

# 1994: A Memo From the Principal

A peek into the future reveals possible results of court-ordered religious observances in public schools.

## Memorandum

**To:** All Parents  
**From:** Principal, Almondin Middle School  
**Date:** October 31, 1994

This is to inform you of the current status of our daily program:-

To comply with court orders resulting from suits brought by various groups, we will hold singing and poetry readings from 9:00 to 10:00 each morning. Songs and readings will include "God Bless America"; "The Star Spangled Banner"; "Washington, My Home"; "Tacoma, The City of Destiny"; "Almondin, My Alma Mater"; "M is for the Many Things She Gave Me"; "That Dear Old Daddy of Mine"; "This Land Is My Land"; "Dear Grandma of Mine"; "Aunt Sadie and Uncle Jake"; "Trees"; and selections from the Koran, Talmud, Tao Te Ching, Bhagavad Gita, Dhammapada, Book of Mormon, and others.

From 10:00 until noon there will be prayers of the following Christian denominations: Catholic; Eastern Orthodox; Maronite Christian; Nestorian Christian; Russian Orthodox; various branches of the Methodist and Lutheran (except the Missouri Synod, which opted for the afternoon so they could be away from the other Lutherans); 23 Baptist branches (except for the Christ's Only and Real Church Baptist Church, which also opted for the afternoon); six branches of the Presbyterian church; eight branches of the Episcopal church; six branches of the Congregational church; and various branches of the Assembly of God, Church of Christ, Church of God, Nazarene, Pentecostal, Unitarian-Universalist, Community, Covenant, Seventh-Day Adventist, Independent, and Christian.

Lunch will be from noon until 12:45. Lunch will be eaten in the rooms since the court decision of 1990 mandated closets for those requesting them. The lunchroom has been converted to 125 closets. If you desire one for your child, please fill in the attached form.

As many of you already know, we could not agree on a common prayer before lunch (there were 2,306 proposals). The court thus ruled that there would be 12 seconds of silent prayer instead. Because of challenges that this time was not being given, the court ruled that teachers would count those seconds aloud from the clock. In a subsequent challenge the court ruled that this counting could *not* be construed as a humanist prayer to the elemental forces of numbers in the universe. An appeal is pending.

The playground may no longer be used at recess due to the construction and activity following the 1991 court decision backing the request for outdoor altars "to enable groups to perform their religious ceremonies according to their consciences without interference." We understand that there have been complaints from the neighborhood about smoke, the smell of burning flesh, the cry of goats, and so on. We have referred these complaints to the administration. I am now using the custodian's desk. My desk was used by the Delphic Oracle Church for devination of chicken entrails by court order, and I have been unable to eradicate the odor.

The afternoon from 12:45 until 2:00 will be used for prayers of various churches: six sects of the Moslem church; ten of the Hindu; five of the Buddhist; seven animist churches of Africa, Asia, South America, Eskimo, and others; Parsee; Agnostic; Deist; Taoist; Shinto; Baha'i, and atheist, as well as churches of Odin, Thor, Zeus, the Delphic Oracle, Baal, Moloch, Ahura Mazda, Isis, Amon, and Ra. From 2:00 to 2:30 there will be the prayers of the Christian churches that refused to be included with the other Christian churches.

From 2:30 to 3:10 students will turn in their homework and receive assignments for the next day. Please note that class sizes are now ranging from 60 to 75 students. This is due to a shortage of teachers. Mrs. Schermann has just resigned to take a position with the police department as a meter maid at a 50 percent increase in salary. There is no truth to the rumor that her resignation is due to her being assaulted by a group of students accusing her of being a "secular humanist" for teaching that mathematical equations can be true, and that they were shouting, "The only truth is in the Bible!"

We hope to maintain the present 2:30-3:10 academic scheduling, but there is heavy pressure to take over some of this time by presently scheduled churches who want more time and by new churches who want equal time. The court actions now pending on this issue were initiated by the New Organized Aztec Church of Hui-chipoztli of Los Angeles, the Conservative and Totally Dedicated to Yahweh Church of New York, and the God Speaks Only to This Church and No Other Church of New Orleans.

Please remind your children that proper respect should be shown for the religious beliefs of others. There have been many complaints concerning students sleeping during prayers, doing schoolwork, talking, playing games, or listening to radios. The court has ordered that proper respect must be shown at *all* times. There have also been a number of cases of fighting and harassment; these must cease.

Finally, parents, I urge you to bring your concerns in the future to my assistant principal, who will take over my job at the end of the term. I will be leaving education to join a contemplative group at a retreat in the Ozarks known as PSAWHSTHWI (Public School Administrators Who Have Said, "To Hell With It!"). □

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