

Dr. Frank 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.