

Yun-Foh Chong, Joshua (1911–1999)

FAI LEONG

Fai Leong began his pastoral ministry in Kuala Lumpur in 1980, after he graduated from Hong Kong Adventist College. At the time of writing, he was the president of the Peninsular Malaysia Mission.

Joshua Yun-Foh Chong was an Adventist minister and educator who served in China, Malaysia (Sarawak and Peninsular) and Singapore.

Early Life

Joshua Yun-Foh Chong was born on April 17, 1911, to a Lutheran elementary school teacher's family in Xinning, a town located in the Hakka district of

Guangdong Province in China. He was the fifth of twelve siblings. His father, Sook Au Chong, was brought up in a traditional Chinese family with traditional religious practices. Before Chong's birth, Sook Au and his wife Mei Hwa had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior after a plague that had taken the lives of most of their fellow villagers, including Sook Au's parents and all his siblings who lived in a village near Xinning. The small family of six managed to escape the "Black Death" only because they had moved to their in-laws' house eighty kilometers away from the outbreak.¹

Chong spent the first six years of his childhood in a small mission school compound in Xinning before his father was transferred to teach the Chinese language at a secondary school in Meizhou. The school in Meizhou had a large compound encompassing a primary school and a big church building. He received his primary and secondary education in Meizhou.²

At the close of the last semester of Chong's high school education, he suffered severe diarrhea that no physician in the town could cure. As he continued to suffer from the debilitating illness, his mother suggested that he attend a revival meeting in town. He heeded his mother's advice and with the help of his brother, managed to sit



Joshua Yun-Foh Chong

Photo courtesy of Chong family.

through the meeting. Though he was not healed in the special prayer session for the sick after the sermon, he was touched by the message about the Divine Healer. He continued attending meetings every evening where he encountered God personally, which led him to a genuine conversion.³

Chong first heard about Seventh-day Adventists from the preacher at one of those meetings. Hearing conflicting opinions about Adventism, he visited an Adventist Church for himself, wanting to learn more about their teachings. With the help of Ellen White's writings, he understood all the Bible truths taught by the Adventist pastor. As he shared his newfound truth, a leader of the Lutheran Church where he belonged lent him a few books that went against the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Chong was confused for a time but he decided to study the Bible seriously without help from other books. Eventually, he made a firm decision and was baptized into the Adventist church, along with 39 other young people, on December 7, 1928, during the Hakka Mission annual council. After his baptism, he brought his parents and all his siblings into the church as well.⁴

Education and Marriage

A year after his baptism, the church sent Chong to San Yu Training Institute in Nanjing for a year to be trained as a pastor. After his ministerial training, he began his pastoral ministry in Meizhou in 1931. Two years later, he was given additional responsibility as a school principal. Then the Hakka Mission sent him back to San Yu College for another year to learn the industrial arts so that he could train young people in various trades such as drafting, woodworking, and agriculture. Chong intended to complete his college education in 1938, but his plan was shattered by the second Sino-Japanese war just as he enrolled at the college. He was forced to return home as the war escalated. Before he reached home, he changed his travel plans and landed in Hong Kong. After working at the Signs of the Times Publishing House for a month, Chong returned home to join a mobile evangelistic team working in Hakka.⁵

While working with the evangelistic team in Hakka, Chong received a call to serve as a missionary in Kuching, Sarawak, which was under British rule at that time. He was advised to marry his pre-arranged bride, Eunice Tshin Chin before he left for Kuching. A simple wedding ceremony was arranged on March 1, 1938, solemnized by Pastor J. P. Anderson, former president of Hakka Mission. They left Hong Kong on April 4, 1938, and arrived in Kuching five days later.⁶

Ministry (1938-1978)

Chong served as the pastor of the Chinese congregation as well as the principal of Sunny Hill School with 61 students on a 5-acre land where the current Sarawak Mission office is located. Chong's daughter, Mary Hui-Tze—who later became Dr. Wong—was born during his first year at Sunny Hill School.⁷ By the second year, the enrollment of the school doubled through Chong's hard work and the assistance of church members. While the

church and the school continued to grow under his leadership, the Japanese army landed in Kuching and took over the campus as their barracks in 1941.⁸

After the war, Chong continued to grow the church and expand the school until the end of 1948. In January 1949, he was called to serve as principal of Teh Sin Primary School in Kuala Lumpur, operated by the Malay States Mission (now the Peninsular Malaysia Mission). On June 27 of the same year Chong's second child, Dayton Chin-Keong was born.⁹ By the end of the year, the Malay States Mission decided to send Chong to complete his college education at Philippine Union College. While he was studying in the Philippines, he actively participated in prison ministry, reaching out to Filipino prisoners of war, as well as, the Chinese inmates.¹⁰

Returning from the Philippines on May 9, 1951, Chong was next sent to a bilingual congregation in Ipoh, a tin mining town about 200 kilometers north of Kuala Lumpur.¹¹ He was ordained to the gospel ministry on June 13, 1953, while attending the union session in Singapore. In 1954, he was called to head the revived Chinese ministerial training department in the Malayan Seminary of Seventh-day Adventists (renamed Southeast Asia Union College in 1958).

While Chong taught at the seminary, he was also the pastor of the only Chinese church in Singapore. In 1957, the church was relocated to Thomson Road (the current location), and the church board decided to operate a Chinese mission school named as San Yu High School within the church compound. In addition to his busy work loads, Chong was appointed as the first principal of the new school from December 1957 until September 1958.

Later Life

After serving the church institutions in China, Malaysia (Sarawak and Peninsular) and Singapore for 47 years, Chong retired in 1978. Throughout his career he served as literature evangelist, mission evangelist, church pastor, school principal, teacher, and mission departmental director.

In retirement, Chong continued his active service to the church. In 1981, he joined his son-in-law, Dr. David Wong, president of Taiwan Adventist College, where he taught theology classes until 1984.¹² In 1992, he and his wife decided to join their son, Dayton Chong, in the United States where he was serving as pastor and coordinator of Asian programs for the Central California Conference. Chong stayed in San Jose, California, until he passed away peacefully on July 14, 1999.¹³

Contribution/Legacy

Chong's passion for training young people in the ministry ensured there was no lack of Chinese speaking pastors in the Southeast Asia Union Mission after communist China adopted a closed door policy. His zeal inspired many young people to join the ministry, including his own two children and son-in-law. His passion for conducting evangelistic series motivated pastors to pioneer new mission fields in areas without an Adventist

presence in Southeast Asia. Chong's passion for education blessed thousands of young people through Sunny Hill School in Kuching, Sarawak and San Yu High School in Singapore.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Mary Hui-Tze Wong and Maylan Schurch, *Under the Shadow* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2007), 21-25.
2. *Ibid.*, 26.
3. *Ibid.*, 40-42.
4. *Ibid.*, 42-45.
5. *Ibid.*, 46-50.
6. *Ibid.*, 51-58.
7. *Ibid.*, 60-62.
8. *Ibid.*, 64-66.
9. *Ibid.*, 84-86.
10. *Ibid.*, 94-98.
11. "Transfer of Workers," *Southeast Asia Union Messenger*, July 1951, 3.
12. Wong and Schurch, 114.
13. *Ibid.*, 122.

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