

Kiš, Miroslav

(1942–2016)

LYNETTE ALLCOCK

Lynette Allcock is a writer and broadcaster from the United Kingdom. She graduated from Southern Adventist University with a Bachelor's in English Education, and also earned a Master's in Applied Linguistics from University College London. She has worked as an English as a Second Language teacher, a producer and presenter for Adventist Radio London, and a freelance writer. She loves travel and good stories.

Miroslav Kiš was an Adventist pastor, educator, scholar and administrator. He served 31 years at Andrews University as a teacher and department chair.



Miroslav Kiš

Photo courtesy of Brenda Kiš.

Early Life

Miroslav Kiš was born on November 20, 1942, in Mikluševci, Yugoslavia (now Croatia). He was the 10th of 11 children.¹ His parents, Andrija Kiš and Natalija Pap Kiš, were instrumental in raising up the only Adventist church in the area, after Miroslav's grandfather had taken Bible studies from a travelling literature evangelist.²

Miroslav grew up in poverty and experienced persecution and mockery for his Christian beliefs, particularly about the Sabbath. After one especially brutal beating by a teacher for missing Saturday classes, young Kiš resolved that he would attend school on the Sabbath to avoid further punishment. However, that Friday night he had a dream in which his guardian angel expressed sorrow at his decision, so Kiš immediately resolved to keep the Sabbath come what may. When he went back to school on Monday, he found that his abusive teacher had been arrested and Kiš would face no further retribution. It was through this experience that he learned to know God as a real, personal friend.³

Education and Marriage

Kiš originally trained as a watchmaker before beginning theological studies.⁴ He married Brenda Bond on August 22, 1971, and together they moved to Le Campus Adventiste du Salève in Collonge, France so that Kiš could complete his undergraduate studies in theology.⁵ He graduated from the French seminary in 1973 and received

a Master of Divinity from Andrews University in 1976. He then completed a doctorate in philosophical ethics from McGill University in Montreal, Canada in 1983.⁶

Ministry

Kiš first pastored in the San Pedro Yugoslavian church in California in 1970, and later in the Canadian province of Quebec, where he cared for the Longueuil French-speaking church and served the Quebec Conference as their Youth Director (1976-1979).⁷ After completing his doctorate in 1983, Kiš went back to the Andrews University seminary.⁸ By now Kiš was the father of two sons, Adam and Andrej, and he and his family settled in Berrien Springs, Michigan, this time as a professor at Andrews University, where he remained until his retirement. There, he established an ethics degree program that had a biblical and theological basis in contrast to the typical philosophical-ethics foundation used by many universities. He was a professor of Christian ethics and chair of the department of theology and Christian philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.⁹

He famously believed that there was no such thing as a white lie and that there was no circumstance in which it was acceptable to lie. Indeed, in considering difficult situations, his early experiences with God as a child and teenager fueled his belief that God cannot show “all of His muscles when we let Him lift only small weights,” and that when we are in extreme circumstances, we give God the opportunity to show us His face in a way we wouldn’t see in ordinary circumstances (Intersection interview with Miroslav Kiš, February 1, 2010).¹⁰

Miroslav Kiš served in the Adventist world church’s Biblical Research Institute from 1986 to 2015.¹¹ He played a key role in establishing the Institute’s ethics committee, believing that it was necessary to address complex moral issues facing the Adventist church.¹² While at the Institute, he also sat on committees tackling matters related to Adventism and Marxism (1987)¹³, the Christian view of human life (1988)¹⁴, and the Church’s response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (2001)¹⁵. These committees studied out the issues and made recommendations to the denomination about what policies it should adopt and how it should be involved in addressing the issues.

Kiš wrote extensively throughout his ministry, covering many complex subjects such as Biblical interpretation,¹⁶ morality,¹⁷ sexuality,¹⁸ ordination,¹⁹ and personal and professional ethics²⁰. He also wrote a book exploring the implications of being a disciple of Jesus, *Follow Me: How to Walk with Jesus Every Day*, published by the Review & Herald Publishing Association in 2001.

Later Life

In 2015, Kiš retired after 31 years at Andrews University, continuing to live near the university campus in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He died of a heart attack on February 23, 2016, aged 73.²¹

Legacy

Miroslav Kiš was a “giant of biblical-theological-ethical interpretation” who “was not driven by popularity but by biblical and theological truth”.²² By all accounts he lived as he taught – a conscientious and compassionate scholar, ethicist, and family man.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Brenda Kiš to Lynette Allcock, email message, November 27, 2019.
2. Ibid.; Miroslav Kiš, “Faith as a Little Child” in Don Schneider and Ken Wade eds., *Really Living 2* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2011).
3. Miroslav Kiš, “Faith as a Little Child.”
4. Ibid.
5. Brenda Kiš to Lynette Allcock, email message, November 27, 2019.
6. Andrew McChesney, “Miroslav Kiš, Giant in Adventist Ethics Who Wouldn’t Tell a Falsehood, Dead at 73,” *ARH*, February 24, 2016.
7. Brenda Kiš to Lynette Allcock, email message, December 12, 2019. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, years 1978 and 1979, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

8. Minutes of General Conference Committee Meeting. March 3, 1983. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
9. Andrew McChesney, "Miroslav Kiš, Giant in Adventist Ethics Who Wouldn't Tell a Falsehood, Dead at 73."
10. Intersection. February 1, 2010. Interview with Miroslav Kiš. "Honesty and Lying Interview," <https://vimeo.com/9132708>.
11. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, years 1986 and 2015, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.
12. Andrew McChesney, "Miroslav Kiš, Giant in Adventist Ethics Who Wouldn't Tell a Falsehood, Dead at 73."
13. Minutes of General Conference Committee Meeting. January 8, 1987, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
14. Minutes of General Conference Committee Meeting. July 7, 1988. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
15. Minutes of the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee. September 25, 2001. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
16. See Miroslav Kiš. "The Word of God in Christian Ethics," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, October 1993, 199-208.
17. See for example: Miroslav Kiš. "Living with Moral Issues," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (1993), volume 4, issue 1, 103-113.
18. See for example: Miroslav Kiš. "Dealing with a fallen pastor?" *Ministry*, January 2005.
19. See for example: Miroslav Kiš, "Thoughts on a SDA Theology of Ordination," *Faculty Publications*, January 1988.
20. See for example: Miroslav Kiš. April 1998. "Biblical Narratives and Christian Decision," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 24-31; Miroslav Kiš, "The Christian View of Human Life," *Ministry*, August 1991; Miroslav Kiš, "Dealing with a fallen pastor?" *Ministry*, January 2005.
21. "Andrews University Ethics Scholar Miroslav Kiš is Dead." *Adventist Today*, February 24, 2016.
22. Andrew McChesney, "Miroslav Kiš, Giant in Adventist Ethics Who Wouldn't Tell a Falsehood, Dead at 73."

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