

# the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



## WHAT'S INSIDE



**FINDING FULFILLMENT  
IN FAITH**

## *NEW YEAR, FRESH START*

The academic year kicked off with a welcomed return to familiar traditions. Even before classes started, the DWC community gathered at a nearby park for a day of sunshine, games, friendship and food during the Opening School Picnic. A few days later, faculty, staff and students assembled in the courtyard for the Opening School Prayer Service led by President Fr. Tom Aschman, SVD. On September 4, students and Divine Word Missionary Priests and Brothers came together again for an event known as Family Feast, which honors the anniversary of the Society of the Divine Word. The festivities started with prayer before students filed into the gym to compete in games and activities. Later, there was a Mass followed by a banquet. While the College continues to take safety measures to ensure the health of the community, we are happy that our patience has paid off and we are able to begin celebrating some cherished traditions again!



# PATIENT PERSISTENCE

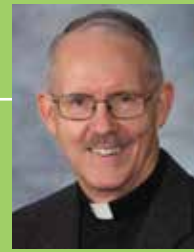
*Many life lessons can be harvested in a garden.*

I recall a day at school when I was 6 or 7. Each of the children were given a cup of soil and a bean seed. We planted the seed, labeled our cup and placed it near the window for some sunshine. Each day I checked my bean to see if anything had happened – nothing for three days. Other beans were already sprouting so I asked my teacher if I could dig in the soil to see if my bean was coming. She said to be patient. The weekend came and on Monday, I rushed into school to see my bean cup. It had sprouted! In my eyes, it was beautiful, miraculous even. I also recall a day at school when I was 67. I was in the garden when someone came by to praise the beauty of the flowers in the courtyard. My response was, “I’m in charge of water and weeds, God sends the flowers.” The answer came out of my mouth before I could even think about it. Every day, together with some student helpers, we give the plants some water and we pull some weeds. And God works a miracle!

A student needs both patience and persistence just as much as a gardener. The hard, persistent work of paying attention, asking questions, reading and studying can seem very unrewarding. But then comes the moment of insight! From nowhere, understanding dawns. A missionary also needs patient persistence. Building bridges of friendship with faith-seekers, with the poor, with people of other cultures and other religious traditions takes real effort. Above all, missionaries must spend their lives with the others, even when it is unclear why. Experience testifies that wonders do happen. New friendships bloom, new hopes for the harvest arise.

The road to the new creation comes into view as we join our fellow pilgrims.

*Fr. Tan*



Fr. Tom Ascherman, SVD

## Formation Continues

The primary purpose of Divine Word College is to prepare young men for service as Divine Word Missionaries. This year, six 2021 DWC graduates were accepted to the Novitiate program for the Society of the Divine Word and six other former DWC students professed first vows as Divine Word Missionaries in July. Frt. Samuel Lollar, SVD, said he learned a lot about himself and his faith over the past year. The Novitiate program allows novices to focus on prayer, reflection and study of consecrated life.

“I believe that the Novitiate year will definitely be one of the best years of my life, yet I am also excited to travel and experience life as a missionary in the Society of the Divine Word,” Frt. Samuel said. Please keep these 12 men and the other SVD candidates who are in various stages of formation in your prayers.



Top: Frt. Michelet Boncoeur, Bro. Joubert Felix, Bro. Wisvel Joseph, Frt. Samuel Lollar, Frt. Tu Nguyen, Frt. Baruch Zinsou. Bottom: Novices Hoang Duy Khan Do, Wisno Elie, Truong An Nguyen, Tuan Hoang Nguyen, Tung Cao Vu and Friday Onoja.



For more information about Divine Word College, call 563-876-3353, email [info@dwci.edu](mailto:info@dwci.edu), or visit: [www.dwci.edu](http://www.dwci.edu)





# MEGAN HALL

## construction nears completion

The religious sisters who live in the century-old building on DWC's campus known as Megan Hall can rest easy as temperatures fall this winter. That's because the building received a major construction update this summer that will help regulate temperatures inside and keep moisture from seeping in on the ground level.

Some of the renovations included new siding, gutters and insulation. A generator will also be installed to ensure power in case of a major outage event.

The total cost for the exterior updates is approximately \$474,000. Generous donations from benefactors like you have reached more than \$350,000! Thank you for this incredible gift!



### *Still looking for a way to help?*

To contribute to the Megan Hall project, please contact:

**Fr Linh Pham**  
Development Director  
714-488-4753  
lpham@dwci.edu

**Mark Singsank**  
Associate Development Director  
563-876-0097  
singsank@dwci.edu

*Or send your gift to:*

Divine Word College  
PO Box 380

Epworth IA 52045-0380

or make your gift online at [www.dwci.edu](http://www.dwci.edu)



## YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE!



**Mark Singsank,**  
Development  
Office

Divine Word College students come from many different cultures and family backgrounds, yet they have one goal in mind – to serve God as Catholic missionaries.

Some of our students know from the time they are young children that they want to be a priest, brother or sister. Others feel their call later in life, after they have been in the workforce for several years.

Regardless of the age they first come to Divine Word, the process is the same and can take as long as 12 years for a young man who wants to be a priest to come to his day of ordination. That's a long time. But, if they are truly committed to their

vocation, they will stick with it until the end. Thank you so much for your donations and prayers to help our students as they prepare for life as Catholic missionaries. You make it possible for them to be here.

Thank you also for your gifts to help with the renovation of Megan Hall. The sisters who live in Megan Hall are very excited about the sprucing up of their dormitory. Hopefully, the new exterior will last for another 100 years. You make it possible for Divine Word students to be successful in reaching their goal of being Catholic missionaries, thank you! Know that you are remembered in the daily prayers of the Divine Word College community.



# WORLD NEWS

## HITS HOME FOR DWC STUDENTS

Most days, the headlines from across the globe highlight the latest news about natural disasters, political tensions, war and health crises. Here at DWC, the countries in those stories aren't just datelines, they're the homelands of our students. When tragedy strikes, the college community pulls together to help and uplift students during difficult times.



Junior Jean Baptiste

In August, the country of Haiti suffered tremendous destruction and loss of human life following a 7.2 magnitude earthquake. Of the 14 Haitian students enrolled at the College, four had families who were

impacted by the devastating quake. It completely destroyed the family home of DWC student Junior Jean Baptiste. About half of his home diocese was ruined, including buildings, churches, schools and his aunt's house.

He said it was hard to hear about how many Haitians died, especially while he was so far removed from it all. He and the other students from Haiti leaned on one another for information and encouragement. He said they were touched by the outpouring of love that was shown to them by people at the College. The school organized a fundraiser to assist

their families and held a prayer service for the people of Haiti.

***"We need to be in solidarity with our community members and support them in their difficult moments because we are family."***

***- Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD***

"The DWC community supported not only me but also the other Haitian students during this time by reaching out to us," he said. "For instance, when they see us around campus, they express their condolences and offer words of comfort, courage, and hope."

Rector Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD said it's important that students receive encouragement when they're faced with troubling circumstances, especially when their typical support system



Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD

is so far away. During times of political turmoil, special Prayers of the Faithful are offered at Mass. Fr. Thang said this raises awareness among students so they know what their classmates are dealing with. Sometimes a holy hour or special vigil service is also organized in order to dedicate time and focus on these global issues. This unified effort trains students to think beyond their own world and develop a sense of global responsibility. "We need to be in solidarity with our community members and support them in their difficult moments because we are family," Fr. Thang said.



DWC student Junior Jean Baptiste's family home after the August earthquake in Haiti. Communication access has been limited but Junior's family managed to share these pictures when they were able to get internet access.

For some students, worldwide health issues can impact their personal lives. DWC student Sr.

Hilda Alonyo, LSMIG, learned in September 2020 that her aunt died of COVID-19 in her home country of Uganda. More than just an aunt, Sr. Irene Onyai, LSMIG, was like a



*Sr. Hilda Alonyo, LSMIG*

parent to her, stepping in to help raise Sr. Hilda after her father died when she was 11 and serving as the driving force behind her advanced education. Sr. Irene was also a religious sister and a great spiritual inspiration to Sr. Hilda. Her death was nearly too much for Sr. Hilda to process from halfway across the world. It also made her realize just how dangerous the global pandemic was and caused her to fear for the rest of her family in Uganda. In the following months, Sr. Hilda lost her maternal grandmother and two uncles to various health conditions.

She says some days her mind would wander to her beloved family members during class. The sadness was powerful but so was the compassion she was shown from the people around her. Instructors were patient, staff listened and students joined her in prayer or brought food. Sr. Hilda said her formator offered guidance and the school counselor helped her begin to move through the grief. "I felt like everyone reached out to me in some way," she said. "It may have been simple but it helped me to know they were thinking of me." Through it all, Sr. Hilda continued to show up to school celebrations, lending her voice in song, making costumes for a performance or joining in a dance. She says it's still hard to go on some days but she knows that her aunt would want her to find joy and live a full life.

## TECHNOLOGY KEEPS VOCATION TEAM CONNECTED



Vocation directors for the Society of the Divine Word continue to find new and innovative methods to reach young men who are interested in pursuing a religious vocation. For much of the past year, their travel plans were canceled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unable to attend conferences, youth groups and even one-on-one meetings with young discerners, the vocation team turned to the internet to reach their audience.

For months they took turns hosting live video sessions that streamed online. The vocation directors discussed different topics each week and viewers could submit questions in real time.

In February, the group reimaged a new way to continue their virtual vocation efforts that would encourage more participation from prospective candidates. They launched a four-part online discussion series called "Discerning the Call to Mission." In the new format, young men interested in learning more about religious life and the Society of the Divine Word could register in advance to attend the live video sessions. This allowed the vocation directors to literally meet them where they're at – in front of their computer screens!

"This program not only presents a specific topic for the month but also

allows for conversations between discerners and vocation directors in a more intimate group setting," said Vocation Director Fr. Thinh Ngo, SVD. The first series was so successful that a second one launched in July. An average of 10 participants have attended each discussion, month after month. Each one starts with an opening prayer and introductions. There's input from a vocation director or an SVD guest speaker followed by small group discussions. Everyone comes back together in the virtual space to participate in a large group discussion and Q&A session before ending with a closing prayer and blessing.

"The program is unique because it allows discerners from all over to meet and gather in one place," Fr. Thinh said. "We have participants from California to New York and even from as far away as Thailand."

Vocation directors are beginning to travel again but the pandemic continues to impact in-person meetings. Thankfully, the online discussion series has provided a space for meaningful conversations and an opportunity for discerners to grow in their faith. Several of the participants have already journeyed to DWC for Come and See visits, one is currently enrolled at the College and another has been accepted for admission next semester.



## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



### *An intercultural performance*

Five students and one faculty member performed an Indian-inspired dance at the Family Feast Mass. In addition to honoring the anniversary of the Society of the Divine Word, the service also celebrated three Jubilarians: Bro. Tony Kreinus, SVD, who celebrated 60 years in Vows, and Fathers George Koottappillil, SVD and Sam Cunningham, SVD who both celebrated 40 years of Priesthood. The offertory dance was a beautiful display of cultures, music and the intercultural acceptance that makes the College so unique.



### *You made it happen!*

Thanks to 70 golfers and many sponsors, the 7th annual Divine Word College Benefit Golf Outing on July 23 raised more than \$11,700. All funds raised were added to the Divine Word College student scholarship fund. This fund helps our students with their educational expenses. Thank you to everyone who participated and to all of our sponsors. We could not be successful without your help. Mark your calendars for next year's outing on Friday, July 22, 2022.



### *Taking cover*

On August 24, Divine Word College administrators used an emergency notification system to warn students, faculty and staff via text message and an intercom announcement about a tornado warning in the area. As the stairwells filled with people heading for safety in the basement, ESL instructors did their best to describe a tornado to students who were unfamiliar with the weather occurrence. While no tornadoes touched down in Epworth, four trees were destroyed and several others on campus were damaged by strong straight-line winds.



### *Game on!*

The DWC Community spends a lot of time focusing on ways to show kindness, but when it comes to dodgeball, the gloves come off. Formation groups competed in a lively dodgeball tournament during the Family Feast celebration. Competitive spirits were evident as team members scrambled to toss balls to the remaining players in the center of the gym and cheered on their teammates until the bitter end. A little healthy competition is always a fun way to bring the formation groups even closer!

# FINDING FULFILLMENT IN FAITH



Growing up in Vietnam, Khoa Bui was inspired by the generous spirit of his grandmother, who was a Buddhist nun. She raised money from local benefactors to purchase essential supplies for the needy and let Khoa join her as she distributed them. Together they provided food, warm clothing and blankets to people living in communities that did not have electricity or modern amenities. It made him realize that he wanted to follow her example of generosity and service.

“The poor in Vietnam are really poor; they don’t even have the next meal to eat,” he said. “I saw that as an inspiration to help the poor, bring them joy and provide fulfillment to the needy. I find joy in doing that.”

Some people suggested that he might be suited for religious life but Khoa felt the concept was too remote at that time. He excelled

in math, so he set his sights on becoming a scientist, physicist or accountant. When he was 14, his family moved to the United States and after high school, he earned a bachelor’s degree in business management and finance at California State University, Long Beach. In his early 20s, Khoa started a journey of personal discernment.

“I was very curious and eager to learn about religions and philosophies, so I was able to discern between different religions,” he said. “From that I felt that Christianity was the one true religion that I wanted to follow.”

Khoa entered the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program at a Catholic church in Costa Mesa, California. The priest there, Fr. Andrew Tran, gave inspiring homilies. Sometimes Khoa felt like the message connected directly to

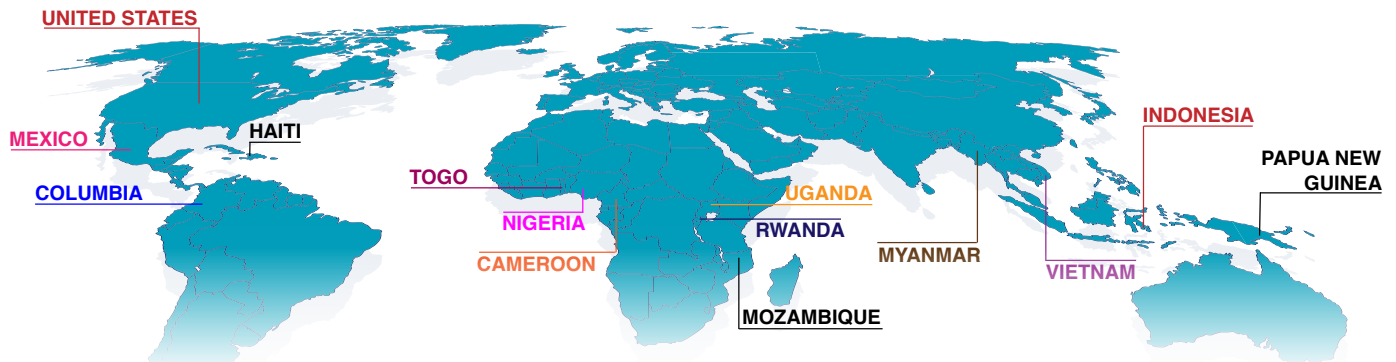
what has happening in his personal life. In 2012, Khoa was baptized.

After college, he worked briefly in e-commerce before deciding to answer the call to religious life. Khoa enrolled at Divine Word College where he is studying and furthering his discernment. With a natural curiosity about cultures and philosophies, he feels that Divine Word Missionaries as a worldwide missionary religious order is a good fit for him.

Today, the 32-year-old is working toward a Certificate in Pre-Theology. He hopes someday he will have the opportunity as a priest to inspire others with his own homilies the way he was moved by Fr. Andrew’s words. He’s also looking forward to helping the poor and needy around the world in the same spirit of service he learned alongside his grandmother as a young boy.



# DWC students gain WORLDVIEW



It's one thing to read about intercultural studies in a textbook but at DWC, lessons come alive for students who are immersed in a culturally diverse community every day. The 91 full-time students enrolled at Divine Word College this fall come from 14 countries around the world.

This international environment fosters meaningful relationships between learners from a wide variety of backgrounds that simply can't be taught in a traditional classroom setting.

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, additional students who were accepted to Divine Word College were unable

## DWC STUDENT CITIZENSHIP

Cameroon .....	2
Columbia .....	1
Haiti .....	14
Indonesia .....	2
Mexico .....	1
Mozambique .....	1
Myanmar .....	2
Nigeria .....	4
Papua New Guinea .....	1
Rwanda .....	3
Togo .....	1
Uganda .....	3
United States .....	7
Vietnam .....	49
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>91</b>

to secure the documentation necessary to travel to the United States and begin classes this fall. There's always a degree of uncertainty when it comes to lining up student visas for international students, but in the past year many countries implemented travel bans or restrictions due to the virus. That led to a backlog of visa interviews at some U.S. Embassies and Consulates.

The DWC Admissions staff continues to work with prospective students and are hopeful that enrollment figures will increase as more of them manage to obtain documentation to travel and study at DWC.

## Donation brings artwork "home"



In August, a Chinese painting of the Madonna and Child found its way back to Divine Word Missionaries after more than 40 years. In the 1970s, Blanche Babcock purchased the large, framed piece of art from the Divine Word Missionaries Religious Gift Shop in Techny, Illinois. Her family believes it was brought back from China by one of the SVD missionaries who returned to Techny after completing his missionary work. The piece was likely sold in the gift shop after the missionary's death.

Blanche and her husband, Tom, lived in Three Lakes, Wisconsin. For decades, the painting remained in their possession but after they

passed away, their family thought it fitting to return the artwork to the missionary congregation. The Babcocks' son-in-law, the husband of Nancy Ann Babcock, by coincidence, is DWC Adjunct Professor of Philosophy Dr. Roman Ciapalo. With his SVD connections, it wasn't hard to find a new home for the painting. The family's generous donation is now prominently displayed in the entryway of the Our Lady of Asia Chapel on the lower level of the college's main building. The children of Tom and Blanche, Nancy, Kathy, and Tim, agreed that the most fitting home for the painting was Divine Word. *Thank you to the family of Tom and Blanche Babcock for this gift!*