

Canada: villagemissions.ca USA: www.villagemissions.org

COUNTRY *Matters*





A View From the Country with Murray Graham, Executive Director

Growing up with a dad who served in World War II was an honour, but it was also sobering. What my Dad gave for his country changed him forever. He was wounded twice on the battlefield, but as children, those were the kinds of stories he never told us.

As I grew older dad shared some of his stories; others were only talked about amongst other veterans. He spent five years overseas but never wanted to go back. Fifty years later, when he returned to see the rebuilt Europe, I believe, he was able to leave some of the baggage behind which he had lived with most of his adult life. I am so grateful for my dad, and the many other Canadian soldiers who fought by his side. The freedoms we have in our country today are because of those men and women, many whom gave their lives for you and me. Because of them, we don't have to live with the stories of destruction and death.

And yet, Remembrance Day reminds me of another man who gave his life—not to liberate me from any earthly power—but from sin and death. His name is Jesus.

Across North America, there are little, hidden-away places in need of the Gospel. Many of the rural people who live there have never heard that Jesus died for them. Sadly, many of the churches in these communities are dying. On the surface, it seems like a losing battle. Recently one man asked, "Does it make any difference?" Yes! The enemy would love nothing more than for souls of these people to be abandoned.

Yet, in over 220 communities across Canada and the United States, Village Missionaries are fighting for these little country

churches, refusing to let the light of the gospel vanish. It's not always easy, but it's a battle worth fighting.

In this issue of Country Matters, you will read the story of Jake Leichter, who served in the Air Force for 13 years before joining Village Missions. I hope as you read this, you are inspired by Jake and Kathryn's commitment to bringing the gospel to rural people in need.

Murray Graham

Murray Graham
Executive Director



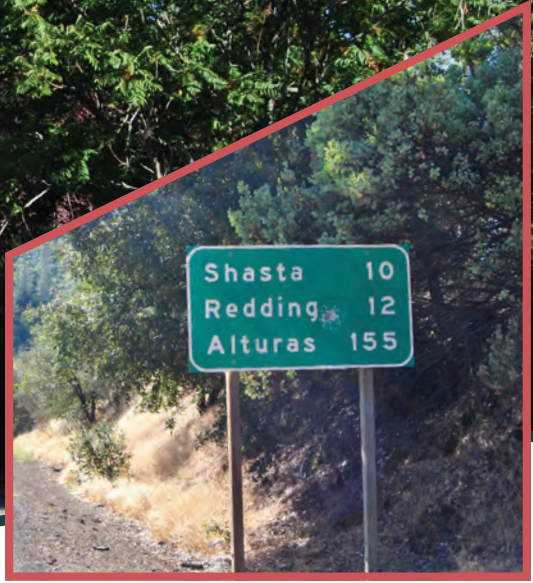


French Gulch, California, isn't the quaint, small town you read about in books or see in movies. There is no local coffee shop. No sports teams for parents to talk about. No grocery store, gas station or barbershop.

The walls of the main street saloon tell the history of this town. Photos and antiques of 1800's gold miners—men and women with dreams of riches—leaving the civilized world they knew to make it on their own. Not much has changed. The old gold mine may have a few workers still manning it, but many of the people who move to French Gulch are still escaping the modern world, hoping for something better.

Many live in the trailer court down the hill from the main road, while others live down long dirt roads, completely off the grid.

And then there is a little church served by Village Missions by 1981—inviting the hardy locals to come find the one thing they've been looking for—hope. That's why Jake and Kathryn Leichter left everything they'd ever known to move to a place they'd never even heard of.



NUCLEAR WEAPONS, TOP SECRET MEETINGS, & DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Jake attended the Air Force Academy after high school. And while he may not have been soaring the heavens like Maverick and Goose, he would still be in for an exciting ride. During Jake's 13 years in the Air Force, he served as a nuclear launch officer and worked with satellites. Jake couldn't talk about the exact nature of his work, because it was top security clearance information. It was the kind of job young boys dream of, and Hollywood producers depict as "the job." Yet, Jake was unwittingly being prepared for ministry leadership.



"I always liked leading people. In the Air Force, I loved leading the troops.

I would get troops that other people didn't want. I'd sit down with them, talk and get to know them and find out what made them tick. After I trained them, they were winning awards for their efforts. And that's what ministry is—figuring out

how to minister to each person—how to help them grow in their faith.”

During their four years in Colorado, Jake began to feel the Lord calling him to full-time ministry.

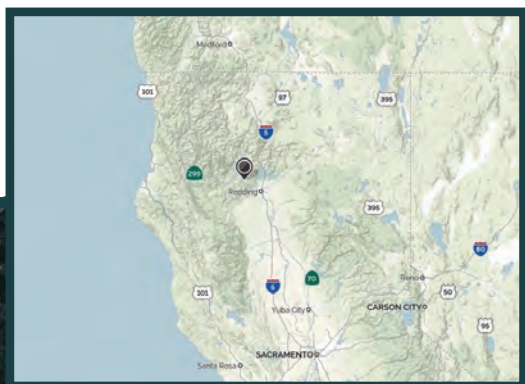
The Air Force was already downsizing, so when Jake mentioned his plans, they chose to let him go instead, allowing him to receive a big bonus, along with free health care for two years. Jake also was able to benefit from the G.I. Bill and attend Talbot Seminary for free.

A Growing CHURCH

Learning about Village Missions from his academic advisor and having grown up in small town Kansas, Jake knew rural ministry was exactly what he wanted to do.

As new members of French Gulch, Jake and Kathryn had their work cut out for them. Being a hardy, independent community, townspeople weren't always excited to meet a pastor.

“When they find out I’m a pastor, they’ll be a little standoffish. But once they learn I’m a veteran, it’s totally different, especially when they’re a vet too. They’ll say ‘Oh, you’re a veteran? Oh, it’s good to meet you!’ Immediately the door is open.”



This credibility, along with the church's commitment to build a close community, has helped French Gulch Community Church begin to see new growth.

"When some people come to church, they are afraid to step into the church—literally cowering, said Jake."

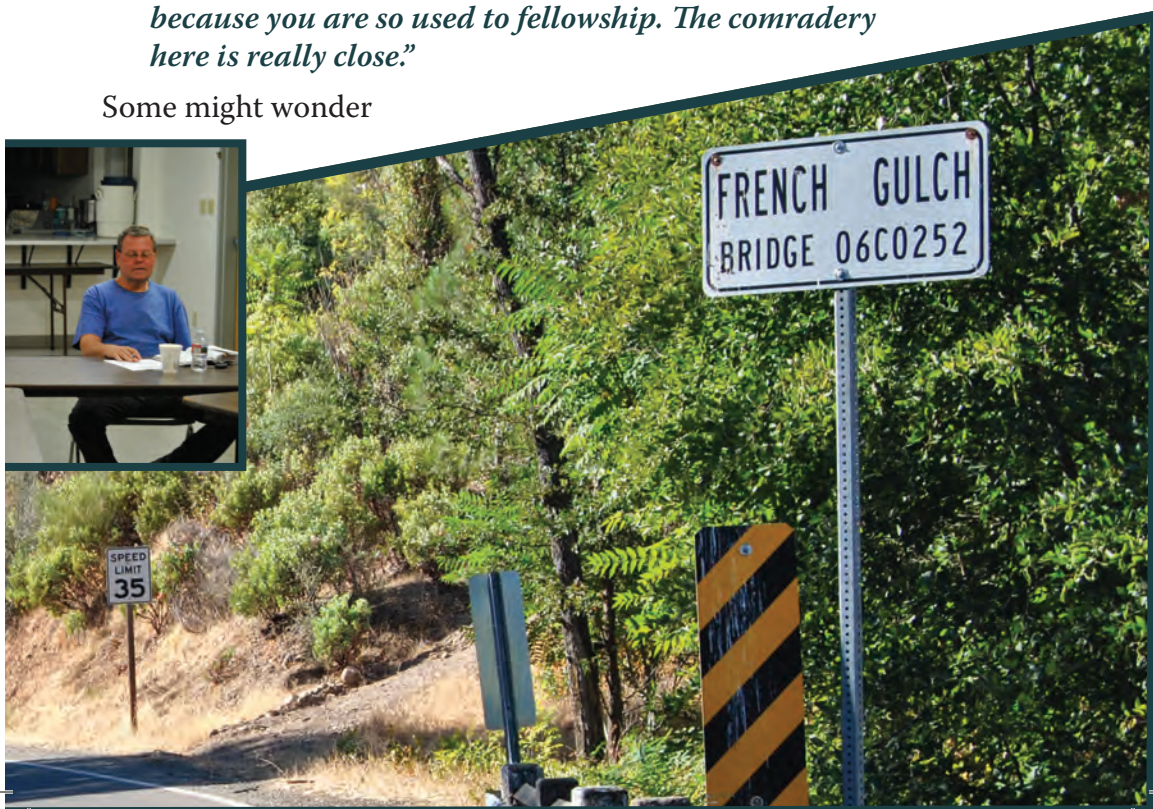
From soup suppers to harvest events, people are beginning to realize that the church isn't a scary place. The church is growing and the community is noticing. Not only are unchurched adults and children beginning to attend, local folks who had been traveling 15-20 miles for the closest church are finding a church family in their own neighborhood.

"We'd gone to a big church in Redding, but they've gotten so big," said church board member Glen. "It was hard to get involved. This has just been a wonderful church for us."

Attending a smaller church has now given both the opportunity to serve. Not only has Glen been able to serve as a board member, but his wife Bernice serves as the church treasurer as well.

"Since Jake, Kathryn and the kids came, more kids have shown up. Suddenly we have enough that we are having a Sunday School. It's infectious. You have people that are excited about coming to church and studying. If I don't go to Bible Study or prayer meeting, I miss it. One or two times this year we've had to cancel it, and it was like you hadn't seen people for a month, because you are so used to fellowship. The comradery here is really close."

Some might wonder



if a community church like French Gulch is necessary, or if Jake's seminary degree is being wasted. Yet, God is using both Jake's military and seminary training to show the truth of God's Word and help build authentic, Christian community in the town of French Gulch.

"This church is my family," said Cheryl. "I never imagined feeling this close to a group of people and to the pastor and his wife."

Cheryl experienced years of addiction and physical pain before rediscovering her childhood faith in the little church at French Gulch.

"I never stopped believing God, even when I was on drugs, but I didn't have a relationship with Him. I've learned so much from Jake and studying the Bible. It would be devastating if this church wasn't here."

"People are aware of the church in a community," said Glen. "Everyone that goes to church that lives right here in the community—people are watching them. So, I'm sure it's having a tremendous effect."

Not ALONE

The "tremendous effect" described by Glen is not an isolated event in French Gulch. The impact we've seen from Jake, Kathryn and the church in



French Gulch is just one of many stories happening across the United States and Canada. In fact, 34 Village Missionaries serving today are veterans of the U.S. military.

Like Jake, they made the sacrifices every soldier has to make to help defend our nation. And then, when God called them, they continued serving—this time in spiritual warfare—fighting for the eternal souls of lost men, women and children.

There are still sacrifices, but the freedom of souls is worth the fight.

Many of these Village Missionaries, like Jake and Kathryn, serve in churches that cannot afford a pastor. They rely on Village Missions to supply the necessary health benefits and salary for keeping missionaries in the community.

We need you to join the fight!

Will you join us and help keep churches like French Gulch alive and thriving? Will you help hardy, independent rural folks find their true hope in God? From the mountains of California to the beaches in Maine, your financial gift will help keep the gospel alive in rural and small town North America.



HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED

Many Village Missionaries, past and present, served with various branches of the United States & Canada military. We choose to recognize them here.

Army

Eric Anderson (Bowdoin, ME)
Richard Bauer (Associate)
Lyle Birkey (Deceased)
Michael Cappiello (Deceased)
David Cox (Oriskany, VA)
Tim Cumberland (Retired)
Larry Dahlborg (Retired)
Arnold Dalke (Deceased)
Paul Faris (Deceased)
Jimmy Francisco (Defiance, NM)
Jason Ham (Moapa Valley, NV)
Arthur Lyons (Associate)
Clifford McMullen (Retired)
Dave Possing (Hokah, MN)
Jeff Pratt (Retired)
Ron Sallee (Director, CDI)
Timothy Sander (Westport, WA)
Roger Schuck (Deceased)
Gary Shults (Retired)
Robert Skutevik (Fond du Lac, MN)
Ron Welch (Retired)

Army National Guard

Don Manning (LaPine, OR)
Ken Schubert (Retired)
Fred Tribble (Endicott, WA)

Marine Corps

Dean Bousman (Deceased)
Michael Kunkle (Bodgett Mills, NY)
Joe Mataya (Deceased)

Navy

Ken Ainsworth (Coram, MT)
Herman Boerman (Retired)
Paul Brandon (Retired)
Jim Bredow (Retired)
Herb Cambra (Deceased)
Ben Elliott (Deceased)
Jim Harkabus (Lakehead, CA)
Charles Hill (Deceased)
JQ Hunter (Retired)
Jeff May (Broadbent, OR)
John Mulvihill (Meadview, AZ)
Bob Rayburn (Deceased)
Tony Sunseri (Retired)
Valerie Williams (Lookingglass, OR)
Mike Winters (Mackay, ID)
Daniel Wuthrich (Mayer, AZ)

US Naval Reserves

Mickey Parker (Hinkley, CA)
Dan Tanner (Tanwax, WA)

WHO SERVED

Air Force

Jeff Black (Halsey, OR)
Nydia Black (Halsey, OR)
David Carr (Lenwood, CA)
Owen Corcoran (Gorham, NY)
Larry Dahlborg (Retired)
Stephen Fournier (Milford Center, NY)
Robert Grindle (Retired)
Steve Hanson (Retired)
Charles Highley (Double Adobe, AZ)
Jacob Leichliter (French Gulch, CA)
Mark Monroe (West Halifax, VT)
Tommie Owen (Tensed, ID)
Michael Preston (Graeagle, CA)
Jim Scanlon (Deceased)
Archie Smith (Lapeer, NY)
Gregory Stansel (Hauser, OR)
Michael Stiener (Retired)
Ken Weldon (Retired)

United States Coast Guard

Maury Jenkins (Kendrick, CO)
Jim Scudder (Retired)

Air National Guard

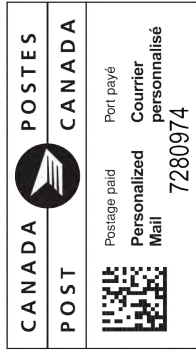
Steve Hanson (Retired)
Don Manning (LaPine, OR)

Canadian Armed Forces Air Force

Denis Pelland (Retired)

We are proud to recognize the many Village Missionary men and women who have served Canada and the United States of America. We are honored to have them choose Village Missions as their second career, and we know that the experience of the military has uniquely trained them to serve in full-time, ministry leadership. Their dedication and commitment, both to this country and the gospel, is a testament to their character and relationship with Jesus Christ.

 **Village Missions of Canada**
Keeping Country Churches Alive
1715 Davies Road
Sorrento, BC V0E 2W1



Keeping Country Churches Alive