

# Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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November 22, 2003

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Our letter dated May 5, 2003, to “All Bodies of Elders” encouraged elders, ministerial servants and pioneers who had their children in boarding schools to re-examine the situation in the light of Bible principles and guidelines provided by the Governing Body. That letter clearly pointed out that elders whose children are in boarding schools “where the authorities prohibit students from leaving the school premises to attend congregation meetings held at the Kingdom Hall,” would not qualify to serve in positions of responsibility. Appointed servants having children in such schools were given up to December 31, 2003, to make adjustments as outlined in the April 2003 *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert. In addition, our letter stated: “If by that date the necessary adjustments are not made to safeguard the children, such parents would have to lose their service privileges.”

As this date draws near, we would like to make some additional clarification on the matter of boarding schools. We trust that this will help all of us to focus on the Bible principles involved so that we can clearly understand how boarding schools can affect an appointed servant's qualifications.

One major qualification of any appointed elder and ministerial servant is that he should be “presiding over his own household in a fine manner, having children in subjection with all seriousness.” (1 Tim. 3:4) Clearly if someone has a child in a school where the child is prohibited from attending congregation meetings at the local Kingdom Hall, he would be failing to meet this requirement. Does this mean that all fathers who send their children to boarding schools are disqualified? No!

Please keep in mind that a parent may not necessarily be disqualified if the child is able to share fully in congregational activities, such as attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall, and if other adequate safeguards of the child's spirituality are in place. For example, Witness children who attend some of the universities throughout the country are able to attend all of the local congregation meetings at the Kingdom Hall without hindrance. However, as pointed out in our May 5, 2003, letter, “even if a child would be free to attend congregation meetings, the father still might not qualify to continue serving if the school also required the child to attend religious services conducted at the school. Or, if the school allows the child to attend congregation meetings, but it turns out that the child does not actually attend, this will likely disqualify the father. In addition, circumstances may develop, such as the child getting involved in some kind of wrongdoing, that would indicate that the father is not presiding in a fine manner over his household, thus necessitating his removal as an elder or ministerial servant or pioneer.—1 Tim. 3:4, 5.”

Some may feel that they need more time to make arrangements for their children. However, it is good to remember that as far back as 1997, the Governing Body drew our attention to the dangers of boarding schools through *The Watchtower* article of March 15, 1997, entitled, “Should Your Child Go to Boarding School?” This article, in a clear and forthright manner, showed what our children go through when attending boarding schools that do not respect our beliefs. Then in 2002, the issue of boarding schools was again discussed at great length during the Kingdom Ministry School. At that time elders were reminded of the spiritual harm that boarding schools can have on children and were encouraged to make adjustments if their children were in such schools. It was stated that not doing so could disqualify a brother. Many of the brothers expressed appreciation for this information and began making arrangements to transfer their children to schools that allow Witness children the freedom to attend congregation meetings.

Later, the April 2003 *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert further discussed the negative effects that boarding schools have on the spirituality of our children. To help parents make a wise decision when choosing a school, the *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert encouraged parents to seriously and prayerfully consider the following questions before sending a child to a boarding school: “Will the school authorities respect our Christian beliefs? Will my child be permitted to attend congregation meetings and share regularly in the field ministry? Can I get exemption for my child so that he is not pressured to participate in worldly activities or false religious practices? Will I be able to visit my child each week to provide encouragement and to check on his spiritual progress?”

Again, many Christian parents expressed appreciation for this information and began approaching school authorities to see if arrangements could be made. Some were able to arrange for their children to become day students. Moving to another location where children could attend suitable schools has also proven to be a solution for a few. Others have found school authorities that have been willing to allow Witness children the freedom to associate and worship each week with their parents and the local congregation. Sad to say though, many school authorities have not been willing to make such concessions for Witness children. When this happens, an elder must decide what he will do regarding the education of his own children. Surely, a caring Christian father will not wait to be deleted from his service privileges before he gives due attention to the spiritual needs of his child.—Ps. 119:60.

Elders, ministerial servants and pioneers are expected to be good examples in applying Bible principles in their lives. They demonstrate the “wisdom from above” and “have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.” (Jas. 3:17; Heb. 5:14) Although choosing a school for one’s children is a personal decision, if that decision is unwise and puts a child in spiritual danger, clearly that person would not be a fine example in “presiding over his household in a fine manner.” (1 Tim. 3:4) The apostle Paul made this point clear when he said: “If indeed any man does not know how to preside over his own household, how will he take care of God’s congregation?” (1 Tim. 3:5) Indeed, how could an appointed servant or pioneer encourage others to avoid the dangers of bad association, to develop a strong love for God, and put Kingdom interests first in their lives, if he is not doing so with his own children? Such a person would not only lack “freeness of speech” when teaching others but would not be respected as a Christian who puts his full trust in Jehovah.—1 Tim. 3:13; Rom. 2:19-21; Prov. 3:5-6.

We appreciate that it will not be easy for some of you to follow through on the counsel given on boarding schools. However, we encourage all who find themselves in this situation to prayerfully consider the heavy responsibility they have to build within their children's hearts an appreciation and love for their Creator, Jehovah God. Doing this is far more important than the school a child attends or the privileges someone enjoys in God's organization. When mature parents do this, they demonstrate that they truly "make sure of the more important things" and are not "stumbling others" who look to them as examples in Christian living. — See Philippians 1:10.

Please be assured that Jehovah's organization is deeply interested in the spiritual well-being of the young ones in our midst. It is equally concerned that those who take the lead in the congregations are spiritual men who are "good examples to the flock of God under their care." (1 Pet. 5:3) We commend all of you brothers who have made adjustments regarding the matter of boarding schools. For those of you who are yet to do so, please remember that you can be confident that our loving God Jehovah will always be able to make a way out for any who put spiritual interests first.—1 Cor. 10:13.

Please be assured of our deep interest in you and your families. We take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for the fine work you do in helping the congregations under your care. Please accept our warm love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation  
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

c: All Traveling Overseers