

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses Congrégation chrétienne des Témoins de Jéhovah



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February 7, 2011

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Caring for the needs of the blind

Dear Brothers:

Two men on the roadside cried out loudly, "Have mercy on us!" Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" They answered, "Let our eyes be opened." Jesus touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight. (Matt. 20:30-34) Besides being anointed to declare the good news, Jesus was also sent forth to grant a recovery of sight to the blind. This and other examples in the Bible tell us how Jehovah and Jesus feel about people who are blind. Today, we need to give special attention to the blind, both in the congregations and in the field.

The branch office produces many publications for the blind and visually impaired in numerous Braille languages in embossed-paper format and in audio format with Braille labels. Additionally, as announced in the August 2008 *Our Kingdom Ministry*, page 3, publishers who are blind have the option of receiving electronic files of selected publications via e-mail for use with Braille notetakers or screen reader programs. These Braille items are produced in various languages and grades. Therefore, before you submit a request, it is important to know whether the blind person can read Braille and, if so, which language and grade of Braille he can read. Only when a request for a screen reader file is submitted would the grade not be needed, since these text files are converted to audio format by the screen reader software.

To help congregation elders with requesting Braille literature, *Braille Request Guidelines* has been provided along with this letter. Additionally, the *Braille Publications List* (S-58) and the *Braille Request Form* (S-59) are available for download in the *Forms* section of the jw.org Web site. In the future, elders will be able to request Braille publications electronically from the jw.org Web site. Information regarding this enhancement will be supplied as it becomes available.

Congregation elders should be alert to inform the circuit overseer as soon as they are aware of a visually impaired elder who may need a copy of the *Shepherding* textbook in Braille or a visually impaired pioneer who may need the Pioneer Service School textbook in Braille. Both textbooks are produced with the Scriptural references included. Additionally, *How Parents Can Protect Their Children From Misuse of Blood* (S-55) and the annual pioneer outline and encouragement letter in Braille may be requested directly from the Shipping Department.

If someone is found in the ministry who is blind and shows an interest in the truth, you can request a publication or two in Braille to cultivate his interest, such as a tract, a brochure, or the *Bible Teach* book. Braille literature is distributed without charge to persons interested in the Kingdom message in the same way that other literature produced by Jehovah's Witnesses is distributed. Please note, however, that producing literature in Braille is costly. This is particularly true of the *New World Translation* in Braille, which in English is a 20-volume set. Therefore, the

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Bible should only be requested for publishers or for Bible students who have made their advancement manifest, for example, by attending congregation meetings.

A publisher who is blind will normally require additional help from the congregation. This may involve helping him to get to and from congregation meetings, assemblies, and conventions. Assistance may be needed in order for him to share in the ministry or to prepare for meetings. Having Jesus' view of the blind will prompt the elder body and the publishers to provide this needed help. The elders should regularly check with each blind publisher to see if he needs further help in his service to Jehovah.

It is a privilege to assist those who are blind, whether they are in the congregation or we meet them in the field. Your continued effort to help these ones does not go unnoticed by our Creator.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

cc: Traveling overseers

BRAILLE REQUEST GUIDELINES

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Not all blind people are able to read Braille. Therefore, before making a request, please confirm that the person is able to read the grade of Braille that is available in his language. Braille publications are produced in two grades.
 - Grade one: This grade corresponds letter for letter with the visual print of the material. It is the easiest one to learn, but it requires more time to read.
 - Grade two: This grade is an abbreviated form of Braille. Since not all blind people have learned this abbreviated, or contracted, form of Braille, please verify that the person is able to read it before you request publications in this grade of Braille.
- Please consult the *Braille Publications List (S-58)* for a complete list of items available in any format for the blind and visually impaired. Additionally, note when new Braille publications are listed on the monthly announcement to all congregations, inform those in your congregation who are visually impaired, and assist them to obtain the items that they need.

SUBMITTING REQUESTS

- Please consult the *Braille Publications List (S-58)* for a complete list of available publications in various languages, grades of Braille, and formats, such as embossed, audio with Braille labels, and electronic Braille text files. Note new Braille publications available in the monthly announcement to all congregations. If questions arise when filling out a Braille request—for example, a publisher may desire to have an item that is not listed on the *Braille Publications List*—you may contact the branch office by sending an e-mail as outlined below or by calling 905-873-4501.
- Braille requests should be submitted to the branch office by means of the *Braille Request Form (S-59)*. The form contains editable fields and can be downloaded from the *Forms* section of the *jw.org* Web site. The completed form may be sent via e-mail with the word “Braille” along with your congregation name and number in the subject line. It can also be sent via fax or regular mail with the line “Attn.: Braille.” Please use the following contact information:

E-mail address: shippingcorrespondence@wtbts.ca
Fax number: 905-873-4520
Mailing address: Watch Tower
Attn: Braille
PO Box 4100
Georgetown ON L7G 4Y4

LITERATURE

- Braille requests should not be submitted through the language-coordinating or ship-to congregation; they should be submitted separately from all other literature requests any time during the month. By making separate requests for Braille literature, you will help to expedite the process.
- Braille literature items should not be stocked by a congregation. Rather, they should be requested only in response to a specific request from an individual.
- The Bible in Braille should only be requested for publishers or for Bible students who have made their advancement manifest, for example, by attending congregation meetings. If someone is found in the ministry who is blind and shows an interest in the truth, you can request a publication or two in Braille to cultivate his interest, such as a tract, a brochure, or the *Bible Teach* book. This is because embossed Braille publications are considerably larger in size and significantly more expensive to produce than printed publications. For example, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in English Braille consists of 20 volumes.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Each year, a survey will be sent to congregations for each person in the territory who has a subscription to the magazines or *Our Kingdom Ministry* in Braille. The form should be completed and returned to the branch office promptly using the mailing address listed on the previous page. The survey lists publications that are regularly being sent to the person. The elders will be asked to confirm whether subscribers still desire to receive the Braille periodicals in the chosen format. This will allow the subscriber to continue to receive the Braille items without interruption.
- The Congregation Service Committee will also be asked to verify that a publisher is still in good standing with the congregation. Checking either “Renew” or “Cancel” under the “Existing Subscriptions” section of the *Annual Braille Survey* will inform the branch office of whether the subscriber still qualifies to receive each item. For example, those who are disfellowshipped do not qualify to receive *Our Kingdom Ministry*.
- If you have not received a survey by **April 1** each year and you have a publisher in your congregation who is blind, the service overseer should send an e-mail to shippingcorrespondence@wtbts.ca with the congregation name and number and the word “Braille” in the subject line. However, anytime a person who is blind moves into or out of your congregation, the service overseer should immediately contact the branch office as mentioned above and include the name and address of the blind person as well as the name of the congregations to and from which he transferred.

ELECTRONIC FILES

- *Screen readers* are software programs that allow blind or visually impaired persons to hear text that is displayed on the computer screen read to them. Since a person does not need to read Braille to benefit from this audio format, the grade of Braille does not need to be submitted with requests for screen reader files. *Notetakers*, on the other hand, are word processors with a Braille display, and therefore the grade of Braille needs to be submitted with requests for notetaker files.
- When submitting requests for electronic files, please include on the *Braille Request Form* (S-59) the person’s e-mail address and what type of electronic device he will be using. If the visually impaired person cannot receive e-mail, the e-mail address of someone who can receive and transfer files to him should be provided.
- Please note that this provision is for the personal use of the visually impaired individual for whom the file is intended, and it should not be redistributed.