

Benevolence Reset!

By Terry Fee

Ideas From Churches, June 2025

Note from Editor Bill Moberly: Many LCMC & NALC congregations have been handling the investment of mission and benevolence funds directly, rather than sending to ELCA headquarters, for more than 15 years, with some approaching 25 years! Lutheran congregational policies mean that these are decisions made by local church leaders. The degree to which a congregation remains faithful to Jesus' global mission mandate in Matthew 28:19: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"* varies from congregation to congregation. **GO** and **MAKE DISCIPLES** of all the earth is the Call, and the Word of God defines this, not our opinions or experience over the past generation. In practical terms it's not easy as leaders ask the hard questions about this, such as, "How effectively does our giving fulfill the Great Commission?" One church, Good Shepherd Lutheran in Irvine, CA, asked the uncomfortable questions that take time and teachability to answer. This is a little of their story!

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Irvine, California



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church – Irvine, California

KNOW CHRIST
& make
Him Known

Benevolence Policy: Kingdom-Building Activities

Greetings to ALWM, CGM Magazine, and our brothers and sisters in Christ from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (GSLC) in Irvine, southern California! I am taking this opportunity to share with you some important Kingdom-building work that Pastor Bill Moberly helped us accomplish last year.

Every year, our church takes 10% of our congregation's tithes and directs it to Kingdom-building activities outside the walls of our church. A portion goes to yearly global and local missions led by teams from our church (e.g., Haiti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Alaska). This past February, 2025, we sent a team that served in a very remote area *2025 GSLC Irvine mission trip, Terry Fee on right*

on the Haiti-Dominican Republic border. We partnered with a Dominican organization called "Building Bridges of Hope" and Haitian partners (doctors, dentist, translators) through partnership with a ministry called "3 Strand Cord."



2025 GSLC Irvine mission trip, Terry Fee on right

Building
Bridges
of Hope



Three
Strand
Cord



2025 mission trip team with medical personnel in front of medical building

In addition, a portion is devoted to work our members carry out in our local community (e.g., homelessness, human trafficking, food insecurity), and a portion goes to support missionary partners and organizations. We have a set of guidelines in our Benevolence Policy that helps us discern where to direct funds.

Time for a Benevolence Reset!

In 2024, our church leadership looked at our Benevolence Policy and asked whether we were being the best possible stewards of the financial gifts God has given us. We asked ourselves questions such as:

- How effectively does our giving fulfill the Great Commission?
- Are we supporting organizations and individuals who spread the Gospel and bring Jesus to those who desperately need to know Him?
- Are we in alignment with the Biblical mandate?
- What is the best and highest use of these funds?

We realized that we needed an “outside voice” to help us discern how to reset our long-standing Benevolence Policy. We were familiar with Pastor Bill’s expertise in training church leaders and missionaries. We supported the impressive work God has equipped ALWM to accomplish all over the world. He was the ideal person to invite in to lead a workshop for our Church Council and key staff. It turned out ALWM had the tool we needed in their Harvest Focus Workshop!



GSLC Harvest Focus Workshop, 2/10/2024 (Pastor Bill Moberly 3rd from left)

The result? Pastor Bill created an environment for our leaders to have a Spirit-led and honest conversation about what needed to change. The conversation continued over the subsequent months and culminated in a new Benevolence Policy. It is centered on being accountable to be good stewards of God's gifts in all our efforts to live out the Great Commission. It has turned out to be an excellent guide for future leaders and decision-makers. And, the whole discernment process reminded us of the continuing need to stop and re-examine how we are shepherding the gifts God has given us.

For more information, contact GSLC at churchoffice@gslcirvine.org



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Links:

ALWM: <https://www.alwm.org/>

CGM: <https://www.cgmmag.com/>

GSLC: <https://www.goodshepherdirvine.com/>

Haiti: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Haiti>

Dominican Republic: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Dominican-Republic>

Building Bridges of Hope: <https://bbohadr.org/>

3 Strand Cord: <https://www.3strandcord.org/>

Harvest Focus Workshop: <https://www.alwm.org/workshops>