

Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ

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James W. Jones, Pastor

March 28, 1973

Letter to the Pastors,
Disciples of Christ Denomination

Re: Rev. James W. Jones,
Peoples Temple Christian Church

Dear Disciples Leader:

Our board of trustees at Peoples Temple Christian Church is so very appreciative of the warm Christian fellowship we have constantly enjoyed from pastors such as you who are part of our splendid Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) brotherhood. Because so many of you have been so supportive of our ministry and because God has blessed our work to such an extent that it is becoming increasingly publicized, our board deems it only fair to provide you some background information so as to enable you to answer whatever questions may arise. We have traditionally sought to avoid publicity, even though nearly all that we have received has been very fair and very favorable. So with reluctance we enter a new era and send you the enclosed information, hoping that you will reciprocate by sharing with us your activities as well.

For 22 years Rev. James W. Jones, who is an ordained minister of our Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) brotherhood, has worked to establish a congregation of Christians who would devotedly follow the "simple requirements" of Christ and his apostles, and thereby also be true to the "basic truths" of the Disciples of Christ:

"Two basic truths were in the minds of the men whose work led to the beginnings of the Disciples of Christ.

The first was that the church ought to be one without sectarian divisions.

The second was that the reasons for its divisions were the addition of 'human opinions' to the simple requirements of Christ and his apostles as tests of fitness for admission to the one church, and the usurpation of rule over the church by clergy and ecclesiastical courts unknown in the days of its primitive unity and purity." (Garrison and DeGroot: *THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, A HISTORY*, page 11.)

Preaching the literal requirements of Jesus in Matthew to **FEED THE HUNGRY, SHELTER STRANGERS, VISIT THE SICK AND IMPRISONED**, Rev. Jim Jones has inspired the congregation of Peoples Temple Christian Church to devote themselves to human service in the name of Christ. Describing this "highly regarded" church, the *San Francisco Chronicle* recently mentioned a number of the charitable activities whereby the church implements Matthew 25:

"... called less formally Peoples Temple, this church is best known and highly regarded for its social works which include housing and feeding senior citizens and medical convalescents,

... For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.
... St. Matthew 25: 35-36.

maintaining a home for retarded boys, rehabilitating youthful drug users, and assisting non-members as well as members of the faith through college and legal difficulties." San Francisco Chronicle, January 17, 1973.

The ecumenical and social witness of Peoples Temple has led the clergy of other denominations to express their appreciation. Dr. John Moore, District Superintendent of the Methodist Church for Oakland and the East Bay in California, recently wrote:

"Peoples Temple is a caring community of people of all races and classes. They have the marks of compassion and justice — compassion for the hungry and jobless, lonely and disturbed, and also for the earth and her offspring."

The President of the Ukiah Ministerial Council, Dr. Elmer Schmitt, published a report on churches in the area, stating:

"Progress in meeting the needs of people . . . is perhaps seen most dramatically in the seven-day-a-week program of the Peoples Temple with its team of teachers and lawyers, to mention just a few, who strive in the name of Christ, to serve their fellow men."

The apostolic and "primitive" Christian church quality of the congregational life at Peoples Temple Christian Church is manifest also in plain living and in a sane, subordinated spiritual ministry which takes place in an atmosphere of relative calm and which works in cooperation with medical science. Marceline Jones, wife of the pastor, heads a team of registered nurses who encourage people to consult physicians, often for the first time in their lives. Rev. Jones has often publicly stated that the field of healing should not be left to those who would abuse it or live extravagantly from it, and that although he would personally prefer not to have a healing ministry (so as not to divert attention from becoming Christ-centered, principled Christians), it is a New Testament ministry and a gift from God which he must use as a wise steward.

Our church does not want to be known primarily for a healing ministry even though its results have been medically verified. In fact, one doctor, I. H. Perkins, M.D., stated in a letter:

"To Whom it May Concern:

Reverend Jim Jones. . . has helped numerous individuals obtain cures believed impossible."

In giving credit to God for these cures, Rev. Jones publicly described himself as "only a messenger" of Good.

Rev. James Jones is a graduate of Butler University, has studied deeply into Biblical history and exegesis, spent two years on sabbatical as a foreign missionary establishing programs for orphans abroad, and has, with his wife, Marceline, adopted impoverished children of five ethnic backgrounds.

For many years he had a "tentmaker" ministry, combining the pastoring of a church with being a public school teacher and with being a very successful businessman. He has served with acclaim in many civic posts, including Foreman of the Mendocino County Grand Jury and as Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission for the City of Indianapolis. Last year he was given the Special Merit Award for civic leadership by the San Francisco Sun-Reporter, one of the largest newspapers in circulation in northern California.

My personal enthusiasm and esteem for this God-ordained ministry at Peoples Temple results from it having brought me to Christ from a life of increasing alienation and despair. I was a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a veteran of the Peace Corps, and a graduate student at the University of California (Berkeley) when I first met Rev. Jim Jones. Until then I saw no hope that people of all backgrounds could learn to live together. It was the integrity and character of Jim Jones that convinced me the Christian life could be lived without compromise in this world. It was the close unity of the members that convinced me,

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a unity that comes from devotion to the teachings of Jesus Christ. I can find no excuse to do other than my best to implement more of Christ's teachings in my life and in my job as a public school teacher.

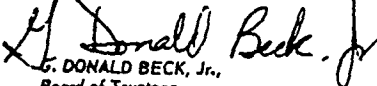
In conclusion, please let me convey to each of you the very great respect Rev. Jim Jones has for the pastors of the Christian Church throughout the land and its Christ-centered leadership, both general and regional. It is an honor to work for Christ with people such as you. It is additionally an honor to serve in a denomination structurally free to institute ministries under the leading of the Holy Spirit, thus realizing the truth of Romans 12: 4-5:

"In our one body we have a number of members, and the members have not all the same function; so, too, for all our numbers, we form one Body in Christ and we are severally members one of another."

If you would like any additional information, or if at times we can be of some assistance to you, please do not hesitate to ask.

May God richly bless you.

In Christ,


G. DONALD BECK, Jr.,
Board of Trustees
PEOPLES TEMPLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
of the Disciples of Christ

Enclosure: Information Sheet