

History of the Church in Japan: Part 7: 1947-1948: Japanese Mission Reopened

By R. Lanier Britsch ()

In the spring of 1947, the First Presidency called Brother Edward L. Clissold to go to Japan to investigate the possibility of re-opening the mission, and if appropriate, to do so. He received word of this appointment and was set apart as mission president on October 22, 1947. The First Presidency instructed President Clissold to preside over the members, to organize the Church, to establish a mission headquarters, and to make arrangements for missionaries to enter the country. He arrived in Japan on March 6, 1948.

President Clissold began immediately to search for living and office quarters. In April, he located a partly burned mansion in Azabu, Tokyo, and through the help of many influential people, even Prince Takamatsu, and after a series of extremely complex negotiations, he obtained permission to buy the property.

Renovation of the building began in May, and by the 22nd of that month President Clissold moved into the servant's quarters over the garage. Although Sister Clissold and other missionaries moved into the home in September, the remodeling work was not completed until November 25, 1948. A large addition was later built on, and in the late 1970s the building was razed to make way for the new Tokyo Temple. It was in an excellent part of the city and served the Church well as a mission home and office for almost thirty years.

The initial group of missionaries arrived in Japan on June 26, 1948. The first of their number, Harrison Theodore "Ted" Price, was called to serve in late 1947. The other four were Paul C. Andrus, Wayne McDaniel, Koji Okauchi, a nisei (second generation American of Japanese Ancestry), and Raymond C. Price, brother to Ted.

Between December 1947 and March 1948, these elders were assigned to the Central Pacific Mission in Hawaii for language training under Paul V. Hyer, an elder who had learned to speak Japanese well. They not only studied the Japanese language but also tracted and taught the gospel with companions from the Central Pacific Mission. Their experience in Hawaii prepared them to know how to teach the gospel as somewhat experienced missionaries. Otherwise they would have entered the Japanese mission field as total "greenies." (Paul V. Hyer, "Preparations for a Mission in Postwar Japan: Paul Hyer's 'Mini-Mission Training Center,'" unpublished paper).

The elders were allowed to enter Japan only after President Clissold had made arrangements for them to live with American Saints in the Occupation Forces. Between June and the end of 1948 the mission force grew to seventeen: President and Sister Clissold, thirteen elders (seven Caucasians and six nisei) and two lady missionaries (both nisei).

One of the early assignments President Clissold gave the first group of elders was to find any members from the former mission who were still alive. Some of the converts of the

early mission, such as Brothers Nara, Shiraishi, and Takagi, and a few women, had already found the Church and were serving well in one or two small groups. But by no means all of the old members had found the Church. Paul C. Andrus and his companion, Ray Price, found some members in the Yokohama area who had been out of touch with the Church since the late 1930s, but who had nevertheless remained faithful.

One of those who was overjoyed to know that the Church had returned to Japan was Sister Suzuki Nami. According to Elder Andrus "she remained faithful even though during the war and during the Japanese incident in Manchuria she lost two of her sons and one daughter. . . . Her very nice home in Yokohama was bombed and burned and destroyed completely. When Ray Price and I found her, she and her husband were living on two tatami straw mats. Each mat is six by three feet. Over these they had a corrugated iron lean-to. They cooked in there on a charcoal brazier, a hibachi, and they slept there. This was their property where they had had their restaurant, which had also been destroyed." (Paul C. Andrus Oral History, interviews by R. Lanier Britsch, 1974).

As the missionaries went to work proselyting among the Japanese, they found them much more willing to listen to the message of the restored gospel than had been true before the war. The elders had several advantages that the missionaries before 1924 had not enjoyed. Among these were translated materials to share with prospective converts. The most important item was of course the Japanese version of the Book of Mormon. A collection of hymns and a few tracts were also available. But more important than the literature were the people, both those members who remained faithful from the early mission and the U.S. military people who not only lived the gospel and taught it to their Japanese friends but also contributed time, money, and leadership to the newly established mission.

Even before the mission was officially opened in March 1948, some Japanese had been baptized into the Church. The first Japanese to join were Sato Tatsui and his wife, Chiyo, who were taught the gospel by Ray Hanks and C. Elliott Richards. Mel Arnold and Boyd K. Packer also became friends and gospel teachers. On July 7, 1946, the Satos were baptized in a swimming pool at Kansaigakuin University. Elliott Richards baptized Brother Sato and Boyd K. Packer baptized Chiyo. (Lucile C. Tate, *Boyd K. Packer: A Watchman on the Tower* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 64-66).

Brother Sato, who remained faithful to the Church until his death in Salt Lake City in 1996, organized a Sunday School in Nagoya in 1946 and conducted it almost single-handedly until missionaries were sent there in October, 1948. (Harrison T. Price, "A Cup of Tea," *Improvement Era*, March 1962).