

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

May 12 - Webinar

"The Value of Strategic Planning" with Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, RSTM

1 – 2 p.m. CST

June 16 - Webinar

"Keeping the Ball Rolling with Strategic Planning" with Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, president, Missouri District

1 – 2 p.m. CST

Nov. 3-5

RSTM National Conference
Wichita Hyatt Regency,
Wichita, Kan.

lcms.org/rstm/conference

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

Phone: 888-463-5127

Email: amy.gerds@lcms.org

2016 National RSTM Conference

Join us by registering now for the 2016 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference to be held Nov. 3–5 in Wichita, KS at the Wichita Hyatt Regency. Keynote speakers will include Rev. John Mehl, director of Mission Partnerships and Church Relations, Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Nebraska; 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.

Session Topics

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, 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 interested in rural or small town culture 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 has a limited number of seats and requires attendance in all six sessions. There is something planned for everyone ... from lay person to pastor, student to teacher!

Registration

Registration is \$200/person and includes all sessions, materials, Thursday dinner, Friday lunch and dinner, and more. Hotel

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RSTM Events Update

Join us for the 2016 National RSTM Conference — registration is now open! Don't forget: RSTM provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is "The Value of Strategic Planning" on May 12. The second in this three part series will be "Keeping the Ball Rolling with Strategic Planning" on June 16. You can find our past webinars in the webinar archive on our website as a free resource for use when you

need it. Remember, you can register for our Engaging Your Community events (EYC) at lcms.org/rstm/engaging-rural-communities. Be watching for updates to our 2016 schedule which happen all the time.

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



The Value of Strategic Planning

CONTRIBUTED BY REV. TODD KOLLBAUM,
DIRECTOR, RURAL & SMALL TOWN MISSION

As a young person, I can remember conversations between my dad and grandpa about the farm. They would often center on planning. Not just for the day, although that certainly was important, but more regarding the big picture: what would be planted in which fields the next year, when we'd buy, when we'd sell, how many hogs or cattle we would have ... the conversations would flow. What I didn't know at the time, although they never called it this, was that these men were engaged in strategic planning.

As I travel around and visit with folks in rural and small town congregations, I am often met with skepticism when it comes to the idea of strategic planning. While it might be fine to plan ahead for home or work, why would we do that for the church? That's God's work, right?

Well, indeed it is, and we want nothing else than to conform to God's will. However, just as it was for those two farmers I grew up with, having a plan is a good thing. In fact, I would say that we are not being the best stewards we can be if we don't engage in at least a minimal amount of strategic planning. As Luther says in his Small Catechism explanation to the First Article of the Apostles' Creed, God gives us "our reason and all our senses." It is indeed then, good, right and salutary to use these good gifts in service to our various ministries.

We improve our stewardship of those resources God grants to us when we



“When we engage in strategic planning, we are able to focus our attention on what is truly important. We can allocate resources to those endeavors that are in line with what we perceive God has enabled us to accomplish.”

focus our attention on what it is that God has equipped and called us to do. We waste a lot of effort and precious resources when we leave our work to chance or take a haphazard, helter-skelter approach. Yet when we engage in strategic planning, we are able to focus our attention on what is truly important. We can allocate resources to those endeavors that are in line with what we perceive God has enabled us to accomplish. Strategic planning doesn't just allow us to best use resources but also equips us to most

efficiently utilize the time and talents of our members as they serve His church. When there is a plan and a method and people are educated on expectations and requirements, they are far more apt to agree to serve and will likely do a far better job.

Certainly strategic planning isn't to be held in priority over worship, prayer and study of God's Word, but when it is seen in the proper light of ministerially serving the Gospel, it is then of immense value to the Church.

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

RSTM Conference, continued

reservations must be made separately from conference registration. The Wichita Hyatt Regency is offering a rate of \$95/single or \$105/double. Rate includes breakfast buffet, complimentary self-parking in attached hotel garage, basic in-room internet and airport shuttle on request. Register online at lcms.org/rstm/conference.