

RELIGION IN FRESNO ASSEMBLY CENTER

In 1942 the percentage of clergymen among the Japanese evacuees amounted to about one clergyman for every one thousand evacuees. More than half of the clergymen could be identified as being affiliated with established Protestant Denominations. Most of the balance were Buddhist and Shinto Priests with Buddhists outnumbering Shinto Priests two to one. Fresno Assembly Center had a slight advantage in the percentage of established clergymen among the evacuees interned there. This was a dominate factor in the availability of a wide range of religious services for the Japanese evacuees to participate in at Fresno Center.

Protestant Christian Church services including a full program of church affiliated activities and Buddhist Church services plus a complete offering of allied Buddhist activities were available to all evacuees within a few days after arrival of the first residents. The fact that communities were moved to the same Centers intact, brought into Fresno Center the same religious leaders that had served the evacuees in their home communities. These leaders proceeded at once to provide all the services and church related activities that they had offered previous to evacuation in those communities.

It is interesting to note that Protestant Christian Services and Buddhist Services were the only religious services desired by any of the evacuees. Facilities for other kinds of religious faith would have been made available if requested. There were more than 1,000 Center Busseis participating in Buddhist activities and nearly 700 Protestants taking part in the activities of their preferred religious faith.

The Center administration provided office facilities for both groups equipped with tables, chairs, shelves and other office requirements. The Recreation centers and the Center Bowl (outdoor auditorium) were used for services.

These churches with their leaders contributed greatly to the welfare and well being of many evacuees with the extent of the services and activities they provided.

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