



REACHING RURAL AMERICA FOR CHRIST

RURAL & SMALL TOWN MISSION

OUR

MISSION:

- To follow the core beliefs of the LCMS
- To bring the hope of Christ
- To equip rural Professional and Lay Leaders
- To be a Mission outpost to the community.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THESE IMPORTANT DATES:

(To register: 888-463-5127)
District Rural Task Forces
 2/24 -MO; 3/1- MN

4/8-9 - *Rural Regional Mission Partnership Retreat*- Mission Central, Mapleton, IA ; Presenters: Bunkowske, Thies, Geisler

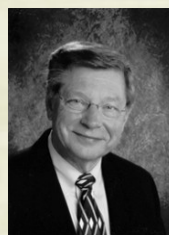
6/25-26 *RSTM-SPIFE 10th Anniversary Celebration* Concordia, MO
 Rural Learning activities for all
 Speaker: Rev H Mueller 1st VP LCMS

7/22-23 *Rural Regional Mission Partnership Retreat* - Hwy 200
 Regional Ministry; Underwood, Hazen, McClusky, ND

RURAL REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP RETREAT

Over a very snowy January 19th-22nd we spent some serious time listening, sharing, & equipping District representatives, pastors, & lay leaders with tools & skills to mentor & establish Regional Partnership Mission Plans. All districts were encouraged to send a district representative, a pastor, & lay leaders to participate in order to facilitate the best Regional Partnership Mission support. Even though the bad weather kept some from making the trip, we felt blessed by God to accomplish so much! Goals for our 10th anniversary year were mapped out, are being implemented & are on our website. These include the plan for 10 Rural Regional Mission Partnership

Mission Groups, monthly learning experiences that will mentor & establish



Missionary Ralph Geisler

“Asset Thinking.” This year RSTM will provide a “Rural Mission net” of Bible studies, assessment tools, stories, resources, & models, & we intend to provide 5 more Rural Regional Partnership Retreats or “Rural Plunges.” Through the course of this year, we also seek to identify & equip 20

Rural mentors who will encourage rural pastors & lay leaders. These mentors will be provided with a Congregational Mentoring Tool Box from RSTM-SPIFE for all of the following: Inspiring weekly worship, caring groups, child care, quality Biblical education for the whole family, youth centers, health care, stewardship of time, talent, & financial gifts, church sites for community space, develop plans for outreach action, ministry for older adults, elder training, & governance plans. RSTM receives restricted gifts from individuals & congregations through LCMS National Mission. Please pray for us! [We are your missionaries wherever we go!](#) Ruralmission@spife.org

GET INVOLVED!

Give your gift to enable rural small town congregations to be more effective mission outposts to their communities. ~ Luke 19:10
 Transform the spirits of church workers, lay leaders & congregations within the

rural small town culture.
 ~ Romans 12:2
 Experience the joy of seeing the Great Commission strengthened in a changing & very challenging rural small town American culture.
 ~ Matthew 28:18-20

Connect & share through stories & conferences.
 ~ Philippians 2:1-4
 Pray, celebrate, recognize, & thank professionals & lay leaders for their passion & support for congregational outreach.
 ~ Colossians 1:9-14

EXTRAORDINARY THINGS HAPPEN THROUGH GOD'S PEOPLE

With GOD's power it is possible to do extraordinary things through very ordinary people.

"If we have faith the size of a mustard seed you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move!" Matthew 17:20

Something extraordinary is happening on Highway 200 in rural North Dakota. The nearby congregations of St. John Lutheran Church in Underwood, Trinity Lutheran Church in rural Hazen, and St. John Lutheran Church in McClusky have come together in a Rural Regional Mission Partnership with the goal of strengthening and equipping their members. (Luke 19:10) This regional ministry strives to use the abilities of each church for significant outreach



mission through multiple locations. This Rural Regional Mission Partnership says "Highway 200 Lutherans Reaching Rural America for Christ Working Together" is their vision and mission statement. Members strive to be friendly and stress outreach in the community. This has included such things as being intentional in their daily life, using such simple phrases as, "I'll pray for you," and "Praise the Lord," with co-workers and at morning coffee. As the excitement in the partnership has spread, more people have jumped on board, energy in the congregations has exploded, and the Word of Christ has become infectious among them!



"God always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus." 2 Corinthians 2:14

Rev. Dean Hartley, who serves all three churches in a tri-point arrangement, says that he most values his personal relationship with each congregation. The congregations have given him the "liberty to do various things" he feels are



Rev. Hartley drove the bus to get all Partnership members to a joint service at St. John's, McClusky, ND

important, and he gets to spend a lot of precious relational time in the homes of his members. This means a large portion of his time is spent doing hospital calls, building relationships, and making personal greetings. Rev. Hartley commented that as we need time to build our relationship with the Father, we also need time to build



St. John's Lutheran Church at McClusky, ND

those relationships among our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Rev. Hartley especially enjoys the times his congregations get to worship together, such as a recent joint Reformation Sunday, saying he felt, "like a mom at



St. John Lutheran Church in Underwood, ND

Christmas, when all the kids come home." As their pastor, he knows them all, but now they are getting to know one another better too.

The congregations continue in many of their individual activities, but they now also come together for some joint activities, such as



Trinity Lutheran Church in rural Hazen, ND

quarterly worship services, cross-congregation LWML prayer partners which include a dinner made by Pastor for the ladies, and a "Nuts and Bolts" committee of lay leaders that consists of two lay leaders from each congregation. This committee has been very effective in helping build mutual trust between the congregations.

EXTRAORDINARY CONT.

They are busy planning for the future and addressing the needs of equipping their lay leaders, acquiring and training new staff as their partnership grows, and delegating responsibilities to new volunteers. *"The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1*

There have been lots of positives in the Highway 200 Partnership and the people of these congregations continue to look for compassionate and caring ways to reach out to their communities. "I enjoy working in God's house," these words express the changing attitudes sweeping through the members of "Highway 200 Lutherans" Cary (Mic) and Peggy Johnson are the two people voicing the changes going on around them. Mic and Peggy are regular attendees at St. John's Underwood,



Mic & Peggy Johnson have become involved through volunteering

though they have not formally joined the congregation. Their "JOY" in working at God's house, came to the forefront in August 2010.

At that time the members of St. John's took up the dormant issue of making the church handicap accessible. The first consideration was how to enable people to come inside the building. The members decided to build a ramp. Immediately after the meeting Mic said "I will help." For many years, Mic has been project manager, building motels throughout the United States. His knowledge and

expertise resulted in a ramp that is Hurricane Proof.



His talents continue to be used to complete the entire accessibility project. Mic and Peggy's enthusiasm and willingness has spread to others, as they come forward to help complete the project. The congregation looks forward to the time when this couple is welcomed formally into the family of believers. Mic and Peggy are one of many sparks, being fanned into flames, throughout the "Highway 200 Lutherans" As other members catch the sparks and then the flames, the Partnership will become a family afire with the desire to tell others of our friend JESUS. People are frequently nervous about cold calling, so equipping their members is an important piece of this ministry. The LCMS National Rural & Small Town Mission-SPIFE in Concordia, MO under



Rev. Hartley & lay leader, Craig Pankow attending a training retreat or "Rural Plunge" at RSTM-SPIFE

the direction of missionary, Dr. Ralph Geisler serves as the national resource center sharing out-

reach strategies and ministry possibilities. Congregations and lay leaders are strengthened to fulfill the Great Commission in their region (Matthew 28:18-20) through on-site visits from Dr. Geisler or by attending equipping events at Rural Small Town Mission-SPIFE on the campus of Saint Paul Lutheran High School. Each experience equips leaders of all ages and backgrounds by providing them with tools to help incorporate the



Discussing rural outreach at RSTM in Concordia, MO with other rural leaders.

Gospel into a life equipped for outreach. (2 Timothy 3:14) "So much in the world can distract us from what Christ has done for us. He did it just for us! In turn we need to go and tell others." reminded Rev. Dean Hartley.

"God has not given us spirit of timidity, but of power and of love and of sound mind."

2 Timothy 2:7



WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.SPIFE.ORG



Let us go to the small towns...
Mark 1:38

**RURAL & SMALL TOWN
MISSION - SPIFE**

SPIFE
Schroeder Memorial Leadership Center
205 S Main PO Box 719
Concordia, MO 64020

Phone: 888-463-5127
E-mail: ruralmission@spife.org
www.spife.org
LCMS National Mission

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Let us go to the small towns... Mark 1:38

MISSIONARY'S MESSAGE—DR. RALPH GEISLER

The LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission (RSTM) works along side of the National Mission/World Mission restructuring with only restricted gifts from individuals, congregations and organizations. Saint Paul Institute for Education (SPIFE) on the Saint Paul Lutheran High School & Ministry campus, Concordia, MO provides the deployed office and other in-kind services. We are most appreciative of everyone's support services and also the part-time staff, Amy Gerdtz –RSTM Communication/Website; and Rosalie Pennington – SPIFE Events/Resources.

Last week, LCMS Roster and Statistics provided a list of over 750 rural and small town congregations serving in regional partnership ministries. These congregations, Rural Regional Mission Partnerships serving as mission-outpost are our primary focus in

2011. **To help us serve districts and congregations, we would welcome your responses through our e-mail to the following questions.**

Name of congregation _____;
Name of District _____,
pastor; _____,
lay leader: _____.

What are some physical things you value about your church(s) in the community?

What are your congregations good at?

In your community, who do you have a good caring relationship with?

What are some special blessings in your congregation(s)?

What is your greatest concern about ministry in your rural congregation(s)?

Watch our website, www.spife.org for Rural Regional Mission Partner-

ship Retreats and equipping rural mentors . We collaborate with many LCMS agencies and services across the USA that provides witness, mercy and caring that helps each of us **Reach Rural America for Christ.**

Contact us if your congregation wants mission outpost assistance or lay leader training at 888-463-5127 or ruralmission@spife.org



Rev. Jeff Thormodson of Concordia Seminary, and Rev. Matthew and Lana Schneider participating in the latest Rural & Small Town Mission Listening Event.