

# Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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July 13, 2014

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants

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Dear Brothers:

1. As previously announced, effective September 1, 2014, circuit overseers will be responsible for the appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants. This letter provides further direction regarding this adjustment.

2. **Appointments during a regular visit to a congregation:** At least one month before the circuit overseer's visit, the Congregation Service Committee should send to the circuit overseer the full name, date of birth, and date of baptism of any brother the body of elders will be recommending for appointment as an elder or a ministerial servant. The *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* (S-62) form should be used for this purpose.—See paragraph 14.

3. No earlier than a day or two before the start of the visit, perhaps when other congregation records are provided, the elders should provide the circuit overseer with background information that will help him have a complete view of the qualifications of the brother(s) being recommended for appointment. Such information would include letters of recommendation (or perhaps letters of introduction) from a previous congregation. During the meeting with the elders later in the week, the circuit overseer will discuss the Scriptural qualifications of each brother recommended. (*ks10* chap. 3 pars. 1-10) If the circuit overseer determines that the brother does not measure up to the Scriptural requirements to a reasonable degree, he will advise the elders accordingly and inform them how they can help the brother to qualify in the future.

4. When the circuit overseer decides to appoint a brother, the circuit overseer and another elder will meet with the brother to inform him of his appointment. If the brother is (1) being appointed for the first time as a ministerial servant or (2) being reappointed as an elder or a ministerial servant for reasons other than his move from one congregation to another, the circuit overseer will ask the following questions: "Is there anything from your past, even before baptism, or in your personal or family life that disqualifies you or that would prevent you from accepting this appointment? Is there any reason why your appointment should not be announced to the congregation?"

Have you ever been involved at any time in the past with child sexual molestation?" (This revises the direction in the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 3, paragraph 13.) If the brother answers no to the questions, the circuit overseer will provide the elders with a signed appointment letter that includes the brother's name in the list of those appointed during the visit. The appointment should be announced to the congregation at the next Service Meeting.

5. If the brother approved for appointment is not present at the conclusion of the visit and it is necessary to ask him the three questions mentioned in paragraph 4, the circuit overseer will not include the brother's name in the appointment letter, if any, left with the elders at the end of the visit. Rather, when the brother returns, the coordinator of the body of elders should assign two elders to ask the brother the three questions. The coordinator of the body of elders will then inform the circuit overseer of the brother's answers. If the brother answers no to the questions, the circuit overseer will provide the elders with a signed appointment letter. At the Service Meeting following the receipt of the appointment letter, the brother's appointment should be announced to the congregation.

6. If the brother approved for appointment is not present at the conclusion of the visit but it is not necessary to ask him the three questions mentioned in paragraph 4, the circuit overseer will include the brother's name in the appointment letter left with the elders at the end of the visit. When the brother returns, two elders should meet with the brother to inform him of his appointment before it is announced to the congregation.

7. **Appointments between regular visits to a congregation:** When a brother moves into the congregation with a favorable letter of recommendation for reappointment and the next visit of the circuit overseer is not in the near future, the body of elders may recommend his immediate reappointment. In such cases, the Congregation Service Committee should submit the *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* (S-62) form to the circuit overseer along with a copy of the letter of recommendation from the service committee of his former congregation. (See paragraph 14.) If the recommendation is approved, an appointment letter will be sent to the body of elders. A brother who has been reappointed as an elder or a ministerial servant should be informed of his appointment before it is announced to the congregation.

8. **Appointments of coordinators of the body of elders:** The circuit overseer is responsible for the appointment of the coordinator of the body of elders. When needed, this appointment will be made during his regular visit to the congregation. If a temporary adjustment is made apart from the circuit overseer's visit, the Congregation Service Committee should immediately notify the circuit overseer, explaining the reason for the change. Whether the change in the coordinator of the body of elders is permanent or temporary, a *Coordinator of the Body of Elders/Secretary Change of Address* (S-29) form should be sent to the Service Department.

9. **Deletions during a regular visit to a congregation:** Recommendations for deletion because of poor judgment not of a judicial nature are usually best considered with the elders during the visit of the circuit overseer. At the start of the circuit overseer's visit, the elders should provide any background information that will help the circuit overseer have a complete view of the qualifications of a brother recommended for deletion. During his meeting with the elders later in the week, the circuit overseer will discuss the Scriptural qualifications of the brother. (*ks10* chap. 3 pars. 15-24) If the circuit overseer agrees with the recommendation, the brother will be informed of his deletion. If the brother agrees with the decision, the circuit overseer will generate a letter of deletion. The announce-

ment of deletion should be made at the next Service Meeting. (*ks10* chap. 3 par. 26) If the brother disagrees with the decision, he will be informed of his right to appeal.—See paragraph 13.

10. **Deletions between regular visits to a congregation:** If serious questions arise concerning a brother's qualifications and the next visit of the circuit overseer is not in the near future, the body of elders should follow the procedure outlined in the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 3, paragraphs 22-24. If, after reviewing a brother's qualifications the elders decide to recommend his deletion, the Congregation Service Committee should send the recommendation of the body of elders to the circuit overseer immediately. The letter should provide complete details and indicate whether or not the brother agrees with the recommendation. (*ks10* chap. 3 par. 25) If the circuit overseer agrees with the recommendation and believes it should be processed immediately, he will send a letter of deletion to the body of elders. Upon receipt of the letter, the coordinator of the body of elders should assign two elders to inform the brother of the circuit overseer's decision. If the brother accepts the circuit overseer's decision, the announcement should be made at the next Service Meeting. (*ks10* chap. 3 par. 26) If the brother does not accept the decision, he should be informed of his right to appeal, the announcement to the congregation should be held in abeyance, and the coordinator of the body of elders should inform the circuit overseer.—See paragraph 13.

11. **Transfers to another congregation:** When an elder or a ministerial servant moves out of the congregation, an announcement of deletion would not be made to the congregation. At the next visit of the circuit overseer, the elders should inform the circuit overseer of the brother's move.

12. **Resignations, deletions for judicial reasons, and deaths:** The Congregation Service Committee should immediately inform the circuit overseer of (1) the deletion of an elder or a ministerial servant because of resignation, judicial reproof, disfellowshipping, or disassociation or (2) the death of an elder or a ministerial servant. For deletions resulting from judicial reproof, disfellowshipping, or disassociation, the information sent to the circuit overseer should include the specific judicial offense and the action taken by the committee. When a brother resigns for personal reasons, the information sent to the circuit overseer should include full details as to why he chose to relinquish his privilege of service. In cases involving judicial reproof or the resignation by a brother, the circuit overseer will send a letter of deletion to the body of elders. No letter of deletion will be sent in cases of disfellowshipping, disassociation, or death.

13. **Appealing deletions:** If an elder or a ministerial servant disagrees with his deletion by the circuit overseer and wishes to appeal, he should immediately write a brief letter to the Service Department, with a copy to the body of elders and the circuit overseer, explaining why he disagrees with the deletion. The announcement of deletion should be held in abeyance, and the letter of deletion should be destroyed (if one had been generated). Thereafter, the Service Department will select an experienced circuit overseer who will then rehear the entire matter with the original circuit overseer. After the circuit overseers hearing the appeal reach a joint decision, there is no further right to appeal. If it is decided that the brother should be deleted, the circuit overseer will generate a letter of deletion to the body of elders. Upon receipt of the letter of deletion, the announcement of deletion should be made at the next Service Meeting.

14. **Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants (S-62) form:** Beginning August 1, 2014, the *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* form should be used to submit to the circuit overseer the names, birth dates, and baptism dates of brothers being recommended for appointment in conjunction with a regular visit. Effective September 1, 2014, this form should also be used to submit recommendations for appointments be-

tween visits. Enhancements to jw.org are under way to provide a Web version of the form. In the event that this new Web form is not available by the time it is needed, the Congregation Service Committee should submit this information by means of the PDF version of the form, using the jw.org Inbox feature. The PDF version of the form, containing editable fields, will be posted in the “Forms” section of jw.org in the near future.

15. **Congregation file:** Records related to the appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants should be retained indefinitely. This would include S-2 forms and S-52 acknowledgement letters from the branch office and letters of appointment and deletion from circuit overseers. In connection with any deletion, a brief explanation of the reason for the brother’s deletion should also be kept. Such background material will be helpful in supplying the circuit overseer with complete details in the event a brother is recommended for reappointment in the future.

16. **Shepherding textbook adjustments:** The adjusted procedures described in this letter update a number of paragraphs in the *Shepherding* textbook. Each elder should make the following notations in his copy:

- In chapter 2, paragraph 13, and in chapter 3, paragraphs 11-13, 27, and 29, cross out the existing sentences and write in the margins the following: “See letter dated July 13, 2014.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 6, cross out the words “and the branch office.”
- In chapter 3, in the subheading preceding paragraph 11, cross out the words “Branch Office” and replace them with the words “Circuit Overseer.”
- In chapter 3, cross out the subheading preceding paragraph 12 and replace it with the subheading “Appointments Made During the Visit of the Circuit Overseer.”
- In chapter 3, insert before paragraph 14 the new subheading “Recommendations Not Approved by the Circuit Overseer.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 14, in the first and fourth sentences, cross out the words “branch office” and replace them with the words “circuit overseer.” In the third sentence of the same paragraph, cross out the word “neither” and replace it with the word “not,” and cross out the words “nor read to him from the confidential letter received from the branch office that explains why he was not appointed.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 23, cross out the existing sentences in the last bullet point.
- In chapter 3, in the subheading preceding paragraph 25, cross out the words “Branch Office” and replace them with the words “Circuit Overseer.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 25, in the first sentence, cross out the words “branch office” and replace them with the words “circuit overseer.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 25, in the penultimate sentence of the first bullet point, cross out the words “branch office” and replace them with the words “circuit overseer.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 25, second bullet point, at the end of the third sentence, cross out the words “branch office” and replace them with the words “circuit overseer.” Cross out the sentence “If he disagrees, he may submit a letter along with the elders’ letter of explanation, stating why he does not accept the recommendation.” Write in the margin the following: “See letter dated July 13, 2014.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 26, cross out the first two sentences and write in the margin the following: “See letter dated July 13, 2014.”
- In chapter 3, paragraph 28, cross out the word “include” and replace it with the words “send to the Service Department.”

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17. If any questions arise concerning the procedures outlined in this letter, please contact your circuit overseer for assistance. We send our warm Christian love.

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.