

REACHING RURAL AMERICA for CHRIST

RURAL AND SMALL TOWN MISSION

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**

Aug. 9, 1–2 p.m. • Webinar **Exploring Childcare** Opportunities for Small Towns Congregations. Rev. Dr. Phil Kuehnert

Aug. 11, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. **Engaging Rural** Communities Event Zion Lutheran Church, Hemlock, Mich.

Aug. 25, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. **Engaging Rural** Communities Event Grace Lutheran Church, Fairbury, Neb.

Aug. 30, 1–2 p.m. • Webinar Pastors Leading Churches with Schools

If you have an idea or story for Rural Outreach, contact Amy at the RSTM office: 888-463-5127 amy.gerdts@lcms.org

National Conference Update

Registration for the LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission National Conference is open on our website! The **RSTM National Conference** will address the blessings and challenges facing rural and small town congregations today as well as encourage those congregations and their leaders in cultivating healthy churches that are eager to bear witness to Christ, show mercy to the suffering in their communities and encourage a robust life together with their fellow members.

"The National Rural and Small Town Mission Conference will be a great opportunity for pastors and lay leaders to gather together for mutual encouragement and support as we look for ways of being active in our communities throughout our corporate witness and

acts of mercy," said LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison. "I am excited to be a part of the conference and I hope that people from across the heartland of the

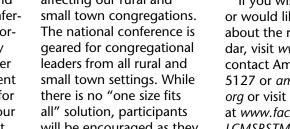
Synod will be blessed by attending."

Choose from break-out topics including youth/family ministry, funding and stewardship, rural resources and many other topics affecting our rural and small town congregations. The national conference is geared for congregational leaders from all rural and small town settings. While there is no "one size fits all" solution, participants will be encouraged as they see new opportunities for



If you wish to participate or would like to know more about the rest of our calendar, visit www.lcms.org/rstm, contact Amy at 888-463-5127 or amy.gerdts@lcms. org or visit us on facebook at www.facebook.com/ LCMSRSTM.

be invaluable too!



Engaging Rural Communities

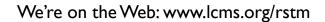
An active church that engages its community is able to witness through acts of mercy. The Engaging Rural Communities events are geared for parishes in rural and small town settings that help congregational leaders examine their communities and consider ways in which they can serve the unique needs of their particular

communities.

Events are intended to help congregations identify assets they have in place and make plans for utilizing those resources to engage their respective communities. Events emphasize the importance of building and strengthening partnerships as congregations explore ways to work together for

the needs of their commu-

Upcoming events in 2012 are scheduled in Michigan, Nebraska, Illinois, Oklahoma and Minnesota. We are beginning to schedule events for early 2013. For more information contact Amy at 888-463-5127 or amy. gerdts@lcms.org





RURAL AND SMALL TOWN MISSION E-NEWSLETTER • AUGUST 2012

Ageless

"Edna" was excited to participate in the autobiography workshop being offered by an area church at her assisted living complex. In the first meeting she read stories of traveling the world with her late husband, Jack. She'd had an exciting life and she enjoyed sharing with new friends. She listened as others read their stories: some happy, some sad. Too many ended with a person alone, living away from loved ones, unsure of what the last part of life might bring. One story struck Edna deeply.



A woman, "Frances," wrote of loss after loss — a farming accident that took her son, a miscarriage, the premature death of her husband, a bankruptcy, a fire, outliving her

daughter and two grandchildren and now a fight with chronic illness. Edna couldn't imagine having survived so much. Yet, it was Frances' last sentence that Edna couldn't forget. Frances closed the story with "So, you see, God is faithful and Jesus was with me always." Edna had known a lot of professed Christians, but in her 84 years of life, she'd never known Christ. Something in that story kept her awake that night and the next night and the next. After the fourth meeting, Frances happened to lag behind her peers. Edna stopped her and she asked the question that had been with her since that first week, "Who is this Jesus? And can you tell me about Him?"

Edna's story is based on an actual story and real people.

When Christians today talk about the mission field, many think of outreach in poor communities, Africa or Asia. When we discuss church growth, the focus is often on youth and family ministry. Even in the so called "graying churches" of rural America, evangelism isn't closely associated with older adult ministry. And yet, it should be. Although the Gallup organization reports that those over 65 are still among the most likely to attend religious services, there are an estimated 38 million unchurched and aging baby boomers in the United States. Among those over 75, numbers are smaller, and yet as end of life questions loom, increasing numbers of older adults do not know the Good News of Jesus Christ. As your congregation sets its mission goals for the next year, consider ways in which you are reaching out to this population. Consider small opportunities for older adult outreach whether it's holding the men's prayer breakfast at the area assisted living facility, encouraging newly retired members to do home safety checks and repairs for homebound community members, or taking a fall Sunday in which to do yard work for less able church neighbors. And when appropriate, answer the question: Who is this Jesus? The Holy Spirit's work is ageless.

- Renea Gernant, Ph.D., is the Dean of On-Line Education and Community Outreach for Cloud County Community College in Concordia, Kan., teaches online for the Communication Arts faculty of Bellevue University in Bellevue, Neb. and is a member of the Nebraska State Board of Nursing Home Administration. A Lutheran educator for 24 years, Dr. Gernant created the Gerontology and Aging Studies Program of Concordia University, Seward, Neb.

Wisdom for the Ages

"Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time." (Col. 4:5)

God has a perfect plan for each of us here on earth and, as St. Paul says, we are to run the race set out for us to the fullest.

Consider these ideas for older adults outreach and ministry:

- Foster grandparent programs.
- Host a Valentine's Day party especially geared for widows and widowers.
- Volunteer at a local nursing home or assisted living center.
- Hold a fish fry or card party.
- Giving of talents. Retirees with time and skills are in a great position to share their God-given talent with others. Consider teaching a class or volunteering at the community center.
- Have an intergenerational day where the older adults spend time showing the younger generation all types of fun they had

growing up... fishing, games and other fun skills.



LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission supports and encourages rural and small town congregations in engaging their communities and growing together in Christ through Word and Sacrament.

If you have a good idea for outreach or a story you'd like to share with us so that we can share it with others, please contact us at amy.gerdts@lcms.org.

Learn more about us at www.lcms.org/rstm or by calling Amy at 888-463-5127.