

SMALL-TOWN PASTORS' CONFERENCE

April 28-30, 2025 ♦♦♦ Morton, Illinois

A conference tailored for those who minister in town and country settings

PLENARY SESSION SPEAKERS

Jeff Clark



Director, Rural Church Institute, Wheaton College Billy Graham Center; Global Rural Researcher, International Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention; former rural church planter and pastor

Eric Redmond



Professor of Bible, Moody Bible Institute; Executive Director, Moody Theological Seminary's Center for Compelling Biblical Preaching; Associate Pastor of Preaching and Teaching, Calvary Memorial Church, Oak Park, IL; former pastor of small churches; author, including *Christ-Centered Exposition: Judges and Ruth*

Phil Tuttle



President and CEO, Walk Thru the Bible; former small-town pastor in Central Illinois; conference speaker; author, including *Crucible: The Choices that Change Your Life Forever* and *Detour: Finding Purpose When Life Doesn't Make Sense*; member, RHMA Board of Reference

SEMINAR LEADERS

Maureen Berger & Becky McAllister



Ritch Boerckel



Kurt Busenitz



Ken Helmuth



Kristen Humiston



Ron Klassen



Jason McConnell



Ted Miller



Ellen Tuttle



Barney Wells



Aaron & Janice Yoder



LEADER BIOS

Maureen Berger

North America Vice President of Programs, KidZ at Heart International; served in children's ministries with CEF and local churches; experienced trainer who equips adults to help kids love Jesus deeply; conference speaker

Ritch Boerckel

Longtime Senior Pastor, Bethany Baptist Church, Edwards, IL; member, RHMA Board of Directors

Kurt Busenitz

Director of Church Planting, RHMA; former church planter and pastor of Sandhills Church of Hope in Nebraska

Ken Helmuth

Leadership Team, Berean Prison Ministries; chaplain at a small-town county jail; oversees Romanian and Kenyan prison ministries; raised on a dairy farm in Oklahoma; retired from Legal Services at Caterpillar

Kristen Humiston

Ministry leadership coach; grew up as a small-town pastor's kid; served with her husband in a small-town church; conference speaker, including workshop leader for Small Church Ministry; member, Flowers for the Pastor's Wife Board of Reference

Ron Klassen

Executive Director Emeritus, RHMA; former small-town pastor; adjunct professor, Dallas Theological Seminary; conference speaker; author, including *Maximize! Leveraging the Strengths of Your Small Church*; professor, RHMA's TACT Program

Becky McAllister

Chief Program Officer and Interim CEO, KidZ at Heart International; served in children's ministries in local churches for 20 years; builds resources for those who love and teach kids; conference speaker

Jason McConnell

Pastor, Franklin United Church and East Franklin Union Church (Vermont farming communities); seminary adjunct professor and mentor; author, including *Return to the Parish: The Pastor in the Public Square*; professor, RHMA's TACT Program

Ted Miller

Partner and Financial Advisor, Guardian Wealth Management; longtime pastor; RHMA retirement consultant

Ellen Tuttle

Served alongside her husband, Phil, as a small-town pastor's wife; speaks and serves with Phil at Walk Thru the Bible; member, Flowers for the Pastor's Wife Board of Reference

Barney Wells

Director, Fred Craddock Center for Preaching Excellence at Johnson University; longtime country church pastor; consultant and professor, RHMA's TACT Program

Aaron & Janice Yoder

Aaron – RHMA's Director of Church Strengthening; small-town church planter's kid; former youth pastor and senior pastor; Janice – serves with Aaron in ministry and in small-business leadership

SEMINARS

Tuesday Morning

Maureen Berger & Becky McAllister – Oldest to Youngest: How Grandparents Can Grow Your Children’s Ministry

So much pulls children away from God; yet, impressing Christ into their lives has never been more vital. How can churches do this? Gain practical knowledge to envision the oldest in your church growing their faith by impacting children’s faith, drawing on biblical principles to help you bring the grand generation into your children’s ministry.

Kurt Busenitz – Rural Church Multiplication: From Anomaly to Normality

Healthy corn plants produce more corn. Healthy cattle produce more beef. Healthy churches should be a part of multiplying gospel-centered churches in spiritually needy areas. In the spirit of Nehemiah, we will lean into pursuing healthy building blocks for effective rural church multiplication.

Kristen Humiston (*women*) – Renewed by Delight: Finding Restoration and Preventing Ministry Burnout

This seminar will help attendees combat the all-too-common stresses of family and ministry life. Rooted in God’s Word, participants will learn about the impact of delight on their mind, body, and soul. We will gain practical techniques to counteract ministry pressures and maintain our spiritual and emotional well-being, while being equipped to nurture joy, sustain calling, and prevent/heal from ministry burnout.

Jason McConnell – Preventing One-Trick Ponies in the Pulpit: Pursuing Versatility in Preaching

During their ministry training, pastors typically learn only one way to preach sermons. Unfortunately, this leads to one-dimensional and predictable sermons Sunday after Sunday. Following the various ways God speaks to His people in Scripture, this seminar will show why they should and how they can become more versatile preachers by utilizing a wide variety of sermonic models, forms, and styles.

Ted Miller – Three Financial Opportunities Every Minister Should Consider

Pastors are busy! Their role constantly moves among teacher, counselor, janitor, maintenance man, husband, dad, coach, chairman, etc. Many leaders sacrifice financially and there are several opportunities that a minister can use to eliminate financial pressure now and in their future. This session will give you the top three.

Aaron and Janice Yoder – Five Ways to Destroy Your Pastoral Family

We all want to have a healthy marriage and family while serving in ministry, but we often sabotage ourselves with these common practices. Unlearn and relearn marriage and family life together!

Barney Wells – The Big Challenge of the New Rural Poor

Over the past 40 years, rural villages have become pockets of inner-city-like poverty. Differing from the traditional rural poor in many ways, these new rural poor can present challenges to the church in the smallest of towns. We will learn what makes this ministry so challenging and some successful strategies for engaging it.

Tuesday Afternoon

Maureen Berger & Becky McAllister – Celebrate Good Times: How to Make Any Celebration a God Encounter

Childhood celebrations are often our most cherished life memories. But can these moments be even more impactful for our children? Gain ideas and practical skills on how to make celebration moments intentional God-connection moments for children.

(Cont.)

Jeff Clark – Rural Evangelism

In this seminar we will attempt to move away from event-based evangelism that is grounded on the law of large numbers. The goal is to develop a spectrum and help develop strategies to move people along that spectrum from non-evangelist to committed evangelist.

Ted Miller – How to Stop Drowning in Debt

Debt has become the American Way. While there are several financial plans to eliminate debt, most do not complete these plans because they require a diet of rice and beans six nights per week. There is a better way to eliminate debt for you and your congregation. Join this seminar to learn the proper definition of wealth and live completely free.

Ellen Tuttle (*women*) – Moving Beyond Self-Reliance

Do you often find yourself striving to manage everything on your own? It's easy to think that God is too busy with bigger issues than yours and forget the purpose and reality of His daily presence. Self-reliance is exhausting! We'll talk about the peace and renewed strength that come from acknowledging how God meets us in the day-to-day of our ordinary lives, not just in times of crisis or joy. Come get recharged and embrace God's sustaining grace.

Wednesday Morning (*repeated in the afternoon*)


Ritch Boerckel – Personality and Preaching

This seminar explores God's purpose in creating each pastor's unique personality as His instrument for preaching His Word. We will consider the importance of pouring His truth through our own personality in our preaching and explore ways the preacher's personality can be either a destructive or constructive influence in bringing God's message to His people.

Jeff Clark – Rural Church Planting

With so many rural churches closing and the ability to easily drive to nearby towns, do we really need to plant churches in rural areas today?

Ken Helmuth – Serving the Least of These

On  prison or jail cell today, perhaps some from your rural or small-town community are at their lowest point in their lives and desperately need the hope and forgiveness offered by our heavenly Father. This seminar will focus on equipping churches to serve these individuals.

Kristen Humiston (*women*) – What's a Pastor's Wife to Do About Trauma?

This seminar focuses on understanding and addressing trauma within the unique context of a pastor's wife. We will learn to recognize the signs and effects of trauma, manage our own well-being, and support our congregation and community members. We will develop practical skills to assist others in their healing journeys, empowering them as caregivers and leaders.

Ron Klassen – Maximizing the Strengths of Your Town and Country Church

Picture a town and country church that is not trying to imitate larger city churches but studies itself and its community and then prayerfully designs ministries uniquely suited for its place and time. This seminar will help this picture become a reality as we explore the distinctive characteristics – especially strengths – of the town and country church.

Barney Wells – Rural Ministry 101

This seminar is an orientation to rural ministry, geared primarily for pastors and wives who are just getting started in rural ministry. Seasoned rural pastors and wives are welcome to attend for a refresher course!

SCHEDULE April 28-30

Monday

- 3:00-5:00 p.m. Check-in at Grace Church
1325 E. Jefferson, Morton
- 5:15 p.m. Supper at Grace Church
- 6:30 p.m. Plenary Session with Phil Tuttle
- 8:00 p.m. Ice Cream Social and Fellowship
Hosted by the RHMA Board of Directors

Tuesday

- 8:00 a.m. Prayer Meeting with Phil Somers
- 8:45-9:45 a.m. Seminars
- 9:45-10:15 a.m. Break – Bookstore open
- 10:15-11:15 a.m. Plenary Session with Jeff Clark
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch / Free-time Options
- 1:00-2:00 p.m. Seminars
- 2:00 p.m. Free Time
- 5:15 p.m. Supper
- 6:30 p.m. Plenary Session with Phil Tuttle

Wednesday

- 8:00 a.m. Prayer Meeting with Phil Somers
- 8:45-9:45 a.m. Seminars (repeated in the afternoon)
- 9:45-10:15 a.m. Break - Bookstore open
- 10:15-11:15 a.m. Plenary Session with Eric Redmond
- 11:45 a.m. Lunch / Options > *Fellowship with other pastors and wives*
> *Get-to-Know-RHMA presentation*
- 12:00 noon Lincoln Museum, Springfield
- 1:00-2:00 p.m. Seminars (*repeat of morning seminars*)
- 2:30-3:30 p.m. Ladies' Tea and Men's Dessert
- 5:15 p.m. Supper
- 6:30 p.m. Closing Plenary Session with Phil Tuttle

REGISTRATION COSTS

Pastor only	\$120	Optional additional costs:	
Pastor & Spouse	\$160	Funk Prairie Home/Museum	\$5/person
Lay Leader	\$125	Lincoln Museum	\$10/person
Full-time Student	\$60		
Full-time Student & Spouse	\$100		

) *After April 14, ADD \$20/person*

) *Registration costs are non-refundable after April 14*

ACTIVITIES

In addition to seminars, the following are options for Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon.

Tuesday

Funk Prairie Home Museum *(Limit 20)*

Lafayette Funk was a founder of the Chicago Stockyards and Director of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. His family owned one of America's largest farms and created the first hybrid commercial seed corn. The 13-room home, built in 1864, has been extensively restored. The museum is home to over 4,000 specimens of gemstones and minerals, including an intact saber-toothed tiger skull! The cost is \$5.00 per person.

Disc Golf

Morton has two nationally-ranked disc golf courses. Bring your own discs and enjoy! No cost.

Golf Outing

Weather and interest permitting, we will schedule a golf outing. The cost will be determined based on sign-ups. We will contact you before the conference with further information.

Bass Pro Shops – East Peoria

Bass Pro Shops is an outdoor retail leader in hunting, camping, nature gifts, outdoor cooking, and much more. They have become one of America's premier outdoor retailers with destination outdoor retail stores across America and Canada, serving over 75 million sportsmen a year. Each store is unique and offers a truly unforgettable shopping experience – as close to the Great Outdoors as you can get indoors!

Wednesday

Abraham Lincoln Museum *(Limit 20)*

Step through the doors of the official Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, and you'll feel as if you've stepped into the life of our 16th president, widely acclaimed as our nation's greatest. The museum features state-of-the-art exhibits, interactive displays, and multimedia programs. It also contains the world's largest collection of documentary material related to the life of Lincoln. Join us for an experience you will never forget, and learn more about Abraham Lincoln and his legacy to the United States and the world. The cost is \$10.00 per person.

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HOTELS

The following rates have been secured at these Morton hotels. Mention RHMA to receive these rates.

Baymont by Wyndham

Phone: 309-266-8888

\$89.00 – King

\$89.00 – Two Queens

(rates expire 4/15)

Best Western Morton Inn

Phone: 309-266-9933

\$119.00 – King

\$119.00 – Two Queens

(rates expire 3/3)

Comfort Inn & Suites

Phone: 309-263-5116

\$94.00 – Two Queens

(rate expires 4/14)

Days Inn by Wyndham

Phone: 309-266-1600

\$99.99 – Two Queens

(rate expires 4/15)

Holiday Inn Express & Suites

Phone: 309-263-4400

\$144.00 – King

\$144.00 – Two Queens

(regular rates)

Quality Inn

Phone: 309-524-6064

\$79.00 – Two Queens

(rate expires 4/23)

