

Westminster United Presbyterian Church

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Douglas K. Huneke, Pastor

13 July 1983

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased and honored to write on behalf of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Before addressing specific issues related to the matter at hand, permit me to establish my credentials for making the following observations about the Bhagwan. For fourteen years I have been an ordained minister of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. I graduated from San Francisco Theological Seminary after completing a residency at Presbyterian Medical Center in San Francisco. I served for three years on the chaplain's staff at San Quentin Prison. For five years I was minister to students at Sacramento State College. I then served for eight years as University Chaplain at the University of Oregon, Eugene. For five of the eight years I was a member of the Honors Faculty at the University of Oregon. I am now the pastor of a parish in Tiburon, California. I am a visiting lecturer at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

In 1980 I was awarded a Faculty Research Grant by the Oregon Committee for the Humanities. The grant enabled me to conduct extensive research on the moral and spiritual development of Christians who rescued Jews during the Nazi era. In 1981 I was awarded a grant by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. This grant enabled me to continue the work on moral and spiritual development of rescuers. During a 1977 sabbatical and during the grant periods previously mentioned, I lived in Poland, East Germany and Israel. As a result of the grant studies a manuscript was published and five articles have been printed. I am writing a biography of one of the foremost rescuers. I am a founder and the co-chairperson of the Marin Interfaith Council. I was the host of the interfaith television program, "Mosaic", which appears weekly on the San Francisco Westinghouse network station, KPIX. In April of this year I visited the Soviet Union under a special grant from the Bay Area Council on Soviet Jewry and the Jewish Community Relations Council. The purpose of the trip was to make contact with and to assess the plight of Jewish "Refuseniks" and Christian dissidents in the Soviet Union. I am the chair person of Northern California Presbyterians for Peace and Justice and the convenor of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations. I have lectured privately and as a B'nai B'rith lecturer.

Over the past five years I have had the opportunity to study the writings of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh; listen to tapes of his talks and presentations; to view movies and television programs about him and his movement; and to witness,

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re: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

first hand, the profound and positive impact that the Bhagwan and his religion have had on friends and colleagues. In addition, I have personally found great meaning in his written and spoken words. A new dimension of spiritual life is to be witnessed in his practice of silence. This practice has significance for all those who seek to deepen their religious life.

It is my carefully considered opinion that the Bhagwan is a person of exceptional insight, stature, and global significance. He is both a teacher and a spiritual guide, encouraging personal growth, religious values, and pro-human behaviour. He is an innovative religious thinker who has gained a world-wide following of more than 600,000 persons. There is not another spiritual leader of his stature alive today.

I have come to respect the Bhagwan, his teachings, and the utopian vision that motivates those who have settled a wasteland in Eastern Oregon. I am deeply impressed by the absence of racism, anti-Semitism, and religious exclusivism in the Bhagwan, his followers, and the movement in general. I believe that the Bhagwan and his teachings have a great deal to contribute to the welfare, the ecology, and the spiritual life of Americans.

I do not find the Bhagwan, his teachings, or his community in Oregon to be at odds with the Christian faith or with any other faith for that matter. He respects and understands the many religions of the world and offers something unique that they could not offer. The Bhagwan has made and will continue to make a significant impact on the spiritual life of the United States and of the world. The impact will be for the benefit of humanity. I would be pleased to respond to specific questions if you wish to address them to me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglas K. Huneke". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Douglas K. Huneke
Pastor