

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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



June 24, 2002

TO ALL CONGREGATION SERVICE COMMITTEES IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

As announced in the July 1, 2002, issue of *The Watchtower*, arrangements are being made to hold international conventions in various regions of the world during 2003. Despite troubled world conditions, how grateful we are that Jehovah opens up opportunities for his people to assemble together in order to benefit from timely spiritual provisions and upbuilding Christian association, bringing praise to his name and giving a widespread witness. (Psalm 26:12; Hebrews 10:24, 25) We are pleased to provide information at this time regarding the locations and dates for these international gatherings. So that all concerned may be appropriately informed, the following announcement should be made at the *Watchtower* Study to be held on Sunday, July 7, 2002, and repeated at the Service Meeting for the week of July 8. If your congregation will be attending a district convention on July 5-7, 2002, you should make the announcement at the following two congregation meetings.

“In the July 1, 2002, issue of *The Watchtower*, an announcement appears concerning plans to hold four-day international conventions in 2003. Arrangements are being made to hold a number of international conventions in Europe, Latin America, the Pacific area, and Asia, to which delegates from this country will be invited. The conventions in Europe will be held during the months of July and August. Conventions in Asia are scheduled for mid-October; in Latin America they will be held during November; and in the Pacific region during December. The Congregation Service Committee would like to meet with those interested in attending one of these international conventions in order to determine who may be eligible for selection as delegates.

“To apply, one must be an exemplary baptized publisher, physically able to make such a trip. The United States has a certain delegate allotment for each of the international conventions. The Congregation Service Committee will fill out applications for those that qualify to be recommended as delegates by the Congregation Service Committee. Exemplary children, at least 15 years of age as of July 1, 2003, may accompany their baptized parents. As a reminder, no one should make plans to attend any of these international conventions unless he is selected by the International Convention office in Brooklyn to be a delegate and is willing to cooperate with the travel arrangements being made. It only complicates matters and creates problems for others if some try to make their own independent arrangements. The Congregation Service Committee has been supplied with details about the international conventions. Individuals who are interested should meet with the Congregation Service Committee within the next two weeks.”

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When you brothers meet with those who are interested, please cover the following points:

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS: Please review the list of convention cities and dates as indicated in the enclosed application. Call attention specifically to those conventions with tentative dates. The following additional comments about the conventions in Japan and Mexico should also be conveyed:

In Japan, international conventions will be held in Yokohama (greater Tokyo area) and Sapporo, on October 16-19, 2003. Conventions will be held in Saitama City (greater Tokyo area) and Kobe, on October 23-26, 2003.

In Mexico, conventions will be held in Mexico City, Puebla, and Monterrey, tentatively on November 6-9, 2003, and/or November 13-16, 2003.

For the conventions in Mexico and Spain, preference will be given to those who are able to speak and understand the Spanish language well.

LIMITED TOURS: These will be scheduled either before or after each convention, and will include visits to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in the host convention country as well as a tour of the convention city. Branch offices of nearby countries might be included, depending on travel arrangements, but extensive sight-seeing tours are not being planned. Itinerary prices will vary depending upon the length of the trip and the activities scheduled.

As you may know, current airline fares are quite expensive. For example, from New York to Mexico City fares are in the \$600 range. Fares from New York to Monterrey go from \$400 to \$600. Airfares to Japan vary greatly and can be as high as \$1,300. Roundtrip fares to the South Pacific can be as much as \$1,300 and higher, depending on the departure city in the United States. Since the convention dates for Honolulu, Hawaii, fall during the holiday period, hotel costs will be higher than in any of the other locations. As travel agencies negotiate group rates, more information will be made available to the selected delegates. Keep in mind that hotel accommodations, transfers, lunch boxes, and some meals must be added to the airfares. Hence, we provide the above figures only as a reference so that each person can have a better idea of what to expect regarding travel expenses. Of course, efforts are being made to negotiate group rates, which generally reduce the cost. What airline rates will be next year, we cannot say at this time. But, the above may help to determine if one is financially able to afford any of these trips. As stated earlier, it is necessary for selected delegates to cooperate with the arrangements being made for travel and accommodations in order to ensure that the conventions run smoothly.

REQUIREMENTS: Please share the following with those who still show interest in applying as delegates. It will be appreciated if you would make certain that each applicant meets the following requirements before you fill out and submit an application in his behalf. Inform prospective applicants that the International Convention office in Brooklyn does not approve or disqualify delegates. That is the sole responsibility of the Congregation Service Committee. As permitted by the delegate allotment set for the United States Branch, selection of delegates will be made from the general pool of applicants that have been approved by their respective Congregation Service Committees. Thank you for conveying this understanding to those who meet with you. Please note the following:

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- 1.) Every applicant must be an exemplary, dedicated and baptized Witness, at least 19 years of age as of July 1, 2003.
- 2.) Children who are at least 15 years of age as of July 1, 2003, are exemplary in conduct, and are progressing toward dedication and baptism may accompany their baptized parent(s).
- 3.) All whom you approve and recommend must be in good health and capable of traveling without physical dependence upon someone else. You are acquainted with the circumstances of publishers in your congregation. If they do not have the physical stamina to withstand long trips, hot weather, and other common circumstances that result from large crowds meeting together, it would not be loving to approve and recommend such. Please have in mind that with increased security measures and other air travel restrictions, delays should be expected, and there are other problems that may be encountered, which would especially impose hardships on any who do not enjoy good physical condition.
- 4.) Individuals you approve and recommend should be exemplary in every respect. This includes their dress and grooming. (Please see "Question Box" in the June 2002 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry*.) We have had situations with some individuals who are very careless as well as very casual about their appearance, especially during their leisure periods, while traveling abroad.
- 5.) All applicants must be willing to cooperate with their appointed group captains and must be willing to follow the overall arrangements for travel that are outlined for these conventions. All should understand that accommodations and conditions in other lands might not be up to the standard that one might expect to find in the United States.

APPLICATIONS: A supply of delegate applications is being sent to each congregation along with this letter. If the individuals that you interview meet **all** the requirements set out in this letter, please fill out an application in duplicate for each person, married couple, or family group. In doing so, please follow closely the pattern indicated in the enclosed SAMPLE. You may photocopy these forms as needed. However, since all applications will be scanned, when making any needed photocopies it will be imperative to use a high quality photocopier such as can be found in some commercial establishments. Please make sure that all field-defining lines come out dark and neat, as close as possible in appearance to the original form. Applications should be signed by the Congregation Service Committee to indicate that you have filled them out and unanimously **approve** and **recommend** the applicants as delegates. The duplicate copy should be retained in your files.

Each applicant is at liberty to indicate a first, second, third, fourth, and possibly fifth choice. Of course, he should indicate only those conventions which he is actually interested in attending. Every effort will be made to give consideration to each applicant's first preference. Please keep in mind that delegates will not be invited to attend international conventions in more than one country. For individuals or families who desire to travel with others on the same itinerary, please follow the printed instructions in the upper left-hand corner of the application form. All selections or choices such groups make must be identical.

You will note that on the application there are two separate boxes identified as **Congregation Status** and **Wife's Congregation Status**, respectively. Classifications apart from those listed can be indicated in the box marked "Other." You may do so by using one letter only as follows: **B**-for Bethelite; **C**-for commuter Bethelite; **I**-for international volunteer; **M**-for missionary; **S**-for special pioneer; **T**-for traveling overseer; and **W**-for traveling overseer's wife. If none of the above apply in a particular applicant's case, leave the space blank.

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After an application has been filled out by the Congregation Service Committee, it should be signed and sent to the Teaching Committee, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201-2483. These forms should reach us as soon as possible, but no later than August 2, 2002. Please keep in mind that these applications may not be FAXED, since such copies would not be fit for scanning.

Shortly thereafter and by way of a letter, the Congregation Service Committee will be informed regarding all applicants in the congregation who are selected as delegates, as well as those who are not. You will be asked to inform all applicants accordingly. The names and addresses of all selected delegates will be sent by the Teaching Committee to a travel agency designated to handle arrangements for the group. In time, the travel agency will advise the selected delegates about the various travel options that might be available. This will likely be done toward the latter part of this calendar year. Delegates will then confirm their selection directly with the travel agency.

Bear in mind that being approved and recommended by the Congregation Service Committee does not guarantee that the individual will be selected as a delegate. Please make this point clear to all applicants. We must factor into the process that other countries also have assigned allotments of delegates going to these international conventions, and we do not want to overtax available hotel space and convention facility seating. Thus, the total number of delegates from the United States cannot exceed the set allotment of delegates.

No one should plan to travel to any of these conventions unless he or she has been selected by the International Convention office and has been so advised by the Congregation Service Committee. It only complicates matters for us and creates problems for others if some try to make independent arrangements.

Please keep in mind that if any who may be selected to attend an international convention should become involved in certain disqualifying problems, or if anyone is no longer exemplary, it will be your responsibility to so advise the Teaching Committee immediately. This procedure would be applicable right up to the time when such individuals are ready to depart. Financial losses associated with an abrupt cancellation due to improper conduct on the part of a selected delegate will be the sole responsibility of that individual.

All of us look forward with keen anticipation to the international conventions to be held in different parts of the world during 2003. Truly we live in momentous times. The bonds of love, peace, and unity among all our brothers are being strengthened by Jehovah's provisions and 'all that he furnishes us richly for our enjoyment.' (Psalm 133:1-3; 1 Timothy 6:17) As we anticipate what is in store and endeavor to carry out Jehovah's will "more fully," may we earnestly pray for Jehovah's blessing upon all arrangements being made for the conventions next year.—1 Thessalonians 4:1; 1 Peter 4:7.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

For the Teaching Committee
of the Governing Body