

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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March 8, 2008

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Baptizing individuals who have communicable diseases

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letter dated April 1, 1996, to all bodies of elders and the note dated July 10, 1996, to all bodies of elders on the same subject. They should be removed from the congregation's permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed.

During these last days, an increasing number of individuals are contracting communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and so forth. Upon hearing the good news of the Kingdom, some of these desire to study the Bible, attend Christian meetings, and progress toward dedication to God. How should Jehovah's Witnesses respond to the needs of those with contagious and potentially fatal diseases? Are there precautions that would be practical and of benefit to the sufferer and for others in the Christian congregation?

The March 22, 1994, issue of *Awake!* stated on pages 14 and 15: "In all our dealings with others, including AIDS victims, Christians are instructed to follow the example of Jesus. The compassion he had for those who were afflicted, and yet were sincere in their desire to please God, is worthy of our imitation." To assist you with providing guidance for those with a communicable and potentially fatal disease who request baptism, questions 8 and 9 on pages 196 and 197 of *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will* are reviewed with candidates for baptism.

If the candidate makes known, or if it otherwise becomes known, that he has a communicable disease that will require precautions, he can be informed that he may consider the following loving options:

- He may attend the district convention, circuit assembly, or special assembly day; listen to the baptismal discourse given there; and then be taken to a running body of water to be baptized.
- He may attend the district convention, circuit assembly, or special assembly day; listen to the baptismal discourse; and then be baptized in his hotel or motel room or in a private home where there is a large tub that can be used for this purpose.
- If he is sensitive to others becoming aware of the fact that he has such a disease and does not want it to become known to others, he may attend a district convention, circuit assembly, or special assembly day to which his congregation is not assigned; listen to the baptismal discourse; and then be baptized in a running body of water.
- He may request that the elders arrange to have a private baptism at the local congregation.

You should be sure to inform the brothers performing the baptism of the health issue. This will allow the brothers to make a personal decision as to whether they feel there would be a risk that they would be unwilling to take.

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All should continue to welcome those with communicable diseases into the Christian congregation and to show love and warmth to them, while at the same time taking reasonable precautions to protect ourselves and our families from disease. We pray Jehovah's rich blessing on your earnest efforts to shepherd the flock in your care.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

c: Traveling overseers

PS to secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation's permanent file of policy letters.