

Announcement Letter August 2021

Dear Brethren:

This letter is being distributed to you near the beginning of the sixth month on God's calendar (Ellul), which means, of course, that we are only one month away from the first of Tishri (the seventh month), coinciding with the Feast of Trumpets. That also means that we are only weeks away from Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles, the time of year that many of us look forward to most of all. To all of you who receive this letter and who are earnestly waiting for the Kingdom of God represented by these Holy Days (Mark 15:43), we greet you with sincere love and appreciation for your focus upon God's spiritual things and for your love of the Truth.

This is such an unusual year for all of us in the aftermath of international border closures and regional lockdowns due to virus pandemic fears. Even at this late date it is still uncertain whether certain of you will be able to cross borders to be able to attend one of our designated assemblies for the Feast of Tabernacles. Never in years past did our Feast planning include worry about being restrained from physical travel the way that we now experience this "new normal." It requires *that much more* personal determination to "keep the Feast," and for all of you who are facing that challenge, our prayers are with you that God will open up a door to bless your journeys. For those of you who are physically restrained, in spite of your willingness to travel, our prayers also are with you, that God will keep you and comfort you in your isolation. We know that it will become ever more difficult for the people of God to fulfill those spiritual obligations before God as we grow nearer to the end of this age, but we also know that God has promised to fight for us if we will do everything within our power—by use of His Faith—to persevere. Being a true Christian is not for the faint of heart, but those who are determined to trust God and to step out are promised God's divine help. And if, for reason, God allows some of you to be "locked up" or "locked out," then, that too is for His divine purpose. No matter what, all of us who share that same Spirit—through our mutual calling in Jesus Christ—can manifest that *true unity*, no matter how scattered we may be physically or geographically.

Another aspect of these last days—which we should know to expect—is the increase in satanic activity. Do any of us doubt the fact that there are powerful, invisible beings upon this earth that hate the children of God and seek their destruction? Do any of us doubt the fact that God specifically allows these beings limited access in order to tempt us and to prove whether or not we are truly committed to *the faith once delivered*? Is not the Bible full of the admonition to grow close to God so that we will not be seduced by these very deceitful forces? And did not Jesus Christ warn that one of the key signs of the very last days would

be that many of God's called would become offended at the real Truth and begin to hate one another (Matthew 24:10–12)?

We have enjoyed an especially "long run" of peace and tranquility within this little fellowship—so much so that it can be easy to let down our guards and assume that we are impervious to attack. The point of this writing is not to make any one of you paranoid, but simply to remind us all that the next attack upon God's church is always just around the corner. We have had many instances within our forty-six-year history as a remnant body in which elements within and without have attempted to stir up controversy and to rob us of our peace. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. And it is the responsibility of God's true ministers to give to you the warnings that you need so that you can be vigilant in watching your own minds and hearts. With the power of God's Holy Spirit, not one of you needs to worry. But those who are not *truly close to God* because they have allowed some *contrary doctrinal concept* to seduce them into offense—or else some *personalized contention* to create division among brethren—are absolutely at risk to that *still subtle voice* of the enemy. Those of us who are mindful of these very real threats—and who are using the *revealed doctrines* of God as our yardstick—can have absolute confidence (not arrogance) that we can make correct choices under pressure.

With that in mind, the following *Spiritual Principle* is being republished from the June 2009 issue of this *Announcement Letter* for historical reference. It has been that long ago since we faced a concerted effort by some to seek to sway our brethren into opposition to this ministry and to our authority to lead and to guide this little fellowship. The wise among us can always learn from these past events, because the past certainly informs the future. Even though the specific threats from 2009 referenced here are obviously not an issue today, the spirit of our adversary is always quite the same, and it is only a matter of time before we will see *the very same proclivities* begin to surface once again. You can count upon that! In 2009, the majority of our brethren quietly stood shoulder to shoulder to defend the real faith—including support for this ministry. That kind of solidarity back then was responsible for our survival as a remnant body, and for limiting the number of our beloved brethren who became seduced by the small number of antagonists. If the majority of our brethren today likewise feel that God is actively inspiring and leading this ministry to serve you and to feed you with the Word of God, then we can have the very same success in facing every future test that God will surely allow. Each one of you is a key part of that unified Body. Please never doubt it.

Spiritual Principle—Who May Attend the Feast?

Church of God, The Eternal has always used a rather "relaxed" approach as far as who may attend our Feast of Tabernacles assemblies. We have never opened the door wide to invite anyone and everyone (as some other groups have done through targeted advertising

campaigns), but neither have we acted heavy-handedly to make it difficult for those *who approach us* to be able to attend. We do not subscribe to the idea of trying to unify scattered former members of the parent body through an ecumenical outreach. The doctrine of Jesus Christ is most important to us, and there is only one doctrine which God accepts. Anyone who attends our Feasts should understand what we believe about revealed doctrine. We are not interested in debate. We accept no other concepts than those which we were all first taught through Mr. Armstrong. Anyone who seeks to attend a Sabbath or Feast service with us needs to understand that and be respectful of it.

That being said, we do not go to the other extreme of applying a stringent litmus test to those seeking to attend with us. Over the years we have often had "visitors" attend one or more of our services, who admittedly do not profess all of the same doctrines we hold dear. That is OK. Mr. Raymond Cole never assigned deacons to watch the doors and bar entrance to any visitors or strangers. As long as such individuals do not create a problem, we are happy for them to sit quietly in a service if they so choose. It is always possible that one who is searching might find fruits in us that may help them somewhere down the road. We will continue to use this same *balanced* administrative approach to welcome them, even as we always have done.

But because we have always made it so easy for people to attend our Feast services, some of you may have acquired false notions about the true scope of ministerial authority to approve or disapprove someone to attend a service. That principle we want to clarify now so that there is no misunderstanding.

The ministry does indeed carry the authority of Jesus Christ to decide who may and who may not convoke before God among us. Those appointed shepherds have the obligation to assure that the collective sheep are protected from those who would seek to devour or to spread heresy in our midst. If there is any individual whom the ministry deems to be a threat, it has not only the right, but the obligation before God to keep such a one at bay. (These principles are all covered in detail in our articles and past sermons on the topic of church government.) Therefore, in spite of our "relaxed" administrative approach to allowing attendance in our worship services, the reality is that every one of you attends with the *express permission* of this ministry. Not one of you has the *inherent right* to attend if we do not approve it. Does this cause alarm or offend anyone? Is anyone concerned that this is a departure from the orientation of Mr. Raymond Cole while he led this group as Pastor and Director for twenty-five years? Here are a couple of historical accounts which should verify what Mr. Cole taught and practiced:

A number of years ago, Mr. Cole disfellowshipped a woman who had caused problems in our midst. She later sought to come back with us, and Mr. Cole wrote to her and outlined a very specific program of requirements for her to accomplish toward that end. Included in that list was a prohibition for her to attend the Feast with us that particular year.

She would have to stay at home. This was one of the tests she would have to pass to prove whether she was truly repentant and willing to submit to Mr. Cole's authority. However, she defied his instruction and showed up where our Feast was held anyway, checking into a hotel room in the very midst of our brethren. Not only that, she tried to attend one of our services. She arrived after the service had begun while Mr. Cole was already speaking to the assembly. Because we had advanced warning of her intentions, Mr. Cole had instructed us to station men at the doors and prevent her from entering. We simply stood in front of the door so that no one could get past us. As she stood there facing us, demanding for us to step aside and let her in, this is what she said: "I have *a right* to be here as much as anyone else. This is *my church*, and these are *my friends*. No one has a right to keep me out." Ultimately, we called the police, who escorted this woman away from our lawful, "private" assembly. But this demonstrates the attitude of one who is inspired by Satan, and one particular way he influences some to think about the church. Some of you were witnesses to this event and can testify to it. It should be clear evidence of Mr. Raymond Cole's orientation toward this issue of *the right* of service attendance.

In another case about twenty years ago, soon before the Feast, Mr. Cole had been forced to disfellowship a particular married couple. According to his judgment, they were a threat to the body with their vitriolic spirit of rebellion. Mr. Cole specifically instructed the entire body to have nothing to do with this couple, exercising the very same authority used by the Apostles Paul and John (1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 John 1:10). Yet soon afterward, Mr. Cole received secondhand information that another member had defied his instruction and intentionally traveled up to meet this couple to "get their side of the story." Because the Feast was at hand, there was no time to address it in advance. This individual was attending at one of our sites where Mr. Cole would not be attending personally. Therefore Mr. Cole instructed the minister assigned to that site to confront this member at the first opportunity. That first opportunity came just before the opening night service of the Feast. As soon as this member entered, the minister was waiting. I happened to be standing there to witness what took place. The minister—by Mr. Cole's authority—asked this member directly, "Did you travel up to meet with 'so-and-so' after Mr. Cole told us not to?" The man was flustered, but rather than lying, he at least answered honestly that he had so done. The minister replied immediately, "Then you are out!" That man was escorted off the premises.

These two examples should help confirm what was always Mr. Cole's orientation toward this issue of "right of attendance." Church of God, The Eternal continues to welcome at our services members, unconverted family members, visitors, and even strangers who might be curious. We will always make it very easy for someone to fellowship with us without making him jump through a lot of hoops. But please do not infer from this administrative behavior that we have *no right* to keep someone out. Again, anyone who attends one of our services needs to understand that he does so with the *express invitation* and approval of the ministry.

Why is this principle being enunciated at this particular time? Because there have been subtle behaviors manifested in times past which are troubling, which this ministry does not intend to allow to continue. It is not our intent to embarrass anyone. We desire, above all, to see a correction of behavior which negates the need for direct ministerial involvement. By publishing our intentions in advance to the whole body, it provides ample insight into how these decisions will be made in the future, so that everyone understands. There is no "gotcha" orientation with us. All which we are doing is aboveboard and open to the light of day.

Anyone who outwardly, *or even subtly*, has been thumbing his nose at the ministry will not be welcome at our festival services. To allow such a one to be in our midst while manifesting disdain for the leadership of the group is not fitting. If one does not believe God is inspiring those ministers, why would they want to attend one of our services anyway? God is not present there unless the ministry is legitimate. But some seem to believe—like the woman of the above example—that they can despise the leadership and still have a right to fellowship with the people. *Not so*, and we will not permit it.

Specifically, there are some few who have been members in good standing with us for a number of years, but who have begun recently to change their behaviors. It shows. How so? They are ones who live in an area where they *can meet* with other brethren every Sabbath during the year, and in fact have *done so consistently* in past years. Yet now they seem to be boycotting those local assemblies. They have changed. Perhaps there is a legitimate explanation, but if so, none has been offered. If what they are doing is making a "silent protest" against this ministry, should such a one be allowed to attend with our brethren at the fall Feast? Should someone who used to be an active, supportive member—but who now shuns commanded Sabbath and Holy Day services all year long—be allowed just to "show up" with us at the Feast, as if nothing is amiss? What kind of message does that send? Without the use of a single word, that very example sports *a false doctrine* in our midst, asserting that they could not care less about honoring God's assemblies the rest of the year, but desire to take advantage of the Feast, when many friends have gathered there from all over the country. This is an advanced warning that such will not be allowed.

Anyone who falls into this very narrow category at this time has a choice to make. (Again, this has nothing to do with true visitors—even from other groups, unconverted family members, or those who cannot meet throughout the year because of distance or health restrictions.) The only thing that needs to be done to rectify his/her status is to begin attending again at local weekly Sabbath services, renewing support for this group by simply showing up, just like he/she once did. Nothing will be said, and that beloved brother or sister will be welcomed again with open arms. That action would send a very good message to the rest of the Body. That is the choice we encourage and pray for most heartily. But the individual who refuses to do that will not be allowed to attend the fall Feast with us this year.

He will not be allowed to have it both ways. As Pastor and Director of this group, I will not allow anyone to appear in our midst, radiating heretical doctrine by that very appearance, with or without words used. I can spot such subtleties a mile away. If there is a legitimate reason why one has ceased to attend regular local services as he used to do, all I need is for that individual to contact me and to explain. But some to whom I have written—to kindly ask about their intentions—have thus far refused to give me the courtesy of a reply.

Right before the Feast arrives this year, I will be providing each festival coordinator in the US with a list of individuals (hopefully none) who are not allowed to attend with us. Without such an individual contacting me personally in advance for permission, he/she will be turned away at the door of our assemblies. This notice—being made as early as June—of my administrative policy gives *everyone* advanced understanding of the principles involved, and those specifically affected have *plenty of time* to rectify their status with us. If there is any misunderstanding and you feel you might be "on this list" in error, simply contact me. No one should be surprised or unsettled if the worst case scenario becomes necessary. But I am praying for true reconciliation and unity with those dear and priceless children, not exclusion. I am very anxious and willing to restore them to the fellowship if they desire to be with us—*truly* with us. If anyone has any questions about this policy, please feel free to contact me. You each deserve incredible respect and accommodation because of who you are in God's glorious plan.

Death

Mrs. Bettie Jones of Keithville, LA, died Sunday morning, July 4. Bettie had been declining in health for quite some time, and was under the care of a daughter and her husband, Robert. They have been longtime members of the church, and we will miss Bettie. We offer our sincere condolences to Robert and their children.

Holy Days

Feast of Trumpets	September 7
Day of Atonement	September 16
Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day	September 21–28

Feast of Tabernacles

Please take note that weekly Sabbath services on September 18, will be held in Townsend, TN, and in Otter Rock, OR, since the Feast of Tabernacles will begin the evening of Monday, September 20, at 7:30 p.m. Please make your plans and reservations accordingly.

Feast Site Addresses

In Otter Rock, OR, the Feast will be held at the Otter Crest Convention Center, located at 301 Otter Crest Dr., Otter Rock, OR, 97369.

In Townsend, TN, the Feast will be held at The Barn Event Center of the Smokies, 7264 East Lamar Alexander Pkwy.

If you need further information, please call the church office at (541) 344-8880.

New Moons

The new moon, Ellul (sixth month), begins Sunday evening, August 8. The new moon day is Monday, August 9.

The new moon, Tishri (seventh month), begins Monday evening, September 6. The new moon day is Tuesday, September 7 (Feast of Trumpets).

Monthly Letter

The *Monthly Letter* for August will be a timely archive letter from Mr. Jean Aviolat, written in September of 1986.

Trip Schedule

Jon W. Brisby

September 4, 7 Malbuisson, France
September 20–23 Townsend, Tennessee
September 24–28 Otter Rock, Oregon

Robert Burke

September 20–23 Otter Rock, Oregon
September 24–28 Townsend, Tennessee

Richard Litz

September 20–28 Townsend, Tennessee

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JWB 259	07-08-21	08-07-21	Reconfirming the Third Resurrection
WSE-RC 66-6	07-08-21	08-14-21	Where Is Christ Since His Personal Days in the Flesh? #6
WSE-JWB 225-39	07-29-21	08-21-21	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #39
WSE-RC 66-7	07-29-21	08-28-21	Where Is Christ Since His Personal Days in the Flesh? #7
WSE-RC 66-8	07-29-21	09-04-21	Where Is Christ Since His Personal Days in the Flesh? #8
Holy Day	07-29-21	09-07-21	Trumpets Sermons
WSE-JWB 261	08-19-21	09-11-21	Recent History of Ministerial Judgments
Holy Day	07-29-21	09-16-21	Atonement Sermon
WSE-JWB 225-40	08-19-21	09-18-21	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #40
Holy Days	09/20–09/28	—	Feast of Tabernacles
WSE-RC 66-9	08-19-21	10-02-21	Where Is Christ Since His Personal Days in the Flesh? #9
WSE-JWB 225-41	09-09-21	10-09-21	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #41

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby