

Adil, Jimmy Hadji, Sr. (1936–2015)

JIMMY JIAMAH V. ADIL

Jimmy Jiamah V. Adil, Jr., RGC, Ph.D., D.Miss., currently serves as the Adventist Mission director and Adventist-Muslim Relations coordinator of the South Philippine Union Conference. He is married to Myrlie Lim-Adil, a registered nurse and a registered librarian who is presently serving as chief librarian of Mountain View College. Their union is blessed with three grown children who are serving the Lord in their respective career paths.

Jimmy *Jiamah* Hadji Adil, Sr. was an ordained Adventist pastor and missionary to the Muslim populations in the Philippines.

Early Life

Jimmy *Jiamah*¹ Hadji Adil, Sr. was a full-blooded Maguindanaon² whose parents were devout Muslims. He was born on July 3, 1936, in Cotabato City, Maguindanao.³ His father, Hadji Zumbaga Tambis Adil, was a farmer and goldsmith; and his mother, Mantang Dadigan, was a *malong*⁴ weaver. Jimmy grew up with six siblings in a Muslim home and community under the spiritual influence of his father, who served as an *imam* (worship leader) and a respected *alim* (Islamic scholar). Their family belonged to a royalty clan and prominent chain of politicians in the Province of Maguindanao. His siblings with the same mother were: Mua (businessman), Subia (mat-weaver), Duma (farmer), Kuder (sales agent), Naguib (publisher), and Kerod (fisherman).

Education and Marriage

Jiamah finished his elementary education at Cotabato Central School and his secondary education in Notre Dame of Cotabato (now Notre Dame University), which is a Roman Catholic institution. There he learned of the Catholic doctrines from the catechisms that were part of their studies. What puzzled him was they never used the Bible as a textbook or reference throughout their four years of study of religion. While in high school he married Adelina Silvera Villarta, whose roots can be traced to the Cebuan, Chavacano, and Maguindanaon tribes and who had an Adventist family background. But her faith succumbed to the unbending Islamic influence of her husband in the first ten years of their marriage. Their union was blessed with six children.

After finishing high school, he studied in Dansalan Junior College in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur. Being a Protestant institution run by the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the Bible was a required textbook in character education classes. It became his favorite and exciting reading material, completing it within one year and three months. He enjoyed reading the dramatic history of humankind through many generations and the miracles and parables of Jesus. What thrilled his heart most was the story of His cruel death and triumphant

resurrection. After reading the whole Bible, he discovered that what the Bible is saying is different from the teachings of Islam that he knew in childhood and from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that he learned in high school. But what confused him more were the teachings of the protestant Bible professors that were different from what the Bible actually says. On several occasions he had personal confrontations with the Bible teachers but received no satisfactory explanation on major issues such as the Bible, Ten Commandments, Sabbath, state of the dead, body temple, and why so many Christian churches, among others. In 1956 he earned an Associate in Arts degree from that institution. He proceeded to study law at the Philippine Law School in Intramuros, Manila. Despite the demands of law studies, he continued reading the Bible and completed it the second time before earning a Bachelor of Laws degree in March 1960.

Conversion and Ministry

After studying law, he worked at the Department of Public Works and Highways as a senior investigator assigned in the engineering district in North Cotabato. He moved his family to the town of Midsayap where they rented a house and ran a small variety store adjacent to an Adventist Church. There he met an Adventist pastor, Olegario J. Balansag, who became his friend. It was during their intimate conversations that all his questions about the Bible were satisfactorily answered. Somehow he was also convinced not to take the bar examinations anymore, which could have qualified him to practice the legal profession.

During one summer his son, Gabriel, who was so fond of music, joined a Vacation Bible School conducted by the Adventists. On one Sabbath the children would have a presentation during the Sabbath School program in church. Gabriel's part was to play the ukulele, and that took Jiamah and his family inside the Adventist Church for the first time. During the Sabbath School lesson discussion, he was enamored by the liveliness of the SS class interaction, which he did not experience at the mosque. That was the beginning of his coming to an Adventist Church.⁵ Eventually, on February 13, 1965, he was baptized, together with his wife and eldest child, Eppie. It happened during a church officers' convention; so, all the mission officers were present. In the evening after his baptism, the Southern Mindanao Mission Committee voted to send him to Mountain View College to take Bible subjects.⁶

However, becoming an Adventist was a too-costly decision to make. As a consequence, he was disconnected from his big clan, he lost his right to the material inheritance from his family, he missed a promising career in the government, and he was even willing to lose his life for his love for Christ and His gospel. His relatives hunted to kill him since his leaving Islam was a great shame to their renowned Muslim family. Thus, his work and family were uprooted, and they struggled to survive in the next ten years. His wife sewed clothes to earn some money, and his eldest daughter worked as a salesgirl in the market to help with the finances. His youngest son died due to a health issue that was not given proper medical attention for lack of money.⁷ Nonetheless, his family was protected, provided for, and spiritually nurtured by the brethren of Midsayap Church who kept him

in the faith.

On January 1, 1967, after taking Bible subjects at Mountain View College for two years, he was assigned by the Southern Mindanao Mission as a missionary to the Muslims.⁸ He was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1973.⁹ From January 1969 to December 1977, he served as district leader in some parts of Sarangani Province, church pastor of General Santos City Central Church, mission evangelist, and secretary of Lay Activities and Temperance Departments. Then he was called to serve as South Philippine Union Mission evangelist (January 1978–December 1979), and later as president of the Southern Mindanao Mission (January 1980–December 1985).¹⁰ In 1986 he took a study leave and earned a Master of Pastoral Studies degree from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in October 1987. He later became one of the lecturers (January 1988–December 1990) of the Church Growth Institute that trained pastors and lay members in evangelism and church leadership. From 1991 to 1999, he served as head chaplain of Manila Sanitarium and Hospital and later as Human Resources director of the same institution. He retired on June 1, 1999, completing thirty-two years of faithful service to God's church.¹¹

Later Life

On April 30, 2002, three years after retirement, he lost his wife due to a stroke. He married Mary Ann Landero-Adil, who became a partner in his closing ministry and faithful support through his remaining years. Although retired, he was involved in church ministries and served for some time as one of the elders and Sabbath School teachers at Pasay Adventist Church. He also made himself available for Bible studies. In their rented house in Cavite, a small board was posted at the gate with the invitation: "Bible Studies Offered Here," with the available schedule specified.¹²

Despite his faithfulness to Jesus Christ and love for sharing His saving truth, he was not immune to the debilitating effects of sin. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer that later invaded the other organs of his body. He died on May 11, 2015, after five years of being diagnosed with prostate cancer. He was buried next to his first wife, Adelina, at the Eternal Gardens Memorial Park in Binan, Laguna.

Legacy

Jimmy Adil Sr. was the first Maguindanaon convert to Adventism and the first Filipino Muslim to be ordained to the Adventist ministry and become mission president. His passion for sharing his faith to Christians and Muslims was contagious as he conducted evangelistic programs and planted churches in different communities resulting in multitudes of converts with some from Islam. It was during his term as president of Southern Mindanao Mission that a concrete office building was constructed after the old wooden building was burned.

His leadership demonstrated making evangelism foremost even when one is weighed down with administrative burdens as he continuously engaged in evangelistic activities even while serving as mission president and hospital head chaplain. Much more, in leaving Islam, he also left many career and material prospects; but his costly decision to be with Jesus Christ and His saving truth has become an inspiration to many as it forever shows the wonder of God's wonderful plan of salvation in individualized ways.

SOURCES

Personal Service Record of Jimmy Hadji Adil, Sr. in the archives of Southern Mindanao Mission and Manila Adventist Medical Center. Southern Mindanao Mission archives, General Santos City, Philippines. Manila Adventist Medical Center archives, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Southern Mindanao Mission (SMM) Minutes 73-6 and SPUC Minutes 73-2. Southern Mindanao Mission archives, General Santos City, Philippines.

South Philippine Union Mission (SPUM) Minutes 66-212. South Philippine Union Mission archives, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1970; 1979; 1982. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

NOTES

1. His name before becoming a Christian was Guiamah or Jiamah, but his siblings called him Mamaw. Adil's birth certificate shows that he changed his name to Jimmy, perhaps to Christianize it.
2. The Maguindanaons are one of the indigenous tribes in the Philippines that have embraced Islam, and the largest Filipino Muslim group.
3. Unless stated otherwise this article is based on the author's knowledge as Jiamah Adil's son and the author's interview with Alicia Villarta-Nazareth, the surviving sister of the author's mother, January 22, 2021.
4. A wrap-around decorative cloth commonly worn by Muslim women and men, especially in Southeast Asia.
5. Personal knowledge of the author as Jiamah Adil's son.
6. South Philippine Union Mission (SPUM) Minutes 66-212.
7. Shared by his daughters Eva Adil-Ticar, a retired nurse in Texas, U.S.A., and Dr. Eppie Adil-Manalo, a retired educator living in California, U.S.A.
8. From his Personal Service Record in the archives of Southern Mindanao Mission and Manila Adventist Medical Center.

9. Southern Mindanao Mission (SMM) Minutes 73-6 and SPUC Minutes 73-2
10. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* 1970, 145, shows that he was a licensed missionary in Southern Mindanao Mission; evangelist and Temperance director of South Philippine Union Mission; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* 1979, 197; and president, Ministerial and Religious Liberty secretary in Southern Mindanao Mission, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* 1982, 137.
11. Personal Service Record of Jimmy Hadji Adil, Sr.
12. Personal knowledge of the author as Jiamah Adils' son.

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