

Lee, Howard Milton (1880–1982)

KUK HEON LEE

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.

Howard M. Lee (, Lee, Hee-Man) entered Korea in 1910 and was a representative educational missionary who led the educational work of the Korean Adventist Church for 26 years until 1936. He served as head of the Korean Union Workers' Training School at Soonan (Korean name, Soonan

Uimyeong Hakkyo), an educational institution that fosters workers of the Korean Adventist Church, and served as a director of the Educational Department, Home Missionary Department, and Young People's Missionary Volunteer Department at the Korean mission and conference. In addition, he was also appointed as the director of the Central Chosen Mission, contributing to the development of the Korean Adventist Church.

Background

Howard M. Lee was born on September 3, 1880, in Union City, Michigan.¹ The reason why he volunteered as a missionary for the Korean Adventist Church was because of his sister. His sister, Helen May Scott, worked as a teacher and church evangelist after graduating from the Department of Education at the South Lancaster Academy (the predecessor of Atlantic Union College) in 1904. After that she studied theology at the Washington Training School and entered Korea as an educational missionary after receiving a missionary request from the General Conference (GC) in 1908.²

Upon arriving in Korea, Helen took charge of the Girls' School run by Mimi Scharffenberg. At that time the head of the Boys' School founded by William Smith in Soonan was also Dr. Riley Russell, the director of the Soonan dispensary. The Korean Mission asked the GC for an educational missionary to be in charge of the Boys' School



Howard M. Lee

Photo courtesy of Kuk Heon Lee.

in Soonan to allow Dr. Russell to focus on medical work. Helen recommended that her younger brother Howard M. Lee volunteer as an educational missionary for the Korean Mission.³

Howard Lee, who worked as a teacher at the academy after graduating from the South Lancaster Academy, accepted his sister's recommendation and volunteered for Korean missionary work for the GC. He arrived in Seoul in April 1910 and stayed at the Korean Mission headquarters. Then, 10 days later, he went up to Soonan and started a full-fledged missionary service at the Workers' Training School.⁴

Ministry in Korea

Howard M. Lee, who started his ministry at the Workers' Training School (Soonan Uimyeong hakkyo), studied the Korean language while working as a general manager of the school for about a year. During that time the school's director was Dr. Russell. At the second Annual Meeting of the Korean Mission held in April 1911, Howard M. Lee was appointed as the secretary of the Educational Department and the head of the Workers' Training School. He took the office as head of the school on August 23, 1911, when the fall semester began.⁵

Howard M. Lee not only served as the head of the school but also taught students Bible and English. The first graduation ceremony was held in March 1913, a year and a half after he took office as the principal, when six graduates were produced and all became ministers of the Korean Adventist Church.⁶ He received funding from the GC and built a modern classroom and a female dormitory in October 1913. This new building was built with male and female classrooms on the left and right sides, with the auditorium and chapel in the center. After the building was completed, he merged the Boys' School and Girls' School that had been operated separately.⁷ He also contributed to the promotion of the school's academic system from a three-year system to a four-year system by obtaining approval from the government.⁸

Soonan Uimyeong Hakkyo was operated according to Ellen White's educational ideals. Therefore, the school purchased four acres of land in April 1911 and operated farms and orchards. Students were able to earn tuition money by laboring here, and the school partially covered the school's operating expenses by selling agricultural products produced here. After taking office as principal, Howard M. Lee received \$10,000 in support and purchased an additional 45 acres of land, further increasing the size of the farm.⁹ In addition, he organized an industrial department in the school to run a farm and guide students' labor. As schools developed due to these efforts, the school was also named the Korean Industrial School.¹⁰

In 1917 the Korean Mission was promoted to the Chosen Conference. At the first General Meeting of the Chosen Conference promoted in this way, Howard M. Lee was appointed as the secretary of the Educational Department and the Home Missionary Department.¹¹ The decision of this General Meeting illustrates what his role is in the Korean Adventist Church. As the principal of the Korean Industrial School, he focused on educational missionary work.

The Chosen Conference, which was promoted from mission to conference, established a two-year Chosen Conference Seminary within the Chosen Industrial School as a higher education institution as the demand for ministers increased due to the development of the Korean Church. Howard M. Lee lectured at this seminary on the prophets of the Old Testament and the epistles of the New Testament.¹²

In 1919, two years after being promoted to the Chosen Conference, the Chosen Conference was promoted again to the Chosen Union Mission. Accordingly, the Chosen Union Mission held the first General Meeting in May of that year and decided on the officers of the Union Mission. At this General Meeting, Howard M. Lee continued to be appointed secretary of the Educational Department of the Chosen Union Mission and was also appointed secretary of the newly established Young People's Department.¹³ Meanwhile, this General Meeting organized three regional missions (West Chosen Conference, Central Chosen Mission, South Chosen Mission) within the Chosen Union Mission, and the area where the Chosen Industrial School was located was organized into the West Chosen Conference). Russell was appointed as the director of the West Chosen Conference, and Howard M. Lee was appointed secretary of the conference.¹⁴ And Howard Lee, along with Korean Pastor Rye-Joon Kim, was ordained as a pastor at this General Meeting.¹⁵

After becoming an ordained pastor, Howard M. Lee had an opportunity for a new ministry. The first General Meeting of the Central Chosen Mission was held in February 1920. At the General Meeting, he was appointed as the director of the mission. Originally, the director of the Central Chosen Mission was concurrently headed by C. L. Butterfield, who was the superintendent of the Chosen Union Mission. However, Howard M. Lee was appointed as the director of the mission, and he resigned as the principal of the Chosen Industrial School. C. L. Butterfield temporarily replaced the principal's position, and J. E. Riffel, who entered Korea as a missionary in September 1920, took over until December 1923.¹⁶

Howard M. Lee had one daughter and two sons while serving as a missionary in Korea. However, he suffered the death of his three-year-old daughter due to the epidemic. And in 1921 he went back to the United States for a while to treat his disease. Therefore, the Chosen Union Mission appointed C. L. Butterfield, the superintendent of the Union Mission, as the secretary of the Educational Department and the director of the Central Chosen Mission.¹⁷ Howard M. Lee, who stayed in the United States, was re-appointed as the principal of the Chosen Industrial School and the dean of the Theological Department of the Theological Seminary of the Chosen Union Mission in December 1923 and returned to Korea.¹⁸

Howard M. Lee, who returned to Korea in 1924, devoted himself again to the development of the Chosen Industrial School as a principal. When he was reappointed as the principal, Howard M. Lee was reappointed as secretary of the Educational Department and Young People's Department at the fourth General Meeting of the Chosen Union Mission held in May 1925.¹⁹ As a secretary of the Young People's Department, he guided the activities of the Youth Volunteer Mission Society, and in the spring of 1929 he introduced the system of the Youth Prayer Week.²⁰ This prayer week event has been expanded to the division level since 1935 and has been

held regularly every spring season.²¹ He served as secretary of the Young People's Department until 1931. However, as a secretary of the Educational Department, his educational ministry continued until the end of his mission to Korea, along with the principal position of the Chosen Industrial School.

While serving as secretary of the Educational Department, Howard M. Lee encouraged the establishment of elementary schools nationwide. As a result, in 1921, 17 elementary schools were established with 657 students as part of the Korean Adventist Church. In January 1924 detailed guidelines on the establishment and operation of elementary schools were created and used in each local mission. As a result, at the end of 1925 the number of elementary schools and students increased up to 31 and 1,081. However, since then the number of elementary schools has decreased to 24 by 1932 due to various conditions.²² Howard M. Lee made great efforts to secure finances and qualified teachers for school management. In September 1924, in particular, he tried to re-establish the department of Education in the Chosen Industrial School where he was the principal in order to train teachers, but it was not easy.²³

Howard M. Lee has operated the long-term Teacher Training Course since 1925 to strengthen the qualities of teachers. The Teacher Training Course was held every summer during vacation time for 4 to 6 weeks. The Training Course was guided by Howard Lee, the director of the Educational Department of the GC and the Far Eastern Division (FED). On the last day of the course, a test of type 3 teacher's license was taken, and those who passed the test received a teacher's certificate.²⁴ The Teacher Training Course continued until Howard M. Lee returned to the United States permanently after completing his missionary work.

Howard M. Lee returned to the United States after quitting his ministry in Korea because of an incident in November 1935. At this time the Japanese government, which dominated Korea as a colony, forced Koreans to worship the Shinto shrine, which is a Japanese religious ritual. Most Koreans and Korean Christians regarded the ritual as idol worship and refused to worship the Shinto shrine. In November 1935 Howard M. Lee, the principal of the Chosen Industrial School, also refused to visit the Shinto shrine. The government threatened to close the school if it refused to visit the Shinto shrine. After much discussion, the leaders of the Chosen Union Mission, including Howard M. Lee, considered the Shinto shrine worship as a national ritual, not a religious ritual, and decided to visit the Shinto shrine according to the Japanese policy. This decision shocked the Korean Adventists, and many church members protested the decision. As a result of this, E. J. Urquhart, who was the president of the Chosen Union Mission, left Korea in August 1936 after being appointed to the Philippines Union Mission.²⁵ And Howard M. Lee also returned to the United States permanently in December of that year.²⁶ After Howard M. Lee returned to the United States, Pastor Sung-ui Lee was appointed as the principal of the Chosen Industrial School, and Clinton W. Lee was appointed as secretary of the Educational Department of the Chosen Union Mission.²⁷

Later Life

After returning to the United States, he entered Pacific Union College to study theology and graduated in 1938. After graduation he worked as a Bible teacher at Canadian Junior College in Alberta, Canada. Four years later, in 1942, he retired from his official position. After retirement, he lived in Loma Linda, California. He researched Ellen White's writings, making compilations of nearly thirty topics.²⁸

He lived faithfully with his younger brother and two sons and died in Loma Linda, California on May 21, 1982. While he was in the United States, his two sons, James M. Lee and Donald S. Lee, volunteered as missionaries in Korea and served as dean of Sahmyook Theological College. Most of his family, including himself, his wife, his sister, and his two sons, devoted themselves as Korean missionaries for a long time.

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