



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

November 3, 2009

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Assisting inactive ones

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letters dated February 2, 1999, and February 4, 2004, to all bodies of elders. Those letters should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed.

The November 15, 2008, *Watchtower* articles entitled “Help Those Who Stray From the Flock” and “Help Them Return Without Delay!” highlighted the duty that shepherds of God’s flock have to search for sheep who have strayed. (Ezek. 34:11; Acts 20:28) Of course, elders want to do all they can to “shepherd the flock of God” so as to prevent inactivity. (1 Pet. 5:2) However, when publishers become inactive, what can be done to help them? How can we balance our responsibility to render assistance to these spiritually weak ones while upholding Jehovah’s righteous standards?

Arranging for a visit: A special effort should be made each year during the Memorial season to seek out those who are inactive and to invite them to attend the Lord’s Evening Meal. You may also at other times become aware that a publisher is inactive. In any case, arrangements should be made by the Congregation Service Committee for two elders to visit the inactive one. When planning your visits, perhaps the field service group overseer might be one of the elders assigned. As you realize, the circumstances of inactive ones vary greatly. Generally speaking, though, many who are inactive have not abandoned the truth. Neither have they engaged in serious wrongdoing. They have simply stopped preaching because of discouragement, personal problems, materialism, or other anxieties of life. (Luke 21:34-36) Helpful information has been provided in *Our Kingdom Ministry* on how elders can assist those who have become inactive. Before your visit, you might review such references as the February 2007 *Our Kingdom Ministry* article “Do Not Forget Those Who Are Inactive” and the November 2000 *Our Kingdom Ministry* Question Box. Very often, inactive ones need help to appreciate that Jehovah cares for them. You can direct their attention to chapter 24 of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*; to the article “You Are Precious in God’s Eyes!” which appeared in the April 1, 1995, *Watchtower*, pages 10-15; or chapter 1 of the book “*Keep Yourself in God’s Love*” along with the letter from the Governing Body in that publication. Other appropriate material may also be used.

Offering Bible studies: If the inactive one responds favourably to the visit and expresses a desire to resume activity with the congregation, a Bible study may be offered. If the study is accepted, make this known to a member of the service committee. Arrangements can then be made for the study to be conducted. Good judgment is needed to determine who is best suited to conduct the study, how long it should be conducted, and what publication should be studied.—*km* 11/98 p. 7.

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Resuming field service: If a person has been inactive for only a short time, a helping hand from an experienced publisher may be all that is needed to reactivate the individual. On the other hand, before inviting a long-time inactive one to share in the ministry, two elders should meet with him to see if he meets the basic requirements to again serve as a Kingdom publisher, as outlined on pages 79-81 of the book *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will*. They will follow a procedure similar to that used when meeting with new ones seeking to publish the good news.

Assisting repentant wrongdoers: There may be occasions when the inactive one has been involved in serious wrongdoing and now desires to return to the congregation. Some have been inactive for many years, while others have only recently become inactive. What can be done to help someone who has 'quit the wrong' and repents and wants to come back, be it on their own initiative or as a result of an elder's visit?

The November 15, 2008, *Watchtower*, pages 14 and 15, paragraphs 12 and 13, states: "Some individuals stop preaching and attending meetings because they have committed a serious sin. They may feel that if they confess their wrongdoing to the elders, they will be disfellowshipped. But they will not be expelled from the congregation if they have discontinued the unscriptural practice and are genuinely repentant. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) Instead, they will be welcomed back, and the elders will give them the spiritual help they need. . . . The elders will know how to assist anyone desiring to return and live in accord with God's will. Loving discipline may be required. (Heb. 12:7-11) If the person acknowledges that he has sinned against God, has ceased to engage in wrongdoing, and is truly repentant, the elders will help him, and he can receive Jehovah's forgiveness.—Isa. 1:18; 55:7; Jas. 5:13-16."

As you can appreciate, good judgment is needed when handling these matters. If questions arise relative to a specific situation, please feel free to write to the branch office and we will provide assistance.

May Jehovah continue to bless your hard work in behalf of the congregation.

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 congregation copy of *Index to Letters—For Bodies of Elders* (S-22) at this time as well.