

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

March 7 – Webinar

“Raising Young Leaders and the Lutheran Young Adult Corps”
with Julianna Shults, LCMS Youth Ministry
1–2 p.m. CST

April 11 – Webinar

“Community Engagement”
with the Rev. Dr. Keith Schweitzer,
pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church,
Greenfield, Iowa
1–2 p.m. CST

Nov. 14–16

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

STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

Everything is Under Control

I don't know about you, but since the beginning of the new year, it seems as if things are getting more and more hectic. The political and social climate is particularly stressful, serving in the church has its constant demands and at times, it feels like we just can't seem to get control over much of anything. Then in this chaos, I read a newsletter article written by my wife, Angela. It helped me gain perspective and I just had to share...



I am a planner. I love to schedule and plan out my day, month and even my year. I love the smell of a fresh clean calendar or planner that is just waiting for the days to be filled. I buy colored pens for different activities and each person is assigned a different color. I have a monthly calendar on my refrigerator at home, a calendar that is synced with my husband's on my phone, a calendar for monthly bills, as well as a work and personal monthly calendar with daily/weekly planning pages. I could spend hours in an office supply store or in the planning section of a Michael's, Hobby Lobby, or JoAnn's (yes! They have planner stuff too!!). I am a member of several planner groups on Facebook and I have been known to spend time on YouTube watching videos on the best way to plan your day. I love to plan.

My planning is all about controlling my life. I view my planning as a responsible manner to conduct the business of my life, but what happens when my plans are interrupted by life? What happens when I am unable to plan for the unplannable? Honestly, I struggle. I feel paralyzed and have a difficult time focusing ... until I re-group and realize I do not have to have it all figured out. Last month I wrote about anxiety and fear. God tells us over and over again throughout Scripture to have faith, trust and not to be anxious. My sinful self falls into the trap of trying

(continued on page 2)

Raising Young Leaders and the Lutheran Young Adult Corps

by Julianna Shults, DCE, Program Manager, Lutheran Young Adult Corps, LCMS Youth Ministry

When I was in sixth grade, the Director of Christian Education at my church asked me to be one of several teen representatives on the Youth Board. It might sound silly to ask an eleven-year-old to sit through the business agenda of monthly meetings, but I took on the responsibility with genuine passion. This one person saw me, challenged me, equipped me and ultimately moved me towards pursuing professional church work. Raising up young leaders can be a powerful thing.

In 2017, LCMS Youth Ministry did a research project on millennial retention in the LCMS. We found that congregations with a decision-making leader under 32 showed several markers of increased LCMS retention from confirmation to young adulthood. It didn't matter how many young adults were in the congregation; the impact was the same. Raising up young leaders helps children and teens stay in the church.

Rural and small-town ministries are uniquely designed to mentor new young leaders. These congregations tend to be close-knit where young people are known deeply. This can give special insight into where a young leader can best use their skills, passions and abilities and prevent ill-fitting or token leadership roles. These congregations can provide a critical safe space for young leaders to try and fail with grace.

Smaller congregations can be more open to empowering young leaders, sometimes out of necessity. When they do, leaders of all ages must work together for the sake of the Gospel. While established leaders have experience, knowledge of systems and a critical understanding of history, young leaders bring a fresh perspective and new strategies. Young leaders can learn and grow in new skills while established leaders can be reenergized and help manage change.

One example of raising up young leaders is Lutheran Young Adult Corps.

Lutheran Young Adult Corps provides full-time service opportunities for LCMS young adults in urban settings. Participants grow in community and share their faith in Jesus through acts of service for 10 weeks in the summer or 10 months as a gap year. During their service, our 18- to 26-year-old participants serve in roles such as volunteer coordinators, after school tutors, communications and administrative help.

The power of young leaders should not be underestimated. Consistently the young leaders in Lutheran Young Adult Corps prove to be self-motivated, passionate, adventurous, independent, and have a desire to grow in the areas of faith formation, service



Young Adult Corps participants Courtney Haag and Madison Ezzell serve together at a food distribution warehouse on April 4, 2018, in New Orleans.

and community outreach. This is true of the young people in your congregation as well. Engaging young leaders helps ministry, keeps young people connected to the church and provides a chance for all ages to live out their vocation.

Everything is Under Control, continued from page 1

to control everything, when I know that God has it ALL under control. I may not be able to write it on my planner, but I know that I can be grateful for all the times that He cares for me by handling those unplannable moments. The following are my 'Go-to' verses and I have started writing them at the top of my fresh clean planner ... before anything else!!

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28).

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand (Prov. 19:21).

Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand" (John 13:7).

(Angela Kollbaum serves as the Youth Director at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Concordia, Mo., and as Congregational Life Facilitator at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Warrensburg, Mo.)

Pastor Todd Kollbaum

Minneapolis, Here We Come!

The LCMS 2019 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference will be held **Nov. 14–16** in Minneapolis, Minn., at the Doubletree by Hilton Bloomington-Minneapolis South.

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.

We hope you'll join us by registering now and reserving your spot!

Speakers and Session Topics

Keynote speakers will include Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission and Dr. Harold L. Senkbeil, Executive Director for Spiritual Care, DOXOLOGY. Rev. Robert Zagore, executive director, LCMS Office of National Mission, will lead the theme Bible study of the conference.

Breakout topics include dealing with addictions, mental health, young adults in ministry, bi-vocational pastors, stewardship, community engagement, partnering with LERT, online education and many other topics affecting our rural and small-town congregations. There is something planned for everyone ... from layperson to pastor, student to teacher!

We encourage you to bring your whole family to spend a few days together! Enjoy the Mall of America and take advantage of the special family rates that include access to all conference activities.

Don't forget that a special track for Youth Ministry will be returning this year, led by youth peer leaders and specially meant for your youth to join you as well; this option will have a limited number of seats and require attendance in all six sessions.

RSTM Apparel

- This year we will have a theme t-shirt in addition to our standard apparel, available in blue, short sleeve, youth-adult S-XL \$8 each (\$10-2XL, \$14-3XL, \$16-4XL), and blue, long sleeve, youth-adult S-XL \$10.50 (\$12.50-2XL, \$14.50-3XL, \$16.50-4XL).
- 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.)

Order your RSTM apparel and help "Reach Rural America for Christ!" Order by Oct. 15, either online when registering or by contacting our office, so that you can pick up your shirt at the RSTM National Conference.

Registration

Adult registration for the conference is \$225/person and includes all plenary and breakout sessions, materials, Thursday dinner, Friday lunch and dinner and more. See our full form for rates for youth, students, families, couples, meals only and groups. Contact our office with questions.

Hotel reservations must be made separately from conference registration. The Doubletree is offering a rate of \$100/Single or Double plus applicable taxes for our group including breakfast buffet per day per occupancy level; complimentary self-parking; complimentary airport and Mall of America shuttle.

More information and online registration can be found at lcms.org/rstm/conference.



Reaching Rural America for Christ is published monthly by LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission.

Reaching Rural America for Christ may be reprinted with acknowledgment given to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

© 2019 LCMS

Staff

Rev. Todd Kollbaum
Director, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

Amy Gerdtz
Coordinator, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

Chrissy Thomas
Designer

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 Gerdtz at the RSTM office.

LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission
205 S. Main, P.O. Box 719
Concordia, MO 64020

888-463-5127
rstm@lcms.org
lcms.org/rstm
[f lcmsrstm](https://www.facebook.com/lcmsrstm)

How to Subscribe

To subscribe to *Reaching Rural America for Christ*, contact Amy Gerdtz at the RSTM office by calling 888-463-5127 or sending an email to amy.gerdtz@lcms.org.

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!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

RSTM Events Update

Don't forget Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Raising Young Leaders and the Lutheran Young Adult Corps** on March 7, followed by **Community Engagement Leaders** on April 11. Find past webinars in our archive.

Watch for information on all our upcoming events! Register for one of our **Engaging Your Community** or **Engaging the Wandering** 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. Online registration is available for both types of events. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Save the date! The 2019 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, **Running With Endurance: Eyes Fixed On Jesus**, will be Nov. 14–16 in Minneapolis at the Doubletree by Hilton Bloomington-Minneapolis South. This conference is meant for anyone living in, serving or interested in rural or small-town areas, with topics and resources specifically suited for the unique mission field where they have been placed. Bring your family! Enjoy the Mall of America and take advantage of the special family rates that include access to all conference activities. 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.

