

Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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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

July 6 - Webinar

"Teaching the Faith: College/Young Adults" with Rev. Marcus Zill, director, LCMS Campus Ministry
1-2 p.m. CST

August 3 - Webinar

"Mission Insight" with Kurt Fuhr, vice-president, Lutheran Church Extension Fund
1-2 p.m. CST

Nov. 9 - 11

National RSTM Conference
Hilton Kansas City Airport
Kansas City, Mo.
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.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, LSB)

Strong Faith, Fervent Love

In my travels and work with congregations and districts throughout our Synod, I have the great privilege to bring support and resources to rural and small town congregations. I am always amazed at the fortitude of so many of these congregations. They have seen wars, internal struggle and external strife; they have lived through good times and bad. Through it all, multitudes have found respite in the comfort of Christ's Gospel proclaimed and delivered in these places.

Yet too often in today's climate, some have slipped into a feeling of hopelessness, a general sense that they have little to offer the Church and the world. When that happens, what is forgotten is that it isn't about any particular place or time. In fact, "It's Still All About Jesus!" Jesus is what got them this far in the first place, and He will be the hope that sustains them. In fact, He is the hope we are privileged to share with a hopeless world. Throughout the world, even in our own back yard, there will

Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. JOHN 4:35

always be persecution, bloodshed, hatred, malice and evil. Yet this is our clarion call to continue in the hope of the Lord to proclaim His lovingkindness to all people.

It is for this reason that I said in a blog post a couple of years ago, "From LWML to men's clubs, Sunday schools to VBS, youth groups to older adult ministries, these congregations are uniquely situated to provide hope and healing to areas often forgotten and often ignored. Hardships and roadblocks can make these ministries a challenge to remain viable, but there are many who are addressing this challenge head on. They are creatively maintaining their mission presence so that the lost might hear about Jesus."

Pastor Todd

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: College/Young Adults* with the Rev. Marcus Zill, director, LCMS Campus Ministry, on July 6 followed by *Mission Insight: Getting the Most Out of Your Demographics* with Kurt Fuhr, Lutheran Church Extension Fund on Aug. 3. Past webinars are in the webinar archive on our website as a free resource for use when you need it. Register

for our Engaging Your Community (EYC) and our new Engaging the Wandering events at lcms.org/rstm. You can also see our full calendar.

Don't forget to check out all the RSTM National Conference details at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

Now is a great time to register! Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org.



TEACHING THE FAITH:

COLLEGE STUDENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Contributed by the Rev. Marcus Zill, who serves as the director of LCMS Campus Ministry and LCMS U, and resides in Albuquerque, N.M.

I HAVE SPENT nearly my entire ministry working with the young people of the Church, especially those who are college age. It is both exhilarating and challenging. Here are a few thoughts about teaching the faith to this age group:

Raising the Bar

I have yet to meet any single college-age young adults who complained that something was too deep for them. While many teachers seek to “dumb” things down or present material in a subjective fashion, young adults are nearly always seeking precisely the opposite. I am convinced that college-age adults can handle whatever depth of catechesis you might offer them, and the deeper the catechesis, the more they will want.

Authenticity

The young people of the Church expect two things from whatever you might teach them. First, they want the truth and they want it straightforward and unvarnished. In a world that is a gray sea of confusion around them, they are looking for that which is black and white. Give it to them. Second, they also want to know if you believe it yourself and are passionate



Campus ministry in Warrensburg, Mo.

about that which you are teaching them. If it means something to you, it will mean something to them. The opposite is also true: if it's not important to you, it's not going to seem important to them.

Make It Worth Their Time

Young people, whether in college or not, have less time than ever before. Nothing will keep them from returning to a Bible class opportunity more than believing it is not worth the time they invest in it. They are certainly dedicated (they can binge entire TV show seasons on Netflix over a weekend, after all!), but their time is limited.

Opportunities to Ask Deep Questions

Our young people have many substantive questions, and they are used to simply “Googling” answers. They need an outlet to bring up their own topics. In many ways, the depth of one's biblical understanding will be proportional to the depth of their questions. They have many

questions. They are dying to ask them. Let them. And don't be afraid to take time to research things and get back to them when you are prepared.

Integrate or Segregate?

Many rural and small town congregations often lament that they can't have separate Bible classes or studies (especially on Sunday morning) for their high school youth, college students and young adults. However, you shouldn't assume that young people view this as a negative thing. While they certainly like to hang out with those their age, they also want to feel incorporated into the fuller body of Christ. In short, they want to be Church.

These are just a few of many tips for teaching the faith to today's college student or young adult. There is much, much more to explore. I invite you to join the free RSTM webinar on July 6 at 1 p.m. CST as I flesh out “Teaching the Faith to College Students and Young Adults.” In the meantime, feel free to email me at marcus.zill@lcms.org or call 307-760-7497.

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.

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