

WATCHTOWER

Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

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November 10, 2012

TO ALL HOSPITAL LIAISON COMMITTEES

Re: Balancing HLC responsibilities with other assignments

Dear Brothers:

The work of Hospital Liaison Committees (HLCs) has been of great benefit to our brothers for many years. The medical community has come to appreciate the valuable service HLCs render the brotherhood. One well-respected pediatric anesthesiologist stated, “Jehovah’s Witnesses provide a liaison service to assist doctors in reaching an individualized agreed strategy before the surgery, and it has been the experience of the author that this has proved very straightforward, nonconfrontational, and helpful.”

Much time is demanded of you in fulfilling your responsibility as members of the HLC. In fact, as your circumstances have allowed, many of you have accepted multiple theocratic assignments because of your self-sacrificing spirit and willingness to assist where the need exists. (1 Tim. 3:1) Appropriately, elders must balance the time they spend helping others with their own need for personal study, meditation, prayer, family responsibilities, and sharing in the field ministry. Additionally, advancing age or health concerns may at times make it difficult to continue carrying such a heavy load of responsibility.

With this in mind, at your next HLC meeting, please discuss the following questions and read the cited Bible texts, *Watchtower* references, and other material as it relates to the HLC-assigned responsibilities. It would also be appropriate to review the various assignments within your committee to determine whether there is a need to redistribute certain responsibilities. Prior to the meeting, all HLC members should review and prayerfully consider the following material: Seminar III outlines entitled “Organized to Assist and Support Our Brothers” (*hlc-tk-3*) and “Keep Balanced in Favor of ‘The More Important Things’” (*hlc-tk-17*) and the January 1, 2002, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 29-31.

1. What should be my attitude toward fulfilling my role as an HLC member?

The HLC arrangement is clearly Bible-based. (**Read Proverbs 17:17; Matthew 25:36, 44.**) Jehovah promised to sustain his servants “upon a divan of illness.” (Ps. 41:3) One of the ways he accomplishes this is through the HLC and Patient Visitation Group arrangement. Since Jehovah directs his servants to abstain from blood, it is reasonable that he would not leave them to provide for themselves, but instead he would direct the earthly part of his organization to put into place an arrangement to support his people in their efforts to comply with his law. (Acts 15:28, 29; compare 2 Cor. 4:8, 9.) Therefore, members of the HLC should have in mind that their assignment supports our brothers, who are determined to obey God’s law on blood. As Proverbs 19:17 shows, assisting the lowly in a time of need is comparable to “lending to Jehovah.”

The HLC arrangement has proved to be a source of great help to individual publishers and families. After receiving assistance from the local HLC, one sister stated that the HLC was “a great

source of comfort and peace during a difficult time.” Another family expressed their gratitude by letter, stating, “We write to extend our great appreciation for the assistance and support you gave our family and me during a time of crisis.” The efforts you make on behalf of God’s people by your willingness to assist any time, day or night, is a great blessing and source of comfort. Your work in this capacity as shepherds encourages, strengthens, and helps the brotherhood to be integrity keepers.

2. Why is it important for me to analyze my present circumstances regarding serving on the HLC?

Our service is motivated by Christian love. It is therefore important to remember that an HLC member does not hold back “when it happens to be in the power of [his] hand” to help one in need. (Prov. 3:27) When an HLC member receives calls for assistance at inconvenient times, he is aware that Jehovah takes note and feels indebted to mere humans who perform such acts of loving kindness. Serving on the HLC means being willing to respond to an emergency at all hours. **(Read John 13:35.)** In most cases when the HLC is called to assist, it means that the blood issue has arisen and a Christian’s integrity may be tested. Understanding the gravity of the situation means that even when an HLC member may be engaged in the field ministry, attending a Christian meeting, or is involved in some other activity, he would make the necessary arrangements to ensure that he or another member of the committee renders immediate assistance to the needy one.—**Read Philippians 2:4; Seminar III outline *hlc-tk-17*, subheading “Prioritizing Responsibilities and Theocratic Assignments.”**

Of course, we should not turn down a privilege of service or avoid reaching out because inconveniences are involved or because we feel incapable of shouldering the responsibility. The most powerful force in the entire universe, Jehovah’s holy spirit, can make up for our deficiency if we rely on the wisdom and strength it imparts. **(Read Philippians 4:13; James 3:17.)** Modesty, however, helps us recognize our limitations. As an elder, you are already very busy in a number of spiritual activities. You realize that by accepting further privileges, you may risk neglecting other necessary Scriptural responsibilities. In such a situation, it may be that declining other additional privileges is the course of wisdom.—**Read Proverbs 11:2; Micah 6:8.**

3. What if my present circumstances now limit my ability to serve on the HLC?

All elders must constantly evaluate their personal efforts to ensure that they are giving proper attention to the more important things, such as Bible reading, personal study, prayer, a personal relationship with Jehovah, preaching the good news, a loving relationship with family, family worship, and shepherding the congregation. Some HLC members whose circumstances have changed and are now unable to promptly respond to requests for HLC assistance may have already considered making some adjustments. In such instances, perhaps another HLC member would be in a better position to take on the more demanding aspects of the work. **(Read 2 Timothy 2:2.)** Some brothers may feel that for the most part, they are able to keep up with their varied responsibilities as an elder but modestly look at what they can now reasonably keep doing in behalf of the HLC. (*w09* 6/15 pp. 28-31; *w02* 1/1 pp. 29-31) As in the past, it may be that some now serving on the HLC could assume the role of advisor, if their circumstances permit. Serving in this capacity allows brothers to use their years of experience to assist the committee. In this way they can be a valuable asset. If a member decides he needs to relinquish his HLC assignment in order to give more attention to “more important things,” he need not feel guilty. (Phil. 1:9, 10) We are not, however, suggesting that any brother do so without giving the matter prayerful consideration. **(Read Philippians 4:6, 7.)** Bear in mind that Jehovah promises to impart power to his faithful servants who at times grow weary.—Isa. 40:29-31.

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It is a challenge to balance responsibilities in the family and in the congregation while caring for an assignment on the HLC. Honestly evaluating present circumstances in light of these questions, each HLC member should be able to determine whether he needs to make changes. After considering this matter, please apprise your Hospital Information Desk of any adjustments the committee as a whole feels are necessary. Additionally, if an HLC member were to relinquish his responsibilities, it may be that circumstances will in time allow him to serve again, and he should not hesitate to make the HLC aware of his willingness to serve.

This letter has been added to the list of permanent policy letters. Please update the HLC *Index to Letters* (hlc-4) at this time.

Whether you brothers have been involved with the HLC since its inception, or you have started to serve recently, we commend you for your faithfulness. It is truly a pleasure to be working with you. Do not forget that Jehovah is aware of your labors of love in behalf of his precious sheep.—Prov. 19:17; Isa. 40:11.

Your brothers,


OF NEW YORK, INC.

cc: Traveling overseers