



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

July 3, 2009

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Expanded use of ministerial servants where the number of elders is limited

Dear Brothers:

Because of the substantial increase in Kingdom proclaimers around the world, some congregations may at times have very few elders or none at all. Therefore, we wish to provide direction as to how ministerial servants may be used in an enlarged capacity where the number of elders is very limited.

Dedication and baptism are the most important steps in a person's life. These are divine requirements for those who wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Elders must use good judgment and rely upon Jehovah's holy spirit when determining whether a publisher is qualified for baptism. (Jas. 1:5) When a publisher makes known his desire to get baptized, the coordinator of the body of elders arranges for qualified brothers to review with the publisher the questions in the appendix of *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will*. The questions should be reviewed with each candidate individually, not in a group. A possible exception would be if a married couple request to be baptized. In most congregations there are sufficient elders to meet with any desiring to be baptized. However, some congregations have very few elders, making it a challenge to meet with each one in a timely manner. Therefore, the following adjustment is being made.

In congregations that have very few elders, capable ministerial servants who have demonstrated good judgment and discernment may be used to review with individuals the questions for baptism dealing with doctrinal matters. These are found in "Part I—Elementary Bible Teachings" and "Part III—Jehovah's Arrangement of Things." Since "Part II—Jehovah's Righteous Requirements" involves sensitive personal matters, an elder should be used to consider this section. If the congregation does not have sufficient qualified brothers, the circuit overseer may be contacted to determine if a nearby congregation may assist.

When the baptismal candidate is male, the one assigned does not need another brother to accompany him when reviewing the questions. However, when the baptismal candidate is female, the discussions should be held in such a way that the elder or ministerial servant is never alone with her. It may be possible, for example, to hold the discussion in an open room in the sister's home where they will remain in plain view of others but out of earshot. Or perhaps they can meet at the Kingdom Hall in a similarly appropriate setting when another congregation is having a meeting. However, if it is necessary to take along another person, an elder should be used. If the congregation has few elders, a capable ministerial servant may be asked to accompany the assigned brother when considering parts I and III of the appendix.

Ministerial servants should *not* be used to serve on judicial committees. This updates the direction provided in paragraph 37 on page 4 of the insert of the September 1977 *Our*

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Kingdom Ministry. In the extreme circumstance where three elders are not available to serve on a judicial committee, one or two elders from a neighbouring congregation or the circuit overseer may be used to complete a judicial committee of three members. With regard to selecting elders to serve on a judicial committee, please see page 109, paragraphs 6-13, and pages 149-150 of the Kingdom Ministry School textbook.

In the *rare* circumstance where three elders cannot be located to serve on the judicial committee, two elders may care for the matter. The two elders will function as an appointed judicial committee. (Matt. 18:19, 20) However, prior to their informing the person of their decision, the chairman of the committee will submit a printed or typewritten report to the branch office. The confidential report should clearly outline the facts of the case and the conclusion reached by the responsible judicial committee. This report is to be sent to the branch office whether the decision is to disfellowship the individual or not. The branch office will review the report and confirm receipt of it in writing to the judicial committee. Thereafter, the two elders will inform the person of the committee's decision. (*ks91* p. 121) If the decision is to disfellowship, the committee will then submit the *Notification of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77) and the *Summation of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77a) forms to the branch office in the usual way.

We rejoice with you that Jehovah is speeding up the ingathering work. (Isa. 60:22) It is our prayer that these adjustments will assist you to care for your many responsibilities as shepherds in the congregation. (1 Pet. 5:2) Please accept our warm Christian love and greetings.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN

cc: Travelling overseers

PS to the secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the *Index to Letters—For Bodies of Elders* (S-22) at this time as well.