



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

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ST February 10, 2005

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Regular Pioneering in Britain

What a joy it is to see brothers and sisters from all sorts of backgrounds and circumstances enter the full-time ministry. During the last service year in Britain we have seen many in their teenage years decide on a career as regular pioneers. Also, some parents have even simplified their lives and made room in their busy schedule to meet the regular pioneer hour requirement. Many appointed men are likewise balancing up all their responsibilities and set an excellent lead as pioneers. A large number of married couples have the joy of engaging in full-time service together. While others who are retired from secular work or no longer have family responsibilities have decided to lend their experience to the pioneer ranks.

All those who have made room in their lives for full-time service as regular pioneers deserve commendation. Our pioneers play a vital role in our congregations. They spearhead the ministry, encourage others by their example and hone their skills in helping to “make disciples of people” in harmony with Jesus command at Matthew 28:19, 20.

We are certain that you provide encouragement and support to any in your congregation who are currently in full-time service. Pioneers very much appreciate the kind and loving assistance that is provided for them by their body of elders.

As you know, the activity of all regular pioneers will shortly be reviewed by the secretary and service overseer as directed on page 7 of the February 2005 *Our Kingdom Ministry*. We therefore felt it would be an appropriate time to write to you regarding our dear brothers and sisters who are engaged in full-time service. At the same time, we would like to take the opportunity to write about the benefits of encouraging pioneer service in your congregation.

What can bodies of elders do to assist those who are currently in full-time service to maintain their focus on their career?

- *Commendation:* It is important to be generous in giving commendation to those in full-time service. Their simplified way of life runs counter to the society in which they live. All regular pioneers have made sacrifices to be in full-time service. Never underestimate the powerful force of commending the pioneers in your congregation. When did you last commend a pioneer for his or her work and self-sacrificing spirit? A word spoken at the right time telling them how much you appreciate their zeal and lead in the ministry can be just what they need to help them maintain their joy. Congregation Book Study overseers should be particularly alert to shepherd and

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encourage the regular pioneers in their groups. You can commend them personally; mention them collectively as a group from the platform, in your talks and in your prayers.—1 Cor. 11:2.

- *Difficulties:* Is there anything that elders can do to assist the pioneers who are finding their assignment a challenge? We believe it is important for elders to be alert to the needs and problems of the regular pioneers. As elders, *do you really know how your pioneers are doing?* Is the congregation secretary keeping the elders informed of any problems the pioneers may be experiencing? This is especially important in congregations where there are many pioneers. Sometimes, situations that are nipped in the bud can prevent discouragement and loss of joy for the pioneer. Do they need help with their schedule? Are they living beyond their means? Is there anything practical that you can suggest to assist them to use their time and financial resources more wisely? Could it be that they do not have sufficient territory? Are they located in the right Congregation Book Study to meet their needs? Do they need assistance to start Bible studies or to cope with indifference in the territory?

At your **next quarterly elders meeting** we are asking all bodies of elders to carefully review page 54 of *Pay Attention to Yourself and to All The Flock* under the sub-heading “Be alert to the needs and problems of those already in the pioneer service.” Each regular pioneer could be considered one at a time. You should determine if any regular pioneer in your congregation has any of the needs or problems that are listed here. Your circuit overseer will discuss this further with you on his next visit.

- *Concessions:* Many of our regular pioneers have to cease pioneer service due to health difficulties. They exercise Christian modesty and recognize that the regular pioneer hour requirement is really beyond them. The letter to All Bodies of Elders dated November 1, 2001, clearly explained the difference between an *ongoing unavoidable change of circumstances* and a *temporary problem*. When regular pioneers have a temporary health difficulty lasting one, two, or three months it is important for elders to be reasonable and understanding. The Congregation Service Committee may take the initiative and speak to the pioneers and reassure them that they do not need to worry about making up the lost time. This reassurance can make all the difference. When help is given without delay, the pioneers may be able to complete the service year successfully. Good communication between regular pioneers and elders is vital.
- *Encouragement:* While doing much to encourage others, the regular pioneers also need encouragement to serve with joy. (Rom. 1:12) Pioneers especially appreciate having someone to work with in field service during those hours of the day when few publishers are out. Can you accompany the pioneers and spend extra time in field ministry to support them? You can express your appreciation for such hard workers in a tangible way by sharing a meal with them, voluntarily assisting them with their travel expenses, and in other ways supporting them, as you are able. In this way you will be showing them “more than extraordinary consideration in love because of their work.”—1 Thess. 5:13.

How can you encourage others to join the pioneer ranks?

- A good starting point would be for elders to evaluate periodically who might be able to reach out for the privilege of pioneer service. Elders could approach individuals who seem to be in a favourable position to pioneer, including many who auxiliary pioneer on a regular basis, retired persons, housewives and students. While no one should be made to feel under obligation to enrol, those who have hesitated may, with a little practical encouragement, realize that regular pioneering is within their reach. In giving encouragement to those who wish to apply, elders should bear in mind that it is not necessary for the applicant to spend several months in auxiliary pioneer work before enrolling as a regular pioneer. Of course, elders will want to be reasonably sure that the applicant is in a position to meet the hour requirement.
- One of the best ways to encourage pioneer service is for elders and members of their family to *share in the pioneer work* to the extent that their circumstances allow. Every elder should have a pioneer spirit even if he cannot pioneer himself. An elder should always talk positively about full-time service. An appointed man would never want to be seen as one who encourages secular pursuits over the spiritual career of a pioneer.
- When appropriate, a local needs item might include interviewing regular pioneers about their time spent at Pioneer Service School or on what they learned at their annual pioneer meeting with the district and circuit overseers. How have some pioneers been able to stay in full-time service for decades? Why do some younger ones turn their backs on a prosperous worldly career or on university education? Their experiences may encourage and motivate others to do the same.
- Keep the Pioneer Assist Others Programme active in your congregation. We find that many new pioneers started their full-time service as a result of working closely with experienced regular pioneers. Often the zeal and enthusiasm of our faithful pioneers has a positive effect on those who they work with.
- Are parents encouraging spiritual goals for their children in your congregation? Are young brothers and sisters being guided towards a career of full-time service? Are young ones using their education to praise Jehovah? Through shepherding and platform teaching it would be good to emphasize the value of directing the minds and hearts of our younger ones to the benefits of full-time service before the world directs them to secular pursuits.

Challenges in the Britain field

In affluent lands like Britain, there is a great deal of pressure for Christians to be “fashioned after this system of things.” (Rom. 12:2) Sadly, this pressure is taking its toll on our regular pioneers. We are finding that an increasing number of regular pioneers are ceasing their full-time ministry due to financial reasons, secular work difficulties or being unable to reach the yearly hour requirement of 840 hours. Some are discontinuing their pioneer service after a year or so because they have become discouraged by apathy and

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indifference. Service committees have informed us that some have stopped regular pioneering due to being in heavy debt, working extra hours secularly, loss of joy and discouragement from poor support in their congregations.

We recognize, of course, that many cease full-time service for genuine reasons. A large number stop temporarily and rejoin the regular pioneer ranks as soon as they can. Already, this service year, we have been pleased to welcome 674 to full-time service in Britain. However, during the last 18 months nearly 1,600 have stopped regular pioneering in Britain. We are very concerned about this. It means that we now have over 76 congregations that do not have a regular pioneer and nearly 160 congregations that have just one regular pioneer.

Throughout the year, regular pioneers have a meeting in December with local elders, several meetings with travelling overseers, and receive an annual letter from the Governing Body. Some have the joy of enrolling in a class of Pioneer Service School. These provisions emphasize how the Governing Body view those in full-time service. As our regular pioneers are in the ministry full-time and receive these extra provisions, it may be wrongly felt that they do not require anything more. As a result, they could be unintentionally neglected and overlooked when it comes to their receiving effective personal shepherding.

We appreciate that as elders you have many responsibilities. Some of you handle weighty assignments and deal with many difficult and complex cases. Caring for the congregation as shepherds, teachers and evangelizers while caring for your own spirituality and that of your family takes a great deal of time and love for Jehovah. We value your efforts in being prepared to care for the “flock of God.”—1 Pet. 5:2.

However, we would like to suggest that **during the next six months** every regular pioneer in your congregation, including pioneer elders, receives a personal visit from the elders. This visit should be one of encouragement and commendation. You should discuss their pioneer service and assist with any difficulties or potential problems that may lead to a discontinuation of full-time service. This means that by the end of August 2005 every one of the 7,000 regular pioneers in Britain will have received a visit of encouragement as part of your regular shepherding work. Your circuit overseer will discuss the results of these visits during a future circuit visit.

It is good to keep in mind, that when a congregation has happy regular pioneers that work well together and with others in the congregation it really does have a powerful positive effect on a congregation. Travelling overseers' reports often comment on the fine pioneer spirit in many of our congregations based around the nucleus of hard working pioneers. In one of our congregations that have recently had five regular pioneers appointed in two months, the elders say, “the congregation is buzzing at the moment.”

In the Britain field there is still a great need for regular pioneers. We have an exciting and expanding foreign-language field and many congregations that need assistance to cover their territory. It is from our regular pioneers that we appoint some for the travelling work. Others apply for Bethel service or get involved in some form of Kingdom Hall construction

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work. Some expand their horizons even further and apply for Gilead service or join international construction teams.

We are certain that you will appreciate these reminders as elders. We know you will want to make a point of actively showing your love and concern for the regular pioneers in your congregation. Jehovah values their self-sacrificing spirit. We are sure that you do too. Never discourage pioneers who pursue other approved theocratic activities outside of your congregation. Always encourage and commend. If you are in a congregation with no pioneers at present, please do not be discouraged. Speak to your circuit overseer about the situation. Take the matter in prayer to Jehovah. Review this letter carefully at your next quarterly elders meeting.

We are pleased to write to you faithful elders who work so hard in caring for the congregations in Britain. Presiding overseers should ensure that this letter is read by every elder prior to your next quarterly meeting. Please do not hesitate to contact the Pioneer Desk in the Service Department regarding any of the questions raised in this letter and we will be pleased to help where we can.

We take the opportunity to send our warmest expression of Christian love and best wishes. Serving with you in furtherance of the good news,

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN

c: Travelling Overseers