

MISSION AND MINISTRY AT GOOD SHEPHERD

THE NGO FAMILY STORY

From Refugee Immigrants to Faithful Christians

On Sunday, January 19th the Ngo Family - Mai, Chang, their three children, and grandchildren - worshipped with us at GSLC in celebration and thanksgiving for their 40 years in America. They have been a part of our GSLC community all this time and are extremely grateful to God for the support and friendship they have received in their lives.

Their story is one of courage, faith, and trust during the long, hard journey. For Good Shepherd it was also a journey – one of Mission and Ministry. A few GSLC members who participated in the Ngo family transition to life in the United States, tell their story here.

It was cold. Very cold. The coldest night of the year 1980. Six of us drove in three cars drove to JFK airport. We needed that much room because there were seven of them. Excited and anxious, we had no idea what we were doing. But we knew we had to do it. Our faith compelled us to do it.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? ... If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. - James 2:14-17

The plane arrived on time. The passengers looking scared and exhausted – after all, their trip had taken more than a year. It originated in Viet Nam. Then 48 hours via boat to Malaysia. Living in a small tent. And, finally, 13 months later, by plane, 23 hours to America.

We welcomed the seven enthusiastically, but awkwardly. But none of the six of us spoke Vietnamese! Thankfully Lutheran Social Services, who coordinated the sponsorship, had provided an interpreter. Fortunately they had been given jackets. But they wore sandals. "Let's get their luggage," one of us said. "They're carrying it," responded the interpreter. She pointed to the small plastic bags each of them carried. Welcome to America!

The next months were hectic and frantic. Good Shepherd members mobilized – rapidly. An apartment to rent and furnish. Lessons to be taught. Where do you start? English, customs, shopping, banking, driving, job hunting, school, doctors and dentists. It could have been overwhelming – but for our firm belief that we were we doing God's will. That we were being led by God's Spirit.

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. - Hebrews 13:2

They asked us why we were doing all this. When we responded that our faith led us, they asked us to tell them about Jesus. They asked to be baptized. We welcomed them to God's kingdom and to our family of faith.

Perhaps most challenging of all was Halloween. You try explaining Trick or Treating to folks who didn't have the slightest idea what you were talking about! But we didn't want them to feel terrified when ghosts and goblins arrived at their front door. They had experienced more than enough fright in the war, the boat and the airport. They didn't need any more. Fortunately, they trusted us. Implicitly. Totally. Such was the bond we made with these strangers who risked everything to come to our shore. Such was the faith that had been born in them.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. - Ephesians 2:19-20

Now, 40 years later, they are citizens. Productive. Successful. They vote.

Now, 40 years later, they are Christians. Faithful. Committed. They worship.

Now, 40 years later, the parents -Mai and Chanh – they work hard. They enjoy their freedom and faith. And they bring Vietnamese spring rolls to our Sunday refreshment time. Yummy!

Now, 40 years later, the children - Kim, Nhan and Tam - have graduated from college and have fruitful lives.

Now, together, we celebrate 40 years of life and ministry. They are home, with God and with us.

THANKS BE TO GOD!

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