

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

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PEOPLES TEMPLE — A DYNAMIC CHURCH THAT IS GROWING
STEADILY BECAUSE IT TAKES ON THE CHALLENGE OF
PUTTING PRINCIPLE INTO PRACTICE...

Fired with hope and encouraged by their own "not inconsiderable achievements...," an astonishing group of practicing Christians, called Peoples Temple, has opened the door to a new era for churches. Pastor Jim V. Jones and the Peoples Temple Christian Church members are infused with the conviction that something CAN be done to overcome the apathy and moral degeneration that threatens to destroy the very fabric of our society.

Peoples Temple Christian Church (an affiliate of the nationwide Disciples of Christ denomination) is proving that the church can be an invigorating and restorative presence in community life. Its intense dedication to fundamental Christian principles of brotherhood and human service is providing a useful model of practical Christianity, and generating programs and projects involving thousands of people.

Perhaps the most significant fact about Peoples Temple is that it has been able to forge a unified, active, and extensive congregation that has remarkable ethnic diversity. Some have characterized the church as a miniature "family of man"; while others see it as a "vast cross-section of the human race", for Black, White, and Brown have found a way to work together in harmony at the Temple. One soon discovers that the inspiration and vision of Pastor Jones is largely the reason for this. He has often emphasized that the "highest worship of God is service to our fellow man".

The focus of human "responsibility" is reflected everywhere: in the work undertaken with senior citizens and medical convalescents; in child care, legal counsel, and education as well as many other community activities. The guiding concept of responsibility to others is creatively combined with a spirit of 5-021 voluntarism that generates results.

"We used to count the number of young people that our Drug-Rehabilitation Program had unhooked, but we lost track! Hard-line heroin addicts, lifetime alcoholics, and many others who were drug users of one kind or another are now working productively. These very persons are now helping straighten-out the lives of others. Many are receiving professional training under church sponsorship in schools and universities. While some have been complaining about the drug culture,

Page 2 (Peoples Temple...)

Peoples Temple has made a significant contribution towards the elimination of the problem." This comment comes from a female social worker who has been helped by the Temple. She continues: "I just couldn't get myself together...but I met Jim Jones and this beautiful group of people: they made the difference and I came out of a living death of drugs." Physicians in the drug abuse field who have seen the program at the Temple recognize it as "saving many from disaster".

Many senior citizens, and more than a few in their 80's and 90's, had nothing but loneliness and desolation facing them. They are now residing in lovely homes maintained by the Temple members. With a new lease on life even the seniors participate in the "help humanity" programs; their activities include quilting, canning, baking, arts, crafts, and gardening. Hundreds go on periodic tours around the nation on the church's own fleet of eleven Greyhound buses.

At the other end of the spectrum, the hundreds of children at the Temple benefit from a host of activities and programs, including working with animals of all kinds in the large refuge shelters maintained by the church, free music lessons, tutoring, and helping in the Temple's organic gardens. One of the gardens is planted on a scenic 40 acre ranch located by a beautiful winding river; this is also the site of a grape vineyard and a children's home. Through these church programs even the youngest Temple members are taught responsibility to their fellow man. Young people are given a foundation of decency in their life-style which is free from race prejudice. They are instilled with a deep appreciation and respect for life. The group is proud of its record with its young people who have steered clear of trouble with the law and away from drugs.

Pastor Jones and his busy staff have set up a legal counsel program, a credit union instrumental in helping members get started in business, job counseling, nursing care, and an extensive college scholarship program that has fully sponsored the educations of well over 100 youngsters in many fields, including medicine and law. College dormitories are maintained to house these students, many of whom grew up in ghetto poverty and would not otherwise have had such a valuable opportunity.

Peoples Temple facilities also reach out to non-members through convalescent centers (some of which have been cited by the State for their high level of care) and a community center, with an indoor heated swimming pool open to everyone. Funds and assistance have gone to many social service programs of all descriptions.

Page 3 (Peoples Temple...)

Active in the 1.4 million member Disciples of Christ Denomination (notable for having in its membership Congressmen and Governors of diverse political persuasions), Peoples Temple is striving to redefine the roles of a "church" in the conventional sense of the term. It is a comprehensive and functional ministry that is growing and reaching for new goals all the time. In the spirit of its work to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and minister to the sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25: 35-40 is a favorite scripture of Pastor Jones), the Temple has, in recent months, established an agricultural mission on a huge tract of land in South America, where "pioneers" are already working diligently in a unique program to help feed the hungry in the wake of the world food crisis. This program is also giving the local residents an opportunity for training and employment. Here is an undertaking that again represents the fundamental dynamism and practical emphasis of the Temple.

The agricultural mission is showing amazing progress. Already a host of crops are in with some 300 acres cleared, part of which is planted. Plans for a dairy herd and other livestock are being finalized, and the Temple's introduction into the tropics of a large, ecologically balanced farm (as opposed to a single crop plantation) is already arousing interest among local agricultural officials.

The formula of cooperation, voluntarism, and self-help, in the context of a "family" of the faithful, has produced notable achievements. Pastor Jones has expressed the idea that Peoples Temple, in fostering among people a sense of responsibility for one another's welfare, is creating the kind of practical model for individual and congregational involvement that can work as a buffer against the threat of totalitarianism from both the fanatical Right and Left, as well as providing an answer to the "welfare state" by releasing the burden from government.

Observers in political, business, medical and religious circles have commended Peoples Temple enthusiastically. Jones has been frequently praised for his work, receiving the merit award for outstanding citizenship from Dr. Carlton Goodlet, President of The National Negro Newspaper Association. Dr. John Moore, a California District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church, sees the Temple as "a caring community of people of all races and classes" who "bear the mark of compassion and justice". According to a leading-denominational official, Rev. Gerald McHarg, "One gets the impression at Peoples Temple, of being in the midst of the human race at its best." A prominent physician in San Francisco, one of many in the Jewish community who have been impressed by the Temple, sees Pastor Jones' dedication to

Page 4 (Peoples Temple...)

his fellow man as "unsurpassed". His congregation, affirms Chicago attorney Wade Kubick, "is the most committed and dedicated group of people I have known in any church, anywhere."

The dialogue continues concerning the role of the church in national life, but this amazing congregation in California has gone further, perhaps, than anyone else in translating ideas into actions.

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A FOOTNOTE TO CONSIDER:

It is indeed unfortunate that, in recent days, the humanitarian efforts of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Mission in South America have been the victims of politically motivated attempts by fanatical extremists to link them with the CIA. Pro-Marxist political factions in the area of the Temple mission distributed literature to this effect, even after citing our successful efforts to share our produce with the local Amerindian population. The Rev. Billy Graham has also been attacked by this same element.

Our church, first of all, considers such allegations ludicrous to the point of being hardly worthy of comment. We are opposed to unlawful intrusions of the CIA (as have recently been alleged) into domestic affairs, and we would also oppose terribly any involvement of the CIA in Watergate operations, if they were guilty of this. However, we also feel that the CIA itself has been maligned on many occasions, and its name used as a means of manipulating ill will, as in our case and so many others.

Peoples Temple Christian Church receives no outside funds whatsoever from denominational sources or from any governmental agency. All funding comes in free will offerings from our service-minded congregation, in small amounts. Again, those who have perpetrated such untrue allegations are apparently threatened in some way by a church that is doing a positive voluntary work: we feel that it is precisely this kind of effort, in the ghettos, transitional neighborhoods, and abroad, that constitutes a buffer against totalitarianism from the extreme Right or Left.