

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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SDA November 23, 2011

TO ALL REGIONAL BUILDING COMMITTEES, HOSPITAL LIAISON COMMITTEES,
AND TRAVELLING OVERSEERS

Re: Caring for expenses

Dear Brothers:

As Jehovah's chariot-like organization moves forward, it is inevitable that certain adjustments are required in the way in which we view matters and care for our assignments. We marvel at the recent developments in the activities of both the Regional Building Committees (RBC) and the Hospital Liaison Committees (HLC). We know you appreciate the explicit direction being provided by the Governing Body. Please be assured that we are most grateful for your unstinting labours in these vitally important roles.

It seems that various anomalies have arisen in so far as caring for your expenses. Similar anomalies have also been reported in connection with covering the expenses incurred by travelling overseers as they serve the congregations. The Branch Committee felt it would be beneficial to clarify the current procedures and thereby resolve any questions that may have arisen, either in your minds or those of the brothers.

Regional Building Committees:

As you will be aware, *Regional Building Committee Guidelines (S-120)* 11:4 states, "RBC members, department overseers, project coordinators, or others who expend significant personal resources working on Kingdom Hall projects may submit out-of-pocket expenses for reimbursement." In addition, in connection with biennial maintenance inspections, paragraph 8:6 indicates that congregations "may also reimburse the volunteers for fuel expenses if receipts are supplied." There are benefits from applying these arrangements consistently in your dealings with congregations.

However, RBCs do incur other expenses that are not specific to a congregation or Kingdom Hall project. For example, some office expenses, as well as certain costs in training volunteers to meet legal requirements, may fall into this category. Perhaps there may be fuel costs that cannot be attributed to a specific project. Or, you may believe that, in the long term, it is preferable to purchase certain items of construction equipment rather than hire them.

In such situations, the RBC can make out a requisition, itemizing the specific expenses, and submit this to the branch office for approval and payment. When it comes to equipment it may well be that such equipment can be obtained at a highly-competitive price through local contacts in our Purchasing Department, or through Global Purchasing. When arranging training sessions or other non-routine expenses, it will be necessary for an estimate of the costs to be submitted to the branch office in advance. You should not proceed until you receive permission from the branch office. Such approved expenditure will be covered by the branch office.

With these guidelines in mind you will appreciate why it is unnecessary to request donations from circuit funds.

Hospital Liaison Committees:

The above guidelines, in principle, apply to HLCs. We appreciate that as you carry out your assignments, expenses are incurred and we also appreciate that many of you, as with RBC members, do not claim for some of your legitimate expenses. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for

your self-sacrificing and generous spirit. Of course, HLC members, unlike RBC members, do not have specific congregation projects to which they can charge their expenses. For some time now, the Governing Body has established an arrangement whereby your running expenses such as travel, hospital parking, telephone calls, etc. can be reimbursed from the branch.

However, we would like to make an adjustment as to how capital expenses can be cared for. From time to time your activity may incur expenses over and above your day-to-day running costs. For example, you may feel there is a need to purchase or replace office equipment. In such cases, please submit these requests to the branch and, if approved, we shall be happy to supply these items. We believe that in many cases this could well be cheaper than if you were to obtain the item locally.

In view of this adjustment to bring both the RBC and HLC activity into line with the Governing Body's current policy, please note there is no further need for circuits to be invited to make donations from circuit funds.

Circuit Accommodation:

Regional Building Committee Guidelines, chapter 12, is entitled "Kingdom Hall Apartments." It encourages circuits to construct apartments attached to, or part of, a Kingdom Hall. There is even a suggested standard apartment design of 800 square feet.

The above-mentioned chapter 12 covers every aspect of circuit accommodation, including areas of responsibility, costs of construction, maintenance, operating expenses, and relationship to the organization. We strongly recommend that all RBCs and travelling overseers read this chapter carefully and convey the information contained therein to each body of elders when they next serve the congregations. May we draw your attention to the fact that no mention is made of Circuit Flat Committees. Paragraph 3 states, "If the collective body of elders in a circuit or district wishes to work out arrangements with the elders of a congregation owning an apartment to assist with expenses for an apartment to be used by a travelling overseer, this may be done. It is usually best for such matters to be discussed by the collective body of elders of the circuit at the time of their business meeting in connection with an assembly."

What about circuits that have provided accommodation separate from a Kingdom Hall? The Branch Committee recommends that the collective body of elders in a circuit appoint an elder to serve as a liaison between the travelling overseer and the collective elders. Costs in connection with the day-to-day operating of the accommodation can be submitted to this "liaison" elder. If extensive repairs are required this "liaison" brother can communicate with the RBC. They can determine whether the repairs can be executed by skilled brothers or, if unavailable, by a worldly tradesman. It will be up to the collective body of elders in the circuit to determine by what method these costs will be met, whether by donations from the congregations or out of circuit funds.

By following this procedure there is no longer a need for Circuit Flat Committees. They have proved a blessing over many years and we appreciate the kindly, thoughtful oversight they have exercised towards ensuring suitable accommodation for the circuit overseer. We thank you sincerely for your loving ministry.

Finally, may we turn to the weekly expenses incurred by travelling overseers as they visit congregations. It is the privilege of congregations to contribute towards the expenses incurred by travelling overseers as they visit congregation. *Travelling Overseer Guidelines*, 10:7-9 outlines clearly the procedure for submitting expenses. It states, "Travelling overseers should not take the initiative in requesting that a congregation reimburse them for expenses incurred during the week." There appears to be some uncertainty as to how this delicate matter can be approached. Various methods have been suggested, many of which

have proved extremely successful. For example, what has been referred to as the “book system” has proved very effective, one congregation’s surplus offsetting another’s lack. (2 Cor. 8 and 9) The travelling overseer simply shows the elders his “accounts” book. They are free to make a donation or refrain. But it is apparent that there is no real uniformity, some successfully using the “book” system, while others have either never had it explained to them or failed to adopt it.

What can be done to adopt a uniform approach compatible with the guidance given by the Governing Body? During the next round of visits travelling overseers may wish to spend a few minutes outlining the principles discussed by the apostle Paul in pertinent verses of 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9. If, after a kindly explanation, the body of elders feels the congregation would like to cover some or all of these expenses, the body of elders may approve and reimburse these expenses at the end of the visit. *Travelling Overseer Guidelines* 10:9 explains what should be done if a congregation does not provide reimbursements for food, petrol, routine office, and moderate personal expenses.—2 Cor. 11:29.

We request that all travelling overseers discard the “book” system, or any other system you might have in operation, and follow closely what is stated clearly in the *Guidelines*. This will avoid any further anomalies or ambiguities and ensure that the same Governing Body approved system operates worldwide. It will prove to be another step forward in promoting worldwide unity of thought and action.

We might mention that travelling overseers’ cars are purchased by the branch. Global Purchasing determines the make, model, and specifies how many years we keep a car prior to changing it. Tax, insurance, AA, are all paid for by the branch. Each year congregations are invited to make a pro rata donation to the branch to help defray these capital expenses involved in operating district/circuit cars.

The Branch Committee is sure you will all respond readily to these guidelines, thus ensuring a greater measure of clarity and uniformity. We really do value highly your ministry in these specialized roles of sacred service. We are confident that ‘whatever you are doing, you are working at it whole-souled as to Jehovah.’ (Col. 3:23) We thank you, and your dear wives, for your valuable contribution towards caring for Jehovah’s Kingdom interests. May Jehovah’s rich blessing continue to be with ‘the (excellent) spirit you show.’—Philem. 25.

Your brothers,
*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah’s Witnesses*

For the Branch Committee

cc: Bodies of elders