

the **CALL**

MARCH 1961



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Selecting "Tet Tree"

THE CALL OF VIET NAM

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COVER PICTURE :

Carefully trimming its branches to blossom at the precise time of the lunar New Year, this old man watches his « Tet tree » in anticipation of the coming holiday. The « Tet tree » is important to the Vietnamese.

They select with care what appears to be dry branches, but ones that will blossom forth into golden beauty, bringing blessing and protection for the New Year.



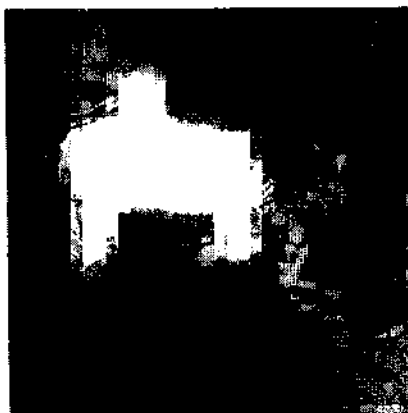
As a part of his language study, each missionary must write brief articles on various aspects of local culture. Drawing from these and other sources, THE CALL presents to its readers background information with the impact of the Gospel upon culture and customs. Contributors of material included in this issue are Mrs. H. Collins, Mr. D. Douglas, Mr. G. Erickson, Mr. and Mrs. F. Kleinhen, and Mrs. S. Sutherland. VIET MY magazine has also provided much helpful information.

TET

A festive spirit fills the air for weeks before the beginning of another lunar calendar year. Families are busy preparing food and making clothes, for everyone is to have a new outfit for this all-important holiday. Homes are scrubbed, polished and painted. Shopkeepers work well into the evening hours eager for business, hoping to pay all debts to avoid feelings foreign to love and brotherhood.

Business ceases about noon on the last day of the old year. As evening approaches the streets become silent. Everything is in order so the family can enjoy a time of relaxation. There is an air of expectancy as they gather around the ancestral altar awaiting the midnight hour. Ancestors are believed to come back from the ethereal realm, remaining for three days to bestow blessing and protection. In return, gifts of food and flowers are offered as tokens of gratitude. At the end of the third day a ceremony is performed to honor the ancestors as they return to their place of abode.

Several methods are employed to insure protection from evil spirits which might bring harm or hinder the arrival of ancestors. Sometimes a tall stalk of bamboo is placed upright in the front yard. To this is tied a basket filled with betel leaves and areca nuts, with the hope of



In Gratitude to Ancestors

satisfying the appetites of the spirits. Lime scattered throughout the house is believed to be another protective measure. It may be a sketch of a bow and arrow by the front threshold, or simply placing branches of the popular «Tet tree» in the house.

The first few days of Tet are spent visiting relatives, friends and neighbors, respectively. Of great concern is the first visitor to the home, for he is responsible for the fate of all the family throughout the coming year. To insure a happy future, first visits are often scheduled ahead of time.

Stores reopen the fourth day of the new year, marking the end of Tet. It has brought happiness and goodwill for the present and hope for the future.

New Year's Day, Christians gather to recount the blessings of the past and join in prayer to God to use their lives in the coming year for His glory. Their hope for the future is based on confidence in their Heavenly Father.

RELIGIONS

CAODAISM

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Caodaism

A combination of five « great ways » resulted in what is known as Caodaism, a religious sect of more recent origin with a membership over five hundred thousand. It began as a political movement as well as a religious group, peculiar to south Viet Nam.

These five « great ways » include Confucianism, Ancestor Worship, Christianity, Taoism and Buddhism. An eye symbolizes the Supreme Being, Cao-Dai, who is all-seeing, all-knowing and everywhere-present. It sets forth the doctrines of existence of the soul, reincarnation, the law of Karma, the cult of the dead, love of justice and the practice of virtue. Protection of life, charity and universal brotherhood is its motto.

At their great temple near Saigon are images of Cao-Dai; Li-Tai-Pe, a Chinese poet; Nguyen-Binh-Khiem, a Vietnamese poet; the French author, Victor Hugo; and the Chinese revolutionary leader, Sun-Yat Sen. These personages are held in high esteem because of followers who held frequent seances with them during the early stages of forming this religion.

As a political movement, Caodaism has lost power, which has effected its prestige as a religious group. Today its followers are a great deal less than before Viet Nam gained her independence.

Ancestor Worship and Confucianism

Relations existing between the living and the dead vitally effect the social and religious life of Vietnamese people. Souls of the deceased live in the interest and memory of the living to guide, assist, protect and inspire them.

Confucius stressed the belief of ancient China that man is made up of a living and spiritual soul. At death the living soul turns to dust with the body, while the spiritual soul wanders in the ethereal realm. It is possible for this spiritual soul to evaporate into nothing. Keeping alive the soul's effectiveness through memory of the dead is the duty of living descendants.

Filial piety was one of Confucius' dogmas. This, he claimed, was the foundation of all virtues of family morals and of society. It is expressed as the living honor the spirits of the dead through memory.

An ancestral altar is found in almost every Vietnamese home, where tablets listing deceased ancestors for the past five generations repose. They are the objects of special rites on numerous occasions throughout the year. Two particular days dedicated to the dead are the ninth day of the third lunar month, when the tombs are visited, and the fifteenth day of the seventh month. This latter occasion is a Buddhist festival, remembering the wandering souls of those who died without descendants.

Buddhism

Teachings of Buddha, a native of India, spread to Viet Nam from China. Referring to himself as the «enlightened one,» he alone was able to lead men from the wheel of being to Nirvana, an eternal, perfect state of mind. «Four noble truths» were propagated by Buddha: that life is a succession of suffering, ignorance of true reality is the cause of suffering, by eliminating selfish desires man can eliminate suffering, and man must strive to perfect himself through right concentration, speech, action and living.

Ardent followers of Buddhism are vegetarians, stemming from the «prohibition» not to kill, including both man and animals. Buddha further instructed his followers not to steal, lie, drink any alcohol, nor be unchaste. These «five prohibitions» are aimed to bring about self-improvement in actions, speech and thought, resulting in good behavior as well as purity of heart. When this has been achieved, through the practice of meditation one can arrive at the perfect vision, see true reality and enter Nirvana.

«Everyone has had many previous lives and will have many future lives,» is one of Buddhism's tenets. A record of the sum total of one's good and bad actions during this life is called the law of Karma. At the end of life, if good actions outnumber the bad, the future life will be better. Reincarnation and the law of Karma thus account for the

(Continued on page 16)



Buddhist Monk Praying

Offering Incense



MAKING a bride in Viet Nam is quite a complicated affair. One of several recourses may be followed. An agreement can be made while the children are small. Relatives and friends may recommend a girl to the young man's parents. He may make his own choice, or seek the help of a «matchmaker.» Good health is important, more so than beauty. The girl must come from a respectable family, be a good housekeeper and be of an equal social level.

The choice made, a close friend of reputable character acts as intermediary. Upon the first visit with the girl's parents, he consults horoscopes as to the compatibility of the couple.

Agreement of choice results in both parties meeting on a chosen «lucky day.» The young man, his parents and the intermediary go to the girl's home with gifts, purposely observing her conduct as she silently serves the guests, and to see the kind of house her parents have. Satisfied with the girl, a return invitation is given to her parents to assure them she is entering a fine family.

On a carefully selected day, the young man, his intermediary and male relatives walk single file to the engagement celebration at the girl's home. After relatives greet the party, the young man prostrates before the ancestral altar as a symbol of accepting her ancestors and family. He performs this same ritual before the girl's relatives, and offers the traditional engagement

ENGAGEMENT



Traditional Engagement Gift

gift of gold earrings. The couple are considered engaged, so all join in a feast, at which time the wedding date is announced.

Parents of both parties agree on a bride price, determined by the wealth of the young man's parents. It may include gifts of cloth, jewelry, rice alcohol and food.

Guests assemble at the groom's house on the wedding day to form a procession. Leading the party is the groom's assistant, carrying gifts of gold, rice alcohol and the bride's wedding garments. The groom follows with a box of betel leaves and areca nuts, a symbol of unity and faithfulness.

AND MARRIAGE



Announcing Marriage

Upon arrival at the bride's home, a revered old man presides, lighting red candles and reciting prayers at the altar. The groom prostrates before the altar and the bride's relatives as an act of respect. In a back room the bride awaits the groom where he presents her with the wedding garments. When she is attired, the couple come forth displaying their gifts before the guests. Again the procession forms, this time with the groom leading, followed by the bride and others in a given order, going to the groom's house.

Ushered by both fathers, the couple approach the altar as the

intermediary holds two lighted candles informing the ancestors of the marriage. They prostrate before the altar and before male and female relatives, respectively. This ceremony completed, the bridal couple passes the tray of gifts among the guests expecting to receive money from relatives.

A feast follows with the bride caring for the women guests, while the groom looks after the men. The couple do not eat, nor do they talk to each other but rather appear very serious.

First to leave the feast are the bride's parents. She accompanies them out to the gate, quietly weeping as she bids them farewell. When feasting is almost over, the bride and groom remove their wedding garments and go to the kitchen to eat. Guests have gone, the house is put in order, so they can retire to the room specially prepared for them. As the bride enters the room first, the groom stands aside lest she step on his shadow and he become a henpecked husband!

Christianity has raised the standard of many Vietnamese marriages to that highest plane of a union blessed by God. Though Christian parents guide the marriage choice of their children, it is done through Bible teaching and prayer. As in all things, Christ has transformed that which has been marred by sin into something of beauty and sacredness, to the praise of His own Name.

DEATH AND BURIAL

Funeral Procession



It is a common practice in Viet Nam for an elderly man of means to purchase his own coffin long before death, placing it in the main room of the house. Money is set aside to build his tomb. He has prepared a lifetime for this and somehow feels consoled to know where his remains will lie. Encouraging this thought is the proverb, «When you are alive you must have a house; when you die you must have a tomb.»

Essential preparations for a funeral and burial are many. Relatives living near and far are notified and come to assist. Reporting death to government authorities and requesting to keep the corpse a stated period of time is of first importance. If relatives come from a distance, sometimes the family waits as long as a week before burying the deceased. Cleaning the house and expanding the roof to make a temporary shelter for guests must be done. An elderly man is sought to give advice concerning mourning, funeral ritual and «lucky days» for performing rites. A monk is informed, for he is to recite prayers. Women are busy preparing food for the next several days.

Washing and dressing the corpse in traditional black tunic and turban is the first ritual. Members of the family or specialists perform the «shrouding ceremony,» which is putting the corpse into the coffin now placed before the ancestral altar. Few corpses are embalmed. Personal belongings of the deceased (clothing, mosquito net and blan-

kets) are also put into the coffin. Ten white candles are placed on the coffin after sealing it with a sticky substance. These are to reduce punishment in the ten gates of hell through which the deceased must pass. During the funeral period, three times daily an offering of food to the soul of the deceased is placed on a table at the head of the coffin. It consists of three bowls of rice, three cups of tea and special dishes. Members of the family prostrate one by one before the altar in priority of relationship to the deceased. Mourning clothes are distributed by a monk or by relatives.

Three years of mourning are observed if the head of the family dies. There is but one year of mourning for the mother. No rituals are held for unmarried children nor do parents mourn for deceased children. Mourners wear robes of white cotton, men having a head piece of rough straw and women wearing a white band.

Friends and relatives pay their respects by bowing before the deceased as an act of honor and offering gifts of food and money. They bring silk and satin banners on which the fine qualities of the deceased are inscribed in Chinese character. Musicians may be hired to play during this period, often lasting several days. It is usually a boisterous occasion as men feast and drink rice alcohol.

The funeral procession follows a given arrangement. A cart carrying gold and silver paper money leads the way. Scattering money

along the road satisfies spirits, so they will not hinder the path of the deceased. There is a large banner telling the life history of the deceased in Chinese character. Four men follow carrying a small altar with a photo of the departed one, an incense holder and candles. This same incense holder is used afterward in the home in worship ceremonies for the deceased. The carved gilt and red hearse may be carried, drawn by horses or transported on a slow-moving vehicle. Walking close behind the hearse is the immediate family, bent low in an attitude of sorrow. Sons, the widow, daughters, other relatives and friends follow in this order. At the grave there is much weeping and wailing, for they realize there is no hope of ever seeing the deceased again. A Buddhist monk chants prayers, again the family prostrates and the coffin is lowered into the grave.

Three days later, again donning their mourning clothes, the family returns to the grave to perform the symbolic «opening of the grave» ceremony. For three days the soul of the deceased has been imprisoned in hell. This ritual permits the soul to leave the grave and go to the ancestral altar. Regarded as an unseen member of the household, the soul observes family activities. However, apart from periods when the soul is worshipped, it may be kept imprisoned in hell to pay its debt of sin.

Hallelujah! Jesus Christ delivers from sin and its penalty. What a message of hope for these people!



SUPERSTITION

by J. Livingston

A WANDERING SOUL IS BURIED

ANH DONG, a wealthy young man from a fishing village in Quang-Ngai province, drowned while swimming in the sea. Grief-stricken, his family recovered the body, burying it beside their ancestors. Something must be done to return the boy's soul to his body. When a Vietnamese meets death through accident, it is believed that his soul wanders about the scene of death, a menace to anyone nearby.

Five days after a simple burial, Dong's family called the local sorcerer. It was agreed that if he could successfully return his soul to the ancestral burial grounds, he would be well rewarded. A day later, the family, relatives, many spectators, the magician and his helper (a demon medium) gathered at the seashore.

Vigorously the sorcerer commanded Dong's wandering soul to leave the waters and enter the waiting medium, who stood waving burning incense sticks. Suddenly, with wild contortions, the medium expressed entrance of this lost soul into his body. In fiery exhibition he ran over to three of Anh Dong's friends, slapped their faces and scolded them for being so careless in letting their friend drown. Everyone gazed in fear. Anh Dong's father stopped the medium saying, «If my son's soul has really come upon you, then tell me what small objects are hidden in my left pocket.» To the amazement of everyone he answered correctly, «Watermelon seeds.»

After enacting Dong's manner of death, the medium came dripping-wet out of the sea, loosened a rope tied about his waist and ran to the boy's grave. Plunging face down, he shook convulsively. The sorcerer took three mouthfuls of whiskey, spewing it all over the medium's body as he stood looking wretched and tired. Liquor cleansed out any of the boy's soul that might remain in the medium. Dong's wandering soul was buried. Back home, his father passed an envelope to the sorcerer. It contained his reward.

Into like fishing villages God's mighty power is being manifest. During the past year over five hundred men and women have turned from superstition and ancestor worship. The Holy Spirit working through a humble student pastor has accomplished this work. Pray earnestly that these new believers will stand firm in Christ.

MARVELOUSLY TRANSFORMED

by Pastor Phan dinh Lieu

MY father, a Chinese character scholar and village school teacher, instructed all eight of his children in the Chinese language. We were well versed in Confucianism, which meant we honored our ancestors. At Tet time the family altars were well supplied with food and liquor. Much carousing accompanied this annual occasion.

When I was sixteen, my brother, four young men and I formed a religious group with the purpose of praying to the Great Spirit of Heaven. The altar we used in worshipping was always laden with rice alcohol and areca nuts. Drunkenness was usually a part of this praying group.

Gathered in a dark, locked room, Due, the leader, began by chanting a verse which all of us repeated. Then another line, and thus the singing continued until Due had an inspiration. All would cease while he wrote poetry concerning nature. While Due was in this trance we believed one came down from heaven to possess and inspire him. Sometimes these gatherings continued for a week, praying and writing under the influence of liquor.

Over a period of sixteen years this prayer group became well known throughout Quang-Nam province. People came from distant places bringing offerings, asking us to pray for the sick.

At my grandfather's death I fell heir to a book on sorcery. This practice was quite remunerative. One of my victims was the son of Mr. Diem, who later became a pastor. After praying, the child

died. There was no way out but to tell the bereaved father the position of his house was wrong. Undaunted, he tore down the structure and rebuilt it facing south instead of east.

With all our praying, I am ashamed to say that our lives were anything but examples to others. How could they be, under the control of Satan? Gambling, stealing and loose living accompanied our praying.

Amazing grace of God! Earnest in our search for something higher than what was on earth, God in mercy found a way to our hearts. When three of us followed Christ, our religious group ended.

Friends wept when they saw the marvelous transformation that the Holy Spirit wrought in my life. These past forty years I have suffered imprisonment, beatings and insults in preaching the glorious Gospel, but I count them as nothing, for I have gained Christ!

Mr. & Mrs. Phan dinh Lieu



FROM PESSIMISM TO PEACE

by Pastor Pham Xuan Tin,
Vice-President of the
National Church



I was born into a strict Buddhist family. How well I remember my parents teaching me to worship our ancestors. Twice a month my brother and I burned incense and bowed before the ancestral altar.

My mother died when I was nine years old, making my childhood unhappy. Although pessimistic, I was zealous in our religion. While living with my uncle, I began training as a Buddhist priest. This failed to bring the peace I sought, so I left the pagoda. Though I feared death, I was tempted to commit suicide because my weight of sin made me so miserable. But thank God, He spared my life for His own purpose.

To no avail was the advice to be baptized by a priest, or to worship spirits at my mother's grave. One night I had a dream, and I saw Jesus come in a cloud. He called me to follow Him. I met a Vietnamese pastor who explained the Gospel clearly and gave me some literature. This I read, and I listened to salvation messages. Shortly afterward I accepted Christ as my personal Savior. What a complete change! The peace I long had sought now filled my soul.

Returning to Hue to visit, I witnessed of Christ to my family. In anger my father picked up a knife to kill me. He tried to force me to forsake Jesus and return to ancestor worship. I refused, so he drove me out, forbidding me to come home again. What a comfort was Psalm 27:10, «When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.»

While working in my small pharmacy one day, God's call came to me. Like Paul, I did not confer with flesh and blood, but I left all to follow Him and enrolled in Bible School. A girl from a Christian family became my wife. God led us into the jungles of Viet Nam to work among tribespeople.

We have experienced many testings down through the years, but God has sustained us. Hundreds of souls have been saved, for the Gospel is God's power «unto salvation to every one that believeth.» Our hearts rejoice in the Lord today as we continue working among the tribespeople in Dran district. The task is great and duties are many. We would appreciate your remembrance of us in prayer.

EARLY in life I became a Buddhist with the hope of gaining deliverance from sin. Death claiming the lives of most of my children caused my heart to protest, «Why does Buddha not protect them?» I knew the answer—because of my sins. This led me to adhere to a more strict vegetarian diet than I had been following. In time I became so weakened, I could no longer prostrate in worship. Strength permitted going to the temple only to burn incense. As I performed this rite I continually recited, «O Buddha in the lotus flower,» vainly hoping for peace of heart.

One day I suffered an arm injury resulting from a fall. My troubled heart only added to the painful condition. Upon advice from a friend I went to the temple to recite Buddhist scriptures, which would bring forgiveness and healing. There a monk informed me I fell on an «unlucky day.» Encouraging me not to be alarmed, he assured me I would get well. With these words he rubbed some incense on my injured arm. I was instructed to worship ten days each month at the temple altar of Buddha, give a monthly offering of ten dollars, and recite the sacred writings. So desirous was I to know deliverance from sin, I soon learned from memory two books of the writings.

While visiting in China in 1957, I stayed with an ardent Buddhist friend. She had in her possession Buddhist literature and pictures. Vivid in my memory was the scene

of Buddha having reached Nirvana, very emaciated as a result of much suffering. Fear gripped my heart at the thought of a like experience, for I knew I would not live to achieve my objective.

It was Prayer Meeting night when I had occasion to visit a Christian friend. At her invitation I consented to attend the service. Unceremoniously, she introduced me to the pastor as an ardent Buddhist friend from Viet Nam, promptly inviting him to her home to tell me the Gospel. My heart was deeply moved as he spoke of One who could forgive sin. In Buddhism there is much suffering. But this pastor told me Christ bore my sin and suffering. Why should I not believe in Him? «Faith» and «salvation» were the keynotes leading me into that precious experience of knowing true deliverance from sin!

TRUE DELIVERANCE

by Mrs. Six, a Chinese Christian





LABOR AND HARVEST

by Robert Henry

THE culture which has been described to you is the soil in which the missionary plows and plants the seed of the Gospel; it is the ocean into which the fishers of men cast their nets. Even as the farmer must know the potential of his soil and the fisherman must know the dangers of the deep, nature's laws governing the winds and currents, and those coves which provide the most bountiful catch of fish, so must the Lord's servants become vitally acquainted with the culture of the people among whom they labor.

This strange, parched soil which the laborer begins to plow under the trying rays of a tropical sun is so different from the land which he used to till. More often than not it is hard and unyielding. Finally when sprouts do push their heads above the dry crust, they are often either withered or destroyed by some devastating blight. The laborer acquaints himself with new instruments and new methods. Sometimes he is tempted to change the very seed which he has been commissioned to sow. Too frequently the subtle suggestion enters his mind that he could gather a much more impressive harvest back in his homeland. But thanks be to God for the laborer who puts his hand to the plow and refuses to look back,

patiently working the stubborn soil until it springs forth with green crops and luscious fruit.

Used to the placid lake, the fisherman now finds himself in the midst of a turbulent ocean. The boat which had seemed so secure and sturdy now appears but a flimsy craft bobbing dangerously over the crests of the mighty rolling waves. The church, which the missionary saw as the very central pillar of his home society, appears as a small minority group on the mission field, battered and tossed by waves of persecution and public scorn. But still, at the command of the Master, the fishers of men launch out into the boundless depths of this foreign sea to cast in their nets again and again. Pray therefore that the fishermen may reach the eternal shores with their ships heavily laden with fish, and that the laborers may come again bringing their sheaves with them.



AFTER 50 YEARS



by Pastor Pham Xuan Bin

LET us open the pages of history and retrospect concerning the work of the Gospel in Viet Nam these past fifty years.

Although there were sporadic visits before 1911, that year marked the time when Alliance missionaries took up residence in Da-Nang (Tourane). Early in 1911 Dr. R. A. Jaffray together with two young men made a brief trip from South China to Da-Nang to open the station. One of the young men died, while the other, Mr. Hosler, returned to Viet Nam to take up language study. Other missionaries followed soon after, sowing the Gospel seed in this pioneer field.

Even as the Lord's messengers of old, they received a vision of Him, heard His call and were sent to proclaim the Living Message. Early they learned what it was to «break new ground,» experiencing weariness and hardship. But because of their love for the Lord Jesus and the people to whom He had called them, they counted these as pleasures.

Missionary personnel increased resulting in more stations being opened. Many hundreds of people were at last hearing the Truth. Fervent in prayer, ever believing for a rich harvest, God's servants over-

came obstacles, and He accompanied their ministries with success. As the number of believers increased, flourishing self-supporting churches were established.

Fishers of men were trained at the Tourane Bible School to work with the missionaries in spreading the Good News and guarding the flocks. In 1927, the first National Church Conference was held when the Evangelical Church of Viet Nam was established. Although the Church was officially organized in 1929, it was not until 1942 that government recognition was given.

God gave a vision of missions to the Church. In 1930, Vietnamese pastors were sent to the mountains, working with the missionaries in tribal areas. Today there are more than ten thousand believers among these people.

The 1960 National Church Conference revealed a present church membership of over twenty-four thousand. As we recall what God has done these past years, we unite our hearts in praise to Him. The past and present are but stepping stones for the goal yet to be realized. God wants our faith to produce works, to be united in one purpose—an indigenous Church giving forth the Glorious Message.

NEWS:

Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Collins, Mr. and Mrs. R. T. Henry, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Revelle and Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Travis leave for furlough during the 1961 Conference year.



A newly opened work in Quang-Tri province reports enthusiastic attendance at their recent one-week Bible School. Binh-Dinh province continues to reap benefit from the well attended sessions in that area. Da-Nang and Vinh-Long also held schools of one month duration.

PRAY:

Returning and new missionaries, as well as Chinese workers from Hong-Kong, are hindered from entering this country due to lack of visas. Pray they will be granted soon.



We rejoice that four Chinese young men in Da-Nang have been saved recently and two of them baptized. May God grant they shall be shining lights, influencing others to believe. Some desire to take the step of believing in Christ, but they fear opposition or expulsion from their families. Please join us in praying they will be determined to win Christ and have courage to face possible persecution.



Six hundred new believers in Quang-Ngai province need to be established in Christ. A two-month tent campaign and a series of Short Term Bible Schools are to be held

A Fifty-year Church Celebration will take place in Saigon, June 11, as part of the National Church Conference. Christians from all of free Viet Nam will attend. Open-air Meetings and special Evangelistic Services will be conducted during this time. Immediately preceding the Fifty-year Celebration is the annual Youth Conference.



The first church in Quang-Tri province was dedicated the end of last year. Construction has begun on the second building. We praise God for His working in this pioneer area.

soon. Lack of pastors necessitates an elder at Nghia-Hung and a young man at Minh-Long assuming this responsibility. Five places in poverty-stricken areas are in need of church buildings. Pray God will undertake for each of these requests.

(Continued from page 5)

misfortune and happiness that man experiences in this life. Man's previous existence determined what he now experiences. By good acts he hopes to improve his future life. There is the possibility that after a hundred or a thousand lives, with the result of a good Karma, everyone can become a Buddha, fit to enter Nirvana.

«Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His (God's) mercy He saved us... through Jesus Christ our Savior.» Assurance of life eternal is the news we proclaim!