

TEMPLE BROTHERHOOD AT DISNEYLAND

A visit to Disneyland doesn't sound like much of an undertaking. But when many hundreds of members of a church decide to go...together...as did the several congregations of Peoples Temple Christian Church this past Labor Day, it's a different story.

Pastor Jim Jones, the spiritual leader and director of the church's vast human service ministry, decided that hundreds of the thousands of Peoples Temple members who couldn't afford to go to the world famous amusement center individually, should be given the opportunity. He wanted the many city young people who had never been to Disneyland to be able to enjoy themselves for an entire day there. He also wanted senior citizens of the church to come along, too.

So, equipped with a nursing staff and medical students, security personnel, and everyone organized into supervised groups, the entire fleet of Greyhound-type buses that are owned and operated by the church, rolled into the Disneyland parking lot in a caravan half a mile long. The great gathering came from the church's main Temples in Los Angeles and San Francisco, California and some from the many other states where Peoples Temple has members.

It was a trip that the children, especially, won't soon forget-- although all of the seniors, too, expressed that they had a grand time. Mobile chairs were provided for the many elderly members so they wouldn't have to walk long distances. But the seniors didn't just want to view the exhibits; they also wanted to go on the rides. One spirited soul who is nearly 90 years old went on almost every ride with the young people and even insisted on going on the "Rocket Plane." So a nurse went with her and they had the time of their life.

Disneyland staff personnel showed astonishment that such a large group could be so well organized. One official exclaimed, "I've never seen anything like this in my life! I'm simply overwhelmed by all these hundreds of different people-- they're like one huge family." The Temple has also sent other groups at other times to Disneyland throughout the year.

But this isn't really anything new for Peoples Temple. It's buses have taken members on many excursions, including several cross-country tours that have gone into Canada and Mexico as well. During one of the most recent trips, they were honored as "Tourists of the Year" by the Washington Post, and last year the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry recognized the Temple throng for its unique demonstration of co-operation and brotherhood when they stopped there for a day's outing on their 10,000 mile "Pilgrimage of Hope."

With so much racial animosity, tensions, and violence in the news these days, there is very little evidence that co-operation and harmony among people of different races and backgrounds can exist here in America. The Disneyland venture of Peoples Temple, however, symbolized as well as demonstrated in a concrete fashion, the possibility of a true and living "brotherhood of man" with equality for all. From infants to seniors in their 90's, the members of Peoples Temple have virtually eradicated racial barriers and generation gaps.

One might wonder how this all came about. It has all been made possible by a co-operative structure and vision of human harmony which the Temple's founder and pastor for nearly 25 years, Jim Jones, has infused into his congregations. But beyond the

periodic excursions and trips. Pastor Jones has been the inspiration for Peoples Temple Christian Church (a Disciples of Christ affiliate) to establish a wide range of human service programs that have brought over 200 young people of drug habits, put scores through college, established innovative, self-managing senior citizen homes, provided legal and medical assistance, and taken care of a host of other vital human needs.

On the eve of America's Bicentennial, here is a unique group that is serious about not merely celebrating what our nation is really all about, but giving the "American dream" reality.