

Langson, Tonkin.
French Indo China.
Dec. 10, 1936.

Union Tabernacle & Sunday School,
West Hempstead, Long Island.
New York. U. S. A.

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus:

It is already getting late in the evening and we have been up since four o'clock this morning, but this day cannot close even as tired as we are without writing a letter to you. We had been to Cao Bang which you know is one of our outstations. When we go there, it is like going on a camping trip, or for that matter is always the same thing no matter where you go in this country. I suppose you boys and girls would like to go on such a trip taking cooking utensils, your food, tin plates, unbreakable cups, bedding and what not for a few days. Then camp in the chapel and sleep on the native beds. We told you when at home, they were board beds and the wood is rather hard. However, Esther stretched out night after night on such a bed and was soon in dream land. Everytime she would move, the boards would squeak and play a lovely tune. Then the termites seemed to think they were being left out of it and started to drill away, making a noise something like a rivet machine, only naturally not so loud. This is only a part of the noises you hear in Indo China which are always more noticeable at times, especially when you are trying to sleep. Outside the vendors are passing one by one; the peanut sellers; the market merchants etc, but the noise they make is bearable compared to the candy seller (native candy of course) shaking a lot of sticks in a tin box. Those who sell rice are not so bad, but the noise that gets us the most is that fellow who sells soup and makes sounds as if he is heading for the railing of a ship out on the rolling sea! So you see besides meetings, teaching, visits, it is tiring and if this letter is tiring to you, we will forgive you for thinking so and also ask you to bear with us as we try to write you a few lines.

Your letter that arrived this afternoon was like a recompense for being out in the district. Everytime we go over that Cao Bang road we are car sick for it does nothing but twist and turn and up and down and last meal we had joins in with the same motions! We still have the effects of it as we bang out these words, but there is also another feeling in us too and that is a feeling of great joy and thankfulness. Here you have sent us another Christmas Gift. Really you are all so faithful to us and it is hard for us to express our sincere gratitude to you. We can say thank you and pass on but we wish you all to understand when we say "Thank You" it contains the very depth of meaning of that little word. We not only write these words, but they are a reality to us for indeed we are very grateful. We trust you shall understand every word and sap out the same meaning we are putting into them.

The gift you have sent is being carefully put away. Mr. & Mrs. Phien shall receive \$15 which you asked us to give them, but we are keeping it until Christmas Day to make them a happy surprise. So you shall not hear from them until after the Holidays. This gift will come in handy for them as they just an increase in the family,

a boy to gladden their hearts since they already have two girls. Then too they had extra expense lately and I can say for them that the Lord supplies every need. The rest we shall put towards the Church building as you also know it is not entirely paid for. This we explained in a previous letter. It is so kind of you to remember us at this Christmas time, that we feel unworthy of it all. May the Lord bless every one of you from the youngest to the oldest. We should'nt have said oldest because none of you are old in Union Gospel Tabernacle, but you know what we mean just the same. We sure would love to spend Christmas with you, but where duty call, we must be there.

It was a joy to be in Cao Bang for several days. The Christians are growing in grace and others being added to their number. They learn scripture verses and it is a pleasure to hear them recite. It makes us think of the Psalmist who said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Many walked fifteen kilometres for the meetings. After the Sunday morning service we were invited to a Tho house for dinner, that is all the Christians as well. This Tho woman living three kilometres from the chapel had decided to take down the altars in her house. She had stopped worshipping them for some time, but had not destroyed them. It was a red letter day for her alright, but it was also a battle. Her family was there, even her aged mother, the village and district authorities. It was a testing moment for this dear soul and the words of the prophet seemed to bear down upon her, "How long halt ye between two opinions?." She hesitated a moment and then did the hard thing which was also the right thing. Together we all united our voices in singing that good old familiar hymn:-

O happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

We said she did the hard thing which is certainly true when you think of the superstitious ideas she carried out since she was able to think and her parents doing the same and her forefathers for many centuries. No doubt she thought of that as she was doing something new, but the Lord gave her the joy to do it even when she was threatened to have her rice fields taken from her for doing it for she is a widow. Pray for her as she will need your prayers. Pray that through her many will be saved and come to Christ. She can be the means of opening up a great area.

We did not baptize this time, but there were seven ready for baptism who have shown forth fruit of repentance. This we will do the end of the month when we go up for Christmas.

Mrs. Van Hine taught the children for their Christmas service and also had a children's meeting while there. This work is very important as it is the future Church of Indo China if I may say it that way.

My eye lids are getting heavy and it has been a hot day without a minute's stop since four oclock this morning, so will close before my head bangs on top of the typewriter and I am afraid I will ruin it (the machine, not my head) and will not be able to type you any more letters.

Again a hearty thank you to one and all for your sacrificial giving and your sincere interest in the work. We wish you all the best Christmas you ever had and a Blessed New Year. The Lord may come in 1937 and if He does, may He find us all busy in the task He has given us to do in His great harvest field.

Yours in making Christ known,

*Mr. & Mrs. J. J. Van Hise
Joel Estlin*

P.S. In reading every signature, we noticed many of the good friends did not sign. We missed them as much as we would miss a visit as they are put away along with the other souvenirs of West Hempstead!