

*I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.*

*John 14:18*

Dear Local Church,

Vacation Bible School provides a wonderful opportunity to teach young children about the importance of mission. The Shawnee Valley Youth Initiative invites you to challenge your Vacation Bible School kids to fight homelessness and hunger by participating in the Vietnam Thien An Orphanage Project. All donations go directly to support the orphanage.

Visit the Shawnee Valley District website at [www.shawneevalleydistrict.org](http://www.shawneevalleydistrict.org) to find resources for the Thien An Orphanage Project. There are ideas for mission moments, coloring book pages, a letter for parents, and craft and snack ideas. A PowerPoint is also available with photos of the Vietnamese orphans on the district website.

**Background.** In 2008 the Shawnee Valley District made a commitment to focus efforts to help with the growth of the United Methodist Church in Vietnam, and kicked off their first annual "Rally in the Valley," followed by the first mission trip of the Shawnee Valley District to Vietnam in spring of 2009.

Each spring, beginning in 2009, Shawnee Valley has sent a mission team, led by Joseph Bishman, to Vietnam. When the first team from Shawnee Valley went to Vietnam in 2009, there were 68 UM churches in Vietnam. Now, under the amazing leadership of Ut and Karen Vo To, there are over 200! During our mission trips, Shawnee Valley has trained pastors, visited and supported churches, led countryside motorbike rides (leaving behind the much needed motorbikes to transform the Vietnamese Pastors' ministries), visited and supported different UM ministries, including most recently a UM orphanage.

**Thien An Orphanage Project.** Currently the Thien An Orphanage houses 50 children ages birth to 15 years in Christian homes around the country of Vietnam. The youth initiative vision is three part. The first part is to find sponsors for the children. It cost \$30 a month to support a child. That covers their housing, education and their health care. While they are in the care of Christians, they are introduced to Jesus Christ and His great love for them. The second part is to raise the funds to help pay for staffing and the cost of the rental house. And the third part is to build a United Methodist Orphanage to house the most needy children in Ho Chi Minh City. Karen Vo To receives calls frequently asking her to take in another orphan. She is unable to accept any more children at this time due to space limitations, staffing needs, and financial reasons.

By the time you receive this information, we hope to have all 50 orphans sponsored. The VBS challenge is to raise money to fund the support staff that takes care of these children.

On Saturday, July 30, *The Be The One Vietnam Orphanage Benefit Concert* is at VA Memorial Stadium in Chillicothe, OH. All proceeds benefit the orphanage and local food banks. Visit the Shawnee Valley District website for more information!

**How to incorporate the Thien An Orphanage Project with your VBS.** On the first day of VBS, begin a fun donation drive. Challenge groups to compete against each other to see who can raise the most, class vs. class, girls vs. boys, children vs. adults, etc.

Connect a way to your theme to update the children during the opening/closing each day.

Share a mission moment each day during opening, closing or in the classroom.

At the end of VBS, count the money collected. Write a check to "Shawnee Valley UMC" mark memo line with Thien AN Orphanage. The address is:

Shawnee Valley UMC, Thien An Orphanage Project  
P O Box 63, Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

Thank you, *Karen Edmonson* [bk\\_edmonson@yahoo.com](mailto:bk_edmonson@yahoo.com)