

## Announcement Letter January 2017

Dear Brethren:

As always, it is a pleasure to address you in this new monthly mailing and to have the chance to maintain contact with all of those who find value in this small fellowship association we call Church of God, The Eternal. Please never doubt the importance we place upon all of those scattered brethren who are striving to hold firm to God's revealed way of life. You are all so very dear to us.

Recent events have altered the topic chosen for this month's letter introduction. That original topic will be postponed until next month. Instead, this letter will take on a very personal flavor. Mr. Raymond Cole always chose to write in the third person when possible, rather than to use the word "I" in addressing the church in these letters. "I" have tried to follow that same philosophy as well, as you can tell from looking at past letters. Yet what I want to convey right now really requires more personalization as an exception.

On December 27—just a few days ago—my family and I buried both my father and my mother in a single graveside funeral service in Hartsville, Tennessee. Donald Brisby and Patricia Brisby were both taken from us within a single twenty-seven hour period of time between the weekly Sabbath of December 24 and Sunday, December 25. Normally, these deaths would be announced as we do with all others of our beloved brethren, in a simple statement within one of our *Announcement Letters*. The reason their deaths are being given more attention in this particular issue is not because their lives were any more valuable than those of our other brethren. Far from it! And it is certainly not true that the parents of the church Pastor deserve more attention than we would give to others. Then what is the point of giving special space in addressing their deaths? Only because of the lessons *uniquely* involved which happen to affect all of you, not just my particular family. What are those factors?

Every single one of us, as a true Christian, is responsible for obeying God's Ten Commandments, including the Fifth Commandment concerning proper respect for our parents. This responsibility includes taking care of our elderly parents and going out of our way to help them in their time of need. Ministers are not exempt from this obligation, and refusal to be willing to sacrifice to help our vulnerable parents could keep us out of God's Kingdom just as much as the violation of the commandments against practicing adultery, murder, theft, etc. There is no difference!

Yet, at the same time, Jesus Christ showed by His own example that the obligations of the ministry to take care of the whole Church supercede all personal considerations. Notice these examples:

And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother (Mark 3:32–35).

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me (Matthew 10:37–38).

Therefore, when an ordained minister of Jesus Christ becomes obligated to care for the members of the Church as a singular priority, but still has elderly parents who likewise require respect and honor, what happens when need arises which seems to make accomplishment of both duties impossible? Which duty will suffer? It is a topic that has caused me personal concern for many years, anticipating a potential time when my parents might weaken in old age and become unable to take care of themselves. What would I do? Just pass off responsibility to other family members for their care? Claim "exemption" from the Fifth Commandment because I am feeding the sheep of God as a greater priority? None of those options ever seemed satisfactory. And as I watched my parents progressively get more physically weak in recent years, the weight of that burden of mind increased in direct proportion. Here is what just transpired:

In planning my annual trip to the Philippines for December 2016, my family asked me to do something different upon my return. Normally, I would fly straight home to Eugene, Oregon, after such a long overseas visit. But because my parents in Hartsville, Tennessee, were weakening, and also because the fiancée of our youngest son was coming from France to visit them in late December, it was suggested that my wife and I should also plan to visit at the same time so we could all be together. Therefore, after visiting the Philippine brethren, I flew to Nashville, Tennessee, rather than going home. We had no idea that two days after I arrived there to see my parents, first my father would die on the weekly Sabbath, and then my mother on the very next day. To say the least, it was a very traumatic few hours. No one is ever prepared to lose a parent, let alone two of them so quickly. But after the initial shock wears off, look at the results:

- Neither of my parents was faced with any long-term grieving period. Having been married fifty-eight years, they had been totally devoted to one another, and also were taking care of each other as they both became weaker in different ways. Together, they each were able to stay in their own home so much longer than if either had been left alone. They were in charge of themselves till the end.
- Most of our immediate family was all together when it occurred, so that not only did Mom and Dad have the comfort of our presence in their final moments, but also we had each other to help us bear that emotional load together more easily.
- Our family was not left with any difficult decisions about how to care for a surviving parent who needed twenty-four hour assistance. None of us was considering a nursing home at all, but the cost of in-home care would have been extremely costly, as well as unreliable. All of that was avoided.
- Lastly, with both of them peacefully asleep now after having lived full lives together in the faith, my surviving family and I have no further obligations in that arena concerning the Fifth Commandment! There is now no more worry about divided loyalties between the obligations of serving physical parents vs. taking care of the Church of God. God indeed intervened to solve that very problem.

The outpouring of sympathy and support from so many of you already has been very touching and very much appreciated. There is nothing that can fill the void of losing parents who were such good examples and who were so instrumental in my life in teaching me God's Truths from birth. But knowing and believing in God's perfect will to offer salvation to the faithful at the return of His Son makes every physical loss so much easier to bear. Confidence in the master plan of a loving Creator is the very best balm for our losses.

I hope that in relating these details you will be able to appreciate how God's intervention and guidance of my family in so many little ways throughout the course of these last weeks has actually helped aid the church as a whole to make it possible for me to continue to put my primary focus upon each of you, and upon the church as a whole for the future. Our loving God is indeed in charge of all, and if we will do what is pleasing in His sight, no matter how impossible our circumstances may seem, He will indeed provide a way through to fulfill every obligation.

## **Deaths**

It saddens us to announce the deaths of Mr. Don Brisby and his wife, Pat, of Hartsville, TN. They both had been declining in health and becoming frail with age. They

died quietly one day apart: Don on Sabbath, December 24 and Pat on Sunday, December 25. Being longtime members of the church and the parents of Mr. Jon Brisby, they were very well-known and loved. Don was eighty-eight years of age and Pat was eighty-three at the time of their deaths. We offer our love and condolences to their son, Mr. Jon Brisby, daughter, Mary, and their grandchildren, Sam and Tom.

### **New Moon**

The new moon, Shebat (eleventh month), begins Friday evening, January 27. The new moon day is Sabbath, January 28.

### **Trip Schedule**

#### **Mr. Jon Brisby**

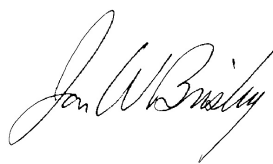
February 11..... Cape Town, South Africa

## Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 39-29	12-15-16	12-31-16	Confrontations and Responses of Jesus Christ #29
WSE-JWB 191	12-15-16	01-07-17	A Celebration of Death
WSE-RC 39-30	12-15-16	01-14-17	Confrontations and Responses of Jesus Christ #30
WSE-JWB 22-155-26E	01-05-17	01-21-17	Fund. of Belief #26: Worldly Holidays: Gentiles vs. Israel
WSE-RC 39-31	01-05-17	01-28-17	Confrontations and Responses of Jesus Christ #31
CL2-RC 138	01-05-17	02-04-17	Principles of Christian Living (Series 2): Humility #1
CL2-RC 139	01-26-16	02-11-17	Principles of Christian Living (Series 2): Humility #2

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In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby