



Dear Families and Friends,

How have you all been of late? Good I hope. It has seemed such a long time now since I was back in Australia, speaking and promoting the project and my book, as so much has happened here since last year. As the tropical weather here gets hotter in the next few months, I know there are still more work ahead for me in Vietnam.

1st Board meeting for Company of Grace in Vietnam!:

Late in January this year we had a our first official board meeting. Present were John Beasy, Loc our lawyer friend and myself. Absent was Neil as he was still in America.

It was exciting to discuss quite a lot of important steps we needed to take this year and make decisions as a board. From that meeting we all came from it knowing that this year will be another busy and exciting year for House & Company of Grace. Other potential board members will slowly join us in time but at this early stage we are careful to choose those with the right heart and vision for this work.

Grace Services & Trading Company Ltd:

While the board had our first official meeting we discovered that the business licence we had recently had approved was much more than we had expected.

In the past it was near impossible to get a license for a business in Vietnam owned by a foreigner. Only recently Vietnam has

entered the WTO and laws have slowly changed to make things a little bit easier. However when I applied for a business license, once I proved that I was actually born in Vietnam, then this license actually allows me to be the owner of the business and what is even better is that this business can own real-estate and property in the company's name.

With so much at stake now with fast development of this project, we saw this as an answer to our prayers as John Beasy, many Vietnamese friends and myself have searched every possible avenue in order to secure the property either under my name or even better under a company (not an individual).

Not only does the business license allow us to do general business, teach English, computers and vocational training but it will allow us to secure the property as well!

Slow Progress on the Building:

This area has taken a lot longer than I had hoped. Progress is always being made but it is lots of little steps instead great big ones. Here are all the steps we've went through so far.

When I came back to Vietnam I had envisioned a building with 3-4 floors and enough rooms to do all the activities that would be the House & Company of Grace. I had even got my Dad (now a retired architect) to do a general drawing of where everything should be.

The first obstacle was that it was rather difficult to apply for permission to build that high in this area just in case it blocked the neighbour's view being close to the river. The authorities in that district gave conflicting answers. Some would say we could build that high but others warned that we couldn't unless this and that happened or were in place. So with no guarantee we decided to head for the surer bet of not building so high.

However, once the architect drew up the design plan for only the ground floor and the first floor, he indicated that there would be no where near enough space to fit everything I had hoped as the place had to be wheelchair and disabled friendly. We were missing out on those floors that we couldn't build up to.

After much thought and discussions a suggestions was put forward that we tried for 300 metre squares to build on instead of trying to fit everything into a 200 metre squares (This is the size we had permission to build on for each block). The pros and cons of this had to be taken into considerations though. With larger area space for the building it would mean we would just about have all the rooms we were hoping for, but the price of building had to go up. This new proposal had to be resubmitted and get approval as well. So this is where we are at for now. Submitting the latest proposal and hoping that it would pass quickly

and the building cost would not blow our budget. *Oh the joy of working overseas!*

The good news is the new drawing plans looks great and I even have a picture of what the building would look like when finished. (See website for details) The architect has tried to encourage me that if everything goes to plan then they should start building by April.

The Search for my Biological parents continues: Early this year I had a meeting with those who were helping me find my biological parents. They urged me that if I was still interested that I should act soon and go down to the Mekong Delta and look at my father's grave. They indicated that there was an 80% chance that it was my actual biological father grave stone, and furthermore there could be either friends, neighbours or living relatives who could shed light on my biological parents' history and even the slim possibility of the whereabouts of my biological mother (whom they believe is still alive today).

With this possibility I had to work out a good time when all the work for the House & Company of Grace was not as urgent so I could make a trip down there. So now I'm thinking of sometime in June, as this would give me time to properly prepare for the trip and most importantly give me precious time to prepare myself emotionally for what could be one of the most important times of my life. I can feel another chapter of my second book coming on.

Grace Support Team in Adelaide: This team is slowly growing in numbers and have a lot on their plates this year to help us out. The support team are busy

coming up with great ideas to how best promote our work in Vietnam and raise funds for the building work this year. If you have some free time and would like to be a part of this team or act as a support for them Judy Secomb (facilitator of practical support) is the lady you can contact. Her email is tjsecomb@hotmail.com

Short-term volunteer teams to Vietnam: People in Adelaide are currently being recruited and trained for a few short-term volunteer teams this year to come to Vietnam. It takes quite a few months to prepare teams adequately for this so they can be a real help to our work in Vietnam. There are still a few positions left to be filled so if you are interested please contact Kristen Graham (facilitator of overseas services). Her email is krisgraham@hotmail.com. If not this year there is always the next!

New DVD based on the book Heart of Stone: For those who have already read my book, you may be interested in my next project. With the help of a friend Frank Ahlin and his newly established All Nations Production a new DVD video of my life story will be out soon. It is based on the book Heart of Stone. As we couldn't afford to get David Attenborough to narrate for this DVD I had to do it myself. While I'm retelling my life story there are re-enactments and shots of me revisiting some of the locations as I grew up in Adelaide and my druggy days. It even has my parents (Brian & Kath Stone) being interviewed to give their side of the story (don't believe them, it's all lies). Around 40 minutes of footage, those who have seen it already have given me at least one and possibly two thumbs up. Not only will all

proceeds towards the House & Company of Grace but I'm hoping that this DVD will reach those who don't get into reading so much but could manage to watch a video. With only 1,000 DVD produced in the initial production you better be quick. It should be out by April and a launch date sometime next month.

Stay tuned for further progress and keep an eye on our website for regular updates and changes www.houseofgrace.com.au

For Your Considerations:

- Continue smooth sailing for the building work to begin.
- The Program Support Team and their work this year in Adelaide to assist us in our work in Vietnam. Promotions, fundraising, and preparing teams to visit Vietnam to help us out in our work.
- Continuing interest and provisional support for the building stage of the House of Grace in Vietnam.
- Short-term volunteer teams as they prepare for their trip to Vietnam to help us out.
- For the trip to the Mekong Delta to search for my biological parents.
- Successful launch and promotion of the new DVD.
- Wisdom, health, patience, good spirit and strength for the people working in Vietnam for the House & Company of Grace.

Your friend in Vietnam,
Peter (Hoa) Stone (Director)