

# History of the Worldwide Church of God's Advisory Council of Elders

By Craig M White  
Version 1.3

Due to the shenanigans and such like by Stanely Rader and other reasons, Mr Armstrong established the Advisory Council of Elders in 1981 ("Advisory Council of Elders formed," *Worldwide News*, 16 March 1981, p. 1).

In a draft article for the *Worldwide News*, 27 August 1981 (to my knowledge never published), Mr Armstrong wrote:

"In February I was seriously concerned about the possibility of one not chosen and used by Jesus Christ, living Head of God's Church, using some legal strategy to take over the Church or its assets. Media emphasis on a so-called "heir apparent" or "second in line to succeed Mr. Armstrong," and constant references in the media about my calendar age, stirred me to take precautions. The Advisory Council of Elders was formed as a safe-guard against such attempt by Satan to destroy God's Church.

"The Articles of Association clearly state that in event of my incapacity for any reason, the Advisory Council will appoint the one to govern the Church in the office of Pastor General. The Council cannot - - nor can any person or group of persons, appoint one as apostle. Only Jesus Christ can do that...

"We have to rely on God to manifest His will to this Council, should such eventuality become necessary...

"During my life and ability to govern, the Advisory Council is vested with no initial authority." ("What if Christ's Apostle is Removed?" *Worldwide News*, 27 August 1981)

Membership	Source
<b>First Members March 1981 (8)</b>	
Dibar Apartian Dean Blackwell Robert Fahey Ellis LaRavia Raymond McNair Leroy Neff Joseph Tkach Leon Walker (Adviser to the Council - Ralph K. Helge)	<a href="#">"Advisory Council of Elders formed," <i>Worldwide News</i></a> , 16 March 1981, p. 1: "The Council of Elders, as of now, consists of Dibar Apartian, Dean Blackwell, Robert Fahey, Ellis LaRavia, Raymond McNair, Leroy Neff, Joseph Tkach, Leon Walker and, as adviser to the Council, Ralph Helge."
<b>Expansion July 1981 (12)</b>	
Dibar Apartian Dean Blackwell Robert Fahey Herman Hoeh	<a href="#">"Advisory Council of Elders Expanded," <i>Pastor General's Report</i></a> , 31 July 1981, p. 1: "Named to the Council were Herman L. Hoeh, the only pioneer student of Ambassador College still in the

Membership	Source
Harold Jackson Ellis LaRavia Raymond McNair Roderick Meredith Leroy Neff Norman Smith Joseph Tkach snr Leon Walker (Adviser to the Council - Ralph K. Helge)	Church. Also Roderick C. Meredith, who entered Ambassador College in its third year, 1949. (Mr. Raymond F. McNair, who entered the second year, 1948, already was a Council member.) Next added were Norman A. Smith, who entered in September, 1950, and fourth, Harold L. Jackson, a member since May 28, 1936. These early Ambassador College graduates and longtime ministers bring additional depth to the existing Council. The original advisory group consisting of Dibar Apartian, Dean Blackwell, Robert Fahey, Ellis LaRavia, Raymond McNair, Leroy Neff, Joseph Tkach and Leon Walker, with Ralph Helge as Legal Advisor was formed in early March by Mr. Armstrong. The original appointment of the Council was announced March 13 in the Pastor General's Report and in the March 16 issue of The WORLDWIDE NEWS."
<b>Change in Membership late 1981 (12)</b>	
Dibar Apartian Dean Blackwell Herman L. Hoeh Harold Jackson Ellis LaRavia Raymond F. McNair Robert Fahey (replaced with Aaron Dean late 1981) Roderick C. Meredith Leroy Neff Norman Smith Joseph Tkach snr Leon Walker (Adviser to the Council - Ralph K. Helge)	
<b>Expansion 1982/83? (13?)</b>	
Dibar Apartian Dean Blackwell Herman L. Hoeh Harold Jackson Ellis LaRavia Raymond F. McNair Robert Fahey (replaced with Aaron Dean	In <a href="#">Ordained Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God 1981-82</a> , p. 2.  Not listed is Aaron Dean which seems to be an omission. Leon Walker went to Big Sandy as Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College. When he returned to Pasadena, he was put back on the Council again. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In an e-mail to me Leon Walker wrote: "I was appointed with the first group, March 1981. I was off the COE during 1982, as I was in Big Sandy as Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College. However, I returned to Pasadena and was back on the Council again. I don't know the exact date for that." (10 April 2024)

Membership	Source
late 1981) <sup>1</sup> Roderick C. Meredith Leroy Neff Norman Smith Joseph Tkach snr (Adviser to the Council - Ralph K. Helge)	
<b>Expansion 1984? (13?)</b>	
Richard Ames Dibar Apartian Dean Blackwell Aaron Dean Herman Hoeh Harold Jackson Ellis LaRavia Raymond McNair Roderick Meredith Leroy Neff (Secretary) Norman Smith Joseph Tkach snr Leon Walker (Adviser to the Council - Ralph K. Helge)	Addition of Richard Ames?
<b>Change in Membership 1986 (12?)</b>	
Aaron Dean removed March 1986.	Removed for challenging Tkach for his not fulfilling his promises to Herbert W Armstrong. Not announced in the PGR or WN.
<b>Membership 1988 (16)</b>	
Ames Apartian Blackwell Fezell Hoeh Hulme Jackson Kelly McNair Meredith	<a href="#"><u>The Family Album of the Worldwide Church of God</u></a> (1988), p. 4.  The ACE was expanded some time 1986-88 to include the following: Fezell Hulme Kelly Rice Salyer

<sup>1</sup> Aaron Dean wrote the following explanation on Facebook:

"He tried to change some people without asking HWA.

One of the saddest days for me was when he was removed. I lost what little free time I had. He is the one who got Michelle on the plane after 7 years of flying without her up to 300 days a year in the mid '70s. He was a great pastor, I think his forte. I only succeeded at the job because of the seven years in the plane and watching others fail. You had to know how to work for him."

Later he wrote:

"I took Bob Fahey's place when he was sent to New York in late '81 by HWA and I was removed in March 1986 after challenging JWT. Neither of these events were ever published. I refused to give the council rights away that HWA bestowed. The others did at JWT's request after I was removed. There is a photo of HWA's COE '81-'86 in a PowerPoint sermon I gave at UCG at Portsmouth, Ohio this past summer on UCG.org entitled the "history of the work". FWIW, Aaron Dean" (7 April 2024)

Membership	Source
Neff (Secretary) Rice Salyer Smith Tkach jnr Walker (Adviser to the Council - Ralph K. Helge)	Tkach jnr (minus Dean and LaRavia)
Abolishment of the ACE	The exact year is not clear

NB: "Finally, before his death. Mr. Armstrong - after much prayer chose Joseph W. Tkach to succeed him as pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God. Mr. Tkach was chosen directly through God's government in His Church. Jesus Christ - the living, active Head of the Church - has promised to guide and inspire him in this very important office. Along with the entire Advisory Council of Elders and several other leaders in God's Church, I was a witness to Mr. Armstrong's decision." (Rod C Meredith, "Loyalty to God's Church. Are you backing God's choice?" *Worldwide News*, 5 May 1986, p. 4). This was probably written out of duress?

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**"Advisory Council Of Elders Formed," *Worldwide News*, 16 March 1981**

Herbert W Armstrong

In the organizational pattern of God's Church an ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ELDERS has been formed. It is not a legal board of directors.

Actually the Worldwide Church of God is a spiritual organism, created by GOD — not a legal corporate organization created by this world's laws.

But, in order to function IN the world in an organizational manner, the Church of God has needed to be incorporated according to state laws. The members of the Church are NOT members of the "Worldwide Church of God, Inc.," a California corporation, nor of "Herbert W. Armstrong, a corporation sole," under which our financial operations currently are functioning (since the massive lawsuit by the state of California).

The California corporation "Worldwide Church of God Inc.," does require a board of directors. The corporation sole does not.

But, regardless, the GOVERNMENT in God's Church a spiritual organism, is government from the top down. God is Head over all — even over Christ. Christ is Head of the Church. He directs and operates the Church through His chosen apostle. In such office I have to appoint managers or directors of various operations under me.

God says through Solomon that in multitude of counselors there is safety. We are told not to put our trust in a man, but there is safety in a number of counselors. I have always followed that admonition. Beside prayer and looking to God through Christ for guidance, I have always counseled with those I consider best qualified to advise in the subject at hand.

This ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ELDERS, therefore, is a safety valve, in addition to relying on guidance from God.

For this Council I have chosen from among our older, tried and proven loyal ministers — men whose fruits show the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit, men of spiritual wisdom and balance. In order that we may meet frequently, or on quick notice when necessary, I have chosen men located in or near Pasadena. They are not the only ones qualified. I may add others later as

conditions require.

The Council of Elders, as of now, consists of Dibar Apartian, Dean Blackwell, Robert Fahey, Ellis LaRavia, Raymond McNair, Leroy Neff, Joseph Tkach, Leon Walker and, as adviser to the Council, Ralph Helge.

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**"Congress of Leading Ministers," *Worldwide News*, 6 March 1981**

Herbert W. Armstrong

"So now we are incorporated under myself. I am appointing an Advisory Council of Elders, not a Board of Directors. This type of corporation doesn't require a Board of Directors. I want an advisory council, Advisory Council of Elders, because Solomon says in the multitude of counsel there is safety...

"Sometimes I didn't agree with the others when we went in and when we came out I did. I think that more often the others agreed with me before it was through, but there were times when I had to change my mind. We didn't want our own way. I still want this Advisory Council of Elders. We have here the Church, an organized spiritual organism but unincorporated. Now this is not the corporation, or the corporation sole. This is just! The Church as God has organized it. As for The Worldwide Church of God, Inc., a California Corporation, do you realize that most of you are not members of that corporation at all? The members are the officers that sign the corporation papers." (p. 8)

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**Co-Worker letter, 19 March 1981**

Herbert W. Armstrong

"We are not to put our trust in MAN, but in God. On the other hand, through Solomon God says that IN MULTITUDE OF COUNSELORS there is safety."

"...I have formed the new ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ELDERS. That Council, at present, is composed of...experienced elders, all of many years' faithful and loyal experience as ministers in God's Church."

"I have NEVER SAID I expect to live until Christ comes.

"But, just in case of my disability for any reason, to prevent Satan from causing division, I feel God has inspired me to delegate power to the Advisory Council, during any such complete disability, to take full charge of the Work and all its assets and activities.

"The CHURCH must not be scattered. It must not become scattered, because there is no COMPETENT, CHRIST-CHOSEN SPIRITUAL SHEPHERD, TO BECOME MEAT FOR BEASTS (human) OF THE FIELD! (See Ezekiel 34:5.) This is a safeguard for YOUR protection."

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**"Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the WCG," *Worldwide News*, 24 June 1985**

Herbert W. Armstrong

"Brethren, put your faith in Christ and the living God and not in me. If Christ should remove me, He will direct the Advisory Council of Elders to select one of them to continue leading you until the coming of Jesus Christ in power and in glory."

## **ACE - 1982 (3 May)**





## ACE – 1981



**Seated:** Mr. Armstrong, Dibar Apartian, Joe Tkach snr, Raymond McNair, Ellis LaRavia, Harold Jackson, Ralph Helge

**Standing:** Dean Blackwell, Roderick Meredith, Norman Smith, Robert Fahey, Leroy Neff, Herman Hoeh  
(NB: it seems that this photo was taken prior to the appointment of Aaron Dean and after Leon Walker's temporary assignment to Big Sandy. Upon his return to Pasadena he was back on the ACE)

## Articles in this series:

- *Do Church Eras Exist?*
- *History of the Fair Chance Doctrine*
- *History of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Radio/Worldwide Church of God*
- *History of the Place of Safety Doctrine in the Church of God*
- *History of the Plain Truth magazine*
- *History of the World Tomorrow Broadcast*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Ministerial Conferences*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Foreign Works*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Publications*
- *How the Israel Identity truth entered the Church of God*
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