DAVID TAMOTSU KAGIWADA: A Compassionate Healer



Responding to a request from newly established church of Japanese immigrants in Los Angeles, the Disciples-sponsored Margaret K. Long School (Joshi Sei Gakuin) in Tokyo sent one of its graduates to become director of Christian education. After a few years, she married one of the church founders. Their first son, David, was born on September 9, 1929.

When David was in junior high school, World War II broke out and anti-Japanese hostility exploded. David, along with his parents, was taken by force to a concentration camp in Arizona where people of Japanese heritage were confined without due process. Young David felt the grave injustice of such treatment by the government. After all, he had been born in the United States and he was an American citizen. However, even in this hostile place, surrounded by barbed wire fences and armed guard towers, he found meaning in the church activities which were developed by the Christians interned there.

After leaving the concentration camp, David became increasingly conscious of the wider implications of the wrong which had been directed at Japanese Americans. He sought ways to commit his life toward fighting injustice, not only for people of Japanese heritage, but for all peoples. During his college years, David associated with peoples of many different races and nationalities. He made a commitment to be a reconciler of antagonistic people, whoever they might be.

He first thought he could do this as a social worker, but after considerable soul searching, he came to the realization that he wanted his Christian faith to be a central part of his life's. work and decided to go to seminary. David graduated from the University Of Chicago School Of Divinity and was ordained in what is now the Illinois-Wisconsin Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In his ordination statement, he said, "I want to bear witness to the goodness which finds its source in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . It is a ministry which involves judgment as well as healing. It is to this task that I commit my energies, talents, vision, and life."

By drawing upon his own ethnic experiences, David effectively communicated the need for Christians to work actively toward justice for <u>all</u> peoples. He encouraged compassionate action and better understanding among all communities of people, but a special mission for him was to persuade Asians who were historically antagonistic to come together in the name of Christ the Reconciler. He also labored to help

the Disciples denomination recognize and appreciate the gifts that Asian Americans offered to the church. He organized and became the first convener of the American Asian Disciples (AAD, now. NAPAD - North American Pacific/Asian Disciples).

Another important aspect of David's ministry was his support and advocacy for women. With his active support, at least ten women entered the ordained ministry during his six years at Crestview Christian Church in Indianapolis.

David died on July 10, 1985 while serving as senior pastor of Crestview Christian Church. For David, there can be no better fitting memorial than the scholarship fund established to assist in preparing North American Pacific/Asian Disciples for pastoral leadership.