



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

Looking back at 2009... Looking ahead through 2010!

If you don't know where you are going, anyway will get you there! It is important that every congregation understand and implement their mission statement in the context of their setting. This is especially important for rural/small town churches as they struggle through the questions and concerns that keep coming to the forefront of many discussions. Questions about finances, longevity, pastoral vacancies and opportunities to be served in the times ahead are being asked and debated. *These are some of the concerns that the IDW Rural Advocacy Team discusses at their meetings.* There is a good representation on this team from a wide area of IDW congregations in a variety of situations, from the single parish to dual and triple options and discussions beginning to arise about regional ministries. This brings me back to the statement at the beginning. *Do you and your congregation know where it is going?*

Dual and triple point parishes once filled the gap so smaller congregations could continue their ministry where they were. Today's research is finding that moving beyond dual and triple points isn't going to fill the spiritual needs of the members. What is the next step? What is the next model? What can be done to address the concerns of our rural/small town congregations?

The Rural Advocacy Team (RAT) has some experience in these discussions. Each member of the RAT Pack has been at the *Reaching Rural America for Christ* conference and has been exposed to a number of ideas and models. They have been involved in discussions with other similar congregations throughout the Midwest and beyond. These folks have a passion for rural and small town ministry and are learning more from one another at these meetings. Do we have all the answers? No. Do we have any answers for your congregation? Maybe!

If you have concerns and questions about what is happening, where this is leading, how ministry is going to continue, then you should call me (712-676-2293) and I will put together a team that will come to your area and lead a discussion on how to begin dealing with this whole topic.

The wheels of change in rural Iowa turn slowly. Now is a good time to address that change and see how you and your congregational members can start to learn from the knowledge gathered by this team. Together, in the power of the Lord and His Word, we can begin.

Give it some thought, give us a call.
Stay tuned.

Gene Ernst