

TESTIGOS CRISTIANOS DE JEHOVÁ

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October 8, 2012

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Use of ministerial servants where the number of elders is limited

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letter dated August 19, 2010, to all bodies of elders. That letter should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and should be destroyed. In this letter, a reference to the *Shepherding* textbook has been inserted. Also, paragraph 7 contains updated direction on recommendations for appointment and deletion when ministerial servants substitute as members of the Congregation Service Committee.

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 on page 6, paragraph 37, of the September 1977 *Our Kingdom Ministry*. In the extreme circumstance where three elders are not available to serve on a judicial committee, one or two elders from a neighboring congregation or the circuit overseer may be used to complete a judicial committee of three members.—*ks10* chap. 6 pars. 1-2.

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. If the decision is to disfellowship, the committee will then submit the *Record of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* cards (S-79a and b) to the

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branch office in the usual way (see our letter dated October 1, 2007, regarding the standard procedures for reporting judicial matters to the branch office).

In congregations where there are insufficient elders to fulfill the responsibilities of the coordinator of the body of elders, the congregation secretary, and the service overseer, qualified ministerial servants may be asked to substitute as members of the Congregation Service Committee. In such cases, the ministerial servant will care for many of the technical aspects of the assignment. Such work is highly valued and contributes to the smooth functioning of the congregation. Nevertheless, there are certain responsibilities that only elders will perform.

Regarding recommendations for elders or ministerial servants in congregations where one or more members of the service committee are ministerial servants, the circuit overseer will discuss with the elders the Scriptural qualifications of the brothers who may qualify for appointment and submit S-2 forms to the branch office. Any ministerial servants should not be aware of or be involved in the discussion. Ministerial servants should have no access to any S-2 forms. In congregations with no elders, the circuit overseer himself will provide the S-2 forms.

To what extent should ministerial servants who substitute as members of the service committee be used to sign other documents and forms regarding service privileges of publishers? This issue will often arise when sending letters of introduction for publishers or appointed servants and in connection with approval for publishers to serve as auxiliary or regular pioneers or for other privileges of service. Certainly an elder should be used to fulfill this role when available. In the absence of an elder, ministerial servants could sign letters or forms that provide general observations on a publisher's share in the ministry, meeting attendance, or overall involvement in congregation activities. Nevertheless, if information regarding confidential personal matters needs to be conveyed to the branch office or another congregation, this should be cared for by a local elder or one from a neighboring congregation who is familiar with the situation. The circuit overseer could be called on to facilitate communication in such matters. If he is unable to do so, the branch office may be consulted.

We are confident that these additional guidelines will prove helpful to you. Please be assured of our deep appreciation for your loving labors in behalf of the brothers and sisters in your respective congregations.—1 Thess. 1:2, 3.

Your brothers,

Testigos Cristianos de Jehová

cc: 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.