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Tule Lake, California

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The Christian Church in Tule Lake

Introduction. When reference is made to the Christian Church in Tule Lake, the major Protestant denominations -- Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian -- and a few smaller denominations are being referred to. The Catholic Church, the Seventh Day Adventists, and the like are minority church groups which maintain activities within their own little circle. For this reason they will be mentioned later in a separate paragraph. A significant aspect of the Christian Church in Tule Lake is the maintenance of a single Protestant Church in a population of over 15,000, a large organization with which none of the ministers or members of the separate churches probably had ever coped with before. State-wide conferences have been organized before, especially by the young people, but these were temporary gatherings usually not lasting over a week. To get a picture of this organization, first a running account will be given of the process of organizing this large religious structure.

Development. Pre-organization Period. When the first voluntary group of 447 arrived in Tule Lake from North Portland and Puyallup Assembly Centers, there was no Christian minister among them.¹ Physical facilities for church services consisted only of empty recreation halls, with possibly a bench or two. On May 31, however, a group of young people, under the leadership of Tom Uyeno and Tom Okabe, observed Sunday. Through Ted Waller, head of the Recreation Department, Rev. George Almond, minister of the church of the nearby town of Tule Lake, was invited to deliver the sermon.

In the second large incoming group, which arrived June 2 from Salem, Oregon, and outlying districts, was a certain Rev. Andrew Kuroda.¹ J.S., who interviewed him later, describes him in the following manner: "He was born in Japan and had received his basic education there and had received his

1. Information Bulletin, June 9, 1942

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theological training here in America. He spoke English with only a slight trace of accent. He seemed to be in his early thirties, youthful, frank, and cheerful. There seemed to be very little Oriental about him, except for the fact that he spoke good Japanese. He talked to me in a friendly manner, and expressed many liberal views. He favored a single community church in the Colony, and felt that Ward Stewards should be popularly elected, instead of being appointed by the ministers. His Japanese church in Salem had been on very friendly terms with Caucasians in that district, and was, in fact, supported by Caucasian church organizations. He felt that the Christian Church had a definite role to play in the Japanese community: that of bettering Japanese-Caucasian relationships."¹

Rev. Kuroda called a meeting of young people from various districts on June 4, and made plans for the following Sunday. As a result, for the children Sunday School was held. The worship service for adults attracted about thirty Isseis. In the evening Donald Dodd (?) from a nearby town spoke to about fifty young people who attended the service for them.

Another meeting of the leaders of Christian young people was held soon after, and Perry Saito was chosen to handle the young people's service, while Mrs. Kuroda was selected as the Sunday School superintendent. By the third Sunday after Rev. Kuroda arrived a definite schedule of church services was announced in the Tulean Dispatch. By this time 1,900 people had filled Ward I, and beginning on June 16, approximately 500 persons from Wallerga Assembly Center began to pour into the Colony daily.² The following schedule was announced for the week beginning June 21:

Schedule for Sunday Services

9:00 a.m. Sunday School for all ages. Mrs. Andrew Kuroda, superintendent, will be in charge. Will take place in Recreation Hall #408.

¹. Interview, September 30.

². Tulean Dispatch, June 26, 1942

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9:30 a.m. Japanese services. Rev. Charles Warren, Seattle, will be the guest speaker. To take place in #1708.

10:30 a.m. English services to be held in #1708 with Rev. Warren, Seattle, as guest speaker.

2:00 p.m. Women's Society will meet in #508 with Rev. Warren in charge.

7:30 p.m. High School Fellowship Meeting. To be held in #1708 with Mrs. E.L. Shirrell as the speaker.

7:30 p.m. Post-high school group meeting will be held in #508. Mr. Bob Yeaton will be the speaker.

Wednesday, June 24

7:30 p.m. Japanese prayer meeting will be led by Rev. A.Y. Kuroda in #508.

Friday, June 26

8:30 p.m. Choir practice in #2508. ¹

Up to this point church activities had been voluntarily organized by various Christian leaders. It was not until people from Wallerga had come in that actual discussion of establishment of a church here was begun.

Organization Period. With the Sacramento group arrived two more ministers: Rev. Igarashi, an Issei, and Rev. Tanabe, the only Nisei reverend in the Colony. On June 22, a meeting of all Christian leaders was called and the organization of a Christian Church in the Colony discussed. Some of the people from Sacramento desired to continue with their own church in their own ward, leaving Ward I to Rev. Kuroda. The latter, who had been in charge of a community church in Salem, was opposed to this idea of splitting

1. Tulean Dispatch, June 20, 1942

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the organization of the Christian Church here. After some discussion the leaders decided that they would have one community or union church in the Colony. This was the beginning of the permanent Protestant church organization.

For the week beginning June 28, the following church schedule was announced in the Tulean Dispatch. On the same Sunday the Buddhists inaugurated their first service.

CHURCH SCHOOL

Services this Sunday

Sunday School hour 8:15 - 9:15 a.m.

Beginners (ages 4 to 5):

Ward No. 1 (May Miyamoto)	Bldg. #1408
Ward No. 2 (Masako Miyake)	Bldg. #2608
Ward No. 3 (Mary Machida)	Bldg. #3108

Primary (ages 6 to 8):

Ward No. 1 (Rose Soyejima)	Bldg. #1408
Ward No. 2 (Hannah Miyai)	Bldg. #2608
Ward No. 3 (Bill Inouye)	Bldg. #3608

Youths (out of high school)

Dave Okada will be in charge of the Sunday School.
Church service will be held from 9:30 to 10:30 in building #2508.

MORNING WORSHIP SERVICES

All youths from 0 to 18 will hold their own combined Sunday School and Church services from 8:15 to 9:30. Read Church-School notices for place and leaders.

9:30 to 10:30 (ages 19 and up). #2508. Rev. George

Almond of Tule Lake will preach the sermon with Rev.

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Andrew Y. Kuroda in charge of the services.

10:30 to 11:30. Issei Service. #2508. Rev. Kensaburo Igarashi, formerly of Sacramento, will preach the sermon.

EVENING FELLOWSHIP HOUR -8:00 to 9:00

High School Fellowship. #1708. Hiroshi Kaneko will be in charge.

Young People's Fellowship. College age. #2508. Tom Okabe will be in charge.

WEEK-DAY ACTIVITIES

Issei Prayer Meeting. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Rev. Kensaburo Igarashi, directing. #2408.

Nisei Prayer Meeting. Bible study. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. #2608. Rev. Andrew Kuroda, directing.

If you wish to sit down, please bring your own chairs.¹

After the people from Arboga Assembly Center entered the Colony a meeting of all former church officers was called. By this time several ministers had been added to the nucleus already here. Among the Isseis the church organization in the Colony was discussed formally for the first time. One Issei, a Presbyterian, was especially in favor of retaining separate denominations. After some heated discussion the group voted to have a community church rather than denominational churches. The group decided to have a steward in each ward, who would be in charge of nine blocks. The blocks in turn were to elect a block steward.

By this time five wards had been filled, and a Sunday School opened in each of the five wards. Finer gradations of morning church services were begun. For July 12, the following schedule was announced:²

1. Tulean Dispatch, June 27, 1942
2. Tulean Dispatch, July 11, 1942

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH SERVICES

8:15 a.m. College of Life (ages 19 to 24)	#2508
9:00 a.m. Worship in English (ages 19 to 50)	#2508
9:30 a.m. Juniors (ages 9 to 12)	#1308
9:30 a.m. Intermediates (ages 12 to 15)	#1708
9:30 a.m. Seniors (high school age)	#2008
10:00 a.m. Beginners (ages 4 to 5)	
Ward 1	#1417
Ward 2	#2917
Ward 3	#3217
Ward 4	#1117
Ward 5	#4418
10:00 a.m. Primaries (ages 6 to 8)	
Ward 1	#1417
Ward 2	#2917
Ward 3	#3217
Ward 4	#1117
Ward 5	#4418
8:00 p.m. High School Fellowship	#1708
8:00 p.m. Young People's Fellowship	#2508
7:30 p.m. Bible Study	#2608

Please bring your own chairs. ¹

Religious services for the Isseis were slower to be organized. On July 19, they had the following schedule: ²

Worship Service (10:00 a.m.)

"Live in Christ" (10:00 a.m.) Rev. Igarashi

Place, #2508.

1. Tulean Dispatch, July 11, 1942

2. Christian News Letter, July 19, 1942.

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"Self Destruction and Self Protection" by Rev.

Sano. Place, #4608

"New Duty" by Rev. Kawashima. Place, #1008.

Bible Study (7:30 p.m.)

Ward 1	#1417
Ward 2	#2917
Ward 3	#3217
Ward 4	#1117
Ward 5	#4415

When the Pinedale group entered the Colony (July 16 to 24), the Christians were invited into the circle of the established Christian Church. Here again there were laymen and ministers among the incoming group who felt that they should remain close together and retain their own denominational churches. On July 28, the second general meeting of Issei representatives of all Christian churches in the Colony was held, and this matter of type of organization was discussed. Representatives from the Pinedale group finally accepted the idea of a single community church. On July 26, representatives of the Christian young people, including those from Pinedale, had called an official board meeting, and had accepted the community church setup. Since Pinedale was the last large group to come in, the single community church had been accepted by all Protestant Christian groups within the Colony.

For the name of the Protestant non-denominational church in the Colony the designation "community church" was not employed because there was a community church in the town of Tule Lake. "Tule Lake Christian Church" was at first selected as a name, but as there was a denomination called "Christian Church," the present name of "Tule Lake Union Church" was adopted. In Japanese it was translated "Tule Lake Godo Kyokai."¹

1. Christian News Letter, August 9, 1942.

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From the end of July the Christian Church widened its scope of activities gradually. The population had become practically stabilized at around 15,000. In June choir practice had already been started, and this was continued.¹ The choir was featured at some of the services, especially those held on the outdoor stage when an outside Caucasian speaker was available. Some of the Caucasians who spoke at such a service were Dr. Grant of Sacramento (July 26), Alfred Tonness of Sacramento (August 9), and Caleb Foote of Berkeley (August 16).² The Christian News Letter, a weekly mimeographed sheet printed on one side in English and on the other side in Japanese, was started in the middle of July.

On July 26, the first meeting of the Adult Youth Fellowship was held. This claimed to be the first group of its kind organized on the Coast by a Japanese church group, including those between the ages of 25 and 35, an age span which included only a small proportion of Niseis.³

Under the leadership of Koso Takemoto, Christian Kibeis were organized into a discussion group which met every Saturday night, starting in August. By August a church loan library had been started.⁴

By August the following organization of Sunday School classes and services for Niseis was established:

WORSHIP SERVICES AND CLASSES⁵

10:00 a.m. Dr. Tonness will speak at the outdoor stage.

10:00 a.m. Worship in English. #2508, #4708, #1008.

9:00 a.m. Beginners and primaries

Ward 1 #1417 Ward 2 #2917

1. Tulean Dispatch, June 18, 1942

2. Christian News Letter

3. Tulean Dispatch, July 25, 1942

4. Christian News Letter, August 2, 1942

5. Tulean Dispatch, August 8, 1942

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Ward 3	#3217	Ward 6	#4915
Ward 4	#1117	Ward 7	#7017
Ward 5	#4415	Ward 8	#5808

9:00 a.m. Juniors. #1308, #4808, #2108.

9:00 a.m. Intermediates. #2308, #1708.

9:00 a.m. Seniors. #2008, #4608.

9:00 a.m. College of Life. #2408.

8:00 p.m. Youth Fellowship. #2508.

8:30 p.m. High School Fellowship. #1708.

In the meantime by August 9, Isseis had also organized services, bible study classes, and prayer meetings in every ward. The only exception was Ward 1, which did not have a worship service until August 16. The worship services were held at 8:45 a.m., bible studies at 7:30 p.m., and prayer meetings on Wednesday evenings. A Women's Club had already been inaugurated and another meeting held on August 9.¹

By September 5, the Juniors were meeting in four places instead of three, and the Intermediates in four places instead of two. The evening High School Fellowship was meeting in two places instead of one. But evidently the maximum organization for the time being had been achieved. The population reached its peak on September 10. From then on the population began to shrink slowly but steadily. While most of the out-going members of the Project headed for the beet fields in Idaho and Montana and only a handful of students left for school, it seems to have been the latter group which affected the development of the Christian Church most. Several of the theological students and other leaders left for school, leaving others to carry on. On October 4, it was announced that the Intermediate group would meet in only two places instead of four. While the cause of this shrinkage is unknown,

1. Christian News Letter, August 9, 1942.

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the drop in population, especially of leaders, should be considered as a contributing factor. The trend of the Church from September 10 on should be reconsidered later on, and in this section we shall be concerned with developments up to September 10.

Thus we can see the rapidness with which the Christians reorganized themselves in the Colony. From the moment the first group entered without a minister to lead them, leaders were organizing the Christian group into worship services, fellowship gatherings, prayer meetings, choir practices, discussion groups, bible study groups. With the coming of the first reverend an organization meeting was held to take in more leaders and more activities. With each new group coming in organization meetings were called, and the next step discussed was mapped out to bring the greatest use of leadership. But it should not be supposed that everything went along smoothly and that organization was achieved without much effort.

Obstacles to Organization. In each incoming group there were some Christian leaders who felt that it was desirable to remain with their own group and maintain their own churches. Part of this was probably due to a feeling of sectionalism. The Niseis seem to have accepted the idea of a community church with all of the adjustments such organization entailed much easier than Isseis. It was among the latter that a great deal of discussion, some of it quite heated, was carried on concerning the desired type of church organization. Among the Isseis there were denominational differences among the church leaders. The strongest objection to the community church seems to have been raised by Baptists, who desired to retain their entity as a group. It is interesting to note that their doctrine, which stresses "emersion," is considered conservative in theological circles. As a group Baptists are generally not in favor of many liberal thoughts maintained by some church people. The Presbyterians also objected somewhat to a community church. In their

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church structure they have elders and deacons among the lay church men, and elders, for instance, are allowed to preside at services. If this structure were to be maintained rigidly in the Colony, it would have been necessary to form a separate Presbyterian church.

There were individual differences among church ministers in their attitudes toward a single Protestant church. While seven of the twelve accepted ministers were Methodists, one Methodist minister from Pinedale especially insisted on a separate Methodist church for himself and his group. Although his objections were overruled, an eighth ward was created from Blocks 56, 57, 58, and 59 as a compromise; and the Methodist minister was put in charge there.

At present there is no uniformity in the procedure of conducting services which has been adopted by the different ministers. Some prefer to be more formal than others. However, this has not resulted in any conflict, and there has been discussion among the ministers of appointing a worship committee to work out a uniform procedure for services within the Colony.

Of the twelve accepted within the circle of the Ministerial Fellowship, it is interesting to note that one is Adjutant Matsushima from the Salvation Army. Some discussion was held in accepting two others who were not ordained ministers. Hisashi Sano was the head of the Laymen's Christian Church, and there was some objection to accepting him as a minister. However, the argument that as head of a recognized sect he should be recognized on equal terms with others ^{finally} prevailed. John Fujimura had quit the ministry for some time, but he was accepted by the Ministerial Fellowship because his services were needed by the Union Church. Both of them, however, are referred to as evangelists, while the others are called ministers.

It is interesting to note that the English-speaking reverends -- Kuroda, Kitagawa, and Tanabe -- get along very well among themselves, making

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whatever adjustments are necessary quite easily. The other older Issei reverends find it harder to make some of the necessary changes in attitude.¹

Uniform Ways. In analyzing the behavior of the Christian group, thought should be given to the type of activities carried on in comparison to what has been done in the past, ways in which new conditions have been met, and activities and attitudes which distinguish this group from the Buddhists, their rival organization. Some of these should be clarified better by analyzing activities historically, tracing their development, while other problems should be given a comparative treatment with the Buddhist group to obtain a better understanding of this group.

Organization. The Tule Lake Union Church is controlled by a Board of Directors composed of eight Issei Ward Stewards, their secretary and their treasurer, eight Nisei Ward Stewards and their secretary and their treasurer, and twelve ministers. The ministers, however, have only one vote among themselves. The chairman of the Board at present is Rev. Sasaki. Under each Ward Steward there are nine Block Stewards, who take care of incidental business, such as contacting church members in their blocks. Each ward calls meetings of their Block Stewards occasionally.

In deciding how the Ward Stewards were to be chosen, the discussion by church leaders brought out a Japanese attitude. Many of the Issei leaders desired to have the ministers appoint the Ward Stewards. Some of the others, including Rev. Kuroda, desired to have the people of the block elect their own Block Stewards, who might in turn elect their own Ward Stewards. After some discussion Isseis were allowed to have the Ward Stewards selected in their own fashion -- that is, by appointment. The Block Stewards, however, are elected by the church members in the block. One minister suggested that all Ward Stewards be former officers of a church. This was opposed on the ground that outside ties should be forgotten entirely, and the other minister's

1. Based on interview with Rev. Kuroda.

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suggestion was overruled. Subsequently, however, there has been no trouble concerning the choice of Ward Stewards.

Facilities. Most of the activities of the Christian Church are carried on in various recreation halls. At first there were not enough benches for all attending church activities, so that sometimes more than half had to bring their own chairs or stand up.¹ The church in the meantime has procured some benches and has broken down the meetings to small groups so that it was unnecessary for most church goers to bring their own chairs. One of the exceptions is the Youth Fellowship group, which draws a large crowd of about 200; and at these meetings those in the back have to stand. For their Sunday School for little children between the ages of 4 and 5, and 6 to 8, they have procured the use of nursery schools in each ward. On Sundays they have almost exclusive use of the Music Room in #2508, which contains a piano, a phonograph, and benches. This hall is probably the most desirable for church services from the standpoint of location and facilities. There are also five pianos which belong to the community, which are available to all church groups.

The Christians have been quick to organize and to spread their scope of activities, thus requiring use of facilities before the Buddhists were even organized. The exclusive use of the nursery schools by the Christians for Sunday schools, for instance, when Buddhists have not broken down their Sunday morning services to small groups and hence do not require a series of small rooms, seems to be characteristic relationship between these two rival church groups. So far there has been no conflict between the two groups over the use of facilities because the Buddhists have not organized sufficiently and because enough recreation halls and messhalls have been available for use by both groups without conflict.

1. Tulean Dispatch, June 27, 1942, and July 11, 1942.

J. S. Journal, June 28, 1942, and July 5, 1942.

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Major Activities (Nisei). Beginners and Primaries. Sunday school classes for children between 4 to 5 and 6 to 8 is carried on in the nursery school of each ward. Two teachers were assigned to take care of a class. All of the teachers except one were women.

Juniors. There are three classes in scattered parts of the Colony for children between the ages of 9 and 12. For these classes 14 teachers have been assigned, four of them being men.

Intermediates. Classes for those between the ages of 12 and 15 are held in two different places. The teachers for these classes are eleven in number, four of them being men.

Seniors. For those of high school age Sunday school classes are held in two different places. All five teachers who were announced on August 9 were men.

College of Life. For those between the ages of 19 and 24, "an informal, stimulating discussion dealing with some of life's major problems" is held in one place only. The discussion leaders are Dave Okada and Wilbur Takiguchi.

The number of membership in these classes has not been determined. On the whole the size of the class seems to be small and out of proportion to the number of classes organized. On September 27, there were only about six boys present in the College of Life class. On the same day about twelve girls and two boys attended a class for seniors. The size of other classes seems to be not larger than fifteen or twenty. The interesting point about the membership is the existence of a large number of Christian youths who are willing to take leadership roles and the creation of many leadership roles.

One other interesting observation is the change in the sex composition of the teaching staff as each higher age group is analyzed. Whereas the smallest