



PACIFIC MOUNTAIN REGION

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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

Interview with Rev. Kenneth Moy

December 3rd, 2019

Oral History Recording Summary

Interviewee: Rev. Ken Moy

Interviewed by: Kimiko Karpoff

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Transcribed by: Victoria McAuley

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Time Log (minutes)	Description of Content
00:01	Beginning of interview, permission to record
00:21	Beginnings with English-speaking VJUC (including Val Anderson)
02:44	Working with the English-speaking VJUC and establishing independence from Japanese-speaking VJUC
04:55	Becoming a separate, English-speaking congregation (including: Grace Namba and Ben Murata)
07:49	Nisei congregation activities
10:19	Active congregants (including: Chizu Uchida, Margaret Eto, Keiko Goto, Mary and Tosh Seki, Charles and Lillian Kadota, and Grace Namba)
11:38	Grace Namba and the ceremony commemorating the new English-speaking VJUC congregation
13:20	Church activities
15:30	Grace Namba's contribution/influence
18:36	The importance of a creating an English-speaking VJUC congregation
20:15	On being a Chinese Minister in a Japanese congregation
21:50	Final thoughts
23:53	End

	Time
<p>KK: This is Kimiko Karpoff, and I'm on the telephone with Ken Moy. It is December the 3rd, 2019. Ken, you are being interviewed for the Vancouver Japanese United Church History Project and this is being recorded. Are you okay with that?</p>	00:01
<p>KM: Yes, I'm fine.</p>	
<p>KK: Great. So Ken, tell us a little bit about your time at the Vancouver Japanese United Church.</p>	[00:21]
<p>KM: Okay. I'll try to remember as best I can. And I could still stand corrected, but it's been a long time. Now, I was the minister at Hammond-Pitt Meadows pastoral charge. That's out just before Maple Ridge area. And it's a small pastoral charge. And one day, Val Anderson, Reverend Val Anderson phoned me and said "come and have coffee, there's a Japanese group of friends that would like to meet you." And I said, "Well that's strange, I don't really know any Japanese group in Vancouver." But he said, "Come and visit." Well, anyone who knows Val Anderson knows that whenever you have coffee with him, he'll have a job for you, so I was hesitant.</p> <p>But I met with this Japanese group in Vancouver. And I found out that they were part of the Japanese United Church, but that this group is an English-speaking group. And they would like to form a congrega[tion]—a little group of their own for Sunday worship. So, I didn't really want to do that because it meant a lot more work. I already had two churches to preach on Sunday morning, and the idea was to come out in the afternoon at about... I forget the time; one or two o'clock for the Japanese service at this [stage of] pastoral work. And one day a week for pastoral work. And they were going to pay, not me, but the pastoral charge for the time that I spend with the Japanese Church, which is the Sunday and one day a week. And, so that's how it started. Okay?</p>	
<p>KK: Yes, thank you.</p>	
<p>KM: Okay.</p>	
<p>KK: And so tell us a little bit about the group when you went. What they were doing, and also what kind of work were they were asking you to do on that one day?</p>	02:45
<p>KM: Oh, pastoral work. It was basically visiting—basic pastoral work. I spent the Sunday afternoon with them. I ate my lunch on the way driving out from Hammond-Pitt Meadows to, it was, oh, I can't think of it, the United Church right on First Avenue and Renfrew. I think it was Renfrew United Church. And met with the group there. And spent the afternoon with them. And then one day a week, I would come out and have,</p>	

possibly, I think a Bible study or just pastoral visiting. And then they often had meetings [and] they would like to have a little get-together. And they would ask if I would come out and I would join them just to be with them. I think that's basically it. And trying to get the group together, explaining to them how we are separate, how we are a little bit different to the senior Japanese group which was all Japanese. And we are trying to become independent. At least they want to be independent from the senior group. But basically my work was at that time just to do pastoral work, because the group was very loose and, and there was no real organization at that time. Okay? But that's what I can remember. My purpose of being there was just to be with them as a group without any idea of being anything more than that, at the time.

KK: You say at the time. And did that change?

04:55

KM: Yes, I was with them, I forgot how many years now; I was still at Hammond-Pitt Meadows doing my past—my church there. I forget how many years it was. Maybe two or three. I don't remember. Then, we became strong enough with the help of Grace Namba who was the deaconess, but she was really great in getting the group together and just mother-henning the whole group. And we were strong enough to start talking about forming a congregation by itself. And so, it got to the point where it was strong enough, and they decided, the Conference decided (or Presbytery decided) that it can form a congregation as the English-speaking Japanese United Church. And it was to be independent from the senior Japanese group. And it was difficult in a way to remind the congregation that what was happening next door—since we're in the same building—that the problems that they have are not our problems and we are not to get involved with them, necessarily. But we are a group of our own. And trying to make them understand that—not to get involved.

The inister at that time was Ben Murata, and he just died recently. I was in Toronto; I went to his funeral. He was the minister there and the senior congregation sometimes didn't approve, or they were not always sure of what we were doing, but we tried to maintain our independence and mind our own business, as it were, in that sense, since we were still in the same building. 'Kay? And it was a little difficult at times because many of the people in the English-speaking congregation had family in the senior group or the Japanese-speaking. So we had to always remind each other that we are trying to be independent and doing our own thing. 'Kay? Ben Murata was very good; he was very helpful. He understood what we were trying to do, and we respected each other.

- And because we were in the same building, we were careful not to get involved with what they were doing in terms of problems. 'Kay.
- KK: So what kinds of things did the Nisei congregation do? [07:49]
- KM: Oh, one thing we always laughed at: they loved doing project outings. And lots of get-togethers for part..., not parties, but you know, get-togethers. And socialize. That was a big part of the congregation. In getting together. I came out more than one day a week. Sometimes they would have something during the week and they would ask me to come out and I would come out and so, actually my time with them was a little more than just the Sunday and one day a week. Not a lot more, I was free and I had time in the evenings. And very often I would just come out when they said, "There's a gathering together". But the other thing I had to remind them was that when we have a gathering together socially, this is not an official board. This is not the session and this has no real authority to start planning things without the proper authority. There was a blurred line in having a social which turns into a board meeting, without all the board members. So I had to remind them that when we're having a social, you can discuss what you want, but it's only a social, we're getting together. And then there is the board when we get together to make official pronouncements or decisions. Okay?
- So, that was a very difficult one to emphasize. That just because we get together, or else that when somebody was mad at—oh, I've got to be careful—somebody has an idea, they would call a few of the board members together and start planning a talk about it. And I said, "That's not proper. You can talk all you want but really, that's your business, but it shouldn't be official." So these were some of the problems with the young congregation. They were excited that they were happy to do things. They were impatient in a way. But I had to always remind them that there are procedures that we have to keep to. And so, we never had any real problems. These are all things that they had to learn, and work together. 'Kay?
- KK: Do you remember some of the people who were particularly active then? 10:00
- KM: Yeah, there was Chizu, I think. She was the pianist—I think that's her name, yeah. Uchida, is it? Chizu. I think she's still there...
- KK: Chizu Uchida. 10:19

KM: Then there was Margaret.¹ And Keiko.² Um, gosh, you know, this is about 50 years ago [laughter]. I can't remember so much. I'm 81 now so, I'm just thinking. Oh, Mary and Tosh Seki. I don't know, are they still there? Have you met them?

KK: Uh, no. Some of those, some of those names have certainly been mentioned by other folks.

KM: Yeah, and then there was, oh, a very prominent family, husband and wife. Did they live on 63rd and Oak or somewhere around there?

KK: Mmm.

KM: Yeah, I forgot now. Charlie, yeah, Lillian and Charlie, I forgot the last name.³ They were very prominent, a very strong supporter in every way. And Keiko, of course.

KK: Yeah.

KM: And Margaret. Yeah. But that's all I can remember. Those are the names I can remember, but there were a few others. But Grace Namba was, of course, really important in keeping the group together even before I got there. So, it was this loose group that started and then were fortunately strong enough, and then started thinking seriously, with Val Anderson's help, of forming the congregation. And we did have a formal ceremony with Conference or Presbytery; I forget which came and founded officially the English-speaking Japanese United Church. The Vancouver English-speaking Japanese United Church. And I was their so-called "first minister" with them. And I was with them, I think... I forget. My work was in Hammond. I was moving, I think, to another congregation at that time. I'm not sure how that happened. But I left the Japanese church and I believe Gordon Imai took over and he became the minister of the church after me. That's as far as I recall, I could still be wrong, but that's as much as I recall.

11:38

KK: And do you remember any stories of particular events or activities that the Nisei congregation did?

13:20

KM: No, we had a lot of outings and they loved socials. And we laughed that eating and enjoying each other's company was so much expected after the congregation and activities. We did a lot but I forgot what we did. But we always had a lot of activities. And socializing. And that, I think, was an important part of the congregation getting together as a young congregation. And we had Bible study, I remember. I can't remember

¹ Margaret Eto

² Keiko Goto

³ Charles and Lillian Kadota

any particular event that was outstanding, at least, that's in my memory. I think there were also church picnics and things like that. But nothing I can think of at the moment. 'Kay?

KK: Thank you.

KM: Now we were busy, and like any young congregation, I had to keep reminding them of the procedures [for] what they wanted to do in terms of starting any group or complaining about anything. Which is not a lot, but as any young congregation they had to do it according to the book; at least, there is a procedure, and the board meeting, and the committees, and so on. And [I had to remind them] not to override each other or do things that didn't go through the process. Which is normal. I would even do that with our regular congregation. You had to remind some groups sometimes: "This is not your concern," or at least, "Bring it to the proper board".

KK: Right. Right. You mentioned Grace Namba.

15:30

KM: Yes.

KK: Many people have also mentioned her. I wonder if you can tell me, what do you particularly remember about her? What can you tell me about her?

KM: Oh. Grace Namba was a deaconess. She was really a typical deaconess that really loved the church and she loved the congregation, the group, and she really worked hard to keep it together and I think she wasn't always appreciated. I mean, she was always appreciated, but there are times when the congregation, the young, I mean, the members would like to do things that weren't proper and she would always remind them that: "In the United Church this is not the way we do it." And of course they'd get annoyed at her as they did sometimes with me because I'd keep reminding them. But by and large, Grace was like... we always thought of her like a mother hen. She just really gathered people together. When things didn't go well she would try to, you know, make everything go better, and that's all I can remember. She really was the typical, wonderful deaconess—my idea of the deaconess—she devoted her time to that congregation. And I'm not sure whether she was part of the Japanese-speaking congregation as well, because I'm sure that she was not just with our group, because our group was too small to have her full time.

KK: Right. She's certainly a person whose name comes up...

KM: Oh yes. Yes.

KK: ...in people's memories.

KM: For me, Val Anderson, who started this and kept in touch, making sure that we were on the right track and informing this group, and Grace Namba, who was in the group... Even before my time she was there keeping this group together, or being with them.

KK: Umhm.

KM: And she was the easygoing person. She really took a lot of guff from the people. I mean, from the group. Especially when she reminded them that they “can't do this!”

Both: [Laughter]

KM: A few things.

[Pause]

KK: Yeah.

[Pause]

KK: So, I just want to give you an opportunity to, if there's any... I mean, you've shared just some of your general memories and I wonder about just your sense of the place at that time. Why was it important for that group of people, for instance, to be a separate congregation? Do you have a sense of that?

18:36

KM: Yes, well it [was] a younger group. The Japanese-speaking group, the senior group, these were mostly parents of these people. Now the group that, in my group... I'll talk about my group. They [weren't] all young people, some of them [had] families and so on, but I would say we were in our—what—in our 30s or 40s at that time. I guess we were in our 30s and 40s. And they had kids, but they still had parents that were in the Japanese-speaking group and they just wanted to have an English-speaking group and a younger congregation, as it were.

Oh, I interject. When I went to be interviewed with the group originally, they were laughing that they were looking for a Japanese-speaking, English-speaking Japanese person, and they couldn't find one at that time. And Val Anderson said, being Chinese, “I guess I'm the closest thing to it!” And they laughed and that's how I became the minister. Because they were really looking for a Japanese Canadian or English-speaking Japanese minister. But being Chinese, I guess they saw me as being the closest they could get to a Japanese, so... We had fun about that and we'd laugh about it.

20:00

Now, where was I?

	Time
KK: Well, how did that affect your perspective in working with the congregation? Or did it?	20:15
<p>KM: Oh it did. It did. They taught me a lot about the Japanese history, particularly about the internment camp[s] because a lot of them were involved. And that came up often in the conversation, as they talked about their past. And also it was a past to us historically, but for them it was still a living memory. And I learned a lot, for myself, as I learned a lot and respected the history that they went through. And to me that was my own personal journey, that I appreciated what happened.</p> <p>And I felt I belonged to the group as much... They accepted me, I think. And I felt very much a part of them and, even though it's extra work, I really enjoyed this extra group that I was ministering to in Vancouver. And we were involved with the senior group once in a while as we had something together, which was nice too. And we were able to, I think, successfully be independent, and yet still part of the senior group, as a family.</p>	
KK: Did you have any other thoughts or comments to make before we close this time?	21:50
<p>KM: No, I don't have any um... Well I was actually quite surprised that the group developed as well as it did. Because it was really a mixed bag of people with different ideas and they were not all too knowledgeable about the United Church structure. And this is something—besides Sunday service and preaching—we spent a lot of time in reminding them that you can't do it this way, you have to go through this way, and so on. So that's all part of a young congregation's problem. So, I don't think there was anything unusual about this group.</p>	
<p>But I enjoyed them very much. There were times I felt, you know, travelling back and forth, back and forth... But overall it was a wonderful experience for me and I made good friends.</p>	22:54
KK: Great. Thank you Ken for sharing your memories.	
KM: Okay.	
<p>KM: Now, I should say it's such a long time ago. But that's the depth of my recollection. But I could stand corrected. I forget the years and the time, but I remember we had a wonderful congregation ceremony in founding the English-speaking church and I don't know whether I could consider myself as being the <i>first</i> minister or not, but I was there for a while before Gordon Imai became the minister.</p>	
KK: That's terrific. Thank you.	

[End]

Time
25:53