

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter July 2002

Dear Brethren:

Very warm greetings to all of you once again, from your servants in Eugene, Oregon who love and think of you often. It is a real pleasure to be able to write this personal letter to God's faithful each month, and it is sent with heartfelt devotion and appreciation for all of you whom God has preserved in these difficult times. How glorious it would be if we could all be together and have that regular fellowship, one with another. Yet God has scattered us about the earth according to His will, and we know there must be a purpose in that. It reminds us how gratifying it is to see many of the brethren at the Feast of Tabernacles each year, one of the only occasions when we are drawn together in larger groups. However, even then there are a number of you who live in places far too remote to have that chance to attend, or who face illness and disabilities which prevent a long journey. In spite of that isolation, please know that you are not forgotten, and the power of that singular Spirit of God still binds us together as family members, giving us more in common than any blood relation. One day—even at the time pictured by the Feast of Trumpets soon coming—God will gather His people from the four winds and we will be joined together with Christ for all eternity. If we can keep that marvelous picture in mind and the hope of that precious calling, we can be renewed to keep fighting against loneliness and discouragement.

As we begin to think about the fall festival season of God which is only just over two months away, it is natural to begin thinking again about our brethren we hope to see there. Many of you may also have experienced the phenomenon of a certain guilt during the summer, in realization that we may not have followed through to stay in touch more with others like we had planned. We leave the Feast of Tabernacles with good intentions of staying in closer contact, but then so easily get caught up again in our hectic lives. The lonely and more isolated brethren we had planned to write during that coming year can sometimes fade from priority as we are inundated with the challenges of our physical existence. But one of the very best ways a scattered remnant body can maintain its strength and vitality is through the kind expressions of letters or calls of encouragement. It does not

require hours of time, but it does require the spirit of sacrifice and outgoing concern for our loved ones in the Body of Christ. Just a short, simple card to say we are thinking of someone and remembering him/her in our prayers can be a real lift. One of the strongest manifestations of God's people is the love they show, one to another (John 13:35). As scattered as we are, it can be hard to know how to manifest that love sometimes. But if we remember the value of a simple contact of encouragement, it can really make all the difference.

Spiritual Principle

Over time we have been asked for a rule of thumb or guideline for knowing when we should stay home from Sabbath services, if afflicted with personal or family illness. This can be a difficult area to define, and may often involve a case by case evaluation. But hopefully we can provide some basic principles to keep in mind in making those decisions.

First, as you are aware, keeping the Sabbath properly requires convocation before God in assembly when we live close enough to a designated place and have the capacity to obey this command. This is a requirement that should never be taken lightly. If we are truly putting God first, we make many sacrifices of other competing considerations to make sure we come before God and partake of that spiritual assembly with His people. We do not just attend church services for what we "get" out of it, but equally for the opportunity to serve others. Because it is a commanded assembly, there should be very few reasons that we fail to convoke.

One of those few exceptions would be when we are legitimately ill and unable to attend. But how sick is "too sick"? Those who have been in the church for many years can probably recall the example of Mr. Armstrong and others who dragged themselves to services and even gave sermons when they were very ill. Mr. Raymond Cole did this on more than one occasion over the years, and even in one case, gave a sermon sitting in an overcoat, shivering from serious flu symptoms! At the same time, God is also the author of quarantine laws when it concerns very contagious diseases like leprosy (Leviticus 13, 14). There should therefore be consideration given to avoid spreading contagious illnesses to others.

If one has a virulently contagious illness like measles, mumps, chickenpox, or whooping cough, he/she should definitely remain in quarantine and not attend church services. But what about lesser illnesses like colds and influenza? These cases are a little more difficult to determine. Again, the examples from God's servants in past years have shown they considered it critical to come before God, even when they felt very ill. But what is a practical guideline for the laity?

If the place of assembly is in a home or very small meeting hall where avoiding close contact with others is impossible, then someone in a contagious stage of flu or fighting a severe cold (including coughing and sneezing that would easily transfer to others) should stay at home. However, if the congregation meets in a larger hall, it would be permissible for one with even a cold or flu to come immediately before the service begins, stay segregated from others—avoiding hand contact, etc.—and then leave immediately after the service ends. In this way, the command of God could still be fulfilled, with minimal opportunity to infect others.

This is the best way we can continue to emphasize the need to make absence from God's commanded assemblies a rare exception, and yet provide a common sense criteria for preventing the spread of contagious diseases to others. If you should ever have any doubts about your specific situation, please feel free to seek counsel from the lead man or local elder in your area, or to request counsel from the ministry. We are all here to work together and assist in any way we can.

Excess Second Tithe

This is just a yearly reminder of the need for second tithe to cover administrative and facility costs for the Feast. We want to reserve adequate for an enjoyable and meaningful Feast. At the same time, we all must remember, to keep the Feast requires the rental of halls, transportation, aid to those who are deserving, etc. If we all contribute, the burden for each is relatively small. A huge thanks to those whose hearts and minds are willing. May God richly and abundantly bless you in all ways.

Second Tithe Requests

Please be reminded that requests for second tithe assistance for the Feast of Tabernacles need to be in by August 15. Any who need assistance should notify us in ample time.

Trip Schedule

July 27

Penrith, England

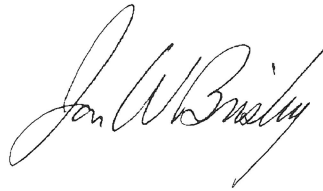
Regards

Mr. Frank Sheffold would like to thank everyone for their cards, letters, flowers and phone calls. Your expressions of concern, sympathy and condolence have been very much appreciated.

Tape Schedule

WSE-JB 22-45-17B	06-13-02	07-13-02	Fund. of Belief: Redemption Through Consent and Overcoming
WSE-RC 19-3	06-27-02	07-20-02	The Art of Listening #3
WSE-JB 41	06-27-02	07-27-02	Venting—Is It of God?
WSE-RC 31-1	07-11-02	08-03-02	Where Has the Joy Gone? #1
WSE-JB 22-46-17C	07-11-02	08-10-02	Fund. of Belief: Growing in Grace and Knowledge
WSE-RC 31-2	07-25-02	08-17-02	Where Has the Joy Gone? #2

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby