

# Kleuser, Louise C.

## (1890–1976)

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Louise C. Kleuser was a Bible worker, pastor, editor, conference departmental director of education, and a General Conference Ministerial Association associate secretary in the time of her service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Early Life and Baptism

Louise C. Kleuser was born June 5, 1890, in Barmen, Germany.<sup>1</sup> When she was nine years old, she migrated to the United States with her parents and began living in New York.<sup>2</sup> Young Louise came to know Adventists and at the age of nineteen, in 1909, she was baptized in Brooklyn.<sup>3</sup>

## Ministerial Career

From 1909 onwards, Kleuser entered a gospel ministry that would span 44 years. She first worked as a colporteur, then, in 1914, became a Bible instructor in the Southern New England Conference. At the same time, she pastored two churches and organized Sabbath schools, churches, and Missionary Volunteer societies (the precursors of Adventist youth societies).<sup>4</sup> From 1917 to 1921 and from 1921 to 1924, the East Pennsylvania Conference appointed Kleuser to lead the Missionary Volunteer and Home Missionary Departments.<sup>5</sup> In 1924, she continued in the same leadership position, this time with the Southern New England Conference.<sup>6</sup>



Louise C. Kleuser

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Around 1926 until 1931, Kleuser moved to the Greater New York Conference to head the Education, Sabbath School, and Missionary Volunteer Society departments.<sup>7</sup> In Greater New York, the presence of members from various countries meant that Sabbath School quarterlies needed to be produced in many languages. Kleuser “responded to the great needs of these overseas people with their international and racial problems.”<sup>8</sup> 1932 saw Kleuser back with the Southern New England Conference, with the same leadership roles until 1937. Kleuser also led the Education and Missionary Volunteer departments of the Greater New York Conference from 1937 to 1941.<sup>9</sup>

In 1941 Kleuser began the Adventists’ Medical Cadet Corps training course and was commissioned a second lieutenant.<sup>10</sup> In September of that year she was called to the General Conference to help organize denominational Bible work.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, she began teaching classes at the Theological Seminary, which was then located in Washington.<sup>12</sup>

In 1942 Kleuser was named an associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association. She became the first woman to serve in the association,<sup>13</sup> a position she held until her retirement in 1958.<sup>14</sup> During this time, Kleuser also served as an associate editor for *Ministry* magazine and, together with Arthur White, compiled materials from Ellen White’s works on personal and public evangelism for the book *Evangelism*.<sup>15</sup> Kleuser’s book *The Bible Instructor: In Personal and Public Evangelism* was published in 1949, and used extensively in courses on personal soul winning.<sup>16</sup> She also aided the editing of two other books, *Aflame for God* (1954), and *Thine Be the Glory* (1955).<sup>17</sup>

## Retirement, Death, and Contribution

Although Kleuser officially retired in June 1958, she kept serving as a consultant editor and regular author for *Ministry*<sup>18</sup> and consultant for the General Conference Home Study Institute,<sup>19</sup> as well as conducting personal Bible studies.

On March 3, 1976, Louise C. Kleuser died at the age of 85, in Takoma Park, Maryland. As a colporteur, Bible Worker, and pastor, Kleuser was instrumental in bringing many Adventists in the area of New England and New York to Christ. As a Bible instructor, educator, and seminary teacher, she played a key role in the training of lay members at camp meeting as well as future pastors, leaders, and workers for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As a ministerial associate secretary she contributed to the growth of a General Conference sector that oversaw the training and spiritual growth of pastors. As an author, her books, numerous articles, and poems served as resources for spiritual growth and ministerial training for readers.

Today, she is considered one of the Adventist women of distinguished service by General Conference Women’s Ministries.<sup>20</sup>

## Memorable Statements

R. R. Figuhr, president of the General Conference at the retirement of workers: “And then I think of Sister Louise Kleuser, quiet, unobtrusive, efficient, whose earnest effort for long years has been largely directed toward inspiring and preparing Bible instructors. Her service to the Ministerial Association has been of unique worth.”<sup>21</sup>

J. J. Spangler, associate editor of *Ministry* Magazine:

She taught me how to give Bible studies and answer questions interested people asked. Her gentle dealings with people who knew little or nothing about our message helped me to be sensitive to the needs of such individuals. These few months together with ... Miss Kleuser were equal, in my opinion, to a four-year college course. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been fortunate to have a woman of such deep spiritual insights and Christian zeal as Louise Kleuser. Her life and example have always been on the positive side of the ledger. It will be a thrill to meet her again on the day of our Lord's return.<sup>22</sup>

Frank E. Meckling, Adventist lay member: “It was because of a dedicated Bible instructor, Louise E. Kleuser, that my mother, father, brother, and I accepted the truth shortly after World War I. Miss Kleuser worked diligently for both the young and the old who met in our home to study God's Word under her capable instruction.”<sup>23</sup>

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### SOURCES

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### NOTES

1. “Deaths,” *ARH*, April 15, 1976, 30 (422).

2. J. R. Spangler, "In Memoriam: Louise C. Kleuser," *Ministry*, June 1976, 48.
3. Ibid.
4. "Deaths," *ARH*, April 15, 1976, 30
5. "East Pennsylvania Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1922), 32.
6. "Southern New England Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1924), 26.
7. "Greater New York Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1927), 23.
8. See extract on Louise Kleuser, in *The Keynote*, August 1959, 3.
9. See *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks* in those years.
10. "Deaths," *ARH*, April 15, 1976, 30. Sabrina Riley points out that Kleuser's obituary mistakenly names Kleuser the first woman to complete the Adventists' Medical Cadet Corps (MCC) training course. Marion G. Seitz from the Alabama-Mississippi Conference was actually the first woman to complete MCC officer training in 1940 (see correspondence between Marion G. Seitz and Chris P. Sorensen obtained from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives: Box 6834, Christian P. Sorensen Collection, MS 76, Rebok Memorial Library, Silver Spring, MD). This document shows that Seitz attended the camp in August 1940. This is corroborated by Everett Dick in his audio recorded memoirs, which his daughter shared with Sabrina Riley
11. Spangler, "In Memoriam: Louise C. Kleuser," *Ministry*, June 1976, 48.
12. Ibid.
13. Kit Watts, "Ellen White's Contemporaries: Significant Women in the Early Church," in *A Woman's Place: Seventh-day Adventist Women in Church and Society* ed. Rosa Taylor Banks (Hagerstown MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 49.
14. "Deaths," 30.
15. Tony Zbaraschuk, "Evangelism" in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 815.
16. Spangler, 48.
17. Ibid.
18. See the monthly editions of *Ministry* from 1958 ff.

19. W. Homer Teesdale, "A New Tool for Bible Instructors," *Central Union Reaper*, November 7, 1961, 1.
  20. "Adventist Women of Distinguished Service," accessed May 22, 2020, <https://women.adventist.org/adventist-women-of-distinguished-service>.
  21. R. R. Figuhr, "Retiring Workers," *ARH*, June 29, 1958, 177.
  22. Spangler, 48.
  23. See statement sent in by Frank E. Meckling, in "Letters," *ARH*, April 27, 1978, 2.
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