

The Following is Lance Duncalfe's prepared text on the occasion of Venture Teams – Rivers Edge Celebration Sunday, October 2, 2011.

Today we celebrate the mystery of what goes on in unseen places, yet miraculously produces limitless, life-impacting potential !

A mother of a former VTI team member said to me just last Wednesday; “I have never seen a September like this for harvesting.” She was almost giddy with joy as she quoted Doris Day’s famous line; ‘gratitude is riches, complaining is poverty.’ When your entire year’s income are like dollar bills, laying in the field – you have to get out there and get it off while the getting is good. Where did it all begin? It began months ago, when farmers were struggling to get on the fields because it was so wet – to put the seed into the ground.

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My neighbour, who just happens to be married to my niece suggested that “the most nerve-wracking time for a farmer is the time between seeding and then waiting for the seed to germinate (unseen, underground) and pop up through the ground.

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Years ago (as Rod mentioned), Mel Slack had an idea (he probably got it from his wife Enid, ha!), a vision for tapping into the Bible Colleges in Canada to recruit, train and provide an opportunity for prospective missionaries or people who would support missions – to gain practical experience cross-culturally. It was just an idea, it grew to be a vision, it eventually gained traction through people like Dr. Antliff and Greg Irwin (our own recruiter). The faith-seed that went into the ground didn’t look at all like the plant that recently went through the thrashing machine. Listen, no-one wants to get hurt in the thrashing process, but there is a whole lot of shaking that goes on when God takes in the harvest.

Today, the best of the seed that has been retained as a result of the ministry of VTI is being sown in unseen places, ideas about cross-cultural leadership training are being channelled by faith into unseen places, guided by the Holy Spirit to begin the long-term process of eventually producing a bountiful harvest.

...what will that look like?

...who is involved?
...will it involve teams?

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What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each one will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building (I Corinthians 3:5-9).”

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We have one purpose and that is to grow God’s plant!

Before I went on a Friends and Followers team with my wife, I worked at the Mountain View Seed Cleaning Plant. One day a farmer came in and looked me square in the eye and said, “you’d better be thankful for this job.” It wasn’t long afterward that my youth group leader came by to ask me, “is this where you think you need to be?” My wife and I both left our jobs at the seed plant and town office to raise the equivalent of what we were giving up to go with Venture Teams for one year – were we crazy? ...or called?

At the Seed Plant we had to be extremely careful. If as a carpenter you measure twice and cut once, as a seed cleaner you triple check everything you do...you simply CANNOT mix seed, there is too much at stake. The farmer would come in and dump his grain from the bin, we would take a sample and run it through screens to estimate how much would be cleaned out (20% screenings etc.). If it was fairly clean we would run it through the clipper only (the screen machine), if needed we would run the grain through the second machine which was like a barrel roll. When grain is in the bin, that’s all it is, grain – that’s the end of the line – it is going to be bread, pizza dough, whatever...that’s the end of the line. The moment that the farmer starts thinking about what he is going to plant where next year, is the moment that the grain is no longer just grain. It is going to be augered into a truck and hauled off to the Seed Cleaning Plant to become a multiplying product, a harvestable commodity.

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Harold, Brian, Daphne, Rod, Gerry, Paul...have been bouncing around ideas related to the legacy of VTI. Seeds are ideas and they don't always look that attractive, but it has to start with quality seed. Spiritual reproduction with cross-cultural objectives fits the foundational principle of Christ's challenge to go into all the world. The plant that grows by each one doing their part (planting ideas, watering....praying for, financially supporting, doing the administrative work, volunteering where needed, staffing on the grounds) producing a spiritual legacy, God's harvest...and that is worth celebrating at this moment.

So, today we celebrate the mystery of what goes on in unseen places, yet miraculously produces limitless, life-impacting potential !