

## Announcement Letter January 2020

Dear Brethren:

Special greetings to all of you in this new year of the Roman calendar. It is not a new year according to God's reckoning of time, but being conditioned by living and operating in this world, we cannot help but find that we are *mentally calibrated* to track time as do the people and institutions in this physical realm. That is not a problem as long as we remember that this man-made calendar will come to an end at the return of Jesus Christ, when all nations finally will be taught to track time according to the one-and-only calendar. Only God's calendar correctly defines the relationship of heavenly bodies that He appointed to define days, months, and years. It is His Creation, and therefore it is also His calendar.

The *true new year* is defined by the *Hebrew Calendar*, which God established *with authority* through *the Jews* as appointed custodians *for that particular purpose*. We do not trust the Jews' *use* of that calendar to appoint Holy Days, but we do recognize their authority under God in confirming when each year—and month within that year—begins. The true new year (Nisan 1) then does not begin until March 26 on the Roman calendar (two months away), but since many of our business and government obligations (like annual taxes) are keyed to the secular calendar year, we cannot help but recognize January 1 as a practical consideration. The difference is, the true people of God will never participate in "celebrating" that pagan New Year. Instead, we look forward to the day when all of these man-made traditions will be abolished. What a glorious time that will be.

This year, it is also interesting to many that we are entering a "new decade," now that 2020 has begun. This is technically a misnomer, since most authorities will confirm that the new decade actually begins in a numbered year ending in "one," not in "zero." That means the new decade will not actually begin until 2021. But again, for the people of God, never forget that there is absolutely no authority in the universe for the Roman demarcation of years, let alone for decades. The point is to admonish God's people to avoid getting caught up in superstitious speculations about new years and new decades, anticipating "significant prophetic events" around them. It is unlikely that God would "honor" any man-made calendar by pegging significant events in His Master Plan to a Roman date. But that does not mean that God's called people are immune to getting "caught up" in thinking so sometimes. Just recall how many became anxious twenty years ago at the coming of the new century, in expecting *something significant* to occur. It was more than just the Y2K fear-mongering in the year 2000. Peoples of the world apply superstitious significance to dates, and then that *Chicken-Little-alarmism* often leads some of God's people to forget how

worthless are such deceitful prognostications. Are you immune to becoming influenced by them? Just be aware of the natural tendency and work diligently to resist it in your minds.

In practical—layman's—application, we probably cannot help but think of 2020 as the beginning of a "new decade." That is just fine when it involves only your tracking of time for secular considerations. Just be very careful never to forget that the one-and-only Creator of heaven and earth is the One who appoints the true times and the seasons (Acts 1:7). Anyone who seeks to attribute significant spiritual events to Roman dates is one who misses this cardinal principle entirely.

### **Spiritual Principal: Sabbath Convocation Protocol for Scattered Brethren**

Periodically, we try to publish reminders about the proper way to think about holy convocations on Sabbaths and Holy Days, as well as the proper protocols to use in conducting those assemblies. Many of our brethren are scattered and unable to convoke with others of like mind on a regular basis. We also have newer members who are asking about the proper way to conduct Sabbath services when a minister is not present in person. For those who are able to meet together, even with only two or three in attendance, it is important to be mindful of what you are doing, and never to treat it as a casual event just because it is "small." Here are two excerpts on the topic which should be of interest to you, written to the church in 1991 by Mr. Raymond Cole. Even though these comments are nearly thirty years old, they apply today as much as they did when first inspired.

All holy days are commanded convocations—under pain of death in the Old Testament. They are times when we must convoke, assemble, before God. Times when God said He would appear in the midst of His people.

Convocations are mandatory on all holy days. Those called and who can read and hear the instructions of God will appear before God at the times of appointed assemblies. But search the whole Bible and you will find only the faintest, for the most part, instruction on how those services were conducted, or the number of meetings which were held. The one area on which we can be most explicit and mentally assured is this: All convocations were ordained as times for the proclamation of the words—truths—of God. The times when God through His chosen servants gave specific messages to His people. They are the times when the words of God, not the ideas of men, must be taught. In fact, the Apostle Paul during the time of the establishment of the first century church of God gave, under the inspiration of the Holy

Spirit, specific instruction to the ministry. He said, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word . . ." (II Tim. 4:1–2). There must have been a tendency creeping into the church even in that first century which God employed as a basis for what would prophetically occur in these last days. The ministry would not be faithful to the Word or the doctrine.

Custom and tradition in and of themselves are not wrong. Both of these principles are used in a number of ways in the Bible. Traditionally, what was the custom of the Church of God in these last days regarding services on holy days? With the exception of some special occasion, the weekly Sabbaths were times on which a single service was held. On all holy days, there were always two services daily, with the exception of Atonement, a day on which there was only one service conducted. This is a custom, or tradition, which we have felt obligated to continue.

One factor we all must understand: It is Christ who said: ". . . The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Inherent in this statement is a fundamental spiritual principle. It is a principle of mercy, compassion, and consideration for human beings. Note the context of Christ's statement, verses 23–26. Technically, violations may have existed, especially in the case of the shewbread. But, the overriding principle of the moment was the urgent need of the human beings involved. In such cases adjustments to "norms," customs, or traditions may be warranted and justified. It is for these very reasons we, as the ministry of Jesus Christ, have placed lead men in charge of every appointed area where services are authorized to be conducted. These men are our eyes and ears—attentive and responsive to the "real" needs of the members in their areas. When they deem it legitimately necessary to make an adjustment to the "customs or traditions" of the church, they have that authority. Of course, we, as the ministry, want to be informed. Further, these men also understand the seriousness of employing any such authority. We feel confident that they will not use such responsibility unwisely nor at any time except where not to use it might create a hardship for a servant or servants of Christ whom they must serve with compassion and understanding.

Lead men assigned to given areas are authorized to make and execute plans for all holy day services in their respective areas. Of course, we expect them to remain thoroughly committed to the "original, revealed" truth, even in respect to traditions and customs except where mercy and understanding

override. Further, these lead men will always check with and keep the ministry advised. All appointed area servants are responsible to the ministry, not to anyone else. They are the local extension of the ministry; carrying out a responsibility of the ministry which they cannot accomplish because it is not possible for them to be in all places at one and the same time (*Announcement Letter*, "Spiritual Principal: Meetings on Sabbaths and Holy Days," June 1991).

At best we are a remnant group, a very small number. In order to have even infrequent services at specified areas, we have been forced to make economic concessions in several areas. One special area is that of using the homes of willing brethren for these meetings. These families have very willingly opened their homes. Such willingness is a great service to us all — one for which we all must be most thankful and genuinely appreciative. Historical examples of this sort of meeting are Rom. 16:5, I Cor. 16:19, Col. 4:15, and Phil. 2.

Such benevolence and kindness puts a heavy responsibility on the rest of us. Since these are the personal homes of the hosts involved, we are absolutely responsible for maintaining the order, cleanliness, and physical condition of the homes as we find them. Also, since God frowns upon any of us putting our feet too frequently and too long at any given time in the homes of friends or neighbors, we all must be most judicious about the length of time we impose our presence upon the host family, both before and after scheduled services. As always, the best response is to allow the host or hostess to extend any special time considerations according to their wishes. If they invite anyone for extended considerations, such an action becomes their individual responsibility. Unless such an extended consideration is offered, we must treat the home as we would a regular meeting hall — a time and place where the true servants of God come together, as God decrees, for the organized services and a reasonable amount of fellowship with the other brethren in the area.

There is one other factor which we need to address. Parents are chargeable for their children. Children are not wise enough, until properly trained, to know what should or should not be touched or done in the home of the host. Some host families may have cherished items which they do not want damaged. Since we are our brother's keeper, it is our duty as parents to see that our children do not abuse the home or items in it.

In general, God holds us accountable for the total conduct of our lives. We must remember the principle, do unto others as you would have them do to you.

Plan to be right on time for services. Since God is a God of order, we should conduct our lives in a timely and organized manner. Order is a kindness to others. Disorganization abuses everyone [*sic*] involved. We are called to be kind and considerate — to manifest the real fruits of the Holy Spirit. We must not run from responsibility. In every case we must face that duty and absolve ourselves creditably before God. Therefore, every meeting is an opportunity to manifest the inward working of God's Holy Spirit. Let us never fail at any time.

The above is a topic which I have wanted to cover for years due to the fact that we find it imperative to accept such kindnesses of willing brethren. Always something else seemed to surface which seemed imperative for the moment. The subject was always preempted in one way or another.

For economic reasons, as well as others, we cannot secure halls in every area where we have authorized services to be held. We must use the homes of the willing. Therefore, the responsibility is urgent upon us all to be concerned with the homes and possessions of host families. We are confident all will respond affectionately and kindly. We thank you for your kindness and thoughtfulness, too (*Announcement Letter*, "Spiritual Principle: Sabbath and Holyday meetings in Homes," August 1991).

In addition to the more broad principles cited by Mr. Cole above, please also keep in mind these additional, specific, "dos and don'ts" when meeting without a minister present:

- To be a *holy convocation*, it must be a meeting appointed with ministerial authority. We try to make this easy, not difficult, and therefore we will readily approve requests for small group assemblies. Just please do not forget to ask permission.
- If you are alone, you really cannot have a *holy convocation*, because a convocation, by definition, is a meeting with at least one other person. You can *commune* with yourself (Psalm 77:6), but you cannot *convoke* with yourself. However, you can still conduct a "formal" service by yourself to make the Sabbath more special. That is never a problem.

- If you are participating in a small convocation without a minister, the full protocols for service order should be followed, including hymn singing, opening and closing prayers, special music, and the pre-recorded sermon. Do not take shortcuts. If necessary, the lead man should clarify any issues directly with the ministry.
- Small convocations should also respect the same formalities that would be observed if a minister were present to give a live sermon. The fact that it is a recording does not change this. That means (just for example), no eating and drinking during the service (a disrespect to God at any time, per Mr. Herbert Armstrong), and no noisy distractions that make it difficult to concentrate upon the message (it is not just about not interrupting a live minister, but interrupting the ability of attendees to hear and to concentrate as well). Again, if there are special circumstances, please feel free to consult one of the ministers for advice.
- Dress standards for holy convocations are the same, no matter how small or large is the assembly. This has been covered in other *Announcement Letters* and sermons.
- Remember that assembly with others is an opportunity to serve—personally—the very children of God. Never allow *familiarity* or routine with the same individuals, week after week, to engender offense or annoyance. Treat these brethren like *new converts* with whom you seek to make a good first impression.

If we remember these principles, we can avoid inadvertently offering polluted sacrifices before God, and He will honor us in spite of our human failings by giving each one of us His grace, redemption, and spiritual inspiration to hold firm until the very end.

## **New Moon**

The new moon, Shebat (eleventh month), begins Sunday evening, January 26. The new moon day is Monday, January 27.

## **Trip Schedule**

### **Mr. Jon Brisby**

February 1..... George, South Africa

February 8..... Lausanne, Switzerland

## Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JWB 225-17	11-28-19	12-28-19	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #17
WSE-RC 90-24	12-19-19	01-04-20	An Analysis of Jude #24
WSE-RC 90-25	12-19-19	01-11-20	An Analysis of Jude #25
WSE-RC 90-26	12-19-19	01-18-20	An Analysis of Jude #26
WSE-JWB 225-18	01-09-20	01-25-20	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #18
WSE-JWB 225-19	01-09-20	02-01-20	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #19
WSE-RC 90-27	01-09-20	02-08-20	An Analysis of Jude #27
WSE-RC 90-28	01-30-20	02-15-20	An Analysis of Jude #28

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In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby