



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

Synod Secretariat, Thiruvalla, Kerala, India.

SHEPHERD'S LETTER

November, 2017

✠ Glory be to the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

I always thank God for each one of you! Day and night you are in my prayers as I think about your love for God and our Church, your faith in Jesus Christ and your patience and hope in following Jesus Christ. (adapted from I Thessalonians 1:2)

How I wish I would be able to visit your parish and meet each one of you personally and talk to you. There are many things on my heart to tell you and I would have preferred to come to your home, sit across a table and have chai with you and tell of those things to you. However, since I cannot do that, I wish to write to you often and tell you what the Lord has put on my heart for you. In this letter I would like to introduce the topic of *church calendar* and its importance in our lives and how it can assist our worship.

We are all familiar with seasons - like summer, winter and monsoon. In most parts of the world we have summer when it's very hot and then winter when it becomes really cold. In some parts of our country we have monsoon, when it rains heavily. Usually we keep track of these seasons and times of the year by using a calendar. These calendars provide opportunities for us to observe important days (like Independence Day of our country) or celebrate certain events (like beginning of harvest) or even commemorate (Gandhiji's birthday) or even our very own wedding anniversaries or birthdays.

Just like we have seasons and we keep track of time by using calendars, the Christian church has long used the church calendar as an opportunity to celebrate the Christian Faith in worship. The Christian church year and thus the calendar focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus. As a community, when we move through the church calendar, it provides us with an organised way to talk about, reflect upon and respond to the various faith confessions (rephrase) that lie at the heart of the Christian (or orthodox) faith. These church festivals and cycle of the church also becomes an important vehicle (means) to teach the story of God and his actions in human history to...

The church calendar is organised around two major sacred events:

- *Advent, Christmas and Epiphany* (beginning from December 3, 2017) - this season focuses on the first coming of Jesus and the events surrounding that.
- *Lent, Holy Week and Easter ending with Pentecost* - this season focuses on the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus.
- Ordinary time - The rest of the year following the Pentecost we focus on the various aspects of our faith, especially the mission of the church in the world.

So how do we practice this church calendar in our lives? During the different seasons of our Christian calendar, when we gather as a community to worship, we will have specific scripture portions being read, special prayers being prayed, special times of fasting and reflection - all aimed at helping us observe, celebrate and commemorate the sacred events in that season of our journey as Christians. Please take these times (seasons and days) seriously. Make sure your whole family including children reads the specific scriptures and listens to them. Make sure you attend the special prayers as well as celebrate the events together as a parish. You should also take these celebrations as an opportunity to share to others the story of God and His redemptive work in our world.

My dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to join with the people of God in the holy church on this wonderful spiritual journey, where by we grow in our faith and become more involved with the church, for the glory of God. But please do remember that you are not alone. There are thousands of your fellow believers in Jesus, celebrating the same seasons, reading the same scriptures and praying the same prayers all over the world. We as Believers Eastern Church, believe in

continuing the traditions handed to us by the Apostles and Church Fathers and what an opportunity to do just that, as we follow the church calendar.

God willing I will be writing you a letter every month that can be read during the Sunday worship service.

May Gods riches blessings, be upon each one of you, your family and your parish.

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen✠.

Dr. K.P. Yohannan
Metropolitan

Note: Instructions for those who read it.

- *Before reading it to your congregation, read this letter several times yourself, so that you become familiar with the letter and its contents.*
- *While reading to your congregation, make sure you read it slowly and carefully, so that everyone who's attending the church will be able to listen and understand.*