

COUNTRY Matters

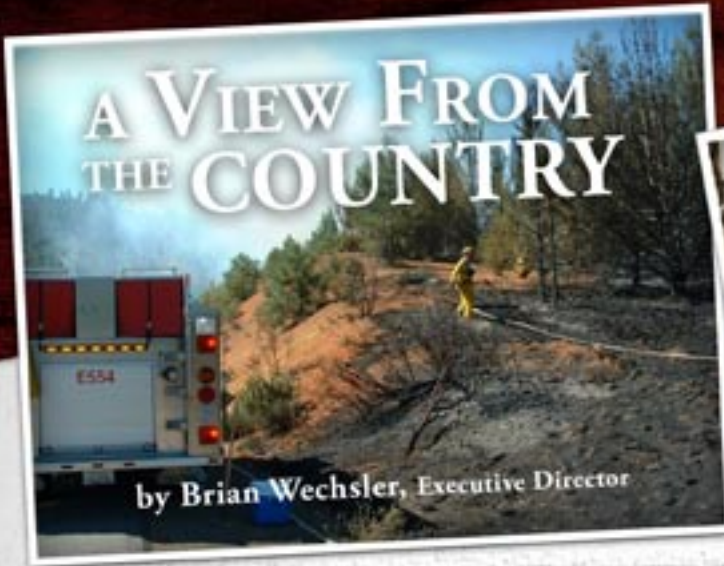
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JUST WHO FIGHTS
A SMALL TOWN
FIRE?



Village Missions

Keeping Country Churches Alive



When the fire alarm goes off in a little town, good things happen!

People come running and get involved. Because in a small town, the fire department is made up of the local folks, volunteers. And when that alarm bell rings, people drop what they're doing and help in any way they can.

Why? It's because they're committed to their little town and its people. In a manner of speaking, they *own* their town. Not literally, but in their hearts, it belongs to them. The dusty street, the school that's been there for decades, even the rundown bar and grill, they *own* it all. The leaders don't own the town. It belongs to the people!

They care about the old folks and the kids and everyone in between. It's their place, and these are their people! And when someone's farm or business or home is on fire, they're going to jump in and save what they can.

Village Missionaries and those of us who serve them each day in leadership roles understand this. We've all lived in places like this, where firefighting was everyone's job when something was on fire. I remember when our church in Red Feather Lakes burned to the ground. The entire community rallied to our support. Even the karaoke singer at a local bar donated her proceeds one night to help us!

And as surely as leaders don't own towns, Village Missions' leaders don't own this ministry,

either. We believe God brought this ministry into being to serve folks in rural North America. And people like you who believe small communities need a church that shares the love of Jesus Christ, you *own* this ministry.

If you listen real carefully, you just might hear a still, small voice confirming this from deep in your heart.

Village Missions might be the firehouse, but *you* are the volunteers who respond when there's a need. Praying, loving and giving in response to God's urging.

And over the past year, there have been a few times we've rung the bell, asking you to pray and see if God wanted you involved in some way. When a country church is at risk, there's cause for alarm. The response has been amazing!

This issue of *Country Matters* is to let you know that, thanks to God's goodness and the faithfulness of friends like you, your ministry is doing fine.

Keeping Country Churches Alive,

Brian Wechsler
Executive Director



Thank you for joining us in giving thanks to God for His goodness to Village Missions and the wonderful people it serves. We trust God and see His faithfulness daily in meeting the wide range of needs of small communities, Village Missionaries and the other leaders of this ministry. We are grateful God has chosen friends like you to pray and stand with us. Thank you for your faithfulness.



If you know of a country church that needs help or someone who might want to serve with us, please call us.

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Thank You

for supporting
Village Missionaries!

When we receive notes from Village Missionaries, telling us what God is doing in the little, often-overlooked hamlet or small town, it warms our hearts. And when we pray, thanking God for His faithfulness, we thank him for our friends . . .



It is God who is responsible for the gifts we've received to help with our annual budget of \$1.2 million designated for *Village Missionary Salary Support*. But we realize that He is using committed Christians to express his love for country folks.

There are no words to fully express our thankfulness to God and to you. Please know we are deeply grateful for your prayers, gifts and encouraging words!

Recently, we wrote a letter talking about the cost-of-living increases our Village Missionaries are facing. The increasing costs of energy will take a bite

out of each of their monthly budgets, as it will out of all of our budgets. And this increase, along with others, seems to always hit hardest those with the least money.

To date, we have received nearly \$20,000 that will help Village Missionaries with their financial needs and keep country churches open. God is good!

At our recent Village Missionary candidate school, we had 9 new couples spend a week with our leaders. Each of these couples has expressed that they have received a clear call from the Lord to serve rural North America through Village Missions.





Soon, these dedicated couples will be serving people in places where their church is urgently needed. The Salary Support funds are designated for Village Missionaries where the church doors might close without a full-time leader in place.

We believe that God touched the hearts of friends like you, and that's why so many of you prayed and gave to help Village Missionaries. Let us assure you, Village Missions asks for your financial support only when there is a genuine need. We believe it is our responsibility to let friends know what the needs are. And please be assured, we never want you to short-change your own church to give to us.

Thank you again for placing the need for Village Missionary Salary Support before the Lord. And thank you for doing whatever God has asked you to do. ■



GOD SHOWS HIS FAITHFULNESS TO PEOPLE LIVING IN

Every month, . . . Village Missions receives reports from each of its Village Missionaries. They are fresh assurances of God's goodness and love. No community deserves to be without a Bible-preaching church. Here are short snapshots of what God is doing in places that might have no church without Village Missions' help.

Village Missionaries Ron and Joan Germain are serving the community of Northfield, Ontario. They're great examples of the Village Missions value, "Preach the Word and love the people." And they understand what it takes to build relationships . . .

I'm making inroads with some of the unsaved people in the community. I accompanied one man on one of his jobs, and he then invited me golfing. Spending the whole day with him allowed for casual conversation, including spiritual issues. I then used a common interest in motorbikes to spend time with one of our neighbors. Because of a death in the community, he was very upset and wanted to talk to me about things. We are seeing the importance of earning the right to share the Gospel.

God is doing great things in Olmstedville, New York. Chad and Jenny Haneman serve this community of about 500 people. And they



SMALL COMMUNITIES

understand the value of investing in young lives, even when it's full of challenges . . .

At our recent Vacation Bible School, one girl in particular had been a problem most of the week. She was very disruptive and acted up, but Thursday night, which is always our salvation emphasis night, she was very quiet and contemplative. When I prayed, I could hear her praying with me! Her brother was also there, and he, too, accepted Christ.

They come from a very dysfunctional family, and it was great to have them here. In fact, a state

trooper who knows me came to my house one night to tell me that he had

given this family my name so that the boy might have some positive male role models.

In beautiful Fernwood, Idaho, population 464, Brian and Julianne Primer are seeing their prayers answered for one teen and the entire community . . .

One particular young lady here was very open and seemingly close to salvation. Our prayers were fervent as she headed off to senior camp. Brian notified a few staff of her tender heart and how close we felt she was to giving her heart to the Lord.

Great news, praise the Lord! She came home from camp and rushed to Brian to tell him she had prayed to ask Jesus to forgive her sins and

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make her whole! She is truly transformed, and very excited to be a child of God.

The Lord is at work in the hearts of our teens. The church is growing, with people new to the area and with locals. Bible studies are popping up, folks are growing in their love, and service to the Lord and worship is joyful.

We are so thankful to be a part of what God is doing in Fernwood through a little Village Missions church with a big heart!

Stephen and Karen McNally of Mattawamkeag, Maine, have seen the benefits of being in a community, serving a community for many years, and making friends . . .

I've heard that when you're in the community for a few years, you begin to see people open up to you. It takes time, for sure, but it does happen. Of the 36 children who came to

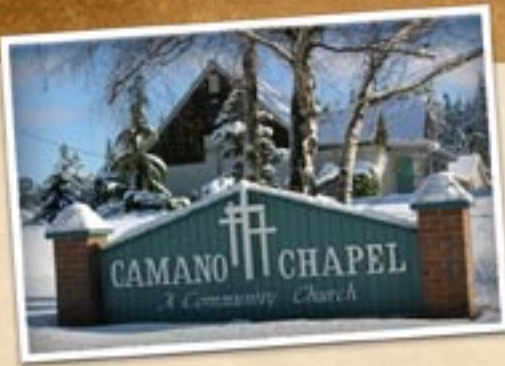
Vacation Bible School this year, several had never been here before. They were old enough, but their parents never let them come until this year. Three of those children came to the Lord. Three couples who sent their children came to the closing program with them on Friday evening. And these couples have never been in the church before, as far as I know.

We put the Vacation Bible School program on a float in the Mattawamkeag town parade (the day after VBS), and it won the second-place ribbon.

Karen and I went on an ATV park ride and saw many of the Vacation Bible School kids there. Getting known in the community takes a long time, hard work, and long hours, but it pays off. Our responsibility is to be faithful and let God do the work in the hearts of the people. There were probably 100 people at the park. The first year here, we did not know anyone, but this year, we knew just about everyone!

Years ago, Camano Chapel was a small church. Today, it is one of the largest churches Village Missions serves. And what God is





“It’s been exciting to see the people growing in their understanding of Biblical doctrine and practical Christian living.”

doing there today is a powerful example of how a single church can touch the world. Kris and Joyce Kramer, Village Missionaries in Camano Island, Washington, are committed to sharing the Gospel not only with their own community, but also with a much bigger world.

Two years ago, we started an evening Bible institute called “Camano Bible Training Center” that offers a three-year Bible certificate, and we have over 100 students. This is presently our most effective discipleship ministry. It’s been exciting to see the people growing in their understanding of Biblical doctrine and practical Christian living.

We have six mission teams going out this next year – two to Mexico, one to Nigeria,

and two to the island of Haiti (our main mission outreach), and our family mission project at Peace Haven.

We’re also in a long-term “debt free” project, building a new Christian education building that includes a small chapel. We have just filed for the permits, and we ask for prayer for favor with the county building department and the endurance to complete this project. We’re blessed with great unity in the leadership and congregation.

These last five years of ministry here at Camano Chapel have been the happiest of my 24 years in ministry.

We are praising God for His goodness. And we are deeply grateful to our Village Missions friends who choose to be actively involved in making this Good News *their* Good News to share with lost people. ■



WHO IS **RESPONSIBLE** FOR KEEPING COUNTRY CHURCHES ALIVE?

Your first response might be that it's God. Certainly, God inspired the founders to put the organization together nearly 60 years ago. And God sustains Village Missions, faithfully each day. The board of directors seeks God's wisdom and guidance, of course. And the Village Missionaries have each responded to God's calling to serve rural North America through this ministry.

But beyond these men and women, called of God, there are others . . . people like George McConahy and Jeff Bald. George worked in the auto business for years. Jeff owns a company that serves dentists.

If you asked them, they would tell you that they're not preachers or missionaries. But when you talk with George and Jeff, you quickly realize they are committed to keeping country churches alive.

"Village Missions is valuable because a little church sometimes can't afford a pastor. They need help," according to George, a longtime Spokane resident and a friend of Village Missions' founder.

"Rev. Walter Duff was committed to keeping rural churches open. He understood how important these little churches are. Rural places

have always been the backbone of our country. Presidents, leaders, missionaries, evangelists, they were born and raised in the country.”

Jeff has known about Village Missions for a shorter time. “My wife, Becky, and I watched a DVD about Village Missions. It was short and to the point and spoke to our heart.” Jeff and Becky became supporters.

Jeff and Becky consider rural churches vitally important. Jeff put it this way. “The direction our country is going is not good. There are moral problems, families falling apart. Families aren’t together like they used to be. It’s the church that brings families together, and God works through the family.”

One image from Village Missions’ DVD especially touched Jeff. “I saw a for-sale sign on a church. That just shouldn’t happen. The people there may not be wealthy, but without a church, how are they going to find Jesus?”

Jeff looks at his business as a means to do more than make money. “We’re taking an earthly investment and putting it in eternal things. That’s what Christians are called to do.”

George agrees and encourages others to come along with Village Missions to help rural churches. “This summer, we put together a golf event and raised money

to help Village Missionaries who are now settling down in Alaska.”

Why is George so committed? “I see God using Village Missions in a great way. They’re alive. They’re on fire. And they’re moving forward. And they haven’t left their nearly-60-year heritage behind. They’ve stayed true to the Word of God and their statement of faith. You can trust them.”

And for Jeff, it’s this simple, “If I can

keep one church open, it’s worth it all. Seeing one person come to Christ, it’s worth it all.”

Friends like George and Jeff are a special blessing to country churches in

North America.

Are they responsible for keeping country churches alive? They certainly are! They own the task God has given them. They respond to God’s calling to help. And they understand that everything belongs to God.

Jeff asks people a simple question, “How will they hear without a preacher? I’m not a preacher. But if I can supply support, it’s really, really important that I do that.” ■



If you're enjoying *Country Matters*, You may know others who would, too.

We're grateful for your interest in Village Missions. And if you know others who you think would also like to receive this publication, please let us know.

We'll be happy to send them a complimentary copy of *Country Matters*. Country churches across North America can use all the friends they can get!

Thanks again for helping keep country churches alive through your prayers, gifts and connections with others.

Please use the enclosed envelope to tell us the name and address of friends you'd like to receive *Country Matters*.

You may also do so online at: www.village-missions.org

OR phone us with this information at:
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