When I look back on Carole and my 17 years serving as Village Missionaries and now 17 years as Executive Director, I thank God for His faithfulness. Through times of joy and pain God used each circumstance for His unique purposes and our own good.

Remembering the past can be a wonderful way to praise God for His work in our lives. In Joshua 4, God commands Israel to place pillars beside the Jordan River as a memorial of God’s protection and provision. When children asked about the stones, their parents would retell the glorious miracles God had performed.

I hope this edition of Country Matters serves a similar purpose, as we reflect on God’s provision over 70 years of ministry. In this issue, you will read about the legacy of Village Missions and our passions to “Preach the Word and love the people.” You will read stories of past and present Village Missionaries, who both endured trials and enjoyed the blessings of God in their rural ministries.

Through the past 70 years, thousands have come to know Christ, believers have been strengthened in their faith and children have been given hope from the gospel. Many, including Carole and I, have come out of our churches to serve as missionaries and pastors. God has used Village Missions to have a profound impact on His Kingdom, not just in rural North America, but
throughout the world. Indeed, Village Missions has a rich history.
Yet, as with the Israelites, looking back is only beneficial if it spurs us on for the future. As wonderful as the last 70 years have been, I believe God will do an even greater work in the years to come, if Jesus tarries. We could not have even existed, let alone had the impact we have had without partners who believed that it was important to bring the gospel to the rural areas of our country.

As you read these stories, would you consider helping us continue this important ministry, so that every community and small town might have a missionary pastor to share the saving gospel of Jesus Christ?

Standing with the Country Church,

Brian Wechsler
Executive Director
Eight-year-old Garrett watched his young father’s casket lowered into the ground. His father was too young to die. But the cancer inside him didn't seem to care.

Garrett listened as Pastor Jim talked about his father, about their friendship and his faith in Jesus Christ. Pastor Jim said the cancer could take his earthly life, but it could not separate him from Jesus. In fact, the man he’d spent years mentoring was now in paradise with his Savior, Jesus Christ.

Village Missionaries Jim and Jeanie Knight would move to a new field a few years later, but their memory, and the impact Jim had had on his father stayed with Garrett. Forty years later, 10 years after retiring from the mission, Jim and Jeanie received a phone call.

“Jim, it’s Garrett. I remember the way you mentored my dad and the difference it made in his life. I was hoping you would mentor me the same way.”

Changing Times – Unchanging Need

It began with a simple idea. People in rural places needed Jesus. Across rural North America, hundreds of churches in small towns and rural communities were dying. Many had already closed, leaving entire communities without anyone to tell them about Jesus. No one to comfort them when they lost a loved one. No one to mentor them, to be a role model for their children, to visit widows, the sick or imprisoned.

Seventy years ago, Reverend Walter Duff started Village Missions with a simple motto: “Preach the Word and Love the People.” Reverend Duff would send out hundreds of missionaries with this clarion call – preach and love. One by one, the gospel light began to shine in communities across the continent. And as Reverend Duff passed the torch to Dr. Jack Canady, he made only one request. “Do not change the direction and heart of this ministry.”

Preaching the Word and loving the people has stayed constant, even though rural America has seen many changes.

For many people, rural America sparks images of Sheriff Andy
Taylor walking the quiet streets of Mayberry. While that may have once been a picture of rural communities, changing times have brought poverty, drugs and violence to these unremembered places.

“The complexion has changed,” said Dr. Jack Canady. “The drug culture has moved into small communities.”

Rural communities and small towns have maintained the charms of friendliness and closeness, but they are also plagued by the same struggles as urban places, yet with far fewer resources.

“The importance today is that with so much emphasis on bigger churches, it takes somebody with a missionary heart to forsake more success – to keep things simple and preach the Word and love the people,” said Village Missionary Chad Haneman.

Rural America is changing, but the heart of Village Missions remains the same.

“Rural ministry is more important than ever before,” said Canady.

Preaching the Word

It was an Easter Sunday when Village Missionaries Roger and Rena Schuck were invited to a church member’s house for a meal. The hostess’s brother, Kelley, had no idea the local pastor was going to be there. Kelley’s face reddened as he saw Roger and Rena.

“I wouldn’t have come if I’d known you invited the pastor,” he whispered in frustration to his parents.

During the meal and afterward, Roger clearly presented the gospel to Kelley, who began to ask genuine questions. By the time Roger and Rena returned home, Kelley had given his life to Christ.

Romans 10:14 asks the question, “How shall they hear without a preacher?” At Village Missions, we often refer to rural communities and small towns as “unremembered places,” because so many people seem to have forgotten that these people also need the gospel.

For those who have already been saved, God has used preaching to lead them to missionary work.
While serving on their third field in Mackay, ID, Jim Knight challenged any young people that might feel God calling them to future ministry to step forward. One of those children was a little girl named Mati.

Years later, Mati and her husband, Mike, became Village Missionaries. Today, they serve in that same church in Mackay.

Village Missionaries stand in the gap, bringing the gospel message to people, like Kelley, who have never heard the gospel and inspiring children, like Mati, to share the gospel as well.

**Love the People**

Village Missionaries are commissioned to preach and love. Sometimes, the way missionaries show love speaks just as loudly as words.

It was Christmastime when a beloved man from Roger and Rena’s church passed away. During that same week, a mother and her 10-year-old daughter were killed in a car accident. The church was decorated beautifully in Christmas decorations, yet Rena helped take down all the decorations for both funeral services. Why?

There was an elderly lady in town who had stopped coming to church, because all she could see every time she stepped into the building was the Christmas decorations from when her husband had died.

Rena could not imagine someone, especially an unbeliever, mourning the loss of a loved one while surrounded by happy Christmas decorations. So, Rena blessed both families by helping take down the decorations before each funeral and redecorate the church afterward.

Years later, Roger and Rena were again able to show love through actions. The Schucks moved to Yale, Washington in 1984, a town largely cut off from the rest of the world due to the eruption of Mount St. Helens four years prior.

During their time in Yale, Roger and Rena helped organize the church’s first ever Christmas program. The fact that someone
was willing to move to a place like Yale with their children and help bring the hope of Christmas to that community showed a kind of love many had never experienced.

When Roger and Rena first moved to Yale, 30 people attended worship on any given Sunday. When they transferred 6 years later, there were 55. Today, over 100 people attend worship each Sunday. Times may have changed, but preaching the Word and loving the people continues to make a tangible impact in rural communities.

A Vital Ministry

For 70 years, Village Missionaries have boldly gone where others refuse to go – where there is no other gospel presence but a single country church. After seven decades, the need is greater than ever. Communities need full-time missionary pastors to preach the Word and love the people.

With renewed passion, we anticipate even greater things in the 70 years to come. We continue to seek new missionaries to preach the Word and love the people. We are finding innovative ways to help local churches reach children with the gospel, train believers for ministry and continue equipping and encouraging Village Missionaries for the ministry to which God has called them.

“It's so neat to see what God has done,” said Jeanie Knight. “I'd do it all again. There's a need and Village Missions fills it.”
Chester, MA – Cornerstone Christian Church
Cornerstone Christian Church sits in the beautiful Berkshires of western Massachusetts, a mountainous area known for its outdoor activities and fall foliage-viewing. The population of Chester is just over 1300, and popular occupations are construction, paper, metal and machinery. This church is currently waiting for a Village Missionary family, and the people have a heart for reaching their community with the gospel.

Buskirk, NY – West Hoosick Baptist Church
Hills and woods mark the landscape of Buskirk. The small town is in western New York, near Vermont, and has a population of 1100. West Hoosick Baptist Church is the only evangelical church and has been in the community for 150 years. The church is awaiting their first Village Missionary. They currently host a food pantry twice a month and hope to begin reaching local children.

Pine, ID – Mountain View Community Church
Mountain View Community Church sits at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Pine is a recreational and vacation area with over 700 vacation homes. For the 150 full-time residents, Mountain View is the only church in the area. Associate Village Missionaries Jim and Diane Everest began serving Pine in 2017, and the church is excited to begin reaching out to the locals and vacationers in their community.

Lisbon, IA – First Federated Church of Lisbon
With a population of 2,166, the town is surrounded by fields and trees. First Federated Church of Lisbon began nearly 100 years ago, and serves an area Barna ranked as the 4th Least Bible-Minded area in 2017. Lisbon is served by Village Missionaries Jake and Pam Bishop, and the church is passionate about being a gospel testimony in their community.
Timblin, PA – Dora Evangelical Church
The small town of Timblin has a population of 157 and is known for construction and mining. It is only 12 miles from Punxsutawney, home of Groundhog Day. Village Missionaries Wayne and Marcia Taylor began serving Dora Evangelical Church in 2017 and it is the only evangelical church for 10 miles. The people are excited to have missionaries to help them remain a witness for Christ in their community.

Murdo, SD – Community Bible Church
With a population of 500, Murdo, South Dakota sits among rolling hills and is known for cattle and agriculture. Murdo is also known as the hometown of US Senator John Thune. Community Bible Church has served the town since the 1950s and is currently served by Village Missionaries Shane and Lacie Campbell. The church desires to equip the saints for ministry and evangelize the community.

West Paris, ME – West Paris Baptist Church
West Paris has a population of 1800 and is surrounded by woods and fields. Construction, wood products and agriculture are the top three occupations. Village Missionaries Dan and Michiko Mandigo began serving West Paris Baptist Church in 2017, and the church is excited to reach out into the community through their food pantry and kids ministries.

Boyle, AB – Boyle Gospel Chapel
Boyle is surrounded by farmland, lakes and forests. Common jobs include farming, oil and gas, pulp and paper and logging. Boyle Gospel Chapel was founded in 1949, but had been without full-time leadership since 2002. Brenden and Helena Peters are the church’s first Village Missionaries, and the congregation is excited to be a vibrant church that reaches out to the community.
As a part of our long-standing commitment to honor missionaries in retirement, Village Missions has had a defined benefit pension plan since 1974. Like many pension plans, we have been affected by increased life spans, and lower long-term investment returns. Despite the magnitude of these impacts on paper, our daily ministry continues unhindered.

In 2017, we have seen some improvement in investment returns. We are presently working to secure the future of our pension plan and continue to honor missionaries in retirement.

In the meantime, Village Missions is blessed with adequate resources to meet our ongoing ministry needs. For more information, see our full financial statement at villagemissions.org/annual-report, or call our CFO, Jim Cross at 800-617-9905 x 120.
Annual Report

Income by Source:
$6,430,335

Operating Expenses:
$6,879,158

Village Missions Board of Directors

Glenn Faxon, Jim Carlson, Gil Doebler, Roy Bell, Keith Walker, Bill Nicholson, Glenn Daman, Sheldon Blattner, Ken Moore, and Board President Peter Corak.
The Legacy Continues

For 70 years, people like you have kept country churches alive. Your generous giving has kept the gospel message thriving among rural people, and your faithfulness is what supplies Village Missionaries to the most unremembered places of North America. I’m so glad you have a heart for country churches, and I cannot thank you enough for your generous gifts. As we begin our 70th year, will you help continue a legacy of reaching rural people with the hope of Jesus? There are so many people in our country who have never heard the gospel, and your gift will give them the chance.