

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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May 25, 2011

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Public speakers

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letters dated March 2, 1990, July 19, 1999, and February 13, 2008, to all bodies of elders. Those letters should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed. Much fine direction on public speaking and teaching has been included in the *Ministry School* book. However, please note the following additional guidelines regarding arrangements for public speakers. Appropriate points from this letter should be shared with ministerial servants who give public talks and who assist with scheduling public talks.

Assignments: It is essential that only qualified elders and ministerial servants be assigned to give public talks. Visiting speakers should be well recommended in their own congregation. It is preferable that visiting speakers be elders. However, well-qualified ministerial servants may occasionally be invited. Generally, requests for speakers should be through the coordinator of the body of elders or another elder or well-qualified ministerial servant assigned to assist him with the scheduling. A list of approved speakers and the talks they have prepared should be provided to other congregations. Speakers and talks should be chosen from this list. Since the number of approved speakers varies from congregation to congregation, it is not always necessary that an equal number of speakers be exchanged.—See also letter *To All Bodies of Elders*, January 1, 2008.

At times, the body of elders may feel that a local speaker should be assigned a talk on a particular subject in view of the needs of the congregation. Or speakers may be allowed to choose which outlines they wish to prepare.

It is best that speakers not be assigned to be away from their own congregation more than once a month. Thus, the many matters that have to be looked after locally will not fall on just a few, and the publishers will not feel that they have been left on their own.

Reading scriptures: Scriptures should be read by the speaker rather than requesting a volunteer from the audience. The *New World Translation* should be used, if available. There may be occasions when the speaker desires to read from the *New World Translation* and thereafter briefly mention the way that another translation renders a phrase or verse. Good judgment is needed in this regard.

Training new speakers: As a way to be of help to new speakers, the body of elders should use qualified ministerial servants in a manner that provides opportunities to counsel them and to assist them with improving their speaking ability. It is not always necessary for a ministerial servant's first public talk to be a symposium. However, the body of elders may decide in a particular case that it would be beneficial for an inexperienced public speaker to be assigned the first 15 minutes of a talk and for a more experienced speaker to be assigned the

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remaining 15 minutes. Following the presentation, appropriate counsel and suggestions may be offered privately.

Dress and grooming: Speakers, whether from your own congregation or visitors, should conform to appropriate standards of dress and grooming for their region. Generally, throughout Ghana, a shirt and necktie, or a “political suit” is acceptable dress for the platform. The speaker may also choose to wear a suit or a jacket. In some areas, a ceremonial cloth, or the smock, may also be acceptable. There is no need to establish a special standard for the public speaker that differs from the dress standard of others who share the platform at the same meeting. If there are problems with dress and grooming on the part of a visiting speaker, it would be appropriate to provide his body of elders with this information.

Hospitality and travel expenses: The body of elders should take the lead in extending hospitality to visiting speakers by asking to cover their travel expenses and by offering them a meal. (Rom. 12:13; 15:7; 3 John 8) Since circumstances vary widely, it will be up to the body of elders to decide how this should be handled locally. Please note: Any congregation funds given to the public speaker should just be enough to cover his travel expenses (such as trotro, taxi or fuel costs) only. Such travel expenses for visiting speakers should be considered recurring operating expenses. Thus, a congregation resolution is not needed. Congregation funds should not be used to cover expenses for other forms of hospitality, such as entertaining or providing meals. We trust that this arrangement will strengthen the bonds of love that identify the true Christian congregation.—John 13:34, 35.

Thank you for noting this direction.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

c: Traveling overseers

PS to 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.