

Bldg. 50, Room 308
LAWRENCE BERKELEY LABORATORY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720 □ TEL. (415) 843-2740

September 20, 1972

Apostle Spencer W. Kimball
Church Office Building
47 East South Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Mr. Kimball:

I am a Ph. D. research scientist at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and I am considering conducting a study of cancer among Mormons. Over the past twenty years several studies have conclusively shown that certain cancers, particularly respiratory cancers, are significantly reduced among varicous nonsmoking and nondrinking populations. However, to my knowledge no corresponding study has ever been made of Mormons. I think that such an investigation would be extremely interesting and valuable, because Mormons are nonsmokers and nondrinkers and their healthy way of life should be recognized as such. Enclosed is a preliminary version of my proposed study.

In my search of the open literature I have been able to find only some very basic information about the church membership in the United States. In order to conduct the kind of study I have suggested, I would need specific facts about the church members over several years. This would involve obtaining the names of deceased members, along with other basic information about them, such as, birthdate, sex, race, address, and number of years of membership, if available. These names would then be matched with vital statistics records to determine the cause of death. The study would be conducted initially in California in conjunction with the well-established Tumor Registry of the California Department of Public Health, which participated in a similar analysis of cancer among Seventh-Day Adventists. All membership information would be held in strictest confidence and only summaries of the findings about individual members would be presented.

I would very much appreciate knowing the Church's position regarding this type of investigation. If it is positive, I will send you a more formal version of my research proposal and a specific request for membership information. I would appreciate any comments or corrections on my proposal. Also, I would like to know about any current books or reports on Mormons which are available. Thank you very much for any assistance you can give.

Very sincerely,

James E. Enstrom



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT

Leonard J. Arrington
Church Historian

October 26, 1972

Mr. James E. Enstrom
Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory
Building 50, Room 308
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Mr. Enstrom:

President Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has handed to me your letter of September 20 with the suggestion that I reply directly to you. President Kimball wishes me to say that he appreciates your letter and the research desires which you express.

I have read over very carefully your research design and it seems both practical and desirable. For all deaths after 1942 we can permit you to examine the membership records of all deceased members. Those membership records are alphabetically filed, and on each of them you will find birthday, sex, address, and years of membership. Our membership records have never contained anything in regard to race, and so you would not know from any of these records whether the person was black or white or whatever race.

We can permit you personally to examine these records and make notations from them, and I am sure you recognize that it would take many weeks to accumulate names and data on several thousand people. Some of the records contain information on cause of death, but these are not reliable from a medical standpoint. The notation might simply say "Died of old age" or something of that nature. If you compared the data with vital statistics records of the states involved you may get more accurate information.

Incidentally, there are more than three million members. How many that would have died since 1942 I would not hazard to guess.

If this is still a live project, contact us directly. Thank you once more for your interest.

Sincerely,


Leonard J. Arrington

47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111