

Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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December 2018



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

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.

1–2 p.m. CST

Jan. 24, 2019 – Webinar

“Rural Ministry Resources” with Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, and Amy Gerdts, coordinator, LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission.

1–2 p.m. CST

Feb. 21, 2019 – Webinar

“Reaching Young Women: LWML” with Kaye Wolff, vice-president of Special Focus Ministries, LWML

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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HAVE NO FEAR



MORE THAN 170 PASTORS AND LAY LEADERS

gathered Nov. 8–10 at the Hilton Kansas City Airport in Kansas City, Mo., for the 2018 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference. The Rev. Dr. Keith Schweitzer, a dual-parish pastor in Iowa who also serves as a bi-vocational pastor via substitute teaching, attended with his wife, Susan. This was the fifth time he has attended the RSTM Conference.

Schweitzer said, “This conference is a joy, primarily for the reason that there previously wasn’t anything in the Synod like this for rural and small-town [areas]. You can come here and receive a program full of resources that are specifically suited for our context and spend time with others in similar situations and share experiences. Plus, it’s a little bit of a vacation!”

Congregational leaders from coast to coast and everywhere in between were in attendance. Over the course of three days, the attendees were impacted by inspirational plenary speakers, practical sectionals, time together in worship and study of the Scriptures and time for attendees to encourage and support each other.

In keeping with the theme of “Have No Fear,” those in attendance considered things such as Christ’s presence in rural and small-town areas, the pastor and congregation’s role together and within the community and carrying our ministry with patient perseverance in an impatient world. The Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray led the daily Bible study for the conference, speaking about the eternal gifts of Word and Sacrament for serving in any setting into which God places us. The Rev. Timothy Koch meditated on the blessings of ministry in rural and small-town ministry in the opening plenary. The Rev. Dr. Robert Bennett discussed spiritual warfare and how we must always be on our guard, as we are warned in 1 Peter 5:8. The Rev. Tom Schlund and congregation members talked about the many possibilities that are opened up when congregations partner together for the sake of the Gospel. Finally, Chaplain Craig Muehler encouraged congregations to reach out and engage their military members and their families with encouragement and the Gospel in action.

On the heels of this wonderful conference, plans are now in the works for the 2019 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, to be held in Minneapolis, Minn., near the Mall of America. Its theme will be “Running with Endurance: Eyes Fixed on Jesus,” based on Hebrews 12:1b–2a. Make plans to join us and bring your family!

Pastor Todd Kollbaum



Participants attend the opening worship service on Thursday, Nov. 8.



RSTM 2018 NATIONAL CONFERENCE



▲ Tori Ritzma and Malaina Pitsch, peer leaders, helped lead the Youth Ministry track. Watch for this track to return next year and join with your youth!



▲ The Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director of RSTM, presents on "Ministry to Inactives."



▲ Exhibitor Bingo was lots of fun and offered participants opportunities to win fabulous prizes, including a \$5,000 gift certificate toward a brand-new Allen Organ from Sandrock Music Company.



▲ The Rev. Dr. Robert Bennett provides encouragement during his presentation, "Spiritual Warfare."



▲ Dr. Kurth Brashear shares during the banquet Friday evening.



▲ The conference was well attended, and the food was excellent.



▲ Jessy the comfort dog visited with participants, too.



▲ Social hour and fellowship was a highlight!



▲ Tessa Brasher presents "Generation to Generation."



▲ Disaster relief was a highlight of the conference and included a tour of a LERT trailer.



▲ The Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray, director of LCMS Black Ministry, shares thoughts during the Bible study on Matthew 19:26.



▲ Ralph Simon, vice president for Investment Services with the LCMS Foundation, really gets into his presentation on "Endowments."



▲ Breakout sessions offered many different opportunities for learning in smaller group settings.



▲ The Idea Exchange time provided the opportunity to share ideas, discuss what works and ask for help with problems.

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.





RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Upcoming RSTM Events

2018 was another great year! As the year wraps up, we hope you'll look at the calendar of upcoming RSTM events to see if there is an event near you in 2019 or a resource you can use.

We'd like to invite everyone to join us online each month for the RSTM webinars. Up next is "Summer Outreach Strategies for Rural and Small-Town Congregations" with the Rev. Jacob

Mueller, pastor of Holy Cross in Emma, Mo., and Holy Cross congregation members J.T. Toensing and Donna Oetting on Dec. 6.

The December webinar will be followed by "Rural Ministry Resources" with the Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, and Amy Gerdts, coordinator, LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission on Jan. 24, 2019.

Watch for information on all our upcoming events! Our Engaging Your Community (EYC) or Engaging the Wandering (ETW) events offer practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members and communities with Christ's love.

The EYCs and ETWs are geared for single- and multi-point parishes in rural and small-town settings. Ideally, a pastor and three or four lay leaders will attend these events and examine their communities to consider ways in which they can serve their communities' unique needs. Online registration is available for both types of events.

We are in the process of scheduling more events for 2019. Contact your district if you are interested in having an EYC or ETW come to your area. If you would like to know more about either of these events or how to register for an event, please contact Amy at 888-463-5127. Look for more details to come soon for 2019 EYC and ETW events.

Find more information by visiting us online! You can see the rest of our calendar, sign up for webinars and register for EYC and ETW events at lcms.org/rstm.

