



Cross Road

A Newsletter for Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27).

Vol. 3, No. 7

*From
the
Pastor
General*

July 16, 1998

Dear Elders and Wives,

Which days will we use for worship? Some people vocally advocate our traditional annual festivals; others are equally vigorous in saying that we should meet on traditional Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas. We allotted two days to this potentially divisive issue at the June meeting of our U.S. regional pastors and regional directors.

I'm pleased to say that we had plenty of open and frank, yet respectful, discussion on the subject of our annual worship calendar. From those discussions and from subsequent communication has come what I believe is a Spirit-led official position on the subject (see position paper on page 14). It was agreed and decided that the Worldwide Church of God will provide increased flexibility in worship by accepting the incorporation of the traditional Christian festivals into its annual worship calendar. How this flexibility is applied may vary from region to region internationally and from congregation to congregation in any given region. Congregations are free to meet on any combination of the festivals. A number of U. S. congregations have expressed their desire to celebrate only the Christian festivals and to no longer meet on the seven annual festivals, while other congregations prefer a combination of festival occasions.

Celebration of any particular festival is not mandatory for membership, of course. We realize that for any number of reasons, sometimes personal and sometimes cultural, some members may decide not to participate in certain worship occasions, whether traditional Christian festivals or the seven annual festivals we have traditionally celebrated.

We think it is important for our members to have that freedom, and I pray that our members will learn not to judge one another in these matters. We must *preach* Christ and *live* Christ.

When we gather for worship, it should be to celebrate what God has done in Christ and to worship the Lord of our salvation. We have come to see that the

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Christian festivals are designed and geared to celebrate the life and saving work of Christ while the seven annual festivals were designed and geared to celebrate the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. However, we also realize that Christ can be preached on any occasion. We want to meet the worship needs of all our members, and that does mean that we must learn to respect the feelings and preferences of one another.

That means we are counting on you pastors to teach and model that mutual respect for one another. Our true goal must not be to get our members meeting on any particular set of days, but rather it must be to lead our members to Christ — to know that God loves them and that they are forgiven and accepted by God for Jesus' sake. Days are secondary. Jesus is primary.

Worship, in fact, is our response to the immeasurable grace and goodness of our heavenly Father. Let us not mar it by harboring judgmental attitudes toward one another. Instead, let us follow the teachings of Romans 14 and accept one another, realizing our brothers and sisters are celebrating *to the Lord* the festivals they prefer. That is just one of the many ways Jesus calls upon us to love one another the way he loves us.

Mike Fezell and Randal Dick discuss some of the broader principles of worship calendars in their article on page 8. Since the new covenant neither mandates nor forbids any particular worship days, our choice of days rests more on our need to bring the gospel to the cultures we are trying to reach. We affirm the right that Christians have to keep either (or both) kinds of worship days. Our position is that people can continue to keep the days they traditionally do, and they are also free to change. The church recognizes that no matter when members meet for worship, it is an opportunity for us to preach the wonderful truths of Christ's gospel.

Throughout our discussions, our foundation for truth is Scripture. In the June *Cross Road* we discussed the importance of the "ministry of the word" — our need to study diligently, teach and preach with a biblical foundation. This month, let's follow up with further evidence from the pastoral epistles, and with some thoughts about how we may apply this in the Worldwide Church of God.

Let's sketch the setting of the pastoral epistles. Paul had preached the gospel, raised up churches, and corrected doctrinal errors. He had trained assistants by having them accompany him on his travels. When the end of his life neared, he gave instructions to the next generation of church leaders. In these letters to Timothy and Titus, he also tells us an important responsibility that church pastors have:

- "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Tim. 4:13).
- "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (v. 16).
- "These are the things you are to teach and urge on them" (1 Tim. 6:2).
- "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2).

- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).
- “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2-3).
- An overseer “must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Tit. 1:9).
- “You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1).

Clearly, doctrine is important in the church. We need solid teaching, based on diligent and accurate study of Scripture. We do not need anyone’s pet theories, but teaching that has been tested against the ideas of other faithful Christians. Solid teaching doesn’t necessarily make us feel good. Solid teaching sometimes challenges our comfort zones.

The in-service program

As we know, our past understanding of Scripture wasn’t always right. That is why in-service education is so important for our future. In our budgetary discussions, it was suggested that we could save money by canceling the in-service program. But we did not do this. Let me offer two reasons — the first somewhat broad and theoretical, the second more specific and concrete.

When some people consider our past history, seeing mistake after mistake, they can wonder whether we have any credibility. What credentials do we possess qualifying us to teach? One answer is supplied by the in-service program: We are diligently studying. We are using materials produced by well-respected evangelical seminaries. This informs our teaching.

We do not agree with the textbooks and classes on every point, but we are covering the major bases. It is only through study that we can avoid factual mistakes some of us made, such as saying that Constantine changed the Sabbath to Sunday, or that he was the main supporter of Trinitarian theology.

Of course, we have learned from mistakes, and one reason we want to teach is to help others avoid the same mistakes. Historical inaccuracies and legalism are certainly not unique to us. Many people need the lessons we have learned.

The more specific, concrete reason for study is that we have a need. We don’t want to preach errors, and the only way we can stop doing so is by learning — and pastors, like all teachers, have to learn much more than they teach. We have to study a subject for many hours before we can preach one sermon. We have to ensure that we are speaking from a solid foundation, not one constructed of generalities, personal experience and opinion, what we “have always believed” supported by a few verses taken out of context.

Each person approaches Scripture from a slightly different perspective — each with his or her own

personal defects and weaknesses. That is why it is helpful for us to study in connection with others, so that one person's insight will help another person overcome a blindness, and vice versa.

It is arrogant and dangerous for any one person to make his or her own interpretation the final word, and to proclaim all who disagree as incorrect and therefore not led by the Holy Spirit. No, when we approach Scripture it is helpful to do it in the context of the believing community today as well as the historic Christian church. Just as we hope that others learn from our experience in legalism, we also hope to learn from what others have experienced throughout centuries of Christian experience and discussion of Scripture.

Often, one group or school of thought can identify errors that another school of thought cannot see. So with caution, we can learn from others. In some cases, we can learn from them and they can point out areas in which we need further research. That doesn't mean that we blindly accept what others say. If we wanted to do that, we would find it impossible, because some ideas contradict others. We cannot believe them all!

So what is the standard of truth? It is Scripture. That is why it is essential that we strengthen our foundation in Scripture.

The ministry of the Word takes work. It takes time. Pastors need to spend a considerable amount of time studying, researching and preparing sermons that have a solid foundation behind them. Most of this work will never be seen, but it is necessary. We should have a library, but we do not bring the library with us to the pulpit. We do not cite every fact we've found. We do not quote every Greek word we've examined. We have to take the time to distill the message of Scripture, to point out its relevance for modern life, and to present it in an interesting way.

A pastor must be active and "at home" in his study, with reference works and technical resources. He must also be active and "at home" in the market place, where those to whom he ministers live and work. His role is to bridge the gap between the two — to translate and explain the gospel clearly and in an interesting, compelling way.

We have recently emphasized the value of expository sermons, sermons that stick to one passage of Scripture rather than jumping all over the place. Such sermons help ensure that we are doing justice to the context of the verses we are using. They also provide a model that members can use in their own study of Scripture — to take a passage and study it in depth, to see how it flows, to see the points that are being made and to see the forest and not just isolated trees.

Expository sermons should not be a dry repetition of facts about the original context — they should also recast the thought-flow into a modern context, to show how the same truths and principles can inform our thoughts and practices today. With some passages, this is easy. With others, it takes time, patience, creativity and work.

Of course, expository analysis is not the only legitimate form of teaching. Biblical reference books come

in two basic formats: commentary (passage by passage) and encyclopedia (topic by topic). Both formats are legitimate, and both have strengths and weaknesses. Either one can be misused, but misuse probably happens most often in the topic-based sermon.

Right now, we need to emphasize the passage-based sermon because it emphasizes the context. It is only after we understand each verse in its own context that we can legitimately begin to put verses together to form an encyclopedic view of how the topic is developed in different parts of Scripture.

Thoughts about our future

Now perhaps I can share with you some thoughts regarding the future of the Worldwide Church of God. This is something I think about often, as I know you do as well.

Why are we here? Why had God brought us on the journey he has? Where are we now in the body of Christ? What role can we play? What is our niche in the Christian community?

While none of us has the complete answer, I would like to share with you a thought. On one hand, one of our strengths as a denomination has been a high regard for Scripture, and we have a biblically literate membership. We have been forced to study doctrines in depth. We went back to the book time and again to see whether these things were so. We wanted to prove all things. I don't have statistics, but I am confident that WCG members, on the whole, know a lot more of the Bible (especially the Old Testament) than the average American Christian does.

On the other hand, I see that many evangelical Christians are lacking in biblical knowledge — even according to the estimates of evangelical leaders! Many Christians come to a knowledge of Christ and accept him — and that is good, so far as it goes — but many do not grow much in grace and knowledge. **Doctrine is important — and the Christian world's lack of biblical knowledge is a serious need.**

So a need in the Christian world is actually a strength that our church has. This is an area in which we can help the Christian community — indeed, we are already providing a educational service in *The Plain Truth* and the many resources that Plain Truth Ministries makes available. As time goes on, perhaps we will find additional ways to contribute in a meaningful way to the work of God's kingdom. This might be in formats we are used to, such as booklets and Bible study courses, or it might be in other formats, such as audiocassette tapes or computerized lessons. It remains to be seen.

But no matter how we might eventually serve the larger Christian community and the unsaved world, we already have the responsibility to teach our own members, to preach the gospel, to invite people to accept their Savior, and to worship him with joy.

With love, in Jesus' name,



P.S. I would like to mention a change in terminology that was approved by the Advisory Council of Elders, and that is that all ordained ministers hold the ecclesiastical rank of elder. Job function titles remain the same — pastors are still pastors, even though they hold the “rank” of elder. They are elders who serve as church pastors. Some elders serve as regional directors, some as ministry leaders. Their job function varies, but in rank they are all “elder.” For more information, see page 15.

For most people, the difference is largely one of terminology. The primary practical difference is that no one will be “raised in rank” — elders will not be raised to “preaching elder” or any other rank. When an elder is assigned to pastor a church or has some other significant change in responsibility, it will still be appropriate to lay hands on the person, pray for God’s blessing, and to commission the person for service.

Worldwide News Articles

We are printing below four articles that will appear in the August *Worldwide News*, which will be mailed next week: “Ministerial Conference: Guidelines Include Flexibility of Worship,” “Annual Worship Calendar: Is There Only One Right Way to Worship God?” “Position Paper: Annual Worship Calendar” and “Worldwide Church of God Administrative Designations.”

Ministerial Conference: Guidelines Include Flexibility of Worship

PASADENA — U.S. regional pastors and international regional directors gathered for meetings in Pasadena June 22 to 25.

Open discussion

“I’m pleased to say that we had plenty of open and frank, yet respectful, discussion on the subject of our annual worship calendar,” said Pastor General Joseph Tkach. “From those discussions and from subsequent communication has come what I believe is a Spirit-led official position on the subject.”

“It was agreed and decided that the Worldwide Church of God will provide increased flexibility in worship by accepting the incorporation of the traditional Christian festivals into its annual worship calendar. How this flexibility is applied may vary from region to region internationally and from congregation to congregation in any given region.

“Congregations are free to meet on any combination of the festivals. A number of U.S. congregations have expressed their desire to celebrate only the Christian festivals and to no longer meet on the seven annual festivals, while other congregations prefer a combination of festival occasions.”

Church Administration provides guidance for pastors on how to work with their congregation's preferences on days of worship.

"Celebration of any particular festival is not mandatory for membership, of course," Mr. Tkach continued. "We realize that for any number of reasons, sometimes personal and sometimes cultural, some members may decide not to participate in certain worship occasions, whether traditional Christian festivals or the seven annual festivals we have traditionally celebrated.

"We think it is important for our members to have that freedom, and I pray that our members will learn not to judge one another in these matters. We must preach Christ and live Christ."

John Halford, European regional director, said: "It was encouraging to see that we could grapple with some real, and potentially divisive, issues that affect our various regions in a spirit of unity and mutual understanding."

Women's sessions

Thursday, June 25 the Connections and Women's Ministry Department conducted the morning session. Kay Persky led praise and worship, followed by a dramatic presentation. Joyce Catherwood described the anguish of the women who were with Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. Beth Mears portrayed the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed. Susan Reedy, as Jesus' mother, recalled events from his life and relayed a mother's grief. Kay Persky then sang "He's Alive" to conclude.

After the presentation, Tammy Tkach spoke on "Women: Past, Present and Future." She discussed the role of women in the New Testament church and how the principles of the new covenant have empowered women in their service to the church today.

Then guest speaker Kathleen Hart, chaplain to student wives at Fuller Theological Seminary, talked about realities of the ministry, and how to finish well as ministers and wives.

The U.S. regional pastors and international regional directors had separate meetings June 26.

Then the international regional directors met in Palm Springs June 29 to July 2 to discuss international governance and worship calendars, as well as spending time daily in small group prayer and worship.

Worship calendar

Speaking of the annual worship calendar, the pastor general continued: "When we gather for worship, it should be to celebrate what God has done in Christ and to worship the Lord of our salvation.

“We have come to see that the Christian festivals are designed and geared to celebrate the life and saving work of Christ, while the seven annual festivals were designed and geared to celebrate the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

“However, we also realize that Christ can be preached on any occasion. We want to meet the worship needs of all our members, and that does mean that we must learn to respect the feelings and preferences of one another.

“Worship, in fact, is our response to the immeasurable grace and goodness of our heavenly Father. Let us not mar it by harboring judgmental attitudes toward one another.

“Instead, let us follow the teachings of Romans 14 and accept one another, realizing our brothers and sisters are celebrating to the Lord the festivals they prefer. That is just one of the many ways Jesus calls upon us to love one another the way he loves us.”

Annual Worship Calendar: Is There Only One Right Way to Worship God?

Liturgy has become a hot topic in the church these days.

“Excuse me, but what’s a liturgy?” you ask.

Liturgy is simply the pattern or program of worship chosen by a church. It includes the gospel-related topics, themes, forms, symbols, styles, seasons and days that help facilitate effective worship for that particular church.

In other words, liturgy refers to the whole set of seasons, days, tools and methods we use to worship, celebrate and enjoy God.

Now we all agree that God doesn’t want his people to fight about when to worship him. In fact, all our worship should be a source of unity and joy in the power, love, glory and grace of God.

Yet, so often, our choices about when and how to worship our God and Savior become a source of division and controversy. You know the issues: The Holy Day keepers don’t like being in the same church with the Advent Month and Holy Week keepers, and vice versa.

While some members don’t mind attending everything the church offers, and some simply avoid the days that are not meaningful to them, others get angry just knowing any ground is being given to the “other side.”

In this article, we'd like to present a few basic principles related to worship that might help us all to lay down our weapons and give each other some space about when we choose to worship our great God who loves us all.

Worship is celebration

The first thing that might help us get some perspective is to understand that worship is a human response to God — who he is, what he has done and what he is doing. It is an active, often spontaneous, celebration of God's work through Christ. In worship, Christians are participating in Christ's work of human redemption.

New Testament liturgy is the recurring patterns of worship that developed among the first century Christians. It developed as the disciples rehearsed and remembered Jesus' death and resurrection by meeting together to participate in the Lord's Supper and to baptize new converts.

These events were discussed, read about in the Scriptures, rehearsed and reenacted in an atmosphere of prayer, singing of hymns, thanksgiving and praise.

God likes variety

As we learn to obey Jesus' command to love one another, we also learn to appreciate and respect our cultural diversity. Jesus values human culture and human customs because he values humanity.

Our cultural lenses, as it were, are a necessary part of who we are. Consequently, the forms or styles we prefer for worship are necessarily shaped by our particular culture, and rightly so.

As we view life through our particular cultural lenses, we tend to look upon other ways of doing things with suspicion, distrust, ridicule or even fear. Our culture tends to shape our values, and our values govern how we draw our conclusions about what is good and what is bad.

When we come to faith in Christ, God purifies our hearts. He softens our hearts toward others. He gives us a new commandment — that we love one another.

To love one another does not require that we must abandon our unique cultural values. It means we must learn to respect the cultural values of others, without feeling threatened ourselves.

Of course, if a particular cultural value is sinful, we must abandon it. But most of our cultural values are not sinful; many are neutral and many are quite compatible with godliness in Christ.

Culture and sin

Culture, of itself, is not evil. Our unity in Christ affirms and purifies culture; it does not do away with it! When Jesus returns, we are told in Revelation, men and women from every tribe and tongue and people and nation will form the kingdom of God.

God works with us in the context of our respective cultures. He is the author of human freedom, and he enjoys the rich tapestry of human diversity and cultural variety. God hates sin, but he does not hate culture.

It is sin that corrupts and spoils culture, not culture that causes and produces sin. Because there is sin in every human, there is sin in every culture. As God's people, Christians should turn away from sin in their respective cultures, but they do not need to turn away from their culture to embrace someone else's culture.

At the same time, no particular cultural form is an absolute. In other words, we must not think that just because a cultural form we especially like is not sinful and has a certain value in worship, therefore it must be used in worship at all costs. To make any cultural form essential to worship is to make the opposite mistake from discarding all cultural forms.

We must be free to use cultural forms in worship, while also remaining free not to use a particular cultural form. We must not allow any form or style of worship to become an end in itself. We worship God, freely using forms and styles of worship; we don't, however, allow ourselves to become slaves to those forms and styles.

Communing with God

Silly as it sounds to have to say it, God is just as comfortable communing with Filipinos in a Philippine culture as he is communing with Arabs in an Arab culture, Indians in an Indian culture, Danes in a Danish culture, Mexicans in a Mexican culture or Latinos, Anglos, African Americans or American-born Chinese in a United States culture. And God loves the worship of his people regardless of its cultural flavor and style.

Our congregations do not need to have the same songbooks, the same musical instruments, the same style of body movement or even the same days on which we worship in order to be united in Christ. Our unity comes from our faith in Jesus Christ and our mutual love for one another, not from worshiping in the same way and at the same times in every congregation around the world.

Each culture may have different symbols that are meaningful to them. In many cultures, for example,

the cross is a fitting symbol of Christian faith, while in certain other cultures it may not be, because of its widespread use in that culture as a symbol of something else.

In many cultures, the Christmas season is a fitting celebration of the birth of Christ, while in certain other cultures it is not, because it has become so entrenched with local spiritism rituals.

Liturgy and culture

As a congregation matures, it develops an increasingly deeper participation in the Incarnation of Christ through its worship and liturgy. That means the members of the congregation are growing in love for God and in love for others. And that means they are becoming less and less likely to condemn others for being different and for doing things differently.

It should be obvious that the more we love God, and the more we worship and honor him, the less we would tend to condemn our brothers and sisters in Christ who prefer to worship him on days and in ways different from those we choose.

But it isn't obvious, is it? We tend to condemn it anyway. And Christians always have. Less than 25 years after Jesus' death, Paul addressed this issue in his letter to the Romans.

"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls," Paul writes. "And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

Such instructions are necessary for the very reason that Christians do tend to have a spirit of condemnation toward others. Paul continues in verse 10: "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat."

What does this have to do with liturgy? Just this: We must learn not to condemn one another over the seasons and days on which we decide to worship.

For example, if a congregation in the United States decides to worship on Sunday, then congregations in Europe and South America do not need either to 1) feel they must immediately do the same thing, or 2) get angry and upset that the U.S. congregation has made this decision.

Likewise, if a congregation in South America feels it should not get involved in local Christmas customs, then congregations in the U.S. and Canada do not have to feel their South American brothers and sisters are being disloyal to Christ.

Freedom not to condemn

We are all free in Christ to worship during whatever seasons and on whatever days we find fitting and appropriate.

As Paul wrote to the church in Rome: "He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God" (Romans 14:6).

Can we let this principle rule our attitudes toward one another? If our brothers and sisters in other congregations are gathering to worship the Lord, then surely we should not get upset about the particular choice of days on which they do so.

Let's take it one step further. In any given congregation we have fellow believers who want to worship on the seven annual holy days as usual, as well as fellow believers who want to worship during the traditional Christian festival seasons.

How do we treat one another? Are we angry and judgmental? Are we considerate and patient? Do we try to understand and appreciate the feelings of those who differ from us? What is the real value of worshiping on any day at all if the fruit of our worship is judgmentalism and condemnation?

Within the essential and central framework of Christian orthodoxy there is much room for diversity.

We have unity in the worship of the Lord, the faithful observance of the sacraments (the Lord's Supper and baptism) and the faithful proclamation of the Word.

We have diversity in the styles and forms we use in administering the sacraments, proclaiming the Word and worshiping the Lord. The Holy Spirit makes us one in Christ, and our diversity in how we express that unity is a gift of God.

Responsible choices

Each congregation in its unique setting in the world must take up its own task, with the help of the Holy Spirit, of filling cultural forms with Christian substance.

Choices about symbols, order of meeting, styles of music and prayer forms, and choices about seasons and days, must be the responsibility of the local congregation under the pastor's guidance within the broad and general guidelines provided by the denomination and the regional offices.

The annual worship calendar of the Worldwide Church of God allows for flexibility. Congregations

are free to gather for worship during those seasons and days that are most fitting for their circumstances and situations.

The key is, they are functioning within denominational guidelines (that means there are limitations), and they are not compelled to make the same choices as other Worldwide Church of God congregations (that means there is significant freedom within those limitations). At the same time, congregations are expected to respect the choices made by other congregations.

Complications

We realize these issues are complicated. The fact is, some of our members worship on the annual holy days given to Israel for wrong reasons: they believe it is a sin not to observe them.

Many of these members also believe it is a sin to worship during traditional Christian festivals. They feel sullied or dirtied, as some have put it, having to belong to a church in which there are people who celebrate Easter and Christmas.

They are upset that the Worldwide Church of God no longer forbids or avoids these days that they continue to view as sinful, and some of them are praying that God will put everything back the way it used to be.

However, there are others who worship on the seven annual holy days simply because it is their tradition and custom. They associate pleasant memories with the festivals. They are glad they can worship Christ in a new and meaningful way and see their holy day tradition as one means to that end.

Still others have completely redefined the holy days as an especially relevant way to celebrate Christ.

On the other side of the issue are those who do not want to belong to a church that holds any kind of meeting on the Israelite holy days.

Many of these have a keen sense of having been freed from the legalism that characterized the way our church understood these holy days, and they want to steer completely clear of them.

They cannot understand why the church would continue to allow for worship on these days when their observance was a major source of our spirit of exclusivity and our misunderstanding of the gospel.

Others don't mind the church having meetings on the holy days, as long as attendance is not mandatory and as long as meetings are also held during the traditional Christian seasons.

Others do not plan to remain with the Worldwide Church of God if it continues to permit worship on the annual Israelite holy days.

Our liturgical calendar

These factors and others like them make the liturgical calendar a hot topic indeed. There is no solution that will please everyone.

The goals of the Advisory Council of Elders, the international regional directors and the U.S. regional pastors in formulating a denominational position paper on the annual worship calendar are 1) faithfulness to God, and 2) denominational unity in the light of his Word (see position paper below).

That is why the calendar provides flexibility within an overall biblical framework. Congregations will be free to formulate their own local liturgical calendar within this denominational framework, taking into account the needs and preferences of all the members.

Whether we can handle such freedom is yet to be seen. Can we have diversity in this way and yet remain united in our faith in Jesus Christ and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? Surely we can. Whether we will is a matter of choice.

God loves all his children, but his children still struggle with the challenges of working together in love.

May we join together in prayer that as we assemble for worship God will lead us into a closer walk with him and with one another.

Randal Dick and J. Michael Feazell

Position Paper: Annual Worship Calendar

As part of its ongoing renewal as a denomination, the Worldwide Church of God is providing increased flexibility in its annual worship calendar. A Christian annual worship calendar must be designed to celebrate and rehearse God's great saving act in Jesus Christ. It must provide meaningful and inspiring occasions to focus on and give thanks for the grace of God as expressed in the biblical teaching and record of the incarnation, death, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ.

Our worship calendar needs to maximize the participation of all church members as well as offer opportunities for participation and shared fellowship with those who are coming to faith as well as other members of the Body of Christ.

In order to meet the worship needs of its members and to provide added focus on the incarnation, death, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ, the church is providing increased flexibility by accepting the incorporation of traditional Christian festivals into its annual worship calendar. The application of this flexibility may vary from region to region and congregation to congregation.

Notes:

1. For personal or cultural reasons, some members may choose not to participate in certain celebration occasions. In the spirit of Romans 14, the church accepts this and makes no judgment. Rather, every congregation seeks to provide for the worship needs of all its members.
2. The Lord's Supper may be held at various times throughout the year, but it is shared denominationally with footwashing annually during the Crucifixion and Resurrection season.
3. The traditional seven annual festivals may be celebrated on the nearest appropriate weekend.
4. The Festival of Tabernacles may be conducted as a weekend celebration, or as an eight-day event.
5. Special worship offerings are collected on Resurrection Sunday, Pentecost, the first day of the Festival of Tabernacles, the Last Great Day and the days on which Unleavened Bread, Trumpets, Atonement and the Incarnation are celebrated.

Worldwide Church of God Administrative Designations

The Advisory Council of Elders approved the following document May 21. Advisory Council of Elders members are Greg Albrecht, Dean Blackwell, Carn Catherwood, J. Michael Feazell, Herman Hoeh, Ron Kelly, Richard Rice, Bernie Schnippert, Norman Smith and Joseph Tkach. The document in effect does away with the former designations of ministerial ranks (evangelist, pastor, preaching elder and local elder). All ordained ministers hold the ecclesiastical rank of elder.

Denominational leadership

President/Pastor General: Chief executive and chief ecclesiastical officer of WCG.

Denominational administrator: Category descriptor only. Specific titles are consistent with each person's responsibilities, such as operation director, manager, supervisor.

Superintendent: Chief pastoral administrator.

Regional director: Administrative head of non-U.S. regions.

Regional pastor: Supervisor of senior pastors.

Congregational leadership

Senior pastor: Administrative head of one or more local churches (may or may not be salaried by the church).

Associate pastor: An elder who is assistant to a senior pastor in a line capacity.

Assistant pastor: An elder who is assistant to a senior pastor in a staff capacity.

Ministry leader: Leader of a particular ministry in a local church under the supervision of the senior pastor or his designate. (Examples: leaders of seniors ministry, women's ministry, youth ministry, counseling ministry, children's ministry, young adults ministry, Christian education ministry, church life ministry, singles ministry, facilities coordination, care ministries.)

Notes:

1. All ordained ministers hold the ecclesiastical rank of elder.
2. Elder status may be conferred only by denominational authority and through sanctioned ecclesiastical ordination.
3. Only elders may perform certain sacerdotal functions of the church, including baptisms, ordinations, weddings, funerals and anointing with oil. The sacerdotal function of baptism may also be performed by lay members, but only under the ecclesiastical authorization of a senior pastor.
4. Not every congregation will need or have every level of congregational leadership.
5. Ministry leaders may or may not be elders.
6. Denominational administrators may or may not be elders, depending on the circumstances and demands of responsibility.

Church Administration

Expectations for Pastors

The Worldwide Church of God deeply appreciates the wonderful job its pastors are doing in the service of the people of God.

Because a pastor is a **servant-shepherd** to his parishioners, and because he is an ordained minister of the Worldwide Church of God, there are many expectations placed on him. There are expectations by church members, by family, by peers, by the pastor himself, and there are expectations that the denomination has for its pastors. To help each pastor better fulfill his duties and meet expectations, the following items will help him be aware of some of the criteria by which his job performance is judged by his denominational supervisors. Pastors are expected to:

Model and Teach Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation involves teaching and practicing the spiritual disciplines with the intent that each church member and the congregation as a whole continually grows in imitating Jesus and in extending his ministry in their lives. Jesus commanded the church to teach people “to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). Pastors must encourage and admonish members to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Preach and Teach the Gospel

Pastors must preach and teach that salvation is by grace through faith. Christians have repented and accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Jesus Christ is totally sufficient for the Christian. The Christian’s relationship with God is through Jesus Christ, not through our obedience to the law. Pastors should be able to teach orthodox Christian belief and practice. Pastors are expected to support and teach the Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God.

Provide Inspiring Worship Services

The pastor should model and teach participation in corporate worship. Weekly and annual worship services should include congregational input and involvement in designing the worship. Every part of the worship service should be directed toward God, to honor and praise him. This includes well-prepared, transformational sermons. Topical sermons and special sermons such as dramatic renditions may be appropriate on certain occasions but expository sermons should be the norm.

Be a Transformational Leader

A transformational leader is not simply a manager who tries to maintain the status quo. Pastors should lead their congregations to Jesus Christ and to a full understanding and acceptance of historic, orthodox Christianity. The ministry of all believers should be a prime focus. Various needed ministries should be encouraged and developed. Pastoral leadership encourages and sees that these ministries are taking place properly. The goal throughout is that members be transformed to become more like Jesus Christ in their thoughts and behaviors.

Model and Teach Stewardship

Pastors should teach members to practice stewardship in all aspects of their lives—in the use of their time, their energy and their resources. Pastors should teach that financial giving is an aspect of worship. Pastors should model proper Christian stewardship for their congregations. It is the corporate policy of the Worldwide Church of God that all employees tithe.

Promote Small Group Ministry

Pastors should continually educate the members of their congregations in the importance of being a part of a small group, and they should keep the congregation apprised of how to start and/or enter a small group. It is a denominational goal to involve as many of our members as possible in small group ministry.

Prepare Congregations for Relational Evangelism

Pastors must teach and motivate congregations to fulfill the command Jesus gave his disciples in the great commission (Matt. 28:19-20). The goal of out-reach ministries is not just to do good works but to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastors should focus their congregation's attention on mission, evangelism and discipleship.

Participate in Continuing Education

Pastors are expected to fulfill the continuing education goal set by Church Administration by either enrolling in an approved graduate school or seminary degree program, or participating in our Pastoral Development in-service education classes. Pastors should meet the performance standards, time frame and established goals for the reading, listening and writing assignments that are set by the Church Administration Department.

Serve the Congregation Faithfully

Though many duties can be delegated and small groups can provide much care and nurture for the members, the pastor should be present at the serious times of transition in the lives of the members. The pastor's presence is expected in times of serious illness and in times of serious conflict within families or among church members. The pastor is expected, as much as is reasonably possible, to be present for funerals, weddings and other important occasions in the lives of the members.

Identify, Develop, Mentor and Empower Leaders

Pastors should seek to promote church growth by identifying gifted people in the congregation who can provide leadership for congregations now and in the future. Pastors are expected to be developing more pastors and other ministry leaders and are encouraged to plant new congregations in the community.

Be Faithful to the Statement of Beliefs and the Policies, Practices and Procedures of the Denomination

In addition to abiding by the Code of Ethics for Elders, all pastors should adhere faithfully to denominational teachings, guidelines, policies and parameters. All necessary reporting of information, church reports, ministerial expenses and other information required by the denominational headquarters should be completed accurately and within the time frames allotted.

The Church Administration staff for the United States takes these expectations seriously and uses them as criteria by which the effectiveness of pastors is measured. The Regional Pastor evaluates and reports on the performance of each pastor in his region. CAD maintains regular communication with pastors and with church members via telephone, electronic and postal mail. The data resources we have at headquarters along with files, reports and surveys will help monitor how pastors are doing in regard to these expectations.

The denominational administrators are very thankful for the wonderful jobs being done by pastors in the Worldwide Church of God and try to pass on positive comments, reports and letters as much as possible. We also communicate any complaints or causes for concern.

Those of us on the Church Administration staff want to communicate clearly the expectations the denomination has for you as a pastor. The purpose of this is to help each of you analyze your own effectiveness and expectations for yourselves as pastors of Jesus Christ and servant-shepherds of his people.

Dan Rogers

Beyond '99 Gospel Blitz

Beyond '99 Gospel Blitz is the effort of evangelical churches to reach every family with the gospel witness during Easter week of 1999. Beyond '99 is an initiative to mobilize the entire body of Christ to reach all of North America with the gospel. Around Easter time, a booklet will be sent to every household in North America explaining the gospel of Jesus Christ and supplying a phone number for those interested to call. A computer program will have all postal codes in North America to help route those callers to a church closest to them. We would like to be as helpful as possible in this worthwhile mission. If you would like to have your local church included in the list, please register at their website: www.beyond99.org

Christianity's On-Line Web Site

Many churches place a listing on Christianity's on-line web site. Some of our pastors have listed their local church here as well. It is an additional way to reach those who may be searching for a church in their area. For more information, please check the following web site: <http://www.christianity.net/churchlocator/>

Cross Road Supplement

A Newsletter for Elders of the Worldwide Church of God

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).

June 18, 1998

Greetings, Fellow Ministers.

As I trust you all know, our Pastoral Development Department has taken on the administrative responsibilities of the former Festival Office. A department that once had several full-time employees, now has none. That obviously means we cannot offer the same services we did in the past.

With that in mind, we had to “declare” 1998 a “year of Festival transition.” When the Regional Pastors and Festival Coordinators met in February, we selected eight Festival sites in the United States where the church would sponsor an eight-day program. Regional Pastors were to communicate to all pastors that no one should prepare definite plans for Festivals at the local level until after eight-day registration was well underway. We suggested that mid June would be an appropriate time to discuss at the local level which cities could/should offer final weekend mini-Festival sites.

It’s now mid June and I’d like to give you an update on the Festival registration and mini-Feast site plans for 1998. We mailed registration forms to households the first week of April. As an encouragement for members to register in a timely manner, and so we could have more accurate budget projections, we offered a Festival ’98 writing pen as an incentive for all registrations received by June 8. We expect registrations to continue throughout the summer, but at least we now feel comfortable with projections for possible attendance at the eight-day sites, and we can better prepare our budget. Because we expect registration to continue throughout the summer, we will continue to send pens to those who register for the eight-day sites as long as our supply lasts. (We did not order a sufficient number of pens to send to all members. The pens were funded from the eight-day registration donation).

Some pastors have expressed their desire to have a local mini-Feast in their area. This year the best time to hold a Mini-Feast would be the last weekend of the Festival, October 9-11. Meetings could be held Friday night, Saturday, Sunday, and for those who would like to, the final Festival day, Monday. Any combination of meetings would be at your discretion. Mini-sites are appreciated because they provide a worship experience for members who otherwise could not attend an eight-day Feast due to jobs, failing health, finances, etc. Because a mini-Feast usually involves mostly locals, it is easier to plan and therefore we asked that pastors wait until June, after the bulk of our registrations were complete, to make mini-Feast plans.

With most of the eight-day contracts and mailings completed, energies can now be focused on the mini-Feast sites. If you and the members in your area would like a local mini-Feast, please feel free to develop it now. It is our hope that those interested in attending an eight-day site will continue to register in Pasadena, and that the local mini-Feast sites will provide an alternative for those who want to attend the Feast but are unable for various reasons.

At our February meetings, because of this unusual year of transition, we asked the RPs to communicate to all pastors that there should be no additional eight-day sites. We make this recommendation to keep administrative structure appropriate to the budget and staff we have available. We advise getting input from the congregants who wish to attend as well as neighboring pastors and congregations you might invite to weekend services.

If members want to have a meeting on the opening day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Sunday evening, October 4 or on Monday, October 5, that would of course be fine.

Should you hold a mini-Feast in your area, we do not have staff to offer assistance. Nor do we have funds to contribute for hall rent, ministerial expense, etc.

Once you have determined you will hold a mini-Feast in your area, please send us information on site location, dates and times of meetings, etc. We will give the information to interested callers and also provide a list for readers in *The Worldwide News*.

If anyone inquires about eight-day Festival registrations, please remind them that there is a coupon in the June *Worldwide News* for members to use to register.

Thanks to each of you for your help in making this year's fall Feast a successful one. It has been a year of transition, and we truly appreciate your support. You probably know that a major item on the agenda for the Regional Director/Regional Pastor conference is our "Liturgical Calendar." Please pray that God will guide us as we discuss liturgical observances in 1999 and beyond.

Would you please either read the attached announcement in your local church services in the next week or two and/or have it posted in your church bulletin? If placed in the bulletin, we would appreciate at least a brief verbal notice that something about the Fall festival is in the bulletin.

Should you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to cc:Mail me or give me a call. I'd be happy to discuss whatever is on your mind regarding these matters.

Your brother in Christ,
Ronald Kelly

LOCAL CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT
TO BE READ IN ALL CHURCHES AND/OR POSTED IN YOUR BULLETINS

Fall Festival Registration Update

We have eight beautiful sites for the Festival this year: Davenport, Iowa; Hot Springs, Arkansas; Lexington, Kentucky; Palm Springs, California; Seaside, Oregon; Saratoga Springs, New York; Vail, Colorado; and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. In addition to these sites, we have the ever-popular sites of Oahu, Hawaii and Anchorage, Alaska. Local brethren in these two sites warmly welcome all mainlanders who would like to join them this year. You may register for Hawaii and Alaska using the same form as for the other sites.

Members who are planning to attend one of these fall Festival sites have been registering for the past few weeks. Church Administration asked as many as possible to register by the first week in June. That does not mean, however, that registration is closed. If you would like to attend the Festival for a full eight days or any part of the eight days at one of the eight Festival sites, please feel free to register anytime. We still have "Festival '98" ballpoint pens that will be sent to all adults who send in registration forms. We will continue to send the pens as long as the supply lasts.

Some church pastors have now begun to plan "mini-Feast" sites in local church areas for members who are unable to attend one of the eight full Festival sites. For most, the mini-Feast will feature meetings, sermons, seminars and special worship services on the final weekend of this year's fall Festival, October 9-12. Some churches may want to have worship services to open the fall Festival on Sunday night, October 4, or on Monday, October 5. In a number of church areas, several congregations will want to combine for an even more special time of worship. Please feel free to discuss your desires for any fall Festival observance with your local pastor and/or your regional director.

In a future edition of *The Worldwide News*, as pastors notify us, we will publish a list of the cities where mini-Feasts will be conducted. Because we do not have a full-time Festival staff, we will be unable to provide additional information on local mini-Feast sites. Our staff in Pasadena can only administer the eight sites that have been planned for 1998.

This year's Festival theme is *Come - Celebrate Christ!* Whatever your Festival plans for this year may be, we trust you will look forward to celebrating Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

And remember, if you plan to attend one of the eight-day sites, please help us out by registering as soon as you can. If you did not receive a registration form in the mail, there was a form in the June issue of *The Worldwide News*. Whether or not you can find a form, the easiest way to register is by a toll-free call at 1-800-507-2299.

There is plenty of room at all Festival sites, and there is still room on the Panama Canal cruise and the Holy Land Tour of Israel.