

Spring, 1958

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THE CALL OF VIET-NAM

is sent to you through the courtesy of:

THE CALL OF VIET-NAM



Ancestor Worship at Tet Time
(see page 2)

THE VIET-NAM MISSION
of the
CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE

The Call of Viêt-Nam is issued by the Viêt-Nam missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. It comes to you as a gift from the missionary whose address is noted on the back page. Its purpose is to acquaint you with the work of the Lord in Viêt-Nam and to solicit your prayer and support.

Editor : Mrs. J.H. Revelle

Co-editors : Mr. and Mrs. B.R. Houck

VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR

To you, the year 1958 is already old. Our New Year has just begun. This, being the eleventh year in the cycle of twelve, is known as the «Year of the Dog». «Tet», or New Year is the most important Vietnamese holiday. For weeks ahead, preparations are being made; houses are calcimined, roofs thatched with new straw, new clothes must be made for all the children, the women are busy making all kinds of cakes and candied fruit, the streets are gay with bright colored paper flowers on sale everywhere. The celebration lasts from three days to a week—depending on the financial status of the family!

The holiday has great religious significance. The Vietnamese are devout ancestor worshippers. On New Year's Eve the people invoke the spirits of their ancestors to return for the three-day holiday period. They burn paper money and paper clothes and offer food on the altars so that the needs of the spirits may be supplied for the coming year. (It seems to make no difference that once the feast has been offered and they have prostrated themselves before it, they sit down and eat it themselves!) They firmly believe that the well-being of the spirit in after life depends on the care with which the eldest son performs these rites.

For three or four days all spend their time in feasting, visiting, shooting fire crackers, gambling and general revelry. It is a brief attempt to lay aside the fears, the poverty, the difficulties of daily life and grasp fleetingly after joy, satisfaction and the hope of a better life.

GOD ANSWERS TODAY!

Bouncing down the coastal road in a jeep one day last August, we passed scores of thickly populated villages, some sprawled under the cool shade of coconut palms, some along the quiet banks of fertile green valleys, and others rising up out of the dusty rubble and ruin of war. Tuy Hoa, the provincial capital, was among the latter; a most uninviting town, but because of its situation at the mouth of the province's largest river valley and at the center of her population, a most strategic spot. In the entire province of 350,000 there were but five small groups of Christians ministered to by one preacher and one student worker. As we returned home, we could not erase from our memories this great area bound by heathenism, scarred by war, and essentially forgotten by the Gospel.

Shortly, the field executive committee appointed us to Tuy Hoa and it became necessary to make a second trip—this time to study the possibility of building a mission residence and to search for temporary living quarters. We located property and estimated building costs. But because of war destruction, we could find only two tiny rooms for rent in a native hotel.

Bob Henry journeyed south with me on the moving truck to help get settled. As we left Tourane, the feeling crept over me that Abraham must have experienced centuries ago as from Ur of the Chaldees, « he went out not knowing whither he went ». All the way south we prayed that a « great door and effectual » would be opened unto us.

Arriving in Tuy Hoa at noon the next day, we asked the driver to park the truck while we went house hunting, saying that if we could not rent a house before nightfall we would move into the two rooms at the hotel. Our Vietnamese friends advised us that it would be several days before we could rent a house but Bob responded, « If God can answer prayer in a week, He can answer today! » In less than two hours we located a store apartment out of which one family had just moved.

Hallelujah! « A great door » to the Phu Yen province has been opened. Not only has God found a home for us and given us a warm welcome from all the officials in town, but praise His Name, in less than two weeks He has added four souls to His Church here in this province.

Mr. Tom Stebbins

THE SCOFFERS REMAINED TO PRAY

During the months of January and February, Rev Thuc, the national evangelist, and I visited several places in Central Vietnam, holding tent campaigns. In one of these places, a fishing village called Phu Hai, we found a suitable location and set up the tent. From the very onset of our two week campaign, large crowds, often exceeding six hundred people, gathered to hear our message. What a joy it was to witness for Christ, preaching the simple Gospel story. And what a thrill it gave us to see them coming to the Lord one by one.

The meetings did not progress without opposition however, for after the very first night of preaching, a group of young people visited the whole neighborhood telling everyone that it was a waste of time listening to us. «There is no God!» they declared defiantly. Before the campaign concluded there were forty souls who had turned to Christ as Lord and Saviour—including every one of those young people who had declared that He did not exist.

Let me tell you the story of one of these converts. Several years ago, a blind man had heard the Gospel story in the town of Mui Ne, about 25 kilometers from where we were preaching. He had believed in his heart at that time, but in his isolation and lack of contact with other Christians he grew cold spiritually.

One night his son who lived in Phu Hai heard the message of salvation and believed. With his belief came a remembrance of the things his father had taught him about God so long ago. In a state of great excitement he travelled back to Mui Ne to tell his father that he had found the Saviour. The father, upon hearing the good news from his son, immediately came to Phu Hai to hear about the Lord for Himself. He joyfully came back to the Lord, and the next night the Holy Spirit used the reading of his testimony to break up many a stony heart and bring others to Himself.

Mr. H. M. Collins

*From the glory and the gladness,
From His secret place,
From the rapture of His presence
From His radiant face:
Christ, the Son of God, hath sent me
Through the midnight lands;
Mine the mighty ordination
Of the pierced hands.*

Selected

WINNING THE STUDENTS

Several months ago my wife and I were given the chance to teach the Bible in English once a week to about 100 high school students here in Bentre. We felt this was a real opportunity, so gladly accepted.

Just after Christmas in a special youth rally, eight of these young people prayed. The following Saturday morning when I asked the eight to stay after class, almost the entire class remained and many more wanted to pray. In order to ascertain the ones who were really seeking God, we told all those who wanted to pray to go down to the church. To our great surprise and joy, over 40 more prayed.



« Some of the High School Students Who Have Prayed »

We felt that further instruction was imperative, so began a class every Wednesday evening, using the Navigator Scripture Memorization Course. The first Wednesday night over 100 high school students attended, and at the close of the class it was our joy to pray with five more young people. The next Wednesday night two young candidates for the priesthood remained after class earnestly inquiring about the things of God. We spent over an hour with them explaining the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Do pray for these two young men. The following Wednesday night after the class, thirteen more young men and women came up and prayed earnestly. We do thank God for what He has been doing in these young lives and do solicit your believing prayers for them.

Mr. Garth Hunt

A GROWING CHURCH

In 1928 we were allocated to a drab-looking little town cut through by several canals, where we had the privilege of serving the Lord for a time. During the rainy season, when there were periodic floods, we went by canoe across the rice fields to the church—a weather-beaten building supported by piles.

Today, some thirty years later, we see something vastly different. For Long-Xuyen (Pronounced Lum-swee-eng) has changed. On a recent visit there, we were surprised to notice broad, clean, well-lighted streets. The biggest, ugliest canal had been transformed into a beautiful public park with a profusion of gay flowers and multicolored shrubbery. But best of all, just one block away we saw the church—not a wooden building now—but an imposing edifice of brick.

A great crowd of people gathered there in the evening and listened attentively as my husband told them the story of Jesus and the cross. What most impressed us, however, was the whole-hearted, earnest spirit which pervaded the young people's group. All during the service they were kneeling in the little side room, quietly pouring out their hearts in prayer for my husband and for their unsaved friends in the audience. Then they were immediately on hand to accompany their student colleagues to the altar when the invitation was given. Seventeen young people accepted the Saviour that night. Why this ready response? The answer is found in the consistent lives, faithful witness and most of all, in the believing prayers of the Long-Xuyen Young People's group. Would to God there were more like them!

Mrs. P. E. Carlson

THE GOSPEL ON THE AIR

We are thankful for the advances that have been made recently in the radio work. We now have two full-time workers—a technician and a radio pastor. Sixty new 15 minute Vietnamese programs have been sent to Manila. The F.E.B.C. is broadcasting two 15 minute programs daily in Vietnamese. Weekly half-hour programs are being broadcast from stations in Saigon, Dalat, and Nhatrang. Shortly we expect to broadcast another from Hue. All these programs are on free time given by government-owned stations.

A new effort is underway to get a weekly gospel witness to the market places all over the country. The recording studio will prepare half-hour tapes and send them to any town or village where the local pastor can obtain permission for play-back on the town public address system.

NOW I AM FULLY SATISFIED



The Cham have been called, «A Forgotten Race», but praise God there are those being called out from among them as a people for His Name. These people, the original inhabitants of the coastal areas of Vietnam, are now reduced to a population of about 20,000. They are quite different from the Vietnamese in language, customs, and worship.

Mr. Van thanh Truc was the only child of a rich and superstitious Cham family. This young man, 24 years of age, had been searching for Truth for several years. One day last fall, he picked up and read a Gospel tract. The Lord began to deal with him, and he felt led to go to the home of Mr. Toi, a Vietnamese pastor working among the Cham. After asking several questions about things that were not clear to him, Mr. Truc said, «Now I am fully satisfied and I want to accept Christ as my Saviour», Pastor Toi says that in his six years of ministry he has never before heard a man confess his sins with such boldness or accept Christ with such sincerity.

Mr. Truc courageously told his parents, wife, and friends that he had found Christ, and was now worshipping God. His transformed life has caused his family and friends to marvel. He attends church regularly and witnesses fervently. On Christmas day he was baptized, and after the service went out and led one of his friends to the Lord.

Please pray much for Mr. Truc, that the Lord will keep His hand upon this young man and continue to use him. At present he is the leader of the «District Youth Association». He feels that God would have him go to Bible School. Believe and pray with us that the Lord will save his young Vietnamese wife, a Buddhist, so that together they may some day be used to bring the blessed News of Salvation to the Cham race.

Mrs. B. R. Houck

PUT FEET UNDER YOUR PRAYERS I

For many years, Binh Thuy, a village lying four miles northwest of Cantho, had been passed by in the evangelistic program of the church. It had not been neglected altogether because the Christians at Cantho have been faithfully remembering to pray for that village at the midweek prayer meeting. However, one was beginning to wonder when they were going to « put feet under their prayers » and actually do something about taking the Word of Life to the needy people at Binh Thuy.

The last week in January plans were made by the Cantho Church for a concentrated campaign in Binh Thuy. For five nights from thirty to forty Christians with three pastors and a missionary couple proceeded to the village to teach the children at six o'clock, to preach to the unsaved at seven o'clock, and to show slides on the life of Christ at eight o'clock. Hundreds of people gathered in and around the large open market place each evening to hear the Word of God and to see the pictures. The youth group did the singing and the older Christians witnessed at the market place and in all the homes in the village.

As a result of the faithful presentation of the claims of Christ, eleven adults prayed the penitent's prayer during those five nights. The following week, the pastor from Cantho and some of the members of the Witness Band returned to visit the new converts. One of these converts offered his spacious house to be used as a place of worship. The Cantho Church is now holding weekly worship services here for the new converts and using this home as an evangelistic center.

Rev. O. G. Fisher

WHEN YOU PRAY

Remember the Annual Field Conference which begins in Dalat on May 4th. Rev. T. G. Ziemer of Thailand will be the special speaker.

Pray for the two provinces of Quang Ngai and Phu Yen, newly occupied by missionaries. People's hearts there have been softened by the suffering of war. Pray that a great harvest may be reaped for God.

Ask God for the opening of more churches in the city of Saigon. There are now only nine Protestant churches in this city of over two million.

FRUIT THAT REMAINED

A quarter of a century ago we made a trip to La Hai, a fertile valley nestled among the majestic mountains of Vietnam. How our hearts were thrilled then, as men and women knelt in prayer after hearing the Good News for the first time.

After twenty-five years and two awful wars, we were finally able to return. Hid away in this distant valley was a precious group, members of His church, exposed to all the onslaughts of the enemy. Yet through the years they have stood true. What a delight it was to find that the ones who accepted Jesus that night long ago were still faithful to Him. What a happy reunion, and how wonderful to hear of God's faithfulness to them through these many years. They have now grown from the handful that prayed that night to a group of forty families. They have just built, without any foreign help, the little chapel you see here.

Mrs. C. E. Travis



SPECIAL MEETINGS FOR THE CHINESE

The Lord used Miss Gladys Ward, of « Church of Christ in China », to bring great blessing in special services held for the Chinese in Saigon. Because of its greater seating capacity, the services were held in the Independent Chinese Church. The first three meetings were for the Christians and there was a ready response as young and old dedicated themselves anew to the Lord. During the evangelistic meetings that followed, the church was crowded with from five to six hundred in attendance nightly. In all there were seventy who sought the Lord for salvation. Our hearts truly rejoiced in the unity of the believers and the working of God's Spirit that was manifest to all.

Miss E. I. Arnold

IN THE NEWS

We welcome to our ranks two new missionary couples — MR. & MRS. S. T. SUTHERLAND, and MR. & MRS. D. R. DOUGLAS (nee Helen Mae Irwin, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. E. F. Irwin) Since our last issue, three couples have returned from furlough, MR. & MRS. P. E. CARLSON, MR. & MRS. H. S. DUTTON, and MR. & MRS. O. G. FISHER.

Three couples have just left us for furlough. MR. & MRS. FITZSTEVENS will live in Nyack, N. Y.; MR. & MRS. HOUCK in Toledo, Ohio; and MR. & MRS. JEFFREY in Toronto, Can.

The first SHORT TERM BIBLE SCHOOL in the new Center in Vinh Long began on March 15th with over forty students enrolled. Pray for students and teachers.

A BOOK ROOM has just been opened in Quan Tri, a provincial capital close to the seventeenth parallel, and services will be held there each week.

MR. & MRS. DUTTON are the only missionaries in Quang Ngai province with its 750,000 inhabitants. Together with two Vietnamese pastors they are seeking to reach this area with the Gospel message. Will you remember them?

EVANGELIST THUC and his team will be holding tent meetings throughout Central Vietnam up through September. There has been marked blessing in the campaigns held thus far, and in every place souls have been saved.

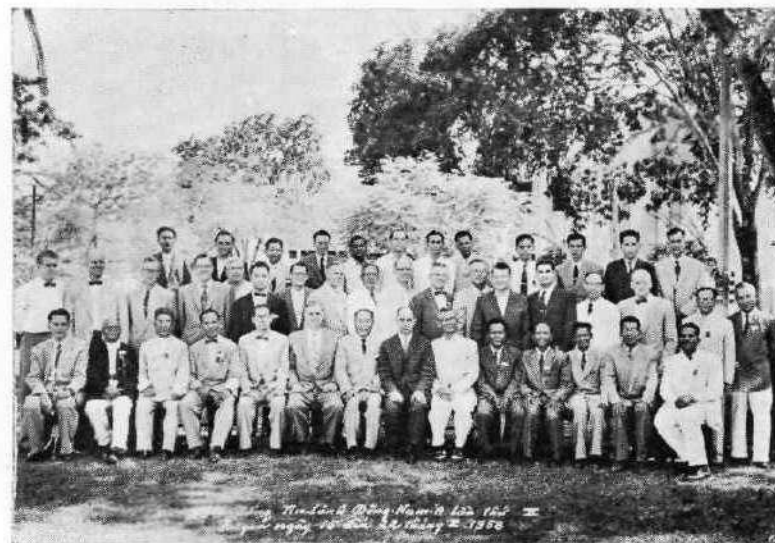
In answer to prayer, the Lord has touched DOUGIE COLLINS for whom we asked prayer in the last issue of the Call. His legs are now straight and he has resumed normal activity.

*And pray for me, my friend
When night comes on;
God's stars look down upon us both,
Apart-alone;
Will you, dear friend, before you sleep
Pray Him my soul, with yours, to keep?*

T. O. C.

SECOND ASIA CONFERENCE

Vietnam had the privilege of being host to the Second Asia Conference which met from Jan. 15-22 in Saigon. The forty-two delegates present represented the C. & M. A. fields of Cambodia, Hongkong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, Tribes, and Vietnam. The Foreign Department was represented by Rev. L. L. King, Foreign Secretary, and Rev. R. M. Chrisman, Area Secretary for the Far East.



* The Delegates to the Second Asia Conference *

The daily sessions were given to reports and discussions of the problems and development of the Indigenous Church in the various fields. The conference was a time of precious fellowship and rich blessing, climaxed by the platform rally of the closing meeting.

Encouraged by the bond of fellowship with churches of other fields and stimulated by their progress and experience, the Vietnamese church has profited greatly from this conference.