



Thoughts on Rural Ministry...from my corner of the pasture

Here's to all of you who serve so selflessly in one of the many rural/small town areas where the name of the Lord and His Word and the sacraments are taught and shared—*May the Lord continue to give you His guidance and wisdom in ministering in every way possible that puts the Living Word of Christ before His people. Thank you and may the Lord bless you!*

The 3rd Heartland Conference, *Reaching Rural America for Christ*, is set for November 5-6-7

Place: Lied State Park, Nebraska City, Nebraska

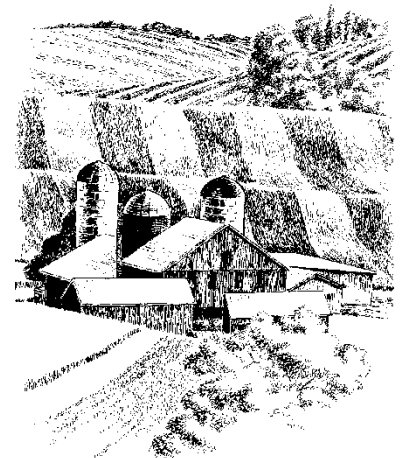
Purpose: Continuing discussions of Rural/Small Town opportunities to share Christ with rural America

Registration will be limited (first 130) so as soon as I have more information I will send it out.

Financial assistance is available through the District to help with congregational costs. Stay tuned for more to come.

- This conference is the *asked-for follow-up* from 2008 at Mahoney State Park, Ashland, NE. Attendees, from what is now being referred to as the “Heartland,” gathered and discussed the challenges the rural and small town churches are facing each year. Dr. Ralph Geisler, Rev. Jock Ficken, District Presidents Mirly of Missouri and Sommerfeld of Nebraska were some of the main speakers, presenters, and encouragers.
- Now would be a good time to discuss with your Voters about setting aside some monies for registrations and for talking with the leaders of the congregation who should attend. It won't happen without leadership. Please share this with your Presidents and Elders and let them begin the planning.
- The cost is \$325/participant for registration, 6 meals and banquet, 2 nights lodging, and all materials.
- The conference begins at noon on the 5th and ends at noon of the 7th.
- ***Reaching Rural America for Christ*** will have 4 specific breakout learning groups:
 - 1) for smaller or larger average worship attendance congregations;
 - 2) Mission planting;
 - 3) Regional Multi-site Ministry; and
 - 4) Christian Education for Children and Youth.
- ***Reaching Rural America for Christ*** hopes to 1) strengthen the care of Christ to children and youth in rural/small town settings; 2) assist congregations in taking intentional steps to help create a positive mission attitude and initiate outreach activities; 3) survey our ever-changing culture and examine its impact on r/st communities; 4) build a network for leadership training and ministry support for r/st congregations; 5) celebrate our common heritage, those saints who passed the faith to the present generation.

My prayer is that this information will give you something to share with and talk about in your council/voters' meetings and help to encourage your members to commit to attending this conference. I think it will be helpful in preparing for the changes that are happening and will continue to happen in our Synod, District, and local congregations.



Serving with Joy in His fields,

Gene Ernst