

REACHING RURAL AMERICA FOR CHRIST



“... 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, *Lutheran Service Book*



Our “Life Together”

- To follow the core beliefs of the LCMS
- To equip rural professional and lay leaders
- To support congregations in community engagement



Please Pray for These Important Dates

May 11 – Engaging Your Community (EYC) event

Waldport, Ore., with the LCMS Northwest District
8 a.m.–3 p.m. Pacific time

May 23 – Webinar

“Outreach Through Lutheran Braille Workers” with Daniel Jenkins, vice-president of Ministry Advancement for Lutheran Braille Workers
1–2 p.m. CST

Nov. 14–16

RSTM National Conference

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel
Bloomington-Minneapolis South
lcms.org/rstm/conference

STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

All Things to All People

Part of our strategic plan for LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission is understanding this very important point: While there is no “one size fits all” solution, congregational leaders are encouraged to see new opportunities for engaging their communities and to be filled with hope for the future.

This is essential for anyone who works in or with congregations that are planning their outreach ministry and work. Paul describes it this way in 1 Corinthians 9: “To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (verses 20–22).

It is important that when we are doing our planning we understand that we can’t always look to those around us and attempt to do things exactly like they are. Too often, congregations make plans based upon their envy of the popular programs and ministries of congregations around them. However, while much can be gleaned and learned from our neighbors, these things must be adjusted to the needs of our community and the strengths and resources of our specific congregation.

RSTM encourages congregations to take the time to self-evaluate and determine those strengths and resources while endeavoring to consider the needs of the community which they serve. All the while, it is incumbent on them to remain in the Word and in prayer in order to bring glory to God and serve His Kingdom.

Pastor Todd Kollbaum



Community outreach by Trinity Lutheran Church, Grangeville, Idaho.

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We want to hear from you! If you have ideas for future issues, comments, or feedback on articles you've read in *Reaching Rural America for Christ*, please contact Amy Gerdts at the RSTM office.

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How to Subscribe

To subscribe to *Reaching Rural America for Christ*, contact Amy Gerdts at the RSTM office by calling 888-463-5127 or sending an email to amy.gerdts@lcms.org.

Support This Work

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.

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

GIVE NOW

Thrivent members: Remember that RSTM is eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars!

Outreach through Lutheran Braille Workers

by Daniel Jenkins

Do you know anybody in your church or community who is elderly or sight-impaired? An aging population is an issue facing almost every church and town in the United States. Church leaders face increasing challenges regarding how to share the Gospel with individuals who may be visually impaired.

Helping Christians with Vision Impairment

Many churches offer hearing assistance technology on their websites or in the pews. Very few churches advertise support for people who struggle with their vision even though there are approximately 300 million people in the world who are moderately or severely visually impaired, 95 percent of whom are unchurched.

While there are many resources available within urban areas, rural communities can struggle to serve individuals who are losing their vision. This is especially true within rural areas with large numbers of senior living communities. It is in these small towns that Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW) can provide a significant amount of free assistance and outreach support.

What does LBW offer for free?

LBW offers free specialized large print, braille and audio materials for individuals



Recipient of a braille *Portals of Prayer*

who are blind or visually impaired, including the Bible, *Lutheran Service Book*, Small Catechism, devotionals and other Christian materials. Churches and other organizations are invited to order these materials for free! These materials can be a great benefit to members of a church who are getting older, losing their vision, home-bound or otherwise not able to enjoy the same connection with the Word that used to. Pastors can use these resources to make house calls or hospital visits. Members of rural communities can use these materials during inclement weather when getting to church may not be a possibility.

For a complete listing of LBW's free resources, visit lbwinc.org or call 800-925-6092. Please also visit LBW's Facebook page: [facebook.com/lutheranbrailleworkers](https://www.facebook.com/lutheranbrailleworkers).

RSTM Events Update

Don't forget that Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Outreach Through Lutheran Braille Workers** on May 23, followed by **Witness & Outreach Resources** on June 13. Find past webinars in our archive.

Watch for information on all our upcoming events! Register for one our **Engaging Your Community** or **Engaging the Wandering** events at 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. Join us in Waldport, Ore., on May 11 for an Engaging Your Community event. Online registration is available for both types of events. Contact your district or our office if you are interested in holding an event near you.

Save the date! The 2019 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, *Running With Endurance: Eyes Fixed On Jesus*, will be Nov. 14–16 in Minneapolis.

To see our calendar, visit lcms.org/rstm. Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.