

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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October 31, 2003

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

For over 15 years many have benefited from listening to *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* on audiocassette. We are happy to announce that these two magazines will now be available on CD-ROM in the MP3 format.

What is MP3? MP3 identifies a method for making audio files smaller so that more material can be placed onto a CD-ROM. Whereas an audio CD can hold 74-80 minutes of recording, a CD-ROM with MP3 files can contain several hours of audio. For example, each *Watchtower* and *Awake!* is about 100 minutes of audio and would require two audio CD's per issue. By using the MP3 format, two issues will fit easily onto one CD-ROM. This results in significant savings in materials, shipping, and handling.

It is important to note that an MP3 CD-ROM disc is different from an audio CD disc that is played in most automobile or compact disc players. Although an audio CD and an MP3 CD-ROM may look identical, an audio CD has audio tracks whereas an MP3 CD-ROM has computer files. Therefore, a CD-ROM with MP3 files can be played only on a computer or an audio device that is specifically MP3 compatible. Audio devices capable of MP3 playback are now available in a variety of portable and home compact disc units, DVD and MP3 players, and personal digital assistants (PDAs). These devices are generally identified with an "MP3 playback" sticker. MP3 compatible players are gaining wider acceptance and inexpensive portable models are readily available. In view of this, and the overall cost savings explained above, there is an advantage if an individual's circumstances permit him to use MP3 on CD-ROM instead of audiocassette.

As mentioned, an advantage of using the MP3 format is that it will be possible to include two issues of the magazines on one compact disc. For example, the first CD-ROM of MP3 files for the month of January 2004 will contain both the January 1 issue of *The Watchtower* and the January 8 issue of *Awake!* in English. The next one will contain the January 15 and 22 issues, and so on. Each disc will be packaged in a sturdy envelope with a transparent window, which will allow for easy identification of the program contents.

At this time *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in MP3 format are being made available in English only. In the future it is hoped that additional languages will be made available in MP3 format on CD-ROM. Publishers desirous of obtaining the magazines in MP3 format should contact the congregation magazine servant immediately in order to begin receiving them with the January 1, 2004, issue.

We are pleased to make *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* available in this new format in addition to the current use of audiocassettes. We take this opportunity to send you our warm regards and best wishes.

Your brothers,

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PS to presiding overseer:

Please have this letter read to the congregation at the first Service Meeting after its receipt. Thereafter it should be posted on the information board for two weeks. In addition, please be sure that the congregation magazine and literature servants and the secretary are familiar with the information below.

Important information for the congregation magazine and literature servants and the secretary:

Congregations that wish to obtain *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in MP3 format on CD-ROM should submit a standing order using the *Congregation Requests* (M-202) form. In the United States, the CD-ROMs will generally be sent with the congregation's regular supply of magazines. Please be sure to specify in the language field "**ENGLISH CD-ROM**" and enter the exact quantity requested by congregation publishers. In order to receive the January 1, 2004, issue of *The Watchtower* and the January 8, 2004, issue of *Awake!*, the M-202 form will need to arrive at the branch office by ***November 15, 2003***.

If back issues are needed in the future, these should be requested on a *Literature Request Form* (S-14) through the congregation literature servant.

Standing orders of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* on audiocassette will continue to be sent with congregation magazine shipments. It would be good for the magazine servant and secretary to confirm with each publisher requesting the CD-ROM if they wish to discontinue receiving audiocassettes. Once the audiocassette list has been updated, the secretary should promptly submit a separate M-202 form requesting that the standing order quantity of audiocassettes be adjusted.