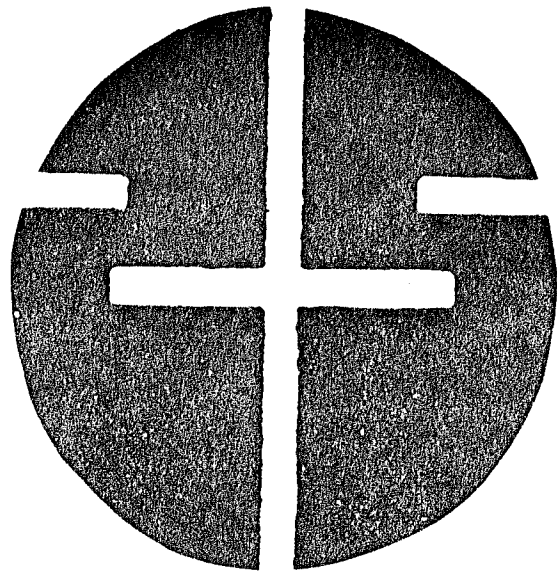


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The History of the  
Wisconsin Synod  
in Japan

THE SEMINARY LIBRARY 1957 - 1982  
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary  
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**BOOK III**  
**1972 - 1982**  
(1985)

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Preface to the Chronology  
1972 - 1982

5 -

The following year by year chronology of the Japan Mission is not intended to be an exhaustive history of the years 1972-1982. It is merely a gathering of highlights from those years as gleaned from LECC minutes, articles appearing in the Northwestern Lutheran and personal correspondence of Pastor Poetter. It is the hope of the writer that this modest effort will serve the purpose of giving the reader an overview of major events of these 11 years.

In any brief historical overview, the inclusion or exclusion of facts, persons and developments is left up to the writer's discretion. An attempt has been made to include as much of the above as possible, but the exclusion of even some of the basics is entirely possible though wholly unintended. Perhaps, a later revision or editing by others 'in the know' will provide what is lacking due to the limited sources and expertise of the undersigned.

- 1972 -

Seven pastors were active in the Japan field in 1972. The missionaries from America numbered four: Habben, Johne, Meier and Poetter. The Japanese numbered three: Pastors Yamada, Oshino and Yoshida. These seven men carried an exceptionally heavy load as they labored for the Gospel's outreach through preaching, instruction classes, and in developing materials for print and radio broadcasts. In light of this shortage of manpower, the WELS honored the request of the Japan field for a fifth missionary. His presence would not be felt, however, until the completion of at least two years of intensive study of the Japanese language.

In this 15th year of WELS work in Japan, two men were training for the ministry at Tsuchiura through a special two year pre-Seminary course of instruction. One of these men, Muhenide Nakamoto, would one day complete his training there and go on to enter the field as the 4th national Pastor of the LECC.

Pastor Meier continued to conduct worship services in the Ueno area of Tokyo. This strategic location occupies a place near the route of the Tokyo railway system and held promise as the second site for outreach in Tokyo. In Spring the foundations were being laid for a chapel-parsonage at Hitachi that would provide Pastor Yoshida and his members with helpful facilities for their worship and outreach.

Literature and radio continued to bring the gospel message to thousands of people. Translations of "This We Believe,"

"Basic Doctrines of the Bible," and "The Wonderful Works of God" have proved their didactic and practical value in personal and group instruction in Japan. These works, together with tracts and radio broadcasts made possible by the WELS Mass Media fund, were still the most effective way of reaching thousands of Japanese in their homes, automobiles and businesses. Even the blind were included in gospel outreach through a growing Braille program.

The spiritual and educational needs of the missionary children were again met by calling a New Ulm graduate for one year of service at Tsuchiura. Vicar-teacher David Halldin replaced Eric Hartzell in this calling. All have termed the program successful and the teachers themselves have profited in their spiritual lives from the experience.

The decision to "float" the American dollar resulted in a devaluation of the monies sent to support the Japan missions by as much as 18%. The Japan Mission itself attempted to meet the resulting budgetary problems by omitting such things as committee visitations. They did so with the hope that "the members of the Synod will find it in their love for their Savior to keep their offerings in pace with the essentials of the Gospel work in Japan."

-1973-

The year witnessed some changes in the pastoral field. Pastor Yamada, the Japan mission's first indigenous pastor, resigned his call after hospitalization for a nervous disorder and an extended sick leave. This made the need for another expatriate missionary all the more critical. That need was filled when the Lord led Pastor Herbert Winterstein, a 1967 graduate of WLS, to accept the call to Japan. After a semester of study at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, he arrived in Japan to continue his study of Japanese at the Tower School in Tokyo.

Pastor Meier continued his services at Ueno, Tokyo and began exploratory work in Yokohama and Chiba. Pastor Oshino organized a three-day evangelism drive in Ashikaga. This city in the Tochigi prefecture had responded well to the Sunday radio broadcasts, but there was insufficient manpower to follow up the calls and letters. To fill this need in so promising an area, permission was sought and given to locate a suitable piece of land for a new mission.

The seminary lost one of its two students, but Mr. Nakamoto continued his studies. Two women from Hope congregation of Tsuchiura also continued their education by enrolling at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm.

While Misses' Sakai and Tomito studied at New Ulm, David Johnson, a New Ulm graduate, took his first call into the teaching ministry via Japan. Thus the spiritual needs and growth

of Christian children and adults were met in a reciprocal manner (during the 1973-1974 school year) on both sides of the Pacific.

1973 also witnessed the weaving of the first ties that were to bind the LECC and the WELS in fellowship. In January the DCC recommended that the Rijicho, together with the called Japanese pastors and deacons, form a committee to draw up a constitution for the LECC. The plans called for careful study of other synodical constitutions for proper form and a careful study of Scripture for content. Each portion was to be read, studied and discussed by the Japan congregations upon completion. The DCC would also survey its doctrinal content step by step. In November, the Constitution Committee reported on the progress of its work.

The WELS continued to view the progress of the young LECC and elected Pastor Luther Weindorf as member of the Japan EC to monitor the gospel's spread in the Japanese church.

-1974-

The Japan field again experienced change in ministries in 1974. Pastor Meier received and accepted a call back to the States in Spring. He left for his new parish in Fairbanks, Alaska in May. There were now two vacancies to be filled. Pastors Poetter and Habben filled vacancies at Mito and Shimodate respectively. Missionaries who had already been carrying a heavy load received additional responsibilities. It was clear that another man was needed if the Gospel needs of the Japan missions were to be adequately filled.

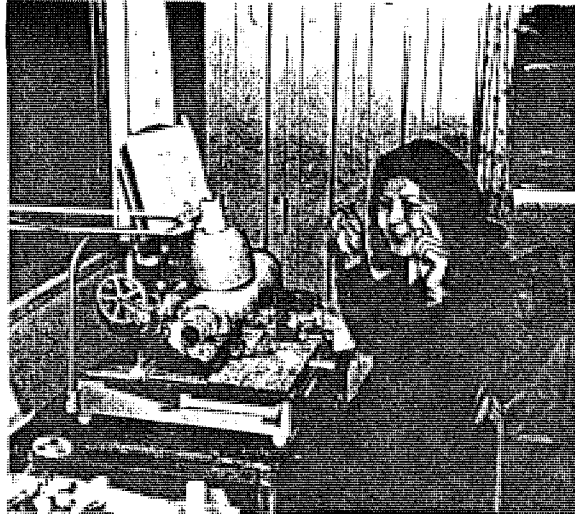
Pastor Roger Falk of Hillman, Michigan answered the call to fill that need and was commissioned on August 11th at Atonement Church in Milwaukee. He and his family, together with the Wintersteins, arrived in Japan in August. Both pastors enrolled at the Tower School in Tokyo for study of the Japanese language. Two years would pass before their studies would enable them to lighten the heavy responsibilities of the other five missionaries. Also called for service in Japan in 1974 was DMLC graduate Ronald Schleef, to continue the program of education for the missionaries' children.

The congregation in Tsuchiura faced a problem that on the surface would not seem too serious in the States but was magnified by conditions in Japan. It was the problem of land erosion. In a country where land often costs as much as \$45.00 a square foot, erosion must be dealt with promptly. To save the church-parsonage-seminary facilities was of immediate concern not only to the congregation but also to the LECC. To save the land and facilities a retaining wall was planned and built at a cost of \$60,000.00. There were no real alternatives to this expenditure, since the land was actually worth far more than the buildings, and land for purchase is scarce in Japan.

The Tsuchiura wall was not the main construction. Members of the Ashikaga congregation joined with visiting members of the World Seminary Conference in dedicating a church and parsonage in September. Plans were made for funding the building of a chapel in Utsonomiya. Truly 1974 was a year of expansion for the LECC!

Printing operations expanded too. A new offset press was purchased through the generous gifts of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society and the old press was overhauled. The expanded operations resulted in the distribution of 91,400 newspaper slip-ins and evangelism tracts. Mail contacts increased to 1,000. Printing operations and radio broadcasts were again the primary evangelism tool in Japan.

1974 was an especially noteworthy year because the new Lutheran Hymnal was published in Japanese. This Hymnal, the first of its kind in Japan, was produced by the Literature Society of the All-Lutheran Free Conference. It has proved to be an wonderful blessing for the Lutherans of the island nation.



Typist - Miss Aoyama - Print Shop

In November, the LECC welcomed WELS Vice-President Carl Mischke to Japan. Pastor Mischke preached the sermon at the opening meeting of the DCC on the 23rd. Most of that day was spent discussing the proposed LECC constitution. Through this special session and the visitation by the World Seminary Board, ties between the LECC and her mother church were strengthened in a very personal way. The daughter synod became so much more than statistics and reports. She became, more than ever, a group of flesh and blood Christians who desired our continued support, guidance and prayers.

-1975-

Although in 1975 there were only five active pastors in the LECC, the prospects for the future were looking up. Pastors Falk and Winterstein would soon finish their training in the Japanese school at Tokyo. Student Nakamoto of the Seminary began vicaring in April at the Shimodate Church under Pastor Yoshida. Within a year, two expatriates would enter the field and the following year still another indigenous pastor would join them. Plans were made to place Pastor Falk in Utsonomiya and Pastor Winterstein in Tsuchiura.

The Seminary Board also had further cause for optimism. Two students enrolled in the pre-seminary training program in 1975. They were Mr. Akagami and Mr. Gunji. The former had given up the business he had inherited from his father to concentrate on his studies full time. Education at Hope Lutheran School in Mito continued to run smoothly as Mr. Mark Adickes assumed teaching responsibilities from Ronald Schleef.

Two celebrations loomed large in 1975. These were the "Grace 125" celebration of the WELS and the 25th anniversary of Pastor Poetter's ministry in Japan. Both deserve comment.

Pastor Poetter remarked to the DCC that, "As children rejoice with parents on an anniversary, so we rejoice with the mother church. She has been a good mother to us! God grant that we may grow up to be like her, always acknowledging God's grace as the source of every good thing." He then went on to draw a comparison between the mother and daughter churches: "How old are we? Yet very young, but we too have experienced years of God's grace. God grant that His grace may be ours for 1975 and many years to come."

Following the Reformation service on November 3, 1975, a special fellowship dinner was held at the Tsuchiura grounds commemorating Pastor Poetter's 25 years of evangelism in Japan. Nearly all the missionaries were present for the occasion, with Pastor Oshino serving as M.C. Each spoke words of congratulations and all presented him with a large silver sake cup with a Bible verse written on it. Although the whole celebration must have touched him deeply, he reflected on the great blessings the Savior had shown in his 25 years, rather than on his own accomplishments.

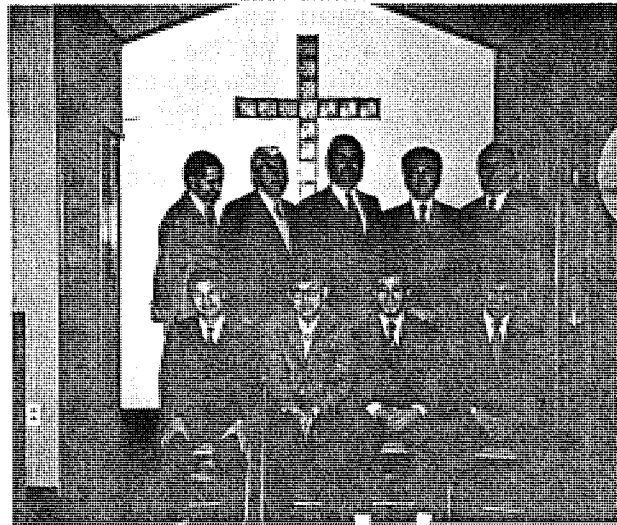
While Poetter celebrated 25 years in Japan, a 32-year old woman by the name of Kazu Kusawake was deeply immersed in studies at Dr. Martin Luther College. She had left Japan only months before to learn more about her Lord at the WELS teacher-training institution in New Ulm, Minnesota. She later expressed her sentiments shortly before she returned to Japan after a year of study. They were printed in the New Ulm Daily Journal as follows: "All the people here have been so nice to me....I have learned a lot about God here. My faith has become more fast. I appreciate what I learned about God." Her words might have been the "plain" English of a Japanese student, but they were also the plain talk of a child of God who had grown in knowledge and love for her Savior!

The ties between the LECC and the WELS, however, ran deeper than the personal experiences of Kazu Kusawake. They were confessional. In 1975, after serious study, the proposed constitution was unanimously adopted by the delegates to the LECC convention. The Japanese church was becoming a doctrinally mature sister synod to the WELS. It was coming of age in a way that no other mission field had ever come of age. And both synods rejoiced in her development!



In 1976 the long-awaited laborers reached the mission fields of Japan in the persons of Roger Falk and Harold Winterstein. Pastor Falk began his service at the Utsonomiya meeting place by preaching on a once a month basis. Pastor Winterstein was assigned to the Tsuchiura and Gakuen City areas. The Lord had answered the prayers of the Japanese church! Missionary Johne received an assignment to Ishioka and Ami. In December, a Missouri Synod pastor with many years experience in the mission field of Japan, approached the EC to discuss colloquy into the Wisconsin Synod. Would the Lord provide yet another laborer for his vineyard?

The year opened with the disappointing news that the Yokohama evangelism program had come to an end. Pastor Oshino had labored there for two years but by February attendance at the meetings was nil. But when the Lord closes doors, he generally opens others. By May a suitable parcel of land had been found in Utsunomiya. It should be remembered that in a land as populated as Japan, this is no small blessing in itself. Even with this purchase, funds remained for improvement at the hub of LECC in Tsuchiura. The drive areas were blacktopped at a cost of \$1,100.00 (in Japan, the city often pays the bulk of such improvements).



LECC Pastors

Significant gains were reported by the Literature Committee in 1976. In Spring the committee announced that it was publishing a Small Catechism and "Basic Doctrines of the Bible." Pastor Poetter and Tomiko Ito together finished a translation of "The Wonderful Works of God"-a work that has proved to be just as useful in Japanese instructions as in English classes here.

The most perplexing problem the expatriate missionaries faced in the mid-seventies was that of educating their children. The problem had been solved years before on the elementary level and the solution had continued to prove quite workable. Dennis

Lemke, like his five predecessors, adjusted well to his teaching position in Tsuchiura. The problems arose on the high school level. The options available to the expatriates were limited. They could send their teens to the American School in Japan, the Christian Academy of Japan (a Reformed school providing elementary and high school education), or one of the WELS preparatory schools. After meetings in March, May, September and November, no consensus could be reached. The issue remained unsolved. Suffice it to say that feelings were strong on all sides, but each continued to respect the discretion of the other. That is where the issue would come to rest a couple years later with an agreement to review the situation every five to seven years.

The above disagreement did not hinder further progress on other fellowship matters. In April the Executive Committee suggested that the time was right to think about overtures of fellowship with the WELS since the Japan synod now had a constitution. Fellowship with the WELS seemed only a matter of time!

The same spiritual growth so evident in the framing of a constitution was also in evidence as the Committee on Doctrinal Matters was organized in May. The committee was to have several functions. It was to keep the LECC informed on Lutheran developments around the world, judge the doctrinal content of publications printed outside the fellowship and supply information on denominational differences. The formation of such a committee demonstrated the resolve of the LECC to continue on the path of confessional Lutheranism on which it was founded in 1963.

WELS' interest in her sister synod continued in 1976 as the Executive Committee for Japan underwent reorganization. Mr. Clarence Krause became Chairman, Pastor Luther Weindorf, Vice-Chairman and Pastor Kenneth Bast, Secretary. In spite of the reorganization, the purpose of the EC remained the same: to advise and plan for the needs and growth of the LECC in Japan.

-1977-

In this, the twentieth year of WELS outreach in Japan, the Lord blessed the LECC with a third national pastor. Muhenide Nakamoto finished his seminary training in March and was assigned to the Shimodate congregation thereafter. Nakamoto's graduation and call were especially welcome events in light of Missionary Winterstein's termination of services after only nine months in the field. Shortly after Winterstein's dismissal, the EC likened the turn of events to that of the separation of Paul and Barnabas, where difference of opinion caused a parting of the ways among those earliest of Christian missionaries. One missionary reminded his people that God can turn such difficult times to work for the good of his church. At all events, the work of Missionary Winterstein went on when Pastor Johne offered his services in the vacancy.

In 1977 another expatriate missionary entered the Japan field. Pastor Keith Haberkorn accepted a call to Japan and left his three South Dakota congregations to begin studies in Japan the following February. In time his studies would also bear fruit for the spread of the gospel in the Japanese tongue. But there was yet another missionary prospect for the field who already knew the language. Elwood Fromm was colloquized and asked to spend a year at the seminary in Mequon before receiving a call into the WELS.

The DCC passed some noteworthy resolutions regarding expansion of the LECC in the coming years. Missionary Falk was to open an exploratory station in Kanuma or some other area. Pastor Elwood Fromm, upon completion of his year at the Mequon seminary, would take the Chiba congregation that had recently applied for admission into the LECC. Exploratory work was also to begin in Katsudo City between Mito and Hitachi. To insure WELS property holdings in Japan, Igarashi worked on the arduous task of registering land and buildings with the Japanese government. This confirmed the "good faith" property agreement between the LECC and WELS some years before.



**Baptism**

**Mika Chan**

There were other blessings from the Lord's hand in several areas. The Mass Media Fund of the WELS supplied necessary funds for rebroadcasting the Sunday worship services in the evenings. Responses to the program by phone and mail rose. The LWMS granted funds to furnish the libraries of graduate national pastors, filling a need that could scarcely be filled by the graduates themselves after several years of full time study.

In the area of education, the DCC resolved that the Education Committee plan Sunday School teachers' institutes occasionally for the enrichment of those who labored in that important area of training and outreach. The elementary school at Hope Church welcomed Miss Christine Tews as teacher for the 1977-1978 school year. Akagami and Gunji continued their studies at the seminary.

The 1977 convention of the WELS, held at D M L C in New Ulm, Minnesota, reaffirmed the progress and goals of the LECC in Japan through the floor committee. The resolutions included a request for two more expatriate missionaries, a request for a program to bring together representatives of the various WELS world mission national churches and others in the fellowship and two resolutions dealing with the policy of creating an indigenous church in Japan. Pastor R. Freier of St. Joseph, Michigan was elected to guide the Japan church toward these goals through the EC.

-1978-

Several changes took place in the Japan field in 1978. Three new men accepted calls from the States - Elwood Fromm, John Boehringer and David Haberkorn. The Haberkorns arrived in February and settled in Tsuchiura City to begin his language study. Pastor Fromm completed his year of study at the Mequon seminary in May and later arrived in Hitachi. His evangelism work in Japan during the previous twenty years enabled him to begin on September 1st. Our seventh missionary, John Boehringer, accepted a call to Japan in August and left Fresno, California for training in Japan in October.

Pastor Yoshida moved to Yachiyo City to rent quarters closer to the rented hall where services were being held. The LECC planned to buy land in the Chiba Prefecture for erecting a chapel-parsonage in 1979 or 1980. The parsonage in Hitachi was also enlarged to accomodate Missionary Fromm's family.

The dollar declined considerably in 1978. The fact that WELS funds were "devalued" together with a \$700,000 shortage for the synodical budget moved the coordinating council to suggest limitations on land purchases and buildings for the Japan mission. Habben's exploratory work in Yokohama and Tokyo would have to remain, for some time, an extension of his present mission rather than opening the possibility of a new field. In spite of these apparent setbacks, the LECC could still look forward to growth in the Chiba area and the erection of facilities as budgeted in the near future.

The presses at Tsuchiura continued to print useful materials for pastors and laypeople in 1978. Pastor Poetter adapted the WELS "Handbook for Circuit Pastors" for use in Japan, while Pastor Falk completed a new translation of the liturgy for use by the congregations. Igarashi completed the translation of "The Shepherd Under Christ" for training in pastoral theology at the seminary and for study at the Mission Council meetings.

Special events also dotted the calendar of the LECC in 1978. The first Sunday School Teachers' Seminar was held on March 21st in Tsuchiura. On November 20th missionaries, their families and English-speaking members of Atonement gathered at that church in Higashi Kurume City, Tokyo to give thanks to God for having blessed the Fromms, Johnes and Poetters with 25 years of marriage

and 120 total years in foreign service. It was a rare celebration in so small a mission field.

-1979-

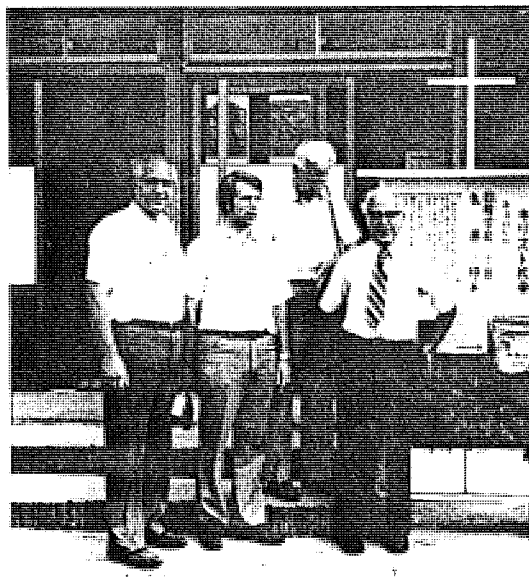
Student Wakichi Akagami completed his third year of classroom training at the seminary and was assigned to vicar under Pastor Yoshida in Chiba Prefecture. The future of Yoshida's congregation remained somewhat uncertain. Although the LECC had offered to contribute \$15,000 for the building of church-parsonage facilities, the WELS Board for World Missions suggested that alternative facilities be located to meet the needs of the group. This, of course, meant continued worship in rented quarters for the time being. Better news was forthcoming from the Tochigi area. Pastor Oshino distributed some 30,000 slip-ins in Tochigi City, thus reopening that area to evangelism once again after several years of absence.

The spiritual needs of members and missionaries alike continued to be met by publications from the print shop. A sample of the materials available included a Bible study on the Psalms, "Christian Family Life Under Christ," "The Word is Now," "Great Men of Faith," "Gospel Gems from Isaiah," "The Wonderful Works of God" and "Christ and the Holy Scriptures." The Holy Spirit was at work through the written word in 1979!

Christian instruction continued for members of all ages through the Bible classes, the seminary and the grade school. In April, a course in Hebrew was offered expatriate and national missionaries for the first time by Pastor Johne. Dr. Martin Luther College supplied Hope school with another graduate. Miss Marla Krauss was assigned to teach for the 1979-1980 school year. She succeeded Miss Tewes, who had filled that calling for the past two years.

Relations between the LECC and the WELS moved closer to an official declaration of fellowship with the adoption of "This We Believe" as the doctrinal statement of the LECC. Personal visitations by WELS representatives Theodore Sauer, Clarence Krause and Ronald Freier drew the two bodies closer together in a way that reports and statistics could never do.

Such visitations are important for appreciating the needs of the LECC. The need is great right now. As Pastor Oshino pointed out early in the year, the Japan mission needs the financial support of the WELS for



R Freier, T Olsen, T Sauer  
& C Krause

land and buildings if the field is to stand alone one day. Facilities for worship and growth are necessary if the LECC is not to be a burden on the WELS forever. Oshino's remarks were the remarks of a Japanese national who had carefully thought through the goals of the WELS Japan mission. He had reached the same conclusion about the goals of the LECC that its mother synod had reached two decades previous - the goal of establishing an indigenous Lutheran church in Japan.

-1980-

Two men entered the full-time work of preaching the gospel in Japan in 1980. Pastors Haberkorn and Boehringer completed their language studies and were assigned to the Zushi and Tsuchiura-Ishioka congregations respectively. Haberkorn's installation at Hope Church was held on March 2nd, while Boehringer's installation at Praise Church was held on November 23rd. "Praise" Lutheran was the youngest mission church located in the Yokohama area. Joining these new servants in their gospel labor was Miss Suzanne Tonder, the ninth graduate of New Ulm to receive assignment to Hope Elementary School, and soon to share in preaching the gospel was W. Akagami, who had completed his vicar year and had returned to the seminary to finish his training.

Throughout 1980 the prayers of Pastor Yoshida and his congregation for worship facilities continued to ascend to the Throne of Grace. Those prayers were answered by a gracious God, who moved the World Mission Board to authorize the full amount for the Chiba project from its funds.

The thanksgiving in Chiba for this wonderful gift was only heightened when days later correspondence arrived with the news that one Christian family had designated \$25,000 of a \$65,000 offering for the Chiba project. Chairman Sauer voiced his awe over the whole matter when he wrote, "Truly the Lord is good and he does some marvelous things in the hearts of his people." That was the reaction stateside. In Japan, and particularly in Chiba, the Christmas joy was made all the more complete.



Delegate Church Council Now, 1980

Doctrinal studies and the matter of official fellowship with the WELS also occupied the LECC in 1980. Plans were made to

translate the WELS' "Our Blessed Fellowship" and "Doctrinal Statement of the WELS, 1970." At the annual joint Reformation service at Tsuchiura Articles 1-4 and 7-8 of the Augsburg Confession were studied under the theme, "The Augsburg Confession: Scriptural and Timely." The Rijikai presented plans to prepare for an official declaration of fellowship with the WELS.

The LECC also looked forward to 1982 and the 25th anniversary of the Japan mission by choosing Keith Habben to chair a committee to prepare for a year of "Praising His Grace." The small church had good reason for planning such a celebration and for planning it early. Although they were yet small in number, they had received great blessings from their Lord over a quarter century.

-1981-

In February the Rijikai designated a field for W. Akagami in the area of Toride, Abiko, Kashiwa and Matsudo. Graduation and call day differ in Japan. The candidate is given an option of either accepting or declining his call before graduation. In Akagami's case, he accepted the call. He graduated and was ordained on the same day, March 22nd. He was the fourth national pastor and, to date, the last to be assigned a place in the Japan mission field. His call brought to 11 the number of missionaries active in the LECC. Akagami's remarks on the occasion echoed the sentiments familiar to all who enter the holy ministry: "Today is a great day for my life. Seven years ago I could not imagine this joy. In my years of study I recognize that the holy ministry is the most important work in the world. I thank God for his guidance....Please pray for me and my family."

A few other noteworthy developments took place in the Japanese congregations in 1981. Responsibility for the Ishioka church fell, by agreement, to Pastor Harold Johne. David Haberkorn carried on his work in Ami. The Chiba church dedicated land and worship facilities for service to the Lord on September 15th, while Pastor Nakamoto began outreach efforts in Koga City and Iwase Town. Grace, Mito joined Peace, Ashikaga City and Hope, Tsuchiura in adopting the sample congregational constitution in April.

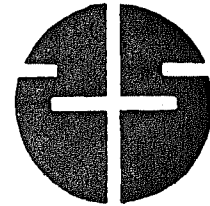
The spiritual needs of the missionary children were entrusted to Helene Grambow, the tenth New Ulm graduate to serve at Hope Elementary School. Translating and printing continued to meet the spiritual needs of those attending Bible classes and camps. "What Does the Bible Say?" "Legacy of the Reformation," "Evolution," "A Study of James," "Distinctive Doctrines and Customs of the Lutheran Church" were among the latest products of the Tsuchiura print shop. The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society also contributed to the program by sending ten copies of "The Wonderful Works of God" in Braille.

Steps toward official fellowship with WELS commenced throughout the year. In March the pastors met to discuss the WELS doctrinal statements. Four months later, "A Declaration of Church Fellowship with the WELS by the LECC" was signed by congregational representatives and pastors and sent with a message of greetings to the WELS convention. The news reached the convention through the President's Report and was welcomed with joy by the delegates. It was a joy that might be likened to the Apostle Paul's remarks in his letter to the Corinthians where that church gladdened his heart, not by receiving the message as if it were from Paul, but as it truly is, the message of God. The Japanese church had examined the Scriptures to search out the validity of our doctrinal statements. She had "searched the Scriptures" and searched them thoroughly in arriving at a new status of fellowship with her mother synod.

-1982-

"Praising His Grace" was a fitting theme for the 25th anniversary of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church of Japan. In a short quarter century, the Lord had provided the flock of Japan with a number of dedicated men to serve the church. Seven expatriate missionaries were spreading the wonderful message of the Savior in a land 99% heathen. Four nationals had completed seminary training and had already labored for their Lord for nearly half a century. Radio and printed materials were reaching thousands of homes and, potentially, millions of people.

*Praising  
His Grace*



1957-1982

聖恵を  
讚美する

The Lord continued to shower his blessings on his church in 1982. Funds became available for expansion of the Ashikaga land and chapel facilities, relocation of the Shimodate facilities and expansion of the Tsuchiura property. The Book of Concord was available for the first time through the Japan Lutheran Church. Igarashi continued his translating activity with "Genesis," "Evolution" and "On Human Suffering." A devotional book based on excerpts from Luther sermons, "The Word Day by Day with Luther," was published.

How does a church body go about "Praising His Grace?" It starts with committee work. Pastors Yoshida, Oshino, Habben and Falk were appointed to serve on the planning committee for the 25th anniversary. On September 12th a special service was held at Tsuchiura, including a liturgy of praise for the blessings of the past 25 years. President Mischke of the WELS delivered a message in English and Pastor Oshino followed with a message in



Japanese. Executive Secretary of the WELS Board for World Missions Theodore Sauer and Chairman of the Board R. Freier were also on hand for the service. The sister synods exchanged gifts - a Luther seal for the seminary and bamboo and cross for the LECC office. Special recognition was paid Mr. Clarence Krause, Pastor Poetter and Deacon Igarashi for their years of fruitful service for the Japanese mission.

Half a world away brothers and sisters in the faith also "Praised His Grace" for the blessings of the past 25 years. WELS set aside September 12th as a day of special prayer and thanksgiving. Congregations of the synod were permitted an inside glance at the Japan mission through an excellent filmstrip tailor-made for the anniversary. Information kits were distributed to all stateside congregations with an offer to inspect a circulating memorabilia kit.

The celebration was active on either side of the Pacific. LECC and WELS members were invited to share in the future spread of the gospel in Japan through their offerings. Together the synods raised \$145,000 for the Church Extension Fund of the LECC. It was a generous token of gratitude for the sharing of God's grace that we ourselves have received.

"Praising His Grace" - the theme for 25 years of blessings upon the Japan mission, the theme of people whose lives have been touched by the saving message of the gospel, a theme for life as we labor to touch the lives of others with the good news of the gospel.

PART 2  
A Topical Treatment of Mission Outreach in Japan

The information provided in the following pages includes a brief sketch of some of the major areas through which the gospel message is reaching ever greater numbers of people in the Land of the Rising Sun. The majority of the material presented has been gleaned from minutes of the LECC, from letters of Missionary Poetter and articles appearing in the Northwestern Lutheran from 1972-1982. In addition, the earlier history, "Praising His Grace," has provided useful highlights from the period from 1957 to 1971. It has been the goal of this writer to combine as much useful information as possible without hindering the casual reader with unnecessary detail or disjointed order. With this goal in mind, a thorough outline for Part Two has been included to simplify the locating of desired information.

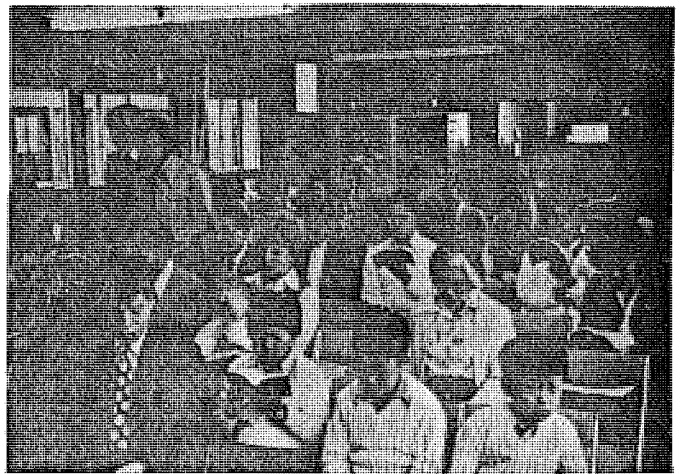
WORSHIP

development of the Japanese service - the liturgy and hymnal  
in Japanese - Bible study in Japan - materials available in  
Japanese - Bible camps - stewardship as worship

In the earlier years of the WELS mission in Japan, it was common for missionaries to preach to Japanese worshipers with the assistance of an interpreter. After intensive study, our expatriate missionaries became familiar enough with the language to reach the people in their native tongue. Generally speaking, two to three years of intense study is necessary for a Westerner to master Japanese, although it has been noted that one never really masters it like an indigenous preacher.

The development of the Lutheran Japanese liturgy reached a milestone in 1974. In that year, the Lutheran Literature Society of the All-Lutheran Free Conference of Japan published the first Lutheran hymnal. While neither the LECC nor the WELS is in fellowship with this group, this hymnal was welcomed as an indispensable asset to our own worship.

Five years later, our missionaries were asked to examine the ALFC hymnal for questionable readings. That same year a Liturgy and Worship Committee was formed to work on updating the liturgy into colloquial Japanese. Three Japanese pastors finished this trial liturgy in September of 1980 and it met with the approval of the LECC.



The Congregation

The Japanese have adapted well to Lutheran liturgical forms and hymns. They work at it. It's not uncommon for them to assemble for worship early to practice singing some of the more difficult hymns in the hymnal. Their appreciation and love for Lutheran hymnody touches the hearts of expatriate missionaries deeply at the special joint Reformation services, where language and cultural barriers give way totally to the powerful confession, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

Bible Study is another area of worship that is flourishing in Japan. When our WELS missionary outreach in Japan began in June 1957, Pastor Seeger's classes were attended by eleven people. The majority freely admitted that they were more interested in learning English from a native American than in a study of Scripture. Nevertheless the Holy Spirit used even this strange motivation to begin harvesting souls in the Tokyo area.

Many things have changed since those earlier mission endeavors. Today, some Japanese still attend Bible Classes for the sake of learning English, but our missionaries are somewhat more reluctant to tutor individuals or small groups in the art of speaking the English language. In fact today there is considerably more material available in Japanese than there was a few decades ago.

The Bible has been available in Japanese for over a century and it's story is an interesting history in itself. The earliest Bibles to reach Japan were actually printed in Dutch and English. These were sent to Japan by the American Bible Society for use by the Dutch whose contacts in Japan predated all other western nations. The English involvement in Japan coincided with the reopening of that country's ports by Admiral Perry in 1853. These editions of Scripture constituted some of the earliest 'large-scale' Japanese contacts with the Bible, and were not even in their native tongue!

Several years later, in 1880, the first Bible in classical Japanese was published by the American Bible Society. This New Testament was the product of two Baptist ministers, one of whom was a marine in Admiral Perry's expedition 37 years earlier. By 1887, the entire 'Motoyaku' or Standard Version was ready for publishing in Classical Japanese.

The post-war period offered tremendous opportunities to spread the Gospel message to the Japanese through the written word. From 1945 to 1951 twelve million copies of the Authorized Version were distributed. Our missionaries still make use of this version in worship and Bible Study, (although a more colloquial edition in Japanese did become available in 1955).

The Bible is truly central to the life of the Japanese Lutheran Church and it's individual members. It is simply a matter of course for them to read their Bibles on a daily basis and to read it cover to cover before baptism. The latter is not an observable response to any written rule, but is free evidence

of the great love that the Japanese have for their God and for his Word. This love is demonstrated collectively at the annual Spring and Summer Bible classes that are well-attended year after year. Intensive personal and group Bible study has been the Holy Spirit's prime medium of witnessing to Christ in Japan.

As is the case in at least 17 different world mission tongues, the Small Catechism has become an important textbook for instructing people of all ages in Japan. Small children study from an edition that includes phonetic readings with the Japanese characters to facilitate reading while future pastors study an edition similar to our Gauzawitz edition in their pre-seminary instructions. No special problems have arisen in 'making Luther talk Japanese' in respect to either the Small or Large Catechisms. This fact permitted the Literature Committee to publish both the Small Catechism and related materials as early as 1976.

Instructions in the Lutheran faith are by no means limited to the Japanese Bible and Catechism. Many familiar pamphlets and courses from the WELS are now available in Japanese. "This We Believe," "Guidance from God's Word," and "Basic Doctrines of the Bible" by President Schuetze are familiar studies to the Japanese. These, together with "Christ and the Holy Scriptures" by Harold Wicke were all translated into the native tongue by Igarashi Sensei, a man who has been called 'the gift of God to the Church in Japan' by grateful missionaries of the past 25 years. (See biographical sketch and the general publications under Evangelism - Seminary for further translations by Igarashi).

At times, expatriate missionaries have combined their efforts with indigenous workers to produce useful materials for Bible Study. Through such combined efforts of Pastor Poetter and Tomiko Ito, for instance, "The Wonderful Works of God" by Professor Paul Eichmann of Northwestern College was made available in 1976. This particular work has provided an invaluable tool for the instruction of our Lutheran friends in several congregations of the LECC.

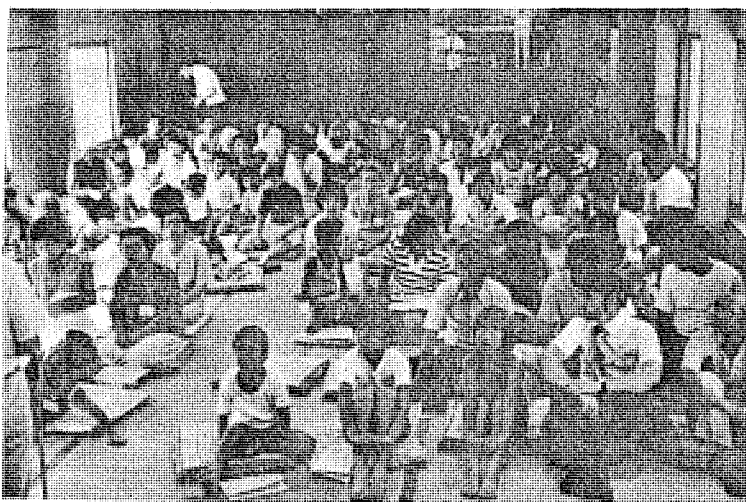
All of these materials have the distinctive mark of being Lutheran and conservative. In a land where the materials of other denominations have been weighed and found wanting, the translation and publication of studies that are theologically and doctrinally sound is of great importance. Surely we Lutherans on both sides of the Pacific have great reason for "Praising His Grace" for providing dedicated men and adequate resources for translating and publishing these materials. We owe so much to so few. The Lord will surely reward the efforts that we cannot repay!

While most Bible Study materials are translations of pamphlets from the WELS, some studies are written by our missionaries as it is needed. And the need arises at least twice a year when large groups assemble for Bible Camp twice a year.

These Bible Camps are held twice a year, in the Spring and in the Summer. The Spring Camp is often held in April and lasts for one and a half days. It is often held at the facilities at Tsuchiura where dozens of people have in the past congregated for studies of selected Psalms and parables, evangelism and goals of Christian parents for their children.

Summer Camp is often held in August and consists of two days of intensive study and a half day of recreation. The Ten Commandments, portions of the Sermon on the Mount and portions of the Book of Acts have been studied in the past. Lectures and small group discussions combine to provide for growth in knowledge of the written Word and in faith - applying the Word to personal life. The camps have sparked considerable interest among Japanese Lutherans, and it's common for attendance to reach 100.

Camps are by no means restricted to adults. Children and young people are provided with their own 'course of study.' The agenda for the Summer of 1976 included an opportunity for Junior High students to teach the story of Noah and the Flood to the younger children. They, in turn, presented the story the following day in words and pictures to their proud parents. Such a thorough agenda involves people of all ages and involves them in a very personal way.



Summer Bible Study Conference

As we look forward to the future of organized Lutheran worship in the Japan Churches we have every reason for optimism. In a land where people normally have nothing to do with 'assembling together' except for births, weddings and funerals, a strong faithful nucleus is regularly in attendance. In a country where confessing one's self a Christian is synonymous with breaking ties with the closest of friends and family, a group of Lutherans is gathering regularly to confess that Jesus, not Buddha, is God. This group, though small in number, has a great determination to spread the Good News through the written Word and the spoken.

## EVANGELISM

- the written Word in print - tracts for witnessing -
- general publications - periodicals - Braille for the blind

The printing operations of the LECC are nearly as old as our mission outreach itself. Already in 1957 Pastor Poetter recognized the need for an extensive outreach program through the written Word as he enlisted the help of Igarashi Sensei in the limited operations. In a matter of months invitations, correspondance courses, newsletters and Bible reading programs were being sent to some 1300 people in Ibaragiken and the Tochigi prefectures. Mailing lists have provided the contacts necessary for entering several new areas. The Utsunomiya congregation is proof that such mail contacts do bear fruit and are well worth the comparatively small investment.

The present source of all outreach materials is the print shop located on the grounds of the Tsuchiura complex. Mr. Najihara and Miss Saito are responsible for preparing the materials and distributing them as needed. Their little office boasts a reconditioned offset press and a ten year old Hamastar 700 DX. The latter was purchased through a special gift of love from the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. Through gifts and support like this, the print shop has gone a long way in reaching thousands of homes by mail and supplying our missionaries with the Bible Study pamphlets and books they need to carry out their work.



**Print Shop**

**Tsuchiura**

Tracts are an important part of reaching out to the unchurched thousands. Together with radio, they represent the most effective means for spreading the Gospel Message. In fact, in many areas, they are the only ways of sharing the faith. This is due, in large part, to the social customs of Japan. Canvassing from door to door is frowned upon in most areas and visitation is by invitation only. The latter custom has changed little over the centuries. If Mr. Y would like to pay Mr. S a visit, proper etiquette demands that he first contact Mr. S and let his wishes be

known. Mr. S will then extend a formal invitation to Mr. Y and Mr. Y must respond just as formally. Upon arrival at Mr. S' home at his chosen time, Mr. Y must give an apology for 'dropping in.' Then, and only then will the guest be welcomed into his home. As one can readily tell, the whole process rules out all large scale canvassing in a field short on manpower and long on pastoral responsibilities.

Due to it's importance as a means of outreach, a special Literature Committee exists to prepare and distribute the evangelism material. It is a massive operation. In 1974 alone, 91,400 newspaper slip-ins and tracts were produced, printed and distributed. That same year, mail contracts totalled nearly one thousand and six people studied the Word through regular correspondance courses. These are only bare statistics, but there are numerous references in the letters of Missionary Poetter to prove that they are living statistics.

The Hagiwara family was reached through the Sunday School Materials of their children - all of which was printed at the Tsuchiura print shop. The story is told of a missionary debating whether he should offer a tract to an elderly man he happened upon one afternoon. The customs of the land told him 'No' but the Spirit told him 'Yes.' He did so and a short time later the gentleman returned to him and was interested in finding out more about Christ and what he had done for him. The story is a touching one because it demonstrates so clearly that where people and cultures create barriers, the Holy Spirit eradicates them. This is surely the greatest assurance the LECC has through all their efforts at spreading the Message where immediate feedback is seldom possible.

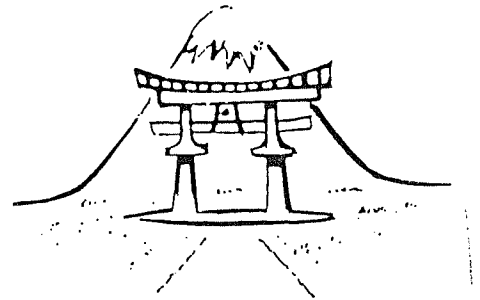
Where tracts leave off, general publications take over. It has been noted that the Japanese are about 99.5% literate and possess an avid thirst for the written Word. That thirst is being quenched by a handful of dedicated and industrious men who busily go about translating some of the latest publications of the WELS. It has become their goal, in fact, to keep pace in translating newly published pamphlets and Bible studies from our own Northwestern Publishing House.

Among the latest such translations are Pastor Kolander's "Sermon on the Mount," "God's 'No' and God's 'Yes,'" and "Guidance from God's Word." Translated especially for the 25th anniversary celebration were documents expressing Lutheran heritage: "Distinctive Doctrines and Customs of the Reformation" and "The Legacy of the Reformation." In addition to the above, Sunday School materials are produced for use by the Japanese missionaries and articles from the Northwestern Lutheran are regularly translated. There remains a dearth of material to still translate, but both expatriates and indigenous workers have experienced phenomenal success in laying a firm foundation for orthodox Lutheranism in the Japanese islands.

Of course publications in Japan are not limited to instructional printing. Two magazines are also printed. The "Forward" is a pictorial featuring some of the outstanding events of the past months as well as the familiar faces of dozens of members drawn from past files and recent photos. Such a pictorial offers positive publicity that offsets the negative response that often attends becoming a Christian in Japan.

The second quarterly is "The Rising Sun." It is comparable in purpose and style to the Northwestern Lutheran in many ways. Special attention is given to the seasons of the Church Year by its writers, and Summer Camps are a special area of interest to the readers. This publication is (also) printed in English for distribution in the United States where eager subscribers pay a relatively small price for very edifying information about the happenings in our sister synod. Periodicals like "The Rising Sun" and "Forward" give graphic and concrete incentive for Lutherans to Praise His Grace though separated by the vast Pacific.

THE  
RISING  
SUN



One special part of evangelism through the written word is the 'printing' and distributing of Braille for the blind. This program began in 1963 with the contacts that were made with three of the blind. Two of them were soon baptized into the Christian faith but a third, Mr. Nemoto, was baptized some 17 years later. His story can be told largely through the untiring efforts of one, Mr. Takahashi.

Mr. Takahashi lost both legs in a mining accident in 1963. Missionary Poetter, visiting him in the hospital, assured him that the Lord does not permit such things unless he has some purpose in mind. Mr. Takahashi came to realize that purpose as he carried out his resolve to utilize his time for witnessing for his Lord. He channeled his energies into Gospel service for the blind as he labored hard until a special day came. Poetter recalls: "One day he said: The time has come. Mr. Nemoto has requested baptism and is ready." We were all ahppy, but Mr. Takahashi was, no doubt, the happiest."

His labor of love continues. One year, he and his wife were distributing braille material to 25 people on a regular basis. In addition the two of them can often be seen delivering taped messages from worship services to the blind. Some of the braille materials are the handiwork of Takahashi himself, while others come via the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. This group has sent, among other things, many copies of "The Wonderful Works of



God" to the Japanese missions. Such cooperative efforts for the sake of outreach to the blind are real reason for "Praising His Grace." The gospel is reaching eyes and ears under even the most difficult circumstances.

Evangelism through the spoken Word is every bit as important as that through the printed Word. It has already been noted that door-to-door canvassing is not a socially acceptable method to bring the gospel to the Japanese. But this doesn't mean that other methods are lacking. Each church has a Sunday School program that serves two purposes. The one, of course, is to bring the story of Jesus' love and salvation to little children. The other is to bring that same message to the families and friends of the children who attend. Sunday School has provided our missions with an effective mode of outreach.



Sunday School-Hitachi

Even though door-to-door canvassing is not a viable option for our missionaries, they have not excluded all direct contacts for evangelism. They are expected to man the front lines in this outward push. It's necessary. Missionary Poetter once remarked that where expatriate missionaries play the role of director and organizer of outreach without personal participation, the evangelism drive goes nowhere. The Japanese are quick to recognize the difference between one who does and one who says. This irks the Japanese and slows the outreach.

To avoid such a slowdown, it was necessary to plan ways to spread the message apart from door-to-door canvassing and yet to carry it forth personally. This has led to the "coffee shop" approach to evangelism. On a given day, a missionary, expatriate or indigenous, will stop in at the popular coffee houses in search of prospective members. The coffee shops are places where all kinds of business and informal discussions take place among friends, business associates and casual acquaintances. Here our missionaries can join in the discussions and introduce the Savior into the talks. This method of evangelism is socially and culturally acceptable in cities where direct contacts through home canvassing are all but impossible.

This doesn't mean that the message of the gospel is not penetrating the walls of the thousands of homes in southeastern Japan. That old "novelty," the radio, is seeing to that. The effectiveness of radio was recognized from the start of Lutheran mission work in Japan. In 1957, the Lutheran Hour was already

being broadcast through Japan and in 1963 it was decided to initiate a program of our own. The result was the "Walking with Jesus Hour." Station JOYF in Mito carried the broadcast and has since carried it every Sunday. Two fifteen-minute broadcasts in the morning hours and one fifteen-minute broadcast in the evening have the potential of reaching 4,000,000 people through two radio stations.

The format of the program is simple. It opens with the singing of a hymn, continues with a six- to seven-minute devotion by one of our missionaries, a Japanese pastor or member, and closes with information about area churches, free Bibles, literature, correspondence courses and available Braille.

Although radio is an expensive medium, it is really a bargain for the potential it holds. Broadcasts originating in Mito, Tsuchiura and Utsonomiya can reach 4,000,000 people since nearly every Japanese home has a radio. The cost is figured at about 50 cents per 341 people. Recognizing such potential, the radio program was expanded in 1967 to include "a Word for Today," a two-minute gospel message aired during the morning rush hour at 7:10 a.m.

The response to both radio programs has been good, although we can never fully measure the Spirit's work where there is so little actual feedback. Sunday's broadcasts have averaged 11 telephone responses in addition to this. The questions demonstrate real interest in matters of faith and life. Questioners ask, "Is the Bible really necessary for living?" "Why are we saved if we believe in Jesus?" "Why does God love unimportant mankind?" "Why do men have to die?" These questions and dozens like them prove that these broadcasts are piercing the hearts of listeners. The Holy Spirit is working in and through these precious moments with Christ.

Radio response has been good. When people call the churches for further information, this is gladly given out in the hope they will attend services in the near future. When others write in, replies are sent together with invitations and tracts. Nevertheless, some of the old problems remain. By these calls and letters God is telling us that there is room for further outreach in Japan. Souls are beckoning and calling, "Come over and help us!" Our greatest hinderance to answering these calls is still shortage of manpower. With only five expatriate missionaries and four indigenous pastors there simply is not sufficient manpower to answer the soul's call in every area. But the necessary steps are being taken to expand our outreach. Perhaps one of the most critical steps has already been taken, the establishment of a seminary to meet the needs of a growing indigenous church. This seminary is the next subject for consideration.

## SEMINARY

The questions are often raised, "Why a seminary in Japan?" and "Couldn't we train pastors for Japan under the auspices of our synodical seminary?" These questions seem feasible until we reconsider the goals of our mission outreach to the world. The purpose of our mission thrust into other lands and other cultures is not to extend the Wisconsin Synod into the four corners of the world, but to establish indigenous, self-supporting gospel outposts where the Word is, and will be, taught in its truth and purity. Indeed, if spreading the gospel into all the world were synonymous with providing all the manpower and funds necessary to carry out such a task, we'd be faced with an impossible task on our hands. But to bring the message of forgiveness and life and to eventually establish self-sustaining church bodies - these are realistic and reachable goals.

It was with these goals in mind that a seminary program was begun in the early 1960's. Four men were available for teaching at that time, and the program was established along the lines and purpose of the WELS seminary in Mequon. Missionary Seeger taught New Testament Introduction (Isagogics), Pastor Yamada took New Testament Greek (Exegesis), Mr. Igarashi taught Church History and Missionary Poetter, Dogmatics and Catechetics.

Since that time the seminary has enrolled several men and graduated four. First Pastor Yoshida completed his seminary training in December of 1969 and was called to serve the Hitachi area, where he still serves. Pastors Oshino and Suzuki graduated the following year and were called to serve the Ashikaga and Utsonomiya congregations. Like all pastors, these men gain the title "Sensei", or honorable one, when called to serve in the harvest of our Lord.

The seminary has had its ups and downs. Since its fourth graduate, Pastor Akagami, graduated and received a call to serve the Toride, Abiko, Kashiwa and Matsudo areas, the seminary has had no enrollment. As will be seen later, this has offered an opportunity for further development of the seminary program.

The seminary program has undergone some change. The change has not come in doctrine or theology, but in structure. In the early years students were tutored in private residences or churches since proper facilities were not available. That was changed in September of 1971 when the Tsuchiura Center was dedicated. The complex consists of three buildings. The largest, the "All Purpose Center" has provided a large meeting hall for special occasions, a print shop, two seminary classrooms and a chapel for the Tsuchiura congregation. Pastors Nakamota and Akagami have both studied in these facilities, which have centralized the study and outreach of the LECC.

In 1969, the seminary was privileged to install its own head when Pastor Harold Johne of St. Paul, Minnesota accepted the call to serve at this position.

As was mentioned before, the curriculum at the seminary has developed along the lines of that at WLS. In the past, candidates for enrollment have been required to have a college degree before enrollment. This was changed with the establishment of a two-year pre-seminary course in the late '60's. This two-year program is highly practical and involves assistance with Sunday School, evangelism and various other facets of congregational work. Only after this training and with a written recommendation from the home pastor and congregation is the applicant considered for enrollment at the seminary. Then, depending on his previous education, the student enrolls in the seminary for four to six years of subsequent training.

An "Arbeit" policy has also been set up, wherein the student assists with the instruction of children and youth, making evangelism calls, conducting adult instruction classes and writing and delivering sermons. Each student is expected to participate in this "Arbeit" program during the months of the year in which he is not attending school. The program might be called an "annual vicar program." It gives the students in-service training for the work they will one day carry out on a full-time basis.

Besides the above practical training, each student is required to serve one year as vicar to a congregation. The responsibilities are much the same, but follow the years of a student's classroom training.

As was mentioned before, the curriculum at the Japanese seminary is much the same as that at our own seminary. The only course that is not yet developed is Hebrew. That need was filled, at least temporarily, when Missionary John began a course in the language of the Old Testament in 1979. This course, held once a week, has begun to fill the need for a student to be able to work with both languages of Scripture. With the inclusion of Hebrew in the curriculum, the seminary presently works with no less than four languages: Japanese, Greek, Hebrew and yes, English.



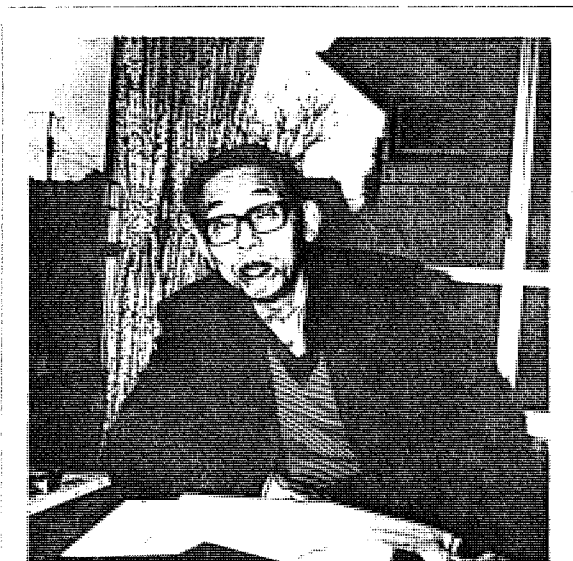
Seminary students, 1968

The need for a course in theological English may at first seem superfluous, but if we remember that biblical concepts are difficult to translate and understand in Japanese, the need becomes apparent. The word "spirit," for instance, has a wholly different meaning than "soul" or "Holy Spirit" in the Japanese tongue. Therefore the English is used to explain and define what

is actually meant. We may compare the use of English to our seminary's use of Latin to define various dogmatic concepts of Scripture. Indigenous pastors are generally close at hand, if not in attendance in the classroom, to insure that the instruction in God's Word is presented in literal, proper Japanese. Truly the graduates of the Japanese seminary are being trained not only as well-rounded pastors, but as theologians able to handle the Word of truth rightly.

It is for the same reason that many of our own English textbooks have been translated into Japanese. In April 1982 it was announced that the Book of Concord was available in Japanese, translated by the Japan Lutheran Church. Mr. Igarashi, a competent expert in several languages, has translated related articles on the Smalcald Articles and Augsburg Confession (?) that originally appeared in English in the Northwestern Lutheran (Meyer). Walther's treasury "Law and Gospel" has also been translated. In the area of Pastoral Theology, "The Shepherd Under Christ" has been available since 1978. Igarashi has also translated J.P. Koehler's "Kirchengeschichte" into Japanese for the study of Church History. He has worked on several other masterpieces of orthodox Lutheranism. Without mentioning them all, we praise God's grace for giving us such a dedicated and hard-working man as this to establish a firm literary foundation for his church in Japan.

Textbooks and in-service training do not mark the end of a pastor's study in Japan. During Akagami's vicar year, when no students were enrolled at the seminary, God provided an opportunity to establish a post-seminary seminar. Missionary John recognized the need for such a seminar when he noted that the temptation is always present for pastors to finish their training and rest on their theological laurels. This was not to be the case in Japan. In 1979 he arranged the first pastors' seminary to be held from May 15 through the 19th. That year he conducted an edifying study of the Petrine epistles. Living in a land where being a Christian means being part of a 1% minority makes these epistles sound and edifying advice on Christian living under trying circumstances. Surely Peter's instructions to those early Christians are a most timely letter for the tiny LECC of Japan.



Igarashi

The second seminar, held in 1980, offered studies from "Isaiah II" by August Pieper (translated into English by E.E. Kowalke). Such a scholarly yet gospel-permeated work proves that the indigenous workers of Japan are receiving the proper post-graduate diet of exegesis and gospel preaching necessary for growth in the pastoral ministry. May this growth continue for them, in numbers and in personal application of the Lord's message.

Presently there are no students enrolled at the seminary. This may seem to be cause for some disappointment if we focus on the negative and not the positive. There is real cause for joy in the positive. The fact remains that the LECC has taken the huge step toward becoming an indigenous and self-sustaining church body. No such body can long exist without the written materials and organized facilities to train a new generation of pastors to spread the message of God's forgiving and redeeming love to millions who walk in darkness. The seminary has filled this need and will continue to equip men to shed the real Light of the Son in a land that is still darkened by the rays of Buddhism and Shintoism. The LECC has provided a bright light in the Orient by establishing a seminary in the land of the rising sun.

1982

Pastors and Delegates of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church



Row1 : Takahashi, Aikawa, Oshino, Poetter, Johne, Fromm, Habben  
Row2 : Fujita, Yoshida, Iimura, Tsujimoto, Sakamoto, Haberkorn, Nakamoto, Tsuchiya  
Row3 : Katahira, Igarashi, Akagami, Gunji, Falk, Masuda, Shimane, Boehringer

## FELLOWSHIP

The establishment and operation of a seminary is not the beginning and the end of the founding of a self-sustaining church body. The continued existence and identity of any church body must always involve a careful consideration of fellowship and fellowship principles. The LECC of Japan has proved no exception to this rule of self-identity.

Questions of fellowship and fellowship practice are well known to this little body in Japan. In the late '50's and early '60's the break between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods caused tidal waves so great that at one point the path of WELS mission work was inundated for a time. The break of Pastor Tiefel with the Wisconsin Synod acquainted the Japanese mission with doctrinal issues and stands that were rocking the Synodical Conference this side of the Pacific.

It's not surprising, then, that serious reflection was given matters of faith and fellowship from the start of the Japan mission with Pastor Poetter's arrival in 1959. In fact, both missionary and church have had to grapple with these questions at various times. For the expatriate missionaries, the focal point of fellowship centered on the matter of the education of their children.

In the early '60's the fellowship issue presented no great problem to the missionaries since their children were of grade school age. The three missionaries in the field at that time used the American School in Japan, the Calvert's System of home teaching and a combination of the Calvert method together with the Japanese School. On an elementary level, all three methods appeared as viable options for the children's education. Since that time, graduates of Dr. Martin Luther College have been assigned to instruct those of grade school age. While distances for commuting still cause some problems, this solution has seemed to work well over the years since 1973, when the first graduate arrived.

Problems have arisen over the method of educating the missionaries' children once they reach high school age. Here the options are limited, and it is really a matter to be taken up by the individual conscience of each missionary. Presently parents can send their children to the American School in Japan (A.S.I.J.), the Christian Academy in Japan (C.A.J.), or overseas to one of the synodical prep schools. There have been pros and cons expressed for each institution and they have been expressed strongly. One feels it isn't in love's interest to school his children overseas and limit his role as a parent. Another has felt it contrary to conscience to send children to the Reformed Christian School in Japan. Both sides have presented strong arguments in respect to their roles as parents and examples for the saints in Japan. Neither side has convinced the other.

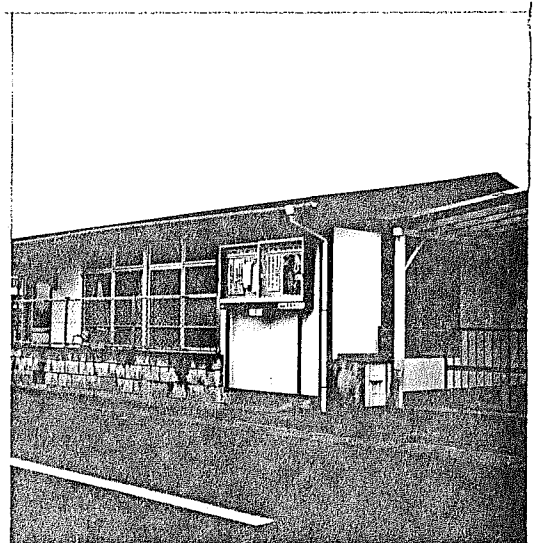
The only "solution" to the dilemma has been an agreement to reopen discussion on the subject every five to seven years. Undoubtedly the problem is a complex one with no pat solutions. Christian charity demands that each side recognize the Spirit-given discretion of the other without passing judgment where feelings are deep. There are no simple answers and it is not within the scope of this paper to pretend there are or to offer so much as an opinion.

The LECC has handled the fellowship issue in other areas as a body. No special problems have developed, but the church has taken a solid stand on the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions to avert trouble in the future. The matter of fellowship principles was carefully worked out by committees and congregations in establishing constitutions.

As early as 1973, the Rijichai formed a constitution committee to study other constitutions and draw up a document for proposal at the November 1974 meeting of the DDC. This constitution met with the approval of the MC and on January 15, 1975 it was read and adopted by the delegates to the LECC convention. It is noteworthy that the proposed constitution was studied and scrutinized by lay and clerical delegates alike long before it was ultimately passed. The members of the Japanese Lutheran Church were well-versed in its ramifications and doctrinal statements.

A year later, in 1976, the EC recommended that with constitution in hand, the time was right for making fellowship overtures to the mother church, WELS. It had long been taken for granted that the LECC was in de facto fellowship with her American parent, but the Japanese desired a formal declaration. This too came to pass, but not before personal and group studies of the WELS' "Our Blessed Fellowship in Christ" and "Doctrinal Statement of WELS 1970" had taken place. In this interim period "This We Believe" was also studied. Finally, on July 2, 1981, the document, "A Declaration of Church Fellowship with the WELS by the LECC" made its way overseas.

It is noteworthy that the LECC of Japan was the first mission to form a constitution and thereafter to seek fellowship with the WELS. The WELS responded in kind to the overtures. At its biennial convention in 1981, delegates at New Ulm were informed that the LECC had declared formal fellowship with their body, accepting the synod's doctrinal statements as "the teaching of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions." The convention acknowledged the declaration with



LECC Headquarters



joy and thanksgiving. This joy and thanksgiving was only enhanced the following year when the sister synods joined the hands of faith in recognizing the grace of God at work in Japan on her 25th anniversary. "Praising His Grace" was a theme that echoed in both hemispheres in a heartfelt display of concern, unity and thanks.

To insure that unity in the truth involved more than unity with foreign synods or institutions, the LECC continues to safeguard doctrinal purity through her Committee on Doctrinal Affairs. This committee volunteered its services in several ways. It hereafter would serve as a referral committee for doctrinal problems, carry on fellowship negotiations with other groups as the opportunity arises, supply information regarding denominational differences, report on extra-synodical Lutheran affairs in other countries and on legislation affecting the church in Japan, and offer helpful criticisms on the content of religious books published outside the fellowship.

If one pauses to reflect upon the steady spiritual growth of the LECC in Japan, one has every reason for "Praising His Grace" over these first 25 years of history. The Holy Spirit has formed a small but determined nucleus in this land of superstition and darkness. A new sun is rising over this island nation - the Son who has shed his light on the hearts of this band of believers. We keep them in our prayers, that the Spirit may continue to lead souls to him who is the Light of the world.

## Preface to the Biographical Sketches

The writers have elected to include this third chapter of Book Three to acquaint the reader with some of the main figures active in the Japan mission as of 1982. While it is true that these names recur frequently in the previous chapters, it is difficult to piece together a biography of any given person through a chronological or topical study. The difficulty is increased by the fact that many of the names are Japanese and readers tend to "slide over" the unfamiliar. This chapter will accomplish its purpose if the reader is willing either to peruse it before the others or refer to it as needed.

The biographies are not detailed. They are meant only to give a "thumbnail sketch" of the men who were active in the Japan field in 1982. This of course means that it doesn't include those who are no longer active there. For their story, Book Two must be consulted. Again, our apologies if, within the limited scope of this chapter, we have failed to include one person or another. The selections that are included are included by our own judgment and not necessarily by any degree of importance.

### Akagami, Pastor Wakichi

There was a time in the life of Wakichi Akagami when the God and Savior of Christianity meant nothing to him. For three years he challenged the message that Pastor Meier preached from the pulpit. For three years he tried to draw his wife away from faith in her Savior, but by the grace of God she managed to weather his ridicule. After those three years, Mr. Akagami lost his struggle against God, Pastor Meier and his Christian wife. Mr. Akagami became a Christian.

In 1975, at the age of 28, he gave up the business he had inherited from his father to enroll full time at the seminary in Tsuchiura. The Holy Spirit had worked a conversion in 20th century Japan after the fashion of Saul of Tarsus!

Akagami studied faithfully for three years and in 1979 was assigned to serve his vicar year under Pastor Yoshida in the new Chiba field. He completed this in-service training in February, 1980 and went on to graduate from the seminary on March 22, 1981.

Pastor Akagami was called by the Rijikai to serve the Toride-Abika-Kashiwa-Matsudo areas. He accepted the call and was ordained. He is presently serving the southern Ibaragi and northern Chiba areas. On September 12, 1981, Pastor Akagami, together with his family, congregation and visiting members of the Board for World Missions, was privileged to dedicate worship facilities for the young church.

Boehringer, Pastor John F.

Pastor Boehringer, the seventh expatriate missionary to Japan, was a 1972 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He received the call into the Japan field in July of 1978 and, after prayerful consideration, left Shepherd of the Valley in Fresno, California for work abroad. After his arrival in Japan in October, he began two years of intensive study of the Japanese language.

The LECC assigned him to the Zushi congregation, a group of about 20 souls that had applied for membership in the LECC in January of 1980. He was installed at Praise Evangelical Lutheran Church, Zushi on November 11, 1980.

Falk, Pastor Roger

Pastor Falk received the call to Japan in 1974 and, having accepted it, left Hillman, Michigan in August. Together with Missionary Winterstein, he studied Japanese for two years at the Tower School in Tokyo. In November of 1974, the DCC passed a resolution to place him in Utsonomiya. He has served Holy Light congregation for over ten years as of this writing.

Pastor Falk has served on the education committee and has supervised Sunday School Institutes as recommended by the DCC. He has also been instrumental in rewriting the liturgy into modern Japanese.

Fromm, Pastor Elwood

In the early months of 1977, Pastor Fromm expressed interest in joining the WELS after 24 years' experience as a Missouri Synod missionary on Haikaido, the northernmost island of Japan. Pastor Fromm spent the '77 to '78 school year at our Mequon seminary before his colloquy.

Pastor Fromm was commissioned as our sixth missionary to Japan on July 9, 1978 at Atonement church, Milwaukee. He was called to serve Gethsemane congregation of Hitachi. Because of his vast previous experience in Japan, Pastor Fromm assumed full pastoral duties shortly after his arrival in July of 1979.

Habben, Pastor Kermit

Pastor Habben was the fourth WELS missionary called to the Japan field. A 1967 graduate of WLS, he was assigned to the Tsuchiura City congregation that same year. He remained there until accepting a call to serve Atonement church in Higashi Kurume City, Tokyo to fill the vacancy caused by Missionary Meier's return to the states.

Pastor Poetter has remarked that Habben's youth and energetic evangelism have been of valuable service to the LECC. His gifts for working with youth have been appreciated as well. In addition to serving his Tokyo congregation, he has also served on the Radio Committee and the seminary Board of Control since 1974. As chairman of the planning committee for the 25th anniversary of the Japan mission, he was instrumental in the celebration in WELS congregations here and LECC programs in Japan.

Haberkorn, Pastor David

Pastor Haberkorn had been serving three congregations in South Dakota at the time he received a call to serve in Japan in 1977. He accepted the call and was commissioned at St. Peter's, Fond du Lac on February 12, 1978. After completing his two years of intensive language study, the DCC assigned him to the Tsuchiura and Ishioka areas.

He was installed at the Nozomi church on March 2, 1980. He has carried on his gospel work at Hope congregation for five years.

Igarashi, Deacon Ryuichi

Mr. Igarashi is a master of four languages who owes his linguistic skills to pre-war schooling and postwar experience in a Siberian prison camp. He was among the earliest converts to Christianity when Pastor Poetter baptized him after months of Bible instructions in December of 1951.

Since that time he has done extensive work in translating Lutheran studies, textbooks and catechetical courses. He served as an interpreter in the earlier years of WELS mission work in Japan and still sees to it that expatriates preach and write in language "couched in good Japanese." His talents as a linguist/translator have given the young LECC such noteworthy works as Koehler's "Church History," Walther's "Law and Gospel," Schuetze and Habeck's "The Shepherd Under Christ" and Schuetze's "Basic Doctrines of the Bible" and "Guidance from God's Word." Deacon Igarashi has been a gift of God rarely found in so small a body as the LECC.

Johne, Pastor Harold

Pastor Harold Johne had served congregations in North Dakota, Wisconsin and Minnesota before accepting a call to the Japan field in 1970. A 1953 graduate of WLS, he was called to Japan to serve as pastor to the Ishioka and Ami areas and as head of the Japan seminary. Besides these pastoral duties, he has also served as chairman of the Committee on Doctrinal Matters and has represented Japan at the WELS World Missionary Conferences.

Under his guidance, the seminary began instructions in Hebrew for the first time in 1979. He was also primarily responsible for starting a program of annual seminars for expatriate and Japanese pastors in 1979. Although there are presently no students enrolled at the seminary, Missionary Johne is still quite active as pastor of the Ishioka congregation, a member of several committees of the LECC and in post-seminary seminars.

Nakamoto, Pastor Muhenide

Muhenide Nakamoto became the fourth Japanese pastor to enter the field in 1977. He began his seminary in April of 1973 and after four years of instructions and a year of vicaring at the Shimodate church, he received and accepted a call as pastor to that same congregation in March, 1977.

Pastor Nakamoto was elected secretary of MC in 1978 and appointed to serve on the constitution committee in 1979. His service on the latter committee has helped to frame a truly confessional, orthodox Lutheran body of the Japan congregations, the LECC.

Oshino, Pastor Rigi Fukuichi

Although Rigi Oshino lacked the prerequisites for seminary enrollment, he willingly undertook the necessary course for entrance in 1965. Six years later he completed his training and was given a call to serve at Peace congregation in Ashikagi, Tochigi Prefecture. His ordination at Mito on April 28, 1971 made him the third national pastor to enter the field.

Pastor Oshino has served on various committees during his pastorate at Ashikagi. He was appointed to the Constitution Committee in 1975, elected to the DCC in 1975 and 1978, and has served as secretary of the Committee on Doctrinal Matters. He was also elected to the MC in 1978 and 1980.

Poetter, Pastor Richard

Pastor Poetter, together with Deacon Igarashi, is one of the fathers of our current WELS outreach in Japan. Poetter has served in Japan since 1952 and has been the field superintendent for this field for most of those years.

His long tenure in Japan has witnessed the development of the seminary program, the formation of the LECC constitution and fellowship with WELS as a sister synod. Together with Tomiko Ito, he has translated the widely used instruction course, "The Wonderful Works of God" and has worked with Igarashi in other language work.

Pastor Poetter has also written an informal history of the Japan mission that covers the first ten years. His "open letters" and articles in the Northwestern Lutheran have kept WELS Lutherans informed, in a touching way, of the spread of the Gospel light in Japan. He currently serves Grace at Mito.

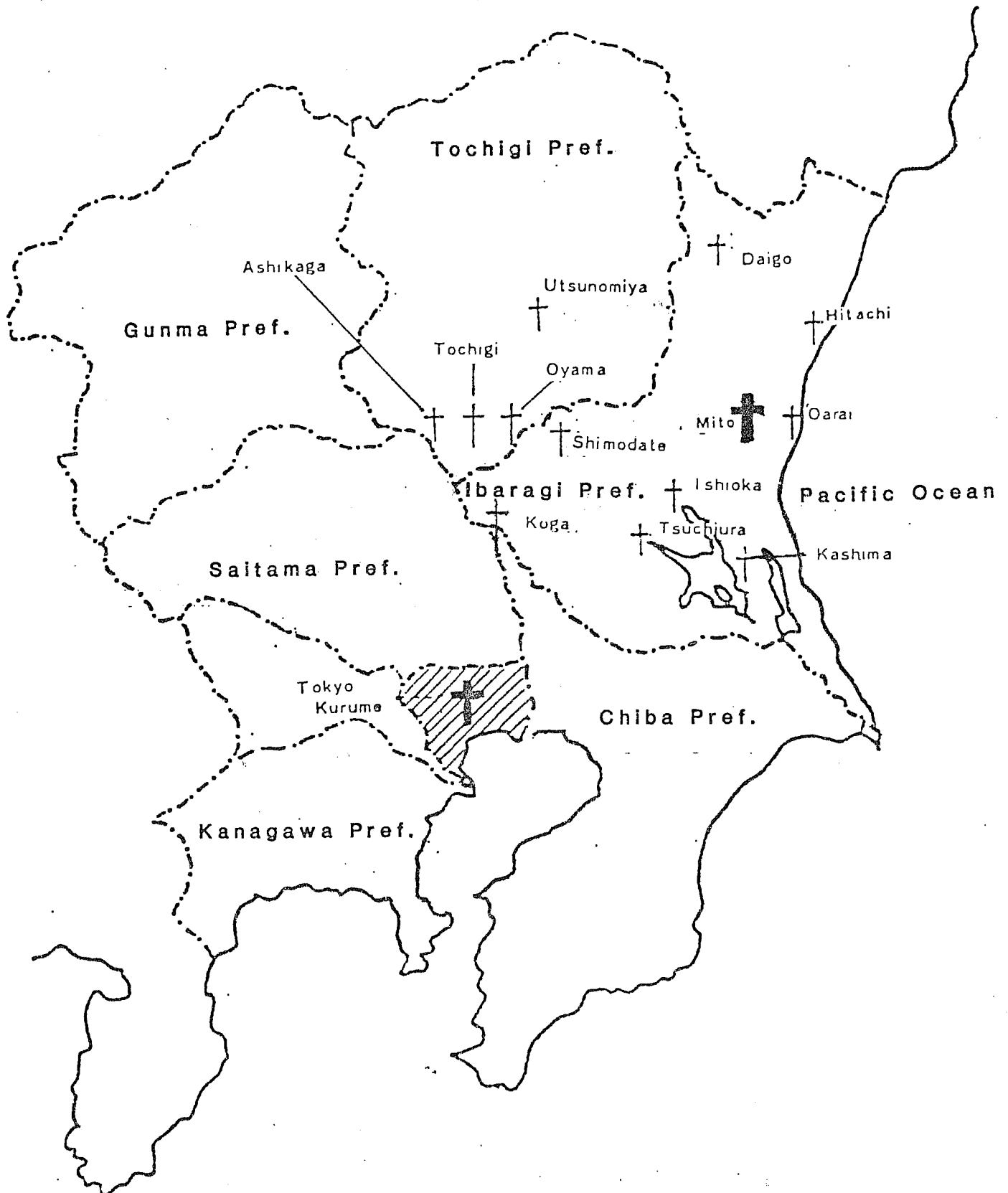
Yoshida, Pastor Todashi

Pastor Yoshida was the second indigenous pastor to enter the Japan field. Although he began his seminary training in 1960, he did not complete his studies until 1969, after several years of pursuing another career. He was ordained at Grace, Mito in January of 1970 and called to serve Guiding Light in Tomoshihi where he and his congregation witnessed the construction of chapel and parsonage in September 1972.

Pastor Yoshida has been described as a meticulous worker with some interesting pastimes. His beautiful handwriting is in demand by many people who approach him with printing requests. This ability has also been put to use in the print shop.

Pastor Yoshida presently has the longest tenure of service of any indigenous missionary in Japan. During his 15 years of service he has chaired the MC, served on committees of the LECC and helped with the planning of the 25th anniversary celebration in 1982. These responsibilities, together with the pastorate of the growing Chiba congregation, have kept him occupied over his years of service.

# WELS JAPAN MISSION



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