

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

June 16 - Webinar

"Keeping the Ball Rolling with Strategic Planning" with Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, President, LCMS Missouri District
1 – 2 p.m. CST

July 28 - Webinar

"Following Through with Strategic Planning" with the Rev. Aaron Witt, Christ Lutheran, Columbus, Neb.
1 – 2 p.m. CST

Nov. 3–5

RSTM National Conference
Wichita Hyatt Regency,
Wichita, Kan.

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

Phone: 888-463-5127

Email: amy.gerdt@lcms.org

"... 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, Lutheran Service Book)

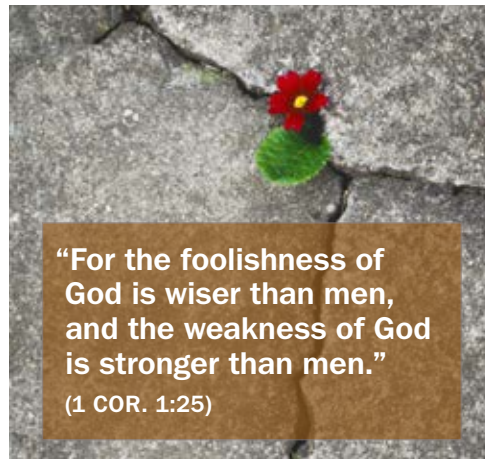
STRONG FAITH, FERVENT LOVE

The Servant Leader Paradox

In a recent class on leadership, I read this quote from Peter Northouse: "Servant leadership is a paradox — an approach to leadership that runs counter to common sense. Our everyday images of leadership do not coincide with leaders being servants." (*Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Sage Publications)

Interesting isn't it, the idea of servant leadership being a paradox? For us in the church, it is no paradox at all. Jesus said that He "came to serve, not to be served." In the church, leaders of all stripes are called to focus first and foremost on the needs of others. This is the very character of servant leadership. In fact, Jesus said He came "to give His life as a ransom for many." It is this sacrificial leadership that led Jesus to wash the feet of his disciples and that emboldens us today to seek ways in which we can do the same.

The church is made up of humans, however, and as such, we often seek the world's view of leadership, which is focused on power and position. We can use concepts and strategies of worldly leadership in some very ministerial ways. However, we must always remember in our planning that we are, above all, "The Church." We are established here on earth so that the Body of Christ might be cared for and equipped. This way, we might reach out to the world around us with that loving message of Christ's sacrifice. What a joy and high calling we have as those servant leaders who have the opportunity,



"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

(1 COR. 1:25)

equipped by the Word of God, to carry out the work of Christ here on earth. This is why it is so important to be reminded often in God's Word that "every good and perfect gift is from above" and that it is through these gifts that we "live and move and have our being." This is why I appreciate the following quote: "Servant leadership is merely the application of the dynamic of the gospel to the task of leadership. If Christian leaders cannot model servanthood, they have little right to ask others to serve. If the church cannot recover the practice of servanthood, it has no future and does not deserve one. What must be jettisoned, as Jesus so clearly taught, is the enhancement of the ego. One cannot be a disciple of Jesus or a leader of his people without giving up on the ego, being willing to die, and following the Christ who did." (Klyne Snodgrass)

May the Lord of the Church bless you in your ministries as you seek to follow Him and His will for you!

Pastor Todd Kollbaum,
Director, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission



Keep the Ball Rolling – **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

CONTRIBUTED BY REV. DR. LEE HAGAN, PRESIDENT, LCMS
MISSOURI DISTRICT

Beyond Strategic Planning to Strategic Implementing

Many congregations “do” strategic planning. They invite someone from the outside to facilitate a strategic planning process. Church office cabinets are filled with binders of old planning processes, and church computer desktops are littered with documents pertaining to the same. But does anything really change?

Where strategic planning processes break down is in the implementation. Kurt Senske writes, “A strategic plan is only as good as the process used to implement it.” Congregational leaders need to give as much attention to the process of implementation as they do to the process of planning. Sometimes the congregation exerts so much of its energy on considering what is possible that they have little energy left to make it possible. Aubrey Malphurs writes, “The temptation is to spend all your time on vision, mission, or strategy and none on implementation. At some point, you have got to move.” Here are a few suggestions

for congregations to keep the ball rolling on strategic planning.

Be Realistic

Ten year plans are no longer realistic. Two to three years are as far into the future as congregations should be looking. Our congregations and our communities are changing too fast. Also, the strategies should be realistic for your congregation and community. Unrealistic strategic planning can leave congregational leaders frustrated and give ammunition to critics.

Make an Action Plan

A congregational strategic plan should assign every action item to a responsible party with a timeline for implementation. The action plans should be revisited at every meeting of congregational leaders. Failure to hold one another accountable is truly a sin of omission. This is how congregations can work to ensure that their plans don’t just gather up dust on a shelf somewhere. Malphurs encourages

“Monthly Implementation Review” (MIR) meetings to make sure that people who are responsible have the resources that they need to meet timelines.

Pass the Baton

The people who have gifts for developing a vision in strategic planning do not necessarily have the gifts associated with implementing strategies. One thing that is sometimes neglected is communication between the two groups. This dialogue can help those involved with implementation to better understand what is behind particular strategies. It can also help to build ownership among those responsible for the implementation so that they do not perceive the plan as belonging to a group of people, but to the congregation.

Quo Vademus?

(Where do we go from here?)

There is great wisdom in using God’s gift of reason to regularly evaluate the activities of congregations so that we can be wise stewards of the resources entrusted to us. This means evaluating and adapting our strategic plans as needed. No plans are carved in stone. The plans are simply roadmaps (with occasional detours) for how we might strive to be faithful in bearing witness to Christ in our communities and serving our neighbors in love.

Mission at Home: Standing Where You Are Planted



RSTM 2016 National Conference

The 2016 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference will be held Nov. 3–5 in Wichita, Kan., at the Wichita Hyatt Regency.

We hope you'll join us by registering now and reserving your spot! Keynote speakers will include Rev. John Mehl, Director of Mission Partnerships and Church Relations, Concordia University—Seward; Dr. Mike Rodewald, Executive Director, Lutheran Bible Translators; Benjamin Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, University of Minnesota Extension; and Mrs. Adriane Heins, Managing Editor, *The Lutheran Witness*. Friday night's banquet guest speaker will be Dr. Micah Parker, TrustGuy Ministries.

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

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

witness and outreach strategies, mental and spiritual health issues, stewardship, educational opportunities, sanctity of life issues, opportunities for reaching young adults, ministry to those with special needs, and many other topics affecting our rural and small-town congregations. New this year will be a special track for strategic planning; this option 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, student to teacher!

We are happy to report that we are again making the snazzy Reaching Rural America for Christ polos available for purchase for anyone attending the 2016 RSTM National Conference! We've also added fleece and button-down oxfords. Wouldn't you like to sport one of the stylish RSTM Reaching Rural America for Christ shirts? You can order when you



register or contact our office by Oct. 15. You can pick up your shirt at the RSTM National Conference. Polos are available in gray or white, with men's and women's sizes S to XL for \$17 each and sizes 2XL to 5XL for \$18 each. Fleece are \$29-\$31, oxfords \$25-\$27.

Adult registration for the conference is \$200/person and includes all plenary and breakout sessions, materials, Thursday dinner, Friday lunch and dinner, and more. 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 Wichita Hyatt Regency is offering a rate of **\$95/single** or **\$105/double** plus applicable taxes for our group, including breakfast buffet per day per occupancy level; complimentary self-parking in attached hotel garage; complimentary basic wireless internet in guest rooms; and complimentary airport transportation on request. More information and online registration can be found 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, by email at rstm@lcms.org or by visiting the RSTM Facebook page at [facebook.com/lcmsrstm](https://www.facebook.com/lcmsrstm).

If you have a good idea for outreach or a story you'd like to share so that we can share it with others, please email Amy Gerds at amy.gerds@lcms.org.



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 the second in our three-part series on strategic planning, "Keep the Ball Rolling with Strategic Planning" with Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, President, LCMS Missouri District on June 16, 1-2 p.m. CST. Part three, "Following Through with Strategic Planning," will be led by Rev. Aaron Witt, Columbus, Neb., on July 28, 1-2 p.m. CST. You can find our past webinars in the webinar archive on our website as a free resource.

Remember that you can register for our Engaging Your Community (EYC) events at lcms.org/rstm/engaging-rural-communities. Be watching for updates to our 2016 schedule. These events provide excellent leadership training on community outreach and are ideally

geared for a pastor along with three or four of his lay leaders to examine their communities and consider ways in which they can serve those unique needs. Participants will be encouraged to identify congregational and personal



assets and make plans to engage their congregations and communities. Leaders will be encouraged to see new opportunities and hope for the future. Register online at lcms.org/rstm/engaging-rural-communities.

Also be on the lookout for more information on our newest events, Engaging the Wandering! Meant to partner with the EYC, these new events will offer practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members.

Watch for updates and more information regarding registration on the 2016 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, Nov. 3–5 in Wichita, Kansas at the Hyatt Regency 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