



A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

REACHING RURAL AMERICA FOR CHRIST

“... 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, *Lutheran Service Book*



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

Aug. 22 – Webinar

“The No-Casserole Illness and How the Church Can Respond”
with the Rev. Dr. Dennis Goff, director of Ministry Programs for The Lutheran Foundation in Fort Wayne, Ind.

1–2 p.m. CST

Oct. 26

Engaging the Wandering (ETW) event
Groton, S.D., with the LCMS South Dakota District

10 a.m.–4 p.m. CST

Oct. 27

Engaging the Wandering (ETW) event
Hartford, S.D., with the LCMS South Dakota District

1–6 p.m. CST

Nov. 14–16

RSTM National Conference
Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Bloomington-
Minneapolis South, Minneapolis
lcms.org/rstm/conference

STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

Rejoice and Give Thanks!

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:16–18).

Watch TV for a bit, peruse Facebook for a few clicks or check the news: it doesn’t take long to see just how much outrage there is in our world today. Everybody seems to be outraged about one thing or another, and to insist that you be just as outraged as they are! And yet, we often have little outrage for those things that are truly outrageous, and apathy for those things that should really get us going.

This isn’t much of a surprise. We are all sinful humans, and, as Paul says, we do what we shouldn’t and don’t do what we should. That’s a reality, but not an excuse. The Lord calls us to something different, higher, better. We are reminded in His Word that Jesus has promised, “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20). In a world which is constantly proving that the wisdom of man is folly and brings us to ruin, what joy this message is! Christ is with us! He is with us, reigning over His Church, feeding, forgiving, strengthening and sending His people according to His purpose. We have the joyous opportunity to bear witness to this One who gives life, through the faithful witness of His message of love in preaching and teaching, at the altar, in our homes, in our work, or in whatever way He has called us to do so.

So, let us remember what Paul says in his letter to the church in Thessalonica, that we can pray fervently to the Lord of the Church, rejoicing and giving thanks in all circumstances for those things that God wills for us in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Pastor Todd Kollbaum





The No-Casserole Illness

AND HOW THE CHURCH CAN RESPOND

By Rev. Dr. Dennis Goff, director of Ministry Programs for The Lutheran Foundation, Fort Wayne, Ind.

It's a conversation I'll never forget. While visiting with a local pastor one day about the mental health focus of The Lutheran Foundation, he shared something he did one Sunday morning in church.

As people gathered for worship, everyone received a sheet of paper with a list of ten questions related to mental health issues. There were questions like, "Have you ever been depressed?" and "Have you ever been prescribed medication for mental health issues?" Each person was to circle any question that applied to them.

When everyone finished answering their questions, the ushers collected them. They shuffled the papers and walked to a different part of the church to pass out those same sheets of paper. Each person was now holding someone else's paper (no names were on them.) The pastor then started to read the questions, one by one, and asked people to stand up if the question he read was circled on the sheet they were holding.

When people in the congregation saw the number of people standing up

in response to each question, there was an audible gasp from the congregation. "Everyone thinks they are the only one living with mental health issues," the pastor said. Too often, the stigma is so great in the church that people are afraid to talk about mental illness.

While author Amy Simpson was growing up, her mother had serious psychotic episodes and was later diagnosed with schizophrenia. The family was always active in church. But when it came to her mother's mental health issues, there was silence and shame. "We needed community and loving friendships," she says. "The church is one of the only places left in society where that is readily available — at least in theory." Amy tells her family's story in her book, *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission*.

Amy says the phrase is not original with her, but she often refers to mental illness as the "no-casserole illness." It's not uncommon for people from church to bring a casserole when a family member is in the hospital, or when there has been a death in the family. But when it's mental illness, people often don't call or visit, or bring casseroles.

However, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that one in five adults will experience a mental illness in any given year. That also means one in five in our churches. Most people don't realize that mental illness is more common than cancer, heart disease and diabetes combined.

The Lutheran Foundation is focused on promoting mental wellness and reducing stigma around mental illness. Starting the conversation and silencing the stigma is one step toward healing. Sometimes those caring conversations happen best across the table ... over a casserole.

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Rural & Small Town Mission

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Contact us

We want to hear from you! If you have ideas for future issues, comments, or feedback on articles you've read in *Reaching Rural America for Christ*, please contact Amy Gerds at the RSTM office.

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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!

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 **"The No-Casserole Illness and How the Church Can Respond"** on Aug. 22, followed by **"Church Reflections"** with on Sept. 26. Find past webinars in our archives.

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 training in communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members and communities with Christ's love. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

The LCMS South Dakota District will partner with RSTM to hold **two ETW events**, at St. John Lutheran Church, Groton, S.D., on Oct. 26, and Trinity Lutheran Church, Hartford, S.D., on Oct. 27. Online registration is available for ETW events.

RSTM is also rolling out a new type of event, **Welcoming**, that we think you and your congregation are going to love and benefit from! We will address the little-known "brain gain" trends in rural and small-town communities. These day-long events will help congregations to be welcoming places that provide God's Word to both current members and guests. We break the day into three parts: welcoming buildings, welcoming publications and welcoming people. These events are also great opportunities for leadership and volunteer training.

Register now! The 2019 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, **"Running With Endurance: Eyes Fixed On Jesus,"** will be held Nov. 14–16 in Minneapolis. Watch for updates and more information at 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 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.

