

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter September 2004

Dear Brethren:

Since this will be the last chance to write to all of you before we gather for the fall Feasts of God, we greet you with heartfelt appreciation and respect for your steadfast devotion to Jesus Christ's revelation, and pray you will all have a wonderful and inspiring festival experience wherever you may be assembling about the world. Those of you still holding fast to the original doctrines established by Christ in His true Church are unique in these current days of darkness and confusion. Therefore, the convocations you will be part of, in obeying God's command to assemble before Him, will be very special indeed. You will be gathering in those places where God has specifically placed His name, through the authority of His legitimate ministry. He will be there in our midst, and in keeping those Holy Days in humble submission to His command, we will once again be confirmed under the sign between God and His people (Exodus 31:13).

The most important thing we can all do to assure these fall Holy Days become the blessing God wants them to be, is to focus our attention on serving others in the Body. Yes, the Feast of Tabernacles was often referred to by Mr. Herbert Armstrong as "God's vacation time," but he did not mean that we were to think of the Feast as a time of escape from all responsibility—a time to be idle and unproductive. The Feast of Tabernacles represents the one thousand year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth, when He will be actively working to restore all things to their originally-created perfection and beauty. It will be a time of great endeavor by the God Family for the edification of all nations, who for the first time will be trained to know, love, and obey their Creator God. Those blessed to be part of that first resurrection will be Kings and Priests under Christ, ruling with power and authority in the kingdoms of men. It will be a time of great effort to establish the equity of God's laws into the practices of the nations, and to marshal the clean-up required in the aftermath of that final battle under Satan's previous rule. Even though that entire period is symbolized by the weekly Sabbath—a time of rest—that rest to come is not a shirking of responsibility, but a restoration of all things. Even as Christ healed on the Sabbath (considered work by the Pharisees), so the God Family will be working to heal all things during that millennial reign.

With that in mind, those who come to the Feast with the primary expectation of being entertained, pampered, or served by others will miss the real opportunity for inspiration. These largest gatherings of the year provide one of the very best opportunities for each of us to serve one another. If we come to the Feast with deep appreciation for being in the midst of the true children of God—whom He has called out to be in His Royal Family—and we are truly thankful for the mere opportunity to be among them (knowing we are not worthy of anything) then we will have the basis for a productive festival experience. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3). If we come with that kind of thankfulness into God's presence—among His dear children—we will have a wonderful opportunity to derive the satisfaction and inspiration God wants for each of us. That orientation will encourage us to find ways to serve others. And if we are each on the lookout for ways to help and serve others at the Feast, what a glorious example we can all set as a collective body.

How about setting a goal to get to know at least three people (or families) that you have not spent much time with before? Over the years, we can all develop habits of predictable behavior and association at the Feast. But how about breaking out of that rut and going out of your way to build bonds with those you do not know as well? One of the greatest services one can render is to take time to talk and chat with someone who may be more alone or isolated. You see, we are not really talking about grandiose efforts to serve, but simply the sacrifice of your time and energy to pay attention to someone else, to listen to them and show a real interest in them.

Not one of us should ever come to the Feast eager to judge others for *not* seeking us out and serving *our* needs. That is what we call the "gotcha" attendee, arriving with a chip on his shoulder, and looking for an excuse to say others do not show "enough love." There are certain ones in past decades who have come to the Feast with that attitude, and they have always been able to pick on something that fits their preconceived conclusions. Some very clever ones have even claimed they do not want to be served themselves, but feel they are the "only ones" trying to serve the brethren in need. They view themselves as the champions of the weak, in the midst of a congregation that has "no love." Brethren, please be careful never to fall into that kind of thinking. If we seek to find offences, it is certain we always will. But such a one is never prepared to keep the Feast as God intended. Our attitude must always be to seek opportunity to serve, never to expect others to serve. If we come without putting any burdens of expectation on others—only the self—we can have the rich and rewarding occasions God intended this season to produce.

May God bless you all in your final preparations to keep the Feasts, and may we pray collectively for His mercy and protection in our travels and assemblies in His glorious name.

Dress Requirements for Those Who Serve

In the past couple of years, we have addressed the issue of proper church service attire to educate our newer members about those standards they may not have understood, as well as to remind our longer-term members about long-standing teachings of the church. By mentioning it again here, it is not our intent to "beat a dead horse." But in light of the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles, it is important to emphasize one requirement we will make for all those who will serve in a *visible capacity* during one of our services. As background, here is an excerpt from the March 2003 *Announcement Letter*, defining proper dress for men and women at church services:

What about proper attire for church services on Sabbaths and Holy Days? The overriding principle emphasizes we are coming into the very presence of God. If you were called before the president, prime minister, or royalty of your country, how would you dress for that meeting? Would you not wear your best? Does God—as Sovereign of the whole universe—deserve any less than we would give to human rulers on this earth? In the church, we were taught we should always wear our best to services. If that means the best we have is a pair of overalls, then that is acceptable to God, given they are clean, pressed, and well cared for. But in most cases, the people of God can afford something better for these solemn occasions. What guidelines should we use?

Men should ordinarily wear suits and ties (unless the standard for formal dress in your country is something different, like a barong in the Philippines). Suits and ties are the standard today in most countries for formal occasions. Over past decades, a number of men have tried to argue suits and ties are modern inventions, and Jesus Christ did not wear them. But the spiritual principle is that Christ wore what was customary for the time, as long as it did not violate a law of God. In our day today, golf shirts, polo shirts, open collars, etc. are considered casual, not formal. While the trend today is to eliminate formalwear more and more, that is one custom the church must reject.

But what about those who would say we are dressing for God, not for men? Keep in mind another important spiritual principle. "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). This tells us true Christians are accountable not only to be right in heart before God, but also specifically to work to avoid creating a negative impression in the minds of others. This does not mean we are to obsess over what someone else might think. But it does mean we are each responsible for taking into account the natural impression our actions and behaviors might leave on others. What does that have to do

with church attire? A man who resists wearing a suit and tie for other than financial constraints is willing to let others assume he feels it is OK to dress casually before God. Oh yes, it can be clarified one on one that this is not the intended orientation, but the very fact such explanations have to be given is evidence an appearance of evil is first being made, and then thereafter needing correction. For those who resist ties because they are uncomfortable, the solution is usually to buy a dress shirt with the correct collar size. A well-fitting collar allows one to fasten the top button without constricting the neck. A tie which is not too tight need not bind or cause real discomfort. Even a string tie would be better than no tie at all. . . .

What about the ladies? The rules outlined above for women's dress all apply especially to attire for church services. If one is weak—and inclined to depart from God's standard of dress during the week—by all means, at least refrain from bringing such weakness into the church. Habits of wearing inappropriate clothes should be rooted out altogether, but let it begin by correcting our appearance when we come before God. From *The Good News* magazine article, September, 1962, entitled *Women's Dress Ruling*, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

. . . in conformity with the Word of God, God's Church encourages women to dress neatly, pleasingly, attractively within the bounds of proper modesty and good taste, and even with sufficient becoming style to express personality and individuality. God Himself expressed perfect artistry in beautiful design in nature—in the lily—the rose—beautiful trees, shrubs and plants—in prize-winning livestock—and even in the beautiful human body, when healthy and not degenerated.

This should be our standard for making personal decisions about attire for church services.

One additional point: Should there be a difference in our dress during the Feast of Tabernacles on the High Days vs. the other days of the feast? Even when it is not a Holy Day, if we are still coming before God in a solemn service—which we do during all eight days of the feast—we should acknowledge that fact in the way we present ourselves before Him. . . .

What about ministerial enforcement of dress standards within the church? Decades ago, many of you may have experienced an administrative philosophy

whose intent was to create a "perfect" church. While very well-meaning, real obedience is by faith—of the heart and mind—and not merely an outward appearance. If those attending services comply with the law only out of fear of the ministry—and not a heartfelt desire to please God—then God does not accept that orientation anyway, and sin still exists. So no human being—minister or otherwise—can ever create a perfect church. The results of that misguided—howbeit earnest—goal became all too evident in its failure to produce spiritual fruits. Those who adhered to church teachings out of fear—without real faith—ultimately cast them aside when real trials surfaced. The *real* process of perfection is taking place in the minds of those who are *willingly* overcoming the carnal nature and putting on more of the mind of Jesus Christ.

It was therefore never Mr. Raymond Cole's approach to have deacons scrutinizing member's dress and militantly intercepting and confronting those who did not fully measure up. Neither should it be the laity's role to scrutinize one another. (However, if one continues to dress questionably, wears make-up—which God despises, or engages in any other prohibited behavior, one hardly has anyone else to blame if negative attention is attracted. If we know these things are wrong, why would we bring more problems upon ourselves by insisting on bringing worldly customs into the church?) Mr. Cole spoke strongly from the pulpit God's requirements for obedience—without holding back—and then made it the individual's responsibility to act upon that knowledge. Certainly, if something considered blatant sin is brought into the body—having the potential to destroy the flock—that must be dealt with strongly by the ministry. But such authority has never been exercised in Church of God, The Eternal in an arbitrary or presumptuous way. This ministry seeks to give time for overcoming, as long as an attitude of rank rebellion is not being manifested. Has that orientation led us to more and more liberality in the last twenty-eight years of our existence? No, it has not, which is the best proof of the wisdom of that benevolent administration.

To see the entire text of this article, please refer to the 2003 *Announcement Letter*. If anyone should like a copy, please contact the church office and we would be happy to provide one.

The point of reprinting this section is to emphasize something that will affect all individuals serving in a *visible capacity* during one of our solemn services at the Feast of Tabernacles. While the guidelines given above confirm our intent to stay away from enforcement concerning the dress of laymembers in the congregation, those who participate

in part of the solemn service in any focused way are an exception. This includes those who participate in hymn and special music service (choral singers, pianists, instrumental ensemble members), emcees, and those men who give opening and closing prayers. Because the ministry is held accountable for assuring a solemn service which sets the correct example, these special functions also come under the jurisdiction of that ministry, and we must therefore assure the proper example is set, just as much as in what we wear ourselves.

While this standard is always required on weekly Sabbaths and Holy Days, we also want to emphasize it for non-Holy Day services during the Feast of Tabernacles as well. Therefore, if you are one who is scheduled to serve either by performing music, leading the song service, or offering a prayer, please make sure you are dressed according to this standard. We appreciate your sincere cooperation with these requests. While many of our former brethren continue to water down these standards year by year, we are intent on holding fast those principles—small and great—which bespeak our fear and respect for God.

Monthly Letter

Because the preparation time of the *Monthly Letter* falls within the Feast of Tabernacles, there will be no letter for October.

Death

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Mrs. Jeannette Turlington, Wednesday, September 1, after a long, difficult struggle with cancer. She will be remembered with much thankfulness for her service in providing biblically-oriented slide shows during the Feast of Tabernacles. Jeannette will be missed by all who knew her. We offer our condolences to her husband, Tom, and their family and friends.

Holy Days

Feast of Trumpets Thursday, September 16
Atonement Sabbath, September 25
Feast of Tabernacles September 30–October 6
Last Great Day October 7

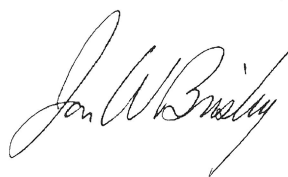
Trip Schedule

September 16 (Trumpets) Modesto, California
September 30–October 2 (Feast of Tabernacles) Newport, Oregon
October 4–October 7 (Feast of Tabernacles) Townsend, Tennessee

Tape Schedule

Tape #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 23-4	08-05-04	08-28-04	Hope: Purpose, Potential, and Power #4
WSE-JB 64	08-05-04	09-04-04	Why Ministers Fail
WSE-RC 23-5	08-19-04	09-11-04	Hope: Purpose, Potential, and Power #5
WSE-JB 22-66-22F	08-19-04	09-18-04	Fundamentals of Belief: Church Government
(Atonement tape sent out 08-03-04)		09-25-04	—
(No tape—FOT)	—	10-02-04	—
WSE-RC 62-1	09-02-04	10-09-04	Do We Really Believe? #1
WSE-JB 22-67-22G	09-02-04	10-16-04	Fundamentals of Belief: Church Government
WSE-RC 62-2	09-15-04	10-23-04	Do We Really Believe? #2
WSE-RC 62-3	09-15-04	10-30-04	Do We Really Believe? #3
WSE-RC 62-4	09-24-04	11-06-04	Do We Really Believe? #4
WSE-JB 22-68-22H	09-24-04	11-13-04	Fundamentals of Belief: Church Government

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby