

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOCIAL MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

"We're going to have to get our heads out of the sky and realize that if we want heaven, we'll have to build it here, on earth, for ourselves."

The words are those of the Rev. Jim Jones, dynamic founder and pastor of a California based ministry known as Peoples Temple.

At once erudite and down to earth, speaking without notes, Jones combines the language of the street with masterful oratory and a biting wit, making him one of the most effective voices in the church today. Speaking with a kind of fiery conviction that holds his audiences enthralled, Rev. Jones takes on high-level corruption with a consistency and boldness rarely found on the church scene.

"I guess I shake people up a bit," Jones ruefully admits. "But complacency in these times is deadly."

Although affiliated with the nationwide Disciples of Christ denomination, Peoples Temple boasts a vast membership from all walks of life, including virtually every racial and religious background.

In a time when crime, unemployment, and racism are victimizing our communities, Jim Jones and his parishioners are proving that churches can do something about it. With central headquarters in San Francisco, the Temple, under Jones' inspired leadership, has been instrumental in rescuing hundreds from extreme poverty, drug addiction, and oppressive conditions.

9/26/76

220

6-027

The Temple's many human service programs meet people's basic needs, and more, providing free medical and legal assistance, senior citizens' homes, a 40-acre children's ranch, a community center with an indoor heated swimming pool, drug rehabilitation, college educations and technical training, day care, and even refuge shelters for sick and abandoned animals.

Rev. Jones doesn't disallow the spiritual side of the church by any means. But the practical emphasis gained more thrust from the belief in Peoples Temple that the highest worship of God or Deity is service to one's fellow man.

However, Rev. Jones does conduct a calm, sane spiritual healing ministry, something that one might not expect to find in a social action oriented church. Parishioners--among them, attorneys and professional medical people--say Rev. Jones' healing ministry has brought deliverance to thousands and is the most effective they've seen.

Referring to various miraculous healings, including those of crippled people who were enabled to walk again, Dr. J. Bruce Massey, a surgeon, has stated, "As a physician of many years experience, I am convinced that these miraculous cures are genuine and permanent. Pastor Jim Jones should be seen and heard by people of the entire world."

One would also not expect to find a man of such dimensions to have a modest personal lifestyle-- one that is completely without frills. But Jim Jones takes no anniversary gifts, appreciation days, or personal offerings of any kind. He owns no car, wears only used clothing, and has only one pair of shoes ("that's all I can wear at one time," he deadpans.) The frugal

9/26/76

220

6-1\*

minister feels he has no right to live above the people in his church. His wife, Marceline Jones (an RN who is a State Dept. of Health official over convalescent and care facilities in Northern California) takes the same position. The couple have adopted eight children of various ethnic backgrounds, in addition to their natural-born.

Rev. Jones has captured the public eye not only for his humanitarian programs and the extraordinary model of active social service the church is providing, but also for the repeated stands he and the Temple have taken on behalf of individuals who have suffered injustice.

"Jim is a fighter, and means to see that America lives up to her ideals of equality and justice, and the guarantees of liberty contained in the Bill of Rights," says Eugene Chaikin, one of the volunteer attorneys on the Temple's legal services staff. The Temple has thus supported Angela Davis, the American Indian Movement, newsmen jailed for refusing to disclose their sources of information, as well as many other causes and organizations in the forefront of defending human rights and civil liberties.

As an uncompromising foe of racism and inhumanity, Jim Jones is highly respected among youth. His rapport with young people has enabled him to establish an effective social structure, infused with compassion and guidance. The program, remarkably, has kept all Temple youth out of trouble with the law, off drugs, and away from violent lifestyles. For the first time in their lives, a multitude of young blacks live with a sense of utter pride and dignity, because Rev. Jones has fought to provide them

9/26/76

225

6-077-8

the opportunity to realize their goals-- in terms of education, specialized training, and jobs.

Rev. Jones is equally concerned about senior citizens, many of whom came to Peoples Temple from poor and destitute backgrounds. But instead of living in a state of hopelessness, fear and despair, as they once did, they now live in comfortable residences, thanks to the Temple program. They are active in a variety of activities--arts and crafts, drama, music, cultural tours, seminars--whatever they want to do, because Rev. Jones feels they are owed that much. He has also stepped in with church resources to save many senior's homes when they were about to be lost because payments could not be met.

Jones, himself, grew up amid the grinding rural poverty of the Depression. He worked his way through school, became thoroughly familiar with the underside of America, and vowed to do something about it. While still in his twenties, he became the director of a human rights commission in a large city, and integrated scores of businesses when it was dangerous to even try. When he was taken to a hospital with an appendicitis attack, he discovered that the patients were segregated, and there was unequal treatment. Though in great pain, he demanded that the hospital be integrated, and refused treatment until it was done.

His work earned him respect and the reputation for being someone who "meant business." That was many years ago. Today, Jim Jones still means business, particularly when it comes to defending fundamental human liberties and First Amendment free-

9/26/76

220

6-091-

doms, such as Freedom of the Press.

Recently, when four newsmen of the Fresno Bee newspaper were jailed for refusing to reveal a source of information-- a right guaranteed them by California's Shield Law--Jones took the Temple's fleet of buses and a thousand members to Fresno to demonstrate in protest. After two such trips and several all night vigils outside of the Fresno County Court-house, the newsmen were freed. They brought their families to a benefit dinner at Peoples Temple, just after their release, where 7000 people showed up, including California's Lt. Governor, the mayor of San Francisco, several congressmen, and other governmental and community leaders, to pay tribute to Rev. Jones' ministry.

The "Fresno Four" expressed their appreciation to Jim Jones and Peoples Temple for their support, in words that were felt by everyone, judging by the long and loud ovation: "There is no doubt in our minds that what you, Rev. Jones, and your flock did in Fresno and, we understand, elsewhere at other times, is the most eloquent testimony possible to the brotherhood of man. You are truly a remarkable group of people, an affirmation of all that is best in the human race."