

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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February 4, 2004

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

During January through March 2003, a special effort was made to reactivate inactive ones. Each Congregation Service Committee reviewed the inactive file and assigned a book study overseer to visit the inactive and offer assistance, including a Bible study in some cases. The results of the campaign were then forwarded to the branch office via the circuit overseer. We are pleased to share with you the results of this endeavor and provide direction on how additional help will be given.

Excellent results: Tens of thousands of inactive ones were contacted in the United States branch territory, of whom 14,963 were reactivated and 12,076 accepted Bible studies. It was not uncommon to reactivate some who were inactive for thirty or more years. Some said the *Draw Close to Jehovah* book was significant in reaching their hearts. Many were touched by the concern shown by God's organization, realizing that the visit was an expression of Jehovah's love for them personally.

One inactive sister of 19 years said: 'I did not realize that the organization cared so much for me. I thought that if they care this much, maybe Jehovah also cares for me.' While nervous to meet with the brothers, she related: "Jehovah is telling me it is time to come back." She now attends all meetings and continues to make progress. Another brother had not attended meetings for three years. When told the purpose of the call, he started to cry, saying that he had been up until five o'clock in the morning praying that Jehovah would help him to come back to the truth. He has not missed a study, comments at the meetings, and after one month is again participating in the ministry. A young inactive couple was having marital problems. Once they accepted a Bible study, their family life improved. They are now at the meetings and have a regular share in the ministry. For the first time, they say they feel the truth is 'in their hearts and not just in their heads.' These and similar experiences illustrate the benefits of reaching out to inactive ones.

A special effort this year: Upon receipt of this letter, the Congregation Service Committee should meet again this year and make arrangements to call on inactive ones in the congregation's territory, except for those clearly indicating they wish not to be visited. Book study overseers may be assigned to call on inactive ones, though other elders not conducting a book study may also be assigned. Thereafter, at a special meeting of the body of elders, this letter should be read. Any adjustments in the assignments can be made at that time. If possible, strive to complete the visits before the Memorial on April 4, 2004.

How to provide assistance: In preparation for the shepherding call, each elder should consider the article "Tenderly Shepherding Jehovah's Precious Sheep" in the July 15, 1993, issue of *The Watchtower*. Reference is made to Jesus' illustration about a man who had a hundred

sheep but promptly searched for the one that had strayed in order to bring it back to the flock. (Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7) The article states on page 27: "In like manner an overseer should have concern for each member of the congregation. Inactivity in the ministry or in attending Christian meetings does not mean that the sheep is no longer part of the flock. He remains part of 'all the flock' for whom the elders must 'render an account' to Jehovah." A principal objective of the visit is to help the inactive one to appreciate that Jehovah cares for him. A few encouraging Scriptural points could be shared from chapter 24 of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah* or the article "You Are Precious in God's Eyes!," which appeared on pages 10-15 of the April 1, 1995, *Watchtower*. While other material may be used according to the needs and circumstances of the person, it will generally be best to keep the visit positive. If needed, additional visits can be made to give further encouragement.

Offering Bible studies: If one responds favorably to the visit and expresses a desire to resume activity with the congregation, a Bible study may be offered. If the study is accepted, make this known to the service overseer. He will make the arrangements for the study to be conducted. Good judgment is needed to determine who is best suited to conduct the study, considering the circumstances involved. The book *Worship the Only True God* will be used in most studies with inactive ones. For those with a good knowledge of Bible truth but who had become sidetracked from Christian activities, a study of section 4 in the book *Draw Close to Jehovah* may be just what is needed to rekindle their love for Jehovah.

Resuming field service: If a person has been inactive for only a short time, a helping hand from an experienced publisher may be all that is needed to reactivate the individual. On the other hand, before inviting a longtime inactive one to share in the ministry, two elders should meet with him to see if he meets the basic requirements to again serve as a Kingdom publisher, as outlined on pages 98-9 of the *Our Ministry* book. They will follow a procedure similar to that used when meeting with new ones seeking to publish the good news.

We pray Jehovah will richly bless you as you endeavor to render personal assistance to inactive ones as responsible shepherds of the flock. You can be assured of much "joy in heaven" over those assisted through your efforts. (Luke 15:7) With this letter, we send our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

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