



**SOCIA**

OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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## Vietnam

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The deepening crisis in Vietnam is a cause of grave concern among all men of good will who seek the establishment of peace with justice and freedom. Especially troubling are the following aspects of the situation:

1. The rapidly mounting number of dead and wounded on both sides of the conflict;
2. The steady escalation of military commitments in Vietnam and, with it, the increased danger of a full-scale war in Asia;
3. The difficulty in achieving conditions which would make feasible the termination of military action in Vietnam in the near future;
4. The vast destruction of natural and developed resources;
5. The tragic diversion of attention and economic support from the assault upon domestic and world poverty to the growing war effort in Southeast Asia;
6. The turmoil and frustration among the people of South Vietnam in seeking to establish representative self-government.

Christians cannot be content to remain silent in the crisis of conscience that confronts them. They must be true to the conviction which is uniquely their own: that all men, regardless of nationality, politics, or ideology, are equally the object of God's judgment and loving kindness in Jesus Christ.

In facing the present situation in Vietnam, Christians must take cognizance of the fact that simplistic solutions are unrealistic. Attempts to bring easy answers to so complex a set of problems may only complicate them. Neither extended war nor immediate unilateral withdrawal by the United States seems to answer the problem. Continuance of the present limited war seems to be no solution. Consequently, it is important that every effort be made to bring all parties to the conflict toward a stance of openness and flexibility with a readiness to respond to whatever beginnings of solutions may emerge.

In view of the church's universal concern and its awareness that the situation in Vietnam defies simplistic solutions, the Lutheran Church in America calls upon its congregations and their members:

1. To engage in intensive study and free discussion of the Vietnam question, bringing to bear Christian insight upon all aspects of this crisis.

2. To pursue such study and discussion while exercising due caution against conclusions which:

a. Assume that ends justify means.

b. Overlook the dangers of the United States acting unilaterally rather than in cooperation with other countries through the effective utilization of international agencies such as the United Nations.

c. Absolutize international conflicts so that one's own position it is seen as totally good, and the enemy's as totally evil.

d. Disregard America's traditional commitments to freedom of expression, and the right of dissent.

e. Ignore or underestimate international Communism's declared purposes of aggression, conquest and destruction of freedom.

3. To seek to foster within their communities a climate of political opinion characterized by such openness to new approaches as to foster a corresponding openness on the part of those holding national political office.

4. To stand in compassion and understanding beside those to whom the conduct of national policy is entrusted, to pray for them and to support them, though not uncritically, in their efforts to solve the dilemmas they face.

5. To be especially mindful of the spiritual and moral problems of men called to military service, including those who on grounds of conscience feel that they cannot participate in war.

Finally, the Lutheran Church in America commits itself to:

1. Continued works of mercy, relief, and rehabilitation in Vietnam through Lutheran World Relief; and

2. Joint efforts through the Lutheran World Federation, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., the World Council of Churches, and particularly with the churches in Asia, in the quest for fuller understanding and possible solutions of the international issues related to Vietnam.

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