

Say “YES!” to Mission Trips

By Katherine Eppley

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My Missions Story

As my plane departed to fly across the Pacific Ocean to Asia, many thoughts went through my head, but none of them were doubts. Pastor Bill Moberly, founder and director of Awakening Lives to World Missions (ALWM) did an excellent job preparing our team spiritually for this mission through study, reflection and virtual community building. I was confident that the Holy Spirit was already at work in Vietnam and Cambodia. The trip there seemed to take forever, only because I was eager to join God’s presence there!

My global missions story did not begin on this flight, or even during the months of preparation prior. Rather, my journey began as a young child. Raised in the Missouri Synod Lutheran church, global missions were an ever-present part of church life. Our church family prayed for and sponsored missionaries around the globe. We sponsored and cared for immigrant refugee communities. Pictures of people from around the globe adorned the refrigerator and cupboard doors in my childhood home. Refugee families from Laos lived with our family for several years. When my parents retired, they served in several short-term global mission trips. Now it was my season to step into this adventure of faith.

Vietnam

When we arrived in Vietnam, we organized supplies and materials that we had all brought with us and continued our team formation, this time in person. We spent time in prayer and study of God’s word. God’s amazing servants on the ground, David and Ms. Hahn, skillfully watched over our steps, protected our choice of meals, and both translated and answered questions with unending patience.

Dr. Hang's "children" in Ho Chi Minh



My highlights of our time in Vietnam were split between the “crafts and games” sessions we had with the children in Khanh Vinh while their parents received medical care and our time with Dr. Hang and the “Gospel House” children. Both were incredibly amazing experiences, where I saw firsthand the ways God is alive and at work in the lives of Vietnamese Christians.

Despite the unfavorable government position toward the Christian faith, the men and women of Vietnam see the urgency and eternal value in sharing the Gospel message. The kindness, generosity of heart, and hospitality shown to our team is something we experienced in both large cities and small rural churches, and I believe to be a characteristic that is only enhanced when contextualized by the salvation story of The Bible.



Children enjoying crafts and games at Vital Links health outreach event



Vital Links health outreach event - lunch served by the host church

Cambodia

It was very hard to say good-bye to Vietnam. What an amazing country! New experiences awaited us in Cambodia with Pastor Sam and his team at the Preah Vihear school. Once again, I was completely in awe of the incredible welcome that we received no matter where we went. We had the opportunity to teach the Bible through English lessons to a group of approximately 75 children from the community.



Bible camp in Preah Vihear

After attending school in the morning, the students had lunch at the school, participated in English practice, singing in English, crafts and outdoor games. After 4 hours with our team, the children were sent home with a dinner meal to go.



Some of my students at Bible camp in Preah Vihear

Our team was blessed to have three amazing translators, Chanty, Vicha and Lena, to support us during our English Bible camp. Watching the children slowly build trust with our team, from reserved and shy then blossoming into leading worship songs and performing liturgical dance on our last evening together was a blessing beyond all measure! There were many hugs and long good-byes as they walked back to their homes that final evening, each taking a small piece of my heart along with them.

While in Preah Vihear, we also had the opportunity to see the land that Pastor Sam was able to purchase. God has given him a clear vision to build a ministry and training center, to both train future and current pastors as well as to host youth events. To say that Pastor Sam is a man “on fire” for the Gospel of Christ would be an understatement – he is an inferno! Always on the move, always meeting and greeting and making everyone feel welcome and seen, it felt like Pastor Sam was shepherding the entire country of Cambodia. Never have I witnessed such a heart for the people of one’s country contained in just one person! While basic needs like access to clean drinking water, healthcare and fair wages are still very much present in both countries, God is using these needs to bring His story to the people of both Vietnam and Cambodia.

Say Yes to a Short-Term Mission Trip!

So, what about you? What obstacles do you think are between you and being part of a mission team to Vietnam and Cambodia, or maybe to another country where God’s people are at work? How can you speak to God about removing those obstacles, or helping you to view them differently so they no longer keep you from His kingdom work?

I can say with confidence that God **IS** on the move in Cambodia and Vietnam. His faithful servants have heard His call to “love God and love people”, and to both understand and regard with utmost seriousness the urgency to share the Gospel. Saying, “Yes!” to a short-term global mission will give you a front row seat to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, an opportunity to encourage God’s faithful

servants on the ground, and a better understanding of the history, culture, and needs of the people in that part of God's beautiful creation. When God taps on your shoulder and whispers in your ear, think about His faithful servant Samuel who simply said, *"Speak, for your servant is listening"* (1 Samuel 3:10 NIV).

To God be the Glory always and forever, Amen!



Katherine Eppley

Daughter of the most-High King, disciple of Christ, sister, wife, mother, Katherine works as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor for Adult Education programs in the greater Phoenix, AZ area. She and her husband Matthew have been blessed with 32 years of marriage and 3 (now adult) children.

Contact Katherine at: matthew.eppley@cox.net

Links:

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

Vietnam: <https://www.alwm.org/vietnam>

Cambodia: <https://www.alwm.org/cambodia>

Missouri Synod: <https://www.lcms.org/>

Laos: <https://www.alwm.org/laos-thailand>

Khanh Vinh: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kh%C3%A1nh_V%C4%A9nh_district

Preah Vihear: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preah_Vihear_province

ESL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_as_a_second_or_foreign_language