

Announcement Letter January 2010

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to all of you once again—our dear friends of the common faith—in the middle of this tenth month of the old year.

Most of you will recognize after a moment that this is a reference to the Hebrew calendar, not the Gregorian calendar. According to the pagan calendar with which we have all grown up, we are just entering the beginning of a new year. But according to God's inspired calendar, we are still in the waning portion of the previous year. The eleventh month will actually begin on January 16, and the true new year will not begin until March 16. Yet, all of us have been conditioned to think of January 1 as a significant benchmark. That is because we have been raised in a Babylonian society, and like it or not, those conditioning influences are very strong.

But think about a time to come when January 1 will no longer be so significant as it is today. In the Kingdom which Jesus Christ is soon bringing to this earth, all pagan customs will be obliterated, including man-made calendars. New generations of children will not be raised with our current customs. January 1 will be meaningless to them because according to the calendar they will learn, that date will bounce around, anywhere from the first part of the their tenth month to the first part of their eleventh month. It will be unimportant of itself, unless it happens to be a weekly Sabbath. It will certainly not be an annual holiday. They will learn to focus upon the beginning of months and years according to the *single calendar* God will teach to them. They will look forward to the new year as occurring around the vernal equinox, with emphasis upon God's annual Holy Days which will be celebrated in the first, third, and seventh months of each year. They will not have to do as we do today, converting back and forth between one calendar used day to day, and another calendar used to pinpoint holy observances. There will be only one calendar—the calendar inspired by God for all humanity.

When we stop to think about our conditioned dependence upon the Roman-based calendar of this world today, it should remind us how much we are truly immersed in Babylon. The months of January through December just seem right, do they not? We are comfortable with them. Doing away with the idea of the new year at the beginning of winter would be a difficult transition for any of us. Yes, we can all stop and force ourselves to think about God's new year really being in the spring, but our *involuntary response* is to think of it

in the winter. That is the "new year" which seems most natural. It is just one more proof of the lingering effects of this world in our lives.

Does that mean we need to reject use of the Gregorian calendar today in order to please God? Not at all. Jesus Christ confirmed we are not to try to escape living in this world, but just make sure we are separating ourselves mentally and physically from the heathen practices of this world (John 17:15). The world operates with the Gregorian calendar. It would be impossible to communicate and to work with others around us if we did not use a common language. The calendar is really part of that language. It is a necessary tool for setting dates for appointments, meetings, etc. And acknowledging that calendar as a tool to function in this world is not wrong, as long as we do not forget to keep God's calendar in our minds as well.

That is why we publish for you every month the dates of the new moons. These are God's benchmarks for the *true* beginnings of each new month. Those new moons are not Sabbaths (except for the Feast of Trumpets), but in any calendar, knowing when the months begin is the essence of thinking in terms of that particular calendar. It is just one more way we try to help you keep the things of God in your minds, while you fight to get by in this Babylonian world.

The difficulties we experience in mind in transitioning from the Gregorian calendar to God's calendar is an excellent metaphor for the struggle of the flesh against the Spirit overall. It is always most awkward and uncomfortable at first, but in time, with diligent practice, the things of God do indeed become more natural, and His ways will seem less foreign to us. It is absolutely like learning a new language. When we become accomplished enough to actually start *thinking* in that new language, we are finally becoming fluent. In the Kingdom to come, God will teach mankind a totally new language (Zephaniah 3:9). He will also teach him to jettison his former man-made calendars and learn to think about months and dates in terms of God's inspired calendar. What a glorious time that will be.

Opening and Closing Prayers

Many of the baptized men in this remnant body have been called upon for years to offer an opening or closing prayer at either a weekly Sabbath service or a Holy Day assembly. This has been a tradition in God's church from the very earliest time of Mr. Armstrong's work. From time to time, it makes sense to rehearse some of the basic guidelines for giving these prayers, for the benefit of all those who will be serving, both for the veteran as well as for many who are newer to this responsibility in our fellowship.

First, the opening prayer—following the hymn service—is when we ask God to bless our convocation and to be with us to inspire and guide both the ministry and the laity to fulfill His will. It is the moment we dedicate the service as a solemn offering to

our Creator, and ask Him to be within our midst. At the end of the service—following the final hymn—we offer the closing prayer to conclude the solemn assembly and ask for God to dismiss us.

In general, and per Mr. Raymond Cole's written directions in years past, congregational prayers should be short and to the point. The opening prayer is typically longer than the closing one. How short is "short"? A good length prayer is succinct enough to conclude within one to one-and-one-half minutes. (This has been determined by paying attention to *actual prayers* over the last year and identifying common denominators of the most effective ones.) Going longer than one-and-one-half minutes begins to undermine the effectiveness of the prayer, often making it seem rambling and inefficient, or appearing to be a "sermonette." Better to be very short than a bit too long. It is also important for the men called on for this duty to recognize they are not offering a personal prayer in front of the congregation (as indicated by using the word "I"). It is a prayer on behalf of the entire congregation, therefore it should always be confined to the expression of "we" and "us." Never use the word "I" in one of these prayers. In the same way Jesus Christ taught the disciples to pray by including specific broad elements, so our congregational prayers should include certain key elements which still provide much latitude for individual expression. The general content of the opening prayer should include acknowledgment of God as our Creator and the One who called us into this way of life, thanksgiving to Him, and a request to bless our assembly with His presence and inspiration. The closing prayer should also include thanksgiving, as well as the request to dismiss our assembly and to provide protection and blessings for His people. If it is the closing prayer for a morning Holy Day service (or one with a meal to follow), that prayer should also include a request for God to bless our noon meal.

The most important thing to remember is to be sincere. One does not have to be a great speaker to offer a sincere prayer. However, in many cases it is a good idea to think about the assigned prayer in advance and ask God for wisdom in offering a prayer on behalf of the congregation. There are also several potential traps that should be avoided absolutely. An opening or closing prayer is *never* to be used as an opportunity to deliver a message to the congregation. Instruction to the church is given by *the ministry* in the sermon portion of the service. Just as our songleaders are instructed to avoid making any comments about the sermon before the closing hymn, so too, laymembers offering congregational prayers should make sure their offerings do not inadvertently turn into sermonettes, or stray in any other way from the guidelines enunciated above. With these simple principles in mind, those called upon for this duty should feel comfortable in fulfilling this important function in our solemn services, regardless of natural public speaking ability. A sincere heart is the most important requirement of all.

Death

We are sad to announce the death of Mrs. Vivian Stewart of Lilburn, Georgia. She died December 14, and had been a member of the church since 1973. She was 84 years

of age at the time of her death. We offer our sincere condolences to her daughter and son-in-law, Mr-s. Homer Hopper, and her extended family and friends.

Tennessee Motel Tax Exemption

In past years, brethren arriving in Townsend, Tennessee, for the Feast of Tabernacles could use one of our tax-exempt forms to give to the motels where they had reservations in order to be exempt from the Tennessee sales tax on their accommodations. But the Tennessee Department of Revenue has made changes, and now the forms and rental fee must be submitted by the church only. If anyone would like to take advantage of the tax exemption on their accommodations, they should make their reservations using a credit card (asking for the church tax-exempt discount), then two months prior to the Feast send Mr-s. Richard Litz a check for the total amount made out to Church of God, The Eternal, who will deposit the money in the church account in Tennessee, then issue a church check to the establishment with the tax-exempt letter. Along with a check, please include the name and address of the establishment, the reservation number or name of the cabin, and a copy of any reservation paperwork that you received. This will help Mr-s. Litz make the correct reservations and not have to issue two checks. If you have any questions, you may call Mr. Litz at (865) 984-0649. Note: This is a voluntary service offered to you, but it is not mandatory. You are always free to pay for your accommodations directly to the vendor without involving the church.

Camp Tejas for Teens

Plans for this year's teen summer camp are already being made, which will be held at Camp Lane in Walton, Oregon, July 8-19. Judicious planning is necessary for a well-organized, fun-filled experience. There are many activities planned, and we hope every family with a teen will take advantage of this opportunity for their son or daughter to share constructive time with others in a positive environment. If you have any questions concerning the camp or registration forms, you may contact Mrs. Jackie Wakefield at (254) 965-7882 or Mr. Dave Brandenburg at (480) 797-9769.

New Moon

The new moon, Shebat (tenth month), will begin on the evening of January 16. The new moon day is January 17.

Trip Schedule

Mr. Brisby:

January 23 Maryville, Tennessee
January 30 Port St. Lucie, Florida

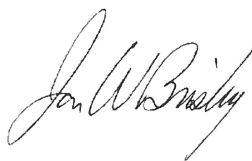
Mr. Richard Litz:

January 30 Port St. Lucie, Florida
February 6 Stephenville, Texas
February 13 Phoenix, Arizona
February 20 Little Rock, Arkansas

Recorded Sermon Schedule

<u>Sermon #</u>	<u>Mailed</u>	<u>Played</u>	<u>Title</u>
CL2-82	11-25-09	12-26-09	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #14
CL2-83	12-17-09	01-02-10	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #15
WSE-JB 118-7	12-17-09	01-09-10	The Truth About Tithing #7
CL2-84	12-17-09	01-16-10	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #16
WSE-JB 118-8	01-07-10	01-23-10	The Truth About Tithing #8
CL2-85	01-07-10	01-30-10	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #17
CL2-86	01-07-10	02-06-10	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #18
CL2-87	01-28-10	02-13-10	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #19

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby