



“Mission First”: Our Reason for Being

The Adventist mandate for all schools in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD), which is comprised of China, Korea, Japan and Mongolia, is “Mission First.” This positive focus propels us even as we encounter challenges.

Taiwan Adventist Conference

In January 2013, the Taiwan Adventist Conference officially became an attached conference to the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. Within this conference, we have two elementary schools, two secondary schools, and a college. Elliot Fullmer, principal of the Taipei Adventist American School in Taipei, Republic of China, tells how this mission mandate is achieved on his campus: “The school year had just started when parents of a potential student called because they were interested in our school. When they showed

up, I took them around the campus and school buildings, giving them the usual speech about how we are a small school with a park-like campus and how parents liked that. Every now and then, they would tell me a little about their family. I learned that they had lived in the United States and were returning to Taiwan so the father could obtain medical treatment. They wanted to enroll their son in our school.

“In my mind, I was thinking that they were looking for a good, American-style school that would ensure that their son could go to school in the U.S. when they returned. So I was promoting that aspect. But the father interrupted me, and said that he had just one question: ‘Do the students have time for Bible study?’

“‘Yes,’ I said. ‘Every day, each class has time for morning worship and a Bible class. Then on Friday, we have a joint assembly in the morning for more Bible study time as a school.’

“I had answered the one question

that was important to them—whether Christ was part of the school.

“Today, their son is enrolled in our school, and his mother faithfully walks him to campus despite the long distance. This family reminded me that our primary mission was not to be the top private school in Taiwan, but to share Jesus and hope that by God’s grace, the students who pass through our school will reflect the love of Jesus to their families and throughout Taiwan.”

Korean Union Conference

The Korean Union Conference has the largest number of schools of any territory in NSD—two tertiary institutions, seven high schools, two junior high schools, and 10 elementary schools. It also operates 34 language schools that enroll some 13,000 students. The profit from the language schools is specifically dedicated to mission. The mandate of “Mission First”

B Y C H E K Y A T P H O O N



The three-pillar gateway to Honam Adventist School in Gwangju, Korea, represents three schools (elementary, middle, and high school), three values (mental, physical, and spiritual), and the three angels' messages of Revelation.

thus is translated into this motto: "Schools With Happiness and Students With Vision."

The South Korean government has ranked Donghae Sahmyook Middle and High School as 27th among 117 middle schools in Gangwon Province and third among schools in Donghae City. At a time when other schools are struggling with decreases in student enrollment (due to population decline), Donghae Sahmyook Middle and High School has seen a small increase in the number of students. Since 2012, Samsung, one of the world's leading electronics and media giants, has selected Donghae as the experimental site for its electronic pads and has provided tablets and PCs to all the teachers and students in the middle school.

Sahmyook Health University College (SHUC) in Seoul, Korea, has

grown from a certificate and diploma-granting school to a degree-awarding tertiary institution. On September 25, 2014, SHUC inaugurated a new building that houses all of its specialty programs.

A short distance away, Sahmyook University, the oldest Adventist tertiary institution in Korea, was chosen by the government as one of the tertiary institutions to receive U.S.\$8.6 million to become a "University of Creative Korean Projects" within five years. Their Department of Science, Information and Communication Technology, and Future Planning was also granted U.S.\$280,000 by the government for university-based enterprises in 2014. In order to strengthen its international

links in academic, structural, and mission-related objectives, the university has established links with more than 20 institutions of higher learning in Asia, the United States, Europe, and Inter and South America.

Japan Union Conference

The Japan Union Conference (JUC) is not lagging behind the changes that are sweeping through the country. The conference has a tertiary institution, one high school, three junior high schools, and 10 elementary schools. Like many of the developed countries in Asia, the birth rate has been declining, which continues to affect school enrollments. Hence, JUC is reaching out to other countries to recruit students and make the institution more mission oriented.

Hiroshima Saniku Junior and Sen-

ior High School has become a testing center for the International Test of English Proficiency (iTEP), an assessment that is equivalent to the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Chinese Union Mission

The Chinese Union Mission (CHUM) is the largest union in the NSD in terms of territories and population. It is divided into Organized Territories (OT) and Unorganized Territories (UT). In the OT (Hong Kong and Macau), CHUM has one senior college, four secondary schools, and two elementary schools, all of which are accredited by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AAA).

In the OT, most of the schools receive some funds from the government and have been conscientious in attempting to integrate Christian values into their classes in addition to meeting the government’s requirements for academics. Since church membership in the OT is not large, the majority of students are not Adventists. These schools have become a major target for mission



Above: School is a safe and happy place for students in NSD schools.



Right: Samsung provided Smartpads for students and teachers at Donghae Sahmyook Middle and High School in Korea.



Donghae Sahmyook Middle and High School.

as Adventist leaders operate schools supported largely by funds from the government.

Although the UT contains no official denominational schools, Adventist education is active there. Many churches run home schools without violating the government guidelines, using curricula from Griggs International Academy and Griggs University.

During a recent visit to Tai Po Sam Yuk Secondary School in New Territories, Hong Kong, evaluators from the AAA interviewed the chairperson of the Parents-Teachers Association, who said, “It is this school that has changed my son, who had no interest in studying. He is so different now, and I am thankful. This is why I want to share a part of my ability and means to assist this school that makes a difference in students’ lives.” This is not an isolated story, but one that is repeated everywhere when teachers, administrators, parents, and the local church work to instill the mission of Adventist education. “Mission First” is not just a high-sounding mantra, but a living reality in our schools throughout the NSD.

Mongolia Mission

The Mongolia Mission (MM), with a church membership of 2,000, has one language institute and a K-12 school, called *Tusgal* meaning “Reflection.” Licensed by the government since 2011, it currently has an enrollment of 79. Chuluunbat Rentsen, who has enrolled three of her grandchildren in *Tusgal*, has this to say:

“*Tusgal* was first established in 2009, when they opened only one kinder [kindergarten] class. So I sent my twin granddaughters to this class. Thank God, after they finished kindergarten, they were able to continue into the elementary grades. Now both are Grade 4 students. Recently, I brought another granddaughter, whose father has just died, to *Tusgal* as well, and now she is in Grade 10. As a grandmother, I want to bring up my granddaughters in

the best way possible. I believe *Tusgal* is the school for them, as it is safe and secure and can lead my granddaughters to a bright future not only in this world but also in the life hereafter.”

Mongolia Mission educators consider Adventist education an important link in the chain that binds the church to her young people. The mission has a tertiary institution in the making. Housing in Ulan Bator is expensive, and many students who attend secular universities struggle to find a place to live. With help from the fourth-quarter 2009 13th-Sabbath offering, MM added two floors above its office to house 37 university students. Adventist chaplains are available to provide Bible studies and counseling sessions as needed, and we believe that the housing arrangements, which opened in 2014, will help to introduce the residents to Adventist lifestyle and beliefs.

Conclusion

“Mission First” as Adventist education’s “Reason for Being” in the NSD will continue to unfold. Our educational institutions are portals that will continue to happily fulfill this call to service until Christ comes to take His children home. We may not know the future, but as long as we know the One who holds the future, we have nothing to fear as we press on with our mandate. ✍



Chek Yat Phoon, Ph.D., is Director of Education for the Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Goyang City, Gyeonggi-do, Republic of Korea.



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