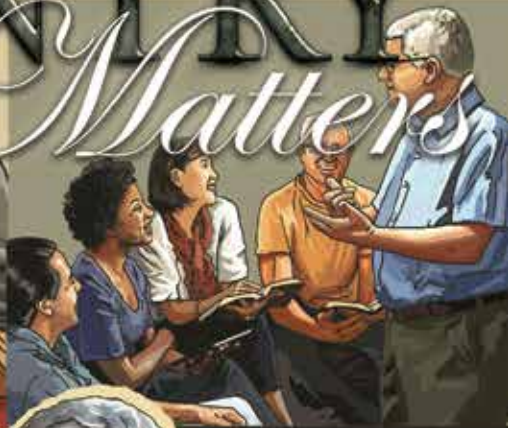


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# COUNTRY

# Matters



Village Missions of Canada



# A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

## The Linchpins

Have you ever heard of a linchpin? It's a small but vital piece of equipment that is found in numerous places around the farm. It also means "a person or thing vital to an enterprise or organization." At Village Missions, our District Representatives are this vital piece.



Their work takes place behind the scenes and their involvement can be quiet and unseen, much like a linchpin.

Yet, their work is vastly important because they are the ones who encourage and build up the ones who go to the front lines.

Our District Representatives—Henry & Marilyn Vandermeer—work tirelessly throughout the year, traveling thousands of miles and equipping our missionaries and churches.

I am so thankful that the Vandermeers can come alongside them with encouragement and support. And by September, another couple—missionaries Gordon & Valerie Rowland—will join Henry & Marilyn as additional District Representatives to help equip our churches together!

Because of our DRs, our missionaries do not have to go through the challenges of ministry alone. In this story, I want to share with you just a snapshot of how incredible Henry & Marilyn are.

As partners with us and ones interested in country churches, I know you will be excited to learn in the coming pages just how impactful and important are the linchpins of Village Missions—our District Representatives.

In Him,

*Murray Graham*

Murray Graham  
Executive Director



## LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Another Staff Conference at Greenbay Bible Camp had finally arrived. Smiles, hugs, and laughter filled the air like a family reunion. Missionaries from across Canada would meet together for a week of renewal and fellowship, each one carrying with them a story as unique as the fields that they serve.

Young interns who wed this past year. Seasoned missionaries who had just lost a close community member in a tragic accident. Another couple who is brand new to Village Missions.

Story after story revealed one common factor: how the ministry of District Representatives Henry and Marilyn Vandermeer personally impacted them.

Throughout the conference, you would observe the interactions between the missionaries and this couple. And your heart would melt.

Missionaries vulnerably sharing their burdens and praying for one another. Kids running up to Henry and Marilyn, arms outstretched and smiles wide. The solemnity of taking communion together.



And as everyone took each other's hand, singing Blest be the Tie that Binds, you too could feel the love and camaraderie that these Village Missionaries shared.

Your thoughts would be taken to the words of Jesus Christ, *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

John 13:35, NIV.

As another conference ends and missionaries return to their fields, this is not the only opportunity for them to be equipped for ministry.

In fact, they receive that twice a year when their beloved DRs,

Henry & Marilyn, stop by for a visit.

## TEACHER TO PREACHER

Ever since Henry & Marilyn met as college students many years ago, they have embarked on a life of mentoring the next generation, serving in Christian schools across Canada for 23 years.

In the late 90s, the Vandermeers decided to pursue ministry. They became Village Missionaries and served Nukko Lake, BC, for eleven years. In 2011, they stepped into the District Representatives role.

Each of the skills they have acquired over three decades of education and ministry, the Vandermeers have brought into their ministry of training our missionaries and strengthening our churches.

Twice a year, they visit each field for at least two days. Although their time together is short, what happens during that time is vitally important to both our missionaries and churches.



## MENTORSHIP

A crucial component of Henry & Marilyn's ministry is mentorship: investing in the lives of our missionaries and their families.

By taking the time to truly know our missionaries, the Vandermeers are better equipped to help them navigate the trials of rural ministry.

In fact, Henry & Marilyn set aside at least one full day for fellowship with the missionaries and their families. The Vandermeers have found that the real heart-to-heart

moments happen when everyone is most comfortable and enjoying each other's company.

Village Missionary Chris White, currently serving in Rich Valley, Alberta, personally understands how important a deepened relationship with your District Representative can be.

*“I would not be here today if it wasn't for Henry's faithful ministry in my life. I thank God continually for Henry and all that he has done for me and my family.”*

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPEMENT

Henry & Marilyn also care about strengthening the leadership of the churches. This is where their people skills and experience in education really blossom.

*“Most of the challenges that a DR faces are not theological,” Henry reveals. “They are practical human challenges—how we deal with conflict and with each other.”*

Usually the first day of the Vandermeer's bi-yearly visit focuses on meeting with the board members, assessing problems that threaten the health and unity of the church, and how they can best resolve them in a Biblical way.

Afterwards, Henry conducts a teaching workshop for both board and church members. Because of their remote locations and often lack of available finances, most of our churches would not normally be able to have learning opportunities like these.



*“We love Henry & Marilyn. They both take the time to care about people. They always bring something relevant to the leadership of the church to help us grow and draw people to Christ.”*

-Les Wilms | Upper Pine Gospel Chapel, Board Member

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Henry & Marilyn mentor our missionaries. They help our church leadership work through discord. But they also want to build strong relationships with the entire congregation.

The Vandermeers do not want to be elusive and unapproachable. They want to be trusted and known by everyone.

That can only happen if the District Representatives have better, stronger relationships with the church. And if they do, the easier it is to manage conflict when it comes.

Henry & Marilyn see that

## IT WILL LEAD TO A HEALTHIER, MORE UNIFIED BODY OF BELIEVERS.

investment into the whole church—not just the missionaries or the leadership—will inevitably lead to a healthier, more unified body of believers.

## TEAMMATES

During one of their visits, Henry was invited to join a game of hockey with a missionary and his friends. When he was introduced as the missionary’s “boss,” Henry chuckled and kindly replied, “we’re teammates.”

That is the heart behind Henry & Marilyn’s ministry—partnering



together with our missionaries and their churches as they strive to proclaim the gospel throughout rural Canada.

The role of the District Representatives is truly the linchpin of Village Missions. Henry & Marilyn provide the spiritual and practical support our churches need to be stronger witnesses for Christ in their communities.

And this fall, the “linchpins” of our ministry will experience some big—but exciting—changes!

After much prayer, our National Board of Directors has agreed to add another District Representative alongside Henry & Marilyn, who currently oversee all the churches in Canada. This couple will be Village Missionaries Gordon & Valerie Rowland, who have served with us for 40 years.



By adding another DR, the number of fields each couple oversee will decrease. This means they will have more time to adequately disciple, mentor, and equip our missionaries and churches.



Village Missions of Canada eagerly looks forward to these monumental changes, but we know that we cannot accomplish them alone.

*We need faithful supporters like you to stand with us and make this vision a reality. Now that you know just how vital the ministry of our District Representatives is, would you partner with us in providing the support that our missionaries need?*

The District Representatives truly are the lynchpin of Village Missions. They equip our missionaries for the challenges of rural ministry and help keep our churches spiritually healthy. And when our missionaries and churches are strong, the gospel will continue to be advanced in rural Canada.

I hope you see just how important and necessary their

ministry is. You can be a part of making their ministries more impactful. As we prepare for the expansion, would you consider giving to the DR Ministry today? Every gift will enable the Vandermeers—and very soon the Rowlands—to continue equipping our missionaries.



Keeping Country Churches Alive

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