***Joseph Tkach, 68; Led Christian Sect***

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**By The Associated Press**

**New York Times**

Sept. 27, 1995

Joseph W. Tkach, who, since 1986, has led the Worldwide Church of God closer to mainstream churches in its doctrine, died on Friday at Huntington Memorial Hospital here. He was 68.

The cause of death was bone cancer, said the church, based in Pasadena, where Mr. Tkach lived.

Mr. Tkach's son, Joseph W. Tkach Jr. of Pasadena, was designated his successor on Sept. 5, said a spokesman for the church, Tom Lapacka.

The elder Mr. Tkach was a 31-year-old businessman in the Chicago area when he joined the Worldwide Church of God, a denomination founded by Herbert W. Armstrong, who combined fundamentalist Christian doctrine with Judaism. The church says it has 92,000 members in more than 110 countries.

Under Mr. Tkach's leadership, the church's doctrine was changed to emphasize salvation through God's grace rather than through good works alone. The church also lifted a ban on observing Easter and Christmas and stopped requiring members to tithe or observe the Sabbath. The tithing shift, which was announced in January, caused an immediate drop of 30 percent in church income. The changes also caused dissent, and some members formed their own churches.

In addition to his son, Mr. Tkach is survived by his wife, Elaine, and two daughters, Tanya Horchak, of Windsor, Colo., and Jennifer Butler of Pueblo, Colo.

A version of this article appears in print on Sept. 27, 1995, Section D, Page 23 of the National edition with the headline: Joseph Tkach, 68; Led Christian Sect.