

Mission Statement Upgrade

The Words on the Wall mean something

In the lobby of Divine Word College—printed in gold letters on a black background and framed in oak—is its Mission Statement. The words will soon change as the result of months of meetings and input sessions. The college has updated its message to more accurately reflect the work of the institution today.

Over recent years, DWC has gradually opened its doors wider, offering its educational resources to others, beyond young men from this country and around the world seeking to be SVD priests and Brothers. It now shares its wealth of educational resources with Sisters, seminarians from other Catholic religious orders and, potentially, lay persons from SVD parishes. By doing so, the college is able to advance the vision of St. Arnold Janssen, who founded the SVD missionary order to, “...go where the Gospel has not been preached at all, or only insufficiently.”*

As the change developed, Fr. Mike Hutchins, SVD, president of the college, said he had become increasingly aware of the need for a statement update. Every fall, a prayer service starts the new school year and includes a reading of the Mission Statement by the congregation.



Fr. Mark Weber, SVD

“I became so conscious of the people sitting out there who weren’t included in the Mission Statement,” he said. “We’d be referring to the education of young men for the Society of the Divine Word and there we had students who were not young men preparing to be future Divine Word missionaries, but were very much a part of the experience in a really positive way.”

Work on a new Mission Statement began in 2008. Committee work and input sessions with faculty and staff resulted in a draft proposal in November. In December, the SVD Board of Directors approved the new Mission Statement. Fr. Mark Weber, SVD, Provincial of the Chicago Province, said it represents both continuity with the college’s primary purpose, and an exciting new element. In welcoming students who are not the traditional seminarians, the college is sharing a wonderful SVD resource—a college-level education and formation program that is oriented toward the universal mission of the Church.

“The dedicated faculty and staff of the college is experienced in walking with students from many cultures, and therefore are well-equipped to welcome other religious and lay students seeking an undergraduate education with a unique world mission orientation,” Fr. Mark said. “The worldwide SVD has grasped the importance of both forming and working with lay missionaries, and thus the expanded mission of the college contributes to our collaboration with other religious and the laity in the field of mission.”

The expanded mission also embodies SVD commitment to mission animation, one of the “characteristic dimensions” of SVD life.

“We hope to not only offer a high-quality undergraduate education to our new students, but send them forth with the spirit of our founder St. Arnold Janssen, and the vision of contemporary mission of the Society,” Fr. Mark said.

The new Mission Statement is not window dressing. In a day and age when such proclamations can be more promotion than substance, the words carry a lot of weight at DWC. Decisions are based on those words on the wall.

“We look to the Mission Statement for decisions about students we accept. The kind of education that we provide, the expectations we have around the formation program,” Fr. Mike said. “It does say who we are and what we are supposed to be doing. It’s recognized by outside groups when they come. Here it really is the Mission Statement.”



Paul Cottingham

A beneficiary of DWC’s initiative to offer its educational resources to those outside the SVD, Ohio-native Paul Cottingham, 34, came to DWC in August. He is a member of the Glenmary Home Missioners, whose ministry is in this country—in Appalachia, the South and the Southwest.

The sole Caucasian student in his class, Cottingham said living with those from other cultures will be invaluable to his future ministry, which will include Hispanic populations.

“If they come to me about being a minority, I will know what they are talking about,” he said. He also acknowledged the beneficial impact of the women religious, especially in his first semester.

“The Sisters have been wonderful,” he said. “They’ve encouraged me a lot. I don’t know if I would have actually made it through everything if it wasn’t for the Sisters.”

*SVD Constitutions (102)

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Recent events have driven home to me the importance of our new Mission Statement, which was approved in December. It now more accurately reflects what we do and the lives that we touch here at Divine Word College.

The earthquake that devastated Haiti earlier this year, snatching lives, crippling communities and destroying infrastructure had an impact far beyond the borders of that small nation. Here in Epworth, Karldy Isidor and Stanley Jean, two seminarians from Haiti, were cut off from their loved ones for several days, left agonizing over their fate. Even until now, they have had only minimal communication from home. Their families survived the disaster and we pray that they survive the aftermath.

CNN images of the destruction and suffering and the immediate outpouring of support from around the world were deeply moving. I found myself unable to turn away. Besides the impulse to “do something helpful” immediately, I felt a new call to conversion, a call to be more acutely aware each day of the poor and the suffering, to step out of my too comfortable lifestyle, to try to make some small difference.

My ministry as a Divine Word Missionary has been in education. If a passion has fired that ministry, it has been for supporting educational opportunity for the poor, for those too often disadvantaged and denied good schooling and its benefits. Whether in South Los Angeles, southern Mindanao or Epworth, my enthusiasm has been for students excluded from educational opportunity by racism, poverty, wars and repressive governments. That passion has kept me going over the years here at Divine Word College as we have served immigrants from Vietnam, and refugees from Sudan, seminarians from China, and many more.

After two years of careful discussion by trustees, faculty, and staff, our SVD Board of Directors has recently approved a newly formulated statement of mission for the college. While holding the education of future Divine Word Missionaries at its heart, the new statement reaches out to embrace new student clientele as well. Among our new clientele are Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters from several countries, our partners in mission around the world. Others are Sisters, Cistercian monks, and priests from challenging situations in Vietnam, many from the northern provinces of the country. Others are priests and religious committed to the care of Polish immigrants here in the US and Canada. Still others are seminarians from the Glenmary Home Missioners. In the near future, we hope that lay students committed to service in our SVD parishes will also join us.

Welcoming new student clientele to the College makes good sense for several reasons. You will hear these echoed in this issue of *DWC World*. Making good sense to me is sharing education’s transforming power with men and women committed to making a difference, a Gospel difference, in the lives of others. Making good sense to me is the extension of our considerable college resources to students eager to take advantage of them, eager to prepare themselves for service among the poor through the ministries of the Church. Making good sense to me is the awakening of Divine Word College to a bigger mission, a broader caring, a deeper compassion for the world beyond our walls.

The tragedy of Haiti’s earthquake prompts me to an examination of conscience, calls me to a stronger bond with those who suffer. It also causes me to reflect that in the main Divine Word College is moving in the right direction. Our new statement of mission fires a passion worthy of our full energy and best efforts.



**Fr. Mike
Hutchins, SVD**

(from page 1)

Historic Moment

Expanding the student body of a seminary in this way—accepting Sisters and seminarians from other orders—is revolutionary, but such groundbreaking efforts are not new to the Society of the Divine Word. Historically, the order has been willing to undertake visionary initiatives.

In the 1930s, the SVD in the United States was the first religious order to accept African American candidates. In the mid 1970s, the order welcomed Vietnamese students. Such moves have transformed the institution.

“It’s because of such moments when some SVDs stepped into something new and said, ‘We can do this and we ought to do this.’ We’re very proud of that tradition,” Fr.

Mike said. “I’m not sure that this compares to those, but it certainly could have a transforming effect on this institution and on the preparation of our candidates, for their future formation and ministry.”



Students, some of whom exemplify its new meaning, converse in front of the Mission Statement in the lobby of DWC.

Divine Word College, a Roman Catholic seminary in the tradition of the Society of the Divine Word, educates men and women for missionary service as priests, Brothers, Sisters and laypersons. For this purpose, we offer an education that combines spiritual formation, a liberal arts curriculum, language learning and mission preparation within an environment that teaches and honors the rich cultural diversity of the world. This spiritual, academic, and experiential preparation serves the particular learning needs of our students, promotes their development as whole and responsible persons, and fosters a lifelong commitment to serving God's people.

Testing the waters of change

Sisters were the first non-traditional students to be welcomed at DWC. The move was championed by a member of the DWC Board of Trustees, Sr. Judy Vallimont, who was the Superior of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS), an affiliated order of the SVD. Early on, she saw the potential in Divine Word College. Her vision was founded on her experience in parish ministries and the training of lay leaders. She saw how the educational foundation offered at the Epworth campus would benefit those who wanted to dedicate their lives to missionary work.

In August of 2006, the SSpS established a house in Epworth so that three of its Sisters could attend DWC. It was the first test in the experiment to expand the student body to include others outside the SVD. The effect has been more than positive. It's been transformative.

"Honestly, the Sisters have brought such energy to the place. I don't think there is anybody here who is not happy about the spirit that they bring, the dedication in their studies, the commitment in their prayer life," Fr. Mike said. "They just know how to form community. It helps create a much more focused environment on vocational growth and religious life."

The first Vietnamese Sisters arrived in 2008 and saw their number grow later that year along with the arrival of two Vietnamese diocesan priests. Last year, they were joined by seminarians from two other orders.

The college has been sensitive to public perceptions of men and women religious studying this closely together. The SSpS Sisters live in a house purchased by their order in Epworth. Other Sisters reside in Megan Hall, across the campus from the main building where the rest of the students live.

Core remains SVD

The expansion of the student body at DWC does not mean a shift away from its primary purpose—educating young men for SVD missionary service. In fact, continued commitment to that primary purpose was a stipulation made at the Provincial Chapter meeting, when it approved the move to welcome these new students.

"Half the students need to be SVD candidates, so that we keep the core group of future SVDs," Fr. Mike said. "It's stipulated and that will be reviewed in 2012. We're pretty much right on target with the number of candidates."

Perhaps one of the greatest values in this more diversified student body is the strength it gives to the SVD.

"Our own SVD seminarians at the college will be enriched by the presence of a more diverse student body, enabling them to better collaborate with other religious and lay people," Fr. Mark Weber said. "The new students and other religious will bring different and challenging perspectives to the classroom as well."

As missionaries, these seminarians will be better prepared because they will have been part of a shared experience with men and women from different cultures and different congregations who share a common faith and common goals.



**Sr. Nu
Nguyen, LHC**

Sr. Nu Nguyen, LHC, 29, of Saigon took her final vows last year and came to DWC in August. Prior to this move, she was involved in missionary work in Vietnam.

Sr. Nu said her experience here has been new and rewarding.

"The most difference here is that I don't feel like college. More like family," she said.

"We receive a lot of help from each other, from the teachers, other students. I feel very comfortable when I study here."

She plans to enter the cross-cultural studies program after completing English studies. The opportunity to study with those of different cultures and nationalities is an education unto itself.

"Learning about cross-cultures can help me do missionary work in Vietnam, in different regions," she said. "We still have different cultures, even if we live in the same country."



Mr. Mark Singsank
VP for Development

“Missio,” the root of the word “mission,” is Latin for the “act of sending.” “Statement” can be defined as a declaration or assertion. Together – “Mission Statement” – is the act of sending out a declaration of purpose.

In this edition of our DWC World newsletter, we are letting you know of the official change in the “Mission Statement” of Divine Word College. Why is that important? Because you are the one who, with your prayers and financial gifts, support the work we do here at Divine Word. We hope that you have supported our students, priests and Brothers over the years because you have believed in our mission, our purpose.

As we expand that mission to include education for religious Sisters, Brothers and priests from orders other than the SVD, as well as lay people from SVD parishes, we rely on your continued support.

Every decision we make should answer the question, “Does what we are doing follow our mission?” Our answer has to be yes. We have to believe in our mission before we can ask you to believe in it. And we do! The addition of the Sisters and students from other religious orders has enlivened our campus and given everyone new energy.

I pray that you will continue to support our students who will go forth from Divine Word College, in the words of our Mission Statement, with “...a lifelong commitment to serving God’s people.”

Music department wish list

Mrs. Jill Heitzman-Carlock, assistant professor of music, is in need of guitars in good working condition. Because of the increase in our number of students, the music department does not have enough to teach guitar lessons.

The guitars should be: Acoustic guitars, meaning non-electric, for student lessons. The guitars need to be traditional hollow bodied with 6 strings. These guitars are sometimes called “folk guitars.” Classical guitars with 6 nylon strings are also fine. We need 5 to 7 of these guitars.

If you have a guitar and would like to donate it to the college, please contact Mark Singsank at 563-876-3353 or singsank@dwci.edu

Have you remembered Divine Word College in your estate plans? All bequests to Divine Word College help with scholarship support for our seminarians. If you would like more information about making a planned gift to Divine Word College, please contact Mark Singsank at 563-876-3353 or singsank@dwci.edu

Memorials and tribute gifts offer an opportunity to honor a relative, friend or business associate for any special occasion: birthday, anniversary, promotion or a particular accomplishment. The memorial gift also provides a thoughtful and appropriate way to express timely sympathy and future remembrance. You may send memorial gifts to Divine Word College, P.O. Box 380, Epworth, Iowa, 52045-0380.

Memorials and honor gifts have recently been received for:

Clarence Dickson, Jr.
Pat Gassmann
Richard Hach
Kathleen Hickson

Jack McCarthy
James F. Nie
Rev. Fred Rudolph, SVD
Dula Scherrman

In honor of Anne Feeny
In honor of Rev. Jim Bergin, SVD



After a bitter, record-breaking Iowa winter, what better way to celebrate spring than by attending the Spring Brunch at Divine Word College? This year’s event will be held on Sunday, March 21, 2010.



The day begins with a 9:30am Mass followed by a delicious brunch. Silent and live auctions conclude the celebration. Many area businesses and individuals support the Spring Brunch by donating auction items. If you have an item that you would like to donate, please contact Sandy Wilgenbusch at 563-876-3353, x302#.

Proceeds from this event go directly to the student scholarship fund. Nearly 100% of Divine Word College students receive some scholarship assistance as they pursue their missionary vocation.

Join in the fun and get your advance tickets by contacting **Amy Hartman at 563-876-3353.**

A man of the world welcomes life at DWC



Mathew Kanjirathinkal
VP for Academic Affairs

Notre Dame grad becomes VP for Academic Affairs

Born in India and educated in Europe and the United States, Mathew Kanjirathinkal, Ph.D., brings an abiding personal faith, first-class credentials and a rich multicultural background to Divine Word College. He was welcomed to the campus in January as the new Vice President for Academic Affairs, following the retirement in December of his highly regarded predecessor, J. Russett, Ed.D.

“The work of Divine Word College is extremely relevant, timely and much needed, more than at any time I think in the history of the Western World. I’d like to be part of that,” Mathew said. “The SVDs, in many ways, have provided leadership in bringing cultural understanding, inter-faith dialog and people together, more than many other religious congregations or orders that I know of.”

Fr. Mike Hutchins, president of Divine Word, said he was pleased that Mathew has joined the DWC community.

“He brings valuable background and experience to his position. These include his early seminary formation as a Jesuit scholastic, his professional training in counseling, his doctorate in sociology from Notre Dame University, and his several years of higher education administration,” Fr. Mike said. “He enriches our DWC cross-cultural environment with his Indian heritage.”

Mathew was born in Kerala, in southern India, a region that contains a strong Catholic presence. He noted the positive influence of the predominant faith in his native land, which has historically been accepting of other faiths.

“Hinduism is a very broad religion, known for its tolerance. All the religions that have made a home in India have somehow benefited from this notion of tolerance,” he said. “For literally thousands of years, virtually every religion has found a home there.”

Mathew studied for a time in Germany before immigrating to the United States in 1976. He earned his master’s degree from Western Michigan University, and later attended the University of Notre Dame, where he received his Ph.D. in sociology. He served as Dean of Graduate Studies at Texas A&M University-Commerce, near Dallas. Later he held that same position, and taught sociology, at Park University outside Kansas City, Missouri before coming to Divine Word.

Rather than continue the climb up the traditional ladder of administrative posts, Mathew decided he’d prefer to apply his skills and talents to work that would be more meaningful to him.

With economic development and affluence in many parts of the world, a phenomenon occurs that sociologists call “nihilism,” where society lacks a connection to philosophical or religious values. In an effort to regain a sense of such rootedness, people turn to the worst elements of their religions, which often appeal to the worst aspects of their nature—self-centeredness and intolerance of those who don’t share their point of view.

He said that despite efforts around the world to encourage tolerance of others, more has to be done to bring people of different cultures together. Though economic development is very important, especially in Third World countries, there is a need for the Church to show leadership in the area of understanding, multi-culturalism and dialog.

“I think that is where the work of the SVDs and Divine Word College is extremely relevant and meaningful,” he said.

After searching for the right opportunity to take his professional career in a different direction, Dr. Kanjirathinkal saw the posting for the opening at DWC. Familiar with the work of the SVDs from his earlier life in India, and seeing a good fit, he applied.

“I am a strong Catholic. I believe in the work of Divine Word College, preparing future priests and leaders for the Church and especially for the work of the SVDs,” he said.

Fr. Mike noted that Mathew’s arrival is timely. The scope of DWC has expanded as indicated in the new Mission Statement. Though its primary mission is to prepare SVD missionaries, the college’s educational resources are now also offered to Sisters, seminarians from other orders and potentially lay persons.

“His rich combination of assets is important at this moment in the college’s history,” Fr. Mike said. “We look forward to his leadership and contributions to our DWC programs.”

Mathew’s move to Epworth was not without sacrifice. His wife of 28 years, Becki, along with their 16-year old daughter Kate, remain in their home north of Kansas City, in St. Joseph, Missouri. The couple decided it would be too hard on their daughter, a junior, to move while still in high school. So Mathew will call the guest accommodations on the third floor of the college’s main building “home” for the next couple of years, while he commutes every few weeks to rejoin the two women in his life. On the upside, he lives close to work.

“And the commute is easy,” he said with a smile.





Divine Word College

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Karlody Isidor

In the late afternoon of Jan. 12, Stanley Jean and Karlody Isidor watched with horror as news reports streamed out of their homeland—the Caribbean island of Haiti—after it was rocked by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake. For days, the two first-year ESL students were helpless to do anything but say prayers and shed tears, not knowing the fate of their families thousands of miles away, in Port au Prince.

Five days later, Karlody talked to his family and found out his parents, two brothers and three sisters were alive. It was two weeks before Stanley heard his brother’s voice and found out that his parents, three brothers and four sisters survived as well. But surviving the earthquake was one thing. Surviving in the aftermath is another.

“After the earthquake, people are living in the street, because the buildings are destroyed,” Stanley said. “The situation is very difficult now. Some of my family live in the countryside. Some in Port au Prince.”

Considered the most impoverished country in our hemisphere, there has been a worldwide response to this living tragedy.

“If before the earthquake we had a lot of problems, after the earthquake, it’s double now,” Karlody said. “Rebuilding Haiti is not something that will be easy to do because a lot of people who could have helped Haiti died, like our Archbishop, like some professors.”

From the first call from Fr. Mike Hutchins, president of DWC, alerting them of the disaster, the college has rallied around the two young men who a few months earlier could barely speak English. Both on the shy side, they quickly found friends around every corner as they dealt daily with the uncertainty of their families’ condition. Some would greet them with concern for their loved ones, some with a kind word of comfort. Still others would try to generate a smile from their faces.

The two young men were friends before they arrived at Divine Word, which was a comfort as each knew what the other was going through.

Their deep faith, too, has been a comfort, especially in the early days of the disaster.

“We are in a very good relationship with God,” Karlody said. “That’s why we believe that our family are safe before we even knew they are safe.”

“I can say before, I didn’t know anyone here,” said Stanley. “Divine Word College is a family for me now. I live with them. We eat together, do many activities together. I feel good.”

“We don’t have the same blood,” Karlody added, “but we have the same conviction, the same vision, the same power of God.”

Prayers and Tears

Haitian students find comfort in DWC community