



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

CABLE WATCHTOWER

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A. PHONE (212) 625-3600

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TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Reports coming to the Society on territory coverage indicate that it is becoming increasingly difficult to gain entrance into apartment complexes and condominiums. In some places legal suits have been threatened if the brothers continue to enter buildings. Often methods used to avoid detection while working buildings have resulted in poor relations with the management as they are concerned about security. How can we reach these people with the good news and at the same time show respect for the difficult task placed upon managers and superintendents? (Matt. 10:16) Herein are some suggestions that might prove helpful.

In high security apartments and condominiums there are generally rigid rules about any kind of door-to-door activity. Managers and superintendents must answer to a board of directors for security. So they ask us to leave even though they may not personally be opposed to our work. When this is done we should immediately leave as requested since refusing to do so could be considered criminal trespass and result in arrest and criminal conviction.

Some progress has been made with managers of these complexes by arranging for representatives of the congregation to approach the managers or superintendents personally in a kindly way, explaining the nature of our work and seeking their assistance so we can in some way communicate with the tenants. How has this been accomplished?

Decorum and approach play an important role. When approaching these men it is best to be positive but respectful. If the reaction is unfavorable, it is best to acknowledge or agree to the extent possible and express empathy for the job he has in keeping the building secure and safe from strangers. It may bring a more favorable response if we offer to arrange for one married couple to come once a week or do only a few doors at a time and check in with the office before entering and when leaving. If it is requested, there is no objection to asking publishers witnessing in the building to wear an identification badge. If concessions are made to allow limited door-to-door visits, it would be good to establish a certain specified time that visits will be made so the superintendent knows when to expect those who will be working in the building. It would also be good for the ones chosen to become personally acquainted with the management and/or superintendent.

If there are no concessions made for making door-to-door visits, there are other things that can be done to reach the people. Many have allowed us to leave literature at regular intervals in the lobby or laundry room or to post an announcement on the information board about our Bible study program with information as to who can be contacted. In some exclusive apartment buildings where there is closed circuit television, use of this has been permitted for announcements. Where there is a door man or intercom system, some have allowed limited use of the intercom or for the couple to be announced by the door man.

Who should be chosen for this special work? Because of the nature of the contacts with the management, it is important to choose the right persons to meet these individuals and represent the congregation. They should be business-like in appearance, discerning and very tactful, those who are capable of developing a good relationship with supervisory personnel. Two sisters or a married couple often have more success than one or two brothers. The type of people living in the building should also be taken into consideration. For example, if the building has many senior citizens, older brothers and sisters might not be viewed with concern as a possible threat to security.

The Society has tested these methods in a number of cities in the United States and the results have been encouraging. One brother said: "80-85% of all security buildings that had barred our entrance granted some kind of concession." Another brother told us of a sister who was told by the management that she could write letters or use the enterphone on the outside of the building. She wrote a brief letter of introduction for herself. She mailed copies of this letter to about five residents in the building each week. After a few days, along with another sister, she made a personal call on each resident identifying herself as the woman who had written earlier. The sisters were invited in about 50% of the time and had some good experiences. So, there is much that can be done to reach people in high security apartments and condominiums. It will require taking a special interest in the work, reliance upon Jehovah along with prayer for his blessing.

If the above suggestions are not successful, another alternative would be to do street work in front of or in the immediate vicinity of the building. The above suggestions could also apply to other places where we have been denied entry, such as some mobile home parks.

If you have such apartment buildings in your congregation territory we encourage you to discuss this letter as a body of elders and determine what can be done and who could best be used in the work as well as who could best oversee the work. Certainly we want to do everything within our power to reach these people, and if we are discreet, tactful and dignified in our presentation of matters, surely Jehovah will help us to search out deserving ones to an even greater degree and this will result in glory to his name.--1 Cor. 10:31.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. V. Society