

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



2821 Route 22, Patterson, NY 12563-2237 Phone: (845) 306-1100

April 25, 2001

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

Recently, academic researchers who say that they are interested in conducting surveys of religious community activities have contacted the elders of a number of congregations. Since there is a need to be careful about the nature of surveys and how such information will be used, we are providing direction for a qualified elder representing the congregation to follow, provided your congregation is asked to participate in such a survey. Some of the points to have in mind are as follows:

When approached by researchers, the elder should treat them kindly, and he may listen to what they have to say. It would be well to find out what university or group the researchers represent and determine just what information they would like to have. If there are survey forms, it might be kindly explained that Jehovah's Witnesses have considerable information in their publications that would no doubt answer some of the questions they are asking. The elder could provide such researchers with a copy of the brochure *Jehovah's Witnesses—Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* On page 13 of that brochure, the basic beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses are listed together with the Scriptural reason for these beliefs. We accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God. It is the basis for all our beliefs and teachings. It is reliable, whereas tradition is not.

Inquiry might be made about such matters as having a paid clergy class, the racial makeup and diversity of the congregation, the volunteer nature of our ministry, and the unity of our congregations. On page 13, column 2, of the above-named brochure, we have listed our belief that a clergy class and special titles are improper. If a topic is raised that is not specifically covered in the brochure, reference can be made to the *Reasoning* book, such as the portion on "Races of Mankind," starting on page 300. On page 304, reference is made to Acts 10:34, 35 showing that God is not partial. So Jehovah's Witnesses do not discriminate against individuals because of race, language, or social standing. On page 305 the first paragraph points out that the oneness and unity of early Christians was a reality, and so it is today within the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses.

If a question comes up on the subject of neutrality, that is also covered in the *Reasoning* book. And if an inquiry is made about how we view marriage, not only are there Scriptural references in the *Reasoning* book but the book *The Secret of Family Happiness* can be offered to the researcher.

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The benefits to the community of our Bible educational ministry are also highlighted in other publications as well as in certain videos. The global scope of our activities is highlighted in the annual *Yearbook*, which includes a chart that sets out what is being accomplished in over 230 different lands. In addition, reference can be made to the Watchtower Society's Web site so that the researcher may have access to a wide array of information, all of which explains the Scriptural basis for the position that Jehovah's Witnesses take on vital issues.

This approach is far more advantageous in giving a witness and providing information than having various members of the congregation taking the time needed to fill out survey forms carefully and accurately. While in some instances we can cooperate with research projects—including surveys—we certainly want to avoid having publishers expressing personal viewpoints that may not be in line with the Bible principles that really govern each Christian's conduct and the united efforts of the brotherhood to carry out Jehovah's will.

If researchers or others approach elders seeking information and some issues come up about which the elders are not certain, they should not make any commitments. Rather, these inquiries should be referred to the Service Department, at the address above, for attention.

We are confident that this direction will be sufficient for you to provide an appropriate response to anyone who approaches the congregation with an inquiry or survey about the work we do in the community and worldwide. May Jehovah's spirit be your guide in caring for this matter as well as in all that you do in his sacred service.

Your brothers,

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Jehovah's Witnesses