

FROM MINISTRY TO MOVEMENT: THE POTENTIAL OF PUBLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY

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Abstract

Too many young people have lost their faith on a public university campus. Despite the barrage of sophistry hurled at these young people, only a handful of denominational workers are engaged in ministry to these students. On many secular campuses, ministry to students is virtually non-existent. At best, sound campus ministry efforts are dependent on a few student leaders that graduate all too quickly. Even where student-led groups do exist, they often lack a clear biblical focus and evangelistic mission. A viable and sustainable program of training for ministry to public university students is seriously lacking within the Seventh-day Adventist church. For some, it seems that ministry on secular university campuses is not worth the investment. However, the history of CAMPUS, a division of the Michigan Conference Public Campus Ministry department, shows that when converted students are trained and empowered to be missionaries on college campuses, an Adventist secular campus ministry can grow into a vibrant movement.

Introduction

In September 1998, the Michigan Conference became the first conference in the North American Division (NAD) to create a separate department focused solely on ministry on secular college and university and campuses.¹ One year later, CAMPUS (Center for Adventist Ministry to Public University Students) was established as the nerve center of Michigan Conference's Public Campus Ministries Department.

Located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, near the University of Michigan, CAMPUS is widely recognized today for pioneering and developing a credible Seventh-day Adventist missionary training program for campus ministry. Among other things, CAMPUS—

- has earned the trust of many students and young people as the place where lives are transformed and where brilliant and godly leaders are developed;
- is the only Adventist secular campus ministry that has a viable, sustainable, carefully-planned, and year-round program of training for students;

- is one of the few ministries in the NAD that has succeeded in actually creating a truly racially-diverse and mission-driven student movement;
- is the birth place, headquarters, and a sponsor of GYC (Generation of Youth for Christ), a thriving, grassroots, revival movement organized and led by Adventist young adults;
- has also spawned in North America other student movements and endeavors, such as ALIVE, ANEW, I.e.a.d.s., STRIDE, Advent/Campus HOPE, ExCEL, L-I-N-K, p.r.e.s.s, and others—all of which are attracting attention from other regions of the world.²

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the blessings and providential leadings of the Lord, careful strategic planning, and the training and empowerment of converted youth to be missionaries to their peers. This paper is a first-hand report of how God is growing CAMPUS from a ministry into a movement.³

I. The Providential Leadings of the Lord

Even though CAMPUS had been following a carefully conceived plan, none of those associated with this ministry was fully aware that the specific plans, personnel, and timing of events were actually orchestrated by God Himself. It was only after the fact that those involved clearly realized the footprints of God. It is this providential leading of God that was expressed elsewhere as “*Something Has Happened*.”⁴

The Patriarch Jacob captured this “Something Has Happened” sentiment in Genesis 28:16-19:

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, *Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.* And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he *called the name of that place Bethel*: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first (italics mine).

Many students who have been impacted by the ministry at CAMPUS can also exclaim with Jacob that the Lord was uniquely with them during their years on public university campuses and they knew it not. This dreadful environment of secular academia is “none other but the house of God.” Indeed, “this is the gate of heaven.” For many students, the secular campus was their Bethel—the place they found God (or where God found them) and were commissioned to ministry.

No doubt, those laboring on various secular campuses have many compelling stories to tell of students who, running away from their parents’ values, religion, and even God, found their way back to faith on those very campuses. These experiences confirm that public university and college campuses are not to be neglected, feared, or abandoned because they are “secular” bastions of sophisticated unbelief, polytheism, moral relativism, and self-destructive behaviors through wrong lifestyle choices (e.g., alcohol, drugs, pornography, immoral sex, occultism, etc.). They are mission fields where the Spirit of God is still at work. On

these secular campuses God’s divine ladder is still stretching up to heaven, pointing out the way of salvation even to students who are determined to declare independence from the spiritual influences of their parents.

The above observation should encourage those currently ministering on the seemingly barren fields of secular university environments. With God’s blessings, the public university and college campuses can actually become centers of major revivals and reformation movements as were the campuses in the days of the Protestant Reformers.⁵

To illustrate this fact, consider the history of CAMPUS and how its three-fold strategy is fueling the growth of the Michigan Conference secular campus ministry into a movement.

II. The Three-fold Strategy of CAMPUS

When asked what sets CAMPUS apart from other approaches to secular campus ministry, Michigan student leaders have often pointed to the following core ideals:

Vision: To develop a Bible-based revival movement in which every student is a missionary.

Philosophy: Academic excellence combined with spiritual excellence.

Methodology: Biblical simplicity based on Ellen White’s counsel that “Your success is in your simplicity. As soon as you depart from this . . . your power is gone.” (2T 608).

Goal: To double CAMPUS’ membership every year.

Watchword: Each one reach one.

Mission: To prepare public campuses for the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Motto: Taking Higher Education Higher

But what many do not know is that the seven core ideals above didn’t just happen. They all spring out of a three-fold strategy to evangelize secular campuses:

1. Bring Missionaries TO campus
2. Raise up Missionaries ON campus

3. Send forth Missionaries FROM campus

The strategy is based on the assumption that converted young people (not adults nor trained ministry professionals) are the most effective group to reach their fellow students. First outlined in a 1999 “CAMPUS Masterplan” document, the three-fold strategy seeks to mobilize, train, and inspire “every student [to be] a missionary.”⁶

The first strategy (“*Bring Missionaries TO campus*”) is being accomplished through the Missionary Training Program.⁷ The second strategy (“*Raise Missionaries ON campus*”) is being fulfilled through a network of university student groups, both within and outside Michigan, that have embraced the ideals of CAMPUS. This network comprises students who attend major CAMPUS events (e.g., Retreats, LEADS, ExCEL, GYC, etc.). The third strategy (“*Send forth Missionaries FROM campus*”) will be fully realized when our students and alumni begin to impact the church and the world in a very powerful way.

Already, students involved in phases I and II are beginning to change campus ministry into a *movement*—a growing network of Adventist young people who are dedicated to spiritual revival in their personal lives and passionately committed to the sharing of the Three Angels’ Messages to their peers.

Because the history of this emerging network is not well-known nor well-understood, it may be helpful to briefly summarize how it is intimately connected with CAMPUS’s vision of developing a “Bible-based revival *movement* in which every student is a missionary.”

III. From Ministry to Movement⁸

The potential of *ministry to students* becoming a *movement of students* was evident as far back as 1998. That year witnessed a revival at a Korean camp meeting at Kutztown University in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, as the lives of young people were transformed through sound biblical preaching. Most of the young people at the camp meeting were students enrolled in universities and colleges on the East Coast of the United States.

The students involved in this revival, together with those at the University of Michigan, became instrumental in shaping the contours of CAMPUS

and, later, transforming the ministry into a movement.

1. SPARC

Describing the remarkable 1998 revival at the Kutztown University camp meeting, one of the student leaders of the Korean group (Tracie Kim) wrote to me:

In light of the strong messages that spoke to the youth’s needs, known and unknown, anger and bitterness subsided, fences mended and we were brought together by the burdens that we carried towards the common goal. We were tired, but we really felt like angels were working with us and we saw God’s hand in the spiritual atmosphere of the meetings.

A year later, 12 or more of those Korean young people crowded into a small studio apartment in Boston to eat and socialize. They were all laughing and having a great time when around midnight one of them asked a spiritual question that would change the course of their lives and impact the Adventist Youth movement in North America and beyond.

“From that moment on, the conversation turned into a Bible study, a Bible study that lasted until 8 AM the following morning. Never before had we experienced the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. His presence was so real in the room that we could almost touch Him”—Tracie Kim.

The spiritual bond they experienced that night over the Bible study led them to start SPARC (Students Preparing Adventists for the Return of Christ), with a goal to lead their fellow young people to total commitment to the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

In that SPARC group was a 20-year old Brandeis University student, who became one of the key architects of GYC. Today, he is the Program Director of CAMPUS, even while serving as pastor of the Oakwood SDA Church in Detroit. His church is being developed as the home base for Wayne State University campus ministry.⁹ His ministry, alongside that of his fellow Koreans, has helped to sustain the spirit of excellence within the emerging campus

movement and also helped the young people to transcend the black-white racial divide endemic within North American Adventism.¹⁰

2. CAMPUS

Not only were the lives of the Korean young people impacted by the 1998 Kutztown revival, but the speaker himself dedicated the remainder of his life to ministry to young people (he had previously committed himself to teach at Adventist Universities and Seminaries). It was at this camp meeting that he accepted Michigan Conference's invitation to start and direct its newly created department of secular campus ministry. Instead of working out of the Conference headquarters in Lansing, the office of this department was based in Ann Arbor, near the University of Michigan campus. CAMPUS was established the following year in Ann Arbor to train young people as missionaries on secular campuses.

Thus, in 1999, under the theme "Higher than the Highest" (which was a call to excellence), CAMPUS welcomed 12 exceptional young people into its first batch of the missionary training program. Three of them were younger than 20 years of age and the remaining nine were in their early twenties. These young pioneers had all embraced the call to excellence, simplicity, sacrifice and commitment. They suspended their studies and careers and came to Michigan to serve as missionary volunteers on a secular university campus. No one paid them to do so. On the contrary, they paid to be in that program. They slept on the hard floors of an unfurnished rented house until a donation of furniture was made to CAMPUS. The rigorous classes they took yielded no academic credit. Their spirit of self-sacrifice was not always appreciated. When asked why they decided to respond to this radical call to discipleship, one of them, a 19-year old Hispanic missionary, replied to the Director of CAMPUS:

There exists an army of dedicated young people out there who are willing to do God's work. They are scattered all over the place. They will go anywhere, provided someone mobilizes them, trains them, and challenges them.

That 19-year old missionary accepted the

challenge to take full responsibility to bring about such a spiritual movement of youth. He started thinking about how to network with other young people with the same vision. That teenager became another of the three leading founders of GYC. He later served as Program Director of CAMPUS. He currently serves as a pastor in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and his church is the home base for campus ministry at Michigan Technological University.¹¹

3. The Princeton Connection

Again in 1999, in a seemingly isolated event, a young woman of Trinidadian heritage who had earlier abandoned her faith when she enrolled at Princeton University was looking for peace. The Holy Spirit impressed upon her the need of repentance. That year she recommitted her life to the Lord.

Almost a year later she was visiting a neighboring church, which was hosting a satellite evangelism meeting, when she met a member of SPARC. Since her conversion the young Princeton student had begun ministering on her campus. Now the SPARC member introduced her to other Adventist young people involved in campus ministry.

As she listened to sermon tapes given to her by members of SPARC, she came to learn about CAMPUS, and would later volunteer as a missionary after her graduation from Princeton. She became the first president of GYC and served as Executive Secretary until 2007. She subsequently received a law degree at Washington and Lee Law School. Today she works as an attorney and continues to be active in campus ministry in the Northeastern United States.¹²

4. The Vision of A Movement

In January 2000, members of SPARC visited the University of Michigan where they formed friendships with the students and missionaries at CAMPUS. This group of friends was instrumental in organizing and formulating the vision of GYC. Of note was a friendship between Justin Kim (a Korean), Israel Ramos (a Hispanic), and Andrea Oliver (an African-American of Trinidadian background). These three students were the principal architects of GYC, the racially-diverse grassroots movement of this group of Adventist young people.

In its seven-year history (2002-2009), GYC, with the active support of CAMPUS, has transformed many lives and enabled them to be godly and effective leaders, brilliant and winsome soul-winners, and sound spiritual counselors for college/university campuses and other professional environments. Today, the GYC-phenomenon that was birthed at CAMPUS continues to spawn many other grassroots youth and student movements and initiatives in the NAD and around the world.

Conclusion

Who would have thought that a simple three-fold strategy to evangelize secular campuses—namely, “Bring Missionaries *TO* campus,” “Raise up Missionaries *ON* campus,” and “Send forth Missionaries *FROM* campus”—could have had such an impact? True, CAMPUS is nowhere near its potential. Yet, the fruit it is already bearing suggests that when young people are transformed by the Word of God and are given sound training, they become the most effective group to reach their fellow students and impact their generation.

Such is the potential of a Bible-based, life-transforming, and mission-driven approach to ministry to secular university campuses. When such a ministry combines authentic spirituality with a philosophy of excellence and a methodology of simplicity, it is inevitable that the ministry would be transformed into a vibrant spiritual movement. We ignore this kind of ministry at our own loss.

Endnotes

¹Prior to 1998, other conferences, churches, and individuals in the North American Division (NAD) had made laudable efforts to reach out to students on public universities and colleges. Often their efforts were subsumed under youth, education, or personal ministries departments. Michigan Conference was the first in the NAD to create a separate department focused solely to ministry to secular university students. The director appointed to oversee the development of this new line of ministry in Michigan, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, was trained in engineering and systematic theology. He had previously served as the director of a thriving public campus ministries program in Ghana, West Africa. He was also a key architect in pioneering

the establishment and growth of Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America and Europe.

²For more on the different activities of CAMPUS, see “CAMPUS: A Conference-Sponsored Campus-Based Ministry” in Kirk King and Ron Pickell, eds, *The Word On Campus: A Guide To Public College Ministry* (Lincoln, NE: *AdventSource*, 2008), 275-285. See also Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, “CAMPUS History and Major Dates and Events,” detailing “CAMPUS Interactions with Other Students, Organizations, and NAD”—a 7-page document shared with attendees at the ACF/NAD meeting in Berkeley, California, November 14-16, 2008.

³I write from the perspective of one who, since 1998, has been intimately and actively involved in the conception, development, and leadership of the Michigan Conference Public Campus Ministries department. Since its creation in 1999, I have also served as the Director of CAMPUS.

⁴The phrase “Something Has Happened” was the title of a special message I presented to attendees at the CAMPUS alumni weekend on April 19, 2008. The message details the early history of CAMPUS.

⁵Historically, God has often launched major revival and reformation movements from public university campuses. For example, great movements were associated with John Wycliffe at Oxford University, John Huss at the University of Prague, Martin Luther at the University of Wittenberg, John Calvin at the University of Geneva, John and Charles Wesley at Oxford University, and others. For more on this, see E. G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1911), 79-264.

⁶At the Shine '99 conference at University of Carolina, Chapel Hill, I shared with the attendees the 1999 “CAMPUS Masterplan” document while discussing the work at CAMPUS, noting especially our missionary training program, our philosophy, methodology, and goal. During the B2K (Berkeley 2000) meeting at the University of California, Berkeley (September 2000), the CAMPUS team shared with others a progress report on the public campus ministry in Michigan.

⁷CAMPUS runs a Missionary Training Program in Ann Arbor, Michigan, near the University of Michigan campus. It is a two-semester, hands-on program that combines sound classroom instruction with practical field training in ministry and outreach activities. The classes are taught by dedicated staff and guest instructors. The goal of the Missionary Training Program is to develop godly and effective leaders, brilliant and winsome soul winners, and sound spiritual counselors for college/university campuses and other professional environments. Limited to no more than a dozen serious students at a time, the program runs concurrent with the academic year at the University of Michigan.

⁸For this history, I am indebted to the following works: Sikhululekile Hlatshwayo, Justin Kim, & Stephanie Quick, eds., *For this Purpose: A Compilation of Sermons and Presentations from GYC* (Ann Arbor, MI: GYC Resources, 2008). Israel Ramos, "What Adventist Young People Really Want: The General Youth Conference Experiment," in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*, ed. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005), pp. 61-70. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "A Grassroots Youth Revival Movement: The Untold Story of the Struggle & Triumph of GYC." Available at the author's website: www.drpipim.org. http://drpipim.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=126&Itemid=5. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "Koreans & the Adventist Youth Revival Movement: A Reflection & An Appeal. Unpublished document, available through the author.

⁹Justin Kim, that 20-year old student, served GYC as Executive Secretary, VP for Programming & Resources, and currently is a General VP. Three other individuals who, coincidentally, all have the same last names as Kim, also played major roles in the future GYC movement: 1) Tracie Kim, then 25 – was a law student at Boston University School of Law. Today she is working in the Intellectual Property law department at Caterpillar, Inc. She is also the legal advisor for GYC. 2) James Kim, then 22 – was a student at Rutgers University, NJ. He has subsequently graduated from Loma Linda School of Medicine and is doing his residency. He has served as

Treasurer of GYC. 3) Jeannie Kim, then 20 – was an undergraduate student at Brown University. She received a masters in education from the Harvard School of Education. She currently volunteers at Greater Boston Academy, and is part of BLESS. She was the Secretary of Internal Affairs of GYC. There were other Korean student leaders (I call them –"the almost Kims," because their names missed the initial "K" so they are simply "lms")—Andy Im, Ray Im, and Steve Im. They also are part of the campus ministry movement.

¹⁰CAMPUS and GYC have always reflected a significant, active presence of Korean students and youth. Their involvement has helped to heal the black-white racial divide in North American Adventism. More significantly, the impact around the world of the philosophy of excellence promoted by CAMPUS cannot be humanly explained without noting the tremendous contribution of Korean youth. These Korean youth, most of whom are brilliant students, have contributed to the "higher-than-the highest," "can-do," "gutsy, no-nonsense," and "all or nothing" spirit of CAMPUS and GYC.

¹¹That 19-year old missionary was Israel Ramos. Until 2007, he was President of GYC. Others who later responded to the challenge and embraced this vision of a grassroots young people's movement included: Judy Namm (graduated from the University of Michigan and worked as a teacher at the Ann Arbor Adventist school. She served as GYC's VP for Programming and Logistics and is currently the Administrative Secretary of GYC). Steven Waterbrook (graduated from University of Michigan, then studied medicine at Loma Linda University where he started Advent HOPE—an Adventist campus version of the Campus HOPE on secular campuses. He became a Vice President of External Affairs of GYC). Mike Orlich (graduated from University of Michigan Medical School and then worked as a Physician and Academic Dean at Weimar Institute. He served as GYC's Vice President of Evangelism).

¹²That young Princeton student is Andrea Oliver. The SPARC member she met in 1999 was James Kim (at that time a student at Rutgers University, NJ). James later served as Treasurer of GYC when Andrea was its President.