

Thoughts from a Seminary Student on a Rural Immersion

During an unseasonably warm week in November, I and a group of four other students from the LCMS' Fort Wayne seminary, along with beloved professor, Dr. Timothy Quill, had the opportunity to visit Western Missouri for several days to get a taste of rural life. Having been raised in various cities around the country, we students had much to learn about parish ministry in small towns and rural areas.

The week before Thanksgiving, the Synod's Office of Rural & Small Town Mission kindly hosted our small group of city slickers on the campus of Saint Paul Lutheran High School in Concordia, Mo. There, we were treated to several days of presentations, field trips and new experiences. The field trips were some of the most enlightening and engaging parts of our stay. We were able to visit the typical stomping grounds of an average small town parish pastor. Schools, farms, funeral parlors and even homes of local LCMS members welcomed us. They eagerly taught us about their way of life, what they expect from their pastors and what future pastors can expect in the unique environment of rural America.

We were also able to hear from a motley group of speakers, ranging from Synodical officials, to farmers, to young students from Saint Paul High School. Each group of presenters had its own unique bit of advice for us student pastors. For people accustomed to city living, it was eye-opening to hear presenters mention how they are able to keep their doors unlocked at night. And, that ambulance helicopter insurance is actually quite common in rural areas. And, that a hot topic of conversation in many small towns often concerns the current price of corn and beans.

While each group of presenters had their own distinct bits of advice to share, we noticed several common warnings running through them all. One of which was, "Be careful what you say, because everybody knows everybody in a small town."

On behalf of Dr. Quill and my fellow students, I would like to extend thanks to Amy Gerdts and Pastor Todd Kollbaum for their warm hospitality, and for working overtime that particular week to ensure that our stay in Concordia was informative and intriguing.

Contributed by Craig Rinkus, seminary student, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.
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. 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 Gerdts at amy.gerdts@lcms.org. Learn more about us at www.lcms.org/rstm, by calling our office at 888-463-5127, by email at rstm@lcms.org or "like" us on our facebook page at www.facebook.com/lcmsrstm.