



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



REACHING RURAL AMERICA for CHRIST

Let us go to the small towns ...
Mark 1:38

RURAL AND SMALL TOWN MISSION ■ WWW.LCMS.ORG/RSTM

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!

Jan. 17

Reasons for the Faith: Apologetics 101 Webinar with Dr. Adam Francisco, Concordia University, Irvine, Calif., 1-2 p.m. CST

Jan. 19

Engaging Rural Communities Event: 8 a.m. –3 p.m. at St. Paul Lutheran High School in Biltz Hall, Concordia, Mo., presented with the Missouri District

Jan. 26

Engaging Rural Communities Event: 8 a.m. –3 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church, Sweetwater, Texas, presented with the Texas District

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

Engaging Rural Communities Events in 2013

We're excited to tell you about the great response to our Engaging Rural Communities (ERC) events over the past year. In 2012, almost 200 congregations and 17 districts were involved. We hope you'll look at the list of upcoming ERC events to see if there is a regional event near you in 2013! (Some locations will be announced soon.) These events are geared for single and multi-point parishes in rural and small-town settings. Ideally, a pastor and three or four lay leaders will attend and examine their communities to consider ways in which they can serve the unique needs of their particular communities. Events are intended to help congregations to identify assets they have in place and to make plans for utilizing their resources to engage their respective communities. One of the important event themes is building and strengthening

partnerships as multi-point parishes or individual congregations explore ways to work together to meet community needs. We are in the process of scheduling events for 2013. Contact your district if you are interested in having an ERC event in your area. If you would like to learn more about Engaging Rural Communities events or how to register, please contact Amy at 1-888-463-5127.



Upcoming Events: 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

- **Saturday, January 19th**, at Saint Paul Lutheran High School in Biltz Hall, Concordia, MO presented with MO District.
- **Saturday, January 26th**, at Faith Lutheran Church, Sweetwater, TX presented with TX District.
- **Saturday, February 9th**, at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Le Heigh, FL presented with FLGA District.

Look for more details to come soon for 2013 Events being planned for the following districts:
**Kansas
Minnesota South
Indiana
Michigan**

Capacity Crowd at National RSTM Conference

More than 150 pastors and lay leaders gathered Nov. 1-3 at King's Pointe Resort for the National Rural and Small Town Mission Conference. It was a great sign that the first conference sponsored by the Synod reached its capacity. There was great enthusiasm among the attendees as they considered the challenges and opportunities facing rural and small-town congregations today. Attendees came from as far away as Maryland, California and Florida. The conference featured three days of inspirational plenary speakers, practical sectionals, time together in worship and study of the Scriptures, and time for attendees to encourage and support each other.

Many of those who attended the conference communicated how pleased they were that rural and small-town congregations were "on the Synod's radar screen." They were very enthused that the president of the Synod attended the conference. There was great appreciation for the opportunity to discuss the challenges of rural ministry.

Dr. Luther Snow helped participants to be able to better identify gifts that God gives to congregations and discussed how they can

see being small and rural as a positive thing. Dr. Snow's asset mapping process was a helpful tool that many participants were looking forward to utilizing in their home congregations. The Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan helped participants to see some of the blessings and benefits of being a small congregation, noting that Christ is still there with His gifts for His people. LCMS President Matthew Harrison entertained attendees during the Friday evening banquet with stories of his service as a pastor of a small-town congregation after graduating from the seminary. On Saturday, President Harrison emphasized the importance of visitation and being active and visible in our communities.

The sectionals were well received as participants explored such topics as ethnic outreach, social networking, community demographics, and ministry to youth and families. One of the highlights of the conference was the panel discussion with pastors and members of Storm Lake congregations, as they discussed their work in showing mercy and bearing witness to Christ among the Hispanic, Asian and African immigrant populations. The pastors and lay leaders were hon-

est about the challenges, yet they remain committed and persistent in the work. The demographics presentation was eye-opening for many of the participants, as it helped them to better understand the changes taking place in their respective communities.

There is excitement as plans are being made for the 2013 National Rural and Small Town Mission Conference. Details will be announced in the coming weeks, but Kansas City, Mo., has been chosen as the location of the conference. The theme for 2013 will be "Planting."

Thanks to everyone who attended the Storm Lake conference, and Rural and Small Town Mission looks forward to seeing you in Kansas City next year.

To keep up-to-date with developments for the 2013 conference, go to www.lcms.org/rstm or contact Amy at the RSTM office by emailing amy.gerdt@lcms.org or by calling 888-463-5127.

RSTM supports and encourages rural and small town congregations in engaging their communities and growing together in Christ through Word and Sacrament.

RSTM National Conference



The Rev. Mark Larson, Lutheran Hour Ministries, leads a breakout session on Mission U.



Participants get hands-on experience during Luther Snow's Asset Mapping exercise.



Luther Snow leads participants to discover assets they might have overlooked or underappreciated.



Iowa District West President Paul Sieveking leads opening worship.



The Rev. Jonathan Watt and the Rev. Ray Smith enjoy breakfast.



Deaconess Dorothy Krans teamed up with other leaders from the LCMS Office of National Mission.



Participants came from coast to coast, including the Shockleys from California.



The conference was completely FULL! We filled every seat in the house. Next year, we are looking at a bigger venue in Kansas City, Mo.

RSTM National Conference



The Rev. Gene Ernst, conference presenter, enjoys some conversation time.



April Miller and Annette Reimer of Elkader, Iowa



Eldon Garlish and the Rev. Mark Gerken, Iowa District West



Florida-Georgia District Executive Doug Kallesen chimes in.



Lutheran Church Extension Fund was well represented.



Time on Saturday morning was spent in a Q&A panel.



Dr. Ralph Geisler, LCMS Mission Advancement



President Harrison seems to have had a great time!



Bruce Manzey and Mike Zimmer, Minnesota South District



Participants enjoy some wonderful fellowship time in a beautiful place.

