

Farah, Aida Ghazal (1924–2012)

RAJA D. FARAH

Raja D. Farah, Ph.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), is a professor of religion at Middle East University, Lebanon. A Lebanese by birth, Farah has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lebanon since 1983 as an ordained pastor, church school teacher and principal, and college/university teacher and administrator.

Aida Ghazal Farah was an educator, Bible worker, college dean of women, church musician, and youth leader in Lebanon.

Aida Ghazal Farah was born May 8, 1924, in Mousaitbeh, Beirut, Lebanon. Her parents, Melki and Maryam Ghazal, were converted from another Protestant denomination to the Seventh-day Adventist faith shortly after World War I. They were among the first national pioneers of the Adventist Church in Lebanon. Aida was their eldest child. Her three younger brothers, Mousa, Boutros, and George, served the Church in Lebanon and abroad in various ministries.¹

In 1929, at the age of five, Aida was one of the first seven students to attend the newly-established Adventist School in Mousaitbeh, Beirut (*École Adventiste*). Before completing her secondary education at the age of 17, she was asked by Church leadership to attend the Evangelical School for Girls (known as the British School), to study the art of teaching. That same year she began her teaching ministry for the Church as an elementary teacher in the Adventist school. In 1951, Aida taught for one school year in the Adventist School in Aramoun, Mount Lebanon.

That year she also received a certificate in piano performance from the Lebanese National Music Conservatory. In 1952, Aida was called to serve as a Bible instructor. She went from house to house, visiting people and giving Bible studies. One of her more interesting contacts was a retired army officer in Sidon, South Lebanon. She labored in this challenging ministry for eight years. During this time she worked on and completed her secondary education in 1956 from the secondary division of Middle East College. In 1960 she received a call to serve as dean of women at the college. It was then when she was able to begin her tertiary education.

Aida dedicated her working years to serving Jesus Christ, His church, and its institutions. She taught subjects such as Arabic, English, and French, as well as Bible, arithmetic, music, physical education, and all the Missionary Volunteer Society classes. She also conducted choirs, including the college's Arabic language choir. Aida was one of the first women in the church in Lebanon to receive a Master Guide in the MV Society. She preached the word of God to many people and led several to Jesus Christ and biblical truth, including baptism and church membership. She also served the local churches where she was a member (Mousaitbeh, Ashrafieh, Boushrieh, and College Park) in several ministries, but especially in music ministry, playing the piano and the organ during worship services and organizing the music for church and school events. She was often invited by other Christian denominations and youth organizations to lead out in music performance and to teach national songs and anthems.

During her time as dean of women at Middle East College, Aida was engaged and then married on March 5, 1961, to Deeb S. Farah, a new convert to the Seventh-day Adventist faith to whom she had given Bible studies for a number of years. Shortly after, Aida took a sabbatical for eight years to serve as housewife and mother of three children: Raja, Salim, and Mary. All three are currently serving the church in Lebanon or abroad. Aida preferred to homeschool her three children during the first stages of their kindergarten and elementary education. However, in 1968 she accepted a call to return to the teaching ministry at the Mousaitbeh Adventist Secondary School. In 1976, due to the war in Lebanon, she transferred to the Boushrieh Adventist Secondary School where she taught various academic subjects, including Bible, and served as the principal's secretary.

Aida Ghazal Farah served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lebanon for 39 years, until her retirement in 1988.



Aida at the age of 36.
Photo courtesy of Raja Farah.

She was a witness to and a part of the development and growth of the local church and its institutions in Lebanon from an early age and for more than half a century. In the summer of 2006, she gradually began to slip into dementia, and on January 16, 2012, she fell asleep in the hope of the resurrection. Her life, words, and actions testify that she was a faithful wife, mother, educator, and disciple of Jesus Christ; for she knew in Whom she believed.

NOTES

- ^{1.} All information in this article comes from personal knowledge of Raja Farah, first-born son of Aida Farah.?

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