



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

June 9, 2008

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Appointment and Deletion of Elders and Ministerial Servants

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letters dated August 1, 1992, and SA:SK June 28, 1999, to all bodies of elders and the note dated September 1, 1997, to all bodies of elders. That correspondence should be removed from the congregation's permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed.

With the exception of appointed brothers who change congregations and receive a favourable letter of recommendation, all recommendations for appointment should be submitted in conjunction with the visit of the circuit overseer. He will submit S-2 forms to the branch office, providing comments on the brother's qualifications.

Recommendations for appointment between visits of the circuit overseer: If a brother moves into the congregation and receives a favourable letter of recommendation from his previous body of elders to continue serving in an appointed capacity, if the body of elders in his new congregation concur that he qualifies to serve, and if the visit of the circuit overseer is not in the near future, the Congregation Service Committee may send a letter to the branch office recommending the brother's immediate reappointment. *A copy of the letter of recommendation signed by the service committee of his previous congregation must be included.* The branch office will not act on the recommendation unless each letter is signed by the respective service committee. The letter from the new congregation should also include the brother's full name, birth date, and baptism date.

Elders and ministerial servants who move to a new congregation with a favourable letter of recommendation and who have a favourable recommendation from the elders of the new congregation do not function in an official capacity (such as by serving on judicial committees or attending meetings of the body of elders) until confirmation of their appointment has been received from the branch office. In the meantime, they may give talks in the Theocratic Ministry School, present parts on the Service Meeting, give public talks, and so forth, according to their qualifications. Such ones are also permitted to attend the meeting the circuit overseer conducts with the elders and ministerial servants during the week of his visit, but only the portion during which the circuit overseer considers the outline from the branch office. Thus, generally, these brothers will leave at the same time as the ministerial servants. However, if the outline includes additional information for the elders only, brothers who were serving as elders may stay for that material as well. But they are not to be present when recommendations and local congregation needs are discussed. They may also attend the Kingdom Ministry School if one is held before they can be reappointed. Please note that if a brother who has moved to a new congregation is not reappointed after the visit of the circuit overseer, he would not be eligible to attend the spiritual programmes mentioned above on subsequent occasions.

Recommendations for appointment of those deleted in the past: If a brother who was deleted in the past as an elder or a ministerial servant is again recommended, the elders and the circuit overseer should provide as much background information as can be obtained, including the date of the brother's removal and the reason. If a deficiency was involved, they should indicate how much progress the brother has made in the area in which he was deficient. If the deletion occurred in another congregation, do the elders of that congregation have any objection to his being reappointed? The elders of his present congregation should contact the elders of his former congregation in advance so that all the pertinent information can be considered when the recommendation is discussed with the circuit overseer and the branch office can be fully apprised of the matter.

Is a brother who was deleted as an elder required to serve first as a ministerial servant before he can be reappointed as an elder? Such a brother would have to serve first as a ministerial servant if he was removed because of committing a sin that required handling by a judicial committee. This would serve as a stepping stone to his qualifying for additional privileges of service. On the other hand, he could be reappointed as an elder without his serving first as a ministerial servant if his deletion was for reasons other than judicial misconduct, such as the following: (1) He was deleted because of falling short of one or more of the Scriptural requirements for elders and later corrected the deficiency. (2) He resigned as an elder because of feeling he could not work well with the body of elders. In such a case, the brother should demonstrate a willingness to co-operate and work in unity with the body of elders and should meet the other Scriptural requirements before the elders consider recommending him. (3) He resigned as an elder for a personal reason, such as to care for a health problem or to spend more time assisting his family, and later his circumstances improved, allowing him to reach out for additional privileges in the congregation. When determining whether to recommend a brother for reappointment as an elder without his serving first as a ministerial servant, good judgment must be exercised, taking into consideration all the circumstances, including the amount of time that has passed since the brother served as an elder and the level of respect he has earned in the congregation.

Announcing appointments: No announcement of appointment in the congregation should be made before receiving from the branch office the returned S-2 form or an S-52 letter. If a brother recommended is appointed, two elders assigned by the presiding overseer should speak to him *before announcing the appointment*. The atmosphere during the discussion should emphasize the seriousness of the matter. It should not be handled in a hurried or casual manner. In every case, the elders must ask the following questions: "Is there anything from your past or in your personal or family life that disqualifies you or that would prevent you from accepting this appointment? Is there any reason why your appointment should not be announced to the congregation?" If the brother has not previously served as an elder or a ministerial servant, ask the following question: "Have you ever been involved at any time in the past with child sexual molestation?" If he answers yes to any of the above questions, do not announce the appointment. Rather, return the S-2 form or S-52 letter to the branch office along with an explanation of why he is disqualified. If he answers no to all of the above questions, the announcement of his appointment should be made at the next Service Meeting. There is no need to allow additional time to pass before announcing his appointment.

Deletions because of moving or death: The circuit overseer will inform the branch office of deletions because of moving or death following his next visit to the congregation. In such cases, no announcement of deletion is made to the congregation.

Recommending deletion because of resignation: If a brother feels that for personal reasons he needs to resign as an elder or a ministerial servant, the elders should discuss the matter with the brother. Is he Scripturally disqualified? If his personal circumstances hinder him from doing what he would like, can the elders be of any assistance or encouragement? Until his circumstances change, perhaps they can lighten his load while he continues to serve. If after this discussion he still feels he should be deleted and the visit of the circuit overseer is not in the near future, full details should be provided to the branch office as to why he chose to relinquish his privilege of service. However, no announcement of deletion should be made until confirmation is received from the branch office.

Recommending deletion because of no longer meeting the Scriptural qualifications though no judicial action has been taken: In most cases, such recommendations for deletion should be handled in conjunction with the visit of the circuit overseer. However, if the matter is serious or is disturbing to the congregation or community and the visit of the circuit overseer is not in the near future, the body of elders can write to the branch office. Full details of the specific disqualification should be provided, as well as an explanation of the counsel he was given and his response to it. It must also be stated whether or not the brother agrees with the recommendation for his deletion. If he disagrees, he may submit a letter along with the elders' letter of explanation, stating why he does not accept the recommendation. In the meantime, he will continue to serve as an elder or a ministerial servant. The body of elders will determine what congregation responsibilities he will have in the interim, according to the circumstances. No announcement of deletion should be made until confirmation is received from the branch office.

If an elder or a ministerial servant decides to move to another congregation and the body of elders does not recommend that he continue serving as such in his new congregation, they should meet with him before he leaves so that he has a clear understanding of the view of the body of elders. This will help to avoid hurt feelings and problems.

Deletion because of reproof by a judicial committee: Individuals reprovved by a judicial committee are automatically disqualified from serving in an appointed capacity. The Congregation Service Committee should immediately notify the branch office of the deletion, providing full information about the case. Include the specific judicial offence(s), the name of any other person involved, any counsel given, and how the wrongdoing became known to the elders. Specify whether an announcement of reproof was made to the congregation. If the case is handled just prior to the visit of the circuit overseer, the deletion may be included with his report to the branch office, and the details of the case provided in a confidential supplementary letter. An announcement of deletion should be made immediately to the congregation at the next Service Meeting without waiting for acknowledgement from the branch office.

Deletion because of disfellowshipping or disassociation: Full details on the wrongdoing should be reported to the branch office using the *Notification of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77) and *Summation of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77a) forms. When the announcement that the person is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses is made to the congregation, no additional announcement of his deletion as an elder or a ministerial servant is made.

Announcing deletions: Whenever a deletion is announced to the congregation, the announcement should read as follows: "Brother [individual's name] is no longer serving as an elder (a ministerial servant)."

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

June 9, 2008

Page 4

Changes in presiding overseer and secretary: If the presiding overseer or secretary is being deleted as an elder, the *Change of Presiding Overseer/Secretary* (S-29) form should be included with the letter of explanation to the branch office. If the former presiding overseer's address was used for literature or magazine shipments and should no longer be used for such, the branch office should be informed by letter. Since the presiding overseer is appointed by the branch office, all changes in presiding overseer are considered temporary until the next visit of the circuit overseer. *Change of Presiding Overseer/Secretary* forms submitted in conjunction with a temporary change of presiding overseer must always be accompanied by a letter of explanation. However, an explanatory letter is not needed when informing the branch office of a change in secretary. If the presiding overseer or secretary will be away for an extended time, the body of elders should select one from among their number to act as a replacement during the absence. Mail and correspondence will be handled by the replacement during this time. It is not necessary to submit an S-29 form unless correspondence should be sent to a different address during this period.

Kingdom Ministry School textbooks: If an elder is deleted for reasons other than moving to another congregation with a favourable recommendation, he should turn over his Kingdom Ministry School textbook to the Congregation Service Committee. The secretary should keep the book in the congregation's file so that it may be returned to the brother if he is reappointed as an elder. If a returned textbook is found to be in bad condition, it can be destroyed. Used textbooks should not be given to newly-appointed elders.

Filing correspondence related to deletions: Do not make any copies of letters to the branch office concerning appointments and deletions. Information stored in computers should be deleted. If there is other information in writing relating to a deletion that it is deemed necessary to keep, this should be sent to the branch office with a covering letter of explanation. S-2 forms and S-52 letters from the branch office concerning the deletion of an elder or a ministerial servant should be retained indefinitely in the congregation's file. Such background information should be supplied to the branch office in the event the brother is recommended for reappointment in the future.

We trust this information will be helpful to you when dealing with recommendations for the appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants. Please accept an expression of our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN

c: Travelling overseers

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