



Headquarters of Middlewest Korean Conference, 2020.

Photo courtesy of Middlewest Korean Conference.

Middlewest Korean Conference

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Sam Bae Kim (M.Min., Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines) started his ministry at the Western Cheonan Church. He served at Gobuk Church, Chungju Central Church, Galma-dong Church, Daejeon Saehaneul Church, Salem Dongsan Church, and Taeon Church. He served as professor at the Adventist Training Center from 2012 to 2015 and pastor at the Domadong Church in Daejeon from 2016. In January 2021 he was appointed president of Middlewest Korean Conference.

The Middlewest Korean Conference (aka Chuncheonghaphoe) is one of the five conferences belonging to the Korean Union Conference of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists. It was organized as the Middle West Korean Mission in 1963,¹ reorganized as the Middlewest Korean Mission in 1971,² and then elevated to the Middlewest Korean Conference (MWKC) in 1983.³

The MWKC's territory comprises Chungcheongbuk-do (except the counties of Danyang and Jecheon), Chungcheongnam-do, and Daejeon and Sejong. As of June 30, 2019, it consisted of 130 churches and 31,613

church members. Its address is 52, Jinjam-ro 106beon-gil, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon, 34227, Korea.⁴

Origin of Adventist Work in the Territory of the Conference

The Adventist Church began its mission in the region of the MWKC in 1912 when it sent Keon-joo Choi to Gongju, Chungnam and established a company in Geumjeong, Gongju-myun, at the beginning of 1913.⁵ After that, another company formed in Sujang-ri, Sichang-myeon, Asan-gun, Chungnam through Kim Jae-bong's efforts, and it constructed a church building during November 1913. On September 19, 1914, Charles L. Butterfield, the director of the Korean Mission, visited it and baptized five people.⁶

By 1914, companies began in Maebau, Yeonki-gun, Chungnam, and Palbong-ri, Nami-myeon, Cheongwon-gun, Chungbuk, and Bugang-ri, Buyong-myeon. Meanwhile, the Korean Mission dispatched Kyu-hyuk Kim as a minister to Kang Kyung-po, Chungnam, in May 1914, and Jin-woo Lee as a minister at Jincheon, Chungbuk, in July. Kyu-hyuk Kim organized a Sabbath School in Jinjam-myeon, Daejeon-gun, Chungnam Province.⁷ During the early days of the Korean Adventist Church's history, only one or two such groups were listed in official statistics until 1920, and not until 1925 did the Adventist Church began to be really active in the region.

In 1925, four Sabbath Schools (Okcheon, Asan, Gwangcheon and Daedeok) were organized in this area. Sabbath Schools were formed in Hongseong and Cheongyang in 1927, and in Boryeong in 1928. In March 1932, a Chungcheongnam-do provincial meeting convened at the Jeongjeon-ri Church in Boryeong, and more than 14 church representatives attended. In 1933, many Sabbath Schools were organized in Chungju, Jincheon, and Jecheon, Chungcheongbuk-do. Soon active missionary outreach established 18 Sabbath Schools in Chungcheongnam-do and 6 in Chungcheongbuk-do as early as 1940.⁸

Organizational History

The Korean Adventist Church remained active in the area until just before Japan dissolved it, but until then the region comprised part of the Central Chosen Mission. It was not until 1963 that it contained enough churches to warrant it being an independent mission. The executive committee of the Korean Union Mission, meeting on December 13, 1962, organized the Middle West Korean Mission (Jungseodaehoe) by dividing Chungcheong Province, which until then had belonged to the Central Korean Mission. The Middle West Korean Mission began operation on January 1, 1963, with its headquarters located in Cheonan, and Jong-kyun shin became its first president. The conference consisted of 5,088 church members in 36 churches.⁹

In 1965, the Middle West Korean Mission moved its headquarters from Cheonan to Daejeon. At the end of the year, the number of Sabbath School members reached 14,726. However, the membership decreased to 11,854 by the end of 1967.¹⁰ In 1968, the Korean Union Mission merged the Middle West Korean Mission and Southwest Korean Mission into the Southwest Korean Mission (Seonamdaehoe).¹¹ After the restructuring, fortunately, the

Korean Church slowly grew again. In response, the Korea Union Mission again separated the Southwest Korean Mission into the Southwest Korean Mission (Honamdaehoe) and the Middlewest Korean Mission (Jungseodaehoe) in 1971. At this time, the Middlewest Conference consisted of 50 churches, 122 companies, and 2,241 church members.¹²

Kwan-Heum Yeon headed the mission for seven years. During that period, however, the mission did not grow significantly, and at the end of 1978 it had only 56 churches and 3,462 members.¹³ However, after Sang-woo Han became president in 1978, the mission expanded to 147 churches and companies and 6,260 church members by 1983.¹⁴ In 1983, the Middlewest Korean Mission became the Middlewest Korean Conference.

During this period, the Middle West Korean Mission accomplished several important goals as well as an increase in the number of church members. Since 1978, new churches have started in major metropolitan cities in the region, including Daejeon, Cheonan, and Cheongju. In 1981, Korean Sahmyook Food opened in Cheonan to support denominational educational institutions. In 1982, after the construction of a four-story building in Mok-dong, Daejeon, the mission office relocated. Meanwhile, through the efforts of the Laymen Missionary Association, additional new churches formed, such as those at Yuseong and Nonsan.¹⁵

The revitalization of missionary activity in the region led to more new congregations. During the three years from 1986 to 1988, 13 churches started within the conference, and during the three years from 1989 to 1991, 10 more churches were organized. As a result of such continued growth, the MWKC recorded 159 churches and companies and 12,244 members in 1991.¹⁶ The Daejeon Sahmyook Middle School and Seohae Sahmyook Academy secured new sites and relocated. And the MWKC secured a 5,543 pyeong (4.5 acres) camping site at Janggok Beach in Anmyeondo.¹⁷ In December 2006, the MWKC built a condominium-type training center that can accommodate 250.¹⁸

In 1994, the Middlewest Korean Conference constructed a new building in Jinjam, Yuseong-gu, where the conference currently has its headquarters. In addition, the MWKC erected a dormitory for girls at Daejeon Sahmyook Middle School, as well as a dormitory for men and women at the Seohae Sahmyook Academy. In 1996, the MWKC established an organic product center in Doma-dong, Daejeon. By 2000 MWKC had grown to 19,356 members in 174 churches and companies.¹⁹ In 2002, the MWKC changed its Korean name from Jungseohaphoe to Chungcheonghaphoe, and in 2003 the construction of a memorial hall at Daejeon Sahmyook Middle School commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the conference's establishment.²⁰

In December 2007, a huge oil spill devastated the west coast of the Korean Peninsula. The MWKC, along with ADRA Korea, deployed about 3,000 volunteers to clean up the oil and provide meals to volunteers with the support of five SDA conferences and other denominational institutions. Along with this work, the MWKC organized a volunteer group of the Tae-an Branch of ADRA Korea to conduct active relief services.²¹

According to a report released at the seventeenth general meeting of the MWKC in January 2010, the conference had 25,740 church members and 112 pastors in 133 churches. The conference shares Christ's love by operating

social welfare facilities such as the Health and Family Support Center, the Northern Happiness Sharing Welfare Center, and the Multicultural Family Support Center in Dangjin. The conference had hoped to construct a Central Mission Center in Daejeon and to establish high schools in Daejeon, but various circumstances prevented their completion.²² In addition, as the number of baptisms has decreased since 2008, the growth of the conference has slowed somewhat, and the leaders have pursued projects such those that would create healthy local churches.²³

In 2012, the MWKC celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary. As previously noted, Seventh-day Adventism entered the region in 1912. By 2012, the MWKC had achieved remarkable growth. According to statistics in July 2013, the conference had 18,319 church members, 162 churches, and 115 pastors.²⁴ Data reported at its nineteenth general meeting held in January 2016, indicated the MWKC had 29,705 church members in 144 churches and companies at the end of the third term in 2015, a mere 2,290 increase in the number of baptisms compared to the previous session. During this period, the MWKC developed projects such as Vision 153, which will strive for 30,000 church members by 2023. And the conference also promoted the pioneering of churches targeting new cities (Naepo, Chungbuk Innovation City, Seowon-gu, Cheongju City, Daesan, Dangjin City, and Osong, Cheongju City).²⁵

The establishment of new urban congregations continued with the Chungbuk Innovation City Church in 2021 that followed ones in Sejong Happiness City and Naepo New Town. Pastor Kim Sam-bae, appointed president at the twentieth general meeting of the MWKC held on January 7, 2021, is actively seeking to form another new congregation by constructing a church building in Dongseong-ri, Eumseong-kwon, Chungbuk.²⁶ Such efforts demonstrate leadership's willingness to seek the development of the conference in difficult times. The MWKC continues to actively advance the kingdom of God.

List of Presidents

Middle West Korean Mission: Jong Kyun Shin (1963-1966); Eung Jun Lee (1966-1967); Seong Rae Kim (1967); Moon Kyung Ko (1968-1970); Hyung Chang Im (1970-1971).

Middlewest Korean Mission: Kwan Heum Yeon (1971-1978); Sang Woo Han (1978-1983).

Middlewest Korean Conference: Young Sung Yoon (1983-1989); Jae Cheol Shin (1989-1992); Kyu Cheol Shin (1992-1995); Dong Woon Im (1995-1997); Jong Myoung Kim (1998-2000); Byung Sung Im (2001-2003); Si Wha Kim (2004-2006); Si Yeol Yeom (2007-2009); Sun Keun Shon (2010-2011); Jong Hap Yoon (2012-2015); chang Soo Huh (2016-2020); Sam Bae Kim (2021-).

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NOTES

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2. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1972), 162.
3. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1984), 137.
4. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2020), 226.
5. *Three Angels Message*, April 1913, 22. This magazine is the predecessor of the *Church Compass*, the official periodical of the Korean Adventist Church.
6. *Three Angels Message*, October 1914, 24.
7. Man Kyu Oh. *History of One Hundred Years of Korean SDA, 1904~1945* (Seoul: Korean Publishing House, 2010), 177, 178.
8. *Ibid*, 509-511.
9. *Church Compass*, February 1963, 17; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1964), 121.
10. "A Report of the Middle West Korean Mission," Minutes of the 23rd General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1967).
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12. "A Report of the Middlewest Korean Mission," Minutes of the 25th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1974), 9.
13. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1979), 188.
14. "A Report of the Middlewest Korean Mission," Minutes of the 27th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1983), 9.
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