



Mount Deer Retreat Center, 2020.

Photo courtesy of Mount Deer Retreat Center.

Mount Deer Retreat Center

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Owned by the Korean Adventist Church, the Mount Deer Retreat Center (Saseum-ui-dongsan) has been the site of camp meetings, youth retreats, and other spiritual meetings since its establishment in 1967. It is located at 330-92, Cheonggun-ro, Sang-myeon, Gapyeong-gun, Gyeonggi-do, with four employees in charge of the retreat center's programs.¹

Organization

After being liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the Korean Adventist Church rebuilt its scattered congregations and began full-fledged evangelistic activities. In particular, church leaders focused on youth ministry to prepare for the future of the denomination. During this period, the Korean Union Conference was deeply aware of the need to purchase campsites for youth ministry and tried to purchase such properties. However, because of economic problems, obtaining them seemed a long way off. Still, at the twenty-second general meeting of the Korean Union Conference held in December 1965, the management committee adopted as part of its agenda that "each Mission should strive to purchase a campsite."² The effort paid off at the Central Korean Mission in 1967.

Pastor Pyung-deok Chun, secretary of the Y.P.M.V. at the Central Korean Mission, submitted a plan to purchase a campsite to the mission's executive committee in March 1967. According to it, the Youth Department of the Central Korean Mission would start a coin collection campaign for church members to raise funds, and then would add subsidies from the mission and the Korean Union Mission to purchase campsite sites and set up a retreat center building. In May of that year, the Central Korean Mission signed a contract for a campsite of 3 ha (8,524 pyeong) in Gapyeong, Gyeonggi-do, and launched a campaign to collect 300,000 coins from May 27 to July 22, 1967. As a result, it raised more than 600,000 won (\$500).³ The Central Korean Mission purchased the campsite site, constructed a road and playground, and built a retreat center with a financial investment of 3 million won (\$ 2,525). Leadership named the campsite the Mount Deer Retreat Center.

History of the Institute

In its early days, Mount Deer Retreat Center actively served as a camping site for Adventist youth. During the mid-1950s the Korean Adventist Church had begun camp meetings for its young people. Beginning in 1965, the leadership separated the youth camp meetings from the teenage ones. However, it was not easy to operate a youth camp, because as yet the Korean Union Conference did not own a campsite. However, after the establishment of the Mount Deer Retreat Center in 1967, the church launched camp meetings for young people.

Since 1968, youth camp meetings have convened every summer at the retreat center. In addition to the youth camp meetings, the retreat has held various additional spiritual programs. Beginning August 16 to 20, 1972, it conducted a camp meeting for the church choirs of the Seoul District.⁴ During July 26 to 30, 1978, it hosted a teacher's training session. It invited Dr. Segovia, vice-secretary of the education department of the Far Eastern Division, to lecture on the philosophy of Adventist education.⁵

By the 1980s the retreat center had become the venue for a wide spectrum of religious meetings. Adventist medical students participated in a revival series July 21 to 25, 1983.⁶ Afterwards, they continued to have regular meetings. In August 1986 they arranged a similar revival series as well as did medical volunteer work at the Gapyeong Church.⁷ From June 13 to 17, 1984, the Korean Federation of Youth Retreat Leaders Conference attracted 370 young people to its special session.⁸ Since then, other meetings of young leaders of the Adventist

Church have convened regularly.

In the 1990s, the youth ministry of the Korean Adventist Church greatly expanded its activities. Therefore, the Mount Deer Retreat Center has become a venue for more and more diverse events. From May 28 to 31, 1992, the Korean Union Conference has held training programs for the leaders of student and Pathfinder groups here. In addition, the AY leader-level retreat met there during this period, and since then, the retreat has become an official yearly event.⁹ In 1995, the Youth to Youth (Y2Y) program took place at the retreat.¹⁰ This program educates teenagers who fall into alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs, and helps them to escape wrong lifestyles. Because the General Conference particularly encourages such initiatives, the Korean Federation has actively operated the Y2Y program.

Mount Deer Retreat Center has added a new program since 1998. On February 19, 1998, the Korean Union Conference decided to establish a laymen training center and appointed Pastor Hak-bong Lee as its director. The Laymen Training Center formed a management board on March 19, 1998, prepared coursework in July, and then conducted a missionary training program for laity on September 6, 1998.¹¹ The Laymen Training Center continued at the Mount Deer Retreat Center for four years, and then transferred to Madalpy Sahmyook Youth Training Center located at Geumsan, Chungcheongnam-do.

In the 1990s, the Mount Deer Retreat Center expanded its outreach by constructing several buildings. Opened on February 14, 1995, Yapbok-gwan is a three-story building consisting of restaurants, housing accommodations, and auditoriums. Then on February 11, 1997, the Carmel-gwan opened in the format of a condominium. It has become a space for families and church members to enjoy recreation together. And in 1998, the Korean Union Conference operated a Laymen Training Center in it. On October 31, 1997, it dedicated a Mizpeh Hall and an outdoor auditorium. Since the Mizpeh Hall was designed as a small chapel, it became a good space for use for organizations at the local church level. The outdoor auditorium has become a site where each conference and church institution can hold camp meetings every summer. In particular, in 2015, the youth department of the Korean Union Conference did landscaping and other site construction along the nearby river to make it suitable for outdoor and auto-camping.¹² It has permitted many Pathfinder activities to be carried out at the camping sites here.

Role and Position in the Country

The Mount Deer Retreat Center has functioned as a representative retreat center of the Korean Adventist Church for more than 50 years. Many events take place here every year, including camp meetings, training sessions, council meetings, spiritual meetings of each church institution, cultural events, various camping activities for children and teenagers, and outdoor programs. In particular, the retreat center has made the youth ministry of the Korean Adventist Church especially dynamic. The reason why the leaders of the Korean Church named it the Mount Deer Retreat Center was because they compared Adventist young people to deer. At it,

countless teenagers have found the value of Adventism and the joy of faith.

In the 2000s, Korean society became increasingly involved in outdoor activities and camping culture. The Mount Deer Retreat Center, reflecting this social trend, invested in convenient facilities for camping, allowing young people to actively participate in outdoor activities. The Mount Deer Retreat Center has been a suitable space for camping programs, because it sits in a natural environment of mountains, rivers, and forests. The retreat center, which combines nature with the spirit of faith, is developing into a spiritual training space for families of Adventists as well as Adventist youth.

SOURCES

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“Certified Copy of Register of Mount Deer Retreat Center” in Archives of the Korean Union Conference, Seoul, South Korea.

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NOTES

1. *Address Book of Korean Union Conference 2021* (Seoul: Korean Union Conference, 2021), 40.
2. Minutes of the 22nd General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1965).
3. *Church Compass*, June 1967, 36; October 1967, 8.
4. *Church Compass*, February 1973, 15.
5. “A Report of the Department of Education,” Minutes of the 26th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1978).
6. “A Report of the Department of Health Ministry,” Minutes of the 27th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1983).
7. “A Report of the Department of Health Ministry,” Minutes of the 28th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1987).

8. Church Compass, August 1984, 12.
9. "A Report of the Department of Y.P.M.V.," Minutes of the 30th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1995).
10. "A Report of the Department of Health and Temperance," Minutes of the 30th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1995).
11. Minutes of the 31st General Meeting of Korean Union Mission (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 2000), 38.
12. Cf. "Certified Copy of Register of Mount Deer Retreat Center" in Archives of the Korean Union Conference, Seoul, South Korea.

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