



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201-2483, U.S.A. PHONE (7 18) 625-3600

June 2, 1999

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

It is heartwarming to see how hospitably the congregations receive and lovingly care for traveling overseers and others that serve them in special capacities. (3 John 7, 8) Those in special full-time service experience the truthfulness of Jesus' words: "No one has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not get a hundredfold now in this period of time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, with persecutions, and in the coming system of things everlasting life." (Mark 10:29, 30) Though often possessing few material things, such ones are content with "sustenance and covering" and lead spiritually rich, satisfying lives in Jehovah's service.—1 Tim. 6:6-8.

Each year a number of brothers and sisters find that they are no longer in a position to continue in the traveling work and are assigned to serve in a local congregation. Some are advanced in age and have served for many, many years in special service. Some are widows whose deceased husbands had been serving as traveling overseers. Since most have limited financial resources, how do they care for their material necessities? A number have worked secularly in the past and thus qualify for some Social Security benefits or pensions. Others have believing relatives who assist them, and this is a fine demonstration of godly devotion on their part. (1 Tim. 5:4) However, in many cases, the Society gives support to such ones with a long record of faithful service by providing health-care services and a modest monthly reimbursement for housing and other expenses, up to \$430 a month each.

Because of the rising cost of living in many areas and their having a limited income, some longtime, former traveling overseers have found it almost impossible to locate affordable and suitable housing. In such cases, the Society provides an increased rental or housing reimbursement so that they can obtain modest accommodations. The Society is pleased to use contributed funds in this way. Local brothers have also asked if there is something they can do to assist those who have served the congregations for many years. We trust the following comments will be helpful.

Kingdom Hall apartments: Many Kingdom Hall apartments have been constructed in recent years. Traveling overseers who are presently serving are using most of these. However, if a Kingdom Hall apartment is not occupied by a traveling overseer and it is suitable—that is, if it has adequate space, lighting, ventilation, and so forth—perhaps it could be used to house those formerly in the traveling work or in other forms of special full-time service. Houses on Kingdom Hall property may also be available occasionally. If a Kingdom Hall apartment or a house on Kingdom Hall property is to qualify for real property tax exemption, the occupants may need to be assigned to the congregation that owns or uses the Kingdom Hall.

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

June 2, 1999

Page 2

If a congregation plans to build a new Kingdom Hall or make major renovations to an existing one and is interested in adding an apartment for the use of a former traveling overseer or other former special full-time servants, the Society would be pleased to hear from you. If a loan from the Society's Kingdom Hall Fund is approved, the Society may care for a portion of this expense.

Low-cost homes or senior citizen apartments: Some former traveling overseers, with help from brothers with real estate experience, have been able to buy homes through government programs. The down payment and the monthly payments on the loans were quite reasonable. Depending on what is available in a certain area, this may be something to look into. There may also be other suitable apartments for senior citizens that are very affordable for those on fixed incomes. The Society, of course, is willing to assist financially in order to help former traveling overseers. Before applying for housing that is sponsored by government agencies, however, the former traveling overseer or those assisting him should send full information to the Society, Attention: Health Care Support, including a copy of the application. We want all to know that we are willing to support those in the religious order.

Other accommodations: If you have information about accommodations that may be available for use by former traveling overseers or other former special full-time servants, please write to us, providing full details. Please direct your correspondence to the Service Department, Attention: Desk SDO.

Today there are many longtime servants of Jehovah who have exerted themselves vigorously for decades in behalf of the whole association of brothers. These faithful brothers and sisters have learned to trust implicitly in Jehovah, and they have seen how he has provided for them as they seek the Kingdom first. (Matt. 6:33) True to his promise, Jehovah 'is not unrighteous so as to forget their work and the love they showed for his name, in that they ministered' to his people. (Heb. 6:10) Neither do God's people forget the loving labors of those who have served them in special capacities. Like many worshipers of Jehovah in the past, they do what they can to show their appreciation.—Compare 2 Kings 4:8-10; Romans 12:13.

If in your congregation you have brothers or the widows of brothers who were formerly in special full-time service for many years, it will be appreciated if you would regularly check to see how they are getting along and ascertain if they have a need that should be cared for. If they are having difficulties, please inform the Service Department regarding their situation.

May Jehovah God continue to bless you richly for the spirit you show in support of "the holy work of the good news." (Rom. 15:16) We send our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. V. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

cc: Traveling Overseers