

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

COUNTRY Matters



Village Missions of Canada



A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

We love to hear about lives transformed by God through the ministry of Village Missionaries.

"I found Christ through the ministry of Village Missions...."

"I don't know where we'd be without Village Missions."

"My father became a Christian at a VM church. Then he went to Bible college and became a Village Missionary."

We hear words like these from people at churches and at conferences or in a note that accompanies a donation.

These stories reflect the power of the Gospel.

They also remind us that we stand on the shoulders of many who have faithfully preached God's Word and loved people in over 1,000 small towns and rural communities in the US and Canada over the last 75 years.

Yes, 75 years. In September 1948, Village Missions was established through the vision of the Duff family and the prayers and generosity of many people in the United States.

The first Village Missions couple in Canada started serving in 1968, but our story goes back to 1948, so we celebrate with the VM family in the U.S. We join them in recognizing God's provision and leading over these 75 years. Together we celebrate the many lives transformed through the faithful work and prayers of Village Missionaries and the churches they led.

Serving our Savior together,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Murray Graham". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

Murray Graham, Executive Director

THE WORK OF GOD IN A RURAL CHURCH



Donna Webb Lyon clearly remembers the day she first heard of Village Missions. It was a Sunday in September 1948, and the Webb family was seated in the fourth row of the church at Cannon Beach Conference Center on the Oregon coast. After songs, prayer and the offering, Pastor Archie McNeill invited Walter Duff to present his vision of sending missionary pastors to the villages and rural areas of America. Archie decided to pass the offering plate again for donations to this new ministry.

Donna's father asked his wife for money, but she whispered that they'd already given their tithe. The plate started down row one, then row two. Donna's father asked his wife again, and she shook her head. As the offering plate was passed down row three, he asked once more. Exasperated, his wife put her hand in her purse and handed him a bill. He placed it on the plate. Then she watched the plate go by...with a \$100 bill on top!

And so it began.

Donna's family couldn't foresee all the lives that would be touched and transformed by this fledgling ministry in the United States and Canada. Here are the stories of a few of those people.

1960s: STARBUCK, WASHINGTON

Judy Jackson doesn't recall ever hearing about God as she was growing up. She certainly never went to church. It wasn't until she was a young bride in Starbuck, Washington, that she heard about God. Judy's journey to knowing her Creator started when Village Missionaries Dick and Alice Dewsnap visited Judy and Don and invited them to church. Judy and Don started attending occasionally.



*Don & Judy Jackson &
Starbuck Community
Church*

The next Village Missionaries at Starbuck were Francis and Rose Mary Klontz. One weekend a visiting evangelist spoke. Today, nearly 50 years later, Judy still clearly remembers his message on John 15: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you abide in me, and I abide in you, you will bring forth much fruit. For without me, you can do nothing" (v. 5).

"I had no doubt that Jesus was not in me, and I was not in him," Judy said. "I understood the Gospel that day, and it was life-changing for me."

Later Don also placed his faith in Jesus. The following year, when Judy's brother came to visit, the Klontzes led him to the Lord as well! He then served as a foreign missionary.

Tony and Mary Sunseri were the next missionaries at Starbuck. They encouraged the church family to study and memorize the Bible. Every Saturday the Jackson family participated in the Bible Memory Association program at the church.

"The verses I memorized have nurtured my soul all these years," Judy said.

Don and Judy had a strategic ministry in their home. In addition to their four children, they fostered 35 children and adopted three. Judy gives God all the glory for this.

"Before becoming a Christian, I couldn't even live my own life let alone invite others in to walk with me."

"I don't know where we'd be without Village Missions. The Dewsnaps planted the seed. The Klontzes watered it. And under the Sunseris, God's Word became my strength for life."



*From left to right: Tony & Mary Sunseri; Dick & Alice Dewsnap;
Francis & Rose Mary Klontz*



In 1968, interested Canadians asked if Village Missions would consider the spiritual needs of Canada. Reverend Duff commissioned Christine Schuman, a Youth Home Missionary, to survey rural areas in Canada needing missionary pastors. The first Canadian VM field was opened that same year in Willow River, British Columbia.

1980s: GLEN KERR, SASKATCHEWAN

When Ryan Schapansky received his driver's license, he decided to go to Glen Kerr Community Bible Church. Ryan was raised in a Christian family, but he wanted to go to church with his friends from school. He participated in the weekly youth group, too, and became acquainted with Pastor Arnold Tracey.

Arnold and Eleanor Tracey were new Village Missionaries and very young. They poured themselves into the teens in the church and community.

One night at youth group, Ryan dedicated his life to God.

Arnold invited Ryan to come to his house weekly for lunch and one-on-one discipleship. ***"He helped me get grounded in the Word and in the faith,"*** Ryan said. Arnold baptized Ryan in the South Saskatchewan River.

One day Arnold told Ryan that a boy at his high school had become a Christian. Ryan was dubious. Ben Hamm, a Christian? Everyone avoided him because he had some strange interests and habits. Ryan decided to befriend Ben, and he quickly discovered that Ben had been transformed by Jesus!

The two teens formed a band with another friend and Arnold and Eleanor Tracey. They practiced at Ryan's family's farm and played at the church.

The Traceys moved to a different field in 1987. After high school,



Ryan Schapansky (top) at Glen Kerr Community Bible Church; a Glen Kerr youth campout (bottom)

Ryan drifted away from God for 15 years. Then he had a powerful experience with the Holy Spirit and became passionate about Jesus and telling others about him. Today Ryan and his wife are very involved in their church in Swift Current. And Ben? He's pastoring a rural church.



1990s: HORSEFLY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

In 1993 Alan and Bonnie Klein drove for six days to reach their first field in Horsefly, B.C. On their first day there, a woman rode up to the parsonage on horseback. Bonnie invited her in and sat with her on the couch. Yvette Cormier introduced herself and told

Bonnie about her family and some difficulties in her life. Bonnie shared that she had experienced similar difficulties and found healing through Jesus' forgiveness and grace. Yvette needed no persuasion. She placed her faith in Jesus Christ that day.

Yvette and her family started attending Cariboo Christian Church of Horsefly. She grew in her faith, and her sons learned God's Word in Sunday School. She was a friendly, outgoing person, and she enjoyed being part of the church family.

In 1997 Yvette was kicked by a horse and died from the injuries. Alan conducted her funeral service.

"We marvel at God's timing and how he brought us all the way to Horsefly, prompted Yvette to visit us that day and gave her faith to accept Jesus. We only knew her a few years, but we have assurance that we will see her again one day."

STILL TRANSFORMING LIVES

God continues to use Village Missionaries to touch and transform lives in small towns and rural areas. As we commemorate Village Missions' 75th anniversary, we are celebrating God's work through missionaries and VM partners. We are praising Him for transformed lives, for the missionaries and families who have faithfully served, and for the ministry partners who have generously given for the growth of His kingdom in the U.S. and Canada. We are also trusting Him for the years ahead.

Remembering GARY SEMENYNA 4/8/1960-3/19/2023

Gary Semenyina liked to say, "Save your fork—the best is yet to come." He wasn't just talking about dessert—he was urging God's children to keep an eternal perspective and anticipate the day they would see Jesus face to face. For Gary, that day came on March 19, 2023.

Since May 2021, Gary and Patsy Semenyina were District Representatives for the East and West District. They were on their spring rounds, visiting and building up missionaries and rural churches, when Gary died.

Previously they served as Village Missionaries in Sturgis, SK (1991-1997) and Wasa, B.C. (1997-2015).



Village Missionaries Terry and Jane Baskin have known Gary and Patsy since they attended Bible college together.

"We've always appreciated their commitment to the principles of God's Word and their burden for the lost. We were blessed to share together and support one another during the joys and trials of ministry. On some occasions, they drove six hours to be with us in times of grief and difficulty. In the last couple years, their DR visits were a special encouragement to our family and our church body."

Many people were touched by Gary's life and ministry. We will remember his love for God and his Word. We will miss Gary's sense of humor and the way he used drama to share the Gospel and teach Biblical principles. We will always be grateful for his faithful service in rural churches and communities as well as to missionary families. In his memory, we will remind each other that the best is yet to come.




As we celebrate the lives transformed since Village Missions was founded, we also recognize that the need in rural Canada is just as great today. Many communities lack a Bible teaching church or can't find a pastor. Through the decades, countless

ministry partners have helped Village Missions send and support rural missionaries. Would you partner with us to keep the Gospel hope shining in rural Canada?



Canada: villagemissions.ca 866.885.3885 | USA: villagemissions.org 800.617.9905

 Village Missions of Canada
PO Box 3400
Mission, BC V2V 4J5



RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED
PORT DE RETOUR GARANTI

Helping Country Churches Thrive