

WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A.

PHONE (718) 625-3600

June 15, 1992

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Recommending appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants

Dear Brothers:

We have received questions on what procedure should be followed when elders or ministerial servants transfer to other congregations or when questions arise about their qualifications.

If elders or ministerial servants transfer to other congregations, the deletion from the former congregation and the appointment to the new congregation should be handled on the S-2 forms when the circuit overseer next visits the congregation. Please do not write the Society between visits of the circuit overseer regarding these transfers.

If a brother comes to your congregation with a favorable recommendation from the congregation where he last served, you may use him for parts on the Service Meeting, giving public talks, and so forth, unless there are questionable circumstances involved or other reasons why he should not be used. However, the brother would not function as an elder or a ministerial servant in an official capacity, attending meetings for elders or ministerial servants, serving on judicial committees, and so forth, until such time as he has been appointed by the Society in the new congregation. However, he may attend Kingdom Ministry School if one is held before he can be reappointed, providing he has a favorable recommendation from his previous congregation as well as from the elders in his present congregation.

If a body of elders decides not to recommend a departing brother, they should meet with him before he leaves so that he has a clear understanding of the views of the body of elders. This will help to avoid hurt feelings and problems.

When brothers transfer to another congregation at the Society's direction, the new congregation will be notified of any appointment(s) on an S-52 letter. Such appointments will go into effect as of the date of the letter.

If a brother feels, for personal reasons, he needs to resign as an elder or a ministerial servant, the elders should discuss the matter with the brother. Is he Scripturally disqualified? If his personal circumstances hinder him from doing what he would like, can the elders be of any assistance and encouragement? Until his circumstances change, perhaps they can lighten his load for a period

of time while he continues to serve. If, after this discussion, he still feels he should be deleted, then the Congregation Service Committee should write the Society and give sufficient information so that the reasons for resignation are clear. We will handle such cases promptly, sending back the Society's S-52 letter if the deletion is approved. No announcement of deletion should be made until an S-52 letter is received from the Society.

If a brother is guilty of serious wrongdoing that requires the formation of a judicial committee, he should be removed. A letter containing full information and signed by all three members of the Congregation Service Committee should be sent to the Society IMMEDIATELY explaining this. There would be no reason to wait for the S-52 letter from the Society before announcing his removal.

Sometimes, elders and ministerial servants become involved in problems that do not require forming a judicial committee, but their qualifications and example may be brought into question. In such cases, the matter can be considered at the circuit overseer's next visit. Do not be quick to recommend deletion unless there is a solid basis for doing so. It may be possible to assist the brother so that the reason for disqualification is removed and he can continue to serve.

However, if the matter is complicated and the elders feel they need the Society's further direction, please write. The Scriptural requirement that the brother fails to meet should be specifically noted in the letter. What has he done or failed to do that raises questions? When counseled, how did he react? Was he counseled on this matter in the past, and what was his response? Was his wrongdoing really so serious that it requires restricting his privileges? Possibly he just made a mistake, using poor judgment on an occasion. The congregation in general may still have respect for him and confidence in him as an elder or a ministerial servant. Perhaps the matter has not become widely known, if at all. If he realizes his action was unwise, has learned a good lesson, has a good attitude, and wants to improve, he may be retained. On the other hand, you may be unsure what to do because of the questions raised regarding his qualifications; in such a case, an announcement SHOULD NOT be made to the congregation. The elders should forward all the above information to the Society along with their recommendations. Also, state whether the elders discussed the matter with the brother and if he agrees he no longer qualifies Scripturally to serve. If he does not agree with the body of elders and wishes to express himself, please enclose his letter. We will weigh all the factors involved and reply without delay.

What factors should be considered when an elder is deleted or steps down from serving and later reaches out for privileges in the congregation? If the brother was guilty of wrongdoing requiring judicial reproof and this was the basis for his deletion or resignation, it would be best for him to serve first as a ministerial servant. This would serve as a stepping-stone for his qualifying for additional privileges of service and would help him regain the full

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respect of the congregation. If he was deleted because of falling short of some other Scriptural requirement for elders and has since corrected the matter, or if he stepped aside because of health problems or to spend additional time in assisting his family, then it may be that at a later date he could be recommended as an elder, rather than serving first as a ministerial servant. There are some who resigned as elders possibly because of feeling they could not work well with the body of elders. If they now meet the qualifications and are again being considered for recommendation, they should have a good attitude, desiring to cooperate and work in unity with the body of elders. Much would depend on the circumstances and the amount of time that has passed as well as the good judgment of the body of elders making the recommendation. It is good to have in mind that there are fine brothers who served for many years but then were removed for reasons other than judicial reproof. These brothers should be viewed in a different light than those who were reproofed. If they are qualified to teach and give reproof, and if they meet other Scriptural requirements set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, they should not be held back from being recommended as elders.

Your handling matters as outlined above will be greatly appreciated by the Society and will allow for an orderly handling of matters. We send our warm Christian greetings.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. I. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.