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

Country Matters



Village Missions of Canada

From the Director's Desk

with Guy & Geni Shields
Executive Director



In July, Geni and I pulled up at Bethel Gospel Camp in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. The shimmering lake beckoned us, but we weren't there for a canoe ride. We were there to offer a challenge to the summer staff.

> *"Have you considered the possibility that Christ is calling you to a lifetime of Kingdom service?" I asked the teens and young adults gathered for their morning debrief. "Maybe He opened up this opportunity to serve at Bible camp as a first step into full-time Christian service."*
>
> *"As the blood-bought children of God, our lives are not our own to do with as we please. They are a stewardship from God to be used for His glory (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Christ gave us a command to go and call the nations to loyalty to Him (Matthew 28:18-20). I encourage you to pray about your response."*

Then I narrowed the focus to service with Village Missions and the possibility that Christ would call the young men seated there to shepherd His flock in small-town and rural Canada.

This visit to Bethel Gospel Camp is part of Village Missions of Canada's new initiative to present the need and the opportunity for Kingdom workers to teens and young adults at Bible camps.

I believe that engaging Christian young people at this stage in life is important. They are old enough to think seriously about what God would have them do with their lives. They are already facing decisions about what direction to take after graduation.

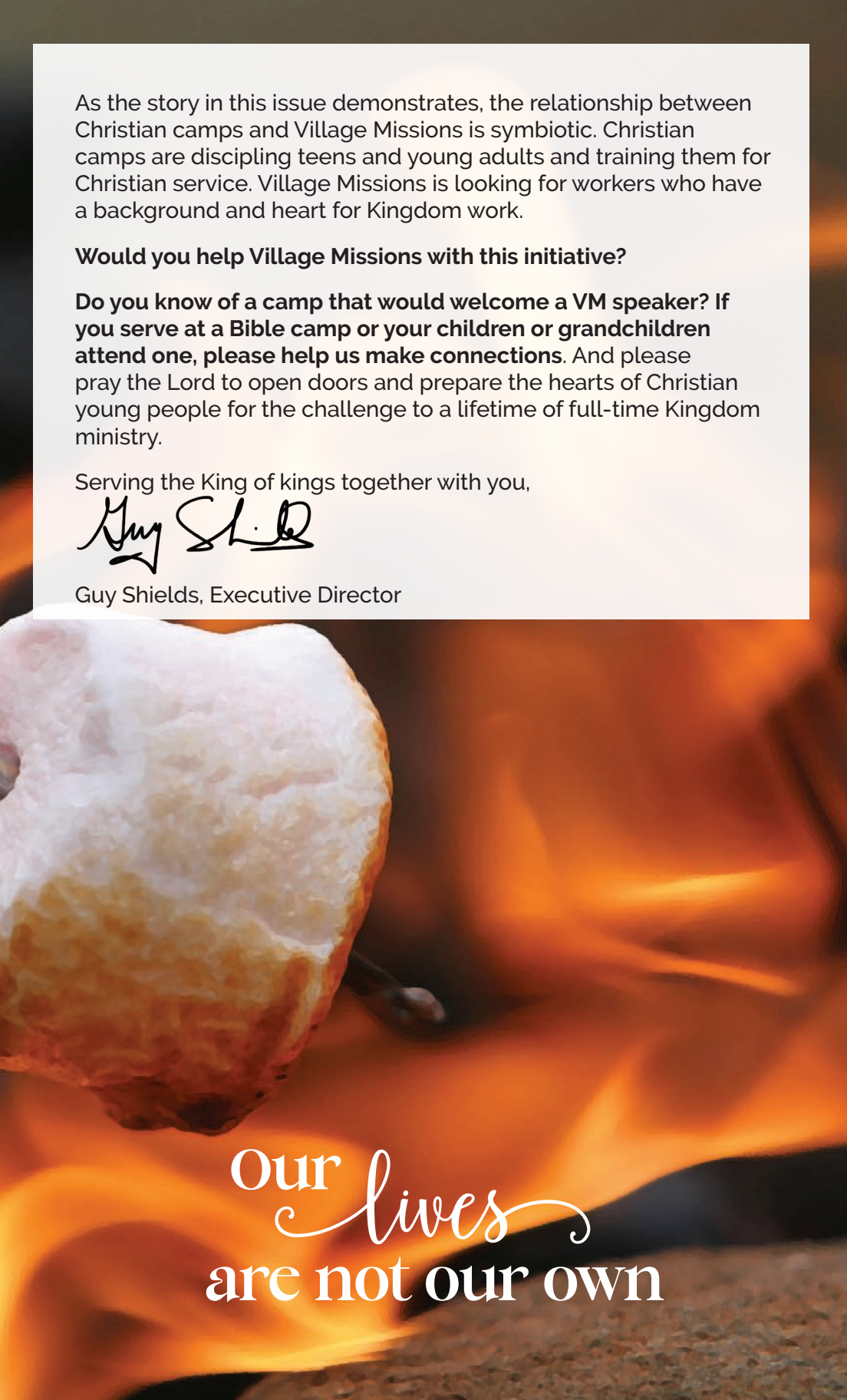
As the story in this issue demonstrates, the relationship between Christian camps and Village Missions is symbiotic. Christian camps are discipling teens and young adults and training them for Christian service. Village Missions is looking for workers who have a background and heart for Kingdom work.

Would you help Village Missions with this initiative?

Do you know of a camp that would welcome a VM speaker? If you serve at a Bible camp or your children or grandchildren attend one, please help us make connections. And please pray the Lord to open doors and prepare the hearts of Christian young people for the challenge to a lifetime of full-time Kingdom ministry.

Serving the King of kings together with you,

Guy Shields, Executive Director



FROM CAMP PROGRAM DIRECTOR TO SMALL-TOWN PASTOR



When Trevor and Renee Elias were applying to serve with Village Missions, they were told, *"You could be sent to a remote community. The nearest grocery store might be a 40-minute drive away."*

The Eliases weren't intimidated by that prospect. As full-time staff at a Bible camp on 240 acres in Manitoba's Pembina Valley, they were used to rural living.

They were also well-prepared for pastoral ministry. For Trevor, this preparation came from Bible camps and Bible college.



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TRAINING GROUND FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY

Trevor said, *"As a teen and then young adult, I served on the summer or spring staff of Pembina Valley Bible Camp for five years. There I received focused, intentional discipleship and leadership training. I also learned how to serve alongside others."*



Trevor felt God calling him

As early as grade 11, Trevor felt God calling him to be a pastor of a small church in a less-evangelized area, so he enrolled in Steinbach Bible College. He graduated with a degree in Biblical Studies and Pastoral Ministry. However, he wanted more experience. Where did he go for that? Back to Bible camp.

He was hired by Pembina Valley Bible Camp. As program director, he hired and trained staff for the spring and summer camps and oversaw the summer programs. He developed skills in discipling teens and young adults and encouraging them to use their giftings to serve God.

Trevor worked there for five years. During that time, he connected with Village Missions.

READY FOR VILLAGE MISSIONS

One year at MissionFest Manitoba, Trevor noticed the Village Missions booth. He recalled an elder at his home church telling him about Village Missions, so he approached the booth and talked with Murray Graham (former VM Canada Executive Director). "I saw that VM's vision aligned with my calling," Trevor said.

VM's vision aligned with my calling



He was so certain of his calling that on his first date with a young woman named Renee, he told her that he was preparing for pastoral ministry and would likely move



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out of the area. Would she be willing to do that?

A few weeks later, she told him she would.

After they married, they spent two years at the Bible camp. Then they applied to Village Missions.

In 2023, Trevor and Renee moved about 380 kilometers northwest to their first VM field: Binscarth, Manitoba (pop. 420).



The Elias family in Binscarth in 2025

CAMP SPEAKER AND VM REPRESENTATIVE

In August 2026, the Elias family pulled into the grounds of Pembina Valley Bible Camp. Trevor was the camp speaker

that week. He taught through Colossians and urged campers to be "rooted in Christ." He joined cabin groups for Bible studies, rode the trails with the bike campers, and joined many activities. He also enjoyed watching his sons experience this place that was so significant in his life.



faces blurred to protect minors

Early in the week, Trevor gave the camp staff a brief presentation about Village Missions and the need for pastors in rural communities. He explained his role as a missionary pastor, shared stories from his field, and described the VM application process.

Afterward, one young man made a lunch appointment with Trevor to find out more. He's 19 and plans to begin Bible college next year. Later in the week, Trevor had a conversation with a camp volunteer's husband about Village Missions.

VILLAGE MISSIONS AND BIBLE CAMPS

Pembina Valley Bible Camp's executive director, Terry Friesen, said that Christian camps are good training grounds for rural church ministry. *"The pastoral care and discipling we do in a Bible camp translate well to small communities [like the ones where Village Missionaries serve]."*

"I believe Bible camps are great places to start reaching young adults and even teens with a challenge to consider rural ministry. You can build a relationship quickly during a week at camp, and many young staff volunteers are already thinking about what they want to do next." ~Pastor Trevor Elias



This wasn't Trevor's first time representing VM at a Bible camp. Earlier in the summer, he taught and gave a similar presentation at Madge Lake Bible Camp, which is about 140 kilometers north of Binscarth. While there, he talked at length with two men interested in pastoral ministry.

The camp director, Ryan Wiesner, is very familiar with Village Missions. He said, *"Two VM partner churches support our camp, so I have a deep appreciation for the Mission."* Moreover, he attended a VM partner church while in Bible college and understands the importance of rural churches.

He understands the importance of rural churches

"Our camp's goals align well with the heartbeat of Village Missions. We want to deepen young people's faith and develop servant leaders. Campers in leadership training practice sharing their testimony, leading devotions, and other activities that are good preparation for ministry."

Village Missions and its partner churches have a history of working closely with Bible camps. Now Village Missions is looking to take that relationship one step further by seeking opportunities to challenge campers and camp staff to consider whether their time at camp might be the first steps into a lifetime of full-time Kingdom service, which for some might mean serving with Village Missions, pastoring a small town or rural church.



Trevor & Renee (facing camera) chat with Jay & Kaylee Foster, Village Missionaries who also recognize the importance of challenging youth to serve God and seek His Kingdom. Read on to learn about Jay's experience.



Village Missionary Jay Foster spoke at two camps this year: Valley View Bible Camp and Steeprock Bay Bible Camp, both in Manitoba. *"During daily chapels, I'm given a full 20 minutes to guide the kids' thoughts and hearts in God's Word. I love it!"*

Whether he was explaining the gospel to campers with limited Christian influence in their lives or teaching children from Christian homes, Jay passionately urged them to know God.

> *"Our hearts and souls cry out to know God, and nothing else will satisfy. When we don't know God, our souls are empty, and we give ourselves over to sin. If we pursue religion and a set of rules, sin will be more attractive. But when we know God, we are clothed in his righteousness, and our souls are satisfied."*

Jay has spoken at Valley View Bible Camp several times and formed friendships with cabin leaders. Some are intrigued by Jay's role as pastor in the small community of Amaranth (pop. 200). They can't imagine a community with only one evangelical church. A few have even visited Amaranth on a Sunday morning to see Pastor Jay and the church!

These young men know and respect a rural pastor. They heard him teach God's Word and watched him interact with their peers and younger campers. They even visited a VM field. Who knows how God might use this in their lives?

Who knows?



GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday is a global day of generosity that inspires people to give, serve, and make a difference in their communities. It's an opportunity to spark generosity by supporting the causes and organizations that are making a lasting impact. At Village Missions of Canada, we're passionate about strengthening rural churches and sharing the hope of Jesus Christ in communities across Canada.

This Giving Tuesday, you can help keep that mission moving forward! Consider making a gift to Village Missions of Canada to support the work of our missionaries, and spark generosity in others by sharing about Village Missions with your friends, family, and network. Your generosity, combined with the stories you share, can help more people discover the difference rural ministry makes. Together, we can encourage others to give, get involved, and help rural churches thrive.

give.villagemissions.ca

Where do many Christian young people commit their lives to Jesus and grow in their faith? Where do they take their first steps in service to Christ, sharing their testimony, and investing in Christian community? For many teens and young adults, this happens at a Bible camp. It may be that during one unforgettable summer as a camper or over several summers as a staff member or young leader in training, they sense God stirring a desire to serve Him in full-time ministry. For some people, perhaps the heart of a future pastor is first stirred at a rural camp. This prospect is motivating Village Missions to pursue a new initiative of engaging young people at Christian camps and challenging them to consider the prospect of Christ's call to a lifetime of full-time ministry.

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