

# Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775  
Eugene, Oregon 97440  
[www.cogeternal.org](http://www.cogeternal.org)

The late Raymond C. Cole  
Founding Pastor  
Jon W. Brisby  
Pastor, Director

Offices in:  
United States  
Philippines  
Switzerland

## Announcement Letter March 2003

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to all of you once again, and may you always be assured of the warmth and genuine love of your devoted brethren in Eugene, Oregon and all those who continually express their thoughts and prayers for the scattered people of God.

Here we are at the beginning of another month in God's calendar, Adar II, which began the evening of March 4. The fact this unique month comes only once every few years causes us to reflect upon the unique nature of the system God preserved for marking the beginning of months and years. While the Roman calendar uses an additional day in February every four years to try and keep the calendar in sync with the cycle of the earth's revolution about the sun (leap year), the method God established is very different. The Hebrew calendar—which is luni-solar—takes into consideration both the months as well as the year (the moon and the sun) in determining the annual cycle. Most unique of all, the calendar God inspired the Jews to adopt (to perpetuate their God-given obligation to proclaim the new moons) is designed specifically with the Holy Days in mind. Other worldly cultures insert their holidays in existing static calendars, but God assembled a calendar specifically for the purpose of proclaiming authorized days for holy convocations in appointed seasons. The seasons belong to—are the property of—the Holy Days. "These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in *their* seasons" (Leviticus 23:4) [emphasis mine]. The sun and moon exist in their movements for the purpose of assigning annual Sabbaths. Therefore an inspired calendar supports the proclamation of God's Holy Days.

So why do we have the periodic inclusion of a thirteenth month in the Hebrew calendar—Adar II? In most years, the twelfth month, Adar, is the last month of the year, followed by the first month of the new year, Nisan. But this year (as in seven years out of every nineteen years in the time-cycle), Nisan did not begin on the new moon of March 4. The reason has to do with keeping the Spring Holy Days in their proper season. Passover can never fall in the winter, and Pentecost can never fall in the summer. This is one thing most

calendar dissidents fail to recognize. *Both* must fall in the spring to fulfill the picture of God's glorious plan of salvation. If only twelve months (of either twenty-nine or thirty day lengths) were used each year—or a total of 354 days—this would be eleven and one-quarter days short of the actual length of the solar year, which is 365.25 days. Using only years of 354 days would cause the beginning of each new year to begin earlier and earlier over time. In short order, Passover would wind up backing into the winter. That can never be. So God gave authority to His people—the Jews—periodically to insert an additional month—Adar II—to keep the first month of the new year in the proper place so that Passover will always fall in the spring. But that thirteenth month cannot be inserted arbitrarily. If it is added in the wrong year, it would cause Nisan to begin too late, forcing Pentecost into the summer, and that also can never be. Therefore, the genius of the calendar God inspired the Jews to develop makes sure that God's sacred Holy Days are always proclaimed not only in the correct months, but in the correct seasons of that year as well.

As you will remember, in 2002 the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles were very early. That is because they had been sliding back each year since 1999 (the last time an Adar II was inserted to push the year forward again). Now that Adar II has been inserted in 2003, you will also note that the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles will be very late, in terms of the Roman calendar. Then gradually the Holy Days will slide back again until the next intercalary year (a year with thirteen months).

So when we take note of this particular new moon, Adar II, it is beneficial to reflect upon the beauty of God's system for ordering the calendar for proclamation of His priceless High Days. The authority of that system is by decree of God, as He has delegated to specific human instruments the power to bind and loose in accordance with prescribed standards. (For a detailed explanation of the Hebrew calendar please see our article entitled *The Hebrew Calendar, Is It Reliable?*).

## **Spiritual Principle**

One topic we have not addressed for some time—but is beneficial to cover periodically—is appropriate dress for men and women and especially the required attire for holy convocations. Although most of our membership should be aware of these principles, with the number of new members we are now serving, it makes sense to rehearse some of these important guidelines again. We have received a number of questions on this topic of late. Since the world continues to redefine appropriate dress in more and more perverted ways, we should be careful not to allow ourselves to be influenced by such deceptive standards.

As Mr. Armstrong always taught, we should dress modestly and appropriately for each occasion. More attention is usually paid to the dress of women, because the Bible speaks

specifically about avoiding immodest tendencies of women in the world (1 Timothy 2:9–10), but the spiritual principles apply to male and female alike. We are not to go to extremes in dress, either toward garish and immodest attire on one side, or toward overly plain and ill-fitting clothes on the other side. Human beings always seem to go to extremes. God's people must use wisdom to find the proper balance which bespeaks the character of God. This means we should dress neatly, with clothes that are clean, well-fitting and cared for. Slovenly and unkempt appearance is never a characteristic of God. And it really does not require much money to dress neatly. Many very acceptable options are available today at discount stores, and especially secondhand stores. It simply takes an effort to find them.

Next, and very importantly, men are to dress as men, and women are to dress as women. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5). This includes hair styles as well. Men should never have long hair, and women should never have short hair (1 Corinthians 11:14–15). While there are more and more "unisex-type" garments like tee-shirts and sweatshirts—which makes it harder than ever to distinguish a clear line in some cases—the basic principles should be discernable. A woman should never wear something made specifically for a man, and a man should never wear something intended for a woman. While it has become commonplace over the past several decades in our culture for women to wear men's pants, that still does not change the fact they are by origin *men's pants*. God's church always used a definition for men's pants as ones having a zipper in front. Slacks made specifically for women are not wrong at appropriate occasions, but they should have fasteners either on the side or the back, not in the front like a man's trousers. For casual wear, denim is no more an inappropriate fabric than any other, but the key is that the construction of women's pants—regardless of the fabric—should never have a fastener in front. If we think this naive, outdated, or prudish, stop and ask by what standard we are evaluating, God's or Satan's.

Secondly, appropriate slacks for women will never be form-fitting. That never used to be as much an issue for men, but in today's society, we must admonish men also to reject pants that are too tight. This also sounds absurd and prudish by today's standards, but that is only because we have been saturated by Satan's perverted world for so long we all have a tendency to accept these corruptions now without question. Whether it is slacks, dresses, or skirts, a modest woman of God does not wear form-fitting clothing that draws undue attention to the body's shape. And the standard for skirt length should always be "below the knee-cap, but not exposing it when standing"—per Mr. Armstrong. A woman who wants to dress appropriately in the eyes of God will never wear skirts that expose the top of the knee when sitting. She will also avoid tops with inappropriately low necklines. Again, this does not mean that the opposite extreme should be taken, with a Victorian philosophy of covering all skin with baggy material from the ankle to the jaw-line. God's standards are ones of balance, not extremes.

These guidelines will certainly generate a number of additional questions. However, it is not our intent to rule on every specific clothing article, but simply to confirm the broad principles involved so that each member can then act according to his conscience. One additional principle from the business world might be of assistance. When large corporations grapple with employee dress codes, a common yardstick is this: If you are considering wearing something to the office and have the thought, "I wonder if this is appropriate," it probably is not. The same rule might be beneficial for church members in evaluating specific articles of clothing in our own wardrobes. If you have to think twice about whether a particular item is "too close to the line," it probably is. Why risk it?

What about proper attire for church services on Sabbaths and Holy Days? The overriding principle emphasizes we are coming into the very presence of God. If you were called before the president, prime minister, or royalty of your country, how would you dress for that meeting? Would you not wear your best? Does God—as Sovereign of the whole universe—deserve any less than we would give to human rulers on this earth? In the church, we were taught we should always wear our best to services. If that means the best we have is a pair of overalls, then that is acceptable to God, given they are clean, pressed, and well cared for. But in most cases, the people of God can afford something better for these solemn occasions. What guidelines should we use?

Men should ordinarily wear suits and ties (unless the standard for formal dress in your country is something different, like a barong in the Philippines). Suits and ties are the standard today in most countries for formal occasions. Over past decades, a number of men have tried to argue suits and ties are modern inventions, and Jesus Christ did not wear them. But the spiritual principle is that Christ wore what was customary for the time, as long as it did not violate a law of God. In our day today, golf shirts, polo shirts, open collars, etc. are considered casual, not formal. While the trend today is to eliminate formalwear more and more, that is one custom the church must reject.

But what about those who would say we are dressing for God, not for men? Keep in mind another important spiritual principle. "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). This tells us true Christians are accountable not only to be right in heart before God, but also specifically to work to avoid creating a negative impression in the minds of others. This does not mean we are to obsess over what someone else might think. But it does mean we are each responsible for taking into account the natural impression our actions and behaviors might leave on others. What does that have to do with church attire? A man who resists wearing a suit and tie for other than financial constraints is willing to let others assume he feels it is OK to dress casually before God. Oh yes, it can be clarified one on one that this is not the intended orientation, but the very fact such explanations have to be given is evidence an appearance of evil is first being made, and then thereafter needing correction. For those who resist ties because they are uncomfortable, the solution is usually to buy a

dress shirt with the correct collar size. A well-fitting collar allows one to fasten the top button without constricting the neck. A tie which is not too tight need not bind or cause real discomfort. Even a string tie would be better than no tie at all.

A special note to families with young boys: Even if you grew up not wearing suits and ties and are now facing a personal challenge in learning to dress formally, please do your young sons a favor and save them from this same handicap. While the church taught that we should not force our young toddlers to dress like adults, by the time they begin to mature—by ages ten to twelve—there is absolutely no reason they cannot begin to learn to dress formally. Teaching a boy to be comfortable wearing a suit and tie will not only help him learn to appear before God properly, but also save him from future handicap in society where such dress may be required for business.

What about the ladies? The rules outlined above for women's dress all apply especially to attire for church services. If one is weak—and inclined to depart from God's standard of dress during the week—by all means, at least refrain from bringing such weakness into the church. Habits of wearing inappropriate clothes should be rooted out altogether, but let it begin by correcting our appearance when we come before God. From *The Good News* magazine article, September 1962, entitled *Women's Dress Ruling*, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

. . . in conformity with the Word of God, God's Church encourages women to dress neatly, pleasingly, attractively within the bounds of proper modesty and good taste, and even with sufficient becoming style to express personality and individuality. God Himself expressed perfect artistry in beautiful design in nature—in the lily—the rose—beautiful trees, shrubs and plants—in prize-winning livestock—and even in the beautiful human body, when healthy and not degenerated.

This should be our standard for making personal decisions about attire for church services.

One additional point: Should there be a difference in our dress during the Feast of Tabernacles on the High Days vs. the other days of the Feast? Even when it is not a Holy Day, if we are still coming before God in a solemn service—which we do during all eight days of the Feast—we should acknowledge that fact in the way we present ourselves before Him.

What about ministerial enforcement of dress standards within the church? Decades ago, many of you may have experienced an administrative philosophy whose intent was to

create a "perfect" church. While very well-meaning, real obedience is by faith—of the heart and mind—and not merely an outward appearance. If those attending services comply with the law only out of fear of the ministry—and not a heartfelt desire to please God—then God does not accept that orientation anyway, and sin still exists. So no human being—minister or otherwise—can ever create a perfect church. The results of that misguided—howbeit earnest—goal became all too evident in its failure to produce spiritual fruits. Those who adhered to church teachings out of fear—without real faith—ultimately cast them aside when real trials surfaced. The *real* process of perfection is taking place in the minds of those who are *willingly* overcoming the carnal nature and putting on more of the mind of Jesus Christ.

It was therefore never Mr. Raymond Cole's approach to have deacons scrutinizing members' dress and militantly intercepting and confronting those who did not fully measure up. Neither should it be the laity's role to scrutinize one another. (However, if one continues to dress questionably, wears make-up—which God despises—or engages in any other prohibited behavior, one hardly has anyone else to blame if negative attention is attracted. If we know these things are wrong, why would we bring more problems upon ourselves by insisting on bringing worldly customs into the church?) Mr. Cole spoke strongly from the pulpit God's requirements for obedience—without holding back—and then made it the individual's responsibility to act upon that knowledge. Certainly, if something considered blatant sin is brought into the body—having the potential to destroy the flock—that must be dealt with strongly by the ministry. But such authority has never been exercised in Church of God, The Eternal in an arbitrary or presumptuous way. This ministry seeks to give time for overcoming, as long as an attitude of rank rebellion is not being manifested. Has that orientation led us to more and more liberality in the last twenty-eight years of our existence? No, it has not, which is the best proof of the wisdom of that benevolent administration.

With that being said, I hope such patience and long-suffering by the ministry will not be misinterpreted as weakness or fear of confrontation. If it ever becomes apparent our long-suffering—in giving time for repentance concerning the dress of some in the church—begins to cause serious problems for the body at large, such issues will be dealt with to preserve proper peace and unity. The majority—if truly converted—should be manifesting good fruits in many ways, including personal attire. Those who are sincere will heed these instructions, not as the opinions of any man, but the literal instructions of God.

## **Birth**

Mr-s. Matthew Crane: We are happy to announce a girl, Kezia Maria, was born to Matthew and Maria Crane of Tasmania, Australia. She was born January 29 and all went well with the delivery of their first-born child.

## **Prayer Requests**

[Omitted for confidentiality]

## **Death**

Mrs. Rosemary Owak: Mrs. Owak, of Kenya, East Africa, died February 11 at the age of 27. She had been suffering from failing health since February 2001. We offer our condolences to her husband, Isaya, and her three children Rachel, Shannon, and Scott.

## **Holy Days**

Passover . . . . . April 15

Night to be Much Observed . . . . . April 16

First Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread . . . . . April 17

Last Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread . . . . . April 23

## **Trip Schedule**

March 22                      Providence, Rhode Island

March 29                      Knoxville, Tennessee

April 23, 26                    Spring Hill, Florida

## Tape Schedule

<u>Tape #</u>	<u>Mailed</u>	<u>Played</u>	<u>Title</u>
WSE-RC 65-2	01-30-03	03-01-03	Prophetic Events Preceding the Return of Jesus Christ #2
WSE-JB 47-7	02-13-03	03-08-03	Fear of God or Man, Which? #7
WSE-RC 66	02-13-03	03-15-03	Satan's Kingdom, and the Purposeful Creation of Man
WSE-JB 50	02-27-03	03-22-03	Pre-Passover Evaluation—2003
WSP-RC 9-1	02-27-03	03-29-03	Known From the Foundation of the World—Whom? #1
WSP-RC 9-2	03-13-03	04-05-03	Known From the Foundation of the World—Whom? #2
WSE-JB 47-8	03-13-03	04-12-03	Fear of God or Man, Which? #8
WSP-RC 9-3	03-27-03	04-19-03	Known From the Foundation of the World—Whom? #3

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby