During WWII, beautiful churches on the West Coast became only a poignant memory for worshippers behind barbed wire. Above: Portland Methodist Church, c. 1941. Courtesy of Don Hayashi. *Right: Manzanar Buddhist Church, c. 1943.* BCA Archives.

Incarceration and the Church: *an Overview*

by Shizue Seigel

A comprehensive picture has yet to be published of the complex interactions between Japanese Americans and religious institutions during World War II. Much is hidden away in oral histories, religious quarterlies, privately published church histories and dusty files. In this article we can only begin to touch on a broad and fascinating topic.

As a consequence of their WW II internment, individual Nikkei were beset by wrenching change and loss. For many, religion was a bulwark against almost unbearable fear, uncertainty and bitterness in a world turned upside down. The words of these two young Nisei poignantly express the emotions that swept the hearts of many – Christian and non-Christian alike:

Of his first night at Tanforan "Assembly" Center, George Aki, later chaplain for the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team says:

> I died mentally, I lost complete faith in myself, my beloved country, and yes, my religion. I lost all control of my life within the barbed-wire fences...

Donald Iwahashi recalls that after several bleak months at Poston detention camp:

> I began to turn my thoughts from the visible to the invisible. What is the meaning and purpose of life?... My search for faith... became much more profound and meaningful.

Spiritual and practical assistance was vital to beleaguered and frightened Nikkei congregations. Yet, even as they struggled to meet this challenge, Japanese American churches and ministers were themselves battered by harsh wartime policies and hostile public attitudes.

For several years before the outbreak of war, the FBI had scrutinized the activities of the Japanese American churches. The "Shinto" sects were damned as state religions espousing Emperor-worship and militarism *(see article, p. 5)*. Buddhism and the other non-Christian sects were tarred with the same brush, although not one supported acts of disloyalty against the government.

After Pearl Harbor

On Dec. 7, 1941, the FBI began arresting community leaders suspected of close ties to Japan. Within 24 hours, 1,212 people from both Hawai'i and the mainland had been turned over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for temporary detention. By March 9, over 4,000 people were held, including Shinto and Buddhist ministers and lay leaders. A few Christians were also picked up.

Although a few detainees were questioned and released, most were shipped under armed guard to Department of Justice camps.

> Many of the men arrived... in the dead of winter... [with] just what they had on when they were picked up... it was not until weeks later that the families... discovered [where the men were imprisoned]. Many ministers were not allowed to rejoin their families for 18 months to 2 years. Some were threatened with deportation and held in separate camps until 1947 *(see article p. 10)*.

Buddhism and other non-Christian faiths. Unlike the Christian churches, the Japanese-based sects had few advocates outside the Japanese community. Some churches closed immediately. Others were able to struggle on until the eviction.

In Hawai'i, all Shinto and Buddhist priests were arrested. Throughout the war, the sole Caucasian Buddhist min-

ister there, Rev. Shinkaku Hunt, struggled to keep the faith alive for the Hawai'ian Japanese community, most of whom were not interned. On the mainland, the largest Buddhist group was the Buddhist Mission of North America (BMNA) *(see article on p. 5)*. Rev. Arthur Takemoto writes:

> A large number [23] of ministers were removed from their temples and homes... [along with] many lay leaders... leaving only the wives and young children stranded... The membership was apprehensive about approaching their temple[s] for fear of being approached [by U.S. government authorities].

Rev. Julius A. Goldwater, one of the few Caucasian members, led a delegation of church leaders to headquarters as a show of confidence. Heartened by the support, BMNA headquarters began regular communications to the local temples. Ministers' wives and lay leaders were encouraged to perform services and continue church business *(see articles p. 7 & 8)*. Members were urged to volunteer for civil defense and Red Cross work and to refrain from actions that could raise suspicion. Some temples placed resolutions in their local newspapers attesting to their loyalty, or volunteered the use of their buildings for the war effort.

Nevertheless, some Buddhists, anxious to avoid public association with things Japanese, avoided their temples or even converted to Christianity to prove their Americanism.

As eviction loomed, temple doors and windows were boarded up, shrines dismantled, and statues and scrolls removed for safekeeping. Vacated temples were made available to evictees to store their personal effects.

The BMNA church in New York City was crippled by the arrest of its minister, who was not released until

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Japanese American CHURCHES

by Shizue Seigel

Prior to the end of World War II, religion in Japan was colored by political pressures. During Tokugawa times, all families were required to register at their local Buddhist temple. Subsequently, during the Meiji era, *kokka* Shinto, or state Shinto, developed as a political tool to redirect feudal loyalties towards patriotic fervor for the Emperor. Everyone, regardless of religious belief, was required to venerate the Emperor and their local Shinto shrine. Perhaps because of this politicization of organized religion, the private beliefs of the people were not rigidly exclusive, instead combining elements of folk tradition, animism, veneration of ancestors and indigenous *kami* (gods), shamanism and Buddhism. Many Issei worshipped daily at separate home shrines for both *Kami* and *Hotoke* (Buddha).

The "Shinto" Churches. During the mid-1800s, amid the turbulence that marked the end of feudalism, several "new religions" arose in Japan, including Konko-kyo, Tenrikyo, and Seicho No Iye. These *kyoha* Shinto, or folk Shinto, movements were founded by charismatic leaders who claimed a mediumistic direct contact with *Kami* (God). To avoid persecution, these groups registered themselves as Shinto although they did not subscribe to Shinto tenets except to ensure the groups' safety from suppression.

In America, U.S. officials made no distinction among the various *kyoha* Shinto sects, branding them all as ultra-nationalistic *kokka* Shinto. Ironically, the very tactic that helped the groups avoid persecution in Japan led to their suppression in America during WWII.

Konko-kyo. In 1941, there were 18 Konko temples in Hawai'i and North America. On Dec. 7, 1941, priests and lay leaders were arrested by the FBI and detained in Dept. of Justice camps *(see article p. 10)*. No public gatherings were held in the detention camps, although the faithful worshiped in small groups. A Hawai'ian minister's wife recalls that although the church was closed, and her husband arrested, she held worship services for members in the church kitchen. The shrine was hidden a closet, so when government agents came to check, worshippers could quickly close the closet door and pretend that they were innocently drinking coffee and socializing. Currently, there are 14 Konko churches in the U.S. and Canada. Although spiritual ties to Japan remain, the North American churches are sustained locally.

Tenrikyo. The first Tenrikyo church in the U.S. was established in San Francisco in 1928. By 1941 there were over 30 U.S. churches, averaging about 20 members each. Members maintained close ties to the headquarters in Japan, visiting frequently for study and pilgrimage. The FBI arrested the head ministers of almost all the churches, including two women. Although some were allowed to rejoin their families after $1^{1}/_{2}$-2 years, three ministers died while imprisoned, and the bishop and key leaders were held in Dept. of Justice camps until 1947. Several churches were destroyed or lost during the internment period. Today, there are almost 60 Tenrikyo groups in the U.S.

Buddhism. The majority of Issei were Buddhists, although many attended

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Japanese American Churches *(cont'd from p. 15)*

sons: some wished to demonstrate their Ameri-canism, some wished to disassociate themselves from Japanese institutions, some were attracted by religious activities in camp. Resettlers to areas without Buddhist churches joined Christian ones. Some Nisei, incensed by the injustices of internment, did not understand or agree with the apparent passivity of their parents' spirituality. With only four Nisei Buddhist ministers, there were few English-speakers to explain such subtle concepts as entrusting to a higher power, the impermanence of life conditions, the interconnectedness of all beings, or the importance of inner clarity in effecting outer change. As one Nisei explained:

> Although they were Buddhist, my parents allowed [us] to become Christians. Because there is a comprehensible salvation and forgiveness in Christianity, I never attempted to understand Buddhism.

Some Caucasian Christians had viewed resettlement as "an opportunity for complete Americanization." In the 1950s, this push for assimilation drew the Japanese Christian churches into the mainstream of their denominations. However, many Japanese Christians made a clear distinction between religious and cultural identity. The churches never lost the desire to preserve their ethnic identity, resisting amalgamation with white churches. By the late '60s and 70s, the major denominations acknowledged the needs and desires of the ethnic churches by forming Asian American Caucuses.

Despite the internment and subsequent challenges, the Japanese American churches have survived – stubbornly asserting the right of every American to freedom of worship. ■

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1946. Churches in Salt Lake City, UT, and Denver and Ft. Lupton, CO, remained open throughout the war, serving an influx of people who moved inland to avoid internment or resettled from the detention camps.

The Japanese Christian community also suffered arrests and church vandalism. In Sacramento, an Issei clergyman recalls:

> [On Dec. 7] the FBI picked up [men who were] the backbone of the local Japanese community and our church. The following morning... when I went to the church, I noticed a large inscription 'Down with Japs' on the front wall.

Although a few white Protestant leaders protested the mass arrests of Japanese Americans within days of the bombing, community support from Caucasian Christians was sparse.

> When the war broke out, the white churches were rather cold. So, deep down in the heart of Japanese people, there was suspicion. There was disappointment in the white churches because of our experience. Where was the church?
>
> In our Congregational church [in Fresno] there was Dr. Gregg who really extended his hands to us even [though] he felt threatened because he knew how his congregation felt.

In some localities, help was offered, then withdrawn:

> [The Sacramento] Church Federation promised the owners of the hotels (there were 14 or 15 Japanese owners) that [it] would look after the business and take care of its upkeep, but the day before we were to evacuate... the Federation informed the owners that [it] had changed its mind... the hotel owners had only one day to find buyers for furniture, bedding, supplies, etc.
>
> A few days before eviction, Dr. Kircher and members of [his] Church came to... bid us farewell by singing hymns and offering their prayers... [However, only] a worker at the Lincoln Christian Center of the Baptist Church helped... When we went into [the] "Assembly" Center... he was just about the only Caucasian who transported our luggage on his truck for us.

A few Caucasian Christians understood that the Nikkei needed much more than hymns and prayers. Dedicated individuals, many of them Japanese-speaking ex-missionaries to Japan, worked tirelessly throughout the war to assist Japanese Americans. To name just a few: Quaker Rev. Herbert Nicholson and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); Dr. Ralph Mayberry and the American Baptists *(See article, p. 6);* Dr. Frank Herron Smith, superintendent of the Japanese Methodists; Dr. Gordon K. Chapman, former Presbyterian missionary to Japan; and Catholic Maryknoll Father Hugh Lavery. When Father Lavery sought to save mixed heritage orphans at Maryknoll from internment, Col. Karl Bendetsen of the Western Defense Command coldly replied, "I am determined that if they have one drop of Japanese blood in them they must go to camp."

The Quakers, Methodists, and Presbyterians and other religious groups protested E.O. 9066 and subsequent orders, although the language is carefully soft-pedaled. One joint statement calls the "abrogation of the rights of citizens" unfortunate because it *leads "the Japanese to conclude* that we are practicing race discrimination." [Editor's italics. The statement shies away from agreeing that race discrimination is being practiced.] The American Baptists (Northern Baptists) in June 1942, declared:

> ...there has been indiscriminate and enforced eviction of Japanese, a majority American citizens of Japanese ancestry... without benefit of judicial processes of investiga-

tion... [we] record our *deep regret* at this violation of the Christian principles of... justice and fairplay, as contrary to the best interests of our nation, and *injurious to the world-wide mission of the Christian Church*... [Editor's italics]

Despite official statements, the white Christian churches failed to stop the eviction. Many Nikkei felt that:

As for our church, we could always build another one. But I felt there was a wall between American (white) churches and the ethnic churches, that we were deserted at a crucial time.

"Assembly" Centers

When the order for mass eviction came, racetracks, fairgrounds and hastily thrown-together barracks became temporary home to thousands of evictees.

Midori Watanabe Kamei recalls,

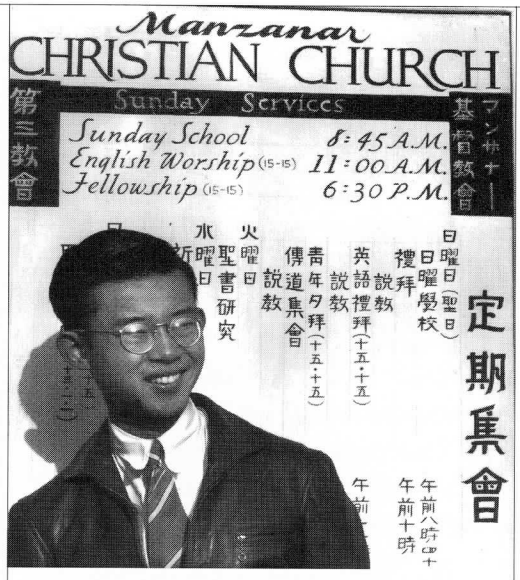
Orderliness and a sense of quiet acceptance of our fate were evident from our first day in [the "assembly" center]. Church services were already being held, and Sunday-school classes were held with the help of Bibles, hymnals, and other teaching materials donated by local churches... The Santa Anita stadium, which once seated screaming horse-race fans, was now echoing the songs in praise of God lifted up by our [fifty] young voices.

An Issei minster relates,

The general feeling of evacuees... was that everyone seemed tense and alert, not knowing what to expect next... When we held Sunday service, the attendance was tremendous, with many non-Christians among them.

Rev. Francis Hayashi recalls that camp administrators recognized that the clergy had influence and knowledge of the community.

Three JACL leaders, Rev. Terakawa [a Buddhist minister] and I were picked to be advisors to the Center's manager. He conferred with us everyday about how to run the camp. We set up different committees to help take care of the people's welfare.



Divinity student, Manzanar, CA. Photo by Ansel Adams, Library of Congress.

The Protestants and Buddhists each formed federated, non-denominational churches. Regular activity schedules were published, announcing English and Japanese language services, Sunday school, young people's groups, mid-week evening services, and choir practice.

Numerous white speakers visited the Christian churches, but with the exception of Rev. Goldwater, who frequently visited Santa Anita, Pomona and later Manzanar, and Rev. Sunya Pratt of Tacoma, who helped establish the Puyallap Sunday School, the Buddhists had few outside allies.

One was Muriel Fisk, a Christian Scientist and former director of the the Guadalupe Buddhist Church choir, who agreed to care for the Guadalupe church. The Fisks visited church members at Tulare "Assembly" Center, bearing encouragement and fresh lettuce. Ostracized by the whites of Guadalupe, Mr. Fisk was abruptly fired from his job without explanation and the couple was forced to move to New Mexico.

Throughout the internment period, religious groups helped supplement what the government failed to provide.

A young Nisei woman describes the school at Santa Anita:

"The Wartime Civil Control Administration had not provided for an education budget, so once again, local churches donated boxes of old textbooks and teaching materials. The Turf Club, once the center for placing bets, eating and drinking, was now filled with the voices of hundreds of school children and their Nisei teachers. We had only park benches and tables for desks, and no walls separated the classes."

However, the hostility of the general public is illustrated by the story of a Quaker teacher who helped Esther Torii Suzuki attend college in Minnesota.

...she tithed from her $100-a-month salary and sent me $10 for nine months. I was so excited and grateful that I wrote her immediately. She answered, asking me not to write my name on the return address. The anti-Japanese feeling was so strong in her small [Oregon] town that she feared losing her job if they found out she had a friend of Japanese ancestry.

Detention Camps

Soon the internees were uprooted once more and sent to permanent detention camps. Rev. Paul Nagano remembers:

We were hustled... onto old trains and transplanted to desolate wastelands... [Seeing] soldiers with their guns pointed at us as we transferred from the train... I suddenly felt like a prisoner of war... I felt betrayed by my country...

I saw a guard tower and a barbed-wire enclosure. Unfinished tarpaper barracks were lined row upon row... My [family] and I – seven in all – crowded into a room measuring twenty feet by twenty-five feet... there is no doubt in my mind that they were concentration camps. These camps were not established to 'protect the Japanese American from misguided citizens on the

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outside' as... claimed; the guns were pointed inward, not outward.

Recognizing the need to keep their prisoners occupied, in May 1943, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) decreed:

> Like all other residents of the United States, evacuees... are free to worship as they please and to conduct any type of religious service of a non-political nature. Because of the critical shortage of building materials, *it now seems unlikely that WRA will be able to provide church buildings...* Space... will continue to be made available in the recreation halls. [Editor's italics.]
>
> Religious workers among the evacuee residents may carry on their religious activities... *No such workers, however, will receive WRA wages for the performance of religious duties.* Religious leaders from the outside will be admitted... only by the... invitation of [interned] church groups.

Federated Christian and Buddhist churches were set up in barracks-like rec halls. Catholics had their own programs, with Caucasian priests, and sometimes nuns, assigned to each camp. Seventh Day Adventists, Seicho No Iye, and the Salvation Army held regular meetings in a few camps. The smaller sects held no public gatherings, worshipping instead in members' homes.

Some Protestant ministers were offered stipends from their denominations, but Buddhist priests were forced to rely on the offerings of their congregations or on second jobs.

Conditions in the churches were crude at first, Frances Kaji recalls:

> We sat on makeshift wooden benches or on boxes and sang hymns led by adult leaders just a few years older than us.... with the help of a portable organ that had to be pumped with both feet... like a sewing machine. Although we did not have hymnals, we sang songs from memory.

Christians. With over 100 ministers interned, the Christians were able to develop a panoply of services and activities, even holding Vacation Bible schools at some camps. Hymnals, chairs and other supplies were donated by Caucasian allies. Outside speakers were frequent, especially at camps with few English-speaking ministers.

The Protestant Commission for Wartime Japanese Service, funded by all the major denominations except the Salvation Army, was formed. On behalf of the Commission, Dr. Frank Herron Smith and Dr. Gordon K. Chapman visited most of the camps, keeping lines of communication open within the interned Christian community. Dr. Smith also tried to ensure that Japanese Methodist property left behind on the West Coast was looked after and taxes paid. Ironically, at the same time that he was encouraging internees to have patience, and "help bring about a universal feeling of brotherhood," Smith and other ex-missionaries also made Japanese language war propaganda broadcasts to Japan for the U.S. government.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones, a noted missionary to India, organized a series of Christian Mission Weeks. These programs of mass meetings, seminars, and Bible study were held at Manzanar and four other camps.

In May 1942 the Japanese Methodists held their annual conference at Santa Anita "Assembly" Center. The 1943 and 1944 conferences met at their remaining free church in Denver. Most of the delegates came from the camps, with transportation paid by the Board of Home Missions.

Christian charity. Internees of all faiths remember Christmas gifts sent to the camps by church groups and infant layettes provided by the Quakers. A Poston internee reminisces:

> While the majority of people on the outside kept their distance, we were fortunate that people like Reverend and Mrs. Herbert Nicholson, Quaker missionaries who had served in Japan, would visit and bring a truckful of items like baby cribs, blankets, newspapers and magazines. Through his church in Glendale, other churches regularly donated things for the internees.

Rev. Francis Hayashi with sons Leland and Eugene at Minidoka Detention Camp in Idaho. *Courtesy of Don Hayashi..*

Buddhists. Since many leaders were still interned in Dept. of Justice camps, Buddhist clergy was vastly outnumbered by Christians at most camps. Buddhist activities were heavily scrutinized by camp authorities, keeping away some formerly active church members. Young Buddhists came into leadership – assisting the remaining ministers, teaching Sunday School, giving Dharma talks, and organizing social and recreational activities. Where English-speaking ministers were unavailable, speakers bureaus were developed. Service books were mimeographed or dittoed and hand-assembled. Many internees, prevented from bringing their home shrines *(obutsudan)* to camp, created make-shift ones from stolen lumber.

With homemade crepe-paper flowers and clothes from the Sears Roebuck catalog, internees tried to forget their desolate circumstances on special occasions. Above: Shimizu-Hori wedding, Manzanar, c. 1943. NJAHS Archives, Tashi Hori Collection.

The BMNA established their headquarters in Topaz. With ministers and members scattered throughout Dept. of Justice and detention camps, and with travel restricted, national activities were limited and board members restricted to Topaz internees for expediency's sake. In April 1944 the organization incorporated, changing its name from the Buddhist Mission of North America to the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). Later that month, delegates from the various camps and outside met at Topaz for a 3-day conference. In 1945, the annual conference was held at the Salt Lake City Buddhist Church.

As Nichiren, Zen, Jodo and Shingon Buddhist ministers were released from the Dept. of Justice camps, they were able to hold separate services at Tule Lake, Heart Mountain and Minidoka.

Religion and "loyalty." In 1943, the WRA turned religious affiliation into an issue of "loyalty" and military fitness. Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga uncovered a document at the National Archives wherein a scoring system for mainland Nisei military volunteers assigned Buddhists -2 points and Christians +2 points. Practicing Shintoists were rejected. The point system was not applied to Hawai'ian Nisei volunteers, who were mostly Buddhist. The prejudicial attitude of the authorities had no basis in fact – the BCA had supported military enlistment since the onset of war. Once they enlisted in the U.S. Army, Buddhists found no provisions for their religious needs. The all-Nisei 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team had no Buddhist chaplains, and on their dogtags, "B" stood for "Baptist" – "Buddhist" was designated by an "X."

Impact on congregations. In the early days of camp, church attendance was high. The opening of the Manzanar Buddhist church, for instance, was attended by 1600. Some Christian services were attended by 400 or more. Later, an Issei minister speculates that:

> After we moved to the [detention camp] the attendance began to decrease gradually because... [people knew] they were secure and settled at least for the duration of the war.

For many Christians and Buddhists alike, with time on their hands and their lives overturned, camp churches filled a vital need:

> My social life revolved around the church: attending Sunday worship, Bible study prayer and meeting other Christians during the week.

However, smaller sects and close-knit pre-war congregations suffered:

> The membership of [the United Methodist Church of Loomis] was scattered. Laboring under the atmosphere of uncertainty and with communication difficulties, large religious meetings and services were never held... [After the loyalty oath] most of the church membership families either moved to other Centers or ventured into the outside world... Thus, the membership was scattered even more.

Church properties at home. Despite arrangements for the safekeeping of West Coast church buildings, problems soon surfaced:

> With the congregation scattered, the Japanese Congregational Church of Fresno ceased to function. It was a poignant reminder that without people a church is only a building – and very vulnerable buildings at that. In... April 3, 1943, [the] superintendent urged Rev. Sakaguchi [interned along with his congregation] to...sell the... building because:
>
> 'So many people have broken in... that it is a very great fire hazard. The stuff stored in the building has been scattered... some of it carried off and some of it deliberately destroyed... (Rev. Gregg) has nailed the doors and boarded the windows... again and again, but it continues to happen.' In the end, the N. Calif. Congregational Conference sold the... building on behalf of our church for $1469.73... Our church members conducted this business by mail while behind barbed wire.

Just prior to eviction, the BCA Buddhist Church in San Diego leased out the church parking lot. When the lessee abandoned the premises without informing interned church leaders, thieves broke into the building and set it afire. The decision to keep the building was complicated by the fact that church leaders were imprisoned in two separate detention camps and a Dept. of Justice camp.

Resettlement

Student Relocation. At the outbreak of war, 2,500 students of Japanese ancestry were enrolled in West Coast colleges. Prior to the mass eviction, the hastily organized Student Relocation Committee in Berkeley, CA, managed to transfer 75 students inland. Short-lived WRA director Milton Eisenhower sought to develop a national commit-

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tee of leading educators to continue this work on a larger scale. He recalls:

> I am still distressed by the excuses I received from the educators I approached. All declined... I [finally] telephone[d] Clarence Pickett, the prominent Quaker leader [executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). He] traveled to hundreds of colleges and universities seeking admissions... [and] finally induced a prestigious group of educators and industrialists and cultural leaders to form the National Student Reloca-tion Council (NSRC).

Four West Coast field offices were set up (later consolidated in Philadelphia). Although the WRA later boasted of the operation, it provided no funds. Operating costs were borne by church boards and foundations, but NSRC volunteers and staffers, many of them Quakers, who traveled to all the camps and worked long hours at the office, were the backbone of the program. By their efforts, over 3000 students were enrolled in college.

Their early work was hampered by early government restrictions which initially barred Japanese Americans from 180 of the best schools because of classified war work, proximity to defense plants or railroad tracks, or the mere presence of a campus ROTC. NSRC staff had difficulty getting access into the "Assembly" Centers to distribute questionnaires and interview students. Placement was difficult, some schools flatly refusing students no matter how qualified, or demanding FBI clearances for admittance. An average of 25 letters were required for each placement to encourage and counsel students, acquire transcripts and reference letters, make applications, secure government clearance, apply for scholarships, find part-time jobs, and arrange for a welcome reception.

Hondo *(sanctuary) of the San Diego Buddhist Church after it was damaged by fire in January 1943. Interned church leaders managed to lease the building to the USO, who paid a very low rent in exchange for repairing the building. The church was not returned until July 1947.* Courtesy of BCA.

By fall of 1942, less than 7% of 2,321 applicants had been placed. A year later less than a third of 3,264 applicants had been placed. Due to the tardiness of the process, 22% of the total applicants dropped out before acceptance because of military, employment, or family obligations. For similar reasons, 11% of those accepted never enrolled.

Although the program was intended for all students regardless of faith, 74% of scholarship funds came from 13 Christian church boards. A few church boards allotted funds for non-members, but most non-Christians – the majority of potential applicants – were only eligible for the remaining 26% in secular funding. The scholarships were helpful, but students financed the bulk of their expenses through part-time work and family resources.

Help with Jobs and Housing. In Chicago, Philadelphia, Cincinnati and other cities, the AFSC and the American Baptist Home Mission opened offices or hostels to assist resettlers in finding jobs, housing, medical service and allies. Quaker Ross Wilbur of the Des Moines hostel describes the many needs of the resettlers.

> "welcoming, caring of evacuees, meeting trains, collection of baggage, arranging for appointments with prospective employers, landlords and interested individuals, and the gradual introduction of evacuees into this community."

He also struggled to keep the hostel in the black. Daily rates for room and board were $1-$1.50 for adults and 50 cents for children. Despite help from a local coalition of churches, schools and individuals, the Wilburs raised chickens and rabbits, and grew and canned vegetables to cut costs. From Dec. 1943 to Sept. 1944, the hostel housed an average of 18 people a day for a few days to a few weeks. A total of 727 guests were served 17,000 meals. When the flow of resettlers slowed to a trickle, the hostel was closed. Former guests collected funds as a farewell gift. With the money, Wilbur bought the hostel station wagon from the AFSC and presented it to the Japanese American community.

Many individual acts of kindness were also made. A college student relocated far from home and family recalls:

> One friend from the Church of the Brethren said her mother, who lived on a farm without electricity, felt that the evacuation was a national shame and she wanted to do something personally for me. She did my laundry in a gas-operated washing machine with homemade soap

[and] ironed with a flatiron heated on a wood-burning stove.

Japanese American Churches and Resettlement. To serve resettlers, the Salt Lake Buddhist Church opened a hostel. Membership in the Colorado churches boomed. In 1943, Rev. Kenryo Kumata was sent from Topaz to establish the Buddhist Temple of Utah-Idaho (Ogden, UT), which supported numerous branch churches in Utah and southern Idaho.

Several new churches were established in the Midwest to serve as a spiritual and social anchor for many lonely young Nisei who had left their families behind in camp. They were also a welcoming beacon for the Issei, particularly the Buddhists, who were reluctant to relocate to a new and possibly hostile environment.

Chicago gave birth to two Buddhist churches: the Chicago Buddhist Church (Higashi Hongwanji, under the direction of Rev. Gyomay Kubose) and the Midwest Buddhist Church (BCA, under Rev. Gyodo Kono) *(see article p. 12)*. Small BCA groups *(sanghas)* were also formed in Cleveland, St. Louis and Minneapolis. In 1945, Rev. Shawshew Sakow set up a church in Detroit.

Among the Christians, Rev. Jitsuo Morikawa, formerly of Terminal Island Baptist Church, was sent to organize a Japanese church in Chicago. Revs. Francis Hayashi and Paul Nagano held services at a nondenominational Protestant church in Minneapolis. Rev. Lester Suzuki received stipends from the AFSC and the Methodist Church to work at the Des Moines hostel and to minister to resettlers.

The Return

In January 1945, Americans of Japanese ancestry were permitted to return to the West Coast. The AFSC opened hostels in Los Angeles and Pasadena, and offered services through their Seattle and San Francisco offices. Quaker Gordon Hirabayashi worked with the AFSC in Spokane, WA.

Rev. Yoshiaki Fukuda, describes returning to his Konko church after nearly 6 years of internment:

> The church building had been been converted into an apartment building... predominately occupied by black families. [They] were very sympathetic to my plight because we had been forcibly evacuated due to racial prejudice. Each cooperated fully by vacating the apartments within a few days of our return.

In contrast, the Nichiren Buddhist priest Rev. Nitten Ishida, who like Fukuda had been threatened with deportation and held in a Dept. of Justice camp until 1947, returned to find that a white realtor had converted his church into apartments. The realtor refused to return the building because the U.S.-Japan peace treaty was not yet signed. Rev. Ishida managed to recover the church in 1948, but many hours of work were needed to restore it to use.

Most of the West Coast BCA churches suffered vandalism and theft. Wherever possible, BCA churches and community halls were pressed into service as hostels for the returnees. In Oxnard and San Jose, hostels remained open until the mid-1950s to shelter elderly people who had difficulty reestablishing their lives after internment. The reopening of some churches was delayed for a year or more because church buildings were being used as hostels, were occupied by government agencies, or because the congregations were overwhelmingly preoccupied with the day-to-day challenges of reestablishing their lives. In six areas, so few members returned that the churches did not reopen. Many internees settled in new areas, leading to the formation of new churches in eastern Washington and Oregon, and at Seabrook, NJ.

The Japanese Christian churches had similar experiences. A returning Sacramento minister was housed in the local jail overnight "for his own safety." He recalls:

> [I was told] that anti-Japanese feeling was still strong... About a week earlier someone took a pot shot at the manse [of the Japanese Presbyterian Church] where two Nisei were trying to set up a temporary [hostel] for the returnees... We rented folding cots and blankets from the WRA and converted the Social Hall and Sunday school rooms into sleeping quarters.

At least one Japanese Christian church was burned down during the internment era. Other buildings were put to other uses by their parent organizations. One was the Salvation Army Home in San Francisco, built in the '30s by the Salvation Army's eight-corps Japanese Division with funds collected throughout the Western states and from the Emperor of Japan. After Pearl Harbor, headquarters was unsupportive of the Japanese Division, and took over the Home. In 1945 the Japanese Division requested the use of the Home to assist returnees but was refused.

Swept by the tides of racism and war hysteria, Japanese Americans needed the spiritual guidance and practical support of the churches more than ever during the war years. During this crucial time, the Buddhist churches and the smaller Japanese sects struggled just to stay alive. Although some Christian organizations and individuals did much to help the internees, they collectively failed to fill a greater need, which was to convince the U.S. government and the American people that wartime policies against the Japanese Americans were a racist travesty of justice which should never have been implemented. ■