest negative impact. These factors correlate with re:Vitality training modules. Each module addresses specific ministry areas including strategic ministry planning, congregational outreach and ministering to inactive members.

re:Vitality modules are self-directed workshops that make use of adult learning methods and incorporate doing the actual work called for in the module. This video-based workshop is led by a local person following a comprehensive workshop leader's guide. Self-directed workshops are made up of multiple sessions interspersed with the work called for in each session. This approach keeps participants from being overwhelmed by an all-at-once workshop, reinforces the way that adults best learn, and eliminates “post-workshop inaction.”

The best news about re:Vitality is that its resources are available to LCMS congregations at no cost. re:Vitality has been created by your Synod to support and equip you as you do God's work in the place, at the time, and with the people of His choosing.

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 re:Vitality on April 23, followed by Counting Your Blessings: Hope for Rural and Small-Town Congregations on May 14. 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, 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 of 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!