

North Fukien Mission (1920–1951)

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian, Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

The North Fukien (today's Fujian) Mission, grew out of the subdivision of the original Fukien (or Fujian) Mission, 1917 through 1920. The rationale for the division was said to be “the difficulty of administration;” that is, the distance, terrain, and poor communication facilities presented hardships for the mission director living in the south of Fujian Province. In addition, the dialect spoken in Foochow is different from that in South Fujian around Xiamen. The Foochow (or Fuzhou) Mission was therefore formed in 1920; the entity changing its name to the North Fukien Mission in 1922. It formed part of the South China Union Mission, and its headquarters always remained at Foochow.²

Clarence Morris () was the principal of the Foochow Intermediate School when the Foochow Mission was formed in 1920, he was appointed to be its director.⁴ During his four-year term, he witnessed his baptized membership rise from 282⁵ to 342 in the six churches under his care.⁶ Advances were made in spite of the fact that the region suffered civil unrest characterized by anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiments. Early in 1926 he reported, “Conditions here in the interior at present are very bad, and it is difficult for our workers to get about as they should.”⁷ Many of the small out-station schools were forced to close because of dangerous war conditions.⁸ Matters did not improve. In 1927 a national evangelist was arrested for preaching and was imprisoned in Foochow.⁹ In late 1930 three other workers were briefly imprisoned.¹⁰

By 1930 mission activities had developed to the point where significant work was being done to evangelize the Chinese women. Miss Ding Seuk Ching and three other national women were conducting meetings to tutor women in the tenets of the faith.¹¹ A Sabbath School department and a Home Missions department were established with national leadership. Five elementary schools and the Foochow Intermediate School with its rag-rug industry were all functioning. Each one of these entities contributed candidates for baptism, the total membership at the time being 425.¹² Graduates from the Intermediate School, of course, contributed evangelists and teachers to the mission team, and a small number advanced to train as nurses at the Shanghai Sanitarium.¹³

Early in 1935 the director of the North Fukien Mission, Vance Maloney (), presented a report of troubles and triumphs for the years 1931 through 1934. He wrote of bandits killing a church deacon and other church

members losing their lives at the hands of communists. A colporteur was fatally shot and a number of adherents wounded. Portions of the province were under martial law and shut off from church officials, finances, and literature supplies. This distressing news was tempered with reports of three new chapels built, two remodeled, and two donated to the mission. Evangelistic crusades numbered eight to fifteen each year and the total baptized membership rose to 510.¹⁴ The formation of a Dorcas Society in the Foochow city church was an additional feature, taking place in late 1935.¹⁵

The following mission director, Clarence Davis () from Australia, reported similar successes amid war-time dangers. There was no respite in the late 1930s. He spoke of sheltering in trenches as bombs fell close to his headquarters and the mission school, shattering stonework and bringing plaster down from the ceilings.¹⁶ However, new chapels were built at Yenping (Nanping) and Goling (Guling),¹⁷ and the baptized membership total rose to 652 by December 1939.¹⁸

During the Second World War years, evangelistic crusades continued, especially in Foochow. Nevertheless, the difficulties generated by unrest persisted. Mission officials reported "there is the problem of slow travel because of the destruction of roads and the coastal blockades."¹⁹ Many evangelistic campaigns were held post-War. In 1948, for example, there were 145 converts baptized.²⁰ The last statistics published of the North Fukien Mission noted 14 organized churches with a total baptized membership of 1,109.²¹

The communist takeover in 1949 by what was called the People's Government of China brought about a major strategic reorganization of Seventh-day Adventist missions in the nation.²² Expatriates rapidly exited in stages, and national leadership became the norm.²³ The changeover, however, was short-lived. By 1951 communications with the General Conference headquarters had become impossible, and reporting systems from all provincial missions, including entities such as the North Fukien Mission, broke down.²⁴

Directors of the North Fukien Mission

Clarence C. Morris (), 1922-1926; Vance J. Maloney (), 1926-1937; Clarence H. Davis (), 1937-1944; Ging Su Tang (1945-1947; Clarence H. Davis, 1948 to 1949; Sia Chung Ong (), 1949-1951.

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NOTES

1. Frederick H. De Vinney, "South China Union Mission," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 15, 1920, 4.
2. "Foochow Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1922), 119.
3. "Foochow Intermediate School," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1920), 223.
Note: With an enrolment of approximately 260 in 1918 this school was the largest operated in China by the Seventh-day Adventist church at the time. See photograph *China Division Reporter*, September/October 1935, 4.
4. "Foochow Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1921), 116.
5. "Statistical Report," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, May 15, 1923, 9.
6. "Statistical Report," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 1926, 9.
7. Clarence C. Morris, "General Meeting at Foochow," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, January 1926, 12.

8. Florence Morris, "Two Years of Sabbath Schools in South China," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, May 1929, 13.
9. Clarence C. Crisler, "A Week in Foochow," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1928, 4.
10. Vance J. Maloney, "North Fukien News," *China Division Reporter*, February 1931, 2.
11. "Women's Work in South China," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, May 1929, 14; "North Fukien Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1930), 183.
12. Vance J. Maloney, "The North Fukien Mission," *China Division Reporter*, March 1931, 6.
13. Harry W. Miller, "North Fukien Provincial Meeting," *China Division Reporter*, July/August 1932, 3.
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15. Vance J. Maloney, "Dorcas Society in Foochow," *China Division Reporter*, January 1936, 4.
16. A.L. Ham, "South China," *China Division Reporter*, August 1938, 15.
17. Clarence H. Davis, "North Fukien Mission," *China Division Reporter*, February 1949, 8.
18. Statistical Report," *China Division Reporter*, August 1, 1940, 11.
19. "North Fukien Mission," *China Division Reporter*, September 1941, 4.
20. Clarence H. Davis, "South China Union," *China Division Reporter*, April 1949, 6.
21. "North Fukien Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951), 112.
22. "Recent Changes," *China Division Reporter*, November 1949, 8.
23. William H. Branson, "Change in Division Headquarters," *China Division Reporter*, January 1950, 1.
24. "China Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 104.

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