

THE CHURCH OF GOD, INTERNATIONAL

POST OFFICE BOX 2530
TYLER, TEXAS 75710

March 1, 1996

GARNER TED ARMSTRONG

Dear Brethren and Fellow-Laborers With Christ:

I'm sending you this vitally important two-part letter to report on our recently-concluded General Ministerial Conference, and to include a "State of the Work" message for your information.

First, let me introduce to you Mr. Bronson James, who is an ordained minister of Jesus Christ, and Secretary of the Ministerial Council of the church, who will outline the most important points under discussion during the Ministerial Conference:

"Dear Brethren:

"I extend greetings to all the brethren, and those who are supporters and 'fellow-laborers' with Christ in this work.

"Our General Ministerial Conference just concluded last weekend. Many issues were discussed which will have long-term impact on the work of God. While the discussions were spirited and open, the central issues revolved around Mr. Armstrong. Of great concern to Mr. Armstrong personally, were discussions about his immediate future, and what was best for the Church of God, International, the ministry, and for all the brethren and fellow-laborers who support the work.

"Mr. Armstrong had previously written to you about the most severe trial he has ever had, beginning last summer. Many have since viewed the video-taped message Mr. Armstrong delivered on January 27th, and have seen and felt his deep repentance, and how he asked for forgiveness.

"Mr. Armstrong delivered a very emotional talk to the assembled ministry during the Sabbath morning session. This resulted in a suggestion by a minister from the floor that collective prayer by the assembled ministry be offered for Mr. Armstrong. This very moving occasion was complete with several ministers encircling him, with hands laid upon him, and the remaining ministers holding hands united in prayer for his complete forgiveness, healing, and restoration.

"During the Sabbath evening session, when little progress was being made in offering definitive suggestions to the Board of Directors of the CGI, the Conference Moderator called for the formation of an ad-hoc committee of five ministers to hammer out important recommendations. This committee consisted of Ben Chapman, Chairman of the Ministerial Council, field ministers Lawrence Gregory, Jeff Henderson, Bill Watson, and myself as Secretary of the Council. The committee spent two hours that same night, formulating two specific recommendations to be read the following morning.

"The first recommendation concerned the formation of a permanent sub-committee consisting of two Board members, two Council members, and two field ministers whose task was to study ways to improve, enhance, and strengthen the Constitution and By-laws of the Church of God, International. A vote was taken on this measure, and passed unanimously by all who cast their ballots. Two field ministers were then selected by nomination and ballot.

"The second recommendation concerned Mr. Armstrong and his calling. The committee formed a proposal recommending, if passed, that Mr.

Armstrong take a 'Sabbatical Rest' of a suggested 'ten to thirteen weeks' of complete inactivity from ministerial and evangelical duties. These recommendations were to be presented to the Board of Directors of the church at its next meeting.

"Since this second recommendation directly affected Mr. Armstrong, his family, and his life's work, the Conference Moderator asked Mr. Armstrong to present his own assessment of the situation to all the assembled ministry before they made their decision on the second recommendation. Now, I want you to read Mr. Armstrong's assessment, taken from his notes, almost word for word as he delivered them":

Mr. Bronson James

"FACT: My new television programs are better than ever. I read to you (the assembled ministers) a beautiful letter I had received from one of our former ministers. He had seen a recent TV program; was so moved by it he called me, and then wrote me a letter. He said, 'You have changed, Ted,' and went on to offer to help in any way he could in God's work. I was very moved by his letter, for he had left the CGI several years ago.

"FACT: The new television programs are bringing in far higher average responses than before. In only a month and a half or so, more new names are being placed on our mailing list than the total number of members of the CGI! We have had 1,400 calls; 1,600, 1,900, and just the other day, 2,051 calls! About 40 percent of these are brand new people we have never heard from before."

I asked them, "Why cut this off? It will not give me rest to stay away from my calling, but place me under acute anxiety; a feeling of worthlessness -- and it would be going back on my word to several large congregations, and hundreds of people I have answered, personally, assuring them I would keep on "doing the work."

"FACT: My son Mark chose a repeat program a few weeks ago. My wife and I watched it together, and I cringed. I had used some wry humor; a couple of sardonic comments. Even though the calls were very good; over 1,500, I knew I truly had changed, for I would not use any sarcasm or sardonic comments if I were to do the same subject today. (I mentioned this to point out that using old repeat programs was not necessarily the best.)

"FACT: Television is the major way by which we fulfill the FIRST COMMISSION Christ gave to His church; preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom of God to the world. It is the 'spear's point' of our efforts, followed up by a never-ending stream of books, booklets, articles, magazines, and sermon tapes.

"FACT: We recently renewed our Extended Church sermon tape program! The first 800 letters we received showed that NINETY-SIX PERCENT of them wanted to continue to hear my sermons! As hundreds more came in, about ninety-five percent checked the box, indicating they wanted to hear my sermon tapes! Shall we disappoint this ninety-five percent in order to satisfy a tiny minority?"

As for speaking in the churches, I said, "My recommendation would be to accept an invitation here and there, two or three weeks apart, from local churches, (if the Board decides it would be better for me to wait to speak here in Tyler) for several more weeks.

"I would be willing to do this, in small churches who actually petition me to speak, with no public announcements, no letters going

out to our mailing list -- but only a local church visit. This would be very much a part of an healing process with me, for the people we have been with (in three previous church visits, in Morehead, Kentucky, Springfield, Missouri, and in Buffalo Gap, Texas) have been loving, forgiving, compassionate, and eager to hear God's word!

"FACT: People come up to my wife and me here in Tyler, week after week, asking when I'm going to speak! Continually, they urge me to begin speaking here again. I am told some are not attending until they know I will be speaking."

I addressed the conference for just over an hour, laying out these facts, and discussing many more issues of importance.

Even after hearing of the outcome (I was not present for the voting), I said to two of the Board members, "I would be willing to voluntarily take ten weeks off, even though the majority of the ministers present rejected this recommendation. "But," I told them, "If I do so, is that not betraying the MAJORITY who voted for me? Does not that frustrate the desires of ninety-five percent of those on the tape program? Hundreds have written me personally, saying 'Don't quit! Don't give up! Don't let Satan win! We need to hear you out here! We're praying that we get to hear you again soon.'

"And," I said, "if I take this period they say is for 'restoration,' will they then absolutely promise to work as hard as they can to RESTORE loyalty, trust and faith in their LOCAL CONGREGATIONS?"

It all boils down to the simple equation that you just cannot satisfy everybody!

Therefore, as I said at the conclusion of my remarks, my life, my calling, my future; and that of my family, is in the hands of the Board of Directors and the Ministerial Council. Surely, our recently-concluded General Ministerial Conference was not all in vain? If some left, feeling thwarted, there were more who left, feeling something very good came out of the conference. If the Board and the Council decides to agree with the minority; if they decide that, in order to prevent some ministers from leaving the CGI, it would be better to GO AGAINST the wishes of the ninety-five percent of the Extended Church, then I would have to be willing to abide by their decisions.

There is my "hanged if you do, hanged if you don't," "Catch-22 situation." I wish it were possible; I PRAY to our Creator, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to somehow make it possible to please everybody! With all my heart, I hope there can descend, like a calming spiritual blanket of comfort, the spirit of gentle forgiveness, compassion, goodness, love, joy, and PEACE, over all of God's people!

As I am writing my part of this letter, I do not know what the Board will decide. They have not yet met, at the moment of this writing. But, with their permission, I wanted to let you know how I feel about all this, and to ask for your earnest, prevailing PRAYERS for God's Church; for God's ministry; for the WORK, and for me and my family! Thank you, brethren and fellow-laborers, for your prayers; your love and your concern!

Sincerely, in Jesus' name,


Garner Ted Armstrong
GTA:gb

From Mr. Bronson James:

"I know all of you can understand how deeply Mr. Armstrong feels what he said. He knows and understands that some in the ministry want him to take a ten to thirteen week 'Sabbatical,' and has said he is personally willing to do so. However, it was the will of the Ministerial Council, and the majority of the assembled ministers, that he not do so, but continue to do the television programs, to write, and to speak in the churches, including Tyler, Texas. His return to the Board of Directors and as president would be considered later. The second proposed recommendation, therefore, was not agreed to by majority vote of all ministers present.

"There is good news! A few weeks ago, the whole church was asked to fast and pray for the church on the Sabbath, and on the following Monday morning, the lawsuit against the church was dismissed; the judge ruling in our favor! We thank God, and praise His name for this deliverance.

"We sincerely appreciate so very much your PRAYERS. Continue to pray for Mr. Armstrong; for all the church; for all our faithful 'fellow-laborers' with Christ!"

Very Sincerely, in Jesus' name,



Bronson James
Secretary of the Ministerial Council

"P.S. Brothers and sisters, fellow laborers with Christ; in these tumultuous times when some feel a need to resign or withdraw from the Church of God, International, please be assured the Church will do everything in its power to continue to provide God's people with services as God provides. We will serve you with sermon tapes, video tapes, booklets and articles. Additionally, should new host groups spring up, we will provide guidance and direction to secure them so they will be assured of being connected to the work.

"We will provide telephonic counseling directly from Tyler to those who have need. It is our desire to provide viable alternatives for you. You will not be abandoned. As God gives us wisdom and blessings, we will do all we can to provide warm, loving fellowship with others whose hearts are still with this ministry and in the work of God."

BTJ