

# RESOURCES FOR RURAL MINISTRY

*Come, the people said:  
The Lord is here with us!  
Don't search any longer,  
don't doubt any longer.  
We have found him.  
Lord, where do you live?  
I live in the hearts of people  
who are without hope.*



Illustration by Mary Azarian

**In this rural synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and in rural communities across the country, the deepening agricultural crisis is affecting all of us. Many of our families, congregations, and communities are dealing with a precipitous fall in farm prices, changes in federal policy that have eliminated the "safety net" for farmers, and changing global markets. For many, it is difficult to be hopeful. As a church we are called to listen, learn, and pray for the concerns and well-being of the entire agricommunity.**



**Below you will find a collection of resources, ideas, and services that may be of help as the rural crisis worsens. Please will you let us know of other community resources that have made a difference?**

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# HUMAN RESOURCES

## **Lutheran Rural Response/Lutheran Social Services**

is prepared to offer counseling to families and individuals dealing with rural stress. If finances are a problem, LRR will help with travel and counseling costs. Call LSS and ask for the counseling department. Call 701-235-7341.



## **North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services**

will find help for abused adults. Call 701-222-8370.

## **NDSU Extension Service**

offers help with managing farm family finances, stress and stress management counseling, and information about changing careers. County, area, and state Extension Service staff are very willing to listen, provide resources, and offer their services. Call 800-472-2911, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Pastor Don Swenson, together with several farmers from Trinity Lutheran in Sharon,** continues to meet with representatives at Cargill in Minneapolis. These meetings came about because Pastor Swenson wants Cargill to hear the voices and see the faces of farmers in Eastern North Dakota who are struggling to survive. More meetings are planned. Call Don Swenson for details. 701-524-1949.

## **Agricultural Mediation**

provides negotiators who will help farmers and lenders reach an agreement which is in the best interest of all concerned. They will provide help before a farmer is in the final stages of financial trouble OR after negotiations have failed and foreclosure proceedings are likely. The first ten hours of help are free. Call 800-642-4752 for more information.

## **Bill and Judith Heffernan and Heartland Network for Town and Rural Ministries**

are helpful sources for organizing church and community action groups. Rural sociologists and farmers themselves, they will make every effort to provide help with resources and support. Call 573-882-7232.

### **Farm Credit Counseling**

offers one-on-one counseling to help farmers evaluate their situation. Call 800-642-4752.

### **Referral Service**

North Dakota State Bar Association will help farmers find lawyers who are willing to take farm cases. Call 800-932-8880.

### **Job Service of North Dakota**

has a program for farmers facing leaving the farm. Information about "The Farm Survival Program" is available from Peter Hager in Devils Lake (701-662-9331) or from Tony Kobbervig in Valley City (701-845-8613).

### **NDSU's Alternative Career Program**

for experienced farmers and ranchers offers opportunities for people without bachelor's degrees and for those with degrees who need a refresher course. Call the synod office for brochures or the College of Agriculture at North Dakota State University. 701-231-8790.

### **Farm Real Estate Debt Restructuring Program**

will restructure first mortgage real estate loans for eligible farmers through the Bank of North Dakota. Call 800-472-2166.

### **Mental Health Information**

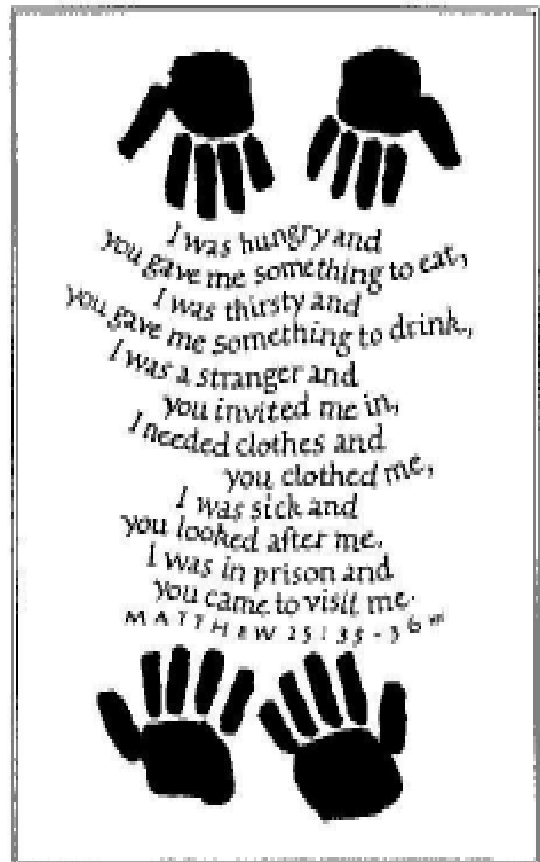
about stress, depression, spouse or child abuse, information on farm stress workshops, and printed materials are available from 800-472-2911.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR PASTORS**



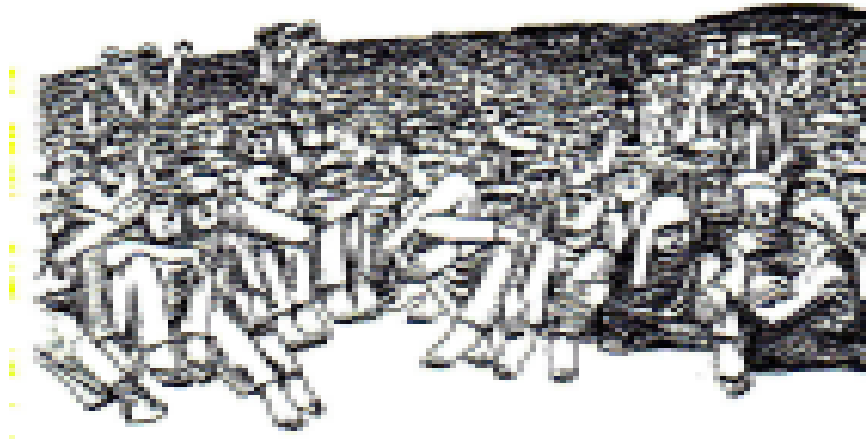
- ✦ Worship is extremely important. Prayers that relate to what the people are experiencing are very important. Scripture to help sustain people during the week can also be helpful.
- ✦ Check out the food pantry rules and regulations. Perhaps at this time of crisis, some changes need to be made in order to make food pantries more user-friendly.
- ✦ It is helpful for pastors to know the resource people before there is a crisis. That way, they can feel more comfortable in referring people plus resource people are more apt to respond quickly. Having a resource directory in the church office is important.

- ✦ The stress on people during this coming winter will be great. One of the best preventative measures could be having a nurse come to do blood pressure checks after church services or gatherings.
- ✦ Be aware of intergenerational needs. Children often are forgotten during times of crisis. Confirmation and Sunday School classes may be a place where listening with new awareness could be very helpful. The elderly also are facing some serious challenges and they are usually hesitant about asking for help.
- ✦ Invite members to help develop a worship service for a Rural Life Sunday. This gives people the opportunity to talk about their concerns and it helps make the pastor more aware of the issues.
- ✦ Invite members to a meal to listen and learn from one another. Show "Jesus the Comforter," a video made for TV about many kinds of loss including the loss of a family farm.
- ✦ Reach out. Contact and visit individual farmers who may be troubled.
- ✦ Let people know that you care and are available.
- ✦ Attend gatherings on farm issues. Be as informed as possible.
- ✦ Adjust church spending and budgets to current economic conditions.
- ✦ Hold special services regularly that reflect the needs of hurting people.
- ✦ Invite appropriate speakers to address rural issues at Sunday worship or adult education.



## SUGGESTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS

- ✦ Plan gatherings so that there is fellowship.
- ✦ Sponsor a nurse to attend parish nurse training this fall or winter.
- ✦ What will Christmas be like for many families this year? Is there a way to plan for this?
- ✦ Provide some training (perhaps with LSS) to help with communication skills and knowledge of resources.
- ✦ Invite Sandy Simonson Thums to visit your congregation.
- ✦ Use Sunday bulletins, newsletters, or bulletin boards to publicize resources, meetings, names of services and support groups, agencies available to help with financial, career, personal and family counseling, and information about food and medical assistance.
- ✦ Keep resources accessible for people to take and read privately. Initiate conversation groups where people can meet informally to discuss similar difficulties or formally to talk about a specific goal.

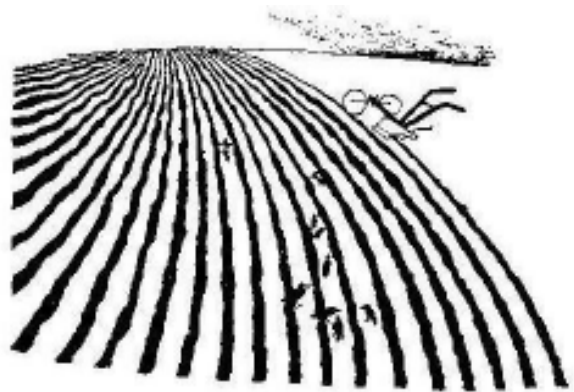


- + Sponsor community-building activities (a Resource Fair?) perhaps with another church. Call Tri-County Ministries in Cooperstown to find out about such an event. Tri-County also has developed a "Rural Resources Packet" that might be helpful. Call Tri-County Ministries at 701-797-3611.
- + Soup and Sandwich with speakers from different organizations can provide both fellowship and education.

## PRINTED RESOURCES

### Articles from the Open File

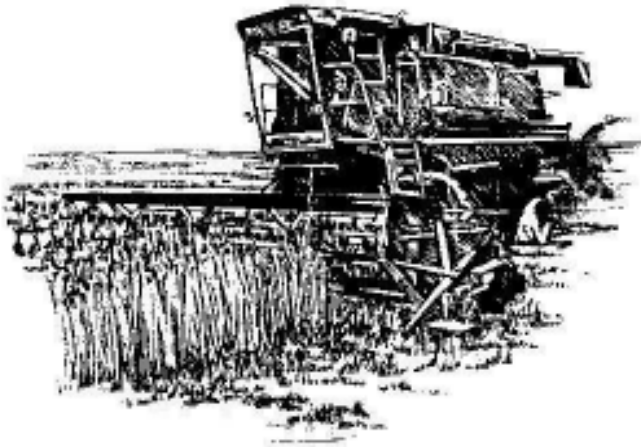
- "Building the Future of ND: Findings of the Commission for the Future of Agriculture-Action Plan for 1998"
- Numerous articles and commentary on rural issues (several on the failure of the Freedom to Farm Act)
- Social statement on economic life from the ELCA, "Toward Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All"
- Litanies, prayers, collects for weekly worship



### Books and Bible Studies

Family Farming- A New Economic Vision by Marty Strange -- "challenges the assumption that bigger is better." (B789)

Broken Heartland by Osha Gray Davidson -- "powerful documentation of the rural dissolution that resulted from the farm crisis of the 1980's." (B1366)



Prayers for the Heartland by Judy Hoff - "More powerfully than any newspaper headline [these] psalms evoke the feel of life in rural America in a time of turmoil and they give us hope." (B1278)

Of the Land, For the Land-A Bible Study on Church, Land and Community "for churches and people of faith who own farmland...and for all people who care about how their food is grown..." (PR)

Praying Our Goodbyes by Joyce Rupp - offers thoughtful reflection about losses in life. (B2115)

Pastor Karl Goodfellow has written a devotional book for farmers and will help congregations with an intentional prayer ministry. Write: Safety Net Prayer Ministries, Box 706, Gutenberg, IA 52052 or call 319-252-3380.

"A Good Land-Five Sessions on the Land and the People Who Care for It" by James Limburg (PR)

Rural Ministry: The Shape of the Renewal to Come with contributions by rural ministry practitioners--offers "a vision of doing ministry in the rural and small-town setting that is biblically sound, evangelistic and justice oriented, locally sensitive, practical." (B1810)



Caretakers of Creation-Farmers Reflect on Their Faith and Work by Patrick Slattery - Interviews with farmers who describe what they do and why they do it. (B733)

Planting the Seeds of Community: A Bible Study for Revitalization in Rural America by Paul Peterson and Mary Agria--deals with economic issues, family, health, and changes in agricultural life. Reproducible and easy to use. (PR)

"Worship from the Ground Up: A Worship Resource for Town and Country Congregations" is a collection of liturgies, collects, confessions, a Rogation and a Harvest Service, and litanies for worship. (PR)

## Booklets

"Building Healthy Communities: Stories of 12 Communities in the Midwest" tells the stories of 12 rural communities that worked with the Center for Theology and Land on its "Empowering Community Development" project. Good for discussion. (PR)

"Revitalization of the Rural Congregation: What We Know, What We Need to Know" describes a research project dealing with dynamics that make for revitalization. (PR)

"What Can I Do About the Farm Crisis?" -- brief paper with answers to commonly asked questions

"Seven Days of Farming" -- seven liturgies celebrating the cycle of growing food.

"The Crisis in Rural America" -- short pamphlet for congregational study

"Liturgical Aids" -- for land earth-care worship themes

## VIDEO RESOURCES

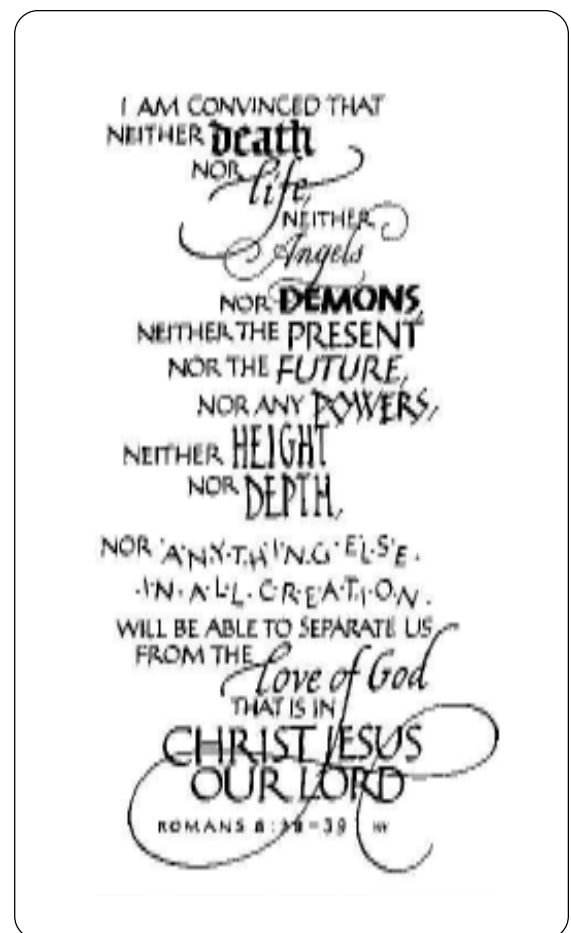
**Vanishing Heartland-A Nightline Report** - report on June 19, 1998 featuring segments about Eastern North Dakota and the Sheyenne parish. (VT1962)

**The Farmer's Wife** - a PBS special on the stresses, uncertainty, and pain of rural life when circumstances are beyond our control.

**Another Cup of Coffee** - a model for conversation to help establish rural support groups. (VT261)

**Another Family Farm** - focuses on a farm sale in the 80's, the family stress involved, and on ways the church can respond. (VT86)

**From Fields to Family** - for rural families dealing with ongoing hardship. (VT449)



**From This Valley: On Defending the Family Farm”** - an exploration of the farm crisis drawing from the work of Shantilal Bhagat in his book, The Family Farm: Can It Be Saved? (VT321)

**In the Midst of Pain** - shares ways of feeling God’s love and comfort in the midst of sorrow and loss (VT173)

**Jesus the Comforter** from **Reflections II** - focuses on loss including a segment about the loss of a family farm. (VT29)

**Roots of Hope-The Changing Face of Agriculture** - for rural communities needing to talk about change, anger, courage. (VT225)

**4x1 Rural Crisis** - four short stories about rural issues. (VT181)

**The Rural Crisis Comes to School** - reactions of students whose families are struggling with rural issues. (VT180)

**Rural Family Stress Management** - workshops on stress, coping with confidence, and managing family concerns. (VT61-64)

**Summer of Hope, Summer of Despair** - six segments about rural concerns in northeastern Minnesota including strong support for family farms. (VT609)



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Helpful Web Sites

Lutheran Rural Response: [www.lrrnd.org](http://www.lrrnd.org)

Heartland Center for Town and Rural Ministries: <http://www.seorf.ohiou.edu/~xx042/hide/heartl.html>

Center for Theology and Land at Wartburg Seminary: <http://www.wartburgseminary.edu/ctl.htm>

Another good link to CTL is <http://www.ruralministry.com/>

National Catholic Rural Life: <http://www.ncrlc.com/moratorium.html#anchor102847>

## LUTHERAN RURAL RESPONSE

Lutheran Rural Response of Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota offers healing, help and hope to rural communities, families, and individuals impacted by the rural crisis. Services available include outreach programs designed to strengthen families and communities, counseling services, food assistance, a resource connection specialist, and resource directories across the state. Call 800-950-2901 for a brochure or more information.

LRR also has compiled a very helpful booklet, "Transitions in Rural America," that details common rural transition issues.

## North Dakota State University

The extension service at NDSU continues to provide up-to-date services and resources. We have reproducible "Facts About the Farm Crisis—Perceptions and Policy Issues," "Facts About Farm Family Well-Being," and "Facts About Farm Family Finances." Call us for copies.

## University of Minnesota

The extension service at UM has helped fund a "video packet" dealing with the challenges of agriculture. Produced by the Farm Women Network of West Central Minnesota, "A Farm Woman's Perspective—Dealing with the Challenges of Agriculture" encourages neighborhoods, community and church groups to come together for dialogue, support, and networking. The packet includes:

- ✦ 10-minute video entitled “Healing Stories” featuring the three farm women who inspired the creation of a play around three farm life challenges—communications, self-worth, and overload. The video also includes parts of the play and other key players in the production of the performances.
- ✦ Play scripts of the three farm life challenges—communications, self-worth, overload.
- ✦ Discussion guide.
- ✦ Return form for more information and connections.

Copy available for loan.

## **CHARIS Ecumenical Center**

Two rural ministry seminars are scheduled at Concordia College May 22-26. “Leading the Rural Congregation: Context and Opportunity” begins May 22-24 and “Wrestling with the Hard Issues: the Renewal to Come” begins May 24-26. Call 218-299-3455 for details.

## **PEOPLE**

Curtis Stofferahn and Gary Goreham (University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University) have been integral to rural life conversations and issues in North Dakota. Stofferahn teaches a course in rural sociology by correspondence at the University of North Dakota. Course information available at <http://www.conted.und.edu/credit/cslist.php3#SOCIOLOGY>. Both Stofferahn and Goreham participated in a rural life poll meant to monitor the changing conditions in rural North Dakota. We have copies of the results of this poll conducted in a series of surveys over a period of thirteen years. Some of the findings can be found in a paper written by Stofferahn and Goreham called “Financially Stressed Northern Plains Farmers and Rural Pastoral Care.” This paper will be available from the center this summer.

## **Litanies, Worship and Prayers**

We have a number of shared litanies, worship services, and prayers. All are reproducible. These include the following:

- “A Litany of Weeping”
- “Hymn Festival of the Land”
- “Sowing Seeds of Hope Holy Communion”
- “Sowing Seeds of Hope Service of the Word”

- “Seven Days of Farming”
- “Lamentations for a Time of Rural Crisis”
- “Rogation Days Prayer Service”
- “Let Go: A Prayer of Relinquishment”
- “We Care—in Prayer”
- “Prayer Service for Loss of the Farm”

Please send us additional resources that can be added to our files.

### **Farm Crisis Films**

Four films have been suggested. If you know of others, please let us know so that we can add them to the list:

- Troublesome Creek**—a documentary about a Boston film maker who returns to her Iowa farm family’s home before and after the family’s farm auction.
- My Father’s Garden** compares and contrasts a Florida orange grower’s chemically intensive orchard operation with an organic and sustainable managed North Dakota grain and beef farm. It addresses critical issues for modern farming and food production.
- A Thousand Acres** is a portrait of rural life after the novel of the same name by Jane Smiley.
- A Map of the World** is an account of a dairy farm that has been surrounded by upscale homeowners.

Some additional titles include **Field of Dreams; Paris, Texas; Bridges of Madison County;** and **Northern Lights.**

### **ARTICLES**

- “A Guide to Being Good Neighbors: During the Rural Crisis” by Sr. Margaret Mary O’Gorman

- “As the Heartland Bleeds, Where is the Church? Quite Simply, the Church is Where the People Are” by Joan Blundall
- “One Long Day on the Farm” from *The Catholic Messenger*, Davenport, Iowa
- “The Rural Economic Crisis and Mental Health: Then and Now” by Joan Blundall
- “Pastoring in the Present Farm Crisis” by Brien McGarvey
- “The Industrialization of Agriculture: Why We Should Stop Promoting It” by John Ikerd
- “How Long Will This Farm Crisis Last?” by William Heffernan
- “Lutheran Bishops’ Statement on the Farm Crisis”—May 1999
- “Reactions to the Stress of Losing the Family Farm”
- “What Worked in Responding to Mental Health Needs of Farmers and Rural Residents”
- “What Did Not Work in Responding to Mental Health Needs of Farmers and Rural Residents”
- “Consolidation in the Food and Agriculture System” by William Heffernan
- “Our Daily Bread: the Business of Rural America” from *Sojourners*, September-October 1995.
- “Ten Issues Relevant to the North American Farm Crisis,” from *Earthkeepers*
- “Mental Health and Ministry: the Vital Connection” by Judith Bortner Heffernan
- “Understanding Abuse,” “Disaster Recovery,” and “Financial Troubleshooting” from the Iowa State University Extension Service
- “North Dakota Rural Life Poll” from the Center for Rural Studies, North Dakota State University and University of North Dakota

### **Toll Free Hotlines**

We have a list of free hotlines that deal with rural crisis issues. “Steps in Handling a Crisis Call” is available from the center as well.

### **SURVEYS and BIBLIOGRAPHIES**

A Rural Realities Survey is available as well as a questionnaire, “What Resources Would You Access?” An annotated bibliography of resources for rural issues, small towns and church life is available. The North Dakota Rural Life Poll described under “People” and in “Articles” is another helpful resource.

**Many additional titles deal with related topics. For more information, call the Resource Center, Eastern North Dakota Synod-ELCA, 1703 32nd Avenue South, Fargo, ND 58103; 701-232-3381/fax 701-232-3180/ e-mail: [julie\\_aageson@ecunet.org](mailto:julie_aageson@ecunet.org) .**