

# the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



## WHAT'S INSIDE

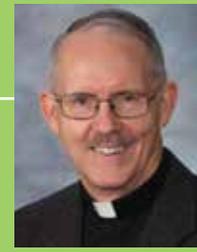


DWC grad returns as vocation director

## *Return To Learn*

Divine Word College used virtual learning to complete the spring 2020 semester but this fall, students returned to the classrooms for in-person instruction. Not everything is back to normal, though. Students and instructors are following CDC guidelines to reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19 by keeping a social distance of at least six feet and wearing face coverings in public spaces. Each day, Mass is held in two locations to allow additional space between attendees. The college also converted more residence rooms into singles, so all students have private living spaces. In the lunch room, students and SVDs eat in shifts, while faculty and staff dine in their offices or outside in the courtyard. It may look a little different for the 101 students at DWC this year, but the new policies are a small price to pay in order to keep one another safe and healthy.

# School year starts with faith and fortitude



Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD

Persevering during difficult times isn't easy, but every missionary knows that there will be ups and downs on a journey. You just have to keep at it. This summer, the Board of Administration spent many hours discussing COVID-19 and its impact on the upcoming academic year, determining the best course of action to take in the interest of both education and safety. It was a complex matter that schools everywhere had to evaluate.

Here at Divine Word College, there are a few things that make us different from other colleges and universities. The primary difference is that we are a missionary college, but another important distinction that sets us apart is that *this is our home*. Most of the college's 101 students live on campus and about 35 members of the SVD community do, too. We have some faculty and staff members who come from off-campus, so it seemed right to invite them to join us back here this fall. We also had the missionary goals of the college in mind when deciding what this school year would look like. While the COVID-19 health crisis presents many unknowns, missionary life teaches us the importance of being flexible, a skill that will serve our students well after graduation.

Even though it feels a little strange to wear a mask and to stand six feet away from a friend, being together in community helps to reassure us and keep us safe. We know that we are following Jesus, and so we can move confidently forward.

*Fr. Tom*

## Spirit of Service SVD alumnus bequest creates new scholarship



Dr. William Goertz

Even in death, Dr. William "Bill" Goertz placed the needs of others before his own.

He graduated from the Divine Word high school in Bordentown, New Jersey in 1957, completed his

novitiate and associate's degree at St. Michael's Mission House in Conesus, New York in 1961 and studied one year at Techny, before discerning that religious life was not his calling. He went on to graduate from St. John's University and enjoyed a long career as a teacher and librarian.

After "retiring" at age 62, Bill earned a master's degree in theology, a certificate as a chaplain and finally a Doctor of Ministry degree. He volunteered countless hours visiting patients in local hospitals, leading prayer services at nursing homes and teaching scripture lessons at an adult day care center. Bill even created a program to bring spirituality back into the lives of nursing home residents who were living with advanced dementia.

Bill died April 23, 2015 at the age of 78. He had a strong desire to help Divine Word Missionaries and future Divine Word priests and brothers. He was a member of the Legacy Society and left his estate to Divine Word College. The college received outright gifts of \$465,000 and the remainder of Bill's estate created a trust that will pay nearly one full year of expenses for a Divine Word College student. This \$15,100 annual scholarship will cover all but about \$6,000 of a student's tuition, room and board, and other expenses.

Even after death, Bill will continue to help others for many years into the future.



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)



**FULL  
CIRCLE  
MOMENT**  
for newest  
member of  
vocation team



*Fr. Think Ngo, SVD at his ordination in August with his confrere and fellow Vocation Director Fr. Adam MacDonald, SVD*

Fr. Think Ngo, SVD was excited to learn that his first assignment as a Divine Word Missionary priest would be serving as a vocation director for the SVD Tri-Province Vocation Office in the USA. Newly ordained, he knows exactly what young men are experiencing as they discern their call to religious life because not long ago, he was in their shoes.

In 2008, the California native was searching for meaning in his life. He briefly considered a career in firefighting because he wanted to help people but something about the profession just didn't feel like the right fit. When he attended a Missouri festival for Vietnamese Catholics called Marian Days, Fr. Think said he started to seriously contemplate religious life. His mother encouraged him to attend daily Mass and he started researching religious congregations, but still felt uncertain about his future.

One day, his mom told a woman at a local religious store that her son was thinking about becoming a priest. The woman told her about an SVD vocation director who lived nearby. That night, Fr. Think asked God to guide him. He asked for a sign to show him where he belonged. The next day, he received a call from former Vocation Director Fr. Trung Mai, SVD.

“He talked to me and he was like, ‘I’ll be at your house in 45 minutes,’” Fr. Think recalls. He had his sign.

That December, Fr. Think traveled to Divine Word College for a Come-and-See visit. The following month, he enrolled in classes and started diving into discernment. For three years during his undergraduate program, he was assigned to the Vocation Office for his work-study. It was rewarding to be part of the process as new candidates learned about the Society of the Divine Word and explored their own call. After completing his graduate courses and serving two years as a missionary in Chile, Fr. Think graduated from Catholic Theological Union with a Master of Divinity and in August 2020 he was ordained. He rejoined the vocation team at the college as a full-time staff member this summer.

“I went through the program here so I know the whole process from beginning to end. I’m a product of this whole system,” he said. When he found out that he’d be coming back to DWC for his first assignment, Fr. Think said it felt like a homecoming. “God calls people in different ways that impact their lives. During my journey, I’ve experienced a lot of grace from God,” he said. “It feels right. I think that’s when you know you’ve found the right path – it feels right.”

**DWC grads take next steps**



This summer, five Divine Word College alumni professed First Vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as Divine Word Missionaries, and six others entered the SVD Novitiate.

*Top: Bro. Mathew Zemel, SVD, Fr. Tim Lenchak, SVD, Fraters Thong Tran, SVD, Joseph Huy Nguyen, SVD, Kodjo David Emon, SVD, Marc Declama, SVD, Ryan Agbim, SVD, Fr. Quang Duc Dinh, SVD, Fr. Walt Miller, SVD  
Bottom: Novices Tu Nguyen, Wisvel Joseph, Baruch Zinsou, Michelet Boncoeur, Sam Lollar, Joubert Felix*

# Long-time donors help sustain the mission

**If it is true that in giving, we receive, then the long-time benefactors of Divine Word College have surely been rewarded for their generosity.**



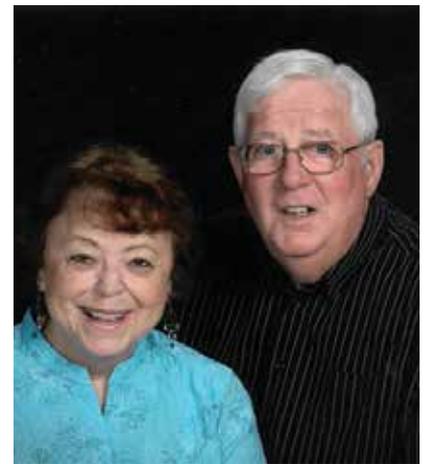
Joe and Judy Oglesby

The college is fortunate to have loyal benefactors who, like the seminarians, say “yes” to the call they hear in their heart. Joe Oglesby’s connection to DWC was established when he was a child growing up in Dubuque during the mid-1960s. His dad displayed the seminary’s Sacred Heart Calendar in the family’s kitchen and encouraged his children to give to the less fortunate. As Joe grew older and became an altar server at St. Patrick’s, he remembers his parish priest treating the servers to an occasional swim at the DWC pool.

“These memories have left an impression in my heart, mind and soul,” he said. Though he and his wife Judy live in Florida now, more than 1,000 miles from Epworth, Joe’s connection to the college remains strong. For more than 20 years, the couple has made monthly donations to aid the college’s unique mission to prepare students for Catholic missionary service. “I may not be able to do what they can do, but I can support God’s work and thank them for their lifetime devotion to God!” Joe said. Being associated with Divine Word College makes him feel that God is always with

him. “In giving a monthly donation, I truly have received a lifetime of blessings,” he said. “I can only hope others are able to feel the warmth in their hearts when giving what the Lord has blessed and bestowed upon us!”

Geraldine and Michael Maloy, of Dubuque, have been monthly donors for more than 45 years. Now retired, Geraldine spent 40 years working as an elementary school teacher. She said supporting Divine Word College allowed her to foster the education of young missionaries and support their vocational journey.



Geraldine and Michael Maloy

“I felt a responsibility to give back in some way,” she said. Each day, Geraldine tries to follow the famous advice of Stephen Grellet by doing what she can for others, because she knows that she only has one opportunity to pass through this world. So she will not miss a chance to show some kindness, if she is able. “I get calls from people every week wanting me to become a donor and there’s only so far you can spread yourself,” she said. “I just wanted to give locally when we can, because I know it’s going to a worthy cause.”

*To learn more about becoming a monthly donor, contact Mark Singsank at 563-876-0097 or [singsank@dwci.edu](mailto:singsank@dwci.edu).*

## NEW LED LIGHTS ILLUMINATE SAVINGS

Last year, *Divine Word College* replaced most outdoor lights on campus and bulbs in the main building with energy-efficient LED lights.

- The total cost for the project was approximately \$93,000.
- The college received nearly \$42,000 in donations from benefactors for the improvements.
- In-kind work by DWC students reduced labor costs by \$2,500.

- Interstate Power and Light Company provided approximately \$39,000 in rebates and Sitler’s LED Supplies donated \$1,000.
- A \$2,500 grant from the Dubuque Racing Association supported the exterior lighting update, which has enhanced the quality of images captured on campus security cameras.
- Approximately \$6,000 was paid for out of the college’s operating budget.

**Since the installation, DWC’s annual electric bill has been reduced by an estimated \$18,000!**



## Keeping God's Love Alive

Fr. Linh Pham, SVD

Our Christian faith calls us to go beyond the figures and numbers that are valued so much in a results-oriented world, and delve deeper into God as the source and giver of all blessings.

St. Paul echoes this sentiment in his second letter to the Corinthians: "Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

If God is the ultimate source and the giver of blessings, where do we fit in as benefactors and donors? The answer rests in God's invitation for us to be cheerful givers. St. Paul urges us to not only give what we have but to provide out of willing hearts.

The focus, then, is not on whether we ought to give, what we ought to give, nor how much we ought to give, but truly on how we give.

It goes to the heart of the dual commandment – love of God and love of neighbor. How we give to our neighbor speaks not only to the authenticity of our love for God, but it also reveals our love for our neighbor. It reveals the extent to which we sacrifice for the sake of our neighbor. And that, in turn, covers whether we ought to give, what we ought to give, and how much we ought to give.

As people throughout the world grapple with the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, we as Christians are reminded to look deep into our hearts to appreciate the depths, lengths and heights of Jesus' dwelling in our souls. Perhaps it doesn't matter how much we give so much as whether we still have the desire to reach out to others in need, whether we still want to stand in solidarity with people in their helplessness and suffering. Ultimately, the greatest gift we can give one another amidst the present difficulties is our persevering faith in the Almighty God, who carries us steadfastly through each moment of life as it unfolds.

## Donors make roof repairs possible

Thanks to generous bequest gifts from Dennis Groetken and the Daniel J Till Charitable Foundation, Divine Word College started replacing the roof on the campus' main building this summer. The \$1,090,000 project is on track for completion this fall.

In the mid-1990s, the original 1963 roof was sprayed with a foam sealant that was expected to last 15 to 20 years. In recent years, its deterioration resulted in several leaks. Initially, Vice President of Operations Steve Winger said he expected to pull from the college's annual budget over several years to cover the cost of the project. He estimated that the work could be spaced over three to four years, but the Planning Committee and Board of Trustees decided to use the bequest gifts, putting the project on a fast track.

Typically, bequests are used for student scholarships, but since the need to replace the roof was urgent, the college decided to use the gifts now rather than place them in the scholarship fund.

"The cost of doing the project over successive years would have increased the final cost due to material increases," Winger said.

"Thus, doing the project in one shot saved money. It is also less disruptive to school operations." Megan Hall, the nearby building that serves as a residence for many of the religious sisters who study at DWC, is also in need of repair. Parts of the structure date back to the late 1800s. The stucco on the building is unstable and pulling away, so the college is exploring options to update it.

A \$100,000 bequest gift from the Daniel J Till Charitable Foundation has been set aside specifically for the Megan Hall siding project. The final cost is yet to be determined. Both exterior building updates were identified as important projects with specific timelines in the college's five-year Capital Improvement Plan.

"In 1876, when St. Arnold Janssen, the founder of the Society of the Divine Word, was asked where he would find the money for a new building, he said, 'St. Joseph always sends me just as much as I need.'" said DWC President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD. "St. Joseph always kept a roof over Mary and Jesus, and it seems he still takes care of us!"



## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



### *Summer break in Epworth*

Nearly 30 DWC students spent their summer on campus after the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted their travel plans. Always the hard workers, they squeezed in some extra study time, volunteered to help with a variety of projects around campus, and had a few laughs along the way. By the beginning of the school year, the facility was sparkling clean, organized, and ready to spring back to life for the new academic year. Thank you all for your hard work!



### *Golf outing a big win*

Most DWC events planned for the spring, summer and fall were canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak, but the virus couldn't put a stop to the Sixth Annual Divine Word College Benefit Golf Outing. On July 24, 60 golfers came together at Timberline Golf Course in Peosta for the 18-hole best-shot tournament. The event raised just over \$9,000, the largest total ever! Proceeds from the golf outing assist DWC students with their educational expenses as they prepare for life as Catholic missionaries.



### *Volunteer work enriches education*

DWC student Hoang Do said he had a great summer working alongside Fr. Eric Groner, SVD at St. Rita Catholic Church in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his classmate, Fr. Think Cao, SVD, shared their talents with the parish by singing, playing music and serving as acolytes at daily Masses. The men also volunteered at Eastside Ministries, where they distributed food and tagged clothing. Their afternoons were spent pitching in with landscape work and enjoying life in the beautiful state of Texas!



### *A generous graduation gift*

2020 graduate Sr. Thanh Nguyen, LHC-GV wanted to do something to ease the college's financial burden before she left. When she realized that graduation gown rentals cost \$60 per person each year, she found a pattern and got to work. This summer, she fashioned 27 gowns in a variety of lengths and sizes for future graduates to wear. She even added gathering at the sleeves for a decorative touch, and made graduation caps and hoods to complete the ensembles.

Celebrating 125 years of missionary service  
throughout the United States. 1895 2020  
The Society of the Divine Word remains committed  
to serving minorities, immigrants and the poor.

# Pre-Novices Bond From A Safe Distance

*For men in formation, the final year of studies at Divine Word College marks an important milestone. Known as the **pre-novitiate program**, it's designed to prepare students for the experience they'll have together the following year if they're accepted to novitiate.*

Candidates live together in the Arkfeld House, just a short walk from the main building on campus. This year, things look a little different for the pre-novices as they attempt to build personal connections while abiding by the college's safety guidelines to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

"Because of COVID, we try to limit some of our activities that involve meeting or gathering," said Formator Fr. Sonny DeClass, SVD, who oversees the program. Still, it's his job to help the men develop connections.

"We build community life among us, knowing each other closely and nurturing our spiritual relationship with Jesus," he said. "The pre-novices have to bear in mind that one of the characteristics of religious life is community life, living together." Wisno Elie is on track to complete his coursework this winter, so he's had the

unique experience of spending three semesters in the Arkfeld House. After graduation, he plans to study theology at the Theologate in Chicago for the remainder of the academic year before rejoining the other pre-novices next August to embark on the novitiate year together.

Having experienced the pre-novitiate program last year, Wisno described this year as "completely different." In the past, the groups met in a small chapel inside their house for shared meditation before Mass. Since the intimate space doesn't allow for social distancing, this year they gather in larger spaces in the main building.

Wisno said he misses crowding around the dining table with his classmates to discuss topics like philosophy and theology over daily meals. He also longs to greet his friends with handshakes and hugs, as is

customary in his Haitian culture. Despite many new restrictions, the pre-novices have found creative ways to build their fraternal connections while maintaining social distance, like Bible sharing, morning prayer, formation meetings and adoration.

"It's hard. I wanted to enjoy my last semester more by being closer with people," Wisno said. "It's something that we did not expect, but this is life."

These unexpected challenges present a unique opportunity for personal growth. Wisno said he and the other students are learning to adapt to uncomfortable and sometimes difficult circumstances, and those are skills that will serve them well as Divine Word Missionaries. "I think the group has a positive spirit," Fr. Sonny said. "And I can see that they all bond together, work together and support each other."



Top: Phuc Truong, Hoang Do, Tung Vu, Wisno Elie, Nam Nguyen

Bottom: Truong An Nguyen, Tuan Hoang Nguyen, Formator Fr. Sonny DeClass, SVD and Friday Onoja

## Farewell To A Familiar Face



For 22 years, Connie Simon greeted the Divine Word College community and visitors as the front-desk receptionist. It was her smiling face that they came to know, but at the end of May, Connie retired, leaving the chair behind the glass panel empty all summer.

“Everyone who came to the front office was important to her,” said Marlene Decker, director of the college’s business office and Connie’s direct supervisor for the entire time she

worked at DWC. “Our office has not been the same since Connie left in May. She had a big smile for everyone and always gave DWC her best. We worked well together and there were many happy, enjoyable times in the office.”

Connie wrapped up her time at the college a few days earlier than expected because school administrators were encouraging faculty and staff to work from home in the spring if they were able, due to the COVID-19 health crisis. It’s not exactly how Connie expected to start her retirement, but she’s not complaining. “It could be a lot worse. I’m safe and I’m healthy and that’s all that counts,” she said. Since then, Connie said she’s been enjoying retirement, even though she’s primarily staying home to reduce her exposure to others. In the mornings, you might see

her riding her three-wheel bike around town or water walking at her friend’s pool while the one at the college is closed.

Connie was quick to note that she doesn’t miss hearing her alarm each morning, but said she does miss chatting with the friends she made on the staff over the years. Looking back, it’s those relationships and the ones she built with students that she cherishes most. Even today, Connie keeps in touch with several former students who she bonded with years ago while they were studying at DWC. “Connie was a dedicated and caring employee who was pleasant to work with,” Marlene said. “She was so patient with the students, faculty and staff. Connie was the right person to have at the front counter.”

## MARY AROUND THE WORLD



Just as the student body at Divine Word College is always changing, so is the space where students live and learn. This summer, crews worked to reorganize chapels on campus to celebrate the principle ethnic communities represented at the college, honor the Blessed Mother and recognize the missionary reach of the Society of the Divine Word.



The space formerly known as “the crypt” in the basement has been transformed and renamed the Mother of Asia Chapel. The change was made possible in large part because of the generosity of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM), who gifted the college with an altar and other liturgical furniture. The Dubuque sisters also contributed statues, numerous crucifixes and chairs that will be used in the smaller chapels that surround the larger one. The space is also dedicated as Harold Rigney SVD Assembly Hall.



Nearby is the newly finished Reina de las Americas or Queen of the Americas Chapel. It includes small images of Mary, as well as a large tapestry of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The altar,

ambo and chair were gifts from the Franciscan Sisters. The tapestry and chairs were gifts from the BVM Sisters. On the second floor, the space formerly known as the Guadalupe Chapel is now known as La Mère du Verbe or Mother of the Word Chapel. With a growing Afro-Haitian-American community at the college, this space will honor St. Josephine Bakhita and other African and African-American saints.

