



# COUNTRY *Matters*

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village Missions of Canada







## A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

In Village Missions of Canada, we emphasize long-term investment into the communities that we serve.

By staying and putting down roots, our missionaries build relationships with generations of people.

Because they are involved in the community, they have daily opportunities to share and demonstrate the love of Christ to those around them.

Years' worth of ministry develops the trust and rapport necessary to one day share the gospel.

Our Village Missionaries have selflessly dedicated their lives to preaching the word and loving the people in their rural communities.

However, in this edition of Country Matters, I want to tell you about just one of them.



Ron & Joan Germain, who joined Village Missions in 1996—have faithfully served in their one and only field—Northfield, Ontario—for all these years.

Their journey to Village Missions is just as incredible as their time in Northfield has been.

They have experienced both the joys and challenges that accompany rural ministry.

I pray that you will be encouraged by their story, and how their faithfulness to serve in this forgotten place reflects the faithfulness and patience of our God to find and redeem us.

In Him,

*Murray Graham*  
Murray Graham  
Executive Director



## THE APPOINTMENT

In the rural community of Northfield, Ontario, rests a small country church. The new pastor, only a few months into his ministry, had just finished a Sunday morning sermon. As he was greeting his congregation after the service, he noticed a lady walking up to him.



She plainly said, “I want to make an appointment with you.”

The pastor agreed, and they penciled in a time for them to meet together.

Just a few days later, he heard a gentle knock on his door. He greeted the lady and she blurted out, “I want to be saved!” After explaining to her what it means to be saved, he led her in prayer and she invited Christ into her life as Savior and Lord.

Many stories—including this one!—remind Village Missionaries Ron and Joan Germain, who have served in Northfield for 23 years, why God led them to this rural community, and how He has remained faithful to them all these years later.

## YOUNG LOVE

Ron and Joan Germain both grew up in eastern Ontario. Although Ron remembered hearing gospel stories while growing up, he did not trust in Christ until he was 19.

Joan, on the other hand, was saved when she was just 5 years old at her mother’s side. Experiencing salvation at such a young age, she realized children needed to be taught the Word of God. Joan developed a heart for children and youth ministries in ministry.

As a teenager, Joan started to pray that God would bring her a godly husband one day. She deduced that if she had not found such a man by the time she turned 16, she surely would become an old maid!

Around the same time, Joan’s sister happened to be dating Ron’s brother. The couple, along with Joan and a few other friends, decided to go bowling one evening. However, one of Joan’s friends was short of a date. Ron volunteered to be her date, and off the group went to enjoy a night of fun and fellowship.

Although they were dates for other people, Ron and Joan realized







they had an instant connection. Their very first meeting was a blind date of sorts—just not for each other!

Only after two weeks of spending time together, Ron proposed, and Joan joyfully accepted. They were married June 21, 1975.

### THE BEGINNINGS

Over the years, three children would be added to their family, and Ron would start a contracting business near Napanee, Ontario.

During this time, he sensed God's call to go into fulltime ministry. So, their family headed to NBBI, New Brunswick Bible Institute.



After graduation, the Germaines joined the world of church planting. These years were difficult as they lived through “tent making” ministry—pastoring fulltime while working part-time.

Feeling the early effects of burnout, the Germaines amicably stepped away from church planting. While attending

a conference at NBBI, Ron & Joan met Village Missionary Jon Van Kesteren, who presented a video about Village Missions in Canada.

However, Ron was not ready to return to ministry. So, he placed a copy of the video on his bookshelf, and decided to examine the case later.

One year later, Ron remembered the video and decided to watch it and was really impressed with the ministry of Village Missions.

*“After watching the video, I knew this was the path for us,” says Ron. “The missionary work, as well as the pastoral work, was exactly what my family needed to do.”*

Joan, however, did not have an immediate “aha” moment like her husband.

After seeing Ron so excited about the possibility of joining Village Missions, Joan decided to learn more about this rural ministry. And before long, she also felt the same sovereign call on her life.

Soon, Ron and Joan sent off their applications, followed by an interview with District Representative Bob Leisy. Afterwards, they





traveled to Kansas City for Candidate School in the fall of 1995.

Then, in May of 1996, the Germain family was transplanted to Northfield, Ontario, their first and only field.

And after 23 years of faithful ministry in this “off the beaten” path location, the Germaines feel as strongly as ever that this is still exactly where they need to be.

*“I love what we are doing in the Northfield community. We have found what God has called us to do,” says Joan.*

### EARLY STRUGGLES

The Germaines’ first few months in Northfield were not a walk in the park.

Before they arrived, Crossroads Congregational Church was a breakaway from a mainline denomination due to incorrect doctrine—which caused many people in the surrounding communities to think that the church was actually a cult.

Fearing closure, battling a negative reputation, and with internal struggles three months in, Ron phoned his DR Bob Leisy and told him, “I quit!” Bob traveled up from the U.S. and encouraged Ron to love the people and preach the Word, and that’s what they have been doing ever since.

While consolidating their church body more firmly, Ron and Joan allocated more energy in reaching the people in the community.

### MINISTRY IN NORTHFIELD

Along with helping farmers out in the field, or using carpenter skills to help out, Ron went door-to-door introducing himself, wrote articles for the local newspaper and visited people in the hospital, leading some to the Lord who were near death.

One of their most vibrant—and at times, hectic!—ministries was







reaching the local youth. With 3 teenagers at home, Ron and Joan developed a heart for loving on the kids in the Northfield area. They knew that if they could effectively reach the children, they could one day reach their parents.

Within 6 months of arriving in Northfield, Joan met a lady involved with “Key Bible,” an organization that worked in public schools. Joan joined, and soon shared the gospel with children who would otherwise never come to church. Parents, teachers, and school people began to recognize Joan; the students know her as the “Key Bible lady.”



For 12 years, the Germaines also opened their home every Monday night to any teen who wanted to come. Rain or shine, there were always youth over for food and games and a testimony. Some nights they had more than 30 kids!

This home ministry for teens was an answer to prayer for Ron, but Joan’s heart and involvement was in clubs for younger kids, such as their soccer program. The whole community was invited to attend their games, and Joan would teach the Bible to the kids at half time, while the parents sometimes listened in.



Although most parents simply watched from the sidelines, many of them appreciated how Ron and Joan invested in the lives of their children. This ministry has now spread into the teens and parents playing soccer as well.

They started a nursery in their church and went on to add more youth-based programs to help reach even more families in the community. At least 4 families have joined Crossroads Congregational Church because of the programs for their kids!

While Ron & Joan did not expect youth and children’s ministry to be the gateway into reaching their community, the Lord has certainly blessed their efforts as they still strive to reach the unsaved in Northfield by loving their little ones.







## ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION

When asked what they have learned after 23 years of serving in the same place, Ron and Joan replied, “You just have to be there for the people. They know you are there for the long haul, and into the next generation.”

Because the Germaines have remained faithful in Northfield—even through difficult times—their church has grown, and their rapport within the local area has strengthened.

Crossroads has also sent out members of their congregations into the broader mission field. This includes their son and daughter-in-law, who have just begun their work as Village Missionaries in Purdy, Ontario. Although Ron & Joan and the church were saddened to watch this family move on, they have peace knowing they are following the Lord’s will.

*“With so many people being sent out from our church, we feel as though we are accomplishing what we have been sent here to do,” say Ron & Joan.*



What an amazing testimony the Germaines have after 23 years of loving the people in Northfield. Although much has already been accomplished, the Lord is still writing their story.

You can be a part of the story that God is crafting through the work of Village Missions in rural Canada. You can enable Village Missionaries, like Ron & Joan, to Preach the Word and love the people in these forgotten communities.

Would you consider joining this incredible story of reaching the lost in these forgotten communities throughout rural Canada? It’s never too late to be a part of God’s ever-unfolding, always amazing story of grace and redemption.

Long-term investment is the key to rural missions. Doing ministry in one place for many years, sometimes decades, is a rare thing these days. Yet, we believe that remaining faithful to serving a small, unknown place is a noble task.

Missionaries like Ron & Joan Germain have been able to minister in Northfield for over two decades because of

donors who faithfully partner with us in keeping a gospel presence alive in rural Canada.

I hope you will consider today how you can help our missionaries – like Ron & Joan – continue to minister in their fields full-time and long-term.



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Keeping Country Churches Alive

