



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

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SH November 3, 2004

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS AND TRAVELLING OVERSEERS

Dear Brothers:

The tremendous increase in Kingdom publishers worldwide has resulted in a dramatic increase in the construction of new Kingdom Halls and the renovation of older ones. The purpose of this letter is to provide helpful direction to follow in making arrangements for Kingdom Hall dedication programmes. The entire body of elders should carefully review this letter and then file it with other organizational policy letters in the congregation permanent file. A similar letter dated May 15, 2004, should be destroyed.

Dedication Speaker: A Kingdom Hall dedication speaker may be requested from Bethel by addressing your request in writing to the Speaking Appointment Desk. If the congregation has in mind inviting someone in particular, that may be stipulated in the request. If the brother you wish to invite is a Bethel speaker approved to give Kingdom Hall dedication talks and if he is available and in agreement, he will be assigned. Otherwise another Bethel speaker will be assigned. Travel expenses for the speaker (and for his wife if he is married and she is invited) are to be cared for by the congregation(s) involved. Some congregations may find it convenient to have the local circuit overseer or district overseer give the dedication talk if one of them is available for the date desired. Of course, the dedication programme would have to be scheduled at a time that does not conflict with the brother's regular schedule for serving a congregation or a circuit. The travelling overseer's schedule is not to be adjusted in any way just to allow time for him to serve as dedication speaker. If a Bethel speaker is invited, there is no need to invite a travelling overseer or anyone else to participate in the dedication programme. Only one dedication speaker is needed.

There may be times when a Bethel speaker assigned to serve as guest speaker at a special assembly day programme would be able to give the Kingdom Hall dedication talk if the new Kingdom Hall is located in close proximity to the assembly site. In some cases, the special assembly day assignment is for just one assembly either on a Saturday or a Sunday, and so the Bethel speaker could be available to serve as dedication speaker on the other day of that weekend. Even if he has a special assembly day programme on each of the two days, it still may be possible for him to give a Kingdom Hall dedication talk on one of the two evenings. The Kingdom Hall being dedicated would have to be close by and the congregation(s) would need to be in agreement with such arrangement.

Programme format: Once the elders work out the details, the presiding overseer may correspond directly with the assigned Bethel speaker. Modesty should be reflected in the format of the dedication programme. The following comments should prove to be helpful in this regard.

- 1) The dedication talk should be given in the Kingdom Hall being dedicated, not at another facility that may be rented in order to accommodate a larger audience.
- 2) Kingdom Hall dedication programmes are usually held on either a Saturday or a Sunday. If held on Sunday, an abbreviated *Watchtower* Study similar to what is arranged during the visit of the circuit overseer should be included. An abbreviated *Watchtower* Study should also be included in a dedication programme held on a Saturday if the Kingdom Hall is not available on Sunday for the regular congregation *Watchtower* Study.

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS AND TRAVELLING OVERSEERS

November 3, 2004

Page 2

- 3) Any slide or video presentation should be limited to perhaps fifteen minutes or so in length. It should include just a few of the main procedures in building the Kingdom Hall. The presentation should be dignified and the content in good taste, since the dedication programme is an occasion for giving praise to Jehovah for his direction and blessing on the project, which serves for advancing his worship in the community.
- 4) When a Kingdom Hall or Kingdom Hall complex accommodates more than one congregation, all the congregations should work together and co-operate in making arrangements for the dedication programme. When congregations are not all of the same language, the bodies of elders must agree as to which language will be used for the dedication talk and prayer.
- 5) The new or renovated Kingdom Hall is to be dedicated only once. If the dedication speaker is bilingual, he may be asked to give the dedication talk early in the day and then give that same talk (or a different appropriate service talk) in the other language at a programme arranged later in the day or the next day. He would explain that the Kingdom Hall was dedicated at the earlier programme.
- 6) There appears to be no need to have a programme of more than two—or perhaps on occasion two and one half—hours in length. Generally, this would allow for a brief history of the congregation(s) involved, possibly including an interview of one or two long-time Witnesses who have had a share in the growth of the Kingdom work in the area. Some local experiences in connection with construction along with a slide or video presentation of appropriate length, showing certain key elements of the construction project could be included. Experiences as well as comments of those being interviewed should be to the point. All who participate on the programme should be mindful that emphasis should be placed on Jehovah and the effect the project had on the community and the brothers, not on how the building was constructed.—Ps. 127:1.
- 7) When two or more Kingdom Halls in one building are being dedicated, only one dedication programme is needed to cover all Kingdom Halls that are part of the one complex.
- 8) A tour of the new Kingdom Hall, or an open house as it is sometimes called, may be arranged before the dedication programme. If felt appropriate, light snacks or refreshments but not alcoholic beverages may be served. Many brothers have found this to be a fine time to invite businessmen and officials of the community who may have become familiar with the building work and who may have expressed a desire to see the completed building. It is appropriate for an elder to be assigned to escort such businessmen and officials and make their tour and visit informative and pleasant. Similar arrangements may be made for other guests to be given a brief tour by one of the attendants when needed. These arrangements are generally scheduled for the morning or early afternoon, depending on the commencement of the dedication programme.
- 9) Participants on the Kingdom Hall dedication programme should be exemplary dedicated active Jehovah's Witnesses. Therefore, there is no provision for government officials or others to be invited or allowed to address the audience from the platform on any occasion, just as is the case at congregation meetings, circuit assemblies, special assembly days, district conventions, funerals, and so forth. (*om* 71, 73; *be* 282; *km* 3/97 7; *w84* 4/15 14, par. 14; 15, par. 18) If an official wishes to make a brief speech or offer expressions of appreciation at a dedication programme, he may be received hospitably and given audience by a few responsible brothers in a separate room before or after the programme.

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS AND TRAVELLING OVERSEERS

November 3, 2004

Page 3

- 10) The dedication talk should be about 45 minutes to one hour in length. Most Bethel speakers and travelling overseers will have a service talk prepared for this type of occasion. However, in the event that the selected speaker does not have a service talk prepared, he should prepare one that clearly explains the use of Kingdom Halls for Jehovah's worship. Topics such as the following could be developed: What it means to dedicate a Kingdom Hall, How Kingdom Halls are used by Jehovah, or How we show appreciation for the Kingdom Hall. Many other appropriate topics may be found in the *Watch Tower Publications Index* or *Watchtower Library* under "Kingdom Halls."

Renovated Kingdom Halls: Questions have been raised as to whether renovated Kingdom Halls should be dedicated. If only minor changes or renovation is involved, there is no need for a dedication programme. There is no such thing as a rededication or reaffirmation. However, there may be circumstances where major renovations have taken place and the floor plan and general appearance of the Kingdom Hall have been greatly changed. Considerable restructuring may have taken place. Rest rooms, classrooms, the stage, and literature and magazine counters were perhaps changed or re-located. Such major changes have, in effect, made a new Kingdom Hall. In such cases a dedication programme would be in order.

Seating: Congregations may need to limit the number invited to the dedication programme so that the Kingdom Hall is not filled beyond its reasonable capacity. However, do not be so restrictive in this regard that the facility will not be filled to capacity for the dedication programme. If more than one congregation is involved, it may be necessary to limit attendance to the elders, ministerial servants, regular pioneers, and their families, along with those who have been baptized for a certain number of years, perhaps 10 or 20 years or more. Some congregations also invite those who contributed much time, effort, or materials toward the construction work. Occasionally, local city officials permit the congregation(s) to set up loud speakers in the Kingdom Hall parking area so that overflow seating can be arranged. However, there is no need for a telephone or video tie line to another location simply to provide seating for a larger audience.

There is no doubt that continued growth will be experienced in Jehovah's organization, and that will result in a need for more Kingdom Halls. We trust that the information set out above will prove to be helpful to you in making decisions in connection with Kingdom Hall dedication programmes. May all things take place decently and by arrangement so that Jehovah's name will continue to be respected and praised in your territory.—1 Cor. 10:31; 14:40.

Please be assured of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN