

6 rue de Lille
Haiphong, Tonkin
Indo China
December 3, 1949

Dear Friends:

A year has gone by since you last heard from us in this general way. Those of you who answered have received replies in the course of the year, but we do want all of you to have special wishes and greetings from us at this holiday season.

There has been very little improvement in the situation since then. It could be considered even more grave than before with the communists in China already at certain points of our frontier. There is an urgent need for prayer that God will keep the few doors open that we have in Tonkin. Most of this territory as you know is under the control of the revolutionary party and makes our work very difficult. These are uncertain days and we need the guidance of the Lord more than ever before. Though in the world fear is rampant, yet to us, as to the shepherds on that wonderful Christmas Eve, comes the angels' word: "Fear not."

In spite of circumstances, the Lord is working and precious souls are being brought into the kingdom and to a life of full consecration. When we look back, we can readily see what He has accomplished. Upon our arrival, we found a church in ruins and the first Sunday only four Christians gathered with us. You were praying for us and souls were being saved in the bamboo mat shed until we were actually crowded out of it. We have been able to move into the partly reconstructed church. The work has been stopped due to a lack of funds. We only have the unfinished walls and the roof. Recently, we held a baptismal service when seventeen Vietnamese took this forward step. Some of the Christians are gradually coming back from behind the iron curtain.

We must tell you about one of the men who was baptized, a former official. He is seventy eight years old and tried every religion known in the East but none of these satisfied him. His heart was still seeking peace when one Sunday morning in the bamboo shed he heard the message of Christ and His atoning work and gave his heart to the Lord. We saw a definite change in him. He goes everywhere witnessing that the Lord not only gave him spiritual life but new physical life as well. He is really an inspiration to us and to many who come out to the weekly meetings.

The baptismal service would not have been complete without Ba Cu Duc. She is a former school teacher and is now seventy two years old. She walked twelve kilometers to attend the service. She can only come a few times a year because of the distance but in her village, where she lives all alone, she is a shining light for the Lord. We can only visit her occasionally. There is frequent fighting there at night but she is without fear as she prays and communes with her Lord.

While the reconstruction work was still going on at the church during the summer, a sudden storm arose and the lightning flashed across the darkening sky. There was a crash as a thunder bolt struck the church. The workmen were knocked unconscious with five of them remaining in that condition. They had to be rushed to the hospital where they were given treatment and none died for which we praise God. We pray as we meet in this unfinished edifice, that fire will come down from heaven upon us all, consuming that which is not to His glory in the Christians lives and convicting the unsaved of their sin. Please make it your prayer too.

It is always a joy to go to our Indo China conference held annually at Dalat and this year even more so because of the visit of our Foreign Secretary, Dr. A. C. Snead. His timely and heart searching messages were such a blessing as well as his valuable counsel at this crucial time.

After conference at Dalat, Nelly and I were invited to the residence of His Majesty, Bao Dai for a visit. He is the President of the Vietnam Government and when he made his first visit to Haiphong, it was our privilege to meet him again. Since Indo China is so much in the international news lately, I am sure you will recognize his name. There was a mass meeting in front of the municipal auditorium. It was like a sea of people as the crowds came to cheer him and welcome him to the North. Later on during that memorable day, we met His Majesty privately at the residence of the Vietnamese Mayor of Haiphong. As we chatted in a salon, the Emperor reminded us of the former visit at Dalat in his palace when he promised he would see us again. He also told us that he remembered Esther when she was invited alone to have tea with him while she was still going to school at Dalat. Upon leaving, His Majesty thanked us for praying for him. He has an extremely difficult task to establish peace in this country, so it will be appreciated if you join us in prayer that he will be guided. The political situation affects the work of missions. Indo China MUST remain open for the furtherance of the Gospel.

We were anxious before the end of the year to get to our former station along the frontier at Langson. I had made one trip there this past summer with the French Chaplain for Tonkin and the Chief of the Chaplains for Indo China. The trip was a profitable one, contacting the Christians isolated in that territory. We did not know how we would find the church but to our amazement it was in excellent condition. This is really a miracle with so much destruction all around. Most of the Christians are held behind the iron curtain. Nelly and I were ready for the second trip, up bright and early before day break and were at the airport waiting to take off. From the radio tower a message was delivered that no planes could land in Langson. We were disappointed but also knew the Lord was keeping us away at that time as it was getting hot along the frontier and this does not have reference to the weather! The first opportunity we have, we want to try and go again, so pray we will be able to make it and be kept safe.

Because of the evacuation of missionaries in certain parts of China, Haiphong is to have the privilege of Mr. and Mrs. Poole's ministry for the large Chinese population. You may remember our request for prayer for this aspect of the work and will rejoice with us that our colleagues will soon arrive to take over that responsibility.

Nelly is not well and I trust you will pray for her. Since our arrival she has lost considerable weight. She suffers frequently with liver and gall bladder attacks which are painful and weakening. Then she is also bothered with bronchial asthma and severe allergies. In spite of these physical handicaps, she keeps busy in the work among the Vietnamese, Chinese and French. She makes regular calls at the hospital to visit the wounded. The cases are numerous and varied, they are the same as you would find in any base hospital during a war. Some are very pathetic. They should not be neglected and she takes them special things that they like, such as flowers from our garden, cool orange drinks, sandwiches and cookies. There is always an opportunity to witness and pray with them. The results are encouraging. One lad, wounded in our former district when he parachuted, had his intestines perforated in six places and one shell lodged in the hip. He suffered atrociously and attempted to commit suicide in a moment of despair. Nelly had dealt with him before and when she was told this, she went to plead with him to give his heart to the Lord. He did not yield then but he promised he would never try such a thing again. We were praying for him and one hot Sunday afternoon, Nelly felt she should go to the hospital and wash him as he was not given sufficient care, the hospital being short of help. When he was nice and clean, he looked up at her and said, "Could you wash my soul too, it needs it so!" This was the opportunity she had waited for and led him right then and there to the Lord. There was a definite change in him and he knew his sins were forgiven. He has been sent back to France for further operations and in a recent letter he told us he would never walk properly again but he is rejoicing in the Lord and his salvation. I would like to tell you more about this lad and others, but space does not permit.

As Christmas approaches, our hearts are with you all and Esther who is in her Senior year at Nyack. She is thoroughly enjoying her studies and teaching a Sunday School class of Chinese children in New York.

Last Christmas as the altar call was being given after the program, shots were heard right near by, but in spite of them several responded and Christ was born into their hearts. Just the other day another man was killed near the church early in the evening, a long time before the curfew. This is quite a common occurrence so pray that all those who come to the early evening Christmas service this year will be given divine protection as they return to their homes.

May we each and all be faithful to our Lord as we realize what Christmas means to us. Through the coming year, let us not fail to show forth the Christmas spirit of self-sacrificing love to a lost and suffering humanity.

Yours in His glad service,

Jake and Nelly Van Hine