

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

COUNTRY *Matters*



village Missions of Canada



A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

Some Through the Fire

It is difficult to tell a story like this one.



Hillside Bible Church, a historic church in northwest Oregon, before the fire.

When the 118-year-old, picturesque, country church tragically burned down, it affected so many people. Generations of families attended Hillside Bible Church and could tell how they came to trust Christ as their Savior there. Beautiful weddings, baby dedications, baptisms, memorials, Christmas programs, Easter celebrations, youth groups, Bible studies, worship services and more were held within this frame over the decades.


As Village Missionary Tim Goold said, "It was a very special place to many people."

This story is also difficult to tell, because each detail of this event could be a story in and of itself on God's faithfulness. For example, District Representatives Mark and Bonnie Canady live only an hour from Hillside and were on the scene within hours of when the flames broke out to comfort and support Tim and Bonnie. Mark and Tim are lifelong friends, and only this year did Mark and Bonnie become District Representatives and move close to the Goolds.

Finally, the fortitude of this body of believers is a testament to their faith, and God's provision and goodness throughout this tragedy is nothing short of miraculous.

As you read this story, I hope you are encouraged by the faithfulness of God, inspired by the love and community in a country church and motivated by the example of steadfast Village Missionaries.

Standing with the Country Church,


Murray Graham
Executive Director

It was Saturday.

Preparations for tomorrow's worship services were in process. Village Missionary Tim Goold was working on a project at the church, while his wife, Bonnie worked on her computer at the parsonage.

Everything about the day was normal—except for the faint smell of smoke in the air as Bonnie walked toward the kitchen. As her eyes panned to the church everything changed.

Bonnie bolted out the front door, and before she'd reached the parking lot she could hear the snapping lumber and roaring flames from inside the church building.

Pacing the sidewalk just in front of the church, she resisted the thought that her husband could still be inside as the blazing flames engulfed the building. Not wanting to leave the church, yet needing immediate help, she screamed "FIRE!" Soon the neighbor could be



seen with cell phone in hand and she knew 9-1-1 had been contacted.

Moments later, Tim's car came flying down the road. Bonnie wrapped her arms around Tim briefly before he dashed to gather what valuables he could before the fire spread to his office beside the old church.

Church members and community friends began gathering as news of the fire spread as quickly as the smoke rising into the air. With tears and heavy hearts, the process of saying, "Goodbye" began.

Even while the lumber continued to crack from the relentless flames a group of loving members standing nearby could be heard saying, "Pastor, your church is fine! The church is fine! Look at us. We're right here and we're doing fine."

Seeing the burning church and his distraught pastor, board member Greg Bamford remembered Tim mentioning a difficult situation years ago when he'd been a pastor yet had no pastor to minister to him. Not wanting that to happen again, Greg contacted District Representatives Mark and Bonnie Canady, telling them what was happening.

"I told Mark our church was on fire and that Pastor Tim really needed him," said Greg. "He dropped what he was doing and within an hour they were there."

There were no words to be said, but Mark and Bonnie's simple presence made all the difference.



District Representative Mark Canady (in red) presents Tim Goold with a certificate honoring 40 years of ministry with Village Missions.

"The ministry of the District Representative is incredible. I looked up, and I was still burdened. But he just held me," said Tim.

"None of us could really help our pastor," said Greg. "At least it didn't feel like we could. It was wonderful to have someone to call on."

In their role, Mark and Bonnie minister to dozens of missionaries, just like Tim and Bonnie. They consider it a privilege to respond to the needs of all their missionaries.

But there is a special bond between Mark and Tim, who have known each other since childhood, when both of their parents were Village Missionaries in the Midwest. Mark only became a District Representative last year, and the place he and Bonnie chose to live happened to be only an hour away from Tim and Bonnie.

In His providence, God placed Mark and Bonnie exactly where they needed to be to minister effectively during this crisis.

THE CHURCH PEOPLE

The next morning was Sunday, and even though smoke was still rising from the ashes, the people of Hillside Bible Church met together, as always, to honor their Lord. The building was gone, but God's church at Hillside was alive and well. With a local camera crew filming the scene, the church of Hillside prayed with thanksgiving, worshipped their God Who never fails.

In the following days, it became apparent that the Lord had been graciously preparing this congregation for this trial as just days prior, Tim presented a message that included 1 Peter 4:12-13.

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation."

The following Sunday, the congregation met under a large, blue tarp over their basketball court. Worship and fellowship was sweet as they were reminded that God, and His faithful promises, are their unmovable foundation!



THE CHURCH TODAY

Greg Bamford has been a part of Hillside Bible Chapel his entire life. In fact, his great-great grandfather helped found the church in 1884. And yet, Greg can rejoice.

"It was a beautiful building," said Greg. "We loved it, and there was a ton of history, but that wasn't the church. The believers are the church. That building, as much as we loved it, was just a tool. And the fire really put things in perspective for us."

As the words rang true upon the church street sign before the fire, they ring true today:



Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good and His love endures forever. Ps 136:1

The congregation at Hillside can rejoice today, because they still have each other. They rejoice, because a fire that could easily have started on a hot and windy day, setting the entire community ablaze, instead began on a cool, calm rainy day. They rejoice because the part that was eternal—their souls—is still eternal.

Today, the congregation temporarily meets in a converted aircraft hangar, donated by a generous neighbor in the community. The location is new, but the mission of reaching the lost in the Hillside community has not changed. The God they worship has not changed. And the people's love and care for each other is stronger than ever.

As the people in Hillside say...

"We've lost our building, but the church is alive and well."

THE NEEDS OF RURAL CHURCHES

Over the 19 years since Tim and Bonnie arrived in Hillside, there has been much growth, both spiritually and numerically. Though the burnt ruins of their church building don't portray the many days filled with their labor of love, the fruit of the spirit witnessed among this body of believers is much more rewarding.

Today, there are hundreds of communities, like Hillside, in need of spiritual leadership that will accurately present the Word of God.

When you give to Village Missions, you help:

- Revitalize country churches
- Enable Village Missionaries to preach the Word and love the people
- Provide District Representatives who help guide and comfort Village Missionaries

By helping revitalize churches, you are also helping prepare congregations for tragedy. Through your giving, Village Missionaries can share the hope that Jesus brings every single week, and District

Representatives are able to walk beside churches and pastors each step of the way.

Because of faithful partners through the years, Hillside Bible Church has grown, not only as a self-supporting congregation, but one that also counts it a privilege to support other Village Missionaries.

Will you give a one-time gift today to help send Village Missionaries like Tim and Bonnie to rural communities? Your gift will help supply Village Missionaries to preach the Word and love the people—in the good times and in times of tragedy.



District Representatives meet regularly with potential recruits and Village Missionaries in their districts to answer questions and provide training. They walk through trials with their Village Missionaries, connect with them even while on the road, and build relationships with Village Missionary kids.



When a tragic fire destroyed Hillside's beautiful country church, the Village Missionaries and congregation felt enormous loss. Yet they remembered that the same God who gave them the building over a century ago will also carry them through this trial. When a congregation is familiar with the promises and faithfulness of God, they are prepared for times of tragedy. Today, you can

be a part of offering rural places like Hillside the opportunity to become familiar with the Scriptures, so people will know that God is trustworthy. Your one-time gift helps send Village Missionaries to the unremembered places of rural Canada, helping shepherd the local church and reach the lost in the community. Visit villagemissions.ca to make a difference today!

 Village Missions of Canada
Keeping Country Churches Alive
PO Box 3400
Missions BC V2V 4J5



Keeping Country Churches Alive