



NSD

“Mission First”: The Northern Asia-Pacific Division’s Educational Mandate

BY CHEK YAT PHOON

Adventist education is on the march in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD). The mandate of a redemptive mission is the clarion call to all educational institutions in the division. It is not only what skills students acquire but what they will become that is of concern to all educators in NSD. The division currently has five tertiary institutions, 15 high schools, 10 middle schools, and 23 elementary schools. There are also 55 language schools in Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan. All of them have one united anthem: “Tell the World of the Advent Hope of Christ.”

Although the vast territory of China is part of NSD, we have no official schools there. However, a number of Adventist churches run their own unique schools in collaboration

with local government entities. In order to impress on young people’s minds the church’s doctrines and build a strong biblical foundation, in-



Bus stop in front of the Honam Sahmyook High School. The street was designated Sahmyook Street by the city because of the school’s significant contributions to the community.

tensive summer Bible schools are operated by many churches in China.

The focus of “Mission First” is alive and well in our NSD territories despite the challenges of changing trends as well as religious and political constraints in this area.

The emphasis on Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) has led to important projects in the division. In March 2007, the NSD hosted the 35th International Seminar on Integrating Faith and Learning, which drew Seventh-day Adventist scholars from around the world to the campus of Hong Kong Adventist College for the 12-day session.

Subsequently, in every union, seminars and conferences were convened to keep this emphasis alive. NSD, assisted by the church’s Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), brought together science teachers and pastors for a three-day Creation, Faith, and Science Conference at Kunming, Yunnan, China, in August 2007, and another at Taiwan Adventist College later in the year for all college and academy faculty.

Japan Union Conference (JUC) hosted a faith and learning seminar in conjunction with the kindergarten/elementary teachers’ convention at Hiroshima in July 2009. In the Korean Union Conference (KUC), integration of faith and learning was the theme for the Conference on Ministerial and Theological Education held in August 2009 at Sahmyook University.

The rest of this report will highlight events in each of the NSD’s union territories.

Korean Union Conference

The Korean Union Conference (KUC) operates the largest Adventist education system in NSD, and includes one of the church’s largest tertiary institutions, Sahmyook University (SU), which held its centennial celebration in 2006. SU cur-

rently has a student population of 5,945, offers 24 degree programs, employs 339 staff and teachers, and is ranked 19th among all South Korean tertiary institutions due to its excellent academic performance. John Choi Chong Geol, the NSD Geoscience Research Institute direc-

tor and a science professor of SU, was named director of an English Edu-Science Park, fully supported financially by the Nowon district government, where creationism is strongly promoted.

In the words of SU President Kim Ki-Kon: "Sahmyook University is a large university that is challenged with a great mission. Only one-sixth of the freshman class is Adventist . . . but the university is committed to sharing the Advent message with these young people." SU's faculty are actively involved in soul winning, and its Adventist students are taught to

reach out to the non-Adventist students. Forty sophomore theology majors have been assigned to serve in campus ministries.

Sahmyook Health College (SHC), another KUC institution, has recently become a senior college, and offers Bachelor of Science degrees in nursing and dental hygiene.

In South Korea, where population growth is declining, 3,016 government-run elementary, middle, and high schools were closed as of March 2007. Adventist schools have benefited from this cutback. Donghae Middle and Senior High School, the smallest of all the schools operated by the East Central Korean Conference (ECKC), has a current enrollment of 188, 30 more than last year, even though the local population is decreasing significantly as people migrate to bigger cities for job opportunities. This year, the school received "The Excellent English Leader School Award" from the Ministry of



A Taiwan Adventist College professor teaches a group of members in China.



A building and land, along with an annual budget, were donated to Sahmyook University by the government for the Seoul English Science Edu-Center, in Seoul, South Korea, where students from schools in Seoul can come to learn English and science. The director, from SU, presents creationism as a viable option for the origin of the earth.

Education and Science, an award given to only the top 100 middle and high schools in the country.

Hankook Senior Academy has 636 students, up from 606 last year. Eighty-seven percent of the students come from Adventist homes, and 615 are baptized church members. The school was ranked 18th among 204 schools in the Seoul district for the percentage of its students chosen for university entrance.

The Education Department of the Korean government recognizes the significant contributions of Adventist education in the country. The street in front of one of our schools was named Sahmyook Gil (Sahmyook Street) by the district government in that area, a great honor.

Integration of faith and learning is a priority in the Korean Union. SU has been running IFL seminars three times each year since April 2007. On September 24, 2009, SU inaugurated the Society of Christian Worldview and the Institute of Integrating Faith and Learning and pub-



Students studying the Bible on the beautiful Sahmyook University campus in South Korea.

lished its first English journal, *Integration of Faith and Learning*, with articles submitted by scholars from NSD tertiary educational institutions and abroad.

Japan Union Conference

One of the greatest challenges facing Japan is a graying population, which also affects our church and schools. The Japan Union Conference (JUC) has a senior college and a senior academy, three junior academies, and 10 elementary schools, which employ 169 teaching faculty.

In 2008, Saniku Gakuin College (SGC) was granted permission to offer a Bachelor of Nursing program by the Japanese Education Department and the church's International Board of Education (IBE). The current enrollment is 83.

Japanese students have enjoyed participating in mission projects in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Malaysia



Opening ceremony for the Sahmyook University Welfare Center for disabled students.



"I Can Do All in Christ" on the school building sets the tone for students at Yungnam Academy in South Korea.



At the Mongolian Ministry of Education, Griggs University President Don Sahly (second from right), representatives from the Mongolian Mission Field, and the NSD education director (far left) meet to discuss the possibility of using the Griggs International Academy curriculum in Mongolia.

led by their teachers and pastors, sometimes with the involvement of ADRA.

The Chinese Union Mission

In Hong Kong and Macau, we have one college, four secondary schools, and one elementary school. In Taiwan, the church operates one senior college, three secondary schools, two elementary schools, and two English-language schools. In ad-

dition, the church collaborates with the Taiwanese government to run an English village near Taipei.

In the unorganized territory (UT) of China, many of the individual churches run vacation Bible schools to supplement the secular government curriculum. Taiwan Adventist College developed an agreement with the

local district government of Xiamen, China, to assist in the training of health personnel in that province.

A number of creative approaches are used by the churches in China to provide Adventist education. In the northeast region of China, a highly regarded vocational school run by the government offered our church an old school building near Shenyang to house 80 Adventist students. While the students acquire vocational skills, the church supplements their education with Bible and Spirit

of Prophecy classes at the end of the school day. Six committed young teachers act as dormitory preceptors in this creative program.

The Mongolia Mission Field

In collaboration with the Korean Seventh-day Adventist Language Institute (SDALI), the Mongolia Mission Field (MMF) opened its first language institute in 2006. MMF is the youngest entity in NSD. Most of the church members are below the age of 30. Because training workers is a top priority, in 2008, the division, in affiliation with Griggs University (GU), began to offer the Master of Ministry program to pastoral workers who have received degrees from the local universities and colleges. MMF launched its kindergarten and elementary programs during the last quarter of 2009.

"Mission First"

Jairyong Lee, president of NSD, has often reminded the division family that "Mission First" is the mandate for all educational institutions in the region. Through the schools (the regular grammar schools and the language schools) in NSD, more than 17,000 students were baptized into the church between 2005 and 2009. We thank God for dedicated missionary teachers who serve in this challenging mission field. We long for the day (should the Lord's coming be delayed) when the NSD educational work under the quality supervision of the AAA will be established in China and North Korea as well. ✍



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