



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

November 1, 2005

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Disruptive individuals at congregation meetings

Dear Brothers:

As you are well aware, the world that we live in is becoming increasingly violent. (2 Tim. 3:1-5, 8, 9) Although Christians strive to “seek peace and pursue it,” on occasion individuals have deliberately attempted to disrupt congregation meetings. (1 Pet. 3:11) Therefore, we are pleased to provide you with updated guidelines to help you handle such matters. This letter replaces the May 15, 1987, letter to all bodies of elders on this subject, which should be removed from the congregation’s permanent file of policy letters and destroyed.

First, we remind you of the position that we have taken regarding individuals who used to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. If such a person comes into a Kingdom Hall to attend a congregation meeting that is open to the general public, such as a Public Meeting, a *Watchtower* Study, or a Service Meeting, even participating in singing, he may be admitted as long as he conducts himself properly. Of course, in harmony with the Scriptures, none will greet him and he may not attend a Congregation Book Study held in a private home.—1 Cor. 5:11; 2 John 9-11.

What should be done if an individual in attendance at a meeting creates a disturbance? If possible, it is best to ignore trivial or minor disturbances. However, if an individual persists in this course of action and is distracting others, he should be asked to leave. If he refuses, then you should consider informing him that if he refuses to leave and continues to distract others, you will have to contact the police to have them deal with the matter. If the individual does not co-operate, you should telephone the police. When the police officers arrive, you may inform them that the individual is causing a disturbance and (if a meeting is in progress) that he is disrupting a religious service. If you feel the need for further direction concerning a specific ongoing situation you are dealing with, please contact the branch office.

Further, it would be wise to avoid being provoked into physically removing such persons as they may be attempting to create a cause for legal action. Thus, you should generally not try to forcibly remove a disruptive individual from the Kingdom Hall.

If an individual is violent, or puts people in fear of violence, from the outset, the police can be called immediately. There is no need to warn him. Additionally, in the event that a member of the congregation is physically attacked, that one has the right to defend himself from harm, and you should do what you can to help protect the individual. If you or others in the congregation are unable to flee from an assailant who appears determined to cause injury, a Christian may try to ward off such physically aggressive attacks and even

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

November 1, 2005

Page 2

strike out in defence if necessary. Of course, any such defensive action would be solely to protect oneself or others from the attacker. In this connection, the *Awake!* of July 8, 1991, page 13, states: "Christians may ward off physically aggressive attacks against themselves, their families, or others in genuine need of defense." Furthermore, the *Awake!* of November 22, 1987, page 28, states: "If attacked and unable to flee from his assailant who is determined to inflict injury or death, a Christian may try to ward off the blows or even strike out in defense, perhaps using whatever was at hand to protect himself or others. But his actions would be defensive only."

Be assured of our prayers in your behalf as we work together in maintaining the peace, good order, and spiritual health of the congregation. We send our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN

PS to the presiding overseer: Please review these guidelines with the body of elders as well as those serving as attendants.