

## Section 17

### *Letters to the President from...*

17. Concerned clergy
  - 17.1. Rev. Darrell and Karen Darling
  - 17.2. Rev. Jerry Fox, 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist Church, Arcata, CA
  - 17.3. Bishop Melvin Talbert, United Methodist Church, California-Nevada Conference
  - 17.4. Rev. John Pairman Brown, Th. D., retd. director, S.F. Council of Churches
  - 17.5. Rev. Arthur Gafke, General Board of Higher Education & Ministry
  - 17.6. Dr. D. Clifford Crummey, former Superintendent, United Methodist Church
  - 17.7. Rev. Hamilton Boswell, Th.D., Pastor Emeritus, United Methodist Church
  - 17.8. Father Leroy Chatfield, Exec. Director, Loaves and Fishes
  - 17.9. Sister Maria Fitzgerald, P.B.V.M., Loaves & Fishes, Sacramento, California
  - 17.10. Rev. Thomas MacMillan, American Baptist Church, Ukiah, California
  - 17.11. Rev. Karl Irvin, Jr., Christian Churches of Northern California- Nevada
  - 17.12. Rev. Ruth Rambo-Brown, Potter Valley Methodist Church
  - 17.13. Rev. Jerry Carter, Prunedale United Methodist Church

*Some of these concerned clergy had direct experience with Peoples Temple and even knew Larry personally. Others learned of the case through Rev. John Moore, who lost two daughters in Jonestown, was Larry's father-in-law (see 13.1), and now actively supports this petition for clemency. The common theme expressed in these letters is the need for forgiveness and healing to allow all of the country to put the Jonestown tragedy to rest.*

# THE DARLING HOUSE

*A Bed and Breakfast Inn by the Sea*

Karen Darling  
Darrell Darling

314 West Cliff Drive  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Telephone 1-408-458-1958

President Bill Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

February 16, 1997

Dear President Clinton:

I am requesting that you grant clemency to Larry Layton for conspiracy to commit murder of Congressman Leo Ryan. On November 18, 1978, our nation went through an unprecedented trauma, the massive suicides and murder of Jonestown, Guyana.

Our family suffered the death of two close friends, one of whom, Annie Moore, had been a leader in our UMYF (United Methodist Youth Fellowship) in the Davis United Methodist Church, a frequent visitor and baby sitter in our home, a bright and highly ethical and committed young woman. Anne's sister, Carolyn, also died that day, two of the three daughters plus the grandson of our dear friends, John and Barbara Moore.

John Moore is one of the most respected pastors in the California-Nevada Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. More than once he received the vote of confidence of his home conference to be elected Bishop and has been among the final two candidates for episcopal election at least once by the Western Jurisdiction. For years he served on various National boards and agencies of the church including Church and Society.

He is also one of my closest colleagues, having worked together for five years in Davis, Ca., he as Campus Minister for Cal Aggie Christian Association at UCD and I as pastor of the Davis United Methodist Church. Barbara and John and their three daughters have always been models of integrity and faithful service, with a marked unbending devotion to truth and generosity, never one at the expense of the other.

Larry Layton was the husband of Carolyn Moore.

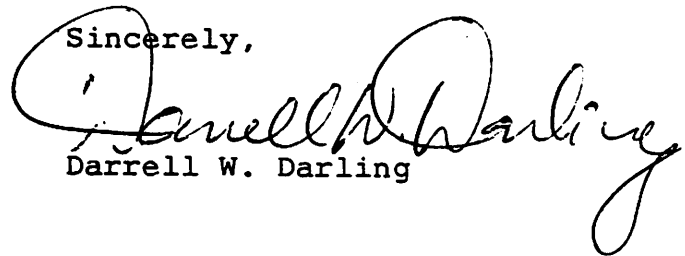
Karen and I join with the Moores, the Layton family, the presiding Judge Peckham, the US Probation Officer, a host of survivors and family members, the convicting jury and even the victims of Larry's gunshots in requesting this act of mercy. In consideration of Mr. Layton's state of mind just days after his own mother's death, the fourteen years already served in confinement, the minor roll that he played in the entire event, and particularly the emotionally and psychologically deranged atmosphere of the entire tragic circumstances, Larry Layton has borne, and will never be free of his share of this horrendous burden.

The death of Congressman Ryan can never be compensated. Larry, however, did not kill Mr. Ryan, and those most directly responsible for his death are themselves in their graves. Neither can the deaths of all of our beloved be compensated, likewise in their graves primarily as a result of actions of the same responsible individuals.

I appeal to you as one you know to have lost two of our own sons by other circumstances to find the means by which to close this last chapter of a national tragedy in an act of healing and mercy for Mr. Layton, for the families most affected, and indeed for our nation.

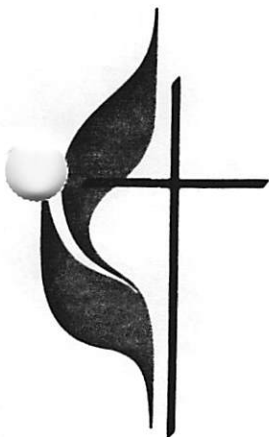
Please accept our deeply held appreciation for your leadership and governance, and most especially the kindness you and Hillary have shown our family , and the many others whose comfort and encouragement you have so genuinely given.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Darrell W. Darling". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,". The signature is somewhat stylized, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Darrell W. Darling

cc: Layton  
Moore



## First United Methodist Church

1761 11th Street

Arcata, California 95521

Telephones (707) 822-1963 - 822-3033

January 27, 1997

President William Jefferson Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N. W.  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This letter is a request for consideration to be given for the release of Larry Layton. Larry has now been in prison for 14 years for his part in the tragedy of Jonestown in November of 1978. I believe that Larry is not a threat to society and has paid the price for his actions. It is my understanding that both persons wounded by Larry at the Port Kiatuma airstrip wrote letters appealing for leniency in his sentencing. Those who carried the real responsibility for the tragedy did not survive. It seems to me that Larry has been punished enough for his part in the events and should be released.

I was one of the pastors of the United Methodist Church in Ukiah at the time of the Jonestown tragedy and knew persons who perished there and family members of several who perished there. Larry's release would provide much needed healing for his family. This is an opportunity to bring a small measure of good out of the events surrounding Jonestown. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

Rev. Jerry Fox

Pastor, Arcata United Methodist Church



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SAN FRANCISCO AREA / CALIFORNIA-NEVADA CONFERENCE

Melvin G. Talbert  
Resident Bishop

Donna La Point  
Administrative Assistant

108 Rawsch Drive  
Brentwood, TN 37027

January 17, 1997

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton  
President, United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you regarding Larry Layton, an inmate at the Federal Correctional Institute. After reviewing his case, I appeal to you to grant him executive clemency.

Believe me, I remember the horror of Jonestown. Also, I remember the tragic death of Representative Leo Ryan. But the information regarding the role played by Larry Layton in these tragedies suggests that a review of his case is in order.

Mr President, I petition you to give the case of Larry Layton a hearing. Also, I plead with you in the spirit of forgiveness, reconciliation and love that you see the wisdom and justice in assessing that time spent by Larry Layton is sufficient to pay for the crimes he committed.

Thank you for giving this matter your attention.

Sincerely,

Melvin G. Talbert

The Rev. John Pairman Brown, Th. D.  
1630 Arch Street  
Berkeley, California 94709

(510) 843-8719

January 11, 1997

President William Jefferson Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr President:

This is a letter urging immediate clemency for

**Larry Layton**

with respect to all charges relating to his participation in the Jonestown (Guyana) event of 1978.

Let me introduce myself. I am a clergyman with joint ministerial standing in the Episcopal Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I have an (earned) doctorate from Union Theological Seminary (New York) and am the author of a number of books. During the years 1977-1984 I was Executive Director of the Northern California Ecumenical Council (our north State Council of Churches) and the colleague of Donner Lane, director of the San Francisco Council of Churches. In the years after 1978, Mrs Lane (with a little help from myself and our Council) played the major role in pastoral work among the families of the Jonestown victims and in securing a proper burial for the victims in Oakland.

I consider myself a close friend of the Rev. John Moore, a Methodist pastor here, and his wife Barbara; two of their daughters died at Jonestown, and their oldest daughter Carolyn was married to Mr Layton in the late Sixties. While I have no personal knowledge of Mr Layton's trials, I have the highest possible regard for John's probity and acuteness. He writes me personally (Jan. 1, 1997):

We [John and Barbara] are convinced that if members of Peoples Temple who carried any community responsibility had survived and had been tried, Larry would have been judged to be the least among them. He bears responsibility for his actions, but not for the actions of Jim Jones and the others. Larry has been punished far beyond the recommendation of the pre-sentencing officer, the judge, some of the jury members and even some survivors.

I understand well the hypnotic spell which Jim Jones was able to cast over ordinary people, Church leaders, San Francisco officials, and even a President's wife (Rosalyn Carter). While we all, to the extent that we were closer to Peoples Temple, were at fault in not perceiving earlier the true

direction in which it was heading, that perception was very difficult to come by! John and Barbara Moore, two of the people for whom forgiveness was most difficult, have forgiven Jim Jones; much more so I join them, Larry's sister Deborah Layton, and many others in asking for our Government to forgive Larry, who has already been punished many times over for the fault of being one of the few available survivors.

Other people who know Larry Layton personally and have visited him in prison will be testifying about his exemplary life there and the assurance that he will become a productive member of society upon his release. I will summarize the things which I believe I know for a certainty in this manner:

**Larry Layton has been made a scapegoat long enough for the far greater crimes of those who in death have exchanged the jurisdiction of all human courts for a higher tribunal. It is time for our Government to close the book on the Jonestown event for which thousands of us also share the blame.**

I look forward to hearing of your favorable action in this matter. Please be assured that my prayers, as the prayers of millions of Americans, are with you in your more-than-human responsibilities. We trust you to tell the right time when judgement is to be tempered with mercy.

Very truly yours,

*John Paul Brown*

**John E. Harnish**  
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**Arthur Gafke**  
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and Ethnic Concerns  
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January 17, 1997

President William J. Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W.  
Washington, DC 20500

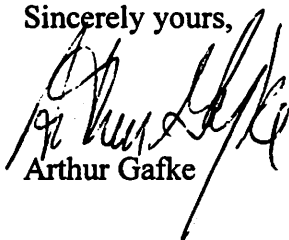
Dear President Clinton:

This letter comes to encourage your consideration of clemency for Mr. Larry Layton. When the tragedy of deaths occurred in Jonestown, I was pastor of the Ukiah United Methodist Church in northern California. This particular church had close association with many members of Peoples Temple, having shared a number of ministries. As a pastor through those years, I know personally how lives were affected.

In a number of ways the current sentence of Mr. Layton places upon him the burden of punishment for Jim Jones and other Peoples Temple leaders.

Your act of clemency will be an act of measured justice for Mr. Layton and his family.

Sincerely yours,

  
Arthur Gafke

AG:pm



*Deceased*

*D. Clifford Crummey*

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February 1, 1997

1400 Geary Boulevard Apt. 909  
San Francisco, California 94109  
(415) 563-8409

President Bill Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Clinton:

I am writing in the interest of Larry Laton. It is time for him to be granted clemency.

In the 1960s I was the superintend for the United Methodist Church here in San Francisco. I met Jim Jones several times. I knew a number of persons who were a part of his movement who were beginning to wonder where he was leading. In due time he took his followers to Guyana and what happened is now a part of history.

The prelude to the final massacre was the shootout at the Port Kaituma airstrip. It was a tragic event, but it is quite certain that Larry Laton was not the leader of the event. He was singled out and eventually found guilty.

His sentence was much harsher than Judge Robert Peckham had recommended.

The daughter of my friends, Rev. and Mrs John Moore, was once married to Larry Laton. They know him to be a reserved person who was not in leadership position.

Mr. President, you have shown yourself to be a reasonable man. When you have all the facts I am sure that you, too, will be sure that Mr. Laton has served a term far longer than the actual events called for.

Please free him now.

Sincerely yours,

*D. Clifford Crummey*  
D. Clifford Crummey, D.D., Ph.D.



**Jones Memorial United Methodist Church**

1975 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

ph. 415/ 921-7653, fax. 415/ 921-7683

Dr. James McCray, Jr., Senior Minister  
Rev. Kelvin Sauls, Associate Minister  
Dr. Hamilton T. Boswell, Pastor Emeritus

*February 24, 1997*

*The President, the White House  
Washington DC, 20500*

*Dear Mr. President:*

*I am a retired United Methodist minister. I was pastor of the Jones United Methodist Church for 30 years in the Fillmore District of San Francisco.*

*In the early 1970's the infamous Jim Jones established People's Temple causing much concern in the community. In 1976 I left San Francisco and vacated my position as a San Francisco Housing Authority Commissioner of 12 years. I was informed by the late Mayor George Moscone that he was replacing me with Jim Jones. I vigorously protested his decision because Jim Jones was an occult leader and his work had no value to the San Francisco community. From that time until now I have some interest in the impact that the Jim Jones' cult has had on the people of San Francisco.*

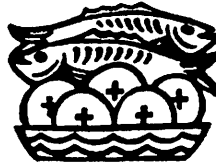
*In early March Lawrence Layton (Reg. No. 20752-053), one of the convicted participants in the Jones Town fiasco will appear before the US Pardon Attorney. It is apparent to me that the sentence rendered by the late Judge Robert Peckham is just. But, his lengthy and careful consideration of Larry's relationship with the cult, as well as the recommendation of the Probation Officer, Loren Buddress, caused Judge Peckham to render a much lighter sentence than proposed by the US Parole Commission.*

*In conclusion, I am respectfully asking for your support in upholding the original sentence and the timeframe as directed by Judge Peckham.*

*Sincerely,*

*H. T. Boswell*  
Hamilton T. Boswell  
Pastor Emeritus

LOAVES & FISHES  
P.O. BOX 2161  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95812



5131 Pleasant Drive  
Sacto 95822

February 24, 1997

The Honorable Bill Clinton  
President, United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

**Re: Release of Larry Layton**

Dear President Clinton

**Justice has been well served; the time for mercy is long overdue.**

I've been in and around politics far too long to have any expectation that this letter will come to President Clinton's personal attention. The best that I can hope for is that the staff member reading this letter will be thoughtful, compassionate and have a certain breadth of life experience to realize that Larry Layton has been in prison far beyond what justice requires and what Judge Peckham ordered.

I too spent many years living in a "cult". During my high school years I was permitted to visit home only once a year for 3 weeks and to receive family visitors only once a month. During my college years I was not even permitted to visit home. I was required to turn over any gifts from family, relatives or friends to my religious superior. Unconditional and unquestioned obedience to the superior was required at all times. I freely chose this monastic way of life during the 40's & 50's and it was deemed socially acceptable because the "cult" was a religious order of the Catholic Church.

Then again in the 60's and early 70's I lived, worked and raised 4 small children in a movement "cult" whose mission was to organize and fight for the rights of California farm workers. My wife and family lived in voluntary poverty, moved to any geographical location for assignment at a day's notice, lived in community, participated in endless meetings and retreats designed to deepen our resolve and motivate our actions. We had to live under the constant threat of violence and retaliation - for us that meant a bullet through our front window and my wife and children deliberately being forced off the road by young thugs driving a pickup. Sometimes I even felt a paranoia about what in other circumstances would have

*"As often as you did it for one of my least brothers and sisters, you did it for me." Matthew 25:40*

been innocent and harmless action or bantering. This movement "cult" had a strong personality/leader in the person of Cesar Chavez who was under constant attack by agribusiness interests but here again this movement was deemed socially acceptable and ultimately was transformed into the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO.

In both of these "cults" there were any number of flash points that because of my total commitment could have led me to lash out and strike back at hostile forces, perceived or real. I too could have ended up in prison as the result of living out my mission for which I was trained and/or perhaps even programmed.

Think about it. If young men can be trained and motivated to give up their life for their country, why cannot the same be true for those trying to protect and preserve their religious calling.

The issue now before you is not whether Larry Layton is guilty or not. He has been incarcerated in prison for 19 years for his action resulting from his participation in the "cult" of the Peoples Temple. The issue is whether President Clinton should exercise mercy in Larry's case and release him from prison.

With our century coming to a close, it seems to me only right and just - and yes, merciful too - that the President wipe the slate clean for Larry Layton and for all others who have paid the heavy price imposed by justice. If South Africa can heal itself from a century of unspeakable atrocities, then certainly we can too.

In the spirit of mercy,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "LeRoy Chatfield".

LeRoy Chatfield  
Executive Director

LOAVES & FISHES  
P.O. BOX 2161  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95812



2/18/1997

Re: Laurence John Layton

The Honorable Bill Clinton  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Clinton,

I join with the family of Laurence John Layton in urging you to exercise your authority to commute Larry Layton's sentence. You can surely see that he is being used as a scapegoat for that madness at Jonestown. He was young, and obviously impressionable at the time, and like the many others, was drawn into the cult that destroyed the lives of many people. But, do we have to continue destroying HIS life? It seems to me that he has already paid a stiff enough price and has been punished enough. Possibly he needed guidance rather than punishment. Please do not let the politician "tough -on-crime" stance stand in the way of exercising your authority to show mercy. This could surely be one of the actions that you can take pride in.

Yours sincerely,  
*Sister Maria Fitzgerald*  
Sister Maria Fitzgerald, P.B.V.M.



THOMAS F. MACMILLAN

January 6, 1997

President William J. Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

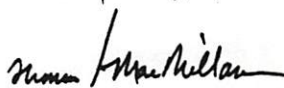
Mr. President:

I am writing in behalf of Larry LAYTON 20752-053, who is currently incarcerated at the Federal Correctional Institution, Lompoc, California. My interest in his case is two-fold. First, as a community college teacher and contributor to a published collection of essays marking the tenth anniversary of the Jonestown events, I consider myself to be informed about the deep impact of Jonestown, certainly on our community, but even more certainly upon the religious and cultural landscape of our nation. Second, as an Associate Pastor of an American Baptist Church, I am concerned that the long process of healing over Jonestown needs to be brought to an honorable and early conclusion for Larry Layton and his family.

Mr. President, I am urging that clemency be granted to Larry Layton in order to shorten the term of his sentence, making it possible to set the earliest release date for his parole. I have neither the inclination nor the expertise to argue the legal merits of the case on the basis of which Mr. Layton was sentenced. But I write as an informed and affected observer who has reflected upon the tragedy of Jonestown since the initial shock of the reports in November, 1978. With the full weight of the impact of those events clearly in view, I would yet claim that the time has come to allow Jonestown to begin to dim in our collective memory, and very specifically to allow Larry Layton and his family the gift of emotional healing by declaring clemency in the terms of his sentence. The time for compassionate intervention has come, Mr. President, and only by the authority of your high office can it be exercised.

Please review the details of this case, considering not only this letter but those that accompany it, and the many gestures of reconciliation and healing that are represented by the collective appeal of those whose lives have been so deeply affected by the tragedy of Jonestown. Along with those who share my convictions, I have complete confidence that you will exercise fair judgment in this matter. I add my own prayers for the burdens of your office, and extend every good wish for your second term.

Yours most sincerely,



Thomas F. MacMillan, Ed.D.

KARL IRVIN  
52 W ADAMS ST  
STOCKTON CA 95204

President Bill Clinton  
The White House, Washington D.C. 20500

January 16, 1997

Dear President Clinton:

This letter is being written as a request that you grant Clemency to Larry Layton who is currently an inmate at a Federal Correctional Institute. He was originally arrested in 1978 in connection with the People's Temple happening at the Port Kaituma airstrip in Guyana.

I knew Larry Layton during the 1970's when he was a part of The People's Temple group here in California. At that time, I was serving as Regional Minister-President of The Christian Churches of Northern California - Monda. People's Temple was affiliated with our denomination.

I remember Larry Layton as a very bright, articulate and caring young man. He was always quiet and was, in no sense of the word a leader in the Jones movement. I recognize that he was responsible for his actions in Guyana, but not for the actions of the leadership of People's Temple. The record will show that Larry has been punished far beyond recommendations made by officials related to the Case. The years of incarceration are more than sufficient to meet society's needs in this Case.

President Clinton, Please consider this as a personal and urgent request on my part.

Gratefully Yours,  
Karl Irvin Jr. (Retired)



## **Potter Valley Community United Methodist Church**

10075 Main Street  
Box 69  
Potter Valley, California 95469

Ruth Rambo-Brown, Pastor  
(707) 743-1152 Church Office  
(707) 743-1001 Residence

January 28, 1997

President Bill Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Clinton:

I am writing to request that you use your power of clemency to release Larry Layton from federal prison.

I became acquainted with Larry when he was a student at the University of California at Davis after he met and later married the daughter of our close friends, John and Barbara Moore. John Moore is an ordained United Methodist minister who has served the church as a District Superintendent as well being a leader at the National level of church government. Often we shared family holidays and at such times met several members of Larry's family.

When Larry and his wife moved to Ukiah and became involved in Peoples' Temple they were often exuberant with enthusiasm for the work of the temple because of it's inclusion of all persons and concern for the poor which was a part of their commitment to social reform.

Others will doubtless inform you of the history of Larry's involvement in Jonestown and of his subsequent imprisonment. I do know that Larry has been punished far beyond the recommendation of the pre-sentencing officer, the judge, as well as some of the jury members and sine Jonestown survivors.

Though imprisoned for 14 years, Larry remains a gentle, peaceful, compassionate person who takes full responsibility for his actions. He has been a model prisoner tutoring other inmates. Knowing Larry back when he was a student at U.C. Davis, it is in keeping with his personality that he uses his great gifts of intellect and spirituality to serve others.

Please give serious consideration to this matter. Larry has served long enough and has a great deal to contribute to society.

Prayerfully and hopefully,

Rev. Ruth Rambo-Brown



# Prunedale United Methodist Church

17640 Pesante Road  
Prunedale, California 93907  
(408) 663-2930

543 Mtn Home Drive  
San Jose CA  
95136

January 24, 1997

President William J. Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 10500

Dear President Clinton:

I write urging you to support the petition for clemency for Larry Layton. I knew Larry during the period of 1968-70, when he lived in Ukiah, California.

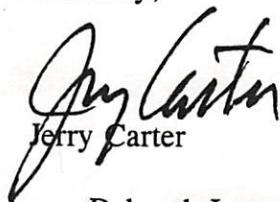
Larry and his wife at the time, Carolyn Moore, cared for our children, shared some trips and recreational events with us, and attended the First United Methodist Church of Ukiah, where I was the pastor. It was at that time that they first became related to Peoples' Temple. Larry was, and I believe still is, a gentle, loving person who wants to act from a position of social responsibility.

As I knew Larry during those years, I also knew other members of Peoples' Temple. Most of them died in the tragedy in Guyana. I spent time with Jim Jones, the pastor of Peoples' Temple, and watched his growing paranoia. I firmly believe that Larry was no less a victim of the paranoia of Jim Jones and others than were those who died there.

The forms and structures of criminal justice do not well relate to persons who have become part of cult-like programs, or come under the influence of a strong cult leader. The well-intentioned actions of law enforcement personnel at Ruby Ridge, Waco, and Montana show the difficulty of applying the criminal code to such situations.

The nation and our communities would be well served if you could deem Larry to have met whatever responsibility may be his for the killings in Guyana, and grant clemency.

Sincerely,



Jerry Carter

cc: Deborah Layton  
John Moore

Jerry Carter. Pastor

Home Telephone: (408) 257-5439