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# COUNTRY *Matters*

A Time of  
**HARVEST**

  
Village Missions  
Keeping Country Churches Alive

# A View From the Country

with Brian Wechsler, Executive Director

Dear Village Missions Supporter,

In the nearly ten years I've been Executive Director of Village Missions, I've had the privilege of sharing hundreds of stories of how God continues to use this vital ministry. Today, I want to share why I care so much for the life of our country churches.

It's a story from my own life.

Way back when (I'd only been married for 2 months and had been a Christian for about a year), Carole and I walked into Fernwood Community Bible Church in tiny Fernwood, Idaho. My hair was long and my Bible experience was short. In fact, I couldn't have told you the difference between the Old and New Testament. I had a lot to learn. But more than anything else, I needed someone in my life to help me figure out how to be a good husband and follower of Jesus Christ.

That "someone" turned out to be two people: Ray and Martha Bell, the Village Missionaries who served that small Idaho community. They accepted us, loved us and nurtured us. And because of their example, the rest of the church did too. I'm convinced that the reason we are in

ministry today is because of how God used Ray and Martha in our lives at that time.

Recently, Carole and I were delighted to return to Fernwood Community Bible Church for the 60th anniversary of its fruitful association with Village Missions. It was a delightful celebration of many lives changed by Jesus Christ. As I sat there, taking it all in, I was struck by how often I have been allowed to witness firsthand the impact a healthy country church can have on a life.

Thankfully, I'm not the only one to have had this experience. In this issue, I am excited to share more stories of life change from several of our Village Missionaries. This is why this mission rural communities is so important...so many miracles are happening! As you read these stories, be encouraged that your support is having significant impact in many lives.

In Him,



Brian S. Wechsler  
Executive Director

*The Fernwood church  
family today.*



*Brian Wechsler at Fernwood,  
many years ago.*



# A Time for Harvest

The long days of summer have passed, the leaves have changed color, and kids everywhere are back in school (something their parents may have looked forward to for much of the summer!). And in rural communities across North America, fruit is ripe on the trees, and farmers have entered a time for harvesting the crops they diligently nurtured all summer.

The same sort of preparation is required for the spiritual harvest in our communities. If there is no farmer to plant and cultivate the seed in a healthy environment, then crops simply cannot grow. This is why we celebrate and support the rural church. The spiritual influence sown by Village Missions in these small towns is reaping a reward of healthy lives...believers of all ages whose lives are growing spiritually and maturing in the love of Jesus Christ.

Here are just a few stories of what has happened this past summer in Village Missions churches:

## **From Terry & Martha Major of Pierceville, KS**

“As Wednesday night programs wound down for the summer, the 5th & 6th grade leaders made a point to talk with each student about their salvation experience and assurance. Almost all 17 children confessed to having accepted Jesus as their Savior, which was



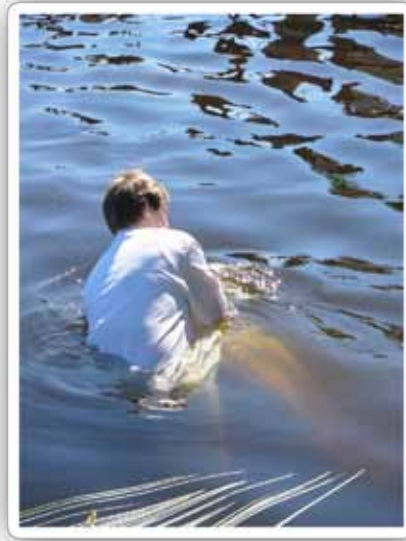
wonderful; but even greater was the one who stayed behind to say that he wasn't sure of his salvation and prayed for Jesus to be his Savior for sure!"

### **Chad & Jenny Haneman of Olmstedville, NY**

"We had our worship service at our local beach. We encouraged the church to invite people who may not come through the doors of the church, but would go to the beach. We had a great turnout and five people were baptized at the public beach in front of everyone. What a public proclamation! Then Noah, our oldest, called one of his classmates and told him he needed to come get baptized – and he did! They had been talking about it in school. So great to see your kids encouraging their peers to strive for obedience."

### **From Clarence & Marinda Blessard of Renovo, PA**

"I had an opportunity to play golf with a gentleman that has a good heart but also has a drinking problem. He doesn't




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know the Lord. While we were playing he told me of one of the things that brought him to the point of drinking and his distrust of religion. He and his wife had lost their oldest child to leukemia when the child was 7 years old. He told me the priest was nowhere around as the family went through this ordeal. They found out later that because they were not tithing as they were supposed to, the priest felt he did not need to offer his services. That turned him off religion and he began a downward spiral into alcohol. He has now been diagnosed with liver damage and is making an attempt to stop drinking. I was able to share with him the Jesus that I know and the fact that while men will fail you, Christ never will. Please pray that God will grant more opportunities with David and that He will melt his heart."

### **From Joe & Karla Beard of McCleary, WA**

"Last Friday one of the new men in the church set up an appointment with me for Monday morning; he had some questions. As we sat and talked, he told me that a couple of weeks before I had given an invitation for anyone who desired to know Christ to come to the front of the church. He said, "I should have come, but I was too embarrassed." He then told me he wanted a



relationship with Jesus and he wanted his sins forgiven. It was exciting as it always is to watch the Spirit work as I opened the Scriptures and shared with him the gospel. Praise God for Adam's salvation, and please pray for his spiritual growth."

### **From David & Sheila McIlroy of Starbuck, WA**

"We had a puppet group here on Monday evening and some of the members wanted to hike to the top of the hill northeast of town. I told them to go ahead and I would touch base with the cattleman who owned it. So I did. He said no hiking from now on, but then he had a question for me. He began to tell me that he and his wife are going through a messy divorce and his grown son has sided with his mom and they are in the process of splitting the holdings. He said his heart has grown cold toward his wife but he sure was going to miss his grandkids. He just talked for a while. Even though he considers himself a provider, he hasn't really been much of a husband, usually putting work over family. He hates mediocrity and looks down on people who don't try to better themselves. He asked what I thought. I shared thoughts from the Bible... that happiness/contentment doesn't come from things.

True purpose and meaning in life comes from recognizing we need help. Inside we are in desperate need of God's forgiveness. We have to see that we are selfish people. I told him that I would get him a Bible and something that would identify specific things that he is dealing with, such as anger, envy, jealousy, etc. I did and put it on his porch. At 1pm he stopped by thanking me for the books and the letter. He told me he isn't going to swallow this hook, line, and sinker, but he sure wanted to think on it."

### **From Riley & Susan Wilson of Pickstown, SD**

"Many times I've heard Christian speakers say, 'If you don't lead someone to the Lord by the age of 18-19, your chances of leading them after that are slim.' In my time in the ministry I have seen more people over the age of 25 come to the Lord than younger people. Such was the case this last month. Maxine, age 94, confessed the Lord Jesus as her God and Master. I went over to visit her and asked her if she was to die today would she be in heaven? She said, 'I hope so!' I then replied, 'You can know for sure, according to the Bible.' She said how, and I began showing her

*"Inside we are in  
desperate need of  
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in the Bible how she could rest in the assurance of being saved. When she understood her responsibility to confess Jesus as Lord, she prayed and was saved.”

### **From David & Valerie Wing of Sebaka, MN**

“We were impacted with 17 tornadoes that hit our area, destroying homes, farms, and businesses throughout. It is still beyond words to describe how things look and the reactions from people who have been affected. We spent most of the week with cleanup and support and assuring others that we are here for them in their time of need. The outpouring of support has been overwhelming and humbling to say the least. We praise the Lord that no one lost their lives through all of this, an amazing miracle in itself. The rebuilding will take a couple of years and the opportunities abound with sharing the love and Gospel of Christ. But even as the rebuilding



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is about to begin, some folks are hopeful for a new beginning on life. We as a church want to be there and continue to share the Way, the Truth, and the Life, so that out of tragedy can come triumph over the forces of darkness.”

### **From Robert & Linda Dore of Yale, WA**

“One of the guys in our church has a special knack for catching moles – and we have a lot of moles in our area. We affectionately call him “The Mole Man.” Gary the Mole Man has become so good that his reputation has spread to the whole community, and consequently people try to hire Gary to help them rid their yards of the pesky nuisance. But rather than letting anyone pay him for his services, instead he asks these folks to contribute a certain amount for each mole caught and give the

funds to the church. So occasionally I will answer a knock at my door to find a non-churched person handing me a check. On the memo line it says: 'For the Mole Fund!'"

### **From Tom & Rebecca Gerbrandt of Gwynne, Alberta**

"On the Thursday evening just prior to Easter, one young family's little boy had a seizure and they rushed him to the hospital. They have already lost one boy to SIDS. He turned out to be OK, but on Sunday morning the young father stood up during the sharing time and said this to us: "When I was driving Justin to the hospital, I thought about whether God was asking me to give up another son. I said, "No, God, I'm not willing to give up another son." He continued, "Then I heard God softly say to me, 'I gave up my Son for you.'" With tears in his voice, he said that Easter was far more meaningful to him this year."

*If you've been encouraged by these reports, would you consider becoming more involved in helping a small community through Village Missions? There are so many more towns waiting for support, desperate to save their church from closing up for good.*

*You can help support the rural church by visiting [www.village-missions.org](http://www.village-missions.org) or by calling (503) 623-4107. Your prayers and gifts will continue to keep our families, communities, and churches strong and growing in the Lord so that the spiritual harvest may continue to be reaped and God may be glorified.*



# Ministry Is Not About Numbers...

**It's just one small town.** There are only about **200 local people** nearby. A lot of them live below the poverty line, in the middle of the misery index, too. **What's the value of bringing them hope?** Is it worth it to help them have a pastor of their own? Is there value in keeping the doors open at their church, knowing they are the last Gospel-preaching church within an hour's drive? What's the value

of one child making a decision to follow Jesus? How about a 50-something grandmother who has never owned a Bible until now?

I know... **there's no value you can place on those things.** But there is a cost. If your heart is moved at the thought of a church closing its doors... if you see the value in keeping country churches alive... you can help make it possible for

Village Missions to do just that.

Please continue to pray... and perhaps you can do one more thing. Perhaps you can send a gift of any size to help us bring hope to a rural community.

**Ministry is never about numbers . . . it's about people loving one another. Thanks for caring and sharing your love today.**

Coming Soon! Village Missions presents "Saving the Country Church", a television documentary.

*Be on the lookout for more details in future issues of Country Matters, and online at [www.village-missions.org](http://www.village-missions.org)*



Keeping Country Churches Alive