



# FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Reno's First Church — Organized in 1868

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Ministers

*Dr. and Mrs. John V. Moore have just recently returned from a visit to the Peoples Temple Agricultural and Medical Mission in Guyana, South America, where they visited their two daughters and grandson who are residents there. Dr. Moore, with thirty-four years experience as a pastor, campus minister, and district superintendent of the United Methodist Church, is currently pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Reno, Nevada. Mrs. Moore is a writer who has worked closely with groups concerned with ministry to prisoners and their families, farm-workers, disturbed teenagers and runaways.*

*The Moores have written the following article to capsulize their impressions of their trip to the remarkable model community established by Rev. Jim Jones and the members of Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ.*

## A VISIT TO PEOPLES TEMPLE COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL PROJECT JONESTOWN, GUYANA

During the month of May, 1978, we had an amazingly beautiful adventure. We visited Peoples Temple Cooperative Agricultural Project in Guyana, South America.

Because so much adverse publicity has been circulated regarding this heroic cooperative of caring and sharing, we felt it important to share our first-hand experience in a town of 1100 people transplanted from Peoples Temple, Disciples of Christ, in the U. S. A.

Our two daughters, one a nurse and the other a teacher with our three-year-old grandson, had written glowing accounts of their life in this unusual project. We wanted to see for ourselves this new land.

We flew to Georgetown, the capital of Guyana, to the Peoples Temple headquarters, which is a lovely home where we were housed with others awaiting a flight to Jonestown, the site of the cooperative. Some of the people we met were planning to retire in Jonestown. One small boy had just had adjustments made on an artificial leg and eagerly awaited the hour-long return flight to the hinterland of Port Kaituma, and then home to the cooperative.

The quaint, attractive government buildings of Georgetown and its friendly Black and East Indian culture in a democratic-socialist country we found most pleasing.

From Georgetown we were flown over a vast ocean of jungle to Port Kaituma where our small plane landed on a tiny air-strip. Members of the Temple met us as our plane arrived and drove us through the exquisite interior region to a turn-off where we observed the sign "Welcome—Peoples Temple Cooperative Agricultural Project".

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What a miracle it is! Over eight hundred acres of jungle have been cleared since 1974, most of it within the last year. All along the road we could see rows of cassavas, eddoes, bananas, sugar cane, and citrus groves. Further along the road we saw the "piggery" and the "chickery" and the dairy center worthy of the best in scientific animal husbandry.

What we found at the cooperative was a loving community of people in the true New Testament sense.

Educational facilities and nursery care and equipment are excellent. The school is government accredited, and unusually creative in its approach to the learning process. Teachers are excited by the possibilities for teaching in a setting so different from town and urban schools where they had previously taught.

Medical services under the supervision of a brilliant young doctor, Larry Schacht, are excellent. Larry, a recent graduate of the University of California Medical School in Irvine, is in radio communication with specialists in the United States and South America. His corps of nurses and technicians are well trained, and the scientific equipment is first-class. All retired residents are checked daily. Services are also provided for nearby Amerindians and others needing medical care.

A nutritionist is constantly experimenting with vegetable and fruit products in an effort to discover maximum utilization of food grown in Guyana. The farm is thriving. Meals are a delight and are rich in protein, natural grain and vegetables.

Soccer, baseball, a good band, crafts, a library of 8,000 volumes and outstanding teachers provide recreational and cultural opportunities for the youth of Jonestown. Birds and animals have become community pets. The band often plays for Georgetown events. It's tops!

The nurture of children and family life is evident. Jonestown offers a rare opportunity for deep relationships between men and women, young and old who come from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Single adults, one-parent families, and nuclear families feel at home in the community.

Jonestown is a mixture of frontier life and contemporary society. The small, neat gardens of the retired residents are in evidence on every pathway. There are opportunities for seniors also to take classes, sew, read, or just to sit. An older woman hoeing her garden brought to mind the words of Micah (4:4)--"...they shall sit every one under his vine and his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid..."

Whereas life is somewhat simple in Jonestown, the latest equipment and techniques are employed, for example in putting up pre-fabricated houses in one day.

Morale is exceedingly high. There is a sense of ownership which is rare in collective societies and not present under private ownership.

We came away from the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project with a feeling for its energy and enthusiasm, its creative, wholesome ways (imagine no television--but weekly movies for all), and an understanding of the fascination and high sense of adventure it holds for its residents.

John and Barbara Moore

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