

February 15, 2018

Happy Lunar New Year!

New Year and Ancestor Worship

Vietnamese celebrated Tết, the Vietnamese New Year last week. It is the best time for family reunion, both for the living and the dead. People travel across provinces and the country to go back to their hometown to be with their families. Many overseas Vietnamese also come back home for the celebration. A special part of the reunion is the inviting and sending off of ancestors. On the last day of the lunar year, families hold a traditional ceremony to invite their deceased ancestors to return home to celebrate the New Year with them. Then, after three days, they offer another ceremony to send their ancestors off.



Welcome Tết—the Year of the Dog!

Celebrating Tết with ancestors is a ritual performance of filial piety, expressing remembrance, reverence, and gratitude for one's parents that is strongly valued in Vietnamese culture. It is, however, a tension for Christians, especially those who are alone converted in their family. As Christians refuse to participate in ancestor worship, they are seen as isolated members in their families. At the community level, ancestor worship, by virtue of its filial piety, has social and political aspects that have been increasingly promoted by the government to emphasize the ideology of loyalty and unity among the Vietnamese. In this context where the government uses ancestor worship—dominant religious ritual and belief of the populace, those who do not participate in it appear a anti-cultural and anti-social group of people in society. It is challenging to be both Vietnamese and Christian when it comes to ancestor worship, especially on New Year and other ritual celebrations.

Bringing Good News to the Poor in the Central Highlands



We provided 286 families with 311 health kits, mainly in the Central Highlands in January (families of 6 or more received two kits). What a blessing it is that new people came to church through the witness of God's love in this ministry. A church in the Central Highlands went into the villages to speak about Jesus since they were encouraged by the way the church cared for their needs. As a result, they welcomed 14 new families to their church by the end of this month. This is an Evangelical UMC, a cousin of

our UMC in Vietnam. With the generous support of the Shawnee Valley District, the North Carolina Conference, many churches and individuals, we were able to include 6 churches of the Evangelical UMC in this year's program alongside our UM churches. Also, in early January, the Wesley UMC of San Diego, CA had a mission trip to the above-mentioned church. The team leader said that of all the places her team had been to in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia she had not seen people as poor as those living in that place. Together, we care for

the needs of the least of our brothers and sisters and provided them with an opportunity to witness God's love to their neighbors in this most poverty-stricken region in Vietnam.

A Health Kit for each family contains:

- A Blanket
A Mosquito Net
- A hygiene kit (4 towels, 4 toothbrushes, 2 tubes of toothpaste, 2 bars of soap, 1 bottle of shampoo)
- A box of bandages (100 dressings)
- Ibuprofen (200mg X 500 tablets) and Anti-diarrheal (2mg X 200 caplets): For safety reason, medicines are distributed to the church where the pastors give them to their members and neighbours when needed.



Used Clothing program and Leadership Development

The Used Clothing program, which inspired by laity training courses in 2015 to help people in need, has fostered leadership through service to others. Thao Truong, who has been a young volunteer since, has undertaken the program this past year. With her compassion for the poor and enthusiasm for the program, she collected clothes almost twice as many as usual and sent

them to two more places in the Central Highlands. She did it twice this past year, one in July and the other in December. It was amazing that she could connect with a Christian network through which even people in Hanoi wanted to send clothes to Saigon! There were also clothing businesses giving new clothes. She has recently shared with me her thought of developing a free market ministry from the Used Clothing program in the future. It is wonderful to see her confidently stepping into a leadership role with connections and compassion for community services.

I am grateful for your partnership that enables us to spread the gospel and bring the church closer to the community in Vietnam.

To support a program #14932A

https://secure3.convio.net/gbgm/site/SPageNavigator/gbgm_donate.html?type=1001&project=14932A

(Please designate your gift, e.g. Bibles & Backpacks, Health Kits)

2) To support my advance (Missionary Support) # 3021965

https://secure3.convio.net/gbgm/site/SPageNavigator/gbgm_donate.html?type=1001&project=3021965

Peace and grace to the Year of the Dog!

Quynh