



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:

1/19 -Webinar
Strategies for Small Church Sunday Schools, Tom Nummela

2/16 -Webinar
VBS & Summer Outreach in Rural /Small Town Settings

3/22-Webinar
Social Networking Strategies in Rural/Small Town Settings

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

EXPANDING ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Rural & Small Town Mission will begin offering Webinars in January to provide support and encouragement to pastors and congregational leaders.

What is a webinar? It is essentially a video or phone conference depending upon the participants' means of participating (whether by internet or phone). This allows internet participants to see video of the presenter, as well as the presenter's documents.

Why a webinar? It is a matter of good stewardship. Rather than presenters or participants traveling great distances at great expense, webinars allow training and the sharing of resources at minimal cost. It also allows participants to draw on the

ministry expertise of others. **Why an RSTM webinar?**

RSTM webinars are focused on the needs of rural and small town congregations across the Synod. They will help congregations to consider new ideas for congregational life and efforts to engage the community.

RSTM webinars are practical and relevant for ministry today.

Our first webinar will be Thursday, January 19 at 1 p.m.

To find a link for the webinar, go to our website www.spife.org. The topic will be "Strategies for Small Church Sunday Schools." Tom Nummela, Senior Editor of Sunday School Materials for Concordia Publishing House, will present.

Our upcoming webinars will

be February 16 on Summer Outreach and March 22 on Social Networking. We hope that these webinars will bless you in your work. If you have a webinar idea or questions about any of our resources, contact Amy Gerdtts at the RSTM office at 1-888-463-5127.

Speaking of webinars, RSTM Interim Director, Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, will be the featured presenter as part of Lutheran Hour Ministries' Mission U webinars on February 4 at 10 a.m. The topic will be *Rural and Small Town Community Outreach Strategies*. Go to Mission U's website, www.whatsmissionu.com for more information.

ENGAGING RURAL COMMUNITIES EVENTS

These events are geared for single and multi-point parishes in rural and small town settings that help congregational leaders to examine their communities and consider ways in which they can serve the unique needs of their particular communities. Events are intended to help congregations to iden-

tify 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 for the needs of their com-

munities. We have scheduled events in for early 2012. If you would like to know more about the Engaging Rural Communities Events, how to register for an event or would like information about hosting an event, please contact Amy at 1-888-463-5127.



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

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

MIDWEEK PROGRAMS FOR OUTREACH

Throughout the year, many congregations work hard to put on successful Midweek programs. While many churches run excellent Midweek programs, some congregations have found ways to utilize them in their outreach efforts. LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM) had the



chance to visit with a couple of rural churches in Kansas that have recognized the outreach possibilities. As a result, they have been doing exciting things with their Midweek programs. We want to pass these great ideas along to you. At Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Sylvan Grove, KS, Rev. Phil Augustine shared that they have an after school Midweek program on Wednesday afternoons from 3:45-5:30. Their theme this year is *Ambassadors for Christ Mid-Week*.



The congregation has partnered with the local school district to bus children to the church door after school each week. He's pleased their numbers have grown to 36 children from grades 1-6. That's pretty impressive

considering only 8 of those children are members of the church! After the children are served a snack, two teachers go through memory work and lessons. There is a worship time, and occasionally they do crafts which they give to residents at a local nursing home. A resource they have found useful is *My First Catechism* from Concordia Publishing House. Dr. Rodney L. Rathmann of CPH, says Midweek resources, such as *Jesus Company* and *Crosstown* provide a range of activities for teaching Bible stories and building community with a focus on Jesus, our Savior, and God's gifts to us and all people through Him.



Rev. Matt Schneider, Lincoln, KS is also very excited about the commitment his dual parish made to run a strong Midweek program. He finds that while the parishes are growing through both youth and adult confirmations, this doesn't always translate to growing numbers at worship. Pastor Schneider asks how he can use the Midweek program to build closer relationships and bring those who attend on Wednesday nights to church on Sunday mornings. The congregation began hosting occasional breakfasts on Sunday mornings before the worship service when the children from the Midweek program will sing. Afterward,

they provide a fun activity such as skating. Kansas District Executive, Mark Frith shared that many congregations find it helpful to incorporate a meal into their Midweek programs. Some are also using this mealtime as an opportunity to teach table manners. Providing transportation proved beneficial as well. A number of congregations have found it very helpful to focus on strengthening families. Their Midweek activities intentionally keep families together for activities. Consider these great ideas: having family groups sit together at Midweek meals. Instead of sending the adults, youth and children to separate activities, have a class on how to do family devotions with everyone together. Think outside the box about what you can do to keep your families together when they are at the church for Midweek. RSTM 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 ruralmission@spife.org. Learn more about us at www.spife.org or by calling Amy at our office at 888-463-5127.

