

Chapter 11

SHO-CHIKU-BAI: JAPANESE AMERICAN CONGREGATIONALISTS

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THE FIRST JAPANESE IMMIGRANTS who entered the United States legally were government officials from Japan. They arrived in San Francisco on the Kanrin Maru at the time feudalism in Japan was being replaced by a new democratic government under Emperor Meiji.

Even with this milestone event the Japanese government was still reluctant to let its people go abroad. Therefore, the daring and adventurous ones stowed away on American vessels traveling to the United States.

Later many others came as laborers. These were the *issei* (first generation).

JOSEPH HARDY NEESIMA

Japanese American Congregationalism begins with a Japanese youth named Neesima Jo. Born in Tokyo on January 14, 1843, he was ten years old when Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry first entered the Bay of Yedo in Japan. When Neesima was about sixteen years old he came across an atlas of the United States. The atlas contained particulars about the United States, including references on such subjects as the President, free schools, hospitals, prisons, and factories. "I read it many times," he wrote in a letter to a friend. "I wondered so much as my brain would melt out of my head because I liked it so much."

Neesima later found a small Chinese Bible in a friend's library. He was enthralled and impressed as he read about the God who was responsible for the creation of humanity and of the whole world. Thus he yearned to learn about Christianity and to learn more about the United States.

In 1864, risking his life, Neesima boarded an American schooner and smuggled himself out of Japan. During the trip Neesima was befriended by Alpheus Hardy, a Christian merchant who was deeply interested in mission. Hardy employed the young Neesima as a servant but quickly realized that he was not about to be a houseboy. Neesima took on the name Joseph Hardy Neesima.

On arrival in Boston, Hardy immediately enrolled Neesima in the Phillips Academy at Andover,

Massachusetts, and in due time Neesima was ready for college. He did well, entering Amherst College and graduating in 1870. Later he went to Andover Theological Seminary, graduating in the summer of 1874.

Joseph Hardy Neesima was ordained as the first Japanese Evangelical minister. He was appointed as a corresponding member of the Japan Mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

In December of 1874 Neesima began preparations to return to Japan. Just before he was to leave, Neesima spoke before the annual meeting of the American Board. He pleaded for the establishment of a Christian school in Japan. With a broken voice and strong emotions he said, "I cannot go back to Japan without money to found a Christian college, and I am going to stand here until I get it."

Overwhelmed and moved, the Board immediately pledged \$5,000. The gift became the nucleus of what is now Doshisha University, a Christian university built in the center of Buddhism and Shintoism in Kyoto, Japan.(1)

MISSION WORK AMONG THE WEST COAST JAPANESE

By the 1870s more and more Japanese were coming to America, especially to study. In 1872 four Japanese students began meeting at the Third Congregational Church on Howard Street in San Francisco. Although initially strangers to one another, the students quickly became friends and decided to meet every Sunday at the church. A Mrs. Wilson, an active member of the church's Women's Mission Society, offered to hold a Bible study class and an English-language class for them.(2) But the church had no room for "orientals."

They eventually found space in the basement of the Chinese Methodist Mission, on Washington Street. The rental fee was three dollars a month. Mrs. Wilson went to the Women's Mission Society, and it agreed to contribute \$2.50 toward the rent. The balance of fifty cents was paid by the four students.(3)

The Japanese did not speak the Chinese language. Nonetheless, because they were "orientals," they were sent to an "oriental" church. In the months and years that followed a sign on the basement door announcing the English-language class attracted more Japanese students.

In 1876 ten students were baptized by a Methodist missionary. The following year, thirty-five students, led by Kanichi Miyama, organized the Japanese Gospel Society. Thus with the support of the Congregational Women's Mission Society the genesis of the first Japanese Christian church in the United States was formed by students meeting in the basement of the Chinese Methodist Mission.(4)

It was not until the turn of the century, in 1899, that the Congregational Home Missionary Society began their mission specifically to Japanese residing in the United States? The move was clearly made in response to the increase in the Japanese population.

Often the work began with a handful of *issei*, like the students who began meeting at the Chinese Methodist Mission. All were strangers in a strange land and often they were strangers to one another. Each was seeking to learn the English language and each found a source of strength and encouragement in having fellowship with other Japanese.

As the number of Japanese increased, separate missions were established under the supervision of the Rev. William C. Pond, of the Home Missionary Society. Many were affiliated with First Congregational churches in their respective areas. Between 1885 and 1926 fifteen Japanese American churches came into being:

San Francisco Congregational Church	1885
Salt Lake City Mission	1901
Ogden Mission	1903
Oakland Independent Congregational Church	1904
Los Angeles Congregational Church	1905
Los Angeles Bethlehem	1905
Seattle Congregational Church	1907
San Diego Congregational Church	1907
Fresno Independent Congregational Church	1908
Pasadena Mission	1909
Santa Barbara Congregational Church	1913
Montebello Congregational Church	1913
Riverside Mission	1913
Hollywood Independent Congregational Church	1922
Santa Maria Congregational Church	1926 (6)

INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

Many of the Japanese congregations continued to receive mission support throughout the first part of the twentieth century. In 1904, however, the Rev. Shinjiro Okubo, a graduate of Doshisha University, indicated to the people of the Oakland church that he had a dream to establish a strong independent church for Japanese in America, a church that would serve Christ through its own initiatives. He felt that the “mission church did not foster the kind of spirit and sacrificial service that can lead to an abiding faith.”(7)

Okubo believed that “living under the charge of the missionary is the easy way. . . . In an independent church, members must assume responsibilities of carrying the church in their own hands... . An independent people with minds and spiritual lives of their own should become self-supporting and selfgoverning.”(8) His goal, to “establish an independent church, financed and governed by the Japanese people themselves,” was realized two years later, on January 7, 1906. In March of the following year the church was officially and legally recognized as the Oakland Independent Congregational Church.

In the ensuing years more missions and churches declared their independence from their

Congregational mission ties. Ministers were called from Hawaii and Japan, and dedicated laypeople took on the heavy responsibilities of the churches' financial and other ongoing needs.

Sunday schools were conducted in Japanese by the pioneer members of the church. Great sacrificial efforts went into raising funds for church buildings. A documented history of Sycamore Congregational Church (formerly the Oakland Independent Congregational Church) notes that "families put cardboard soles in their shoes and some women gave up wearing stockings so they might give a little more to the building fund. The Rev. Okubo went without his salary, while his wife went to work as a cleaning woman in a Caucasian home."(9)

COPING WITH RACISM

Hard work and great sacrifice were not enough. Anti-Japanese sentiments increased and churches tried to help. In November 1909 the Japanese Congregationalists gathered in Fresno for a conference. Dr. Pond was elected Superintendent of the Japanese Congregational churches.(10)

Efforts were made to lift the morale of the Japanese community. Disheartened by the severe anti-Japanese movement that was fostered by surrounding communities, the Japanese Congregational churches joined other denominational Japanese churches to organize the Northern/Southern California Japanese Church Federation.

The Federation's objectives were to combat hostilities brought on by racism by encouraging the churches to help acquaint the *issei* with American ways of behaving, speaking, and understanding; to stand firm against gambling, prostitution, and liquor; and to preach the sacredness of home life and social justice.

For example, the Japanese Congregational Church in Fresno struggled with matters involving gambling and prostitution. These problems affected hundreds of Japanese laborers who were working during the grape harvest.(11)

The churches sponsored athletic leagues and social activities for children who could not participate in sports and social events at school.(12) Concerted efforts were made to draw more women into the life of the churches.(13)

Youth groups were organized. In 1930 the Christian Endeavor was set up to serve the social needs of the *nisei* (second generation). Young Peoples' Christian conferences were held, providing opportunities for *nisei* leadership to develop.

Many Japanese farmers achieved a relative amount of economic success by pioneering new developments in the production of fruit, vegetables, garlic, and other produce. However, fear and racism ultimately triumphed. Laws were passed limiting the rights of the Japanese to own or lease land and to become citizens. But this did not deter the tenacious *issei* pioneers from working on farmland and producing some of the top-grade fruits and vegetables in the country.(14)

In 1920 a second anti-Japanese Alien Land Law was enacted by the state of California. Before

the enactment of this referendum the Rev. Joseph K. Fukushima, of the Fresno Independent Congregational Church, sent an urgent appeal to his “American minister friends. The letter read, in part:

At the polls on November 2nd, you are going to vote on the Initiative Bill No. I entitled Alien Land Law. The passage of this Bill is a great persecutor to the Japanese in California, who were legally admitted to this country, rather than solving the problems.

The measure now before you intends to:

1. Prohibit land ownership by Japanese
2. Prohibit the acquisition of real property by American born Japanese minors, who are American citizens under the guardianship of their parents
3. Prohibit leasing of farm land by Japanese
4. Deprive the Japanese parents of their natural right to be the guardian of their minor sons and daughters owning real property
5. Escheat real property to the state upon certain prima facie presumptions
6. Prohibit the Japanese from owning the shares of stock of corporations which deal with farm land

The measure is so harsh and severe that nothing will be left for the Japanese to live on. This is quite contrary to your high ideal which has been the inspiration for us during the past half century. While this measure persecutes the Japanese in California, it does not check immigration from Japan.

Since the time the first Alien Land Law was enacted in 1913, our Japanese churches of Christ have also suffered. It hindered us even to acquire a piece of land for the place of worship.

Do you think it is wise to solve the matter in this way? Can you not give them, who are already here, the opportunity to become American citizens, and do justice for them? We only desire fair treatment equal to others.”

Despite Fukushima’s eloquent appeal no records could be found as to how the ministers responded. The bill was eventually passed, and the oppression of the Japanese throughout the state of California continued.

Although segregated and isolated, the seven Japanese Congregational churches—which were scattered up and down the western region—became the gathering place for many *issei* and *nisei*. The churches provided strength and assurance to a people caught in the middle of a racism that was prevalent in society in general.

WARTIME INCARCERATION

On December 7, 1941, the United States responded to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor with a declaration of war. Within three months President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the evacuation and incarceration of more than 70,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry and more than 40,000 Japanese nationals, most of whom were permanent U.S. residents.

Executive Order 9066 broadly authorized any military commander to exclude any person from any area. Although the Presidential order did not mention any specific group or provide detention, there was an understanding among high officials that the authorization was to be used for the purpose of removing and incarcerating all persons of Japanese ancestry living in the West Coast states. Ten sites were built by the U.S. government for the mass incarceration of more than 120,000 persons.

The hopes and aspirations of the *issei* and *nisei* were shattered. The Japanese in these camps eventually became wards of the government, guarded by armed soldiers. Fathers were no longer family breadwinners, parents lost control of their children, and families rarely ate meals together. Many were terrified because of the unpredictable future and the hopelessness of the situation and did not expect to come out alive.(16)

Within the Japanese American church community the response of some was a deep sense of bewilderment. In his book, *Christian Seed in Western Soil*, Harlan Hogue recalls the response of a seminary student:

On the night of Pearl Harbor, we trickled into Benton Hall one by one, the last man getting in from a far distant parish about 11:00 p.m. We all gathered in the tiny chapel in the corner of Benton Hall and prayed together in the candlelight, with closing prayers by our Japanese students.

I think it was the most moving emotional experience of our lives... . A Japanese boy from Fresno, who had played football at Fresno State and was as "Americanized" as any *nisei*... was so deeply wrought up ... that he retired to his room for twenty-four hours and did not come out to eat or attend class. He later became a distinguished chaplain for the famous 442nd Battalion."

That seminary student became the Rev. George Aki. Like other Japanese Congregational ministers, Aki served in ministry in the concentration camps. He first served as a minister at the Tanforan Assembly Center and later at the concentration camp at Topaz, Utah.

Many clergy in the Japanese American community—for example, the Rev. Joseph K. Fukushima, Rohwer, Arkansas; the Rev. Seizo Abe, Manzanar, California; and the Rev. Kenji Kikuchi, at Poston, Arizona—as well as those who represented the Christian and Buddhist traditions and a host of lay leaders, carried their ministry to the camps.

Faced with the immediacy of life within the camps,

the clergy, as a rule, were not involved in the affairs of the administration. Those few who took active part in actually serving as interpreters or as

members of an important committee were looked upon with suspicion, so by and large the clergy did not extend their hand to matters that dealt directly with the administration. They worked quietly in the local block meetings and allowed the block leaders to express grievances or correct injustices... . There was no noticeable or recorded conference on “suffering” or “injustice” ... from a religious standpoint. Political grievances were expressed through the block manager’s council.(18)

The work of the faith community was focused primarily on pastoral matters. In looking back, one might question the lack of a prophetic voice among the Japanese-American clergy.

THE WHITE RESPONSE

Within the white church community questions were raised about the legality and necessity of the evacuation. It quickly became apparent that the evacuation was instead an incarceration.

On June 18, 1942, the General Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches of the United States adopted a resolution at its sixth regular meeting in Durham, New Hampshire:

Christian conscience and the long range interests of our nation alike require the facing of the deeper implications of the emergency mass evacuation from our West Coast of some 70,000 American citizens, along with 40,000 resident Japanese. Every time a majority deprives a minority of its civil rights it undermines its own liberties, and the unity and world-wide influence of the nation.

Be it, therefore, resolved:

That while national security justified the evacuation of Japanese residing in vital military areas on the West Coast, we deplore the fact that all persons with any Japanese blood, citizens as well as aliens, were as a group subjected to evacuation without hearings or other means of determining loyalty.(19)

In retrospect, the resolution is remarkable in that it did recognize some of the deeper implications of the action. Unfortunately, its strength was weakened by its reluctance to question the notion that the evacuation/incarceration was necessary because of national security.

In Berkeley, California, others sought to raise a prophetic voice. The Rev. Galen Fischer and Ruth Kingman, both members of the First Congregational Church, were active in the work of the Fair Play Committee. As a former missionary to Japan, Fischer argued that “Americans should differentiate between the actions of the Japanese government and those of Japanese ancestry in this country who were incarcerated on the West Coast.” The Fair Play Committee asserted that what was at issue was “the civil rights of U.S. citizens and a need to humanize the situation until it could be invalidated and rescinded.” (20)

The Rev. Vere V. Loper, minister of First Congregational Church in Berkeley, along with Kingman, played a key role in one of the church's major responses to the evacuation. Through a series of conversations with government and church leaders, the Army was informed that the Church Council had voted to make the church facilities available for the registration and evacuation of Japanese Americans from the area and that a number of Protestant churches would be assisting in the work each day. "The initiative came from the church. The formalities were observed, though, so the Army requested." Although the church was clearly seeking to respond to the evacuation with pastoral concern, some serious questions are raised about the church's complicity in undermining the civil rights of Japanese American citizens and residents of Japanese ancestry.

The Church Council's motion that its facilities be offered to the Army passed with one dissenting vote. The dissenter thought the church should not "cooperate with the dirty business." At the same time the Council voted without dissent that they wanted to "see that some courtesies are extended to the evacuees."

Eleanor Breed, church secretary at First Congregational Church, noted in her diary during the church's involvement in registration and evacuation procedures: "It came over me suddenly, and with shock, that the soldiers who have been on guard have been here not to protect us from the Japanese so much as to protect the Japanese against us."(21)

Ambivalence was evident among those who expressed appreciation for the church's hospitality and yet noted, as did Monroe Deutsch, University of California at Berkeley, that "these people who are being evacuated have had no charges against them individually; they are not guilty of misconduct. They are being removed because of fear. Personally, I feel that our country will some day feel ashamed of its conduct in this entire matter."(22)

Others were more adamant in their assessment of the evacuation. Among such people were Enoch and Margaret Dumas. Along with their six-year-old son, the Dumases lived for three years with Japanese Americans in the concentration camp at Amache, Colorado. With Dr. Dumas in charge of the elementary education program, Mrs. Dumas recalls, "We did not approve of the relocation. We thought it was un-American, unconstitutional, unnecessary, and immoral but it was happening and my husband felt that he would like to see that the youngsters got the best possible education while they were there,"(23)

Although other churches, such as the Congregational Church of San Mateo, California, took part in serving as centers for registration and evacuation, the efforts of the First Congregational Church of Berkeley were, ironically, the most comforting and the most disturbing. In a joint publication with the Berkeley Fellowship of Churches, Dr. Loper served as the primary writer of "A Statement to Japanese Friends and Fellow Americans."(24)

" the statement noted, "we can offer something of value to you in Christian hospitality." Many of the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated remembered with genuine appreciation the hospitality of the church. The statement also noted that "the service you now render to America is the loss, for the duration, of your homes. We rejoice to know that many of you are facing it in

the same spirit in which others are facing the possible loss of their sons, for much longer than the duration."(25) One may argue that the inclusion of the remark reflects the historical context of that period. It is, nevertheless, an unfortunate remark. At best, it may have been of comfort to white Americans and at worst it was a callous disregard for the sufferings of an innocent people.

In retrospect it is clear that the white church community made little prophetic effort to resist the evacuation/incarceration. Like the Japanese Americans themselves, they were resigned to accepting the reality of the exile and sought to concentrate on providing pastoral care.

BEYOND THE CAMPS

By the fall of 1942 indefinite-leave permits were issued to anyone passing the strict government security test. Travel to California, Oregon, and Washington was prohibited. Internees, usually sponsored by host church groups and sympathetic organizations, gradually began their exodus to the world outside the camps.

In January 1943 the U.S. War Department announced that Japanese American volunteers would be accepted for combat duty in Europe. Most of the volunteers came from Hawaii, but there were also thousands who volunteered from within the concentration camps scattered throughout the country. The volunteers were assigned to a segregated Japanese American unit—the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The 442nd became the most decorated American unit, for its size and length of service, to fight in World War II.

In January 1944 the Selective Service System started drafting Japanese American men, even though they were still incarcerated in the camps. More than 33,000 Japanese Americans eventually served in the U.S. armed forces, and many families lost their sons “for much longer than the duration.”

By January 1945 the U.S. Supreme Court had declared that the confinement of the Japanese Americans in the camps was a violation of constitutional rights. The dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the war to a close in August 1945, but the last concentration camp was not closed until October 1946 and the last special internment camp, until 1952.

Released and free, many Japanese Americans were determined to compensate for their “guilt” of being Japanese in a society of “Americans.” Most left and resettled in the Rocky Mountain, Middle Western, and Eastern states. These areas provided opportunities and challenges that were unavailable on the West Coast.

Restrictions prohibiting Japanese Americans from returning to the West Coast states were lifted in July 1945, but the nagging shame of being a “Jap” continued. Assimilation into the larger society nearly became an obsession in the early postwar days. Japanese Americans faced continued discrimination and prejudice.

Despite their quest to be accepted and become part of the larger American society the need for separate ethnic Japanese churches continued. Denominational leaders insisted that segregated Japanese ethnic churches would be unnecessary after the war, because the *issei* would be

declining in number, and the *nisei* and *sansei* (third generation) would be assimilating. The existence of ethnic Japanese churches persisted, however.

JAPANESE AMERICAN CONGREGATIONALISM

In the weeks and months after the closing of the camps the West Coast Japanese Congregational churches and parsonages were converted into hostels for the homeless returnees and their families. As the *issei* and *nisei* struggled to find homes and jobs amid hostilities, Japanese Congregational churches struggled to reactivate their ministries. Denominational leaders encouraged integration with the larger existing white churches or the establishment of interdenominational Japanese churches. Many felt that weak, small, and separate denominational churches were not feasible.

At first, the Bay Area Japanese Christian churches in California came together for Sunday worship services. Children were sent to neighboring churches for Sunday schools. By June 1946, however, after realizing that many Japanese Congregational children and adults were not attending Sunday schools and Sunday services, Sycamore Congregational Church broke away from the interdenominational group. The church reestablished itself as an independent Congregational church.(26)

In Fresno the two Japanese churches remained divided. The Methodist Judicatory felt that the Japanese churches should come together under the care of the Methodist church, whereas the Congregational Conference felt the union should be under the Congregational church. An agreement was never reached.

Many Japanese pastors felt that integration into white churches was impossible. Even if it were possible for some *nisei* to integrate, the action was unnecessary. "In Fresno, for years and years, the Germans and Armenians had their own churches and prospered."(27) The Japanese could do the same.

In southern California the Montebello Plymouth, Hollywood Independent, San Diego Ocean View, and Los Angeles Union churches reported similar postwar struggles. The Santa Barbara Congregational Church, used during the war by the United Women's group as a hostel for the elderly, resumed its services with a handful of returnees in 1948.(28)

In 1946 the first and only Middle West/East postwar Japanese Congregational church was begun. A church was organized in Chicago, an area where the largest settlement of Japanese Americans was located. At first, the church comprised an *allissei* membership, beginning in the North Side apartment of Otokichi Kushino.

Although Chicago *nisei* were visiting predominantly white churches in the area, most were unchurched. Clearly, the *nisei* were not ready to conform totally to an all-white church, nor were such churches ready to take in people of another race.

In 1947 the concern for these unchurched *nisei* came to the attention of the Chicago Congregational Union, and with the support of the Chicago Missionary Society the *Issei-Nisei*

Congregational Church was established in 1948. The name of the church was later changed to Chicago Christ Church—United Church of Christ.

Financial support for all Japanese Congregational churches was provided by the Board for Home Mission's special funds.

The work was subsidized by the Committee for War Victims and Reconstruction for use in the reestablishment of Japanese churches.

With the exception of the Santa Barbara Congregational Church, which was dissolved in 1968, church membership grew. Once again, churches became the focal point for the *issei* and *nisei*.

The *issei* had carried the full burden of the churches for many years. During this period they began to relinquish their leadership roles to the *nisei*. More *sansei* were born, and Sunday schools began to flourish. Junior high and senior high Pilgrim Fellowship groups were organized.

In their pursuit to become “Americanized” during the postwar era, many Japanese joined Christian churches. It was believed that “Christianity not only will develop the Japanese American's character, but also will Americanize it,” creating, “a one-world attitude.” It was felt that with “Christianization will come integration in its good time.”(29)

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

In 1957 the Congregational Christian Churches united with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ. That was also the year when the housing ordinance that limited people of color—including Japanese Americans—from moving into the suburbs was lifted. As a result, many Japanese Americans, seeking better living conditions and better education for their children, moved to the suburbs. They continued to return every Sunday, however, to their home churches for worship. Within the United Church of Christ the word Japanese was dropped from the name of almost all the churches, The exception was the Fresno Japanese Congregational United Church of Christ.

Advocacy to integrate with predominantly white churches continued. Denominational leaders pushed integration and neglected the historical legacy of racial discrimination against Japanese Americans. But most of the Japanese Congregational churches remained ethnic Japanese congregations within the United Church of Christ.

In the 1960s the civil rights movement and the development of ethnic studies programs throughout the country gave birth to the emergence of a new generation of Japanese leaders—the *sansei*. In the following decade the *sansei* wrestled with issues of their identity as Japanese Americans. The 1970s were wrought with the drive to uncover a buried past.

Within the life of the United Church of Christ new questions were raised. By 1973 two laywomen from Sycamore United Church of Christ, Julia Estrella and Mary Tomita, had begun the groundwork for gathering and organizing leaders of other Pacific Island and Asian American

UCC churches. The women encouraged dialogue with denominational leaders. The Pacific and Asian American Ministries of the United Church of Christ (PAAM) was formed in 1974, and in the years since then the three generations of Japanese Americans—women and men, youth and adults, clergy and laity—have been elected to serve on conference and national committees. By 1983 two Japanese Americans were conference ministers and two, staff members of UCC instrumentalities.

Japanese American UCC churches played an important role in raising the consciousness of contemporary Americans about the injustice done to Japanese American citizens during World War II. After President Jimmy Carter signed Public Law 96—317, creating a Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act, the Board of Missions of Sycamore United Church of Christ, El Cerrito, California, identified redress/reparations as one of its major emphases for 1980. Motivated by theological and biblical reflections on justice, wrongdoing, and repentance, the Board sought to educate clergy and laity within the United Church of Christ on the work of the Commission. Its mandate was to hear from those affected by Executive Order 9066, the 1942 Presidential proclamation that authorized the incarceration of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans. The Commission was charged with determining whether wartime imprisonment of civilians was just and, if not, what Congress should do to compensate those who were incarcerated.

On January 6, 1981, a resolution was adopted by the Church Council of Sycamore Church. The resolution included support for monetary compensation as well as the concern for the education of the community and church persons with regard to redress/reparations. By May 16, 1981, the resolution was presented to and adopted by the Northern California Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Two months later the resolution was presented to delegates at the Thirteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, in Rochester, New York. After some discussion the resolution—strengthened by action taken in a working committee—was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

As a result of the General Synod action the United Church of Christ began to move forward in its efforts to provide testimony at scheduled public hearings of the Commission. In subsequent hearings Miya Okawara, Chairperson of the Board of Missions at Sycamore Congregational Church, testified in San Francisco; Yvonne Delk, Executive Director of the Office for Church in Society, and Garry Oniki, Associate Executive Director of the Community Renewal Society of Chicago, testified in Chicago; and Howard Spragg, Executive Vice President of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, testified in New York.

In its report, *Personal Justice Denied*, released in June 1983, the Commission recognized the evacuation/incarceration as a “grave injustice” and conceded that there was “no military justification for the exclusion of Japanese Americans from the West Coast.” Throughout the duration of the Commission’s work the United Church of Christ, through its various agencies and instrumentalities, was clear in its support for redress! reparations.

SHO-CHIKU-BAI

Sho-Chiku-Bai is a phrase often used by children and adults in the Japanese community. *Sho* is the Japanese word for pine; *chiku*, the word for bamboo; and *bai*, the word for *ume*, or plum blossom.

The *issei*, like the pine, demonstrated their remarkable strength during the early years of migration and settlement. Prevented from becoming American citizens and unable legally to own land, the *issei* survived a history steeped in rejection, antagonism, and racism.

The *nisei*, like the bamboo, showed their amazing durability. Uprooted and with their lives disrupted, the *nisei* survived the tragic years of incarceration during World War II in ten concentration camps scattered throughout the United States.

The *sansei*, like the plum blossom, signal the beginning of something new. Heirs to the struggle of the *issei* and *nisei*, the *sansei* have brought new strength and vitality to the life of the community.

The pine symbolizes strength; the bamboo, durability; and the plum blossom, newness. In one sense to speak of *sho-chiku-bai* is to speak of the three generations that make up the Japanese American presence within the United Church of Christ.

Notes

1. Jerome Dean Davis, *A Sketch in the Life of Rev. Joseph Hardy Neesima* (Kyoto, Japan: Doshisha University, 1890). Also see Gary Otis, *A History of Christianity in Japan* (Japan: Charles E. Tuttle, Co., 1976), pp. 114-18.
2. Genkichi Imaizumi, *Miyamo, Konichi and His Times*, trans. the Rev. Sumio Koga (Japan: Mikuni Press, 1940).
3. Ibid.
4. Sumia Koga, *A Centennial Legacy: History of the Japanese Christian Mission in North America* (Chicago: Nobart Publishing, 1977), pp. 10-23, 36—37, 66, 192, and 299.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. It is important to note that these churches represent the history of Japanese American Congregationalists outside of Hawaii. For this book it was necessary to limit the scope of this history primarily to the West Coast states.
7. Correspondence from Hiro Katayama to Harley H. Gill, April 8, 1949.
8. *The History of Sycamore Church: 1904—1974 — Seventh Anniversary Year* (El Cerrito, CA: Church History Committee, November 1974).

9. Ibid.
10. Sohei Kowata, *85th Anniversary of Protestant Work Amongst Japanese in North America* (Japan, n.d.), pp. 7—22, 54, 56, 137, and 146.
11. Ibid.
12. Roy Sano, “A Neglected Past: In Celebration of the 1977 Centennial Challenge.” Available through PACTS, 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709.
13. First Japanese Congregational Church: 1907—1957 — Fifteenth Anniversary (Japanese Congregational Church of San Diego, 1957).
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15. *PAAM Newsletter*, c/a 20 Woodside Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94127.
16. *The Japanese Incarceration: A Case for Redress*, 3d ed. (The National Committee for Redress, Japanese American Citizens League, May 1980).
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18. Lester Suzuki, *Ministry in the Assembly and Relocation Centers of World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Yardbird Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 329-30.
19. *Minutes*, Sixth General Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches of the United States, Durham, NH, June 18, 1942; item #44.
20. Eleanor Breed, “War Comes to the Church Door: Diary of a Church Secretary in Berkeley, California, April 20—May 1, 1942.”
21. Ibid., p. 89.
22. In *ibid.*
23. Margaret Dumas, “Reflections on Life in the Camps” (San Francisco: Northern California Conference, UCC, May 6, 1982).
24. “A Statement to Japanese Friends and Fellow Americans” (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Fellowship of Churches and First Congregational Church of Berkeley, April 14, 1942).
25. Ibid.
26. Sycamore Congregational Church—75th Anniversary.
27. Joseph K. Fukushima, “Report of Findings of Fresno Congregational Church” (N.D.).

28. Le Roy E. Eide, "Congregational Church of San Mateo, UCC" (n.d.). Information on other churches was not available. Some references were made to Independent Congregational Church, Oakland and the Japanese Congregational Church, Fresno in minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Northern California Congregational Conference (March 10, 1942; May 2, 1942; May 25, 1942; and September 14, 1943).

29. Koga, *op. cit.*, p. 299.