

'World Tomorrow', church today

The World Wide Church of God is probably more like the early Christian church than any other modern religious group, according to minister, Bob Morton.

"We are often called Jewish because we observe the Jewish religious festivals in the same way that the first Christians did," Mr Morton says.

"We keep Saturday as our sabbath, unlike many modern churches, and we do not observe Christmas, Easter and other festivals celebrated by other Christian groups."

Mr Morton says there is evidence in the New Testament that the early church retained the Jewish festivals, but there is nothing to suggest that special festivals were held to commemorate Christ's birth or crucifixion and resurrection.

The church celebrates the

mediate history from 1935 when a Californian minister, Herbert W. Armstrong, introduced a changed policy centred around radio broadcasts.

"Before 1935 it was a small, inward-looking denomination," Mr Morton says.

"After that it began looking outwards to see how it could serve others and could preach a message from."

founded to train and ordain ministers to take charge of the rapidly growing church.

Over the years the college also grew and now it is a fully-fledged university teaching a variety of subjects quite unrelated to the original theological course.

"The church began making radio broadcasts in New Zealand about 1967," says Mr Morton.

"Soon afterwards, the first Church of God was formed here, most of the members being people who had read the church magazine, The Plain Truth."

This publication is one of dozens of magazines and booklets produced by the church and distributed, without charge, to countries all over the world.

About 90,000 people in New Zealand read the Plain Truth.

In the South Pacific, 300,000 receive the magazine and worldwide it is read by about three million people.

Translations are produced in English, French, German, Dutch and Spanish.

"The Church of God does not have a theological college or university in New Zealand," says Mr Morton.

"The local administrative centre is called Ambassador College, however."

The church now has seven ministers in New Zealand, operating in all the main centres. There are about 800 adherents, including

children, and most of the ministers lead two or three congregations.

"Two New Zealand radio stations broadcast The World Tomorrow, the church's programme," says Mr Morton.

"It is a half-hour show dealing with moral and social issues, world affairs, current events and all the major issues facing the world today."

"It examines them all from the point of view of a basic Christian philosophy."

All the major radio stations in the United States broadcast the World Tomorrow.

It is also heard in Australia, Fiji and Tonga. In New Zealand it is broadcast by Radio i, at 9 p.m. and by Radio Windy at 7.30 a.m. on Sundays.

Mr Morton, a New Zealander by birth, joined the Church of God before it became widely known in New Zealand.

"When the time came for me to go to university, I had the chance to study overseas," he says.

"I had read some of the church publications, and I was attracted by the philosophy, so I attended Ambassador College in Britain."

"I taught on the faculty there and, because a lot of the subjects I had to teach were in the area of religion, I was ordained."

Mr Morton says that generally the church aims to teach the moral law of God

"Community involvement is very important to the church also," he says.

"The Ambassador International Cultural Foundation — the good works arm of the church — operates a variety of projects all over the world."

"It makes donations to charities to help crippled or handicapped people and so on."

"It is helping to build a school in Kenya."

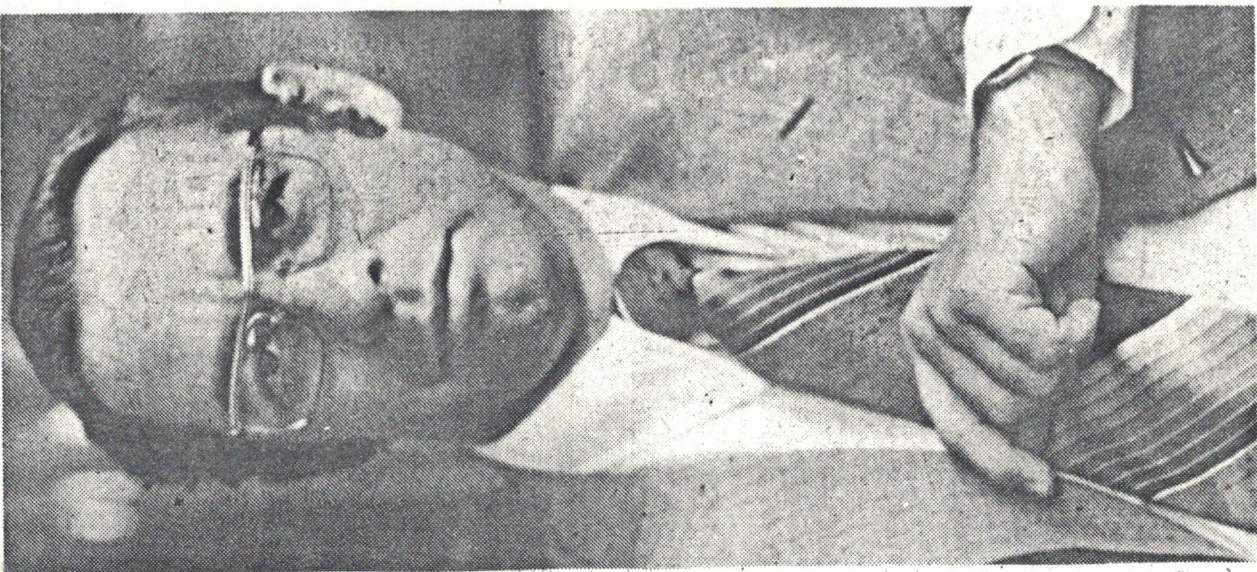
"Also, it helps with archaeological and anthropological projects. The church is supporting several archaeological digs in the Middle East, the most important being the excavation of the south temple wall in Jerusalem, a project which it is undertaking with the Hebrew University."

"In a quiet way the church is also helping to solve the problems in the Middle East."

"It runs a youth organization which arranges meetings for young people from Israel and from Egypt, showing them that they really have a lot in common."

"This project has the support of both governments."

In New Zealand the church distributes magazines and booklets dealing with a variety of problems from family relationships to drugs.



Rev. Bob Morton

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A Matter of Faith
by Jackie Haysom

The changed policy caused a certain amount of trauma within the church when it was first introduced, but soon the idea caught on.

By the late 1950s the church was the biggest buyer of commercial radio time in the United States.

Television broadcasts were also made.

The church itself has been in existence for many years, but it dates its im-

Lord's Supper (communion) only once a year, at the time of the Jewish Passover.

"Our observation of Passover is one day before that of the Jewish faith," Mr Morton says.

"This is the time when Jesus celebrated it with His disciples."

The church itself has been in existence for many years, but it dates its im-

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(Church members drink in moderation, but are taught that tobacco is harmful.)

There is also a youth organization which gives New Zealand young people a chance to take part in local, national and international activities.

"We send delegates to youth conferences in other countries and operate an exchange programme for young people with Australia," Mr Morton says.

The Church of God has its headquarters in Pasadena.

Herbert Armstrong is still head of the church, assisted by a board of trustees, representing ministers and lay members from throughout the world.

"Most New Zealand ministers are now trained locally, because of the cost of sending them overseas," says Mr Morton.

"There is no theological college in New Zealand, but prospective ministers train in the field.

"When they are ordained, some go into a fulltime ministry and others remain in secular jobs, working for the church on a part-time basis."

Church services, held at 2 p.m. on Saturdays, have a similar format to those of other churches, but they last for two hours.

In Auckland the services are held at Silver Rd, Epsom, in a school hall.

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memo from a minister.

Last week I wrote about the American revolution.

The men who signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 had a fairly rough time of it.

Fifty-six men signed the document.

Five were captured or imprisoned in the war that followed.

Nine died of wounds or hardship.

Twelve lost their homes.

Seventeen lost everything they owned.

Most were driven into hiding.

Every one of them was hunted.

They were offered immunity, rewards, the return of their property and freedom of their loved ones to desert the cause.

None did.

They knew what they were for and what they were against.

That's the basis of leadership.

Too many so-called leaders these days are confused.

They do not know what they are for, so they have no idea what they are against.

Two thousand years ago St Paul wrote, "if the bugle gives an uncertain sound, who will get ready for battle."

To get a clear statement of belief from a churchman is becoming rare.

I walked on to a building site one day and asked a volunteer labourer what his church believed.

Without hesitation he put down his hammer and gave me 10 basic things his church taught.

Then picking up his hammer he pointed to another man and said, "if you want to know more you can ask him."

I wonder whether all church union discussions have stemmed from "a knowledge of what we are for."

It is also true, in all walks of life, that "leaders" prefer to keep things peaceful rather than oppose what they are against.

We need leaders in civic, commercial, educational and church life who will stand for what they know to be right, even if it means standing against what ought not to be.

Rev. Roland Hart.