



# 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

#### Jan. 17 • Webinar

*Reasons for the Faith*, Dr. Adam Francisco, Concordia University, Irvine

#### Jan. 19

*Engaging Rural Communities Event* Blitz Hall, Saint Paul Lutheran High School, Concordia, Mo.

#### Jan. 26

*Engaging Rural Communities Event* Faith Lutheran Church, Sweetwater, Texas

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

## Engaging Rural Communities Events

AN ACTIVE CHURCH that engages its community is able to witness through acts of mercy.

The Engaging Rural Communities events (ERCs) are geared toward 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 to make plans for utilizing their resources to engage their respective communities.

One of the important event themes is building and strengthening partnerships as congregations explore ways to work together for the needs of their communities. There is no "one size fits all" solution, however congregational leaders are encouraged as they see new opportunities for community engagement.

Scheduling for 2013 is happening now. The first ERC of the year will be Jan. 19 in Biltz Hall at Saint Paul Lutheran High School in Concordia, Mo., presented in partnership with Missouri District. The following weekend, January 26, RSTM

will partner with the Texas District at Faith Lutheran Church in Sweetwater, Texas. On February 9, the Florida-Georgia District will partner with us to present at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Lehigh Acres, Fla.

To register for any of these events contact our office. For more information about the ERCs or if you would like to know more about the rest of our calendar, visit [www.lcms.org/rstm](http://www.lcms.org/rstm), [www.facebook.com/LCMSRSTM](http://www.facebook.com/LCMSRSTM) or contact Amy Gerds at 888-463-5127 or [amy.gerds@lcms.org](mailto:amy.gerds@lcms.org).

## RSTM Webinar Update

RURAL AND SMALL Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. We will be kicking off 2013 with the following events:

#### ■ *Reasons for the Faith:*

*Apologetics 101* presented by Dr. Adam Francisco, Associate Professor of History and Political Thought, Concordia University, Irvine, Calif., Thursday, Jan. 17, at 1-2 p.m. CST

#### ■ *Children's Midweek*

*Program Ideas* presented by Dr. Dave Ebling, assistant to the president of Congregational Services for the Indiana District, Thursday, Feb. 7, at 1-2 p.m. CST

#### ■ *Working Partnerships –*

*Dual/Multi-Parish* presented by Rev. Dean Hanson, Grace/Faith Partnership Ministries, Hazard/Pleasanton, Neb., Thursday, March 14, at 1-2 p.m. CST.

Don't forget that you can find all our past webinars in the archive on our website as a free resource for use when you need it.

If you wish to participate or would like to know more about the rest of our calendar, visit [www.lcms.org/rstm](http://www.lcms.org/rstm), [www.facebook.com/LCMSRSTM](http://www.facebook.com/LCMSRSTM), or contact Amy at 888-463-5127 or [amy.gerds@lcms.org](mailto:amy.gerds@lcms.org)



# Confirmation Challenges and Opportunities

Confirmation instruction today faces a whole new set of issues for congregations today. Biblical illiteracy on one hand, lack of parental support on the other and a host of other activities for the attention of our families have made confirmation an unpopular topic in many corners of the church. It can be even more complicated when the congregations are faced with small classes or great distances for members to travel. Many young pastors graduate from the seminary full of enthusiasm as they look forward to the opportunity to teach confirmation in the parish, but such zeal is often stymied by the harsh reality of confirmation today.

One of the starting points for a discussion on confirmation is recognizing that great freedom is afforded to congregations in this process. While there is no mandate for confirmation, there are obvious merits to a period of in-depth catechesis for young people that cannot be denied. (For a good overview of Confirmation see Dave Rueter's article: [www.youthsource.com/Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1912](http://www.youthsource.com/Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1912).)

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 so that we can share it with others, please contact email Amy Gerdts at [amy.gerds@lcms.org](mailto:amy.gerds@lcms.org).

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However, the best approach for this is open to much discussion and really should be couched in what is best for each particular situation the congregation, pastor and families face. Wednesday night or Saturday morning confirmation classes are common in many places. However, there are many congregations that have altered their schedules in response to schedules full with athletic and other extra-curricular events. Congregations should identify what the best solutions are for their unique circumstances.

Here are a few ways that rural and small town congregations are addressing confirmation today:

■ **Parental Involvement** – Some congregations have gone to an approach that involves parents more. Whether it is parental attendance on a weekly or quarterly basis or confirmation activities and lessons that can be done in the home with the parents, this approach assists both parents and confirmands. (For suggestions about Parental involvement see Jason Dart's article: [www.youthsource.com/Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1133](http://www.youthsource.com/Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1133).)

■ **Individualized approach** – This approach is built around students working through individual study packets at their own pace, especially when they are at different levels of ability. This allows for more individualized attention from the pastor and other adult catechists rather than relying on lecture. (For further reading on instruction methods see Hannah Miller's article: [www.youthsource.com/](http://www.youthsource.com/)



Heit's Point

[Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1926](http://www.youthsource.com/Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1926).)

- **Confirmation retreats** – There are a number of confirmation retreats that are offered by camps, districts, colleges and seminaries, in addition to individual congregations. These can be great opportunities for pastors to build relationships with students in a unique setting and still intentionally teach the faith.
- **Partnerships** – For congregations that have few students, cooperating with another congregation may be a good approach. It requires cohesion between congregations.
- **Other possibilities include** – greater use of technology, holding the class prior to or following a worship service, the inclusion of service hour, and fellowship activities. (For even more ideas, check out this article by Will Hanke: [www.youthsource.com/Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1754](http://www.youthsource.com/Index.asp?PageID=7082&Function=View&ArticleID=1754).)

The important thing is for congregations to explore the best ways to implement faithful and relevant catechesis for children today. This is a topic that pastors continue to need to discuss with fellow pastors as they consider the challenges of teaching the faith to young people.