

# Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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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

Nov. 8–10  
National RSTM Conference  
Hilton Kansas City Airport,  
Kansas City, Mo.  
[lcms.org/rstm/conference](http://lcms.org/rstm/conference)

Nov. 15 - Webinar  
"Introducing New Hymns in Small  
Congregations" with Rev. William  
Weedon, director, LCMS Worship  
1–2 p.m. CST

Dec. 6 - Webinar  
"Summer Outreach Strategies for Rural  
and Small-Town Congregations"  
with Rev. Jacob Mueller, pastor, Holy  
Cross Lutheran Church, Emma, Mo.,  
and Holy Cross congregation members,  
Donna Oetting and J.T. Toensing  
1–2 p.m. CST

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, Divine Service, Setting One–Five, *Lutheran Service Book*).

## STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

# Make a Joyful Noise

"What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also" (1 Cor. 14:15).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:16–17).

In his preface to the *Wittenberg Hymnal*, Martin Luther wrote, "That it is good and God pleasing to sing hymns is, I think, known to every Christian; for everyone is aware not only of the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament who

*(continued on page 2)*



## RSTM Events Update

**Don't forget:** RSTM provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is *Introducing New Hymns in Small Congregations* with the Rev. William Weedon on Nov. 15, followed by *Summer Outreach Strategies for Rural and Small-Town Congregations* with the Rev. Jacob Mueller on Dec. 6. Find past webinars on our archive.

Watch for information on all our upcoming events! Register for one of our Engaging Your Community events (EYC) or our Engaging the Wandering (ETW)

events at [lcms.org/rstm](http://lcms.org/rstm). These partner events offer practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to wandering members and our communities with Christ's love. Online registration is available for both types of events. Contact your district office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Please pray for the RSTM National Conference! To see our calendar, visit [lcms.org/rstm](http://lcms.org/rstm). Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or [rstm@lcms.org](mailto:rstm@lcms.org).



# Introducing New Hymns in Small Churches

**One of the huge challenges** facing any smaller congregation (whether rural or urban or small town) is how to expand the base hymnody and liturgy of the group, enabling the worshipers to encounter, become familiar with and maybe even just learn to love and appreciate a growing repertoire of fresh and new (or at least new to them!) music.

We'll be exploring this topic in a webinar on Nov. 15 with the Rev. William Weedon, the Director of LCMS Worship Ministry and the chaplain at The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's International Center. Weedon plans to cover a variety of simple ways to help pastors and musicians move the bar.

Carl Schalk, arguably one of the greatest Lutheran musicians of our time, perceptively observed that people may not know what they like, but they all like what they know. One big key to introducing new music is to have it played early and often in the congregation's ears before ever asking them to sing it.

Say the desire was to introduce 941 to the congregation: Steven Starke's now famous paraphrase of the great *Te Deum Laudamus*. The organist or pianist could begin a month or two out, using that melody as her or his prelude one week, a postlude the next week, the piece during the offering or a musical offering during distribution on yet the following week. Putting the piece into the ears of the congregation well in advance and repeating the tune often is an effective (and

sneaky!) way to having the congregation "know" the music even without having been taught it. Your radio works like that! You hear a song for the first time, and then again, and again and again. Finally, it has become one of those privileged songs known as "that's an old favorite!"

Another effective technique is to have the piece partially sung by a solo or small ensemble. And if that ensemble is made up of kids, all the better! Once the kids know it, the nonsense about "no one could ever sing that!" is silenced for good. Weedon actually did this with the song just mentioned. A teacher in his parish school confidently told him that the kids couldn't learn to sing it. Ha! Just the challenge he needed. He sang it in the school several times a week and it became one of the hymns the kids themselves would ask for in the congregational hymn sings that preceded the midweek Advent or Lenten liturgies.

And there's another technique: use hymn sings! Weedon will explore those and a bunch more options in the webinar. Join us for a lively discussion of expanding the musical life of smaller congregations without risking life or limb.



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](http://lcms.org/rstm) or by calling Amy at 888-463-5127. "Like" us on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/lcmsrstm](https://facebook.com/lcmsrstm).

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## STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE, *continued*

praised God with song and sound, with poetry and psaltery, but also of the common and ancient custom of the Christian church to sing Psalms. St. Paul himself instituted this in 1 Corinthians 14 [15] and exhorted the Colossians [3:16] to sing spiritual songs and Psalms heartily unto the Lord so that God's Word and Christian teaching might be instilled and implanted in many ways.<sup>1</sup>

What a blessing it is for us to have such a marvelous gift as we do in our *Lutheran Service Book* that we might be able sing praises to our God in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in our hearts." While we may not be a nightingale, we can all make a "joyful noise to the Lord" and take full advantage of this wonderful gift of God to His church.

**Pastor Todd Kollbaum**

<sup>1</sup> Luther, Martin; Pelikan, Jaroslav Jan (Hrsg.); Oswald, Hilton C. (Hrsg.); Lehmann, Helmut T. (Hrsg.): *Luther's Works, Vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999, c1965 (Luther's Works 53), S. 53:315.