

John 14:18: I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.

I recently returned from the Shawnee Valley Vietnam Missions Trip. We visited Thien An Orphanage located in Ho Chi Minh City. Ten beautiful children reside there. The rental house is very clean and sparse. One small 13 inch TV was in the corner of the room and the children played quietly on the floor. I did not see many toys. I thought of American daycare centers and all of the toys, craft centers, gym areas, and story centers. I felt ashamed. I watched Paul Price play on the floor with the babies. He had them laughing and climbing all over him - to my right, Karen Edmondson was passing out dolls and stuffed animals she had lovingly made and carried in her suitcase across the ocean. Beth Rice was giving out jump ropes to the older children and Mark Bevilacqua had one little toddler holding on to him for dear life. Many churches brought gifts for the orphanage. One church brought a large monetary gift from a young couple that is preparing to get married this summer. I can't say that my mind was on orphans overseas while I was planning my wedding! I observed their caretaker, Than Thi, overwhelmed with gratitude. I didn't say much just continued to observe and think.

Some of my thoughts, "ok God, I am here in this gorgeous country, there are 50 children that need support, I've been talking about raising money for this orphanage since November, I am here now - it is more personal, I'm feeling guilty - my kids have so much - can I take one home with me God?, the older children seem so happy and content - do they get that from knowing that you are their Father and they are not alone? Back home people are going to challenge me that we should be doing more for local missions and not send money overseas? How do I answer that? You told us to take care of the orphans, feed the hungry and make disciples in the world - I think this mission meets all of the criteria - I can't do this alone God - I'm not ready to leave here - I have experienced unconditional love from the Vietnamese pastors - we don't even speak the same language - but I can feel it and I know you, Dear God are here in this country - protect these children and may they do mighty things for your kingdom in the future!"

There are another 40 orphans residing with United Methodist families in Lam Dong and Hue. All of the children are in need of nutritional, educational, and medical assistance. The children range in age from infants to 15 years old.

The cost to support an orphan for 1 year is \$360 (only \$30 per month). The goal is to have all of the orphans sponsored by May 14 for Rally in the Valley. Youth Groups, Sunday school classes, men and women's groups are encouraged to bring their offering to the Rally. The Vietnam Youth Initiative Team is contacting all of the churches in the SVD and offering assistance with fund raising ideas and/or arranging a speaker to come and talk with your class or group. Exciting God things are happening in Vietnam! Don't be left out. I encourage everyone to attend Rally in the Valley this year at Waverly Grace UMC on Saturday, May 14 at 3 pm. Will you step up and be a Champion for Vietnam?

Eager to commit to sponsoring an orphan? Email Ann Evory (aevery@gmail.com) with the number of orphans you wish to sponsor. Each week leading up to Rally in the Valley we will be highlighting a church and what they are doing to sponsor an orphan. Share with me what you are doing - you just might be the next weekly story!

Blessings & Gratitude,

Ann Evory

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