

WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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

April 15, 1997

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Re: Kingdom Hall operating committees

Dear Brothers:

1. All of us very much appreciate the assistance rendered by brothers serving on Kingdom Hall operating committees as they aid in a fine way in caring for our Kingdom Halls, which are buildings dedicated to Jehovah. We are writing to clarify the responsibilities of the body of elders and of the operating committee. This letter supplements the November 2, 1995, letter already in your file.
2. **Areas of responsibility:** The body of elders has the responsibility to supervise the upkeep and maintenance of the Kingdom Hall. When two or more congregations use the same hall, the bodies of elders appoint an operating committee composed of knowledgeable elders or ministerial servants to assist the elders by organizing this work. (om pp. 61-2) This committee works entirely under the direction of the bodies of elders. It does not function independently of the bodies of elders. Its responsibility is to oversee the day-to-day operation of the Kingdom Hall, making sure it is kept clean and tidy and in good repair—basically doing the same work that would be done by just one elder or ministerial servant when only one congregation meets in a hall.
3. The elders—not the operating committee—determine how the Kingdom Hall is to be used, when meetings are to be held, whether the building is to be used for weddings or funerals, and so forth. The elders also bear the responsibility of seeing that congregation funds are spent properly, not simply delegating the expenditure of maintenance or construction funds to the operating committee or a local building committee.
4. The brothers selected to serve on the operating committee must be (1) spiritual men and (2) available. (Acts 6:3, 4; w92 10/15 p. 23 par. 5) They should take the lead in caring for the Kingdom Hall, see to it that there are sufficient supplies on hand, and make sure no hazardous conditions exist in the hall or on the grounds. Annually they inspect the Kingdom Hall thoroughly and advise the elders if major repairs are needed. A written agreement is developed jointly by the bodies of elders, and a copy is placed in each congregation's file. We are asking the circuit overseer to review the written agreement and local arrangements for the operating committee in connection with his next visit to each congregation.
5. It is best, where possible, that a separate bank account be established for operating committee use, and a member of the operating committee should keep this account. Two signatures of members of the operating committee should be required on all checks. Out-of-the-ordinary expenditures would be made only when approved by all the congregations using the Kingdom Hall. No congregation funds should be used to make money gifts to individuals. The bod-

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ies of elders should see that the account is audited every three months on the same schedule that the congregation accounts are audited. The bodies of elders appoint a new chairman of the operating committee when a replacement is necessary.

6. Legal concerns: It is best that maintenance of the Kingdom Hall and the grounds be performed, where possible, by unpaid volunteers from the local congregation(s). (Ps. 110:3; Mal. 1:10; w89 7/1 p. 30; w87 12/1 p. 19 pars. 13-14; compare *km* 8/95 p. 4 pars. 7-8; w80 6/1 p. 4 par. 1.) If any work is contracted to others, obtain written estimates and signed written agreements. The details of the bids should not be shared with others wishing to bid on the work. If someone charges for his services, he then becomes legally liable. This would apply to those associated with congregations as well as to non-Witnesses. It should be determined that the contractor has the required insurance and other legal protection needed. The congregation should be named as an additional insured on the contractor's insurance policy.

7. Cooperation: There is a need for unity and close cooperation in caring for our Kingdom Halls. Good communication is vital. While the operating committee is assigned to assist the elders, the elders must have confidence in the operating committee's ability to fulfill its duties conscientiously. So a spirit of unity and cooperation must exist in order for this arrangement to work successfully. Where it does, blessings will result with a Kingdom Hall that is well maintained and this will be to the honor and praise of our Father, Jehovah. We send our warm Christian love as we all continue to be 'taught to do Jehovah's will.'—Ps. 143:10.

Your brothers,

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

cc: Regional Building Committees
Traveling overseers