

MCC SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Assistant English Teacher – Chuyen Hung Vuong High School

Term: August 14, 2019 – July 11, 2020

FTE: 1.0

Location: Viet Tri, Phu Tho Province, Vietnam

Date Required: August 14, 2019

Program information and policies can be found at mcc.org/salt or mcc.org/yamen

MCC is an equal opportunity employer, committed to employment equity. MCC values diversity and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENER will live on campus and assist teaching English to an active and highly motivated group of high school students at Hung Vuong High School.

Qualifications:

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to: a personal Christian faith and discipleship; active church membership; and nonviolent peacemaking.

An invitation to an assignment is contingent on the successful completion of a criminal background check.

- A university degree or currently enrolled in a university degree program required for a visa.
- Strong English skills. English teaching or tutoring experience is preferred.
- Interest in sharing English skills in school and community settings.
- Willingness to live as a member of a Vietnamese community, learn a new language, new customs, foods, communication patterns, modes of travel, modes of worship, and new ways of living.
- Willingness to serve in a fluid work setting under the direction of a Vietnamese supervisor.
- Openness to the mentoring and support of a Vietnamese community.
- Willingness to make your needs known.
- Flexibility and openness to new experiences.

Assignment Narrative:

Through living in a Vietnamese community and participating in service assignments, participants will:

- Realistically test their gifts, limitations, and their call for further training and longer-term cross-cultural service.
- Grow spiritually as their faith is challenged and nurtured in a cross-cultural setting.
- Broaden their understanding and appreciation of the lives of their brothers and sisters in their host country and further mutual trust, relationships and caring.

- Help to dismantle the stereotypes and prejudices that exist between cultures, both during the exchange year and upon returning to their home communities.

SALT/ YAMEN assignments in Vietnam generally have these elements in common:

- Five weeks of language study with other participants.
- Living as an adult “son” or “daughter” in a Vietnamese family or host community.
- Expectation of intense community involvement.
- Assignment in a Vietnamese owned/operated not-for-profit organization.
- Full participation and mutual support opportunities within the country’s MCC team, including regular check-ins with MCC Vietnam’s Connecting Peoples Coordinators.
- Inclusion in all aspects of MCC team life (The MCC Vietnam team currently consists of 4 service workers, 2 children of service workers, and 7 national staff).

Established in 1982, Chuyen Hung Vuong has a large campus, including: learning area, administrative area, library, classrooms, traditional room, athletic facilities, fitness facilities, a multi-function room, cafeterias, and dormitories. The school has trained 9,460 students, of whom 8,058 have received the honor of being named “excellent” students at the provincial level; 979 were named “gifted” at the national level; and 12 students have even received national and international medals. Currently, there are over 1400 students, whose ages range from 15 to 17 years of age. The school officials, teachers and staff are friendly and hospitable. The students are very eager to learn, especially foreign languages.

The SALT/YAMENER will need to take initiative in designing a schedule of activities that is energizing without being draining. Many opportunities exist, but these will need to be developed based on the SALT/YAMENER’s interests and skills.

Duties:

A specific schedule will be arranged in consultation with the participant, the Vietnamese supervisor, and the MCC Connecting Peoples Coordinators, to accommodate the individual strengths and interests of the participant. Some possibilities are as follows:

- Assist teaching English as an international language at Chuyen Hung Vuong High School. Initially the participant will work alongside a Vietnamese teacher, but eventually s/he will teach independently (though with supervision and input from teachers at the school). Most of the classroom teaching is done on weekday mornings.
- Participate in and advise student clubs and organizations. Student clubs often meet in the afternoons and on occasional evenings.
- Provide English language assistance to children, youth, and adults in the community as requested.

All SALT/YAMENERS in Vietnam are expected to:

- Share in the work of the host community.
- Write at least two stories featuring MCC’s work, connections, and/or partners for MCC reporting.
- Function as an active member of the MCC Vietnam team through regular reporting, team meetings and retreats, visiting nearby MCC sites in Vietnam, and providing mutual care and support for other MCC team members.

Location Description:

Vietnam is a dynamic, energetic, and rapidly developing country that 30 years ago was closed off from much of the world. The population is disproportionately young, with half the population under 30 years of age. Under a single-party political system, it now has a free market economy with entrepreneurs ranging from family-run storefronts to joint ventures with overseas partners.

Vietnamese is a tonal language that many native English speakers find very difficult, but the grammar is relatively easy. An investment of time and energy in Vietnamese language learning will go a long way towards smoothing communications and developing relationships.

After language study in Hanoi, the participant will be based in Viet Tri, Phu Tho province, approximately a 2-hour bus ride from the MCC Vietnam office in Hanoi. Viet Tri is the economic and political center of its province. It is believed that all Vietnamese people can trace their ancestry back to the first Hung Kings, who resided in Viet Tri, and who are the traditional founders of the nation. Home to nearly 300,000 people, Viet Tri is divided into 13 wards and 10 suburbs. People from Viet Tri are known across Vietnam for being friendly and hospitable.

Hung Vuong is located in the tranquil provincial capital of Viet Tri in northern Vietnam, approximately two hours by bus from Hanoi.

The participant will live in a modest private apartment on the Hung Vuong High School campus, with basic cooking, clothes washing, and sleeping facilities, as well as a private bathroom. Lunch is available at the school canteen during the week. Other meals can be purchased at nearby food vendors, cooked by the participant, or hosted by staff or students of the school.

Winter in Viet Tri is chilly and damp, and most houses do not have indoor heating. Temperatures can be down to the high 40sF/8C, though usually it won't be that cold. Wearing warm enough clothing is important. Layering is a good idea. The summer is typically hot and humid, with temperatures reaching 105F/40C. Spring and fall are very nice.

There is a Vietnamese Catholic Church in Viet Tri, but currently there are no Mennonite or English-speaking churches. Spiritual growth will require a lot of self-initiative. MCC workers can manage this by planning to come with devotional materials and books for spiritual nourishment.

MCC workers should expect to access medical care, dental care, and vision care within Vietnam during their term of service. A similar level of medical care is offered to MCC's national staff who also serve in Vietnam. If the local care is not adequate for the need, some rare cases may be sent to another Asian country upon referral of a doctor.

Transportation around Hanoi and Viet Tri will be by bicycle, walking, or public bus.

Challenges:

- In living with a Vietnamese community, the SALT/YAMENER may need to give up some of his/her accustomed independence. The community's sense of responsibility for the safety and well-being (particularly for a woman) may feel limiting and restrictive to some young adults. Hosts may have a cultural expectation that they will know the families of a participant's friends, where the participant is going, when they will return and who will accompany them. This is simply a cultural difference and not a sign the participant is not trusted. Participants have coped by erring on the side of over-

informing their hosts of their activities and by observing the family dynamics, habits and expectations of Vietnamese young people of the same gender and age in their host communities.

- Common foods in Vietnam include: rice, noodles, peanuts, soybean products, tropical fresh fruits, and many different animals (including, but not limited to: chicken, pigs, cows, shell fish). While not entirely unavoidable, allergies to any of these foods could create significant challenges for a participant.
- Mental health resources are limited in Viet Tri. An English-speaking counseling practice is available in Hanoi, and other options are available via Skype. Psychiatric care is limited.
- Some medications commonly prescribed in Canada/U.S. are not available in Vietnam and workers may be required to bring enough medication to last the entire term.
- Openly LGBTQ+ individuals may find it challenging to feel supported by the local community and church.
- Managing frustration when things don't turn out as expected can be hard. While we do our best to determine and outline job responsibilities with our local partners, assignments really come alive based on the passions, skills, and giftings of an individual. Responsibilities may change or be refined over time in communication with supervisors to meet the ongoing changes and needs within a local context. As such, the greatest characteristics a participant can bring to an assignment are adaptability, flexibility, patience, a willingness to get his/her hands dirty, and humility to complete even mundane tasks.
- For those who are very task oriented, it can be a challenge to recognize the importance of "being" instead of always "doing." Building healthy relationships and mutually transformative learning is an important part of the participant experience. Participants should expect to walk alongside our local partners, rather than see the assignment solely as a way to "get things done."