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ASI Korea

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Kuk Heon Lee graduated from Sahmyook University (B.A.), Newbold College (M.A.), and Sahmyook University (Ph.D.). From 1990 to 2009, he served as a pastor at Korean Union Conference. In 2010, he joined Sahmyook University as a lecturer and professor at the Theology Department. His research and teaching interests are in Church History. He wrote several books and published several papers on the subject. Currently, he is also the Dean of Planning at Sahmyook University.

ASI Korea (aka, Pyungsindo Silupinhyuphoe) is an association consisting of private industrialists and professionals among Korean Adventists. It was organized in 1986 to support the missionary work of the Adventist Church in alliance with the Korean Union Conference (KUC). It is an organization established for the same purpose as ASI in the United States and other countries. ASI Korea is located in 11 Imun-ro 1gil Dongdaemun-ku Seoul, where the headquarters of the Korean Union Conference are located.

Organization

The first organization created by laymen in the Korean Adventist Church was the “Laymen Evangelists Association.” The association was first organized at the Central Korean Mission in 1969, with the aim of nurturing self-sufficient ministers to work in the local churches where pastors were absent and support evangelical meetings run by laymen themselves. The Korean Union Conference encouraged other local missions to organize as such an organization. As a result, in the 1970s all the missions organized lay evangelists' associations.¹

By 1983 the Korean Adventist Church developed into a Union Conference with self-management capabilities. Therefore, the Laymen Evangelists Association also needed to be changed to a more advanced organization. The World Adventist Church was already active in 1970 by organizing an ASI that consisted of private industrialists and professionals.² Therefore, the Korean Adventists also promoted a plan to transform the Laymen Evangelists Association into an association of private businessmen such as the ASI organization.

From June 6 to 8, 1985, the council was held by the Adventists laymen. At the council Adventist businessmen belonging to five local Conferences formed the Association of Adventist Businessmen for each conference³ On December 14, 1986, ASI Korea was organized in the auditorium of the KUC and elected Elder Soo-Jong Oh as the

first president.⁴

History

After organizing the ASI Korea, the first ASI seminar was held in Korea from September 14 to 17, 1988, hosted by the Far Eastern Division (FED). At this seminar ASI's purpose was more clearly outlined. Two years later the second ASI meeting was held in Singapore from March 13 to 18, 1990. Forty ASI Korea representatives participated in the meeting, and they raised \$1,000 during the meeting to fund the construction of a church in an area in Indonesia. In addition, Hong-Kyun Kim provided \$1,000 to a hospital in Bangladesh to purchase a wheelchair⁵

In 1992 the third ASI general meeting of the Asia-Pacific Division (APD)⁶ was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The meeting was attended by 46 ASI Korea representatives. In addition, 99 delegates participated in the fourth ASI general meeting held in Bali, Indonesia, in 1994. In particular, ASI Korea representatives raised about \$45,000 to donate to Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Indonesia for the construction of school dormitories and churches. ASI Korea members of the five conferences held evangelical meetings in Russia and China and donated about \$18,000 to fund church construction and missionary work. In addition, ASI Korea conducted activities to support scholarships for disadvantaged students in Korea. In particular, ASI Korea held a breakfast prayer meeting with some members of the National Assembly in 1993 and 1994 to promote national security, unification, and evangelization of North Korea, making the relationship between the church and the state friendly.⁷

ASI Korea supported the establishment of a youth counseling center to protect young people. As a result, a youth counseling room was opened in the headquarters of the KUC on May 1, 1995, and a "Phone of Hope" was set up. The "Phone of Hope" was open every Monday through Friday for 12 hours from 10 a.m.⁸

At the end of 1996, the organization of ASI Korea was expanded. For each conference, the laymen's organizations were divided into the Laymen Evangelists Association, the ASI, and the Public Evangelists Association. In 1996 these organizations were incorporated into ASI Korea.⁹ The most important activity of ASI Korea during this period was to create a weekly newspaper. ASI Korea launched *Adventist Weekly News* on November 5, 1997, with the support of the KUC. The newspaper published about seven thousand five hundred copies per week, playing a major role in promoting various church news, information, and the business of the congregation. In August 1997 about one hundred delegates attended the APD's ASI general meeting in Manila, Philippines, and donated \$40,000 to support churches and institutions in Asian countries. In April 1999 a mountain prayer meeting was held at Jirisan in Korea.¹⁰

The most intensive ministry in ASI Korea was to hold a public evangelical meeting. Especially in the 2000s, this ministry was very active. As a result, 322 evangelical meetings were held from 2000 to 2004, and more than three thousand seekers attended the evangelism every year. In addition, more than one thousand people were baptized through the evangelical meetings held during the period.¹¹

In 2007 ASI Korea established the Uirimji Church in Jecheon by supporting the Jaerim Evangelical Team. In October of that year, ASI Korea held the first National Conference in Daejeon. About two hundred members attended the meeting, which was estimated to have about one thousand businessmen from the Korean Adventist Church. As a result, ASI Korea identified the addresses of businessmen and published an address book in October 2009, which listed about two thousand businessmen.¹²

In May 2009 ASI Korea organized the "Adventist Missionary Association" to strengthen its missionary work. The association was designed to recruit, train, send, and support missionaries.¹³ However, the activities were suspended when Young-Soo Kwon, the president of ASI Korea, who organized the group, resigned from his presidency.

ASI Korea changed the name of the organization to the Association of Laymen at the twelfth general meeting held in Doma-dong, Daejeon, on December 7, 2014. This changed name was the removal of the expression "businessmen" from the original name. The reason for the change was to allow more laymen to participate in the organization. Although ASI Korea retained its English name, it became an "Association of Laymen" in Korean.¹⁴ However, at the thirteenth general assembly held on November 6, 2017, the name was changed back to its original name.¹⁵

From March 3 to 4, 2018, the "Laymen Spiritual Training and Prayer Meeting" was held at Madalphy Youth Training Center. The event was held by ASI Korea to emphasize the missionary work of laymen. In particular, missionary examples of laymen were reported at the event, with the main examples being the ministry of the Byeonwhasan Church of Elder Kyung-Shin Cho and the seeding ministry of the "Truth-Seekers."¹⁶

In 2020 ASI Korea launched a special fund-raising campaign to help suffering neighbors as the difficulties caused by Corona 19 increased rapidly. In addition, ASI Korea provided scholarships to six Chinese students, supported four churches preparing for missionary work in North Korea, and continued lay ministry, including the construction of the Romblon Church in the Philippines.¹⁷

Role and Place in the Church and its Mission

As a major organization of laymen, ASI Korea plays an important role in the church. The most important role is missionary work. ASI Korea participates directly or indirectly in the missionary work of the Korean Union Conference and five local conferences. ASI Korea operates more than three hundred evangelical meetings each year through laymen evangelists groups, baptizing an average of more than three hundred new believers annually. ASI Korea is actively supporting missionary work in Asian countries. In addition, the association is working with the church's

administrative organizations to support various projects, including church construction projects, scholarship projects, and relief projects, etc.

The project to publish *Adventist Weekly News*, a news media representing the Korean Adventist Church, is the most special project promoted by ASI Korea. The newspaper is a professional news outlet that publishes more than five thousand copies every week. ASI Korea not only delivers various church news to the church members through this newspaper, but also provides the mission and vision pursued by the Korean Advent Church. In addition, it functions as a publicity medium available to all Adventists across the country. Through this newspaper, ASI Korea plays a role in communication and public relations.

Another role of ASI Korea is to establish and support a network for direct marketplaces between urban and rural areas. This network connects urban Adventists to consume the products of rural Adventists. ASI Korea establishes special markets in various regions every year to connect urban and rural areas. These events help the economy of Christians living in rural areas and support the production of agricultural products. It also provides healthy food for Christians living in cities. These activities show that ASI Korea is playing a socio-ethics role in times of environmental crisis.

In addition, ASI Korea has contributed to the development of the Korean Adventist Church by supporting various ministries such as youth counseling, union of prayers, and seeding ministry, etc.

List of Directors

Soo-Jong Oh (1986-1989); Jong-Hyun Song (1990-1993); Jae-Moo Lee (1994-1999); Han-Geun Sohn (2000-2008); Young-Soo Kwon (2009-2011); Yong-Ho Ahn (2012-2014); Tae-Kyung Kim (2015-2017); Jong-Woong Kim (2018-2020); Yong-Ho Ahn (2021-).

SOURCES

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Schwarz, Richard W. and Greenleaf, Floyd. *Light Bearers: A History of Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of SDA, 2000.

NOTES

1. *Church Compass*, March 1970, 3.?
2. The early organization of ASI was created in 1947, but it was in 1970 that industrialists and professionals joined the Association of Private Downed Seventh-day Adventist Services and Industries. Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of SDA, 2000), 594.?
3. Southwest Korean Conference (November 5, 1985), Middlewest Korean Conference (November 6, 1985), West Central Korean Conference (November 7, 1985), Southeast Korean Conference (November 18, 1985), East Central Korean Conference (November 23, 1985). Tae Seop Shim, "Founding ASI Korea," *Church Compass*, February 1986, 6, 7.?
4. *Ibid.*?
5. Minutes of the 29th General Meeting of the Korean Union Conference, 1991, 7, Korean Union Conference archives, Dongdaemun-ku, Seoul, South Korea.?
- 6.

