

The Japan-Missionaries of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in the 20th Century

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The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (UDELCA) was formed in Minneapolis in October 1896 and ceased to exist when it merged with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church in 1960. Its center was in Blair, Nebraska. The church was formed by awakened Christians as a conservative alternative to the liberal Danish church supported by the Evang. Luth. Church of Denmark. From its inception, UDELCA was dedicated to mission in the Americas and beyond. Jens Mikael Thøgersen Winther (1874-1970) was present when it began. In the company of and as an assistant to a China-missionary, the 21-year old Dane had come to the US, when his senior found his health would not let him proceed to their destination. The two had been sent by *Luthersk Missionsforening Husum-Ballum*, an association of Lutheran Danes living in German-controlled West-Schleswig. It had strong personal relations to members of UDELCA and it agreed to support young Winther, who wanted to continue the journey, but knew he needed theological training. He stayed with the new church and studied at its Trinity Theological Seminary. In 1898, he graduated and was advised to check the options in Japan on his way to China. He took the advice and found, he wanted to work in Japan. The following year, he and Andrea Hansen, his fiancé, married in Kamakura, then went to Saga on Kyushu Island, where the only other Lutherans, sent by the United Synod South, had started a work in 1892. Winther believed in cooperation. From 1901, Kurume became the center of his work. In 1903 the UDELCA adapted Winther and his work as its own, and in the following 57 years, it sent an additional four missionary couples and three women

missionaries. Here they are listed following Huddle (1958, 249-252) with year of arrival and leaving, and additional information for the years after 1957:

Miss Ella Johnson (1903 / 1906)

Rev. and Mrs. J.P. Nielsen (1909 / 1927)

Rev. and Mrs. D.G.M. Bach (1916 / 1941)

Miss Maya Winther (1928 / 1940) ¹

Rev. and Mrs. Lloyd Neve (1948 / [1986])

Rev. and Mrs. Paul C. Johnsen (1952 / [1963])

Miss Marlene Paulsen (1958 / 1961)

Like Winther, the Japan-missionaries of UDELCA cooperated closely with colleagues from the United Synod South and the General Council of the United Lutheran Church (ULC), (cf. Huddle, 116-117). They were focused on preaching the Kingdom of God, not the Kingdom of Denmark. The UDELCA agreed to cooperation. Still, its Yearbook of 1930 referred to some of the work as “its Parish abroad” (cf. Nielsen and Andersen 1930).

Here follow shorter biographies of the missionaries in the sequence of arrival, relying on information gathered in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA)’s Archives in Chicago and the Danish-American Library and Archive in Blair, Nebraska. The folders for the individuals are uneven in volume, wherefore other sources have been consulted with, in particular the archives of J.M.T. Winther in Kobe Lutheran Seminar and studies on the history of Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) published by that church. For information on J.M.T. Winther, his daughter Maya Winther, and the J3 missionary Marlene Paulsen I refer to earlier studies (see Hermansen 2014a, 2014b, 2017b, and 2018).

¹ Maya Winther also worked in Japan 1947-1966 but was sent by ULC.

Johnson, Ella Nissen² (?-?) was from Vermillion, South Dakota³. The 1903 annual meeting of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was presented to a letter that had reached the church council, informing it that “I am now ready to journey to the field of mission and prefer to work for the United Danish Church.” signed “Ella N. Johnsen.” Here her name is spelled “Johnsen” with an E, in other parts of the annual report it is sometimes spelled with an O. In English and Japanese sources, she is consequently named Miss Johnson or ミス・ジョンソン. The ジ in the Japanese indicates an English pronunciation [dʒɔ́nsən] instead of the Danish [iɔ́nsən].

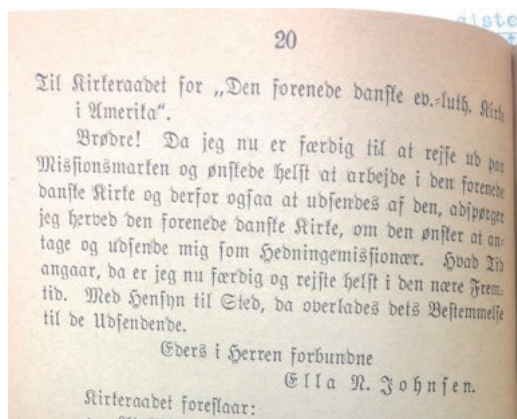


Figure 1 Ella N. Johnsen's application to become a missionary. UDELCA 1903, 20

The Annual Meeting decided to investigate the options with Winther (UDELCA 1903, 20), but accepted to send Miss Johnsen “when the funds for mission permit it” (UDELCA 1903, 75). Funds were soon raised (Winther 1915, 35) so she could leave for Japan on 25 October 1903 (UDELCA 1904, 23). In “A Pillar of Cloud, a Pillar of Fire, The 80th Anniversary of Mission of Kurume Church” it is noted she arrived in Kurume on 20

2 In a list of contributors to the building of a church in Kurume, Miss Johnson's full name is given as エラ・ニッセン・ジョンソン which I assume to be a transliteration of Ella Nissen Johnson (cf. Fujii, 58)

3 I am still searching for details about Miss Johnson's vita, besides the records in the UDELCA annual reports and J.M.T. Winther's writings. Her place of origin is noted in “Vor Japan mission” included in Winther's business letters of 1913 p.431 (though paginated by mistake as 251) and printed in Winther 1915, 35.

November 1903 (Fujii, 41). Together with Ms. Usutaro, a woman missionary sent by the Finnish Lutheran Mission, Ms. Johnson was first introduced to the wider church at the 5th anniversary feast for Kumamoto Church on 23 November.

On 30 November from 3 PM, Miss Johnson was given a welcome feast at Kurume Church. It was raining, but with about 60 guests it was a lively gathering. It started with hymn no. 11 in the *Shinsen sanbika* (新撰讃美歌 New Selected Hymns)⁴ followed by an opening speech by [the local] Pastor Yonemura and a welcome speech by Ohtsuka Ishu, Evangelist of the Episcopal Church, on behalf of all the faithful in Kurume. Miss Johnson gave her greeting translated by Winther. The gathering ended with a prayer by Mr. Inagaki from the Baptist Church and singing the National Anthem “Kimi ga yo”. (Fujii, 41)

At first, she lived with the Winther family while she studied Japanese, and then moved into a house next door from where she was involved in organizing children’s gatherings in a couple of places in Kurume assisted by Ms. Ando, a Japanese Christian. Ando was hired at 8 yen/month to teach Miss Johnson women’s language and vocabulary and assist her, and also with the hope that she would thus get training and become qualified as a “Bible Woman” (cf. UDELA 1904, 44). The following year, she and Miss Johnson shared the teaching of Sunday school classes for the older children. Winther praised Ms. Ando as so highly qualified that she could easily get the double income if working as a teacher. Because she had to rent a house and care for her mother, Winther recommended raising her monthly salary to 10 yen (Winther 1905, 34). Besides the Sunday school work, Miss Johnson took over some of Winther’s English teaching at the local college⁵. “However, though Miss Johnson diligently studied the language and assisted Winther in the proselytization, she had to return to the US in October 1906 due to an ear disease” (Fujii, 41).

Winther was on furlough from 1906. In a diary record for 19 January 1907, he

4 No. 11 is われらエホバのめぐみのみさに “Let us come before the Lord with a song” (Sanbika Iin 1890).

5 In Danish, Winther used the phrase “byens college” (1905, 33).

wrote about visiting a mission meeting in Chicago, and noted, “Ella Johnson was another topic: she returned home for Christmas, to attend the wedding of her sister (Christine) on Christmas Day. It was Mathilde Berg who had gotten her to Blair [Nebraska] and kept her there; she is expected in Chicago in February. Her hearing is far from healed though somewhat improving.” In a letter to Brown⁶, dated “Somewhere in Canada July 22, 1908” Winther wrote:

In 1903 the United Danish Lutheran Church in America in which he [Winther] had been trained for and ordained to the ministry, decided at its annual convention to take up and carry on that [Winther’s] work as its own. At the same time it was decided to send out a lady-missionary. In 1906 the work was left in her charge while the first missionary with his family returned to the United States for such a needed rest. Only 4 months later she was compelled to leave on account of a rapidly increasing deafness. ... While Miss Johnson only has been profited very little by her return had Mr. Winther fully regained his health and expect to reach Japan together with his family about the first of October. (Letters 1907)

Nielsen, Jørgen Peter (1877-1963)⁷ was born on 18 December 1877 in Denmark, the son of Peter Nielsen and Caroline (ne Petersen). The family emigrated to the U.S.A. on 4 July 1879. He was graduated from Dana College, Blair, Nebraska in 1901, then from Trinity Seminar in the same town in 1904, and from Mt. Airy Seminar [Lutheran], Philadelphia, Pa. 1905. He was ordained on 18 June 1905 and made pastor at St. John’s Danish Lutheran Church, Philadelphia till 1907, when he became the principal of Brorson (Folk) High School, Kenmar, N.D. He served as missionary in Japan from

6 The Rev. Charles Lafayette Brown (1874-1921) was missionary in Japan from 1898 to 1916. He and Winther did most of the fundraising for the Lutheran Seminary of which Brown was the president from its beginning till 1916. While on furlough in the US, Brown was made one of three General Secretaries of the Board of Foreign Mission of the newly formed United Lutheran Church in America. He took ill and died on an inspection tour to Liberia in 1921 (Lindberg, 35).

7 The information in this paragraph is based on J.P. Nielsen’s record with The American Lutheran Church Code No. N-3520 (ELCA).

1909 to 1927, first in Kurume and later as professor of theology at Japan Lutheran Seminar 1919-1927. Nielsen became the president of the seminar in 1921 and as such was in charge when it was moved from Kumamoto to Tokyo.

Professor Timothy S. McKenzie gives the facts listed above in an introduction to J.P. Nielsen in his research on “Early Lutheran Missionaries and Theological Education in Japan” (2009), based on data in the ELCA’s Archive in Chicago. On his advice, I accessed the same sources. Indeed “Information is scarce” as McKenzie notes (2009, 31 n. 30). He speculates, if Jens Dixen, “the center of a spiritual awakening in the Danish immigrant community in North Dakota,” and the principal of Brorson Højskole (Folk High School) was a source of influence for Nielsen when he became a faculty and then the president of Japan Lutheran Seminar (2009, 23-24). That is possible. And Dixen unlikely helped keeping the flame burning that must have been ignited while Nielsen was raised in the UDELCA, a church born of the awakening. The flame seemed evident already in 1905, for right after his ordination, Nielsen had sought to be commissioned for Japan (cf. “Nerusen shi wo mukafu” in *Ruuteru Shinpou* No. 43, 1910 January, p.1 where his name is spelled ネルセン and 子ルセン)⁸. In 1905, he married Anna Nielsen, not necessarily because he wanted to be a missionary, but the Church preferred married men whether as pastors or missionaries. Jørgen Peter and Anna arrived in Japan on 9 December 1909 (Fujii, 63). Winther was happy for the development. Fujii notes that seven years later, “When Nielsen and his wife returned from their first furlough in the US on 25 March 1916, Nielsen became the first missionary to use an automobile, and it was particularly useful for outreaching” (Fujii, 89). He no doubt was the first Danish missionary who did so. In a letter of 20 Nov. 1915, however, Winther wrote to Nielsen and admonished him to reconsider bringing a car. He argued that Rev. Miller and Rev. Jones had cars and in a recent meeting they had talked about the high costs of gasoline, tire rubber, and automobile taxes. Winther concluded that he himself [who was 41] might be too old to make a fair judgment of the latest, so he would not judge

8 *Ruuteru shinpou* spelled 路帖新報 was the name of the monthly newsletter of Japan Lutheran Church, first edited and published in Kumamoto in 1900. Since May 1911, its name has been *Ruuteru* るうてる.

Nielsen for bringing a car, but he would certainly not ride it himself. Nielsen brought a car and Winther was converted when Nielsen took him and the family for a ride. Winther acknowledged his own *prejudice* in *A Letter from Japan* themed “Prejudices” (Winther, 1916).

In 1910, Jørgen Peter and Anna Nielsen succeeded Jens and Andrea Winther as missionaries in Kurume, when Jens moved to Kumamoto to be a fulltime faculty of the new theological seminar that had opened in 1909 Ten years later, the minutes of the Lutheran Church’s 23rd annual meeting of 1919 noted that Winther was scheduled to go on furlough to reconstitute his health and that Nielsen would replace him as professor at the Seminar after him (*Ruuteru* No. 96, 15 April 1919, 5).

In 1911, Anna Nielsen was made chair of the women’s group *Maria kai* in Kurume Church, and over the years she was involved in building up Sunday schools, taught on any day of the week, and kindergartens of the church. “Thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Nielsen, a kindergarten was first opened in the Kogashira Street outreach (小頭町講義所 [Kogashira machi kougisho]) in 1913, and then developed in quality to the point where it was officially authorized and then moved into the precinct of the church in Hiyoshi Street 日吉町 (Hiyoshi machi) and named the Nichizen Kindergarten 日善幼稚園 (Nichizen youchien)” (Fujii, 85). Winther reported on the situation of 1917 to the 20th General Assembly of UDELCA, noting, “Then we have the Sunday Schools started by Mrs. Nielsen, where Mrs. Iwaya teaches at four places assisted by Mr. Muto, a [seminary] student. The average attendance is Toricho 40, Arai 50, Kogashira 50 and Mii (two miles outside the city) 70.” (Winther, Letters, B. 843). In 1917, Anna Nielsen initiated a social welfare project for destitute boys in Moji when the Bach family moved there (cf. Fujii, 93). This fact is not mentioned by Ellen Sigrid Bach in her autobiography (1979).

From 25 March 1919 and lasting five days, the Lutheran Church held an extraordinary annual meeting in Hakata Church, in Fukuoka City. On the agenda was a reform of the organization that included negotiations between the United Lutheran Church of America and the local church. It resulted in a proposal for a Foundation Agreement (協同基礎 *kyoudou kiso*) and a new constitution for Japan Evangelical Lutheran

Church (cf. summary in JELC, 47 and Minutes of the meeting printed in *Ruuteru* No. 96, April 1919, 5-7). During the meeting, “the Lutheran missionaries held a meeting in Fukuoka where they resolved to start a social charity (社会慈善儀業 *shakai jizen kigyō*). It made a project group chaired by Anna Nielsen and including Rev. Miller and the woman missionary Miss Maude Powlas⁹” (JELC, 59-60). That year, Anna and her husband were first transferred to Saga and then to Kumamoto, where she initiated a project for receiving and caring for abandoned, newborn male infants (JELC, 60). That project is seen as a precursor of Jiaien 慈愛園 “The colony of Mercy,” the first of JELC’s three flagships of social welfare (cf. Fujii, 130&143 and JELC, 60). At the first general assembly of JELC held according to its new constitution, in Kumamoto Church on April 1920, it was resolved to “make an ear-marked budget for Social Charity aside from the ordinary propagation” (Important Decisions (重要事項 *juuyō jikō*) no. 10, *Ruuteru* No. 109, May 1920), and Maude Powlas was assigned to the project. She planned and later led Jiaien. The Women’s Foreign Mission in America raised 20000 USD for it, so she could buy 6200 m² of land for the project in Kumamoto in 1921, and have a home for the elderly, a nursing home for children and infants, and a women’s relief facility built. Jiaien was inaugurated on 8 April 1923 (cf. JELC, 60). The Nielsens’ worked with dedication to serve the spiritual and physical needs of Japanese but also had to deal with their private health issues. In 1922, Anna needed treatment in the US. During her hospitalized and recuperation, Jørgen Peter toured the country on behalf of the Japan mission. He particularly agitated and fundraised for moving the seminar from Kumamoto to Tokyo. The argument went: Though the Luther Church had been founded and nurtured on the island of Kyushu, many young and talented people now moved east to the capital, including members of the church. It had been observed that the Japanese Christians maintained their membership with the local church where they were baptized, but did not attend worship anywhere, if they moved away. Consequently, Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church needed to establish congregations in the capital to welcome talented people from its boys’ school in Kumamoto and

9 M.O. Powlas was in Japan 1918-1941 and again from 1946 till her retirement in 1957.

congregations. And for the future of JELC it would be better to set up its seminar there, too. Pastor Nielsen intended to stay in the US for a couple of years to prepare himself for “the call as Dean” at the new theological seminary in Tokyo (cf. Andersen and Bondo 1923). When Anna Nielsen had recovered sufficiently, the couple returned to Japan in August 1924 (Andersen and Bondo 1925, 40), so Jørgen Peter was involved in purchasing land in Tokyo, oversee the building of new facilities and their inauguration in 1925. Unfortunately, only two years later he was diagnosed with diabetes and for its treatment the couple again retreated to the US, where he was appointed professor of theology at Trinity Seminary. Anna died in 1928. Jørgen Peter remarried with Gertrude Jensen on 18 December 1929. Though he recovered, the mission of UDELCA followed the advice of its medical expert consequently declining to send a person who had been treated for diabetes into the mission field. From 1932 to 1946, Jørgen Peter Nielsen was the president of Trinity Seminary. At least for some of the period 1931-1941 and again after 1950, he also was chair of the section for Japan Mission in UDELCA. His annual reports in the Yearbook testify to his effort to keep a favorable attitude towards the Japanese despite international conflicts that involved the official Japan in those decades. After retirement he worked for the Good Shephard Home for Aged in Blair, 1949-1956. He died on 31 July 1963.

Bach, Ditlev Gotthard Monrad (1887-1974)¹⁰ was born in Thisted, Denmark, on 2 April 1887, a son of Peder Tøfting Bach and Kirsten Marie (ne Nielsen). The family emigrated to the US. He was graduated from Dana College, Blair, in 1909 and from Trinity Seminary, Blair, in 1912. He was ordained on 23 June 1912. On 24 September 1912 he married Ellen Sigrid Knudsen (b. 4 Sep. 1893 in Faaborg, Denmark). D.G.M. served as a pastor to a Danish congregation in Mauriceville, New Zealand 1912-1916 and then was commissioned missionary to Japan from 1916 to 1941. After resettlement in the U.S.A. D.G.M. served as missionary among Japanese

10 The information here is based on D.M.G. Bach's record with The American Lutheran Church Code No. B-0208 (ELCA). Other sources are identified where used, in particular the autobiography of Ellen Sigrid Bach (1979) has been valuable.

Americans in Fresno, California in 1941-1942 and again in 1947-1956. He taught Japanese at the University of Colorado, Boulder, 1942-1946. The Bachs had seven children between 1916 and 1929. While in Japan, DGM was involved in translating Luther's Catechism.

Based on the records available we observe that like the Nielsen family the Bach family was sent to serve a Danish congregation for a while before being sent to the mission field of Japan. May we deduce that UDELCA wanted its missionaries to hone their pastoral skills within a Danish community to better serve the foreign communities they would encounter?

The Bach family arrived in Japan in 1916 and loyally served the Lutheran Church the next 25 years. They were first introduced to Japan, its language and mores during a few months stay with the Nielsens, then sent to work in Moji, a port city located on the north-eastern corner of Kyushu by the Kanmon Straits that separates Kyushu from Honshu. They cooperated with Pastor Matsumoto, who had started the work, and "(h)e and Gotthard had made a good team and the work had gone smoothly" so it was a "big blow" when Pastor Matsumoto died of meningitis in 1920, leaving behind his wife and three young children (Bach 1979, 45). The Bach family stayed on and helped build up the congregation. Contemporary reports note the poor housing conditions they had to live with: near a red-light district in their first house in Moji and later in a "ghost house" where their children and D.G.M. got sick with typhus because "the sewer was leaking into our well" (Bach 1979, 43). Industrialization drove the rent up, leaving them with practically no choice of anything but the most modest abode. They returned from their first furlough in early September 1923 and settled in Shinomoseki on the Honshu-side of Kanmon Straits vis-à-vis Moji where they continued to the work as well. In March 1926, they got a letter from "the Missions Placement Committee asking if we would be interested in moving to Kumamoto to take over the evangelistic work" (Bach 1979, 61); "We do not know just why the change was made, but feel sure that the Mission Board has placed him where they feel that his talents can be put to the best use for the kingdom" was the comment on the change by the Mission Society in UDELCA (Andersen and Bondo 1927, 48). As it were, the Bach family happily accepted and

moved to Kumamoto for the remain of their time in Japan, but only after the church building in Shinomoseki, built under D.G.M.'s supervision, had been dedicated, and the baptismal designed by him had been used for the baptism of their newborn daughter (cf. Bach 1979, 62). "Evangelistic work" meant he was not confined to Kumamoto on Kyushu's west coast. On the contrary, he reported to the Yearbook about serving nine minor cities near Kumamoto with Tominaga, his Japanese colleague (Bach 1930, 68). They assisted young Japanese pastors and helped build up congregations in Minamata "in the south", and in Nobeoka, "a five-hour's drive by car from Kumamoto" in Miyagi Prefecture on the east coast (Bach 1937, 77). Bach voiced his commitment to mission to the rural population (Bach 1930, 68) and described plans for "a more intensive rural work" (Bach 1937, 77) for which he saved money to make a rural center. "My plan is to make a place that is self-supporting, where we can send young men to be under Christian influence" and "we are planning to send Okawa, my co-worker here, to Denmark as soon as arrangements can be made there for a stay of a year or so at one of the rural folk schools. ... Will you give this matter your prayerful interest?" (Bach 1937, 77-78). Why Denmark rather than the US was to be the source of inspiration is not explained, but perhaps because Denmark was known for its advanced agriculture at that time, and it's Folk [High] Schools were frequented by Japanese (cf. Hermansen 2014a and 2017a). While D.G.M. thus worked out of the house, Sigrid opened it to host meetings and occasional cooking classes for local women groups (Bach 1930, 68).

In the spring of 1941, Japanese friends and the Danish consulate advised the family to leave Japan. They settled in Fresno, California, to work among the Japanese and their Japanese American descendants, until all of them were confined to camps after the outbreak of the Pacific War. D.G.M. Bach was out of work, but then began teaching Japanese to American soldiers at the University of Colorado, Boulder (Bach 1976, 115-124).

In 1946, after the war, he and Ellen Sigrid returned to California. In a letter from Bach to Winther, dated 6 January 1947 wrote:

Dr. Hilburn my colleague at the Boulder school, suggested that we start and (sic)

old people's home for the indigent Japanese. I got some encouragement from the welfare department of the county and the officers of WRA, but when I suggested the matter to the Board office they hit the ceiling. That was the business of the American Board of Missions. But this board would have nothing to do with it but were considered enough to turn it over to the National Lutheran Council. We have considered the matter locally, and if nothing comes of going to Japan, we may consider taking that kind of work. There is still room for that kind of work, if for no other purpose than a gesture of friendship to those who are friendless.

Eventually they started a work almost at their own risk. In the UELCA Yearbook of 1949, Winther relates how they ran it on the retirement allowance for Bach with an additional annual work fund and funds for a car from the mission, but no housing support unlike other home mission fields. They were supported by church members of Del Rey (Winther 1949, 63). The following year, Winther quoted a letter from D.G.M. Bach, who wrote:

About a year ago, after an abortive attempt to hold regular services in our home here in Parlier, we settled down to laying a foundation of good will towards the Christian Church, always keeping the idea before the people that the church is willing and anxious to receive those who will come. Our method has been to get close to the people in the neighborly way by helping those who needed help, always keeping in mind the ultimate goal of showing them that God is love, and that that love is manifested through His Son.

Bach went on to explain that he had bought a lot, where he planned to open a church "and invite any one who wishes to come and worship without distinction of race, color, or creed, I almost said, but I won't go that far. We may not have a Lutheran church as a result, and I think that would be to defeat our own purpose of racial amity. The purpose after all is to build up the existing church, and not to create anything that will tend to isolation of any group of people" (Winther 1950). This work of Gotthard and Ellen Sigrid Bach must be viewed in the light of a "dislike toward the Japanese

people” in the US at that time, sentiments that were shared by some members of the Lutheran churches as well (cf. Winther’s report), wherefore it seems so much more admirable.

David Rudolf Bach, the fourth son, compiled a sketch of his father: “*Far (or Den Gal Man Bach)*,” (2000). It contains extracts of letters sent by DGM to his wife in 1923, an extract of an unpublished novel “I was a Stranger”, and of letters to the chair of the Home Mission Board, Pastor K. M. Matthiesen sent in 1955. The family letters reveal his passionate love for his wife, the pages from the novel his strong sense of injustice being committed against the Japanese Americans with the *Edict on Eviction* in 1942. In the letters to the Rev. Matthiesen Bach gave vent to his frustration with the chairman’s politics that prevented the construction of a Lutheran church for the Nisei – Japanese Americans in California.

Danish Mission Churchmen’s Association – Denmaaku misshion kyoyakushakai 丁抹ミッシン教役者会. It is said that when Danes are more than two they start an association, and even if it isn’t true under all circumstances, the fact that with the arrival of the Bach family there were now more than two Danish missionary families in Kyushu could have been the occasion for the formation of the Danish Mission Churchmen’s Association. It was founded at Kurume Church on 14-16 February 1917. Fujii ascribes it to the fact that the Danish mission had its center in Kurume and activities in many places on Northern Kyushu and the southern tip of Honshu, but that had been true for almost a decade and a half by 1917. Besides Winther, Nielsen and Bach, five Japanese clergies participated: the reverends Miura, Matsumoto, Muto, Kameyama and Yonemura. The intention was for the association to meet once a year, and it issued “Tabiji no tomo たびぢの友” (The Wayfarer’s Friend), an address book for the Clergy of the Danish Mission Section of Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church in April 1917 (Fujii, 92-94). I have yet to find references to the association in the Yearbook of UDELCA that otherwise includes reports from the Church’s Japan Committee and the missionaries in Japan.

Up until the report for 1928, the engagement in Japan is referred to as “Vort Arbejde i Japan” (Our Work in Japan), but when J.P. Nielsen assumed leadership of the

committee, the report of 1930 started differently. The first few paragraphs deserve to be quoted in toto, as they state the extent of the involvement of UDELCA in Japan after 25 years of work.

Our Parish in Japan consists of the stations Hida, Moji, Shimonoseki and Amagi, where the following Japanese workers are located: Evangelist S. Fukuyama at Hida, Evangelist S. Kawagiri at Moji, Pastor Y. Yoshida at Shimonoseki, and Pastor N. Washiyama at Amagi. Besides these four stations, each with its organized church, our synod is supporting Pastor and Mrs. J. M. T. Winther, resident at Kurume and in charge of the field which, besides Kurume, includes Hida, Amagi, Yoshii, Tanushimaru and other out-stations. We are also supporting Pastor and Mrs. D. G. M. Bach, resident in Kumamoto, where Pastor Bach, working together with Pastor S. Tominaga, has a very extended field, consisting of the local work, the regularly organized stations of Omuta and Minamata, and a line of out-stations.

Our two missionary families are doing excellent and efficient work in these evangelistic fields.

Besides these two families, Miss Maya Winther is supported by our Synod. She is located in the small town of Ogi, where together with Miss Faith Lippard, both of whom are born and raised in Japan, she is doing fine work among the women and children.

Pastor A. Muto, who is the regular Pastor of Omuta Church, is supported by the Ladies' Aids of the Pacific District. Pastor H. Inadomi, Chaplain and Bible-teacher at the Middle School and Pastor at the church at that school, in Kumamoto, is supported by our Young People's Leagues. These two men, tho very different in disposition and methods, are doing most faithful and earnest work in the cause of Christ among their own people. (Nielsen and Andersen, 61)

The value of and pride taken in having Japanese pastors was often repeated throughout the 1930s. Years later, in the Yearbook of 1943, the Japan Mission Committee recommended UDELCA taking up foreign mission work elsewhere for there would be no future mission work to do in Japan, and no need for a Japan Mission

Committee either. These recommendations were based on “a number of surveys by Lutherans and others” including the opinion that “The Church in Japan will continue to be self-supporting and self-governing, and a regular subsidy from an American Board, possibly also special gifts of money, will be refused.”

The prophecy did not come true. Winther, Nielsen, Bach and other Japan-hands shielded the flame on the US side.

Neve, Lloyd Rudolph (1923-2015)¹¹. Having completed college at Dana College, been graduated from Trinity Seminar in Minnesota and been ordained in 1947, Lloyd studied for a year at Columbia University, while waiting for the moment to go to Japan. He arrived in Japan on 28 December 1948 (Winther 1948, 67) and on 15 October 1949 he married Muriel Eileen Hayward (Winther 1950, 61), who was in Japan as a J3, sent by the Methodist Mission in America (Huddle, 251)¹². *Ansgar Lutheran* 27 October 1952, carried an article “Missionary Neve describes field” where he wrote:

Our “parish”, so to speak, is an area of about 4000 sq. miles in the North Central part of Kyushu. We are not assigned to any one particular church but rather to an area. Our work is almost what we want to make it: lending help to old established churches in our area, starting new churches, student work, teaching, and as a matter of fact, as varied a work as each person feels he has the time and talent for. (Neve 1952)

11 The information here is based on L. Neve’s record with The American Lutheran Church Code No. N-2976 (ELCA). Other sources are identified where used.

12 As mentioned above, the Church preferred its men to be married. On mentioning Lloyd Neve’s marriage in Japan in the UDELCA Yearbook 1950, Winther states, “We have good reasons to be happy about this marriage. An unmarried male missionary in Japan works under a great handicap; at best he may be counted as only half a missionary. A married missionary, on the other hand is said to mean three missionaries, for if the wife of the missionary is of the right kind, she will be a second missionary, assisting her husband, and reaching many homes which he might never get in touch with. And then the influence of the Christian home, the example it sets, the atmosphere that meets the visitors and draws them, may well be regarded as fully worth as much as another missionary” (61-62). In fact, before Neve was commissioned, as a member of the screening committee Winther voiced his concern with the fact that Neve was unmarried.

Some years later, in 1958, he reported in the Church's *Yearbook*:

Pastor and Mrs. Lloyd have during the past year done most of their work in Futsukaiki, where a church now has been built. For the first time since his ordination Pastor Neve has served as a pastor of an established congregation. Previously he had mainly been doing pioneer evangelistic work and ministering to inquirers. It has been a new experience for him to lead a group of people to a deeper Christian maturity, and the past year has therefore been by far the richest and most rewarding of the ten years he has been in Japan. ... Pastor Neve has also preached regularly at nine other places. Twelve adults and one infant were baptized. (Neve 1959)

In 1964, Lloyd was appointed professor of Old Testament at the Lutheran Seminary in Tokyo, where he taught till 1977 and again from 1982 till retirement in 1986 (Eto and Tokuzen, 271). In between, JELC asked him to start a congregation in the northern Honshu.

In 1972, the Japanese Seibunsha published his doctoral dissertation, defended at Union Theological Seminary, N.Y. 1967, as *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* with a beautiful frontispiece by the famous artist Watanabe Sadao. Lloyd Neve contributed much to the Danish-American Archive and Library in Blair, Nebraska, which therefore has a good collection of materials related to the UDELCA missionaries. He also edited a history of Nojiri Lake Association, a community where the Neve family still had a cottage when I interviewed Muriel and Lloyd in Blair in 2013.

According to an obituary for Lloyd Neve:

His was probably the only household in the Tokyo Metropolitan area to keep rabbits, chickens, a goat, and 6 children on bicycles. Lloyd spoke Japanese fluently and had a working knowledge of Danish, German, Greek, and Hebrew. At the lake in the Japan Alps where the family spent most summers, the residents looked forward to the nightly sound of his baritone horn drifting across the hillside as he played hymns.

(Obituary 2015)

Johnsen, Paul Curtis (1929-2012)¹³. Born on 29 June 1929 in Fremont, Nebraska, he attended Dana College, Blair, in 1943 and in 1946-1949 (B.A.) interrupted by military service in Europe in 1943-1946, then studied theology at Trinity Seminar and was graduated in 1952 (B.D.). He married Carolyn Joyce Nelson (b. 14 May 1929) on 2 June 1952 and was ordained on 22 June. “Rev. and Mrs. Paul C. Johnsen were commissioned as missionaries on 6 July” and “set sail for Japan in August” 1952 (Nielsen 1953, 73) where they remained, absent furloughs, till 1964. The missionaries were “supported by St. Paul’s Lutheran Church of Lynwood, California” (Nielsen 1952, 78). After their return, Paul C. served as pastor in California, first at Christ Lutheran Church, Orange County in 1965-1971, then at Grace Lutheran Church, Huntington Beach in 1974-1990. In between the work as pastor, he taught at Dana College in 1964 and at California Lutheran Bible School in 1971-1974. The couple had five children between 1953 and 1964. Paul C. Johnsen died on 20 April 2012, in California.

Nielsen’s phrasing “Rev. and Mrs. Paul C. Johnsen were commissioned as missionaries on 6 July.” is worth noting. It does not divert from the convention of other protestant groups in the naming of the couple (e.g. cf. Huddle, 249). Like other married women, Carolyn Joyce, was identified as Mrs. Paul C. Johnsen, even in portrait photographs used for presenting “The Missionaries” (The Missionaries, Nov. 1960, Vol. XXIII No.9). However, the plural “were commissioned as missionaries” differs significantly from the past, when wives were not identified as missionaries by the sending organizations, despite their evident, always expected and sometimes acknowledged contributions.

In Japan, the Johnsen family first lived on the perimeters of Kyoto Lutheran Church while Paul (or both?) studied language and culture for two years. Subsequently, they moved to Tokyo from where he was assigned to reach out to listeners of the radio program Lutheran Hour in Chiba Prefecture. With the help of dedicated locals,

13 The information here is based on J. C. Johnsen’s record with The American Lutheran Church Code No. J-4000 (ELCA). Other sources are identified where used.

he and his Japanese colleague managed to establish a church in Chiba City and one in Yokoshiba within the following ten years (Cf. Johnsen, Letters 1953~1960 in the ELCA Archives). According to the UDELCA Yearbook 1957, Johnsen moved to Chiba City in April 1954, managed to have “a small portable chapel erected on a lot close to Chiba National University” in July 1956, and “through the Lutheran Hour broadcasts, received invitations from 600 homes.” (Nyholm 1957, 75), while “the mission at Yokoshiba became one year old” on Easter Day 1957 (Nyholm 1958, 85). Before they returned to the US, Paul C. Johnsen passed on the work to Rev. Frode and Anne Marie Leth-Larsen, Danish Missionary Society (see Hermansen 2015).

Conclusion

The end of the 1950s was also the end of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as an independent synod. Paul C. Nyholm was in charge of its Japan Mission at home and in his annual report he noted:

As we are now approaching merger with the E.L.C (Evangelical Lutheran Church) and the A.L.C. (American Lutheran Church) some adjustments should be made in our work in Japan. Since 1919 we have enjoyed a fruitful cooperation with the U.L.C. (United Lutheran Church). It would be most desirable that Pastors L. Neve and P.C. Johnsen be permitted to stay on the U.L.C. field, where they are now so well established. Both pastors desire to be members of The A.L.C., but they would also like to remain where they are now, as a move to a new location would mean breaking of many valuable contacts which have been made over a long period of years. (Nyholm 1959, 72-73)

Nyholm also expressed gratitude for “the fact that God gave the U.E.L.C. one more missionary to Japan in 1958 and one missionary couple in 1959” (Nyholm 1959, 72). The one missionary in 1958 was Miss Marlene Paulsen who went with the support of the Women’s Missionary Society to Kumamoto to serve the Kyushu Jo Gakuin (Woman’s College) for three years (see Hermansen 2017b). The missionary couple of

1959 was Pastor and Mrs. E. Eskildsen from Indianapolis (Nyholm 1959, 74), but they did not stay in Japan, and I have no further information about them or their decision, wherefore they are not discussed here.

Though United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church only sent few missionaries to Japan, this brief review of their efforts and contributions leaves an impression of highly committed, caring, creative individuals - and cooperative.

Across the individual stories, we find several common themes. I have highlighted the changing Danish-ness of the mission. Interestingly, and perhaps not unrelated, we observed how emphasis on being Danish coincided with English gradually replacing Danish as the *lingua Franca* of the UDELCA as can be seen in the change of title for the annual report from *Beretning for xx Aarsmøde* to *Yearbook*. Initially, native Danish set with Gothic letters was the norm at the beginning while foreign English was set in a Latin font, then Danish was also set in a Latin font, and by the 1930s English had mostly replaced Danish in public writings. On the other hand, in the same 1930s, old timers like Winther took pride in Inadomi Hajime, his disciple, for his ability to speak Danish on public occasions, such as the Second World Conference of Lutherans in Copenhagen, 1929. Still, by the end of the 1940s, UDELCA was renamed UELCA; D for Danish was gone.

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