

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter August 2006

Dear Brethren:

We send our special greetings to you, as the beloved of God, once again with fervent prayers for your continued prosperity in that spiritual calling. There is nothing that binds us together as family more than the Spirit of God, and so this letter is again an expression of sincere love and respect for each one of you as brethren, wherever you may be upon this earth. Together we share that most important bond in common—the hope for an eternal future in the Family of God. May we all hold resolutely to that hope, and endure to see the reward of our faith.

Spiritual Principle—Laymember Communications

Decades ago, Mr. Herbert Armstrong provided the ministry some important guidelines to use in counseling church members concerning written communications. Mr. Raymond Cole recounted these principles a number of times in small local Bible studies, but it is very likely many of God's people may not have been privy to this information. In this age of expanded communications made possible by technologies like e-mail, these principles are actually more important than ever before.

Years ago, the church faced a particular challenge with which many of us can identify today. Before the church became large, brethren were few and scattered, and without opportunity to fellowship with others of like mind on many weekly Sabbaths. The natural yearning for that contact led to what Mr. Armstrong called "letter writing campaigns." Brethren began writing personal letters, copying them in mass, and then sending them to an expansive mailing list of other brethren. The intent was all very good—a desire to serve others of like mind who were lonely and to share positive and uplifting communications. The problem was this: Such endeavors always seemed to generate difficulties sooner or later, and Mr. Armstrong eventually addressed it by discouraging the practice.

He did not discourage brethren from writing personal letters to other brethren. That is not the issue. But what he did not condone was brethren writing to a large audience of other members in what would usually become a newsletter format. Invariably, something would be written that was problematic or poorly worded, and rather than affecting only one recipient, it affected everyone on the mailing list. Besides that, there was always a tendency for such letters to depart over time from the personal flavor of one-on-one communication and slide instead into a "group teaching style." That is very dangerous indeed. It is not appropriate for laymembers to allow themselves to step—even inadvertently—into the shoes of the ministry, teaching the church. It is very fine to encourage other members one-on-one. Those kinds of very personal contacts can be very helpful indeed.

Today it is easier than ever to communicate with many people. Internet chat groups, e-mail, and web-logs (called blogs) have made it very simple to share ideas with thousands and even millions of others. Such tools are being advocated in this world as the means to allow "the little man" to "make his voice heard." Members of God's church have access to these very same tools for personal communication as well, but we need to be careful we do not embrace the world philosophy in its use. Do not fall into the same traps of old that Mr. Armstrong discouraged. The technology is different, but the underlying principle still applies. It is just fine for two or three brethren to use an internet chat function to communicate real-time. This would be the same as if a small group were standing together before or after church services and talking amongst themselves. But as always, we must be careful what we say at any time. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin" (Proverbs 10:19). The more we talk, the more chance there is for us to say something we should not. But as long as we are careful, those kinds of opportunities can be very inspirational.

What is not acceptable is using e-mail, blogs, or regular mail as a tool to access a large group of God's people—as a captive audience—for expressing personal commentary on various topics. This would be the same as if one gathered dozens of brethren together in person, stood before them at the podium, asked for their complete attention, and then began to instruct, or to give one's opinion about things in the world. Such activity begins to look very nearly like giving a sermon, and none of our faithful members would ever presume to do that. Yet if we are not very careful, we might inadvertently fall into it without realizing.

In general, the best way to avoid problems is to communicate primarily one-on-one, rather than producing a single letter or message targeted to a large group. A truly personal letter is much more inspiring anyway, and more cherished by the recipient. That is not to say it is wrong to duplicate information you want to communicate and send to more than one person. An example might be a newsy description of what you and your family have been doing. Why reinvent the wheel by composing that same story multiple times? It is not wrong to copy such segments that will be of interest to many of your correspondents and include it in multiple personal letters or e-mails. Just avoid allowing your correspondence to be written as if for a group, rather than for an individual.

Even as it is not wrong to discuss spiritual topics in person with other individuals, it is not wrong to write these same topics in personal correspondence either. But in both cases, we should never attempt to "get on a soap box" and direct others, or to admonish the church. It is not a laymember's responsibility to inspire the collective group of God's people through mass mailings. That is the duty of the ministry, through official programs like this very *Announcement Letter*. Please resist setting up your own "programs" of the same nature. This ministry has not approved the use of our church mailing list for any such activity. It takes wisdom to make our personal contacts positive and constructive. That wisdom is available to God's people through the Holy Spirit. May we all be diligent to serve one another, willing to make time for those personal contacts, but then may we all be wise in crafting what we communicate to be truly positive and appropriate, to the honor of God.

Camp Tejas

We would like to express a special thank you to Mr. David Brandenburg, Mrs. Jackie Wakefield, and their volunteer assistant, Miss Rebecca Engel, for their personal sacrifice to make Camp Tejas a success again this year. We also wish to thank Mr-s. Richard Litz and Mr-s. Robert Litz, for their willingness and extraordinary sacrifice of facilities, labor, and time spent supporting the camp program. From all accounts, the teens had a wonderful eleven-day summer camp experience, made possible by much hard work of the organizing staff.

It is to those volunteer church members who have sacrificed so much that we all owe a debt of gratitude. We must never take for granted that there will be another camp opportunity next year. It is all according to the willingness of Mr. David Brandenburg and Mrs. Jackie Wakefield as the sponsors, organizers, and driving force behind the project. The church will certainly continue to support them as the principals as long as they choose to continue that volunteer service.

Returning Used Cassette Tapes

Those driving to the Feast may bring cassette tapes that are no longer being used. We will once again transport them back to Eugene from the Feast sites. In Townsend, Tennessee, Mr. Bill McCammon will oversee collecting and boxing tapes for shipment. Duplication of Feast sermon tapes requires an enormous number of new cassettes and these returned tapes help to offset the cost. However, the very best way to help reduce our costs is to become willing to begin receiving sermons on CD rather than cassette tape.

US Feast of Tabernacles

We realize that many plan activities far in advance for the Feast; therefore, we are letting everyone know that there will be a church potluck in each Feast site this year. In Newport, OR, it is scheduled for Monday evening, October 9, and in Townsend, TN, it is scheduled for Thursday evening, October 12. Further information concerning the potluck socials will be provided during the Feast.

Excess Second Tithe

This is another 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 September 1. Any who need assistance should notify us in ample time.

Holy Days

Feast of Trumpets Sabbath, September 23

Atonement Monday, October 2

Feast of Tabernacles October 7–October 13

Last Great Day October 14

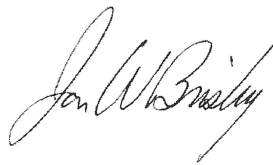
Trip Schedule

August 26 Baltimore, Maryland
September 23 Modesto, California

Tape Schedule

Tape #	Mailed	Played	Title
HFT-RC 84-3	07-06-06	08-05-06	Are You a Proven Product? #1
WSE-JB 80-14	07-20-06	08-12-06	A Survey of the Book of Job #14 Job Replies to His Friends: Chapter 13
WSE-JB 80-15	07-20-06	08-19-06	A Survey of the Book of Job #15 Conclusion of Job's Reply: Chapter 14
HFT-RC 84-5	08-03-06	08-26-06	Are You a Proven Product? #2
WSP-JB 87	08-03-06	09-02-06	When Does Life Begin?
WSE-JB 80-16	08-17-06	09-09-06	A Survey of the Book of Job #16 Eliphaz's Second Speech
WSP-RWL 3	08-17-06	09-16-06	How Do You Feel About Alternative Lifestyles?

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby