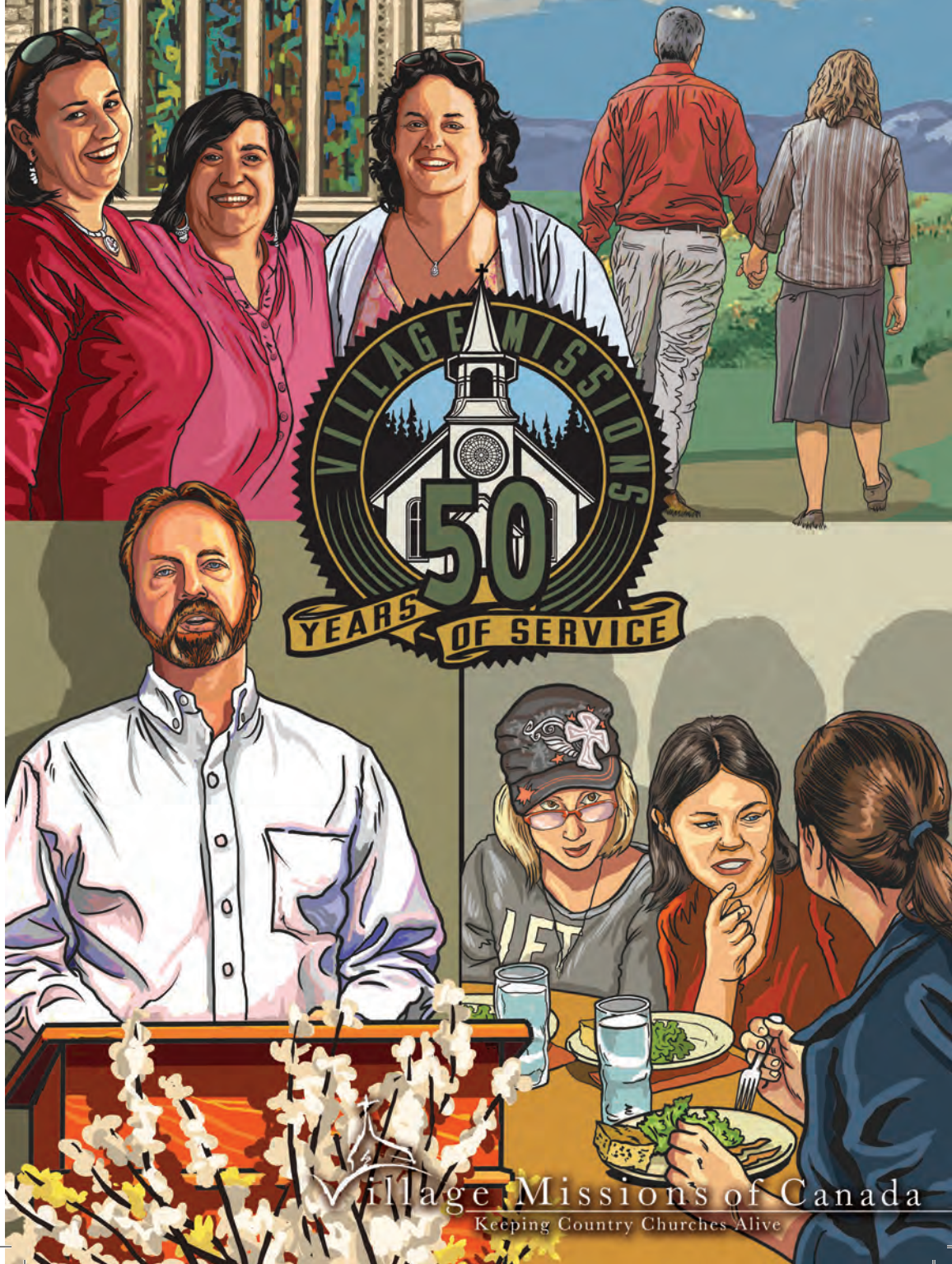


Canada: villagemissions.ca USA: www.villagemissions.org

COUNTRY Matters





A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

Encourage One Another...

Throughout Scripture, we are instructed to encourage each other. Here are a few examples.

"Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing... admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all" (1 Thessalonians 5:11,14 ESV).

"Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24 ESV).

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow" (Ecclesiastes 4:9 ESV).

"Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad" (Proverbs 12:25 ESV).

Believers across Canada fulfill these commandments every weekend when we come together for worship. We listen to those who are experiencing trouble and share an encouraging verse with them. We ask prayer for a specific situation and our brothers and sisters in Christ pray for us. This weekly encouragement gives us the strength to continue in "love and good works" throughout the coming week.



Life is different for Village Missionaries. They are the ones expected to give an encouraging word, to pray and preach and comfort the hurting. Like a shepherd, there is always a weight of responsibility to care for the flock.

Since Village Missions Canada began in July 1968, we have sought to encourage Village Missionaries through an annual Staff Conference.

This time away from ministry allows Village Missionaries to be encouraged by speakers and each other. I remember coming to these conferences tired and weary from ministry, yet leaving excited to minister to my church family for another year. Staff Conference is an incredible opportunity for missionaries and their families to come together for rest and encouragement.

I pray this issue of Country Matters blesses you, as we highlight the importance of staff conference and how it has helped missionaries, families and country churches over 50 years.

Standing with the Country Church,

Murray Graham

Murray Graham
Executive Director



A year as a Village Missionary is a whirlwind.

You experience joy, and you suffer pain. Triumph and defeat. Happiness and heartache. One day, you'll journal the amazing transformation in someone's life, reliving how the Lord brought them from the pits of addiction to the mountain of salvation. With sincere humility, you'll praise God for allowing you to be a part of it.

Other days, you'll feel too tired to journal, collapsing on the couch in utter fatigue after visiting with the parents of a suicide victim—wondering if you have the strength to stand before a hundred people and explain how a loving God could allow such a thing.

It's a challenge, but over 50 years, more than a thousand Village Missionaries have taken up the call to reach these unremembered people with the Good News that Jesus died for their sins.

ON THE *verge* OF BURNOUT

It was Saturday night, and Ron's father had just passed into eternity.

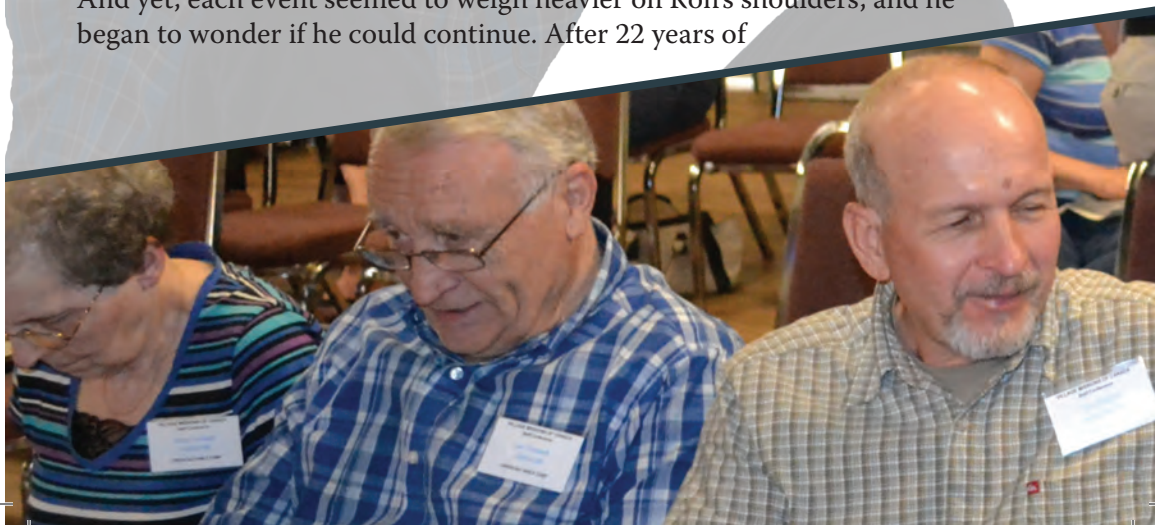
Bittersweet emotions swirled through Ron's head as he thought of his father. He remembered sitting next to his hospital bed just a month before, leading his dad in prayer as he accepted Jesus as his Savior.

It was a joy to know he was in Heaven. But now, he was gone, and there was nothing to do but move on.

"There was no funeral, and it was going to be a cremation," said Ron. "So, there was nothing I could do. I really didn't know how to respond at the time. I was prepared for Sunday, so I continued preaching."

Ministry went on as usual, with Bible studies, sports programs, visitations and funerals.

And yet, each event seemed to weigh heavier on Ron's shoulders, and he began to wonder if he could continue. After 22 years of



ministry, perhaps he'd finally hit his breaking point. Maybe it was just time to step away.

TIME TO *mourn*

With these thoughts fresh on his mind, Ron and Joan packed the car to drive to staff conference. Yet with all the business and responsibility of ministry, Ron wasn't sure he even wanted to go.

"When you are in the middle of ministry, you don't always feel you can take the time," said Ron. "You can't see past the moment."

As Ron and Joan began to mingle with the Village Missionaries, Ron immediately felt a weight begin to lift, but it was hearing Murray Graham speak during chapel that changed his whole perspective.

Ron listened as Murray spoke of his own relationship with his father, and how he had not taken time to grieve when his dad died.

"It caught my attention. I thought, maybe I don't need to pack it in."

As the five-day conference continued, Ron spoke with Murray and other missionaries, who encouraged him and prayed alongside him and Joan. By Friday, Ron was convinced God still had unfinished plans for him and Joan in Northfield.

"Conference helped me realize that what I need was to be rejuvenated."

Ron shared this realization with the church board; they encouraged him to take an extended break from ministry to be refreshed. Ron and Joan took almost two months "just to step back and take time to grieve."



INSET: MURRAY GRAHAM
SPEAKS DURING THE
CANADIAN CONFERENCE.
BELOW: RON & JOAN
GERMAIN (CENTER)
PREPARE FOR A SESSION.





While the 2017 Staff Conference was monumental in the Germain's' ministry, each year has been a blessing.

"It's an encouragement to keep going and be together with like-minded people. Sometimes Village Missionaries feel alone where they are at. It's a highlight to go to conference."

Each year, some Village Missionaries come to Staff Conference on the verge of burnout, and it's the encouraging prayers and wisdom of fellow missionaries that rawakens the passion for ministry within them.

If you ask a Village Missionary what conference means to them, each will tell you something different, but almost every answer comes down to four key areas.

Renewal
Encouragement
Strengthening
Training

It's so important that missionaries take a week each year to *rest* from their ministry. Whether it's some extra sleep, extra time to spend with the family or afternoons to chat with other Village Missionaries, this time of purposeful rest makes it possible for missionaries and their kids to recoup from a year of intense ministry.

Drawing away from ministry and coming together with other missionaries also allows Village Missionaries to *encourage* one another and be encouraged. Many missionaries experience similar difficulties, and conference is a valuable opportunity to encourage each other.



Encouragement leads to *strengthening*, as missionaries are reminded about the importance of their work. Finally, the missionaries are *trained* daily by qualified speakers.

Since the very beginning, Village Missions has been passionate about providing Staff Conference. We believe whole-heartedly that these district conferences save ministries.

Village Missionaries serve in some of the most remote and unremembered places across North America. For many, Staff Conference is their one chance each year to draw away from their responsibilities and connect with people who understand the things they face each day.

CONTINUING
THE *Legacy* A Village Missionary's first year in ministry can be a whirlwind, but so can the second, third, tenth and twentieth. Yet, in all the difficulties, joys, heartaches and changes, staff conference remains a constant source of renewal for them and their families.

But we can only provide this week of rest with your help!

Would you give a generous gift today to help send a Village Missionary family like Ron and Joan to conference?

Your donation of any amount will provide the renewal, encouragement, strengthening and training they need to continue reaching rural North America with the Good News of Jesus Christ! Through the joys and pain and uncertainty of ministry, you can help provide a week of REST.



Renewal, encouragement, strengthening and training are essential to the ministry of Village Missionaries. We provide this R.E.S.T for Village Missionaries every summer at Staff Conference. But we can't do

it without you! Your generosity gives missionaries the opportunity to take a step away from ministry, so they can return to their fields and passionately Preach the Word and Love the People.



Keeping Country Churches Alive

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