



"Let's go ... to the small towns."

— MARK 1:38 GOD'S WORD® —



Resources and Services

- Ministry support for:
Sole rural and small-town parishes
Dual and multi-point parishes
Large rural and small-town parishes
- Leadership training through webinars
- "Engaging Your Community Events" and other outreach and congregational training events
- Monthly newsletter, *Reaching Rural America for Christ*

Strong Faith, Fervent Love: Providing Guidance and Support to Rural Churches

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's (LCMS) Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM) supports pastors, professional church workers and lay leaders in the work to which God has called them; specifically serving to equip them to meet the unique challenges of leading Christ-centered outreach in rural and small-town communities. Through the LCMS' RSTM ministry, rural congregations are upheld and nurtured because, while the work to which God has called congregations is the same across the country, the context in which that work is carried out varies from setting to setting.

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Strengthening Ministry in Rural America *by Megan K. Mertz*

A majority of seminary students come from the suburbs, yet many of them receive their first call from a rural or small-town church — placing these new pastors into a unique culture with many unexpected challenges and opportunities.

That's why, LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM) takes seminary students out into the country for a crash course in rural ministry. "Rural Immersion" events include insights from experienced pastors and lay leaders, trips to rural nursing homes and Lutheran schools, and even the chance to milk a cow.

One seminarian who attended said the event gave him a "practical example of going out as pastors to the people." Another attendee said, "This time will not only make better rural pastors but better pastors as a whole."

"Rural Immersion" events are just one of the many ways that RSTM seeks to help parishes and districts address the unique challenges facing rural and small-town congregations, which make up more than 50 percent of all LCMS churches. Although each congregation is different, many face similar problems such as shrinking populations, changing demographics and aging congregations.

Located in the small community of Concordia, Mo., RSTM provides guidance and support for rural church planting and revitalization efforts. The ministry also offers leadership training through events held around the country. In 2012 it began sharing ministry "best practices" through webinars that address specific topics, such as outreach to older adults or Latinos. These webinars provide helpful training while saving pastors and lay leaders the time and expense of traveling to an event.

RSTM's goal is to train church leaders to understand their role in rural culture, to make their outreach more productive and, most importantly, to lead dynamic change by being in God's Word. To reach this goal, RSTM emphasizes the importance of working in partnership with districts and other congregations.

The Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director of LCMS RSTM, states, "Rural and small-town congregations are positioned wonderfully by our Lord to be His hands and feet to an increasingly troubled world. I give thanks to God that through the Office of National Mission, the LCMS is focusing on strengthening and revitalizing this most important part of our church body. It is my humble joy to work alongside district and congregational leaders as we share the love of Christ where God has planted us."

Rural and small-town congregations make up more than 50 percent of all LCMS churches.

