

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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October 1, 2008

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Re: Sale of Unused Plots and/or Old Kingdom Halls

Before the new Kingdom Hall construction program began in Ghana in the year 2000, many congregations already owned large tracts of land on which they had their Kingdom Halls. Since then many congregations have also acquired suitable pieces of land for the purpose of building new halls under the program. Others even procured more than one piece of land situated in different locations. We commend you for the fine efforts in this direction in support of the new program.

With Jehovah's blessings, to date 501 Kingdom Halls have been completed under the program. The sizes of the modest but decent new standard Kingdom Halls built are such that most congregations are left with additional unused land space large enough to accommodate at least another hall, lying either adjacent to the new hall or in a different location. It has also resulted in many old Kingdom Hall premises being vacated and no longer in use.

In order to make funds available to assist our brothers in other parts of our field who are also in dire need of Kingdom Halls, the branch has long directed that all such properties be sold "so that an equalizing might take place." (2 Cor. 8:14, 15) In accordance with this directive, we have succeeded in disposing of some of such properties. However, others are yet to be identified and sold. To this end, we are glad to provide you with the following steps on how any congregation that holds any such real-estate property should proceed to have it sold.

1. Immediately *set up a committee* of at least three brothers to organize the sale of the property, and submit as soon as possible to the branch office the names and contact phone numbers of the committee members. The committee may invite other qualified brothers who may have connections with possible buyers and some knowledge of real-estate matters and values to help.

2. Normally, we would like to know the *current market value* for the property, and this is done by either engaging the services of a professional real-estate valuer or by taking a consensus of how much property is sold in the area.

3. *Bids are invited* from potential buyers. Interested buyers should be asked to submit to the congregation written applications in which they indicate their bid prices. If the property lies adjacent to a suitable Kingdom Hall, the criteria for selecting potential buyers are that they be good desirable neighbors, preferably brothers or sisters or those amenable to the truth. The likely purpose or use to which the property will be put should be ascertained. Preferably, it should be for residence, supermarket, etc., and not for a drinking bar, school, or church which have the potential to create a nuisance.

4. In all cases, the sale price will be subject to the approval of the branch office. Therefore, it will be important to work closely with the Legal Department at the branch office in the sale of the property by *forwarding all the bid prices to the branch office* for final decision.

5. Once the branch office decides on a suitable prospective buyer and price, you will be given further directions in connection with the preparation of *sale/transfer documentation*, mode of payment, and the handing-over process.

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We are by this letter requesting all congregations having any unused old Kingdom Hall and/or plot(s) lying either adjacent to the Kingdom Hall or at a different location to take note and *immediately* follow through with the above procedure on the sale of the property. If your congregation owns a piece of land and you do not think it is proper to sell it at this time, please write to inform us stating your reasons.

Another important aspect of property matters on which we also feel it is necessary to provide you with reminders has to do with *purchasing property*. In a letter to all bodies of elders dated February 1, 2001, it was mentioned: "We request also that congregations *do not engage in any final negotiations or commit the Society to any purchase of a property before* consulting the Kingdom Hall Construction Desk at Bethel." This policy is still valid. We have had situations where congregations located and paid for property before bringing this to the attention of the branch office. This practice should be discontinued. We definitely want to make wise use of limited dedicated funds.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight for emphasis a point made in our letter to all bodies of elders dated April 4, 2008, regarding payment of "some of the demand notices that are served" on the congregations by local government authorities. Concerning *Ground Rents*, the letter said in part: "It will be expected that every congregation will fulfill the obligation of paying the annual ground rent." However, for *Property Rates*, after referring to Act 462, Part VIII, Section 99, the said letter clearly stated: "Congregations are therefore exempted from paying property rates on their Kingdom Hall buildings." We hope that this reminder will help you see what you need to do when *Ground Rent* and *Property Rate* demand notices are served on you.

We trust that Jehovah will bless your efforts in and support of this arrangement. Please accept our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
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