



# REACHING RURAL AMERICA FOR CHRIST

## NEWSLETTER

### OUR MISSION:

- 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:

8/19 -Webinar 1:00pm  
*Challenge of Change in Rural Churches*

8/23-8/24- LCMS National Mission Advocacy Group Meeting  
Crowne Plaza, St. Louis, MO

9/7-*Funding the Mission*  
St. Paul, MN

9/22-9/23-LCMS Development Training  
International Center, St. Louis, MO

## MISSION OUTREACH INITIATIVE

During the past year the LCMS National Mission Board has connected with the Rural Mission Resource Center-SPIFE, Concordia, MO. For the past ten years Rural Mission Resource Center-SPIFE has & still is available to encourage & reinforce rural & small town congregations to serve as mission outposts in their communities & the world. A holistic approach to assist rural & small town congregations through the art of listening is & has been our effective process to engage congregations in touching their communities with the Gospel. Our vision is through the power of the Holy Spirit & study of God’s Word to see congregational leaders & members experience the joy of reaching out

with the Gospel in various ways that engage their changing communities for



Missionary Ralph Geisler

Christ. We wish to gain trust by effectively anchoring our conversation by following the core beliefs of the LCMS & bring the hope of Christ into each listening consultation & mentoring activity that equips professional church workers & lay leaders for outreach minis-

try in rural & small town congregations. The resulting trust allows our part-time & our volunteer staff to speak timeless Christian values in a timely way without imposing our values & preferences or models on leaders. We receive restricted gifts from individuals & congregations through the LCMS Nation Mission Board. We are able to network your ideas for mission to rural & small town communities. Your faithful prayers allow us to serve leaders & encourage the multiplication of churches across the U.S. **We are your missionaries wherever we go!**

Contact Dr. Ralph Geisler at [rgeisler@spife.org](mailto:rgeisler@spife.org)

## RURAL COMMUNITIES OUTREACH SUMMIT A SUCCESS!

All agreed the Summit was a success, delivering invaluable information. Devotions by Rev. Keith Christiansen reminded attendees that Christ always has enough “loaves” for all. Dr. Phil Johnson encouraged congregational leaders to look for opportunities & build climates for outreach. With reminders

to be a “2 Tim. 2:2 Christian,” Dr. Eugene Bunkowske led us through concepts of Transformational Rural Living. Carole White, LCEF, gave each congregation demographics to help them better understand their unique situation. Rev. Lee Hagan spoke on the power of pastors & lay leaders partnering together.

Even though rural congregations may still have a passion for God & love one another, their passion for the rural community is often replaced by survival instincts & cultural irrelevance. Our prayer is that these tools will equip congregations to reach out to their communities with Christ’s love.

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



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

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Concordia, MO  
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**RURAL MISSION  
RESOURCE CENTER -  
SPIFE**

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LCMS National Missions

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(under Tools) to automatically  
address this publication to multiple  
recipients.

**The mission of rural and small town ministry is to encourage  
and reinforce rural and small town congregations to serve  
as mission outposts in their communities and the world.**

## **REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP MINISTRY**

A major focus of the Rural Outreach Summit was the concept of Regional Partnership between rural parishes. Rev. Gene Ernst from Iowa shared his story as both a pastor of a triple parish & a farmer. Participants then had the opportunity to "plunge" into the community of Cole Camp, MO & hear from Rev. Todd & Angie Kollbaum, Rev. Mike Boothby, & lay leader David Kaiser about the successes of the partnership of three churches in the area: St. John's, Holy Cross, & Trinity. These four people & their churches work as a team. Such missions as C.A.R.E (Community Awareness Rewards Everyone), with food drives involving the school children, & G.E.M. (God's Electronic Ministry), with billboards urging passerby to tune in have been very successful in both reaching out to others &

reigniting the passions of the congregations. Regional Partnership strives to make the most of each church's strengths, connect to one another in Christian fellowship, & reach out to the community in love. Angie Kollbaum reminded us, "We can't get territorial! It's all for God's Kingdom!" The team has a vision for region family life ministry that would "build strong Christian families to serve God." Participants were able to ask questions, tour the historic churches, & enjoy a wonderful, home cooked meal before heading back to the Rural Mission Resource Center-SPIFE. That evening was spent enjoying a leisurely hayride, with Stan Oetting as our tour guide of the Concordia, MO area & an old fashioned hot dog roast at the farm of his son, Joel Oetting. A great example of deep rural roots, this

farm has been in the family for more than a hundred years. God willing, as Stan asked in the evening meal blessing, it will remain there for many more! If your congregation is interested in Regional Partnership contact the Rural Mission Resource Center-SPIFE at 888-463-5127 or [rgeisler@spife.org](mailto:rgeisler@spife.org)



**Enjoying part of the "Rural Plunge"  
....better known as a hay ride & hot dog roast on  
the Oetting family Missouri Century farm!**