

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

COUNTRY *Matters*



Village Missions of Canada



A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

Progress is a small unincorporated community in the Peace River Country of British Columbia. If you drive through Progress, you'll see eight houses and an unpretentious log church called Peace Mission Chapel. At first glance, this church seems unimpressive, but it is evidence of God's miraculous work.

WHY DOES VILLAGE MISSIONS EXIST?

Peace Mission Chapel's story answers the question, "Why does Village Missions exist?"

Peace Mission Chapel was started in 1968 through the pioneering efforts of Christine Schuman, a Youth Home Missionary assigned to find potential places for Village Missions in Canada. When she first visited the area, she was told, "You'll never get people in Progress to go to church."

Today Peace Mission Chapel is the longest-served current Village Missions church. It is the only church within a 30-kilometer radius and draws people from the surrounding communities and as far as Dawson Creek.

The residents of Progress and the surrounding area value it highly. Retired Village Missionary Lee Stephenson saw just how much when the church family built an addition for a larger sanctuary in 2007.

"People from the community—some who didn't attend the church—offered to help because they said Peace Mission Chapel meant a lot to them. We always had the right number of men for the job we had to do that day. Some people handed us cheques. Others loaned us trucks and equipment. Neighbors who owned an electrical business wired the building for free without us



even asking. We started construction in May, and the addition was completed by December."

DEVELOPING SPIRITUALLY VITAL CHURCHES

But Village Missions' purpose isn't to create community spirit or construct church buildings. Village Missions exists to glorify Jesus Christ by developing spiritually vital churches in rural Canada so that people hear the Gospel, see it lived out, and are transformed by it. And that's

the story of Peace Mission Chapel. In the following pages, you'll meet people whose lives were transformed because Progress has a church where committed missionary pastors teach God's Word and model how to love people.

Serving our Savior together,

Murray Graham

Murray Graham, Executive Director



Bill & Lorna Powell

When Bill and Lorna Powell were told they would be sent to Progress, they were a little reluctant, but the Powells agreed to go. They moved to Progress in September 1980.

Looking back today, they view their five years in Progress as the highlight of their ministry with Village Missions because of the amazing ways they saw God work.

Early one morning someone knocked on the parsonage door. Bill opened it to see a man standing outside. With great excitement, the man said he had led his two daughters to Christ. Lorna, listening from the bedroom, said to herself, "I can't believe this place!"

GOD OF THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE

A new family moved in next door. "When I first saw Marilyn Oltmanns, because of my own insecurities, I was a little afraid of her," Lorna said. "She scared me. I thought I'd never reach her." Even after they started playing on the



same baseball team and their daughters became close friends, Lorna was hesitant to talk to Marilyn about Jesus. Lorna was stunned when on Easter Sunday, Marilyn told Bill and Lorna, "I need Christ."

Through Bible study and the work of the Holy Spirit, Marilyn grew into a vibrant Christian. She led others to Jesus Christ as well.

After Marilyn died in 2014, her daughter sent Lorna a note.

"It is by God's grace that he placed you and Bill in my mother's life in Progress. It is by God's grace and your willingness to share the Gospel that she came to have a loving relationship with the Lord. [Her faith] was passed on to two generations after her, and her love for Christ shines through many of the lives she was a part of."

IT'S BY GOD'S
GRACE

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The Powells became friends with an older couple named Rod and Phyllis Bedell. They were well-known and highly respected. Phyllis was a Christian, but Rod was not. After he was diagnosed with terminal cancer, Bill and Lorna started holding a Bible study at their home for Phyllis. Rod sat in on it for some time. Then he listened from the bedroom. But he refused to believe.

One day the Powells contacted Stonecroft's prayer



chapel and several churches and friends, asking them to pray for Rod. The next day he asked Phyllis to lead him to Christ!

In the following days, he told his family and all his visitors about his faith in Jesus Christ. Then he slipped into a coma and didn't recover.

THE MESSAGE CONTINUED TO BE DECLARED

The message he so eagerly shared in his last days continued to be declared. About 450 people came to his memorial service in Dawson Creek. Knowing that Rod was regarded as an exceptionally good man, Bill explained that when Rod placed his faith in Christ, he became a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Then he asked, "If Rod, being the good man that he was, needed Christ, what about the rest of us?" Some answered that question by giving their lives to Christ that very day.

God was at work in Progress, drawing people to Himself and transforming them!

SENT OUT AND WELCOMED BACK



The Manns in front of Peace Mission Chapel in 1993.

During the Powells' time at Peace Mission Chapel, the young people's group grew to over thirty people. One of the leaders was a young college student named Kathleen Rose.

In 1991, Kathleen moved back to the area with her husband, Bill Mann. They settled down and started raising a family. "Peace Mission Chapel was an anchor to us during those years," Bill said. "During that



time the Word of God became more solidified in my life."

After a missionary with New Tribes Mission of Canada (now Ethnos Canada) gave a presentation at the church, the Manns sensed God's leading to foreign missions. They moved to Bolivia and spent 17 years with a small, isolated indigenous group living in the foothills of the Andes Mountains. They focused on translating the Scriptures, church planting and discipleship of believers.

Peace Mission Chapel was part of their ministry partner team. Every year they sent the Manns a card signed by everyone and a photo of the church family. They also sent gifts to help meet the needs of the Bolivian villagers.

In 2017, Bill and Kathleen moved back to B.C. and asked God what He wanted them to do next.

"Our eyes had been opened to the needs of the 'bypassed and forgotten' peoples of the world," Bill said.

OUR EYES
WERE OPENED

Around that time, District Representative Henry Vandermeer challenged them to consider serving the bypassed people of Canada with Village Missions.

Bill and Kathleen started a VM internship at Peace Mission Chapel in 2019. In 2022, they became full-time Village Missionaries there.



The Manns during a session at Candidate School

"About 4 years ago the demographics of our church were not encouraging. We were aging out, with only a couple young children and a few teenagers in the congregation. Since then, however, several young families have come, and we are once again hearing the sweet sound of crying in our midst—the future Peace Mission Chapel!"

JUST DOWN THE ROAD

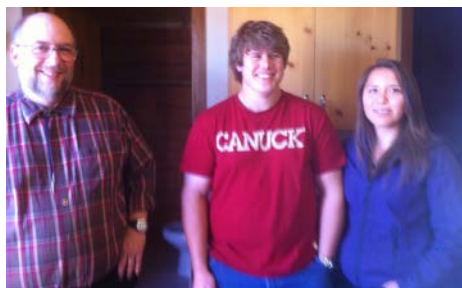
Richard Houde moved to Progress in 2002 with his wife and a grandson they were raising. Their house was just down the road from Peace Mission Chapel, but Richard wasn't interested in church or any of the activities there. He had led a rough life and didn't believe in a loving God.

Richard and his wife separated but shared custody of Dakota. Richard loved Dakota and tried to give him some stability. But Dakota became rebellious, angry and destructive. At twelve years old, he was arrested for

vehicle theft. As a young teen, he started taking drugs. He also dropped out of school.

One day Richard met Pastor Lee Stephenson at

Lee Stephenson visiting with community members.



the local garbage dumpsters. They chatted whenever they ran into each other there and soon became friends.

After some years, Richard began going occasionally to church services at Peace Mission Chapel. He took Dakota, hoping that it would have a positive influence on him.

Then one evening Richard called Pastor Lee with a plea for help. In an outburst of anger, Dakota had torn up Richard's home.

"I knew I couldn't handle it anymore," Richard said. "I remembered a verse I heard at church: 'Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I gave Dakota to God."

*I KNEW I
COULDN'T
HANDLE IT
ANYMORE*

Richard has attended Peace Mission Chapel faithfully from then on. He was baptized on July 28, 2019, by Pastor Lee. Pastor Bill was there, too.

"Richard is truly an example of a life transformed by the Gospel of Christ," Bill said.

Dakota continued to struggle and was in and out of detention centers. In November 2022, at 19 years old, he was shot and killed.

Richard doesn't know how he would have survived



Richard Houde (left) with Bill & Kathleen Mann

without the Lord's help and the love and support of his church family at Peace Mission Chapel.

Before Peace Mission Chapel was founded, some people doubted that anyone in Progress would go to church. But over the years, God has drawn people to the church in surprising ways and miraculously transformed lives. Because of Peace Mission Chapel, the Gospel has been proclaimed in that part of the Peace River Country for decades and continues to go forth.

*Folks from Peace Mission Chapel enjoy a campout (top);
Bill Mann (bottom left) performs a baptism.)*



Partner \part-ner also pard\ noun

1. One that shares: partaker

2. a. One associated with another especially in an action: associate, colleague

b: either of two persons who dance together



Have you ever looked at some of the great financial partnerships in the Bible? Moses asked the Israelites to give for the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 25). Several women supported Jesus in His ministry (Luke 8). The Apostle Paul commended the Philippian believers for their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now (Philippians 4).

Executive Director Murray Graham created a special message for you! He shares what God has done and introduces our new campaign, "Partnering Together".

Watch the video from Murray Graham and learn more about this opportunity. Just use your smartphone's camera to scan the QR code at right, or visit villagemissions.ca/partnering-together




Throughout the history of Village Missions of Canada, we've learned to never say never. Some people said, "You'll never get people in Progress to go to church." They were wrong, and a church has existed there since 1961. We've seen over and over that nothing is impossible with God! Places that are spiritually dark and individuals who are indifferent to God are

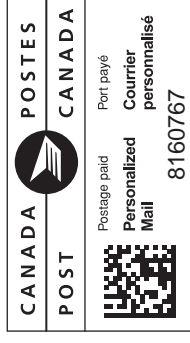


Canadian Centre for
Christian Charities
ACCREDITED MEMBER

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

not outside of His transforming grace. That's why we send missionary pastors to small, rural communities. It's why they faithfully preach and teach God's Word and love the people around them. We can't do this important work without your partnership! Would you commit to giving monthly to help send missionary pastors who help country churches thrive?

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



RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED
PORT DE RETOUR GARANTI

Helping Country Churches Thrive