

WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

CABLE WATCHTOWER

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PHONE (718) 625-3600

October 1, 1989

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

1. Today we see many evidences of Jehovah's blessing on His people. Fine increases are taking place worldwide and congregations are being strengthened. We surely appreciate what our traveling overseers have contributed toward these accomplishments. Obviously their visits are of great benefit to the brothers. An earlier letter concerning matters with regard to traveling overseers' accommodations and expenses was dated October 1, 1976, so it is appropriate to now update certain points.

Reimbursements

2. Circuit and district overseers and their wives in full-time service receive a small monthly reimbursement from the Society for some personal items. Currently the reimbursement is \$40.00 a month. This is adjusted from time to time due to changes in living costs. In addition to the monthly reimbursement, currently each one is given credit of \$240, \$300, or \$360 annually on a personal expense account, this according to the number of years in full-time service. They also obtain literature at pioneer rates.

Accommodations

3. It is interesting to observe what The Watchtower said on this matter many years ago in its issue of March 1, 1916, under the heading "Entertainment of the Pilgrims": "All friends of the Truth properly feel it an honor and a privilege to entertain the Pilgrim Brethren during their brief stays. However, the interests of the Truth and the comfort of the Pilgrims should also be considered. The Elders, or, under their direction, the Class Secretary, should see to it that Pilgrims are entertained in homes where they will not be a burden and where they will be comfortable. Those who travel and preach continuously are more or less under a nervous strain and need comfort, proper rest, and some degree of privacy for meditation. All having the interests of the work at heart should, therefore, cheerfully cooperate that the Pilgrim may be entertained in a home where accommodations are suitable.

4. "The entire Class would surely be disgraced if the Society's representative were otherwise treated. We are sure that only thoughtlessness on the part of some has made this suggestion necessary."

5. When you open up your hearts and your homes and provide suitable accommodations for your traveling overseers and their wives (if married) during their stay with you, it is deeply appreciated. While they do not expect or desire to be an expensive burden, traveling overseers do appreciate and need clean places in which to stay. Some have health problems or allergies, and it is good for the presiding overseer to inquire of the traveling overseer as to any needs in this regard.

6. It would be beneficial for the presiding overseer and another elder to check out the accommodations to be offered to the traveling overseer to make sure all is in good order and is in accord with what is considered herein. Traveling overseers have a full week of theocratic activity in each congregation. Careful advance arrangements to provide appropriate accommodations will help them fulfill their responsibilities in a fine way. It is good to realize that it is not easy to live in a different place each week, year after year. However, there are little things we can do that will make their stay pleasant.

7. Each of us needs privacy so we can study, meditate, and get necessary work done. Accommodations in a private home should be selected accordingly. And while our brothers enjoy the company of the traveling overseer and his wife, and we are sure they enjoy yours, they need adequate time to themselves. Sufficient rest is vital if they are to do their assigned work the next day. Traveling overseers follow a schedule that allows them to best serve the spiritual interests of the entire congregation.

8. Arrangements should be made for them to have a place to hang up their clothes. Also clean dresser drawers should be made available if at all possible. A chair, table for writing upon which a typewriter may be placed, and good lighting will be helpful. (Compare 2 Kings 4:10.) Traveling overseers very much appreciate this.

9. As to meals, nothing elaborate need be arranged. Traveling overseers deeply appreciate your hospitality and will gladly eat what you provide. Wholesome, nourishing food enables them to feel well physically and to keep up with their schedule. Of course, if they are ill or have health problems, they may not be able to eat certain foods.

10. A number of thoughtful presiding overseers have made it a point at the end of the traveling overseer's stay to ask him about the accommodation which had been arranged for him. This is a good practice, and we commend you brothers for showing this extra concern. It is not necessary, and may not be wise, to have the circuit overseer stay in a different home each time he visits the congregation. For example, if there is only one home that is truly suitable, then it may be best for him to stay there each

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visit if the householder is willing and it is convenient rather than 'rotating' him to different homes where the facilities may be inadequate.--3 John 8.

11. The Society and the traveling overseers and their wives appreciate very much your hospitality. (Rom. 12:13) Truly this is a Christian course and enables the traveling overseers to get the most accomplished and to enjoy a warm relationship with the brothers.

12. If a congregation is unable to provide room and meals and cannot assist in caring for expenses of accommodations, food, and so forth, the traveling overseer may submit his expenses for these items to the Society for reimbursement. At no time does the Society wish the traveling overseer and his wife to be a financial burden to any congregation.--2 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thess. 2:9.

Circuit Apartments

13. In some metropolitan areas, suitable and convenient accommodations may not be available in the homes of the brothers for the traveling overseer and his wife. In these areas the collective body of elders in the circuit or district may decide that it would be more advantageous for the circuit or district to provide a modest, reasonably-priced apartment for the use of the traveling overseer. Likewise, in some densely-populated areas where cities are fairly close together, it may be more convenient and cost effective for the circuit or district to provide a modest apartment for their traveling overseer.

14. In some areas, where the distance between congregations or circuits is relatively great, the use of an apartment by a traveling overseer may be impractical. It may be that a number of congregations in an area would be hard pressed to provide the funds necessary to maintain an apartment for their traveling overseer. In such cases the traveling overseer can stay in suitable homes in the circuit. Some have lovingly made their homes available for two or more weeks at a time where circumstances make this practical.

15. Where congregations are willing and able to provide accommodations in the homes of the brothers, as outlined above, it would not be appropriate for traveling overseers to suggest or encourage the brothers to provide an apartment. If after prayerfully considering the factors involved, the collective body of elders in the circuit or district decides that an apartment for the traveling overseer is practical and cost effective, the Society has no objection if the elders make such arrangements.

16. A congregation, or several congregations, may have in mind building a new Kingdom Hall, or renovating one, and they may

wish to include an apartment which could be used by a traveling overseer. This is a matter for the collective body(ies) of elders using the Kingdom Hall to determine. While construction expenses would be the responsibility of the congregation(s) directly involved in the project, others may assist. In any event, no solicitation should be made of other congregations, the circuit, or individuals to fund the construction. Before an apartment for a traveling overseer is included in a project, the congregation(s) using the hall would need to consider this matter by resolution. If the circuit desires to support the project with work and funds, this is left up to the collective body of elders in the circuit.

17. If the collective body of elders in the circuit or district wishes to work out arrangements with the elders of a congregation(s) owning an apartment so that the traveling overseer could use the apartment, then a contribution, agreeable to the congregations involved, to assist with the expenses should be offered by the circuit(s) for use of the apartment.

18. It would not be proper for the traveling overseer to suggest or request an expensive apartment and thus put an unnecessary financial burden on his brothers.

Trailers Owned by Traveling Overseers

19. The Society prefers that traveling overseers stay in the homes of the brothers. However, circuit and district overseers who have been in traveling work for some time may have personal trailers that they have obtained with their own funds, and they want to live in these. If a traveling overseer and his wife, who have been serving many years, carefully weigh their circumstances and decide to use a trailer, this can be done. However, all expenses incurred in connection with insurance, maintenance, towing the trailer, and so forth must be cared for by the traveling overseer himself. After the traveling overseer has been provided with a leased vehicle, it is his responsibility to care for all expenses for any tow vehicle. It is not the responsibility of a congregation, circuit, or district to share in the burden of trailer expenses, and neither congregation nor circuit funds should be used for this purpose. If a brother, who has been in the traveling work for many years has a trailer, the circuit may decide to pay for the expense of parking the trailer. This would be the only exception to what is outlined above. The Society requests that newly-appointed traveling overseers not use trailers.

How Expenses Are Handled

20. If a congregation would like to share in contributing toward the traveling overseer's expenses (not trailer or tow

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vehicle expenses) during the week of his visit, how would this be handled? The presiding overseer, or one of the other elders, can approach the traveling overseer and invite him to submit his expenses (such as gasoline, oil, and minor car repairs) for that week. If the body of elders feels the congregation would like to cover the expenses, a resolution would be presented to the congregation for approval at the first Service Meeting following the visit. If the resolution is approved, the amount would be forwarded promptly to the traveling overseer. Money should not be taken from congregation funds without this approval. (Titus 3:13, 14) If a congregation is not in position to cover his expenses, please inform him and he can submit these to the Society.

21. If a circuit wishes to aid a traveling overseer with ordinary expenses on Society-leased cars, such as tires, brake pad replacements, or other minor repairs not covered by warranties, it is the privilege of the collective body of elders to consider these expenses. This is likewise true of minor health costs not covered by the health insurance. The elders would then determine if the circuit account has funds sufficient to reimburse him and whether such funds are to be used for that purpose. (Minor expenses for automobiles would include repairs of \$100 and under, which is currently the deductible for warranty repairs on leased vehicles. Likewise, expenses for health care under \$550, currently the deductible for the health insurance policy, could be considered by the congregation or circuit elders.) The traveling overseer may be invited to submit small expenses to the congregation.

Traveling Overseers' Health Insurance and Automobile Leasing and Insurance

22. In order to equalize the cost to our brothers with regard to providing health insurance and automobiles for traveling overseers, the Society has made arrangements for group health insurance, leased vehicles, and automobile insurance. The health insurance arrangements have worked out well for a number of years now, with the circuits providing a per capita contribution to cover this expense. The Society and the traveling overseers have appreciated this very much. In the fall of 1988, these arrangements were expanded to include automobile leasing and insurance for traveling overseers.

23. The expense for the traveling overseers' health insurance and automobile leasing and insurance is cared for by a once-a-year per capita contribution made to a fund set up by the Society. Each year the Society will advise congregations of how much the per capita contribution will be for the following service year. After the Society's letter is received, the elders will determine the total number of publishers in the congregation and then present a resolution to the congregation for providing the

appropriate contribution to the Society. The contribution can be sent to the Society with the next remittance, showing the amount on the Remittance and Credit Request form (S-20). Some congregations may wish to set aside a reasonable amount each month so the congregation will have sufficient funds on hand to make the per capita contribution before September each year.

Proper Use of Congregation and Circuit Funds

24. In handling congregation and circuit funds, it is always good to remember that our brothers contribute money for Kingdom interests, for defraying congregation and circuit expenses. So if such funds were used to make money gifts to traveling overseers, special assembly day speakers, or others for things beyond their actual expenses (for example, to purchase a trailer or tow vehicle, repairs for such, a personal vacation trip, and so forth), this would undoubtedly disturb or stumble some of our brothers. We should rightly be concerned that this does not happen. Money gifts should not be made from congregation or circuit funds. Likewise, it is not appropriate for individuals in a congregation or circuit to take up a collection or solicit money from brothers and sisters and then provide this as a gift to a traveling overseer. Gifts from collected funds can cause problems, and these should not be made to traveling overseers.--2 Cor. 8:20.

25. Is it permissible for individual publishers to give traveling overseers personal gifts? If one is moved by appreciation and has a heart desire to make such a contribution, that is for the individual to decide. Such genuine Christian generosity on the part of the giver and acceptance on the part of the traveling overseer is a private matter that need not concern others. However, soliciting of funds from others, even on a personal basis, should not be done.

26. Circuit and district overseers are doing a marvelous work. The Society appreciates the spirit congregations and circuits have shown in lovingly and generously providing traveling overseers with their daily needs. (2 Cor. 9:7) We deeply appreciate all that you brothers are doing. We hope that this letter will help to clarify matters. Please be assured of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Copies to: Traveling Overseers

Watchtower B. & F. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

NOTE: It is recommended that the body of elders meet and read this letter together as soon as possible. Thereafter, it should be placed in the file of the congregation for future reference and should be reviewed by the presiding overseer and secretary before each visit of the circuit overseer.