

April 3, 2017

Dear Members:

As the Passover season approaches, many of us are feeling beset with trials and hardships. We are targeted because of the influence Satan is constantly exerting against the Church of God. Satan never rests and neither should we. Our spiritual welfare hinges upon our willingness to stand firm in the Truth and not succumb to the lies Satan has so masterfully intertwined into mankind's beliefs. Our only hope of leaving behind worldly sins is to have an unquenching desire for those things that are pure (1 Peter 2:1-2). If we are truly coming before God with that attitude, we will grow in godly understanding and overcome anything Satan throws at us.

We should come together with this attitude during God's Holy Days, and even more so as we gather to take the Passover. Our continued support for one another, especially as the world is spiritually crumbling around us, is necessary. The Church of God will not fall, as Christ states: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades [death] shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Are we willing to wholly submit to God so that we can take part and build up the Church of God? When self-desires overcome the Will of God, there is no room for the Truth. His Church will prevail but many in the end time will not. Some, in the pursuit of the temporary, will simply walk away from eternal life.

During the recent Church Conference one central theme emerged: the Work of God is not finished! Christ told His Disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature..." (Mark 16:15). That commission is still at the forefront of our focus for the Church.

Some pertinent topics covered from this year:

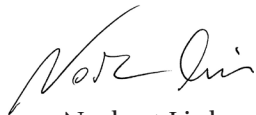
- We discussed the continuing work of the ministry from all our locations, including the ongoing growth in Germany, as well as new and prospective baptisms in the U.S and Germany.
- The technical staff is continuing to modify the English and German websites for better web visibility. Web traffic has grown by over 30%. We are seeing viewers from all parts of the world. We also discussed the need to include clarifying comments regarding our approach towards the Current Events section.
- The StandingWatch has been updated graphically and the video has been directly incorporated into the Church website.
- We plan to incorporate the video for the live Sabbath broadcast directly into the Church website. Initial testing using YouTube instead of Livestream for this change is ongoing. Both San Diego and Fort Collins are in the process of upgrading equipment. We hope to have a more stable broadcast with these changes. We also discussed setting up equipment so other areas can broadcast live/re-recorded video services.
- We had discussions on doctrinal issues, some of which will be followed up with Q&A's. These include the understanding and definition of what are "saints"; whether or not Satan can influence us while asleep; issues that arise with early Sabbath sunsets for commuters; the concept of "betrothal"; and conditional and unconditional biblical promises for blessings.

- Discussion on the requirements and capabilities for our organization to visit a growing number of brethren and interested persons, including those in Africa.
- What is our approach towards other COG organizations in light of doctrinal and administrative differences? We have plans for a booklet, based (in part) with our on-going Q&A series, "How Does the Church of the Eternal God and its International Affiliates Differ From Other Christian Churches?" Our focus should be to uphold the Will of God to the best of our ability and let our lights shine.
- We discussed the steps a person should go through when requesting prayer announcements. Based on James 5:13–16, we have a clear process which the Church has followed. We also discussed the kind of problems which should or should not be included in an official prayer request, and the need for specific preparations of an anointed cloth. We intend to prepare a Q&A to delve deeper into this topic.
- Discussion of several new booklets and other printed material that are in the early planning stages; as well as Feast plans for 2018.

It is on our knees that this Church will succeed in fulfilling God's Will. Stating that the Church of God is built on a Rock—Jesus Christ—elicits a sense of solidity. While the ministry is at the forefront for many of the required tasks, the entire membership needs to support this Work. Each of us contributes in making the Church a place of growth through our prayers and obedience to God's Will. Paul understood that complete submission to God's Will would strengthen himself and his brethren, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Hold fast to the faith delivered to each of us—God's saints. We are light bearers for a world rooted in darkness. Christ offered Himself willingly so that we could share in His Glory. Let us not waste this wonderful opportunity on things that are passing, but fix our eyes on that great eternal reward.

With love from the ministry for all of God's Servants,



Norbert Link



Dave Harris



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