

A Passion for Mission
By Pastor Jeff Teeples
Ideas From Churches, May 2023

Note from Editor Bill Moberly: *I reached out to Pastor Jeff Teeples Senior Pastor of Shepherd of the Hills in Fountain Hills, AZ (SOTH), to share their global mission story. SOTH began its partnership with ALWM in 2010, when a congregation member reached out to me for help by using my book on global mission for congregational leaders as they transitioned out of the ELCA. I visited soon after for a workshop. Our partnership with SOTH has grown over the years and continues stronger than ever under the leadership of Pastor Jeff, who joined the staff in 2018.*

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



**To Know Christ
and to Make
Him Known**

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Fountain Hills, AZ

Editor: *How is the importance of the global Great Commission demonstrated in your congregation?*

Pastor Jeff: **The church has had a strong connection to mission, with a specific mission committee that was formed in 1999. This group began the process that we use today to support specific ministries as we tithe our offerings. Shepherd of the Hills has a passion for mission evolved around the idea that Christ calls all of us to participate in His Great Commission—to go, make disciples, baptize and teach. We joyfully support missions outside our church to build up Christ’s kingdom.**

Editor: *How do you fund your mission support? Do you set aside a portion of the offerings, for example 10%, to fund local and global outreach? What percentage is local and what is global? Do you also include designated giving toward global mission?*

Pastor Jeff: In 2011, when Shepherd of the Hills joined the LCMC, the mission committee's purpose was expanded to determine where all of the mission support dollars would be allocated. This team was tasked with selecting mission organizations and individuals to support financially. The congregation set out to give 10% of all offerings to Christian missions outside our church, both locally and globally.

Editor: *How do you choose the missionaries and agencies you support? Do you look for long term relationships with the missionaries and agencies you support?*

Pastor Jeff: The Mission Committee uses a process to gather information about the ministries of those requesting to partner with us. Usually, an individual or group from the congregation brings forward a ministry worth considering to support financially by completing an application. Together we decide what level of support to give them. We assign one member of the mission committee to be the primary contact person to correspond with the ministry and share updates with the church.

Regarding what percentage of our mission support is local and what is global, we don't have a specific formula. We discern together if the missions requesting support meet our criteria. The primary litmus test is if they are a Christian organization, and we prefer missions where we would be able to develop a relationship with the mission.

[SOTH supports several local mission outreaches, including the American Indian Christian Mission (AICM), Paz de Cristo, Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission and Grace Lutheran Church Heat Respite.]



SOTH supports the American Indian Christian Mission, Show Low, Arizona



Paz de Cristo, a ministry in the Phoenix, Arizona, East Valley, provides over 50,000 meals each month



Office of Navaho Evangelical Lutheran Mission (NELM) at Rock Point, Arizona



SOTH supports hydration stations, water donation sites and more through the Grace Lutheran Church Heat Respite program in Maricopa County, Arizona

Editor: *Where are you currently working / supporting? What is generating the most interest and involvement? Are short-term missions an important part of your global mission program? Do you encourage members to go and serve on mission trips?*

Pastor Jeff: **The mission projects that generate the most enthusiasm are those where people from the church are able to get involved. We have members who partake in weekly, monthly or seasonal ministries to the homeless. Members have supported other ministries within our community and region. Several members have participated in short-term mission trips to Cambodia and Vietnam with ALWM. Some future short-term mission trips are being scheduled for Nicaragua and the Philippines because we have mission connections in these countries. Annual visits from supported missions really keep the organizations in our prayers and hearts. We value greatly the partner ministries we support near and far. [For information about other SOTH mission projects, go to sothaz.com/missions]**



SOTH members John & Marcia Fears assisting the reading glass ministry in Cambodia



SOTH provides strong support for Pastor Sam Chim and his team

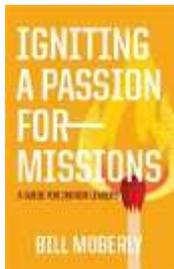


ALWM Vital Links Vietnam Project Manager Van, wife Thuy and family visited SOTH in 2018



SOTH member on the 2019 Vietnam mission team. For many years, SOTH has been THE major supporter of Vital Links medical evangelism in Vietnam, now a part of ALWM.

Editor: *What are some of the things you have done that have most impacted your congregation and the mission field?*



Pastor Jeff: Two resources that have been helpful to shape our mission consciousness are: *Igniting a Passion for Missions* by Bill Moberly and *Helping Without Hurting in Short Term Missions* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. The first book was used as a church-wide study to increase people's mission awareness. The second resource is incredibly helpful to prepare teams for short-term mission trips to minister to the materially poor. Corbett and Fikkert have created a book, a participants guide and videos that generate a great deal of discussion and insight into helping further a mission without hurting what the local mission is wanting to accomplish.



As a congregation that is a part of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), we celebrate that we have a mission consciousness and understand that Christ calls us all to be missionaries. We all go into the places where we live and work to share the Gospel. Some go to places far away and all of us can participate in sending people into the mission field through prayer and financial support.

For more information, visit sothaz.com

Full author bio: *Jeff Teeples has served in ministry for 30 years as a pastor and 6 years as a youth minister. He received his MDiv from Luther Seminary in 1997. Jeff's first call after seminary was to his childhood church, Christ Church, Whitefish, MT (1997-2007). While serving in Whitefish, MT, Jeff was blessed with an ongoing relationship with the late Eugene Peterson as a mentor and spiritual friend for 8 years. Jeff was Senior Pastor at Hawley Lutheran Church, Hawley, MN, for 10 years, and also shepherded congregations in Parkersburg, IA; Ramsey, MN; Cloquet, MN, and St. Paul, MN. He has been the pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (LCMC) in Fountain Hills, AZ, since 2018. His passion is to live life abundantly in Christ and to bring others along with him. Obedient to the Great Commission, Jeff's heart and passion is to reach people for Christ. He is the North America contact for the LCMC churches in Nicaragua and knows firsthand the value of cross-cultural missions to broaden our love for all the unique people in God's world. Jeff is married to Kristen (they are celebrating 34 years of marriage); they have three sons, three daughters-in-law, and four grandchildren.*