



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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January 15, 1996

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

This is a time of great joy for all of us, as we continue to receive reports of marvelous increases in the worldwide field. Never before in human history have so many taken their stand on Jehovah's side. (Isa. 60:22) We know that ours is a precious ministry, a privilege never to be repeated, one that involves God's holy name and the possibility of everlasting life for those who respond favorably to the good news. In view of this, it is important that all of us take seriously our responsibility to be zealous evangelizers. Thus, the words of the apostle Paul must be uppermost in our minds: "Do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry."—2 Tim. 4:5.

Reports coming to the Society indicate a growing challenge regarding the house-to-house ministry. An increasing number of householders in the United States are working full-time to provide for their families. Many hold down two jobs and thus are rarely at home when we call. On weekends, many householders in some territories travel, spend time shopping, or engage in recreation. As a result, when the publishers go from door to door a substantial number of people are not at home. Consequently, in most parts of the country, midweek and weekend house-to-house activity is producing limited results. This has caused many publishers and pioneers to feel that they are striking the air when they engage in the door-to-door ministry.—Compare 1 Cor. 9:26.

We should remember: "The objective of Jehovah's Witnesses is not merely to do *something* in the preaching of the good news but to reach *everyone possible* with the Kingdom message." (jv p. 499) Jesus instructed his disciples to "search out" deserving ones. (Matt. 10:11) Since we find so few people in their homes, we must search for them elsewhere. Jesus did not confine his search for deserving ones to the house-to-house ministry. He gave a witness on every appropriate occasion, both formally and informally. (Luke 8:1; 19:1-5) The apostles too witnessed to people at a variety of locations. (Acts 28:16, 23, 30, 31) Likewise today, our approach to the disciple-making work should keep abreast of the changing times and the varying circumstances of the people in our territory. (1 Cor. 7:31; w94 8/1 p. 17, par. 8) Therefore, what more can we do to improve in our efforts to reach all within our assigned territory? It may be necessary to prepare territories for reaching people in street witnessing, working businesses, and telephone witnessing.—See *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, under the subheading "Territory Assigned for Effective Witnessing," pages 94-96.

The Society is now extending greater flexibility to traveling overseers in arranging their field-service schedule when they visit the congregations. Currently, their schedule calls for house-to-house work in the mornings, with afternoons reserved for return visits and Bible studies. That schedule is still practical in some areas. In others, little may be accomplished by working house to house during weekday mornings. Where this is the case, the time may be more effectively used working in a different feature of the ministry, such as store-to-store work or street witnessing. The traveling overseer may take the lead in witnessing in industrial parks, high-rise office buildings, security apartments, parks, or parking lots or at bus stops and other public places. This will allow

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him to use the time allotted for the service most effectively, according to local circumstances. On Tuesday afternoon of his visit, he will ascertain from you which feature(s) of the ministry may not have received attention in the congregation's territory. He may then arrange to work in these avenues of service for one or more service days during the week.

In certain features of the ministry, such as witnessing on the street or in parks or parking lots, special qualifications are not needed in order to share in the work. If such features are to be emphasized, during his service talk on Tuesday night, the traveling overseer will mention which type of territory will be worked during the week and when the work will be scheduled. In this way, the brothers can prepare to have a full share in the work. During meetings for service, in addition to the usual suggestions for the ministry, an effective presentation for use in the feature of service that will be highlighted that day can be discussed or demonstrated. Of course, if some wish to engage in the regular house-to-house work while others share in different avenues of service, this should be arranged. No one should feel pressured to work in a specific feature of service.

On the other hand, certain avenues of the ministry may require special qualifications and training on the part of those who are to participate. For instance, it may be determined that the business territory should receive more attention. In this case, the traveling overseer and his wife may make personal arrangements with capable pioneers and publishers who would like to accompany them. This would be better than making a general announcement to the congregation on Tuesday evening. This arrangement will provide special training for those who work with them. At the conclusion of the visit, the traveling overseer will make definite arrangements so that those who have received training will follow through and continue working in those various features of service. Arrangements can also be made for these experienced ones to train others, under the direction of the elders.

In conjunction with this arrangement to assist congregations to expand various features of the ministry, an adjustment will be made in the meeting program during the circuit overseer's visit. Starting March 1996, the "Continue in the Things That You Learned" program will be replaced by a 25-minute part in which the circuit overseer can provide direction and training on caring for different features of the ministry, as required locally—incorporating demonstrations, interviews, or experiences in connection with the week's field activity. That will be followed by a 45-minute Congregation Book Study, including the reading of the paragraphs. Then, after a song, the circuit overseer will give a 25-minute service talk. This new program will last a total of one hour and 50 minutes, including songs and prayers. It should help the congregation to 'muster up the boldness' needed to search out all deserving ones in the territory.—1 Thess. 2:2.

In these exciting times, our brothers will find greater joy in their ministry if they preach in areas and at times when they will find people to whom to witness. (Acts 16:13; 17:17) When we dedicated ourselves to Jehovah, we agreed to follow a course of self-sacrifice. (Mark 8:34) If we must make a few adjustments in our personal schedule in order to reach more people, we can be assured of his approval for doing so. There is a need for all of us to continue serving Kingdom interests with zeal. As you each seek to "bear *thorough* witness to the good news," be assured of our prayers for Jehovah's rich blessing upon your endeavors.—Acts 20:21, 24.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & F. Society

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