

# 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

### Feb. 4

Engaging Your Community event at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Crossville, Tenn., with the LCMS Mid-South District  
8 a.m.–3 p.m. CST

### Feb. 18

Engage the Wandering! event at Grace Lutheran Church, Fairbury, Neb., with the LCMS Nebraska District  
8 a.m.–3 p.m. CST

### Feb. 23 - Webinar

"Teaching the Faith: VBS" with Kayla Ronfeldt, Dennison, Iowa  
1–2 p.m. CST

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](mailto:amy.gerds@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, LSB)*

## Strong Faith, Fervent Love

# Teaching the Faith: VBS

**In this issue** of our newsletter, we continue our series of articles on teaching the faith. This month, we address the very important, but I dare say often taken for granted, subject of vacation Bible school (VBS). Why would I say this about VBS, one of the highlights of many children's summers? Well, simply put, all too often our VBS programs are simply that ... programs. We programmatically schedule our event, order in our program, amass our volunteers, decorate, teach, collapse and pray that someone else takes over before next summer.

Instead, what if we were intentional about our VBS? Whether our congregation is large or small, in town or out in the country, VBS is a great opportunity for us as the church to plant seeds, nurture relationships and introduce children who may not know anything of Him to Jesus our Savior. What if we took some time to



Barnyard Round up VBS kids, Schaller, Iowa

review the curriculum ourselves and with our teachers/leaders, instead of feeling like VBS is something that just has to be done. Instead of badgering our yes men, what if we took the time to choose folks who fit into roles for which they might have a gift or passion. Instead of a VBS program, look at this opportunity for our VBS ministry to connect the children in a concrete way to the vital truth of the

*continued on page 2*

## RSTM Events Update

**Don't forget:** RSTM provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is "Teaching the Faith: VBS" on Feb. 23 with Kayla Ronfeldt, Dennison, Iowa, followed by "Teaching the Faith: Confirmation" with Rev. Kenton J. Birtell, Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Holdrege, Neb. on March 9. Find 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](http://lcms.org/rstm/engaging-rural-communities).

Also ask us about our newest events, Engaging the Wandering! Meant to partner with the EYC, these events will offer practical resources and communication skills for reaching out to our wandering members.

To see our calendar, visit [lcms.org/rstm](http://lcms.org/rstm). Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or [rstm@lcms.org](mailto:rstm@lcms.org).



# Teaching the Faith:

# VBS

Contributed by Kayla Ronfeldt, Dennison, Iowa



Pastor David Lyons kisses a pig after reaching the offering goal to support a child in Haiti.

**W**hen I was first asked to take on the role of VBS Coordinator as a junior in college I didn't know what I was getting myself into. With the help from my Pastor and many volunteers in the church we have been able to make a successful VBS week each summer. Here are a few of the many things that have helped our small congregation reach out to a whole community.

When planning a VBS so much organization and preparation takes place months before the actual week. It is highly important to be selective on the week that is chosen for VBS. In our small community, before we set the date for VBS, we check with the local swimming pool for swimming lessons, baseball/softball schedules and surrounding county fairs. Once a week is set for VBS flyers, postcards and a Facebook page are created and set out to families that are members of the congregation and also families that are not members but have come in years past.

The next focus is finding volunteers. It is so important to seek volunteers and helpers months and weeks before VBS. Our church is so blessed to have many teachers that can work together to make it a success! The main goal is to find helpers that can lead the main stations: crafts, music, snacks, games and lessons.

Then find younger volunteers that can help lead groups from station to station. It is very important to consider the gifts that your volunteers have. We have a volunteer that loves to sing and has an amazing voice; therefore she helps each year with the music. Encourage your church members that they are never too old. We have a member that is 90 years old and helps every year!

Many people in the congregation who are not able to help during the week of VBS are willing to help provide in other ways. It is best to get a list of donated items that are needed for the week of VBS out ahead of time to church members. Snacks and craft supply donations big or small can be the biggest blessing for VBS.

Each year it is so important to keep detailed records of everything. Document who was able to volunteer to help teach, lead or donate. Keep records of the children that attended. It has also been helpful for us to document the good, the bad and the ugly on how the week ran. It is so helpful when planning to know what worked well the year before. I have found it is also helpful to review what didn't work so well to prevent the same outcome, and to fix it and make it better for the years to come.

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](http://lcms.org/rstm) or by calling Amy at 888-463-5127. "Like" us on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/lcmsrstm](https://facebook.com/lcmsrstm).

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

**Give Now**

## Strong Faith, Fervant Love, *continued*

Gospel. Instead of just singing the songs, playing the games and eating the snacks, develop and nurture relationships with the children so that as they grow, they look to you as an example in their faith life and walk.

Don't get me wrong, I expect you to sing, dance (learn all the movements and motions to all the songs), play, have fun, be silly, eat snacks and make crafts ... but above all, share the reason why we do all these things!