

WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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

PHONE (718) 625-3600

November 2, 1995

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Maintenance and construction of Kingdom Halls

Dear Brothers:

1. We are writing to share some information with you that should help in caring for matters in connection with the use, upkeep, and construction of Kingdom Halls in the future. This will adjust some procedures that were outlined in the past.

2. **Cleaning and Maintenance:** With the Kingdom Hall in use several times each week, there is a need for cleaning and maintenance. Usually these matters are cared for locally with volunteers from within the congregation(s) meeting in the Kingdom Hall. The Kingdom Hall should be cleaned according to a regular schedule, depending on its use and needs. All may have a share, even the children. In this way all will learn the responsibility attached to the upkeep of the Kingdom Hall and will appreciate it more. How nice it is to step into a clean and neat Kingdom Hall and to invite new ones to such a hall! Usually cleaning is arranged according to book study groups. The elders may wish to make a schedule so that groups, under the direction of the book study conductor or another brother in the group, may rotate weekly in looking after the cleaning. A list of things to be done may be posted. Supplies and equipment should be on hand for use in cleaning. With all having a part in caring for the hall, the burden will not fall on just a few.

3. The general appearance of the Kingdom Hall should be monitored. Does it need new paint inside or out? Are repairs needed? Does the yard or the parking lot need attention? If there is a lawn or shrubbery, it needs regular care. Are there ways within the budget of the congregation(s) to make the inside of the hall more attractive? Often little things can be done that are relatively inexpensive but that do much to make the decor more pleasing. A meeting place that is kept clean, furnished in a practical manner, and maintained properly is one that reflects well on Jehovah and his people. Maintenance will be kept to a minimum if all are careful to avoid breaking equipment or damaging the furnishings. All the elders in the congregation(s) meeting in a Kingdom Hall share responsibility for taking care of it. Regular, consistent attention needs to be given to the hall's security, maintenance, and day-to-day operation.

4. **Ownership:** No one congregation should feel that it "owns" the Kingdom Hall. It is dedicated to Jehovah's worship. The congregation that builds or rents a building has committed into its care a trust in connection with the hall, and the body of elders has the responsibility to manage wisely the Kingdom Hall's operation so that Kingdom interests are best served. In many instances several congregations use the same Kingdom Hall in order to get full use of the facilities and to keep down expenses. The Society deals with only one of the congregations as far as loans, insurance, and things of this nature are concerned, and this congregation is usually the one holding the territory in which the Kingdom Hall is located. Although the Society corresponds

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with only one congregation and the title may be held by a corporation or trusteeship formed by this congregation, handling these physical responsibilities does not provide a basis for this congregation to decide unilaterally when meetings will be held by all the congregations meeting in the Kingdom Hall or how much money each should pay on any mortgage and operating expenses. Additional details about ownership of Kingdom Halls are contained in the memorandum "Information Regarding Ownership of Kingdom Halls" (T-36), which should be in the congregation's file.

5. Written Agreement: How can these matters be decided with loving consideration for all? When more than one congregation uses the hall, it is best for all the elders in the congregations involved to meet and decide Kingdom Hall matters. In this way problems resulting from lack of communication or representation are kept to a minimum. Thus there is a common sharing of the building dedicated to Jehovah's service, and there is common responsibility to take good care of it. Under this arrangement no one congregation dominates while others become mere "tenants." The agreement describing how the building will be cared for and used and when meetings will be held and what will be the responsibility of each congregation financially and otherwise should be in writing, with a copy for each congregation's file, since elders may move and subsequent elders may not be aware of any oral understanding.

6. Selecting Meeting Times: When there is only one congregation meeting in a Kingdom Hall, the elders should consider what they feel will be the best times for the meetings and should present their recommendations to the congregation for discussion, possible adjustment, and final decision (by majority vote of the baptized publishers), making the times as convenient as possible for the majority. However, in line with what is stated above, when more than one congregation meets in the hall, the elders of all the congregations may wish to meet and discuss meeting-time preferences to work out the best arrangements for all concerned. Where there is a choice in the times of meetings, the decision rests not simply with the elders but with each congregation. Some congregations find that rotating the times of meetings, or offering to do so every year or so, is desirable. When a rotation is made, it should take place on the first of January. (km 12/94 page 2) Good communication and cooperation contribute to mutual understanding and contentment, preventing the feeling that one congregation has certain advantages all the time. Good cooperation is also needed in connection with meetings during the circuit overseer's visit, weddings, and so forth.

7. Operating Committee: All the elders may meet initially and set up a committee of knowledgeable elders or ministerial servants to care for day-to-day operation and maintenance of the hall. This will prevent the entire body of elders (or bodies, if there is more than one congregation) from having to meet often to decide on ordinary matters having to do with general operation, maintenance, and the payment of incidental bills. Guidelines should be established, such as a cutoff point for how much can be spent on normal operations without special approval. The committee should have a permanent chairman, an elder if possible. He should have good organizational ability, be able to take the initiative, and be quick to expedite matters. He should not be a procrastinator. The chairman should be alert to care for details or to see that they are cared for. One member of the committee should be designated to care for all day-to-day matters in connection with the operation of the hall. He should be given the authority to care for repairs,

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the replenishing of supplies, and so forth, which do not involve changing the Kingdom Hall or spending large sums of money. This brother should ably care for routine matters so that the other members of the operating committee can concentrate on major matters when the committee meets. He may need to be provided with petty cash sufficient to care for necessary purchases. (w92 10/15 page 23) He should provide receipts for funds spent. Periodically, reports on the operation of the hall should be made to the elders by the operating committee.

8. If there are difficult questions or unanticipated major expenditures, these should be referred to the whole group of elders for determination. If the elders feel that a major expenditure is advisable, their joint recommendation should be submitted to the respective congregations, setting forth the facts, including the anticipated costs. Then the congregations make the final decision.

9. The operating committee oversees general maintenance of the Kingdom Hall and work done on it that does not require the use of volunteers from other congregations not meeting in the Kingdom Hall. If a project is so involved that outside volunteer assistance is needed, then the matter should be handled under the oversight of the Regional Building Committee assigned to your area.

10. **Representation:** The involved congregations should have EQUAL representation on the operating committee. If only one congregation uses a Kingdom Hall, it might select two or three elders or ministerial servants to care for this assignment. If two congregations use the hall, each congregation might each have one or two representatives. If three or more congregations use the hall, likely one representative from each congregation would suffice.

11. **Central Account:** Each congregation should supply an agreed-upon amount monthly for Kingdom Hall operation. To arrive at this amount, all the elders in the congregations meeting in the hall should discuss together what is needed on the average each month for any mortgage payment and other expenses. On the basis of this, the elders in the respective congregations decide what recommendation they will make to their congregation. Each congregation will then make a decision on what payment will be made each month. As necessary, and as seems advisable, adjustments can be made in the amount sent to this fund by each congregation. Where all the congregations using a Kingdom Hall are about the same size, they may all decide to remit the same amount monthly. Where there is a considerable size difference, such as when there is a smaller foreign-language congregation using the hall, the larger congregation(s) might lovingly decide to contribute a larger portion monthly.

12. Funds may be handled through the congregation that sends the mortgage payments to the Society, if that is being done. A separate accounts sheet should be maintained exclusively for the operation of the Kingdom Hall. If it will assist with the bookkeeping, a separate bank account could be opened by this congregation. Arrangements should be made for a quarterly audit of the accounts by the chairman of the operating committee.

13. **Planning for Expansion:** With the steady increase in attendance at the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, the time inevitably comes when consideration must be given to arranging for a new Kingdom Hall. If a new Kingdom Hall project is anticipated, the Regional Building

Committee for your area should be contacted *before* any steps are taken. The regional committee and those working with it can help you in deciding whether it would be better to build anew or to enlarge or renovate your present facility. If it seems wise to build anew, they can help you evaluate property before any offer to purchase is made. They have guidelines provided by the Society that can help you avoid pitfalls in this regard.

14. Regional Building Committee's Role: Whenever a Kingdom Hall project, whether for new construction or renovation, involves using volunteer help from outside the congregation(s) that will meet in a new hall or in an existing one undergoing renovation, the Regional Building Committee assigned to your area should take oversight. These elders have been appointed by the Society to assist with Kingdom Hall construction and to coordinate volunteer activity for this purpose. Thus, although you will select local elders or ministerial servants to serve as a local building committee, the elders serving on the regional committee will have oversight of the project. They will work in close coordination with the local building committee and will not make arbitrary or unilateral decisions. They know the Society's thinking on how matters are to be handled and can aid in all aspects of the undertaking—from the initial decision to expand to initiating a building fund through purchasing property, constructing the hall, and completing the final landscaping.—Please review the Society's letter of October 12, 1993, to all bodies of elders.

15. Local Building Committee: When a new Kingdom Hall is to be built or a major renovation project is being planned, it is advisable for the elders to select a building committee to coordinate the construction work under the direction of the Regional Building Committee, designating one member as chairman. It is good to select brothers for this committee who have had some building or business experience, if possible. There should be EQUAL representation of all congregations that will meet in the Kingdom Hall. General decisions on construction, in harmony with the plans and wishes of the congregation(s), can be made by the building committee in cooperation with the regional committee. The building committee should cooperate well with the body, or bodies, of elders, consulting them, since the building committee is responsible to them. The elders will be consulted on any major changes or unusual developments.

16. Financing the Kingdom Hall: When the congregation is discussing the possibility of obtaining a Kingdom Hall or renovating one, the elders may seek needed information concerning finances available from those associated with the congregation. Unsigned slips from the publishers would suffice to give these estimates as to how much members of the congregation(s) will be able to (1) contribute at the outset to the building fund in a lump sum donation, (2) loan for the project, and (3) contribute monthly to retire any loans obtained to assist with the purchase as well as to cover the normal operating expenses of the congregation. The Regional Building Committee has brothers working with it who can assist you in taking these surveys, and they have copies of the forms that are needed to apply for a loan from the Society Kingdom Hall Fund.

17. When the elders, along with the Regional Building Committee, have a recommendation to make to the congregation(s) regarding a proposed Kingdom Hall construction project, they should share full details with the publishers. At the outset the congregation should know basically what the total cost of building at a certain location would be. If property is to be pur-

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chased for a new Kingdom Hall, the added cost of developing the site and of constructing the hall, including the needed permits, should be outlined. The publishers should have opportunity to consider the full details and to have all their questions answered before voting on a resolution to build.—Please review the Question Box from the June 1984 *Our Kingdom Ministry* as to how resolutions are to be prepared and presented.

18. When two or more congregations decide to cooperate in buying land and building a hall or in remodeling an existing building, there should be thorough discussion by all the elders along with the Regional Building Committee of what is proposed, and an agreement should be reached on type of building, approximate costs, financing, and so forth. The respective congregations should clearly know, through their bodies of elders, what is recommended and the estimated cost so that a final decision can be made by each congregation on the basis of sound information. The general agreement to cooperate on the project and the basic understanding should be set down in writing and signed by all the elders after approval by the respective congregations. We cannot emphasize too strongly the need for cooperation among the bodies of elders and the congregations involved. Your making good use of the voluntary efforts available through those working with the regional committee follows the example of the tabernacle construction in the wilderness and the building of Solomon's temple, when fine craftsmen from among Jehovah's people were used.—Ex. 35:34, 35; 2 Chron. 2:11-16.

19. The Kingdom Hall is one of Jehovah's provisions that enable us to meet together. The happy and rewarding activities arranged at the Kingdom Hall are part of the provisions of Jehovah's spiritual paradise. The provisions are there for all to share. But it is not wise to take them for granted. We should appreciate them and look well to the care of the Kingdom Hall. King David said: "I rejoiced when they were saying to me: 'To the house of Jehovah let us go.'" (Ps. 122:1) Let us all imitate David and other faithful servants of old in how they viewed the construction and use of buildings dedicated to the true worship of Jehovah.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & F. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

cc: Regional Building Committee members