WATCHTOWER
BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201-2483, U.S.A. PHONE (718) 625-3600

March 15, 1996

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

During these last days an increasing number of individuals are contracting communicable diseases, such as AIDS, tuberculosis, and so forth. Upon hearing the good news of the Kingdom, some of these desire to study the Bible, attend Christian meetings, and progress toward dedication to God. How should Jehovah's Witnesses respond to the needs of those with contagious and potentially fatal diseases? Are there precautions that would be practical and of benefit to the sufferer and for others in the Christian congregation?

The March 22, 1994, issue of *Awake!* stated on pages 14 and 15: "In all our dealings with others, including AIDS victims, Christians are instructed to follow the example of Jesus. The compassion he had for those who were afflicted, and yet were sincere in their desire to please God, is worthy of our imitation.—Compare Matthew 9:35-38; Mark 1:40, 41."

To assist the elders in providing guidance for those with a communicable and potentially fatal disease who request baptism, the following additional questions are to be reviewed with candidates for baptism. In addition to this letter, an insert for the *Our Ministry* book outlining this information will soon be provided for each elder.

When covering question 4 on page 191 under the subheading "Sanctity of Life," be sure to include the following questions:

(a) What responsibility rests upon a person who is infected with a communicable disease that is potentially fatal?

Keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just your own matters but also in personal interest upon those of the others.—Phil. 2:4.

All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them.—Matt. 7:12.

(b) To avoid transmitting a potentially fatal disease to others,

(1) why would it be better for an infected person not to initiate public displays of affection such as hugging and kissing?

(2) why would it be best to attend the Congregation Book Study at the Kingdom Hall, if at all possible?

(3) why should infected ones not react negatively when some choose not to invite them into their homes?

(4) why would it be wise to choose voluntarily to have a blood test before beginning a courtship?

When covering Question 3 on page 217, be sure to ask the following question:
(a) If one has a communicable disease, why is letting the presiding overseer know about it before that one gets baptized the loving thing to do?

If the candidate makes known, or if it otherwise becomes known, that he has a communicable disease which will require precautions, he can be informed that he may consider the following loving options:

1. He may attend the district convention, circuit assembly, or special assembly day, listen to the baptismal discourse given there, and then be taken to a running body of water and be baptized.

2. He may attend the district convention or circuit assembly or special assembly day, listen to the baptismal discourse, and then that evening it may be preferred that he be baptized in his hotel or motel room or a private home where there is a large tub that can be used for this purpose.

3. If he is sensitive to others becoming aware of the fact that he has such a disease and does not want it to become known to others, he may attend a district convention or circuit assembly or special assembly day to which his congregation is not assigned, listen to the baptismal discourse, and then be baptized in a running body of water.

4. He may request that the elders arrange to ~~[have him baptized last or have a private baptism at the local congregation]~~ have a private baptism at the local congregation. #5/20/96 ntt

The elders should be sure to inform the brother(s) performing the baptism of the health issue. This will allow the brother(s) to make a personal decision as to whether he feels there would be a risk to himself that he would be unwilling to take.

All should continue to welcome those with communicable diseases into the Christian congregation and to show love and warmth to them, while at the same time taking reasonable precautions to protect ourselves and our families from the disease. We pray Jehovah's rich blessing on your earnest efforts to shepherd the flock in your care.

Your brothers,

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

WATCHTOWER
BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.
25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
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May 20, 1996

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

On page 2, point 4, of the March 15, 1996, letter to all bodies of elders the following adjustment should be made: "He may request that the elders arrange to have a private baptism at the local congregation." The phrase "have him baptized last or have a private baptism" should be omitted. This note should be attached to the March 15, 1996, letter. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Your fellow servants,