



Goshen Adventist Secondary School Classroom and Staff Room

Photo courtesy of Goshen Adventist Secondary School.

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# Goshen Adventist Secondary School

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## KONIS GABU, AND ABEDNIGO YAU SHUNG CHOW

Konis Gabu

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The Goshen Adventist Secondary School (Sekolah Menengah Advent Goshen) is a private Seventh-day Adventist school offering Grade 1 through high school. It is located at Jalan Simpangan Kg, Jalan Goshen, 89108 Kota Marudu, Sabah, Malaysia. Since its establishment in 1960, it has sought to offer physical, mental, social, and spiritual nurture via a strong academic and spiritual program.

## Events that Led to the Establishment of the School

The post-World War era in the early days of the Crown Colony of North Borneo saw significant Adventist evangelistic work among the northern tribes of the territory in the Marudu Bay area, notably in Kudat. In 1952, plans were made by the North Borneo Seventh-day Adventist Mission to open a training school in the town of Bandau (now Kota Marudu) as missionary work was steadily expanding in the northern part of the colony!<sup>1</sup> Thus, ten Adventist families settled in the fertile land where almost anything grows. They named it “Goshen” after the biblical land in Genesis and Exodus. The early pioneers included Salag Gaban and his two sons, Assan and Mandatang.<sup>2</sup>

## Early Years

In May 1952, the school at Goshen started with Pastor Mandatang Gaban and Peter Leopold becoming the first teachers.<sup>3</sup> With humble beginnings, the church and school buildings consisted of only bamboo, but were soon replaced when conventional building materials became available. Pastor and Mrs. Arthur Mountain, the mission president and his wife, made frequent visits to the Marudu Bay area, covering Kudat and Goshen, and were very much impressed with the spiritual and educational growth of the pioneers at the new settlement.<sup>4</sup>

In line with the British educational system during the colonial administration, English was the medium of instruction. In 1959, being the only school for miles around and surrounded by rivers and swamps, it was reported there were 150 students with three teachers.<sup>5</sup> Classes were offered up to Grade 5, and a new grade was added every year<sup>6</sup> until the addition of secondary levels beginning with Forms 1 to 5. Then, the school was renamed as Goshen Adventist Secondary School or GASS for short. Although the location of the school was a few miles from Bandau township, the environment was still considered suitable for learning with its natural surroundings and spacious location.

## Societal Impact

With the existence of an Adventist school at Goshen, missionary clinics were frequently held at the Marudu Bay area with visiting medical staff accompanied by the mission president and lay workers.<sup>7</sup> In addition, medical supplies were contributed by the Youngberg Memorial Hospital in Singapore, Bangkok Adventist Hospital, and Penang Adventist Hospital. When clinics were set up, villagers from far and near would flock to the place, with

the classrooms and church being converted to consultation rooms, medical halls, and a pharmacy.<sup>8</sup> Evangelism through education and medical services was proven effective in soul winning and many of the people who resided in the district accepted the faith and were baptized. To this day, the Goshen Seventh-day Adventists are the largest denomination compared to other denominations in the area.

## Changes and Challenges

On August 31, 1963, the colony of North Borneo was granted self-government and renamed Sabah,<sup>9</sup> with the subsequent formation of the Federation of Malaysia on September 16, 1963, consisting of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah. After 1963, GASS saw significant changes which brought its curriculum in line with the national education standards of the federation.<sup>10</sup> Although English continued to be used in schools, policy changes were made by the state government of Sabah in 1973 for Malay to be the official language<sup>11</sup> and, by 1975, Grade 1 and Form 1 students began learning all the subjects in Malay. It posed temporary difficulties for the teachers, as they were not fluent in Malay due to being taught and trained since colonial days to use English. In 1976, control of education by the state government was handed over to the federal government for the sake of national unity. The reason given for this change was so all the schools in the country would be using the same curriculum.<sup>12</sup> Another change made was in the name of the district when Bandau became Kota Marudu in 1968. During this time, William Earl Smith was the district pastor for the Marudu Bay area, with his base in Goshen. Since the 1960s, his work among the local people and Chinese members was well known as he baptized and set up new churches.<sup>13</sup>

## New Growth

In 1971, GASS slowly expanded and more teachers were added. Living quarters for the workers was limited, but the problem was solved when Earl Smith and his wife, parents of Pastor William Smith, came to Sabah. Earl Smith volunteered to be construction supervisor. He directed work on buildings and repairs done to the churches, houses, and schools in Goshen and the surrounding areas. One significant contribution was the method of laying bricks and the construction of strong and firm buildings suitable to the tropical climate in the Far East.<sup>14</sup> Bricks also helped solve the problem of termites and wood rot in the humid weather.

In 1978, church membership in Goshen had reached 3,000, with an annual GASS registration of students at 270.<sup>15</sup> With the ever-expanding interest, many students had to be turned away because of limited classrooms and living spaces. The school authorities then planned for the expansion of the school by adding an auditorium that could accommodate 3,000 students, dormitories for boys and girls, and more classrooms to meet the demands of increasing enrollment each year. On May 7, 1982, the prayers for a new auditorium were answered when an opening ceremony was held and attended by the Honorable Newman Gaban, a member of Parliament. Officials

from the Far Eastern Division, South East Asia Union, and Sabah Mission also attended. The auditorium project was led by Pastor Helton Fisher and cost about RM190,000 to build.<sup>16</sup> By then, newer classrooms and dormitories had also been added.

## Present-day

Presently, the school curriculum is under the Malaysian Education Department and the school is registered with the Ministry of Education Malaysia under the section of Private Schools Education. Moreover, it is listed as a “government non-aided school” and receives no additional funding; it is solely run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. GASS is thus operated under the School Board of Directors of the Sabah Seventh-day Adventist Mission. Classes offered are Grades 1 to 6, and Forms 1 to 5 of the secondary level with the addition of Form 6 (pre-university).

## Names of Principals from 1960<sup>17</sup>

Gregorio Yaneza Dizon; Mary Bingku; Joseph Tiah (1968-1972); Miun B. Saminggau (1973-1975); Nelton Bingku (1976); Joe Gimbang (1977-1979); Nelton Bingku (1980-1981); James Lai (1982-1984); Nelton Bingku (1985-1991); Daniel W. Bagah (1992-1994); Richard Kilus (1994-1999); Donald Bangkuai (2000-2006); Janet Yabing (2007-2011); Richard Kilus (2012); Justine Simpul (2013-2014); Stephen Loo (2015); Sharon Laung (2016-2018); Jane Liew Zi Ling (2019); Octavius Guling (2020- ).

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