

# DR. FRANK CHARLES LAUBACH



Many knew him as the 'Apostle to the Illiterates'.

Lowell Thomas called him "the foremost teacher of our times."

The tribes of the Belgian Congo called him Okombekombe, which means "mender of old baskets," because he taught adults to read and write.

Frank Charles Laubach (1884-1970) was the leading pioneer of the contemporary adult literacy movement. Through his efforts as an educator, communicator and organizer, millions of poor and disenfranchised people around the world were empowered to improve their lives through literacy.

In 1930, Dr. Laubach was a missionary among the Maranao people of the Philippines. He was deeply concerned about the overwhelming poverty and injustice they suffered and became convinced that the ability to read and write was essential for them to begin to solve their problems.

Using a basic instructional approach, Dr. Laubach found that even the most impoverished people could gain control of the written and spoken word. He discovered the potential of volunteers, as newly literate Maranaos taught adult learners through a one-to-one instructional program that became known as "Each One Teach One." Dr. Laubach also demonstrated that literacy is an effective means for positive community mobilization and change.

Over the next forty years, Dr. Laubach visited 103 countries in an effort to bring literacy to the "silent billion." His teams of visiting and local literacy workers tirelessly field-tested teaching materials and techniques in the search for effective methods of teaching illiterate adults. A prolific writer and accomplished speaker, he wrote forty books on prayer, literacy, justice and

world peace, and inspired congregations and community groups across the United States with his vision of a better world.

In 1955, Dr. Laubach founded Laubach Literacy. This non-profit educational organization enables illiterate adults and older youths to gain the listening, speaking, reading, writing and math skills they need to solve problems they encounter in daily life; to take full advantage of opportunities in their environment; and to participate fully in the transformation of their society.

When asked what people could do to help, Dr. Laubach said "...hunt out the deepest need you can find." It was on behalf of the world's neediest people that Dr. Laubach spent his life and boundless energies, and he moved hundreds of thousands to join him in service to humanity. His work left an indelible mark on the twentieth century and offers messages of hope to future generations as they carry on the work of building a literate, just and peaceful world.

This same system has been used in more than 300 languages (including English and French) throughout the world. Since then, Laubach organizations have used the slogan "Each One Teach One" because this method of teaching literacy skills is direct and personal. Laubach volunteer tutors are matched one-on-one with literacy students.

Strong Laubach traditions form the foundation of our member agencies, but, over time, literacy practitioners have learned that no single system works in today's environment. A well-trained volunteer is able to respond to the specific learning needs of the individual. This is why, in North America, the major effort of the Laubach system is to provide published materials graded to various levels of readers, to professionally train volunteers, and to advance the cause of literacy.

Dedicated tutor trainers continue to prepare volunteers who are committed to helping adults acquire listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy, and other life skills. With these skills people can gain self-confidence and greater control over their lives.

Canada's first Laubach tutor training workshop was held in Nova Scotia in 1970. Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO) was formed by member councils in 1981. Laubach Literacy Ontario continues to support its member agencies in all capacities.