

# Jeong, Mun Gook (1883–?)

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## 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.

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Keun Ok Lee and Mun Gook Jeong<sup>1</sup> were the first ordained pastors of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Korea, and Mun Gook Jeong was one of the leaders of the Church in Korea for two decades.

## Early Life and Ministry

Mun Gook Jeong was born in Daeyeong-ri, Yongwol-myeon, Yonggang-gun, Pyeongannam-do in 1883. He studied at a primary school which taught Chinese characters when he was young. In his early twenties, he heard about the Adventist message from Seung Won Kim and accepted the Adventist faith.<sup>2</sup> After becoming an Adventist, he began his ministry as a primary school teacher and evangelist at Pyongyang Church, which was led by Elder Gi Ban Im, beginning in 1906. While he was ministering and teaching Chinese literature at a private school, an independent church movement arose in Pyongyang Church.

In 1909, when the Adventist leadership moved the denomination headquarters from Soonan to Seoul, Elder Gi Ban Im, who insisted on establishing a headquarters in Pyongyang, launched the Independent Church Movement. Due to this, Elder Gi Ban Im was dismissed on June 16, 1910.<sup>3</sup> At this time, Mun Gook Jeong joined forces with the missionaries to lead the Pyongyang Church. Immediately after the incident, from August 5 to 13, the first annual council of the Chosen Mission was held in Seoul. During this meeting, Mun Gook Jeong was officially appointed as a missionary to help Riley Russell, who was in charge of missionary work in the West Korean Mission Field (North Pyongan and South Hwanghae provinces).<sup>4</sup> At the second annual council held in



Mun Gook Jeong, the first ordained pastor of the Korean Adventist Church, 1915.

Photo courtesy of Kuk Heon Lee.

Jinnampo in 1911, he and Chang Sin Kang were appointed ministers in the Soonan Mission Field. He served as a teacher at the Soonan Uimyeong School and as a pastor of the Soonan Church.<sup>5</sup>

## First Ordained Pastor of Korean Adventist Church

Mun Gook Jeong, who served as a minister in Soonan, was ordained by Arthur G. Daniels, the president of the General Conference, who visited Korea at the time of the sixth annual council of the Korean Mission held in April 1915.<sup>6</sup> He and Keun Ok Lee became the first ordained Korean pastors. Immediately after being ordained, he was honored to participate in the session of Asiatic Division Conference held in Shanghai, China.<sup>7</sup> Pastor Mun Gook Jeong was appointed as one of executive committee members of the Korean Mission and began to participate in the administration of the church. After being promoted to the Korean Conference in 1917, he was appointed as the head of the local mission field.<sup>8</sup> In December of that year, the council of the Korean Mission united North Hamheung and Bukgando into one missionary region and appointed Pastor Keun Ok Lee as the head of the mission. It was notable that one of the first ordained ministers became a leader of the mission field.<sup>9</sup> Due to this decision, Pastor Mun Gook Jeong moved to Songjeong-ri, Jeollanam-do.

## Ministry as a Leader

Two years later, in 1919, the Korean Mission became the Chosen Union Mission. The Chosen Union Mission was reorganized into the West Chosen Conference, Central Chosen Mission, and South Chosen Mission, and appointed leaders for each regional mission, with Pastor Mun Gook Jeong being appointed as the mission secretary of the South Chosen Mission.<sup>10</sup> While serving as the secretary of the mission in this region, he actively engaged in missionary activities such as the tent evangelism meeting in Naju (1920) and the pioneering of Gunsan Church (1921). Then, in 1922, when Pastor C. L. Butterfield, the president of the Chosen Union Mission, decided to return to the United States, the positions of the Chosen Union Mission president and the Central Chosen Mission director were vacant. Accordingly, the Chosen Union Mission appointed Pastor H. A. Oberg as the president and Pastor Mun Gook Jeong as the director of the South Chosen Mission. Pastor Mun Gook Jeong moved to the Cheongjin-dong Church in Seoul on March 6, 1922, as the minister, and he was formally appointed as the director of the Central Chosen Mission at the third general session of the Chosen Union Mission held in June 1923.<sup>11</sup>

## Ministry in His Later Years

As the director of the Central Chosen Mission, his ministry lasted for four years, until June 1927. During this period, he contributed to the growth of the church by taking charge of missionary work in the vast areas of the Central Chosen Mission, including Seoul, North Hamgyeong Province, Gangwon Province, Gyeonggi Province, and North Chungcheong Province. Then he was appointed as the director of the South Chosen Mission at the

fifth general session of the Chosen Union Mission held in June 1927. Following this resolution, Pastor Mun Gook Jeong, who relocated from Seoul to Naju, resigned on December 21, 1927.<sup>12</sup> This concluded his 17 years of public ministry. Currently, there are no available records about the date of Mun Gook Jeong's death.

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## NOTES

1. In some sources, the English name is incorrect. Thus, Chyong Mun Cook is Jeong Mun Gook, Ne Keun Ok is Lee Keun Ok. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1916), 145.
2. Yeo Shik Lee, *The Pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventists in Korea* (Seoul: Korean Publishing House, 1987), 226.
3. C. L. Butterfield, "Korea, the Land of the Morning Calm," *ARH*, June 16, 1910, 25.
4. I. H. Evans, "The Korea General Meeting," *ARH*, November 24, 1910, 9.
5. Man Kyu Oh, *History of One Hundred Years of Korean SDA, 1904~1945* (Seoul: Korean Publishing House, 2010), 149.
6. J. E. Fulton, "A Missionary Tour in Korea," *ARH*, July 29, 1915, 11.
7. A. G. Daniells, "The Asiatic Division Conference," *ARH*, August 26, 1915, 5.
8. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1917), 152.
9. *Ibid.*, 157.

10. *Church Compass*, June 1919, 5; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1920), 149-150.

11. *Church Compass*, July 1923, 9.

12. *Church Compass*, January 1928, 30.

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