

Vision for Lieu Quan Buddhist Cultural Center

By Ven. Thich Phap Chon, Abbot

Dear Friends,

With the 1975 exodus and subsequent waves of immigrants and refugees, millions of us Vietnamese have left our fatherland to build a new life elsewhere in the world. Many of us left empty handed or with very little belongings. Many of us even lost family members during the journey. But, together, we did successfully bring with us our spiritual treasure: our Buddhist faith, and more specifically, our Vietnamese Buddhist faith and tradition.

In the past 32 years, the Vietnamese Buddhist Temple has been the salvation for many of us, appeasing our pain and sufferings, relieving our stress from this fast paced way of life, and providing us with opportunities to nurture our soul and, with it, our physical strength.

For many of us, the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition has become intertwined with our daily life. The Buddhist teachings are not just symbolic rules in the book; they are the ways by which we live our lives. The Vietnamese Buddhist Temple has become, not only a place for individuals to meditate, but also a place where families can spend time together and grow stronger. It is not only a place for one's own inner peace, but also a place for joy and laughter for the family and community. It is not only a place for adults to reminisce old times in Vietnam, but also a place for young children to bond with their Vietnamese language and culture.

In our vision, the Vietnamese Buddhist Temple is the source for spiritual growth. It is the cradle that nurtures future generations. It is the place to acknowledge and pay tributes to older generations. It is a cultural center with activities and services that bring families together. It is the venue that holds together the culture and traditions, and molds the essence of what we call "Vietnamese" to pass on to future generations. The Vietnamese Buddhist Temple indeed has become a critical support foundation for us, even an inextricable part of our identity – as an individual and as a community.

There is still so much more that we want to do at Lieu Quan, for the spiritual and mental well-being of our patrons, young and old. The needs from our patrons are ever increasing, but unfortunately, we are confined by limited infrastructure.

Our current facilities on Clayton Rd were set up in 2000 with a very humble beginning – a house with 2 rooms in a small neighborhood, with just 2 resident monks and a regular patron group of fewer than 10 people. Our patrons and their needs have grown tremendously over the years, outgrowing the facilities, and in fact, taxing the patience and convenience of our neighbors. We have been working very hard to manage the traffic/parking issues, especially during the big festivals of the year. We had to organize big events (such as Vesak, Vu Lan) at rented locations outside such as Andrew Hill High School, San Jose City Hall because our facilities simply cannot

handle that large a crowd. Our activities are constantly kept limited, and yet complaints still come in from time to time.

We have been working diligently in securing a more lasting spiritual home in the Bay area for the Vietnamese Buddhist teachings, culture and traditions in general, and for Lieu Quan Buddhist Cultural Center in particular. The current facility is way too small for even simple visiting activities. A much larger facility is needed to serve the expanding base of patrons and the additional services/activities being requested. A much larger facility is needed to hold more classes or meditation sessions, to teach and develop younger generations of Buddhist monks and nuns and lay practitioners. A much larger facility is needed as well to display the collection of Buddhist teachings and Vietnamese Buddhist art and cultural artifacts that have been bequeathed to Lieu Quan over the years.

We envision a site visible and accessible from freeways and major thorough fares, a site that can house the above listed services and activities, a site that meditatively, peacefully and pleasantly blends architecture with the surrounding environment in such a way that soothes the pain and aspires the soul to reach new heights. Such a site would inspire learning and sharing, create an enduring home for the preservation and dissemination of Buddha's teachings, and become a memorable landmark of the Vietnamese culture right here in the heart of Silicon Valley. We hope that you also share with us this grand vision, for our temple, our family, and our community.

Many of our patrons and friends are standing by ready to lend a hand to build the new temple, once permit has been granted and construction plans approved. Right now, we need your help to complete the first and most critical step: securing the land upon which our dream will be built.

We recognize that this is an extremely difficult time for you as well as everyone, but we hope that you will agree with us that this is also a great opportunity for our collective dream: price for land has become much more reasonable and affordable. Now is the time to take the first step toward realizing our vision.

Your help in any amount, shape or form is greatly appreciated. May Buddha bestow his blessings upon you and your family, for the kindness, generosity and compassion that you are gratefully yours,

Ven. Thich Phap Chon
Abbot
Lieu Quan Buddhist Cultural Center