



Headquarters of East Central Korean Conference.

Photo courtesy of East Central Korean Conference.

East Central Korean Conference

GEUN TAE JUNG

Geun Tae Jung (B.A., Sahmyook University) began his ministry as an intern missionary belonging to the East Central Korean Conference (ECKC) at Youngdong Church, Seoul, Korea. He served as missionary in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, director of Global Evangelism at Southern Union Mission of Euro-Asia Division, and pastor in Korea, including Sahmyook University Church, Korean ACT Association, and Wonju Central Church. From 2016 to 2020 he served as director of the Ministries department, treasurer, and secretary of ECKC. He was appointed ECKC president in December 2020.

The East Central Korean Conference (aka Dongjunghanhaphoe) is one of the five conferences comprising the Korean Union Conference of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists. When the Chosen

Union Mission was organized in 1919 it bore the name Central Chosen Mission, then reorganized as the East Central Korean Mission in 1978, and finally became the East Central Korean Conference (ECKC) in 1983.

The ECKC's territory consists of the eastern part of Seoul, Kangwon Province, parts of Gyeonggi Province (Kapyeong, Kuri, Kwangju, Namyangju, Sungnam, Yangpyung), and parts of Chungcheongbuk-do (Chechung, Tanyang), and as of June 30, 2019, it has 155 churches and 82,088 church members.¹

Origin of Adventist Work in the Territory of the Conference

The Korean Adventist Church began within this territory in 1909. Its leaders moved their headquarters to Seoul from Soonan, South Pyongan Province, in September of that year.² The general meeting of the Korean Mission held at Seoul in August 1910 divided the Korean Mission into four mission fields, including the West Korean Field, East Coastal Field, South Korean Field, and Central Korean Field.³ The Central Korean Mission Field would be the eventual territory of the ECKC. Charles L. Butterfield, director of the Korean Mission, was responsible for the Central Korean Mission Field as well.

The headquarters of the Korean Mission at Wolam-dong, Seoul, moved to Hoegi-dong in the winter of 1912, and there built offices, a publishing house, chapel, and staff housing.⁴ The mission commenced its activities at the Hoegi-dong headquarters chapel. Next it organized a Sabbath School at Gwangjiwon, Gwangju-gun, Gyeonggi-do in 1914, and missionary outreach began in this area. In addition, a Sabbath School formed in Kangneung, Kangwon Province and Wangsimni, Seoul.⁵

Organizational History

The leaders of Central Korean Mission Field held annual general meetings at the Hoegi-dong Church in Seoul in October 1913, Cheongjin-dong Church in November 1914, and Hoegi-dong Church in December 1915. The sessions reported the various mission activities conducted in the territory.⁶

In 1917, church leaders elevated the Korean Mission into the Chosen Conference.⁷ Then, the new Chosen Conference carried out a reorganization of Hamgyongbuk-do, formerly part of the Central Mission Field, into a new mission field by linking it with the Kando region, thus reducing some of Central's territory.⁸ And In 1919, the Chosen Conference advanced to that of a union mission. It now consisted of three missions: the West Chosen Conference, the Central Chosen Mission, and the South Chosen Mission.⁹ The territory of the Central Chosen Mission, the predecessor of the ECKC, included Seoul, Gyeonggi-do and Kangwon-do, as well as the regions of Hamgyongnam-do and Chungcheong-do.¹⁰ At this time, the mission's territory was rather large, because it was just beginning its outreach. However, with the further development of missionary work, administration divided the area several times.

As a result of the growth of the church in Korea, leadership separated the Chosen Union Mission into five missions (Central Chosen Mission, North Chosen Mission, Southeast Chosen Mission, Southwest Chosen Mission, and West Chosen Mission) at the eighth general meeting held in 1934. The session organized the East Sea and coastal areas of Hamkyong Province into the North Chosen Mission, and assigned the Central Chosen Mission to Seoul and Gyeonggi-do and the west part of Kangwon-do and Chungcheong-do.¹¹

Not until 1958 did the Korean Church again divide the Central Chosen Mission. Because of continued growth, the eighteenth general meeting of the Korean Union Mission in December 1957 split the Central Korean Mission into two units: the Central Korean Mission and Middle East Korean Mission. As a result, Kangwon-do and Checheon and Danyang of Chungcheongbuk-do became part of the Middle East Korean Mission, and the Central Korean Mission received jurisdiction over Seoul, Gyeonggi-do, and Chungcheong-do (excluding Checheon and Danyang). During this period, the Central Korean Mission had 4,032 baptized members and 9,787 Sabbath School members, and had established many new churches.¹²

The headquarters of the Middle East Korean Mission was located in Kangneung, Kangwon-do, with 33 churches and 2,000 Sabbath school members at the time of the restructuring. Continuing to grow, it expanded to 61 churches and 3,420 Sabbath School members by the end of 1959.¹³ In April 1961, the Middle East Korean Mission moved its headquarters to Wonju, Kangwon-do, erecting offices and a chapel there.¹⁴ The number of Sabbath School members rose to 7,780 in 1963 and to 11,108 by the end of 1965.¹⁵ By 1966, however, the number of church members in Korea had decreased sharply. As a result, the Korean Union Mission merged the Middle East Korean Mission into the Central Korean Mission in 1968.¹⁶ Therefore, the history of the ECKC again included that of the Central Korean Mission.

As the late 1960s passed and the 1970s began, the Korean Adventist Church went through a period of transformation. During this period, the Central Korean Mission again began to grow, baptizing more than 1,000 people every year.¹⁷ As a result, by 1978, the number of churches and church members reached 234 and 18,749. Accordingly, the Korean Union Mission divided the Central Korean Mission into two missions (East Central Korean Mission and West Central Korean Mission) on March 1, 1978. At the time of the separation, the territory of the East Central Korean Mission was as follows; Seoul: Dongdaemun-gu, Seongdong-gu, Kangnam-gu, Jung-gu, Yongsan-gu, Gyeonggi-do: Gapyeong-gun, Yangpyeong-gun, Gwangju-gun, Seongnam-si, Yangju-gun (Whado-myun, Mikeum-myun, Jingeon-myun, Wabu-myun, Sudong-myun), Guri-eup (excluding Galmae-ri, Saro-ri), Chungcheongbuk-do: Checheon-gun, Danyang-gun, Kangwon-do (excluding Cheolwon-gun). In addition, the mission had 132 churches and companies, 5,742 church members, 9,911 Sabbath School members and 36 ministers.¹⁸ Ki-woong Um was appointed as the first president of the East Central Korean Mission.

As a result of having become financially self-sustaining by 1983, leadership designated the Korean Union Mission as that of a union conference, and the East Central Korean Mission became the East Central Korean Conference (ECKC).¹⁹ In the 1980s, Korean leadership actively promoted church development and established

many new congregations. Twenty-one churches were formed during 1983 to 1985, and 44 churches during 1986 to 1991, increasing the total number to 198 while membership rose to 36,114 in 1991.²⁰

As the size of the conference grew, a research committee began studying in 1991 the possible separation of the East Central Korean Conference into more divisions, but various factors prevented any action.²¹ Instead, the conference's leadership pursued a project to set up churches in new areas, which resulted in the establishment of a congregation in Bundang in 1994.²² In 2000, the ECKC started social welfare work. The conference opened the Donghae Senior Welfare Center in May 2000 and the Dongdaemun Welfare Center in July 2000.²³ During this period, the number of members exceeded 50,000.

In July 2008, the ECKC acquired an office building in Sinnae-dong, Jungnang-gu, Seoul, and relocated its headquarters from Cheongnyang-ri to Sinnae-dong. On December 27 of that year, the Hoegi-dong Headquarters Church, the first church organized in the ECKC, commemorated the one-hundredth anniversary of its establishment. The headquarters church began its leap forward in the second century of missionary work in June 2010 by constructing an eight-story church complex.²⁴

As its history passed the 100-year mark, the East Central Korean Conference, released a research report prepared by the Future Development Committee at the thirty-eighth general meeting. It suggested ways to operate school churches to more successfully evangelize students, how to conduct team missions at the district level, and offered a mission-oriented church development plan.²⁵ The research report was significant in that it presented a mission strategy for the ECKC to move forward. The goal of the ECKC is to realize the kingdom of God, the fundamental reason for its historical existence.

List of Presidents

Central Chosen Mission: Charles L. Butterfield (1919); Howard M. Lee (1920); Charles L. Butterfield (1921); Mun Gook Jeong (1922-1927); Tae Hyun Choi (1927-1930); Keun Eok Lee (1931-1932); Tae Hyun Choi (1932-1937); R. S. Watts (1937-1939); Dong Shim Chong (1939-1943).

Central Korean Mission: Myung Kil Kim (1947-1954); Seong Won Im (1955); Dong Sim Jeong (1956-1957).

Middle East Korean Mission: Myung Kil Kim (1958-1961); Sung Sik Park (1962-1965); Byung Ui Im (1966-1968).

Central Korean Mission: Iyeol Kim (1969-1971); Mun Kyung Ko (1971-1977); Ki Woong Um (1977).

East Central Korean Mission: Ki Woong Um (1977-1984).

East Central Korean Conference: Myung Su Shin (1984-1985); Jin Young Kim (1985-1992); Sang Do Kim (1992-1995); Chun Seop Kim (1995-2001); Bo Seok Um (2001-2004); Hyuk Woo Kwon (2004-2007); Bo Seok Um (2007-2010); Chi Yang Moon (2010-2012); Kyung Woo Lee (2012-2016); Nak Yong Park (2016); Kwang Su Park (2016-2017); Seok Su Kim (2017-2020); Soon Ki Kang (2020-2021), Geun Tae Jeong (2021-).

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NOTES

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3. I. H. Evans, "The Korean General Meeting," *ARH*, November 24, 1910, 9.
4. C. L. Butterfield, "dedication Services at Seoul, Korea," *ARH*, April 17, 1913, 13.
5. Yung Lin Lee, *A Comprehensive Study in the History of the Adventist Church in Korea* (Seoul: Sunmyung Cultural Press, 1968), 242.
6. Man Kyu Oh, *History of One Hundred Years of Korean SDA, 1904~1945* (Seoul: Korean Publishing House, 2010), 493.
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1918), 150.
8. *Church Compass*, December 1917, 14.
9. I. H. Evans, "Meeting of the Chosen Union Mission," *ARH*, August 7, 1919, 14.
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11. *Church Compass*, July 1934, 2, 3.
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13. "A Report of the Middle East Korean Mission," Minutes of the 19th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1959), 11.
14. *Church Compass*, January 1962, 36.
15. "A Report of the Middle East Korean Mission," Minutes of the 22nd General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1965).
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17. "A Report of the Central Korean Mission," Minutes of the 25th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1974).
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21. *Ibid.*
22. Minutes of the 30th General Meeting of East Central Korean Conference (Seoul: East Central Korean Conference, 1995).
23. Minutes of the 32nd General Meeting of East Central Korean Conference (Seoul: East Central Korean Conference, 2001).
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