

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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November 5, 2007

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Throughout the country, we have numerous assembly grounds that have been acquired by the local brothers. A few of our assembly grounds have permanent facilities. However, most of these grounds are not developed. It appears that the local circuits have formed their own assembly ground committees that supervise these assembly grounds. Where there are permanent Assembly Halls, Assembly Hall committees have been appointed by the branch office. This letter contains information that we would like the elders in the circuits throughout the country to be aware of.

In the past, circuit elders have felt the need to purchase land that could be used for assemblies and conventions. While it may appear to be desirable to possess our own land for assemblies, it must be acknowledged that purchasing land for this purpose is often impractical. For example, purchasing land is quite costly and can often present legal difficulties. At the same time, the land may only be used a few times a year. At times, the land is located in an area outside of town, where the brothers have difficulty obtaining public transportation or have to walk a distance before they arrive at the assembly site. To protect the land, some have felt obligated to surround their property with a fence wall that can be extremely costly. To hold assemblies on undeveloped land makes it necessary to construct decent toilets, a stage building, provide drinking water, and other preparations that require a large amount of money and many hours of hard work. In addition to this, chairs and canopies must be hired and set up. At times, when we consider the overall cost of the land, plus the set-up costs and the work involved on such undeveloped pieces of land, we see that the purchase and use of such property often end up being an unwise use of dedicated resources and time.

In the past, letters have been sent out to the congregations by elders in a circuit asking them to contribute for the payment of land. Usually it takes years to finally get enough money to secure the land. Trying to obtain land that is too costly for the brothers to afford is not desirable. We acknowledge that we live in difficult times. Many brothers find it a challenge to feed and clothe their families. The brothers do what they can to contribute for the worldwide work, to pay for their Kingdom Hall loans and utility bills and to have enough money to get their families to meetings each week. Because of this, we should be very concerned about putting any additional "expensive burden" on the brothers by asking them to finance the purchase of land when it is not absolutely necessary.—1 Thess. 2:9.

With this in mind, we would like the elders in each circuit to begin considering an alternative to obtaining venues for their assemblies and conventions. The circuits should investigate the possibility of renting public or private buildings or schools within the circuit for such events. Rented facilities often have a water supply, some toilet facilities and perhaps a shelter where the program can take place. If there is no shelter, schools often have a football pitch where canopies and chairs could be set up. If there is a rented facility within the circuit but it appears too small, then consideration could be given to holding two assemblies for the circuit instead of one. This would reduce the number in attendance at each event. Renting such

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a facility would appear to be much more practical than to pay a large amount of money and maintain a piece of land that lies unused for much of the year. Of course, if a circuit already has a developed assembly ground that has a permanent water supply and toilets, then this can continue to be used if the location is practical for the majority of the congregations in the circuit. However, circuits that own undeveloped land that has no water and toilet facilities are now being asked to consider an alternative venue for their assemblies. Therefore, during the 2008 service year and the years that follow, we would like all circuit overseers, and assembly overseers and their assistants, to investigate the possibility of using schools and other public facilities located in the circuit for their assemblies.

Circuits which have already purchased land that does not have a water supply, permanent toilets or other facilities, should not develop the land unless representatives from the branch office have inspected it. No land purchases or building works should be undertaken unless permission is first received from the branch office. If the local elders would like to make some improvement to their assembly grounds or desire to purchase land to be used for assemblies, they should first provide details to the branch office in care of the Kingdom Hall Construction Desk. In some cases it would be advantageous for two or three circuits to consolidate to have their assemblies held at one central venue.

In the upcoming months, the branch office will make an inspection of all assembly grounds owned by the circuits within the country. A determination will then be made to see if the location is practical or it would be more practical and less of a financial burden on the brothers to rent an assembly site closer to town or that already has facilities.

As a reminder, letters asking for contributions for land purchases or to pay for work to be done in connection with an Assembly Hall or assembly grounds should not be sent to the congregations. Neither should such letters be sent to brothers outside the country asking for financial assistance. If it is felt that such a letter is necessary, you must first receive approval from the branch office. When writing about these matters, details of the type of work to be done and the cost involved should be supplied.

We thank you for following through on this and take the opportunity to send our deep appreciation for the fine work you do in behalf of the brothers.

Your brothers,

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