

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD



Planting Seeds that Bear Global Fruit

How can a school as small as DWC have such a wide impact?

Harvest time has arrived in northeast Iowa, as corn, beans, squash, apples, pears, and the last tomatoes fill bins and baskets. But fall's harvest began long ago with tiny seeds. They sprouted, were strengthened by sun and rain, and have produced ten-fold, or even a hundred-fold.

At Divine Word College, our harvest takes longer than one season. Each year, about 45 students finish their time here, most beginning with English before continuing formation or pursuing degrees in Theology and Mission, Intercultural Studies, or Philosophy.

Along the way, they are strengthened through prayer and shaped by their generous acts of missionary service. When they complete their education, some return to ministry around the world. Others become missionary priests, brothers and sisters. Still others follow a call to married life and form families.

In Vietnam and across Southeast Asia; in Cameroon, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Africa; and in multicultural parishes across the USA and Canada, people have heard of Epworth, Iowa, because of our small but exceptional missionary college.

Jesus once told a story about the “smallest of seeds” that grows into a large mustard plant. It grows large enough to offer food and shelter to the birds of the air. That's how I see Divine Word College: a small seed that grows into something far-reaching and life-giving.

Folks from more than 25 nations gather here to live, work, study and pray. With your help and prayers, from this tiny town, God is growing an abundant harvest.

DWC's global impact doesn't come from its size. It comes from its purpose and trust in God. Like the mustard seed, we may be small—but we are deeply rooted. From here, missionary disciples go out to touch lives worldwide.

Divine Word College: a small place, with a truly global reach.

Fr. Tom



For more information about Divine Word College:

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Vocation is Our Vocation

At Divine Word College, helping students discover their vocation is at the heart of everything we do. Now, with an \$18,350 grant from NetVUE (Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education), supported by the Lilly Endowment Inc. and the Council of Independent Colleges, the college is taking a fresh step to strengthen this mission — starting with our faculty and staff.

The grant will support a series of workshops, institutes, and forums designed to explore the meaning of vocation in the context of teaching, mentoring, and campus life. Faculty and staff will engage in conversations about calling, mission, and how to guide students as they discern their own paths in life and faith. The goal is to create a shared understanding of vocation that will inform both classroom teaching and everyday interactions with students.

“This grant will enable us to fill an important gap in our faculty's knowledge and experience, allowing us to organically create a definition of vocation that is truly ours and will make our teaching and support for students even more effective,” said Dr. Joshua E. Young, Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The project's impact will be measured through surveys and studies to ensure it truly strengthens the DWC community. Faculty growth and student support will go hand in hand, making the college a place where vocation is not just a concept — but a lived experience.

At Divine Word College, fostering vocations isn't just part of our work — it's who we are. Every conversation, class, and mentorship is an opportunity to help a student hear their calling and take the next step with confidence.



Fr. Tuan Hoang, SVD, talks with student Joseph Vu about his vocation journey.

Once an SVD, Always an SVD

Wherever life takes them, our alumni carry with them the spirit and heart of the Society of the Divine Word. The time they spent at Divine Word College was not just about preparation for a particular ministry — it was a time of being shaped by a missionary vision of life. That vision continues to inspire them long after they've moved on to different paths and vocations.

Indeed, *once an SVD, always an SVD.*

Our alumni live this out beautifully. Some continue to serve in SVD missions around the world as priests and brothers. Others, now lay professionals, bring the same missionary zeal to their own communities — as teachers, counselors, business leaders, and parents. They carry the Word of God into classrooms, offices, homes, and neighborhoods. Through their daily witness of faith, compassion, and service, they continue to make God's love visible.

We are deeply grateful for all who make this possible — our alumni, benefactors, and friends. Your prayers and generosity sustain the mission of Divine Word College, helping to form today's students who will become tomorrow's missionaries and faith-filled leaders. Your gifts make this kind of lifelong missionary impact possible, ensuring that the spirit of the SVD continues to shine through every life our graduates touch. Because of your support, the SVD charism continues to bear fruit in lives across the globe.

Everywhere they go, our alumni remind us that being missionary is not only about where you serve, but how you live. The missionary flame lit in their hearts years ago still burns brightly today — thanks to the ongoing partnership and generosity of our Divine Word family.

Once an SVD, always an SVD.



Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD
Associate Director for Development

Alumni Return to Celebrate Faith, Friendship, and Mission

More than 100 alumni from Divine Word College and other SVD schools — most of them former minor seminaries that have since closed — gathered in Epworth August 29-31 for a reunion filled with faith, friendship, and the enduring spirit of mission. The event created a meaningful bridge between past and present, as former students reconnected with one another and shared their stories with current students discerning their own call to missionary life.

A highlight of the weekend came when two alumni shared about their recent mission trip to Ukraine. During their visit, they taught English to young people in a country deeply affected by conflict. Their testimony served as a powerful reminder that the Divine Word spirit of service and compassion continues to shape lives well beyond graduation.

The weekend schedule was full of opportunities to connect and celebrate. Alumni were welcomed with a reception at the Grand River Center in Dubuque, then



joined students for Family Feast games and a picnic lunch on campus. Evening events included a lively banquet with student performances and a bonfire complete with music and s'mores. Guests also enjoyed building tours, a province update, and a warm welcome from DWC President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD. The reunion concluded with a closing Mass presided by Provincial Fr. Adam Oleszczuk, SVD, followed by a farewell brunch.

For both alumni and students, the weekend was a joyful reminder that the Divine Word spirit spans generations, uniting all in a common call to serve.