

Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

Rural & 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

Feb. 10

Engaging the Wandering Event
Rapid City, S.D., with the LCMS South Dakota District
9:30 a.m.–3 p.m. Mountain time

Feb. 22 - Webinar

"Children's Midweek Ministry"
with Angela Kollbaum, youth director, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Concordia, Mo.
1–2 p.m. CST

March 10

Engaging Your Community Event
Great Bend, Kan., with the LCMS Kansas District
8 a.m.–3 p.m. CST

March 15 - Webinar

"Working Partnerships: Dual/Multi Parishes" with the Rev. Richard Boring, LCMS Nebraska District
1–2 p.m. CST

If you have an idea or story for Rural Outreach, contact Amy at the RSTM office.

Phone: 888-463-5127

Email: amy.gerdts@lcms.org

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Midweek Ministry

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." PROV. 22:6

So, you want to start a midweek program for children in order to "train up a child." Good for you! These endeavors can prove to be excellent ways to reach out to a group that is all too often difficult to reach and underserved with regard to faith training. However, there are a couple of things you should consider in your planning.

First, is this a viable demographic for your congregation? Churches all over consistently yearn to "reach out to the young people" of their community. This is all well and good, but if there isn't much of a "young people" population to reach out to, it may not be the best utilization of your precious and finite resources.

If you find that a children's midweek effort does make sense, I encourage you not to start a program. Instead, I would encourage you to think of it as a ministry. A quick internet search will show you the difference. Programs are a planned series of future events, whereas ministry places the focus on planning activities through which

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RSTM Events Update

Don't forget: RSTM provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is *Children's Midweek Ministry* with Angela Kollbaum, youth director at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Concordia, Mo, on Feb. 22, followed by *Working Partnerships: Dual and Multi Parishes* in March.

Find past webinars in our webinar archive on our website as a free resource for use when you need it. Watch for information on all our upcoming events! Remember you can register for

our Engaging Your Community events (EYC) at lcms.org/rstm/engaging-rural-communities and our newest events, Engaging the Wandering! Meant to partner with the EYC, these events will offer practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members. To see our calendar, visit lcms.org/rstm. Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.



“If we as the Church endeavor to have as our goal anything but sharing our faith and the love of Christ in and through our activities, we are losing sight of what we are truly about.”

Christians can express or spread their faith. If we as the Church endeavor to have as our goal anything but sharing our faith and the love of Christ in and through our activities, we are losing sight of what we are truly about. Once we have this as our focus, then it will be easier to determine why we are endeavoring to do this and what our desired outcome will be so we can determine whether it is accomplishing what we want or not.

Another major consideration before you embark upon much detailed planning is to determine what exactly it is that this group of young people might need or desire. Many ministry activities have been planned, funded and carried out with little success. This wasn't because they were ill-planned or poorly thought-out ministries but because they were simply not something the community or the people needed or desired. Ask around, survey the community and find out where the assets and strengths of your congregation overlap with a need. This way, the congregation will be best suited to carry out the ministry that will be best received by those they desire to serve.

Now that you have accomplished your demographic study, determined why and to whom you'll reach out and figured out what makes sense, another consideration might be what parties might be partnered with in order to carry out the ministry. It is OK to “go it alone,” but if there is an opportunity to partner with some other entity, that might just increase interest and compound resources. Perhaps there is a neighboring congregation, a school, the county health department or some other



Youth volunteers talk with their pastor, the Rev. Bob Liebmann of St. Mark's Lutheran Ministries, Eureka, Mo., during a break from filling sandbags in downtown Eureka. The group joined other volunteers to help keep rising flood waters out of local businesses.

entity that has a vested interest in the same population. Here, we could develop a win-win situation as well as extend the reach of the ministry.

There might also be an opportunity to partner with someone who is already doing this activity or that has expertise that would benefit the whole endeavor. A great source of expertise would be partnering with a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS. A quick search of the directory (lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/recognized-service-organizations/directory) shows that there are more than 50 agencies listed as having children and youth as a portion of their area of service. Remember too that this doesn't have to be a full-blown partnership, but these agencies are often ready and willing to share

direction, advice and resources. Another avenue for assistance in this arena may be found through other LCMS entities such as LCMS Youth Ministry (lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/youth-ministry), LCMS School Ministry (lcms.org/school-ministry), LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission (lcms.org/rstm) and many others.

Of course, it can't go without saying that all of this must be approached with much prayerful consideration and with an eye toward how it fits into the overall mission and ministry of the congregation and its strategic plan.

Contributed by Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission, and Angela Kollbaum, youth director, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Concordia, Mo.

LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission supports and encourages rural and small-town congregations in engaging their communities and growing together in Christ through Word and Sacrament.

Learn more about RSTM at lcms.org/rstm or by calling Amy at 888-463-5127. “Like” us on our Facebook page at facebook.com/lcmsrstm.

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