

Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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March 2018



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

March 10

Engaging Your Community Event
Great Bend, Kan.
with 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

Nov. 8–10

RSTM National Conference
Hilton Kansas City Airport,
Kansas City, Mo.

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

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“And we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and fervent love toward one another through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord” (Post Communion Collect, LSB).

STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

Cooperate, Not Compete

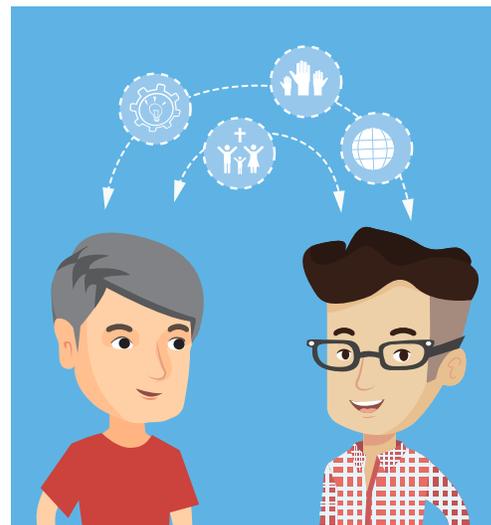
C.F.W. Walther states in his “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod” that **“It is a primary duty of a confessionally faithful synod that it take an enthusiastic part in all God-pleasing organizations dedicated to the spread of Christ’s kingdom in the world.”** While this paints a pretty broad-brush stroke, I wonder how often we think this way in our congregations.

Too often I hear a spirit of competition instead of cooperation between our congregations. At the very time when we are struggling with resources and manpower, we look to our neighboring LCMS congregations not as sources of mutual support and opportunity but as ones that might be doing something better than me (or not as well). We allow bygone feuds to war on when we should in Christian love forgive and be forgiven so that we might be able to best serve our respective communities with the Gospel message of Christ.

What might we do, then, to overcome our obstacles and work together? You’ll find in this month’s newsletter, as well as in our webinar, suggestions on how to work together in partnership. I would encourage you to take advantage of this advice and look for ways in which we might work with one another, formally or informally, so that the Kingdom might best be served. After all, as I have said multiple times throughout our synod, “What’s good for the Kingdom is good for me!”

Consider, then, that when we partner together to connect with the lonely, the dying, the downtrodden and the lost among us, we are exponentially stronger to live out the strong faith and fervent love that God has granted to us. This is our commitment as LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission — to facilitate partnerships and bring forth resources so that together we can “Reach Rural America for Christ.”

Pastor Todd Kollbaum



WORKING PARTNERSHIPS: Dual/Multi Parishes

Contributed by the Rev. Richard Boring
LCMS Executive for Mission and
Revitalization — LCMS Nebraska District

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:3–6).

Today in our rural churches, we hear more people talking about partnerships. The motivation that often drives that discussion is numbers: smaller church attendance, fewer financial resources to pay a pastor or church worker and fewer pastors and church workers to call. These are all valid reasons to talk about partnership ministries, but the conversation has to be centered on the partnership of the Gospel. The partnership of the Gospel needs to be the center that connects ministries to work together. It needs to be about strengthening the body of believers and being Christ’s salt and light to the disconnected and unchurched.

Partnership means:

- **Relationship** between two or more people or organizations that are involved in the same activity
- **Cooperation** between people or groups working together
- A group of people working together for some **purpose**
- A company owned by partners where people put money into the partnership and **share** financial risk and profits
- Partners are people who make up a partnership **collectively**

In the past, dual and multi parishes were usually arranged to share a pastor, and there was very little partnering together to do ministry and mission. The

definition of partnership gives us five words to think about when we develop working partnerships. They are *relationships, cooperation, purpose, share* and *collective group*. Partnerships only work when they are held together by strong, personal relationships.

Ministries that are looking at working partnerships need to develop relationships before they decide to be partners. Some

examples could be joint worship services, joint VBS — perhaps hosting it in a neighboring community where there is not an LCMS church — a joint mission trip or a joint youth group. The sky is the limit for different activities that can be done to build relationships with each other.

We are reminded in Eccl. 4:9–12 that “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ... And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him — a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”



“The partnership of the Gospel needs to be the center that connects ministries to work together. It needs to be about strengthening the body of believers and being Christ’s salt and light to the disconnected and unchurched.”



The 2018 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference will be held Nov. 8–10 in Kansas City, Mo., at the Hilton Kansas City Airport.

We hope you'll join us by registering now and reserving your spot!

Keynote speakers will include:

- the Rev. Timothy Koch, pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in Cresbard, S.D., and Immanuel Lutheran in Wecota, S.D.;
- the Rev. Dr. Robert H. Bennett of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.;
- Rev. Tom Schlund, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Algona, Iowa; and
- Chaplain Craig Muehler, director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces.

The conference will address blessings and challenges facing rural and small-town congregations today. Congregations will be encouraged in becoming healthy churches, eager to bear witness for Christ and able to show mercy to those in need in communities and develop a robust life together with fellow members.

This conference is meant for anyone living, serving or interested in rural or small-town areas, with topics and resources specifically suited for this unique mission field. Breakout topics include:

- ministry to inactive members,
- stewardship,
- family ministry and outreach,
- hope during grief,
- opportunities with Recognized Service Organizations and
- many other topics affecting our rural and small-town congregations.

New this year will be a special track for LERT Disaster Training and one for Youth Ministry; these options will have a limited number of seats and require attendance in all six sessions. There is something planned for everyone, from lay person to pastor and from student to teacher!

RSTM Shirts

We are again making the snazzy Reaching Rural America for Christ logo shirts available for purchase! Wouldn't you like to sport one of the stylish RSTM Reaching Rural America for Christ shirts? Order online when registering or by contacting our office by Oct. 15, and you can pick up your shirt at the RSTM National Conference. They are available in gray or white; men's and women's polos sizes S–XL are \$19 each, and sizes 2XL–6XL are \$21 each. (Other styles have different prices.)

Registration and Lodging

Adult registration for the conference is \$215 per person and includes all plenary and breakout sessions, materials, Thursday dinner, Friday lunch and dinner and more. Special rates are available for couples, meals only and groups. Contact our office with questions or group rates. Hotel reservations must be made separately from conference registration. The Hilton Kansas City Airport is offering a rate of \$106 for a single or \$114 for a double (plus applicable taxes) for our group, including breakfast buffet per day per occupancy level, complimentary self-parking and complimentary airport transportation on request. More information and online registration will soon be available at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

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.

Click the Give Now button to support the work of RSTM.

Give Now



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Upcoming RSTM Events

Don't forget: Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is *Working Partnerships: Dual and Multi Parishes* with the Rev. Richard Boring of the LCMS Nebraska District on March 15, followed by *Reasons for the Faith: Apologetics 101 — Islam Churches* in

April. 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!

Register for one our Engaging Your Community events (EYC) at lcms.org or our Engaging the Wandering events (ETW)! Meant to work together, each event offers practical resources and

communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members and communities with Christ's love. Online registration is available for both types of events, and current dates are scheduled in Strasburg, Ill. ETW will be presented in partnership with the LCMS Central Illinois District on March 3 and EYC in Great Bend, Kan., in partnership with the LCMS Kansas District on March 10, with more events on the horizon. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Save the date!

The 2018 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, "Have No Fear," will be held from Nov. 8–10 in Kansas City, Mo., at the Hilton Kansas City Airport. This conference is meant for anyone living in, serving, or interested in rural or small-town areas, with topics and resources specifically suited for the unique mission field where they have been placed. Watch for updates and more information at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

For more information about our events or to see the rest of our calendar, visit lcms.org/rstm or contact our office at 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.

