

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter April 2007

Dear Brethren:

By the time most of you get this mailing, it will still be the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or just past. We pray that God is blessing you with a full and rich understanding of the significance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and the meaning of unleavened bread in His glorious plan for our salvation. All of you continue to be very dear to us, no matter where you live, or how far away you may be. It is the Spirit that binds us together like nothing else, and makes us family and brethren. May you continue to thrive in the loving care of our Heavenly Father, who has called you to such an auspicious future. Your spiritual successes are always so uplifting and inspiring to us. And for those of you traveling during this season—to be in one of those designated places—may God grant you His protection and blessing in every way.

Spiritual Principle—Offerings to God

During this Spring season, we have the opportunity to come before God more frequently than usual, and to convoke in designated places on special high Sabbath Days. Along with the weekly Sabbaths, these occasions involve the command to bring sacrifices before God. While ancient Israel was required to bring physical meat offerings, the antitype of those offerings is just as important for spiritual Israelites today. Do we stop to consider that when we come before God, we are not to come empty-handed? The point of this writing is not to focus on the specific command of Deuteronomy 16:16, concerning a specific offering to be brought three times in the year. We have covered this principle very well in times past. But stop and think about the *other* offerings incumbent upon us, not only just three times in a year, but every time we come before God in a holy convocation. What are the elements of our Sabbath offerings?

According to the Sabbath service format God inspired Mr. Herbert Armstrong to teach us, these are some of the elements involved whenever we come together to obey God's command to convoke: hymn singing, opening and closing prayers, special music, sermon, and brotherly fellowship. From the time one enters the designated meeting place until one leaves to go home, these are the elements that are predominantly involved. Which ones are considered sacrificial offerings to God?

Congregational hymn singing is definitely an offering we make before God. Psalm 100 tells us to make a joyful noise through singing when we come into God's presence. The hymn service is not something to be taken lightly. It is one of the best opportunities for a lay member to participate in that service and contribute to the collective offering given at the throne of God. Our singing should be heartfelt and sincere. No musical talent is required, just the sincere expression of thanksgiving and praises.

The opening and closing prayers are also an offering before God. Baptized men who are asked to offer these prayers do so on behalf of the entire congregation, not just themselves. And those prayers are received at God's throne like an offering of incense on the golden altar (Revelation 8:3–4). It is not our intent to provide here the specific guidelines for a good opening or closing prayer. Those directions have been published before. Just keep in mind it is not the time to go into a long-winded personal speech, or to try and transmit some "message" to the congregation. The very best prayer as an offering to God is sincere and heartfelt, but succinct and to the point, without rambling.

What about special music? Special music differs from congregational singing in that it has been prepared in advance to be a very special offering before God. Whether it is a voice or instrumental offering, it should be one which has had much care applied to prepare the best sacrifice possible. This is not to say that the only appropriate special music offerings must be at the professional level. If that were true, we would never be able to groom new performers for service, especially among our young people. Mr. Raymond Cole was always very anxious to give our children—as students of music—an opportunity to develop those talents through service in the church. Therefore, acceptable offerings for special music do not have to be error free, but they do have to be the very best someone can offer, because he has worked and prepared to give his very best. Additionally, the special music offering should be treated with the same respect we give an opening or closing prayer. It is not the time to be going in or out of the hall, or rustling with books and papers. There should be absolute silence and respect given at this time.

Fellowship among brethren is another opportunity to make an offering before God, even if that one did not initially come to mind. Yes, our willingness to communicate positively with others—to be attentive and supportive—is a very favorable offering to God.

Remember the principle Jesus Christ stated: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). Therefore, even though you are actually rendering a service to another human being, God views it as a sign of love and respect for Himself, because you are showing love and concern for the brethren He also loves. Fellowship, therefore, should never be something that is reserved or cliquish. When we come together in those appointed places, we are coming into God's presence. Even before or after the formal service, our behavior counts. Do we take the opportunity to fellowship with many different brethren, or do we congregate only with a few we "like the best"? Whether your fellowship is selfish or truly an outgoing service to all has everything to do with God's appraisal of your sacrifice. You are always offering some form of a sacrifice. Is it an acceptable one?

What about the sermon or the sermonette? Is this an offering to God made by the ministry? The answer in this case is an emphatic no. The sermon is the one part of the holy convocation that is not categorized as an offering to God. Why is this true? After all, some in times past have thought of the sermon as only one part of our "total offering" to God, and no more important by comparison to the congregational singing, the special music, or the opening and closing prayers. But this is not true. The sermon is not something the minister offers to God on behalf of the people. The sermon is the inspired word that God gives *to the people* through that human instrument. The sermon is *God talking to the congregation*, not the other way around. So that inspired message is the one element of the service that is not considered a sacrifice to God. God teaches *us* through that inspired message, and we show our thanksgiving, praise, and honor to Him in return through every other element of that commanded assembly.

If we understand these cardinal principles, how much more rewarding can be our participation in both weekly and annual convocations we may be blessed to attend.

Birth

Mr-s. Jean-David Aviolat would like to announce the birth of their second child. Alizée was born Saturday evening, March 3. She weighed 7 pounds and was almost 19 inches long. Stephanie and baby Alizée are doing fine.

Second Passover

Anyone needing to partake of the second month Passover after ministerial approval, please be advised that it is May 2, to be observed the previous evening, May 1, after sunset. If instructions are needed, please contact the church office as soon as possible.

Prayer Request

[Omitted for confidentiality]

Holy Day

Pentecost: Monday, May 28, 2007

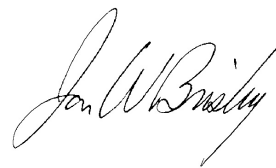
Trip Schedule

April 7, 9	Baltimore, Maryland
April 14	Stephenville, Texas
May 19	George, South Africa
May 26, 28	Lausanne, Switzerland

Tape Schedule

Tape #	Mailed	Played	Title
HFT-RC 82-4-2	03-08-07	03-31-07	The Sabbath—A Sign Between God and His People #2
WSE-JB 80-26	03-08-07	04-07-07	A Survey of the Book of Job #26 Job's Final Speech #1
HFT-RC 90-3-1	03-22-07	04-14-07	A Contrast Between God's Law and Mercy #1
WSE-JB 80-27	03-22-07	04-21-07	A Survey of the Book of Job #27 Job's Final Speech #2
HFT-RC 90-4-2	04-05-07	04-28-07	A Contrast Between God's Law and Mercy #2
WSE-JB 80-28	04-05-07	05-05-07	A Survey of the Book of Job #28 Job's Final Speech #3
HPT-RC 78-1	04-19-07	05-12-07	Spiritual Growth #1

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby