



Dansalan College Foundation, Inc
A Continuing Faith Journey
(Compiled by Edna Orteza)



Laubach Hall

This is the story of Dansalan College, a college borne out of the work of American missionaries in the Muslim province of Lanao. It reveals a rich history of interfaith relations, beginning with the literacy work of Dr Frank Laubach and the ministry of the missionaries that came after the Second World War. As well, a history of committed leadership that brought Dansalan College to where it was, amidst intermittent wars and conflicts.

We write this story in the context of the ongoing armed conflict in Marawi, which rendered into rubble the work of sixty seven (67) years - the result of dream time and sleepless nights, of passion and commitment, of industry and frugality, and of a lot of sweat, blood and tears...

It is a story of courage, heroism and endurance, told - not without pain and sadness - but also of hope that Dansalan College will rise again and restore to wholeness the fragments of many broken lives. It is a story of faiths that transcend historical and cultural barriers. It is a story of love, compassion and solidarity.

We share this with a prayer for peace in the world - no matter how elusive it has been. Let us pray for the end of the Marawi conflict, and for peace in various parts of the world, peace that will transcend all earthly barriers, and peace that will last through generations to come.

Part One HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



The Marawi skyline before the siege

Marawi City, located on the shores of Lake Lanao, is the capital city of the province of Lanao del Sur. It is officially known as the Islamic City of Marawi. Named after Lake Lanao, the people of Marawi are called the Maranaos and speak the Maranao language. Marawi was known as Dansalan, meaning “a place where ships anchor”, when it served as the capital of Lanao province from 1907 to 1940. (World Heritage Encyclopedia) When the Spaniards came in the 16th century, Dansalan was already the citadel of Malayan-Arabic culture.



Mindanao Islamic Center Mosque (Photo: Lakad Pilipinas)



The Capitol Mosque (Photo: Harry Balais)



The City Hall (Photo: Harry Balais)



(SCREENGRAB from <http://zamboanga.com/>)



Kilometer 0 (Photo: Lakad Pilipinas)

The Maranaos are known for their epic literature, the *Darangen*, which in 2005 was selected by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. (Music of the Philippines) They are also known for their artwork, weaving, wood and metal crafts.



Marawi City is home to Mindanao State University (MSU). Founded in 1961, it is the flagship of the MSU system. MSU has a mandate to integrate the Christians, Moros, and Lumads of Mindanao. (MSU Handbook)



King Faisal Mosque (Photo: Ivan Henares)



Aga Khan Museum (Fun Philippines)



View of Lake Lanao from Mindanao State University

Resistance to Colonial Rule

The Moro people had consistently resisted colonial rule, which they see as a threat to their survival and identity as a people. The Spaniards tried but never succeeded in subduing and converting the Muslims. So were the Americans and the Japanese. Centuries of conflict have led to deep mutual suspicions: Muslims see Christians as bullies and landgrabbers eager to destroy Islam; Christians view Muslims as treacherous, vengeful, cruel, and ruthless. At some points, the conflict is regarded as religious more than economic and political.



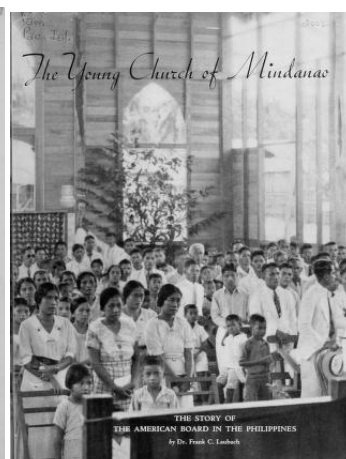
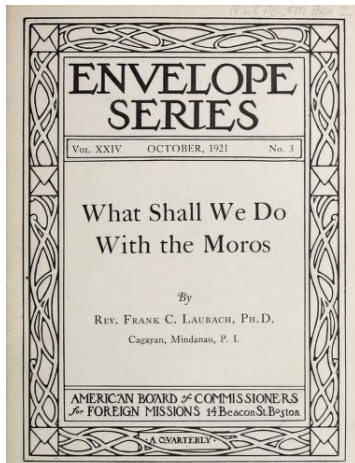
Filipino soldiers fighting for Spain c.1887 (Photo:Wikipedia)

However, in spite of historical hostilities, some missionaries succeeded in making a difference, bridging gaps, and overcoming suspicions, discrimination and hatred and whose commitment, determination and dedication would influence future relations among Christians and Muslims.

Dr Frank Laubach

Dr Frank Charles Laubach (1884-1970)) came to the Philippines with his wife Effa Seely in 1915. He was a Congregational missionary known as a mystic and as "The Apostle to the Illiterates."

Dr Laubach developed interest in the Philippines, especially on the Moro people and on the relations between Muslims and Christians. He wrote a biography of Jose Rizal, *Jose Rizal: Man and Martyr*, published in Manila in 1936. He also translated Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios" (My Last Farewell), which version is ranked second in ideas, content, rhyme and style among the 35 English translations in a collection. (Wikipedia)



As well, Dr Laubach popularized Maranao literature.

"The Moro people of Lake Lanao have amazingly rich literature, all the more amazing since it exists only in the memories of the people and had just begun to be recorded in writing. It consists of lyric and poetry with the epic greatly predominating."

Dr Laubach was deeply concerned about poverty, injustice and illiteracy, and considered them barriers to peace in the world. In Cagayan de Oro in the 1920s, Effa , a nurse, set up a clinic and treated patients at the Chavez house, where they lived and which later became known as the first hospital in the area. (UCCP Cagayan de Oro Centennial)



Dr Frank Laubach and Effa Seely



The Chavez House

While working among Muslims in Lanao, Dr Laubach developed the "Each One Teach One" literacy program, which eventually spread in various parts of the world and was used to teach millions of people to read in their own language. (Laubach, *Thirty Years With the Silent Billion*)

Madrasah High School

Dr Laubach established base in Dansalan in 1940. In June 1941, the Madrasah High School opened with 23 students, among them the children of prominent religious leaders and politicians. Madrasah means a religious school in Maranao (Primo B Salivio, *The Maisie Van Vactor Collection of Islamic and Philippine Muslim Materials*). Unfortunately, the school had to close when the Second World War broke out in December 1941.

Dr Laubach went back to the US and expanded his literacy work to other countries. He died in 1970. Because of his pioneering work and its extensive influence worldwide, Dr Laubach is the only American missionary to be honored in a US stamp, issued in the Great American series in 1984.



To this day, Dr Laubach's literacy method of **Each One Teach One** is applied in many countries around the world, across cultures and in various fields.



DANSALAN JUNIOR COLLEGE

In 1950, inspired by the pioneering work of Dr Laubach in Mindanao, concerned Christians and Maranaos launched the beginning of Dansalan Junior College. Actually, after the war, some Maranao leaders had already approached Christian leaders and asked about the possibility of reopening the Madrasah High School. (Salivio) They underscored the need for a higher level of education for the youth in the area and wanted to continue what the Madrasah High School had started.

Hence, Dansalan Junior College. It was established on the property donated by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It sat at the foot of Carmelite Hill and had an enviable view of Lake Lanao.



Lake Lanao viewed from the rooftop of the ICT building in Dansalan College

Dansalan Junior College was the only school offering secondary and tertiary level education at that time. It provided training opportunities for teachers and would-be lawyers. Soon, the high school programme was added. Demands and needs of the community changed over time, which, consequently, influenced the programmes and commitments of Dansalan Junior College. Later, degree programmes in Liberal Arts and Education were offered. Eventually, it served as the premiere institution of the province and produced some of the best leaders of Lanao del Sur. (Wikiwand)

Rev David and Margaret Hamm

1950-1969

Rev David Hamm and his wife Margaret came to the Philippines in 1950. They were both teachers who were at Silliman University before they moved to Dansalan Junior College during its early years. The Hamms kept documents, mostly letters addressed to family and friends, that chronicle the beginning of the college and its transformation into a foundation that provides a broad range of educational, medical and social services. (See Hamm Family Papers)

Rev Lloyd and Maisie Van Vector
1968-1981

Rev Lloyd and Maisie Van Vector arrived in the Philippines in 1954. They first served in Cagayan de Oro City working with women, men and youth. In 1967, the Van Vectors joined Dansalan Junior College where Rev Van Vector served as President. Apart from academic pursuits, he expanded the college services to include community programmes in the areas of adult literacy, health, agricultural extension, cooperatives, handicrafts, and the setting up of a research center with programmes of publication, documentation, education and social research on Muslim Filipinos. (Domini Torrevillas, *From the Stands*, Philippine Star, July 19, 2003)



Rev Lloyd Van Vector and Ms Emma Thompson with the faculty



With students

In 1968, Dansalan Junior College earned a full college status. Soon, the preschool and elementary school programmes were added.





In the 60s, Ms Fedelinda Booc, then a teacher, with students

Maisie Van Vector collected documents, materials and resources on Islam and Filipino Muslims, which contributed significantly to the setting up of the Dansalan Research Center. (See *Maisie Van Vector Collection of Materials and Resources on Islam and Filipino Muslims*, Peter Gowing Memorial Research Center) She also encouraged and organized the promotion of Muslim weaving and crafts.



Rev Lloyd and Maisie van Vector with sons Norman and Ross; Maisie with Mrs Walther in 1975 (Photo: Mark Walther)

In 1979, kidnapers took Rev Van Vactor and held him captive for 20 days. While in captivity, Maisie had died due to hypertension aggravated by the situation, which eventually led to cardiac arrest. He learned of her death only upon his release - after a series of negotiations that involved church leaders, politicians, and other persons of influence, Dr Fedelinda Tawagon among them. Overwhelmed by the outpouring of support during that harrowing time, Rev Van Vactor stayed for two more years at Dansalan College until further threats forced him to leave for the US in 1981.



Rev Van Vactor served in the New York office of the United Church Board for World Missions (UCBWM) (Global Ministries) The *Lloyd Van Vactor Fund* was established in 1993 in his honor as a Theological Education Scholarship Fund for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). He continues to find ways to strengthen interfaith relations with the Muslims. He published articles about his experiences and perspectives on a variety of subjects, among them

- [Education for Maranaos : a perspective on problems and prospects](#)
- [Four Decades of American Educators in Mindanao and Sulu](#)
- [My Twenty Longest Days](#)
- [The Muslims of the Philippines](#)
- [The Population Education Program of Dansalan College](#)
- [Ventures in Service: Dansalan Junior College among Maranao Muslims, 1950-1980](#)

Dr Peter Gowing
1974-1983

Dr Peter Gowing came to the Philippines as a missionary in 1960. He first served as a faculty member of Silliman University Divinity School. In 1974, he founded and served as Director of the Dansalan Research Center, which aimed to promote understanding of Islam and Muslim Filipinos in the hope of eliminating fear, discrimination, prejudice, hatred and enmity between Muslims and Christians. The Center published the *Dansalan Quarterly*, known as a veritable source of information on Muslim-Christian relations.

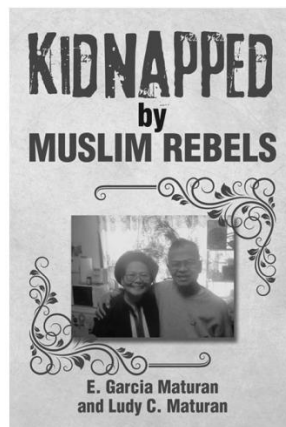
Dr Gowing also published several books and articles on the subject.



Dr Gowing suffered a fatal heart attack in 1983, but even after his death, the center continued to be a center for research and became known internationally as the only repository of valuable documents and resources on Muslim-Christian relations, particularly after the MSU library was burned down . The center was renamed Peter Gowing Memorial Research Center.

Dr Eulalio Maturan
1981-1989

After the departure of the Van Vectors in 1981, Dr Eulalio Maturan took over as President. In 1989, Dr Maturan was kidnapped and , fortunately, was released by his captors after three days. He then resigned and later settled with his wife in the US. Dr Maturan wrote a book about his ordeal.



Dr Fedelinda Tawagon
1989 to the present



Dr Fedelinda Tawagon joined Dansalan College as a young graduate from Silliman University. She assumed the presidency when Dr Eulalio Maturan left. Dr Tawagon had worked closely with Rev Van Vactor, often taking leadership responsibility whenever he was away. When he was held captive, she was instrumental in facilitating his release and helped Linda Washburn with the publication of the book 20 Longest Days. She also collaborated with Dr Peter Gowing at the research center, and was present when he succumbed to a massive heart attack in 1983.

A product of Silliman University, De La Salle University and the Harvard Institute for Higher Education, Dr Tawagon is known for her expertise in research and in the academic field. She has held leadership positions in national organizations and has been an accreditor of church educational institutions and ministerial formation centers both here and abroad. Her vision, experience, expertise and commitment brought Dansalan College to where it was before the siege and is leading it in this time of great upheaval and critical transition.

DANSALAN COLLEGE FOUNDATION, INC

Over the years, not only the Research Center had grown in visibility and credibility, but health services had also expanded, which necessitated the formation of the Dansalan Health Services as a separate unit from the Dansalan Extension Services.

Within the span of three decades, the college performed the three major functions of a university: instruction, research and public service. Many felt that the name Dansalan College no longer reflected the expansion of programs and services and the broad range of concerns promoted by the institution. It was then decided that a new corporation be organized as successor to, but continuing the work of, the Dansalan Junior College which had established her position of leadership in education in the Maranao Muslim community. Thus, by action of the Board of Trustees, Dansalan College became Dansalan College Foundation, Inc. on June 1, 1981, incorporating focus programme areas such as

Dansalan College
Dansalan Extension Services
Dansalan Research Center (Gowing Memorial Research Center)
Dansalan Health Services

Dansalan College Foundation, Inc. is registered as a non-stock, non-profit private educational institution related to the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. It is headed by the President who is responsible for the over-all management and administration of the multi-faced programs and activities.

Members of the faculty and staff are composed of Christians and Muslims who

see themselves as partners in development
strive to provide quality education to the youth

seek to unite Muslims and Christians in friendly relations
exemplify in their lives the best of their culture
commit themselves to the easing tension and the promotion of peace, and
develop their full potentials as Filipino people

Vision

Dansalan College Foundation envisions the development of a society
wherein people live together harmoniously
regardless of race, creed, culture, social status, sex or age
through instruction, research, and public service

Mission Statement

To develop and nurture, a people of principle, virtue, faith, hope,
and health in a trans-cultural academic atmosphere of excellence and service.

High Academic Standard

The school maintained a high academic standard and gained recognition with some of its graduates involved in the governance of the city and province, while other graduates found important leadership positions in local, provincial and national level institutions. Students won in competitions at various levels.



Spelling Bee



Media Award



The Voice Kids

The Interfaith Character of DCFI

Dansalan College Foundation, Inc. was the only Christian school in Marawi City. It has grown from barely a hundred students to 2,000, 99% of them Muslim. Its continuing existence inspired and reflected the importance and impact of interfaith relations.



(Photo: Yo S)

Students



The students on Graduation Day 2017



Alumni



DC Buildings and Structures



Laubach Hall



Integrity Hall



Hamm Hall



Elementary School Building



PreSchool Building



Information and Communication Technology Building (right)



The library at the 2nd floor of Laubach Hall



Science Quadrangle



Craft Building



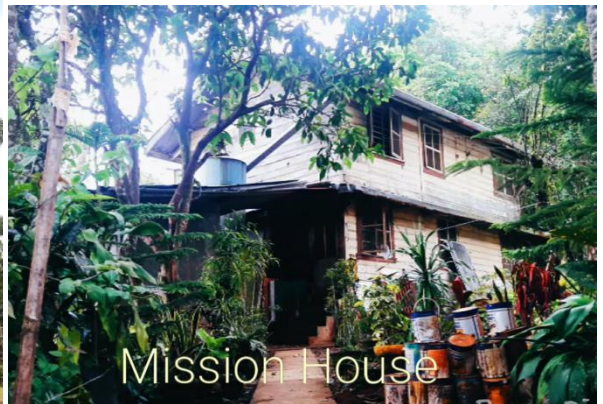
Canteen and cooperative store with the Mission House (left) and the Guest House (right) at the back



Guest House



White House



Mission House



Yellow House



Green House



Old Church



Parsonage House

The Old Chapel and Parsonage(used as housing for staff)

A Beautiful Sanctuary

Over 60 years of hard work and struggle, amidst intermittent wars and conflicts, Dansalan College maintained its integrity, gained recognition for its academic achievements and progressively expanded physically. Its buildings and grounds, surrounded by ancient shady trees, served as a beautiful sanctuary of peace for students, teachers, parents and guests.



The sprawling campus with trees all around



The open quadrangle

Peace Garden

Dansalan College had been affected by sporadic wars and conflicts, and had been subjected to threats to life and security. Its leaders had been kidnapped and harrassed. A recent case involved the destruction of the college agricultural farm including the cutting of a thousand mahogany trees and the burning of others that were not cut. There was total destruction.

In the aftermath of the last spate of environmental violence with the deliberate destruction of trees in the farm, the college decided to create a peace garden.



The campus became a haven of peace with resplendent flowers and shady trees around. Students tended to sit quietly under the trees to study and pray during Muslim prayer times. Mothers would sit in the grass and socialize while waiting for their children.

It never occurred to anyone that all of these would one day be gone...