

3. SPEAK OUT: Consider the practical and political framework in which our prayers take action. To understand and communicate with the countries of Indochina, we must normalize diplomatic relations with the new governments and permit visas for travel between countries; to ship humanitarian aid effectively, north and south Vietnam and Cambodia need to be removed from the Trading With The Enemy Act. Some representation in the United Nations should be arranged immediately, and encouragement given to negotiation rather than military action. U.S.-imposed restrictions on use of its contributions to UN and UNICEF funds in Indochina need to be removed. Providing for refugees within Indochina and the U.S.A., we must work to develop a process to assist those who want to return to their ancestral homes. In light of what U.S. involvement has done to our own country as well, legislation concerned with amnesty needs to be developed, the influence of foreign policy on domestic life carefully considered.

4. STUDY, LISTEN, LEARN: As Americans, we are reviewing our two hundred years, our painful birth as a nation and our growth as new world citizens. As Christians, we are reviewing nearly two thousand years. The sense of faith born of survival as a people abides in the countries of Indochina today. We need to study their rich history and our mutual past. We must listen to the new voices in Indochina and understand what is gone, what is hoped, what abides.

... and the greatest of these is love ...



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
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**AFTER
THE WAR-
LOVE
SURVIVES**

... transforming
despair
into
Hope!



Changing with fierce political winds over the years, U.S. relationships with Indochina have been complex and contradictory. Americans were part of the devastation and part of the suffering, too. Many died, many were alienated. Survivors on all sides carry both the physical and spiritual wounds of war.

Through Church World Service, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches and many indigenous agencies, U.S. protestants have also tried to be part of the hope, reaching out to bridge with love the divisiveness in Indochina and at home:

—**Since 1966**, we have supported Vietnam Christian Service, an ecumenical, international agency working in response to acute human need, social and material. In programs of public health, child and family welfare, community and agricultural development, VNCS has given priority to training of Vietnamese personnel and leadership. Over the past ten years, \$10,363,958 and nearly 300 international and 400 Vietnamese staff contributed to this effort.

—**In April 1975**, VNCS became autonomous, comprised of Vietnamese whose individual capacities to assist their peoples in reconstruction and reconciliation are professional and high level. As new opportunities for service unfold, the prayerful support of the world religious community abides with them.

—**As concerned Christians** we support the Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina, founded by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in 1972 to "contribute to the struggle of the people in the area to find a new identity, and in accordance with this, to focus the concern and resources of the churches toward the future with regard to reconstruction and reconciliation." U.S. protestants have given \$1.5 million to a \$5.5 million FRRRI appeal these past three years for: rebuilding and re-equipping a twice-bombed hospital in north Vietnam, reconstruction of village schools in the south, public health ministries in Saigon's slums and among refugees, providing rototillers to replant fields in areas governed by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Agricultural and resettlement programs in Laos were designed in cooperation with all political factions.

Reflecting the priorities of the FRRRI Board (representing 5 areas of Indochina, 5 other Asian and 5 non-Asian countries), programs have been undertaken only when all sides could be assisted. To discern Indochinese priorities in the vision of peace, the Fund has sponsored two forums, one within Vietnam, the other comprised of participants from 14 countries meeting in Vientiane in early 1975.

—As concerned Christians we have contributed to programs of Asian Christian Service, witnessing through socio-medical and development programs in Laos since 1969, and in south Vietnam the past seven years. Two ACS medical teams sent to Cambodia (Kampuchea) in 1974 remained until government transition in April 1975.

—Through World Council of Churches' facilities we have sent civilian medical supplies to Vietnamese via Hanoi since 1970.

—Church World Service joined Mennonite Central Committee in supplying a request from the Provisional Revolutionary Government, and was able to send \$200,000 of foodstuffs in May 1975 even though South Vietnamese governments were still in transition.

—Responding to a \$1 million emergency appeal, CWS assisted in a WCC \$140,000 shipment of medicines and milk for south Vietnam in April, and the FRRI sent 100 tons of foodstuffs via Haiphong and DaNang to south Vietnam following the change of government in 1975.

—Since 1965, the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A. has taken numerous actions opposing the Vietnam war and proposing changes in U.S. foreign policy in

Southeast Asia. After welcoming the Paris Agreement in January 1973, the NCC and related denominations began to work for implementation of our treaty obligations to co-signatories.

—Church World Service has an on-going relationship with the Church of Christ in Thailand, supporting numerous rural life development and family planning projects, assisting CCT flood relief efforts early in 1975. As refugees from neighboring countries strain Thailand's borders, and Thai re-evaluations of U.S. military presence in Asia begin in earnest, we explore anew our kinship.

The peoples of Indochina, Thailand and the U.S. abide. There are more homeless, more orphans, amputees, jobless, veterans, prisoners in need of restoration; there is wreckage, food shortage, nakedness. And there are new friendships, relationships born of the intimacies of war. Money will not buy back spent lives and dreams of peace, nor will time erase the tragedy of war. Christian remembrance of Gethesemane calls now for reconciliation, for new life transforming tragedy into hope.

*"A Hundred years—in this life's span on earth,
how apt to clash, talent and destiny!
Men's fortunes change even as nature shifts—
the sea now rolls where mulberry fields grew."*

The Vietnamese phrase "sea and mulberry" (*be dau*) distills the sense of upheaval in life and nature, evident when the poet Nguyen Du (1765-1820) wrote his beloved *Tale of Kieu*, at a time when American colonists were fighting for independence from England, and evident still in the changing world of 1975.

Even as bicentennial celebrations began in the USA, Vietnamese raised a new flag over the Presidential palace in Saigon, ending nearly a thousand years of foreign domination in their homeland.

After the drum roll stops, what cadence moves the sea and mulberry? Years of war have influenced the ancient and diverse cultures of Indochina; waging wars, perhaps, has changed us, too.

Geographically clustered, a rich cultural diversity persists in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia despite external influences through generations of conflict. Although historically distinct from Indochina, neighboring Thailand is also affected by the changes wrought by fighting. The physical devastation of bombing so apparent in the northern cities and southern countryside of Vietnam, the disruption of family life and agricultural production throughout Indochina, the economic imbalance born of military priorities, have torn the social fabric of the area and tugged at threads deep into Thailand as well.

Whatever we say now of change, however we chart the apparent winds, no clear course is set. So why write now? To see where we have been, how we have helped and failed, and ready ourselves for still new directions. The vessel that bears us is love, and love abides.

From *The Tale of Kieu*, by Nguyen Du

1. **PRAY:** The bombing has stopped; rejoice!! Decry recriminations and seek understanding. The Protestant community of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand comprises only one-tenth of one percent of the 83 million people in these countries. Learn who they are: remember them. Seek an understanding of reconciliation from Buddhist, animist, Confucian perspectives, and affirm the enduring spirit of the human family.

2. **GIVE:** There is work to be done! Church World Service and the cooperating denominations continue to explore the changing opportunities for effective service witness in Indochina and Thailand. In June 1975 CWS initiated a direct program channel for shipment of medical supplies to north and south Vietnam and began negotiations with the U.S. government regarding humanitarian food assistance. A second appeal for \$5 million has been issued by the Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina, to which we are responding. The Church of Christ in Thailand faces new program dimensions; Asian Christian Service hopes to be a continued presence in all areas of Indochina. And Protestant churches in the U.S. are coming to know new arrivals from Indochina, some anxious to return, many uncertain, ill, jobless, lonely, young and old: people in need among us.