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COUNTRY

Matters



Village Missions of Canada



A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

Small, rural churches can seem insignificant in the grand scheme of things. Sure, they are impacting a few people, but are they truly important in the story of the global church and missions?

ARE SMALL CHURCHES TRULY IMPORTANT?

Yes, they are. I have learned that many full-time church and ministry leaders were introduced to Jesus and discipled in a rural church. We recently asked four rural churches in Alberta, ranging from 30-90 people in size, how many of their people are now serving in full-time ministry. The list of couples and singles added up to 30!

Clearly God is using rural churches to build his kingdom.

I'm hearing from several missionary couples that God is blessing their church's ministries to children and teens.

GOD IS BLESSING THESE MINISTRIES.

Ryley, AB: Before the pandemic we had 12 kids coming to youth group. Now nearly 30 come each week. What a blessing! We took 10 of our teens to a youth retreat for the first time in a couple years. It was a great weekend!

Boyle, AB: Our Youth Group has really taken off! Since we started it in November, over 20 kids

have been attending. They all enjoy it and are even bringing their friends. After not having any youth activities in our community for the past two years, kids seem to have really latched on to this. We are excited to see kids coming through the doors of the church!



Kids from Boyle Gospel Chapel play a game during youth group.

Some churches are resuming Sunday School again after several years. Others are starting to prepare for Vacation Bible School.

As you can see, Village Missionaries desire to invest in children, help them embrace God's love in Jesus Christ, and instill in them God's Word to shape their lives and choices. Some of the children they reach today might be the ministry leaders, missionaries and pastors of tomorrow!

This month you'll read about a ministry that is bringing joy and truth to children in rural Manitoba. I hope you are encouraged by the way God is using this missionary couple's creativity and commitment.

Serving our Savior together,

Murray Graham

Murray Graham
Executive Director

For children in Amaranth, Manitoba, there isn't much to do on Friday evening. But one place is attracting them: Amaranth Gospel Mission's basement. It's a colorful, welcoming space, and any children who enter feel loved and valued. Here, during Kids Club each week, they learn about the Bible and God's love.



Kaylee Foster painted this mural to illustrate Kids Club lessons about Ruth.



The first thing children see is a large mural depicting a scene from the Bible. During the evening they sing songs, watch a Bible lesson, complete a craft and play a game. Older children enjoy the challenge of sword drills.

Amaranth Gospel Mission is a small church, but the missionary pastor and his wife have a big heart for children.

KIDS CLUB IN A BAG

This Kids Club is one of the first things Jay and Kaylee Foster initiated as a married couple, and their commitment and creativity have made it special.

They started Kids Club in the fall of 2020. There are few children at the church on Sundays, so Jay and Kaylee took invitation flyers to homes around Amaranth.

Eight children, ages 4-12, came on the first evening of Kids Club. It was a promising beginning.

But less than four months later, the Fosters had to close the basement doors due to their province's pandemic mandates.

The Fosters didn't bring Kids Club to an end, though. Instead, they thought of a way to take Kids Club to the children. Every family received a flyer with this message:

"In these uncertain times, nothing is as certain as God's love for you and your family! And that's why Amaranth Gospel Mission exists—to share the message of his great transforming love for all people. We would like to help your children know the great love that their Creator has for them. We'll do this in a fun way: Kids Club in a Bag."



Each week Jay and Kaylee filled plastic bags with a lesson worksheet, craft supplies and a snack and delivered them to the children's homes. Jay wrote songs to help the children learn the memory verses. He and Kaylee posted online short videos of the songs and crafts.

Kids Club in a Bag brought about unexpected blessings. The Fosters met more parents and had opportunities to talk with them each week. Kids Club members told their friends about the bags, and soon the Fosters were delivering bags to families they hadn't met before. Circumstances that isolated people instead helped Jay and Kaylee make more connections in their community!

In March 2021 the basement doors were open for Kids Club once again. 16 children came, enough to divide the club into two age groups. Only 4 of these children are in a church service on Sundays. Some are from First Nations families because Amaranth has a large indigenous population and is next to the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation Reserve.

GIFTED BY GOD AND WORKING TOGETHER

Jay and Kaylee are a gifted couple, and the Kids Club lesson each week is proof of that. The lesson is told through a video produced by Jay and long-time church member, Calvin Baker.

When Jay first asked Calvin to narrate the lesson videos, he was hesitant. But then he remembered his childhood and the two women who used to come to Amaranth to



hold Bible lessons at the school. In the winter, they came on snowshoes!

"I always admired them, and I thought that by doing this with Jay, I can instill God's truth in kids' minds like those women did for me."

Kaylee uses her artist's brush to make the lessons come alive. On large pieces of fabric, she paints murals that illustrate the Bible story or theme. One mural portrayed Moses addressing the Israelites from the mountain. The current mural is 20' wide by 5' tall and portrays Jesus speaking to the crowds.

Jay teaches a lesson during Kids Club; another of Kaylee's murals can be seen to the right.



Shirley Merke is one of the Kids Club assistants.
"Our church hadn't had a children's program like this in about 10 years. Now we're connecting with and discipling kids who don't have a church background."

She enjoys seeing the children's excitement as they learn about the Bible and especially when they understand what Jesus did for them.



Shirley (in the back) helps with the Kids Club each week.

INSTILLING GOD'S TRUTH IN YOUNG MINDS

Jay believes he has a responsibility to teach children about God and the Bible.

"God gave me the gift of a Christian family and upbringing, and I can bless others who don't have that. Without Kids Club, what would fill these kids' minds and shape their understanding of God and their identity?"

One boy in Kids Club lost his father in a snowstorm a few years ago. During a lesson on the Lord's Prayer, Jay was

very happy to explain that God wants us to call him our Father. This truth was a comfort to the boy's tender heart.



A FULL CHURCH

One Friday evening in May, Amaranth Gospel Mission was filled with the chatter of over 60 excited children, parents and grandparents. Jay and Kaylee were surprised—and delighted!—by the turnout for their first Kids Club play.

The evening began with a pizza dinner in the church basement. Jay called the Kids Club members to come upstairs for a final rehearsal while their parents had dessert and coffee. He noticed right away that several children remained seated. They were cousins and friends of Kids Club members. Jay invited them to be in the play, too.

"Kaylee and I fit them into any role we could!"

The children portrayed the events of Good Friday as told through a song about the Lamb of God. Jay concluded the evening by pointing out several reasons why Good



Friday is good news. Then the younger children sang a song they had learned in Kids Club. The sound of children's voices filling the church in praise was a beautiful encouragement to the people of Amaranth Gospel Mission.



On the evening of the Good Friday Kids Club play, the church basement was packed with parents and community members.



COMING SOON!

We are excited to give you a sneak peek of a new component to our ministry—the **CONNECTIONS MINISTRY!**

Meaningful connections and relationships are vital to the health of the church community, and even more important in fulfilling the great commission—SHARING the Hope we have in Jesus. We know that Village Missions is not alone in our desire to share the love of Jesus with people in our own backyard—rural Canada.

The **CONNECTIONS MINISTRY** will focus on two aspects:

1. Church-to-Church Connections



We will seek to match the ministry needs in rural VM churches with other churches and Missions' groups desiring to be involved in local missionary work (ie. community projects or Vacation Bible School)

2. VM Ambassadors

Imagine what could happen if the people who already love and support our ministry take their support to a whole new level?



We are excited to see how God will bring believers together in reaching rural Canada for Christ!

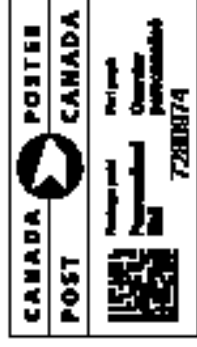
**STAY TUNED AS WE PREPARE TO LAUNCH
OUR NEW CONNECTIONS MINISTRY!**

In rural communities, the church is a foreign place for many children. They haven't read the Bible or heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their minds and values are being shaped by voices and influences that lead children away from their Creator. Village

Missionaries and their churches desire to change that. **Would you give a gift today to help them reach children with the love of Christ and disciple them in God's truth?**



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Helping Country Churches Thrive