

Insightful Surprises

We have come a long way in thinking about the value of rural communities...

Sometimes one needs to look back to see how far one has come. When invited to speak on our work with rural communities and the rural church, I invited those present to join with me in a lament. We recalled the heady days of working together on our church-building, the outreach work, the celebrations – but then pleaded to God not to let our little church close.

Diminishing numbers and dollars and fewer pastors hung like a black cloud, as it does over any vision for the future of our communities.

Only slowly did I recognize just how far we'd come in thinking about rural communities.

At one time the people were called hay seeds, and the image was of raunchy youth and adults who needed to be cultured by our urban cultures.

Through the positive work done by our rural church movements and the progressive work of our community leaders, the image has changed.

We now see ourselves as unique in our culture, having much to contribute to the rest of society. Our spiritual values anchor us, and our sense of adventure is encouraged as we (and our children) spread our wings.

Furthermore, many professionals see their calling being to smaller communities. In some centres special programs are helping ministers, doctors, educators, etc. make the transition between university and small-town Canada.

In the process we recognize new ways to approach the issues that might once have defeated us. Furthermore, thanks to modern communication links, we are able to exchange questions and ideas with colleagues around the world.

The Lord delights in the surprises that await us.