



REACHING RURAL AMERICA FOR CHRIST

RURAL & SMALL TOWN MISSION

OUR "LIFE TOGETHER"

- To follow the core beliefs of the LCMS
- To bring the hope of Christ
- To equip rural Professional and Lay Leaders
- To be a Mission outpost to the community.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THESE IMPORTANT DATES:

11/5 *Rural Regional Mission Partnership Retreat*—Cole Camp Regional Partnership; Trinity, Cole Camp, MO

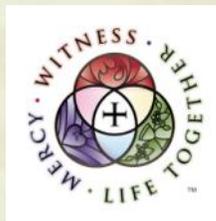
11/12 *Rural Regional Mission Partnership Retreat*—Immanuel, Clarinda & Trinity, Shenandoah Partnership Ministry; Clarinda, IA

11/16-18 *North American Mission Executives Conference* - Raleigh, NC.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Talk of change among Lutherans often garners a few laughs. But, we live in a changing world and while not all change is beneficial, there are changes which present God's people with new opportunities for communicating the Good News in Christ. Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM) is also undergoing changes that are intended to better equip pastors and lay leaders in rural settings for the unique work the Lord has given them. RSTM has now become a part of the Office of National Mission (Life Together) in the synod restructuring, with plans in place to expand RSTM's work for 2012. We are working on three main goals to help support rural congregations across the Synod.

1) **National Rural Conference** – Plans are underway to offer a national conference on ministry in rural and small town settings in the fall of 2012. The 2007-2009 conferences gathered attendees from seventeen districts from across Synod. We will announce details about next year's conference in early 2012.



2) **Engaging Rural Communities Retreats** – This event will be geared for sole parishes in rural settings to help congregational leaders examine their region and

consider ways in which they can serve the unique needs of their communities. 3) **Electronic Resources** – RSTM wants to be able to provide more resources for pastors and lay leaders. Besides redesigning the website, we hope to offer Bible studies, articles on rural ministry issues and webinars via our website. We strive to provide resources that are sensitive to rural contexts and faithful to our confessional witness. We hope that you will continue to support the work of RSTM as we look for effective ways to support congregations in rural ministry throughout the Synod. We invite your prayers and hope that you will contact us if there is any way that we can assist your congregation.

SUPPORT RSTM

Rural & Small Town Mission is building on the momentum of the eight Rural Regional Mission Partnership Retreats held in 2011 by offering more resources, support and training in 2012. However, we need your help to be able continue the great work that has begun. Attached to this

newsletter, you will find an envelope for your gift in supporting the work of RSTM. We are thankful to continue working in partnership with Mission Central and Gary Thies, so you may also still send gifts there. Please pray that the Lord of Harvest would send out workers into

His harvest fields. We are here to support the three thousand rural and small town congregations across the Synod. We hope that you will support us with your prayers and financial gifts. We thank God for your partnership in the Gospel.

GROWING IN PARTNERSHIP

...proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. Acts 28:30-31 ESV

When Rev. Larry Boye came to Clarinda and Shenandoah, IA in 2005 the congregations of Immanuel, Clarinda, and Trinity, Shenandoah were just establishing their dual parish. The partnership of these two congregations was brand new but after six years, he and his members are gratified to see how that partnership has grown. The members of the congregations still value the identities of their individual churches, but are growing together in community also. As Pastor Boye says, "Both congregations want to grow, so they offer each other mutual support, with no competition." Members of Immanuel

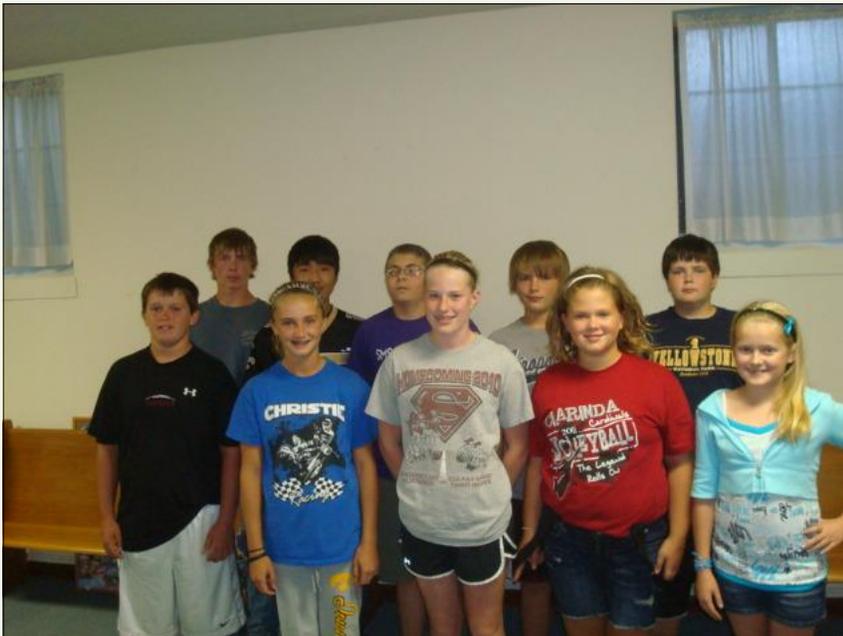
are quick to mention how much they value the support of their fellow members in time of need and the strong feeling of family in their church, but what they are especially excited to see in recent years is the increasing Sunday School attendance. Immanuel has focused many of their efforts on the lower grades because those young members will fuel attendance in later years. They want to build from the ground up! Both congregations have established a church website. Trinity, Shenandoah, has been pleased by the success of intergenerational ministry events such as their Bible studies which have a good cross-section of viewpoints to be voiced and addressed, along with sound instruction in the faith by Pastor Boye. Children are also getting involved in the congregation's efforts including one 4th grader



Immanuel, Clarinda, IA

who decided to organize congregation wide voting on particular mission projects to support. The adults in the congregation are thrilled to have such active participation! Bell choir is another opportunity where the young children join in with adults and elderly. Young people are willing to sing solos in church. Speaking with the members of the partnership, you get a strong sense of a willingness and commitment to serve in various capacities. There are no complaints of overwork, but a spirit of unity as they work together as one Body. They understand that the dynamic of being a part of the Body of Christ is a thing to cherish in contrast to memberships in other groups a person might be part of. You also quickly pick up that this group truly values their pastor and the partnership he has helped to foster between them. Carma McLaren, member of Trinity, put it this way, "United around Christ and the Great Commission, we support and encourage each other."

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5 TNIV



Partnership Confirmation Class is a great time for the youth of both congregations to get to know one another better

GROWING IN PARTNERSHIP CONT.

It is very important to reach out to the community, so Trinity and Immanuel have looked for new ways to do just that. Sometimes they have worked through specific partnership efforts such as radio spots. The advertisements, dubbed, "Something to Think About," were aimed at outreach, or special joint choirs and worship services. Other times, one congregation or the other would be



Trinity, Shenandoah, IA

the spearhead of a unique project. But what always helped it succeed was the other congregation pitching in. Some events they have been excited to take part in include support for those in need, such as the Mapleton tornado victims, and hosting the Iowa District West LLL Convention at Immanuel with the help of Trinity. The Acts of Love Ministry by Trinity and the Ministry to Those in Need program by Immanuel have been in effect for more than three years now and are servant programs where the congregations strive to help with unmet needs. Along with prayer support, they also sent care packages to deployed military from the community, particularly those deployed in Afghanistan. They have also worked with cancer, flood, and accident victims. Though the Partnership

is not directly connected to Clarinda Lutheran School, they are highly supportive of Christian education and actively support this vital ministry. Believing there was a need to become more visible in the community, Trinity opened their doors and sponsored Fish Boils to help support Orphan Grain Train. The Fish Boils were promoted through "word of mouth" and radio spots, but members didn't stop there! They made sure to focus on personal interaction with visitors by having greeters and guides available to help folks figure out where to go once they were at the dinner. The Partnership has made it a priority to get training for their leadership with the help of Rural & Small Town Mission. After several personal visits with RSTM, Immanuel/Trinity Partnership Ministry will be hosting a Rural Regional Mission Partnership Retreat on

Nov. 12, 2011. The LCMS National Rural & Small Town Mission in Concordia, MO serves as the national resource center sharing strategies and resources for engaging communities for congregations in rural settings. Congregations and lay leaders are strengthened for witness and service in their regions, congregation and through their daily calling through equipping events sponsored by Rural & Small Town Mission. Each experience equips leaders of all ages and backgrounds by providing them with tools to equip them for life as a baptized child of God. The members of the Partnership remind us, "God does big things with small people and services!"

"If we have faith the size of a mustard seed you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move!"
Matthew 17:20



The Board of Elders of the Immanuel/Trinity Partnership work together to help their partnership succeed.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.SPIFE.ORG



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

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

Return Service Requested

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE—REV. DR. LEE HAGAN

The work of Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM) is to support and encourage congregations where mission and ministry take place. The goal is always to assist those who are "on the front lines" by providing resources and connecting with other congregations who are facing the same challenges. Since 1990, when he came to work to work for the LCMS Board for Evangelism Services, Ralph Geisler has been supporting and encouraging the work of others. At the end of September, Ralph completed his work with RSTM. I was privileged to be one of those pastors supported and encouraged by Ralph in my service at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Concordia, Missouri.

I am thankful for this relationship and look forward to his continued friendship as I serve as the interim director of RSTM until a full-time director is called in 2012. I will continue to serve at St. Paul's in Concordia, but like Ralph before me, will serve RSTM in a part-time capacity over the next few months. I have been blessed to be a part of the training and events for rural ministry based in Concordia throughout my nearly ten years here. I hope that we can continue to build on the foundation that has been laid and that many more congregations can be assisted in the work that the Lord has for them in caring for God's people and reaching out in their communities. While I am in the

office part-time, Amy Gerdts, RSTM administrative assistant, is always available to answer questions and provide you with information you need about the work of Rural & Small Town Mission. Thanks for your support of RSTM in the past and I invite your prayers upon the partnership of RSTM and congregations across rural America.



Dr. Ralph Geisler and Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan at Ralph's retirement service