



Full view of the Adventist Training Center.

Photo courtesy of Adventist Training Center.

Adventist Training Center, Korean Union Conference

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Jung Gon Kim obtained both elementary and secondary education at the Adventist Education Institutes, earned a B.A. from Sahmyook University and an M.Div. from the Theological Seminary of Sahmyook University. He served as pastor in several local churches, worked as a chaplain of Sahmyook Health University, and was the Youth director of the ECKC. He has been an instructor at the Adventist Training Center since 2012 and the Center's director since 2020.

The Adventist Training Center (Jaerim Yeonsoowon) is an Adventist institution established in 1994 to facilitate spiritual growth of the ministerial workers and church members affiliated with the Korean Union Conference. The training center, which is located at 351, Panbushinchon-gil, Panbu-myun, Wonju-si, Gangwon-do, is served by four pastors and seven other workers.¹

Developments that Led to Establishment of the Training Center

The Korean Union Conference (KUC), which was promoted from union mission to union conference in 1983² has achieved remarkable growth over the decades. In the 1990s KUC experienced challenges with regard to the spirit of mission and religious identity among ministers and church members. When Tae-Seop Shim was appointed to be the president of KUC in 1991, he began to emphasize the missional spirit of ministerial workers, including revival of the church.³ This led KUC leadership to embark on research to establish an institution that could train pastors and workers.

Founding of the Training Center

The initial facility for ATC was situated on 39,700 square meters (9.8 acres) of land, which is located at 977 Sinchon-ri, Panbu-myeon, Wonju-gun, Gangwon-do. The construction work for ATC, which began in early December 1992, was completed on November 17, 1993. The three-story main building, designed to accommodate about 200 people, includes facilities such as a library, bedrooms, a lounge, a cafeteria, and an auditorium. In addition, a two-story prayer hall was constructed separately.⁴

Ki-Woong Um was appointed as the first director of the center, while Chun-Gwang Hwang was designated as the office manager. The institute designed a one-week course of spirituality training under the motto of "Let's Follow the Example of Jesus," along with the slogan of "To Our Heavenly Home Quickly." The training program consisted of regular morning and evening services, lectures, work activities, and prayer sessions. Keeping silent was required during the entire training session.⁵ The Advent Training Center embarked on its ministry in 1994.

History of the Training Center

In 1994, the first year of its operation, a total of 688 trainees, including 454 pastors and 234 institutional workers, participated in the program. In addition, a total of 125 people, including 75 deaconesses of local churches and 50 theology graduates participated in short-term programs.⁶

In 1995 a total of 655 people, including 101 pastors, 277 institutional workers, 86 university professors, 74 church members, and 117 pastors' spouses, participated in the training program. In addition, a total of 274 people, including 50 Adventist couples, 85 family members of the Korean Union Conference, 60 high school student executives, and 79 students from Sahmyook University completed the short-term program.⁷

Jin-Young Kim was appointed as the second director of the training center at the 30th KUC Constituency Session held in 1995 and he led the training program for two years.⁸ In late 1997, Gwang-Ui Hong was appointed as the third director of the training center. He served as the director of the institute for 14 years, from 1998 to 2011.

As the number of trainees increased, ATC experienced a lack of private prayer rooms. To meet the increased demand for personal prayer space, Gwang-Ui Hong purchased 6,600 square meters of land to build an additional private prayer hall in 1998.⁹

Since the 2000s, Training programs have developed to expand the target groups to include: Japanese, pastors' kids, elementary school students, and so forth. One of the major projects during this time was to construct a larger prayer building.¹⁰

Although the prayer hall was planned for completion by 2004 in commemoration of the 100^h anniversary of KUC, it did not have its inauguration ceremony until May 20, 2006, due to the extended plan to include a condominium and a chapel. Those dedicated to the construction project included Gwang-Ui Hong, a director of the center, Gwang-Soo Jeon, the office manager, and Elder Yong-Gu Lee, the facility manager.¹¹ A total of 10,138 trainees, including 23 Japanese pastors and church members, completed the program between 1994 and 2004.

By 2005 the program of the ATC was well-known internationally and it attracted church leaders from as far away as China, Africa, the Philippines, the United States, and Japan. The leaders who visited ATC returned to their countries with an aspiration to have a similar training center in their own country. During this period, short-term training sessions were held for the faculty members of Sahmyook University, employees of Seoul Adventist Hospital, and employees of Sahmyook Food. From 2005 to 2009, the number of trainees reached 4,000.¹²

As the size of ATC was enlarged, KUC leadership decided to separate the Adventist Prayer Center (APC) from ATC in 2011. Four more faculty members were appointed to operate ATC and APC separately. Sung-Ha Park replaced the director, Gwang-Ui Hong, in 2011, and he held the position until he retired in 2020. During this period some additional programs were initiated to train children and to train the One Thousand Missionaries. As a result, 2,702 people participated in the training program from 2012 to 2015.¹³

Since 2016 regular training programs for the pastors and workers have been conducted according to the characteristics of the institutions, and weekend spirituality training programs were operated for each church and small group. Due to this program, many church members visited the training center. Thanks to these efforts, more than 5,000 church members participated in the training program from 2016 to 2020. Meanwhile, at the 36th Constituency Session of KUC in 2020, Jung-Gon Kim was appointed as the director of the training center.¹⁴

Historical Role of the Training Center

The Advent Training Center was established to train pastors, workers, and local church members of KUC to experience God's love and grace with words and prayers, to emulate the character of Christ, and to fulfill the mission to share Christ's message to the world. Based on the purpose of its establishment, the training center conducted spiritual and prayer training for numerous church leaders and church members. Historically, the role

played by the training center was as follows:¹⁵

The training center facilitates church leaders to develop a habit of prayer on a regular basis.

The training center trains Adventists to meditate on the words of God and apply them to their spiritual journey (or life).

The training center helps participants to experience the love of God and maintain a solid faith.

The training center guides church members to recognize the grace of God revealed in the Cross of Christ and to live the Spirit-filled life.

The training center encourages Adventists to proclaim the three angels' messages as a remnant of God's people.

As shown in the roles listed above, the Advent Training Center provided spiritual opportunities for leaders and members of the Korean Adventist Church to experience the Triune God. Participants in the program realized God's love in nature and in the written Word, experienced the grace of Christ's Cross through lectures and meditation, and heard the voice of the Holy Spirit through prayer and silence. Through all these experiences, the lives of Korean Adventists have changed; and they are spiritually committed to fulfilling the mission of the Adventist Church, realizing a certain mission as the remnant of God.

What Remains to Be Done to Fulfill the Mission?

On March 26, 2021, a ceremony was held to commemorate the construction of the Monument for Winning Soul and to pledge dedication to God. The ceremony, which involved leaders of the Korean Adventist Church and staff of the training center, was held following the construction of a monument honoring the late Ji-Sun Ryu, who died in an unexpected accident while praying at the training center and planning to become an overseas missionary.¹⁶ The monument was intended to inspire the martyrs' mission.

ATC hopes that all Korean Adventists will become missionaries who fulfill the mission of the last day with the spirit of martyrs. Some important challenges must be overcome to make this wish come true.

The first is to restore the religious identity of the Adventist Church. As society changes, the secularization of the church accelerates, weakening the identity of Adventism. In this situation, the training center should make more effort to restore the identity of the faith. To this end, various educational programs related to Adventism should be developed.

The second is to strengthen spiritual motivation to encourage church members to voluntarily participate in training programs. Workers belonging to Church institutions are required to participate in training programs. However, this sense of obligation also weakens the motivation to participate in the program. In this situation, it

is necessary to strengthen the spiritual motivation that allows institutional workers to actively participate in training programs.

The third is to expand the training center facilities. Compared to the importance of the training center program, the number of participants in the program is small. Facilities need to be expanded to allow more Adventists to participate in training programs. Financial support is desperately needed to expand this facility. The KUC and the Adventist Training Center are praying to secure the funds.

Currently, ATC trains church leaders to practice their holiness, frugality, and service under the Motto, Have the Attitude of Christ Jesus (see Philippians 2:5-11); and this is a task that the Adventist Training Center should continue to pursue.

List of Directors

Gi-Woong Um (1994-1995); Jin-Young Kim (1996-1997); Gwang-Ui Hong (1998-2011); Seong-Ha Park (2012-2019); Jung-Gon Kim (2020-present).

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