

# Circuit Overseer Guidelines

February 2022

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## INTRODUCTION

1. In the first century of our Common Era, the apostles and other older men made timely visits as traveling overseers to the Christian congregations. The visit of Paul and Barnabas to congregations in Asia Minor ‘strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to remain in the faith.’ (Acts 14:21-23) The governing body in Jerusalem sent Judas and Silas to Antioch, where they “encouraged the brothers with many talks and strengthened them.” —Acts 15:32.

2. The older men who visited congregations in the first century helped them function in an orderly, harmonious way under the headship of Christ. (Eph. 4:15, 16) Titus was sent to Crete to “correct the things that were defective and make appointments of elders in city after city.” By teaching, encouraging, and reproofing on the basis of God’s Word, Titus and other theocratically appointed older men could help the brothers be “healthy in the faith.” (Titus 1:5-13) In his inspired letter to the congregation in Ephesus, the apostle Paul highlighted the need for all overseers to work under Christ’s leadership “with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, to build up the body of the Christ.” (Eph. 4:8, 11-13) About four or five years earlier, when Paul met with the Ephesian elders, he warmly encouraged them to pay attention to the flock of God under their care, following the zealous example he set in preaching the Kingdom and giving to those in need.—Acts 20:17-38.

3. As in the first century, the visits of traveling overseers in our day are a blessing to the congregations. The zeal they demonstrate in the evangelizing work, the loving concern they show for the spiritual welfare of the flock, and the practical help they render to the brothers will help all to be fortified in the faith in these critical last days.

4. *Circuit Overseer Guidelines* has been prepared to assist circuit overseers in carrying out their assignment. An effort has been made to avoid duplication of information already provided to all elders unless it directly relates to the work of circuit overseers. Thus, if questions arise regarding congregation matters, the *Shepherd* book, *Shepherd Addendum*, or other publications available to the elders should be consulted first. If further direction is needed, then this manual should be consulted. Supplemental direction that applies specifically in your branch territory can be found in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines Addendum*. *Circuit Overseer Guidelines* and *Circuit Overseer Guidelines Addendum* are made available to each appointed circuit overseer and substitute circuit overseer. These documents should not be shown to others. When a circuit overseer or substitute circuit overseer ceases to serve in that capacity, he should destroy or delete any copies in his possession.

## CHAPTER 1 ACCOMMODATIONS

1. When visiting some congregations, it may be practical for the circuit overseer to stay in the homes of the brothers. Care should be taken to avoid a situation where a circuit overseer or his wife is left alone in a home with a member of the opposite sex. The circuit overseer should feel free to address any concerns about his accommodations with the coordinator of the body of elders before the start of the visit. If a congregation is not able to provide suitable accommodations, the circuit overseer should discuss other options with the coordinator of the body of elders. These might include renting suitable accommodations for the week or reserving a room at a hotel. If the congregation is not able to cover the expenses associated with these other options, the circuit overseer should consult with the Service Department before the visit.—*sfl* chap. 10 pars. 2-5.

2. It is not proper for the circuit overseer to suggest to the elders in the circuit that they provide an apartment for him. If an apartment is made available for his use, the circuit overseer should be balanced and should be appreciative of what is provided, not making unreasonable requests. If the congregations are consistently unable to provide suitable accommodations, the circuit overseer should contact the Service Department for direction.

3. Where the distance between congregations is relatively great, returning to an apartment every evening may be impractical. In such cases, it would likely be best for the circuit overseer to stay in suitable accommodations near the congregation to be served, if available, rather than to commute a long distance each day.

4. If a circuit overseer has a significant distance to travel between assignments or between congregations or if he simply desires a quiet place to stay for a few days, an Assembly Hall apartment may be available for this purpose. If he has in mind requesting accommodations at an Assembly Hall, he should provide as much advance notice as possible.—1 Cor. 10:24.

5. Circuit overseers who have the use of an apartment should take good care of it, doing their part to keep it clean and in good repair. No pets should be kept in an apartment. Before the circuit overseer moves to a new assignment, the apartment should be thoroughly cleaned. This shows loving consideration for the next circuit overseer who will be moving into the apartment.

6. Circuit overseers should consult with the Service Department before obtaining a travel trailer, or caravan, for use in visiting congregations. Where the use of a travel trailer is permitted, all expenses incurred in connection with insurance, maintenance, and towing must be cared for personally. It is not the responsibility of a congregation or circuit to share in the burden of travel trailer expenses, and neither congregation nor circuit funds should be used for this purpose.

## CHAPTER 2 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Circuit overseers are usually reassigned from one circuit to another every three years. This change is beneficial in a number of respects both to the circuit overseer and to those he serves. When a new circuit overseer is assigned to serve a circuit, the current circuit overseer notifies all the congregations in the circuit by means of the *Notice of Change in Circuit Arrangement* (S-307).
2. It is not necessary for a circuit overseer and his wife to take personal time away in order to move to a new assignment. The branch office will determine how much time is reasonably needed for the move according to the circumstances.
3. It is not possible to make assignments solely on the basis of personal interests, nor is it appropriate for circuit overseers to try to work out among themselves what circuits they feel would be best for them. Loyal acceptance of assignments promotes orderliness and peace in the organization.
4. On the other hand, a circuit overseer may find it necessary to make a specific request because of critical health needs or responsibilities toward immediate family members that will definitely have a bearing on whether he can remain in the circuit work. In such a case, the branch office may give consideration to his request. While in some cases it may be necessary to leave the circuit work to care for such matters, brothers who are effective in the circuit work and who have devoted many years to this form of service—perhaps 20, 30, or more—can often be given consideration to accommodate their needs.
5. If a single circuit overseer becomes engaged to be married and desires to continue in the circuit work, he should inform the Service Department as soon as possible, but no later than 60 days before the wedding. Thereafter, the branch office will determine whether or not he will be allowed to continue serving as a circuit overseer after his marriage.
6. The branch office is interested in the welfare of all circuit overseers. For this reason, a circuit overseer will discontinue serving as such on the September 1 following the service year during which he reaches 70 years of age, even if he has not yet completed a three-year period in his current circuit assignment.

## CHAPTER 3 CIRCUIT ASSEMBLIES

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1. As soon as the circuit assembly dates have been confirmed, the circuit overseer should notify congregations of the dates and locations by means of the *Notice of Upcoming Circuit Assemblies* (S-317).—For detailed instructions on securing facilities, confirming dates, and handling cancellations, see *Assembly Organization Guidelines* (S-330).
2. Two to three months prior to each assembly, the circuit overseer should remind the elders to follow the direction in the *Shepherd* book, chapter 20, paragraph 17.—See 3:14.
3. Circuits have the option to begin the morning program at the time indicated for the afternoon and then present the afternoon program in the evening, if that is most convenient for the majority.
4. Circuit overseers and their wives are encouraged to be in the audience during the sessions of circuit assemblies. Taking time to associate with brothers and sisters before and after the sessions is mutually encouraging.
5. For detailed instructions on simultaneous interpretation at circuit assemblies, on circuit assemblies in multilanguage fields, and on alternative arrangements for attending circuit assemblies, see *Assembly Organization Guidelines* (S-330).

### SPEAKERS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS

6. After receiving the talk outlines, the circuit overseer should prayerfully select exemplary elders who are qualified to teach large audiences. As early as possible, the circuit overseer should provide individual outlines in all available formats to the speakers so that they can prepare and present their parts in an encouraging, motivating, and realistic way. The circuit overseer should also provide speakers with a copy of *Guidelines for Those Assigned Talks at Assemblies or Conventions* (CO-90). The speaker assigned to give the closing talk should conclude with prayer. If the circuit overseer or the branch representative is not fluent in the language of the program, he may agree to have his prayer interpreted. Otherwise, a brother fluent in the language of the program may conclude with prayer.
7. When the circuit overseer identifies an elder with potential, perhaps by means of the speaker rating information received from the congregation or by firsthand observation of the brother giving a talk in the congregation, he may wish to assign him a part on an assembly. This may limit the number of assignments given to more seasoned speakers; however, this can help circuit overseers to make appropriate evaluations and see if the number of qualified brothers who are listed with the branch office as convention speakers can be increased. (See 5:20.) At times, a circuit overseer may wish to assign a circuit assembly part to a brother serving in a group hosted by a congregation in another circuit. This option should be used with discretion so as not to prevent qualified local circuit speakers from being assigned a part periodically. Before making any such assignment, the circuit overseer should first obtain the approval of the circuit overseer who cares for the prospective speaker's congregation.

8. The circuit overseer is responsible for selecting session chairmen. A different brother may be used for each session. Session chairmen should be highly rated convention speakers who can present the introductions in a lively and natural way.

9. Participants in demonstrations and interviews should be exemplary in Christian living, and their appearance should not detract from the program. For example, if a brother is so extremely overweight that others would be distracted if he had a part on the program, good judgment would need to be used in deciding whether to give him an assignment, even though he might otherwise be qualified.

10. The circuit overseer should arrange for a rehearsal of all demonstrations and interviews. It is not necessary for the circuit overseer to rehearse the summary of *The Watchtower*, though the participants should be on hand for the walk-through.

11. If the circuit is divided into sections and the publishers live relatively close to the assembly site, it may be possible to use the same group of publishers for demonstrations and interviews on multiple programs. Doing so, where practical, reduces the time needed for rehearsals.

## **BAPTISM TALK**

12. The circuit overseer should inform the elder assigned to give the baptism talk that if there are no baptism candidates present when he asks for these to stand, there is no need to ask the two questions or to say the prayer.—For detailed instructions on baptisms at circuit assemblies, see *Assembly Organization Guidelines* (S-330).

## **SPECIAL MEETING WITH PIONEERS**

13. In conjunction with one circuit assembly each year, the circuit overseer meets with the regular pioneers, special pioneers, and field missionaries, using the outlines provided by the branch office (S-312). The wife of the circuit overseer should be in attendance at this meeting. However, branch representatives will not be in attendance. An Assembly Hall or a conveniently located Kingdom Hall may be used. If an Assembly Hall is used, any Assembly Hall servants who are assigned to that facility may attend the meeting. Usually this meeting is held with all the pioneers in the circuit at the same time. If that is impractical, however, more than one meeting may be arranged. (See 3:14.) The circuit overseer should use good judgment so as not to impose a financial burden on the pioneers. There may be instances where the distances involved prohibit many or all of the pioneers in one or more congregations from attending the meeting in their circuit. In such cases, the circuit overseer should contact the Convention and Assembly Desk in the Service Department for approval to allow the pioneers to view a recording of or tie in to the meeting, following the guidelines for alternative arrangements for attending circuit assemblies provided in *Assembly Organization Guidelines* (S-330).

14. The circuit overseer is allowed flexibility in determining with which circuit assembly during the year the meeting will be held and when during the week to hold the meeting. If the assembly is held on Saturday, it may be practical to hold the special meeting on Friday or Sunday. If the assembly is held on Sunday, the meeting may be held in the morning or afternoon on the Friday or Saturday prior to the circuit assembly. In other cases, it may be advantageous to hold the meeting on two weeknights during the week preceding the assembly. The decision should be based on the circumstances of the majority who will attend. To the extent possible, the meeting should be held at a time when the ministry of the pioneers would not be severely impacted. No food or drink should be served. The circuit

overseer should direct the elders to notify all pioneers of the time and place of the meeting and inform them of any publications needed. However, he should not provide a printed program, an agenda, or a partial outline of the meeting. There is no objection if a pioneer from another circuit or section requests to attend the meeting because he missed his assigned one or because the program presented in his circuit or section was not in his native language. The circuit overseer should exercise good judgment and reasonableness in the matter.— See [3:17](#).

15. The circuit overseer should assign the program parts designated for local elders well in advance, providing each speaker with his individual outline. Regular pioneers, special pioneers, and field missionaries who are good teachers should be used if available. A pioneer elder should be assigned to open the meeting with prayer. The circuit overseer will conclude the meeting with prayer. Each speaker should introduce the next one. When presenting the information, sufficient time should be allowed for the pioneers to make informative notes, including the titles of the parts presented. This direction should also be conveyed to the assigned speakers. When an outline refers to participants in interviews and demonstrations, male pronouns are used. Unless an outline specifically states otherwise, either brothers or sisters may be used for interviews and demonstrations.

16. The circuit overseer should rehearse all interviews and demonstrations. Local pioneer elders who are good teachers may be assigned more than one part. If sufficient qualified pioneer elders are not available, recordings from JW Stream may be used or a qualified elder with experience in the pioneer or missionary work may be used. Assignments should be made far enough in advance to allow participants ample time to prepare well. Please inform the assigned speakers that it is not necessary to develop all the points in the reference material—only the points appropriate for the outline. Emphasize to participants the importance of adhering closely to the timing of each part.

17. If the meeting being held in a pioneer's circuit is not in his native language or if a pioneer is unable to attend the meeting, the elders in the pioneer's congregation may make the recording of the program on JW Stream available to the pioneer, if the program in the desired language has been uploaded.

## CHAPTER 4 WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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### REGULAR VISIT TO A CONGREGATION

1. At the time the circuit overseer submits his routing to the Service Department, the congregations should be notified of his visit by means of the *Notice of Visit of Circuit Overseer* (S-302). (As an exception to this guideline, if the circuit overseer has requested the use of a substitute at the time he submits his routing, he should wait to receive approval from the branch office before informing congregations of the visit.) Four to six weeks before the scheduled visit, the circuit overseer should remind the elders to follow the direction in the *Shepherd* book, chapter 10, paragraph 1. There is no need to request that each individual elder or the body of elders put in writing their observations on the congregation's spiritual condition prior to the visit.

2. The weekly schedule of a circuit overseer is a full and rewarding one. He checks the congregation records; engages in field service; makes shepherding visits; attends congregation meetings; gives talks to the congregation; conducts meetings with elders, ministerial servants, and pioneers; and prepares a report for the branch office. In addition, he endeavors to encourage and upbuild the brothers in his conversations with them. The circuit overseer can set a good example by adhering closely to the schedule that is arranged. He should not organize special meetings or institute innovative programs unless given special direction by the branch office.—See [10:5](#); [19:7-8](#).

3. Starting Tuesday afternoon at 1:00, the circuit overseer should thoroughly review the congregation records and those of the Kingdom Hall Operating Committee, if applicable. (See [Appendix B](#).) This review may be done at the circuit overseer's accommodations or at the Kingdom Hall. Since the records and information that are to be provided by the body of elders are listed in the *Information Needed for Visit of Circuit Overseer* (S-61) form, there is no need for the circuit overseer to provide an additional list of items to be reviewed. Neither should he ask the elders to spend time compiling averages and figures. Rather, the circuit overseer should personally take note of how the records are being cared for, as this will also enable him to become somewhat familiar with the names and activity of the publishers. If the circuit overseer determines that a congregation is in need of elders, ministerial servants, or pioneers, he may consider submitting the *Congregation Needing Assistance* (S-310) form to the Service Department.

4. At some point before the Tuesday evening meeting, the circuit overseer should meet with the coordinator of the body of elders or another local elder to discuss any questions he has as a result of reviewing the records or to request additional information on brothers being recommended for appointment or deletion as elders or ministerial servants. The local elder may be able to answer questions concerning the spiritual condition of the congregation and identify any serious problems needing attention. (Prov. 15:22) The local elder may also share information on how the publishers are succeeding in various features of the ministry and on those who are scheduled to receive a shepherding visit. When difficulties or problems within the congregation are identified early in the week, there is more time to do research, which may make it possible for the circuit overseer to address these matters in service talks or at least to make recommendations to the elders.—See [4:16](#).



5. When reviewing the *Congregation's Publisher Records* (S-21), the circuit overseer takes note of those who are irregular or inactive and talks to the elders about what can be done to assist these publishers. He also notes those who have the potential for taking up the auxiliary or regular pioneer service or Local Design/Construction assignments and looks for opportunities to give them personal encouragement. He takes a special interest in the regular pioneers and their activity. (See [16:2](#).) He will take into consideration those who are involved in theocratic projects or who care for extra theocratic responsibilities, such as those who assist with the construction of Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls, those who serve on Hospital Liaison Committees, Disaster Relief Committees, and Convention Committees, or those who serve as Bethel remote volunteers. All such assignments are valuable forms of sacred service that may affect a publisher's field service activity and his share in other congregation activities. Brothers and sisters who serve in these ways deserve commendation, encouragement, and support. (See [14:4-5](#).) Comments regarding the congregation's activity may be shared with the congregation in a positive way in the service talk on Tuesday evening.—See [18:2, 7](#).

6. The circuit overseer should check to make sure that congregations are not overstocked with literature and that requests are in proportion to the number of publishers in the congregation. When visiting the language-coordinating congregation, he should review the *Monthly Movement of Literature* (S-28) form. The quantity of special-request items on hand should also be reviewed. The objective is to make sure that there are proper controls for the amount of literature being requested by the congregation. This review may show that words of commendation are in order or that loving reminders are required. He should verify that the literature servant is receiving training from the elders to carry out his assignment. The circuit overseer should keep the branch office informed of any trends, so that assistance and encouragement can be provided. If there is an overstock of literature, he should confirm that a list of the overstocked items has been made available to other congregations. No literature should be returned to the branch office unless the branch office directs that this be done.

7. The circuit overseer should review how the congregation is covering its assigned territory. If the congregation is having difficulty covering its territory at least once each year, could neighboring congregations provide assistance? If it is not possible to make arrangements to assist the congregation to cover its territory and if the territory has not been worked for two years, the circuit overseer should recommend to the Service Department which sections of the congregation's territory should be assigned to other nearby congregations or be listed as unassigned territory.

8. The circuit overseer reviews the congregation accounts.—See [Appendix B](#).

9. Meetings for field service should be conducted Wednesday through Friday morning and afternoon and on the weekend at times agreed upon by the circuit overseer and the elders, in accord with local circumstances. If the circuit overseer's circumstances permit, he may support any additional arrangements for field service the congregation may have during the week, such as evening witnessing. Circuit overseers should have a full share in the ministry on the weekend. A special effort should be made to work with publishers whose circumstances did not permit them to share in the ministry on the weekdays. If the congregation has the weekend meeting on a day other than Sunday, the circuit overseer's zeal for the ministry and love for his brothers will move him to use his time with the congregation in a productive and beneficial way. The arrangements for field service are announced Tuesday evening.—See [10:1-6](#).

10. Time should be scheduled to make two or three shepherding visits during the week. These visits may be arranged at times when those being visited are available, in accord with

local circumstances, whether in the morning, afternoon, or evening. In some cases, it may be possible to make shepherding visits at times when the house-to-house ministry is less productive.—See 19:1-6.

11. On Tuesday evening, the midweek meeting will be held according to the schedule that appears in the *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook* with the following exceptions. In the Living as Christians portion of the meeting, the Congregation Bible Study will be replaced with a 30-minute service talk by the circuit overseer. (See 18:7.) Prior to the service talk, the Life and Ministry Meeting chairman will review the program just held, preview the following week's program, make any necessary announcements, and then introduce the circuit overseer. After his opening comments and the service talk, the circuit overseer will conclude the meeting with a song of his choice from "*Sing Out Joyfully*" to Jehovah—Meetings. He may invite another brother to conclude with prayer. The total time for the meeting, including opening and closing songs and prayers, will be one hour and 45 minutes.

12. On Wednesday evening or Saturday afternoon, the circuit overseer holds a one-hour meeting with the regular pioneers and any auxiliary pioneers, special pioneers, and field missionaries. The day and time for this meeting may be adjusted according to the circumstances of the pioneers. However, it generally would not interfere with regularly scheduled meetings for field service. There is no objection if a pioneer from another congregation requests to attend the meeting because he missed it during the visit of his circuit overseer or because the program presented in his congregation was not in his native language. The circuit overseer should exercise good judgment and reasonableness in the matter.—See 16:3-5.

13. A meeting with the ministerial servants and elders is conducted using the outline provided by the branch office (S-337). It is preferred that this meeting be held on Friday evening. However, if an adjustment is needed based on local circumstances, it could be held on Saturday afternoon or evening. Circuit overseers should not distribute an agenda or partial outline based on the outline provided by the branch office. (Of course, the circuit overseer should prepare an agenda for use in discussing any local matters that will be considered with the elders.) All appointed elders and ministerial servants, as well as those who have moved into the congregation with a favorable letter of recommendation, should be invited to attend the portion of the meeting that reviews the outline from the branch office. There is no objection if an elder or a ministerial servant from another congregation requests to attend the meeting because he missed it during the visit of his circuit overseer or because the program presented in his congregation was not in his native language. The circuit overseer should exercise good judgment and reasonableness in the matter. The meeting with the elders and ministerial servants is opened with prayer. After completing the portion of the meeting designed for both elders and ministerial servants, the ministerial servants are dismissed. Following this, a meeting is held with the elders, with the circuit overseer serving as chairman. (If there are no recommendations for appointment or deletion and if the elders or the circuit overseer have no additional points to discuss, the meeting can be concluded after considering the outline provided by the branch office.) The meeting will then conclude with prayer. There is no need for a prayer when the ministerial servants are dismissed. The circuit overseer should endeavor to set a good example, not spending needless time on points that have been adequately discussed. Generally, the total time for these meetings should not exceed two hours.

14. On the day the congregation normally holds its weekend meeting, the chairman will introduce the opening song chosen by the circuit overseer from "*Sing Out Joyfully*" to Jehovah—Meetings. After an opening prayer, the chairman will briefly introduce the circuit overseer, who will come to the platform for a 30-minute public talk. After the talk, the chairman

will come to the platform and briefly thank the circuit overseer and then invite the *Watchtower* Study conductor to the platform. The *Watchtower* Study conductor will invite the audience to sing the opening song shown in the *Watchtower* for that week's lesson. After an abbreviated 30-minute *Watchtower* Study, the conductor will briefly introduce the circuit overseer, who will come to the platform for the final 30-minute service talk. (See 18:8.) He will conclude the meeting with a song of his choice and prayer. The total time for the meeting, including opening and closing songs and prayers, will be one hour and 45 minutes. A circuit overseer should not ask a congregation to change the weekend meeting to a different day or time for his own convenience.—See 4:9.

15. Before leaving the congregation on Sunday and at a time that does not interfere with field service arrangements, the circuit overseer meets with the Congregation Service Committee to review the *Report on Circuit Overseer's Visit With Congregation* (S-303). (See 5:14.) Although it is necessary for only the service committee to be in attendance, other elders may attend if they wish. The circuit overseer can inform the elders of this, but no announcement concerning this meeting is to be made to the congregation. There may be times when the circuit overseer feels it would be necessary or advisable to have other elders present, especially if complicated matters are being reported. A copy of the *Report on Circuit Overseer's Visit With Congregation* should be left with the coordinator of the body of elders. He should be reminded to have the secretary circulate it among the elders and to have the body of elders review it at the elders' meeting held three months after the visit.

16. To the extent possible, a circuit overseer should not leave problems for the branch office to handle after his visit. If the circuit overseer is unsure about what steps to take after praying for holy spirit and wisdom and then researching the Scriptures and the publications, he is welcome to contact the Service Department or another experienced circuit overseer for assistance. If a circuit overseer's busy schedule does not allow him to deal with a matter or to follow through on every detail, he should refer the elders to direction from the organization, so that they can follow through on resolving the matter later. The circuit overseer should make a note of the matter. During his next visit or perhaps at a circuit assembly, he can follow up, checking to see what progress was made in handling the matter.—See 4:4.

17. If a meeting cannot be held because of extenuating circumstances, such as inclement weather, then the meeting may be rescheduled to another time during the week, as long as the rescheduled meeting will not interfere with another congregation's meeting at the Kingdom Hall.

18. Circuit overseers should use the week of the Memorial to pioneer with a congregation.—See 5:11.

## **THE WEEK OF A CIRCUIT ASSEMBLY**

19. The circuit overseer and his wife should use this week to pioneer with a congregation. No congregation meetings, other than meetings for field service, will be held. In addition to accompanying the congregation in field service, he may use the time to prepare for upcoming assignments or to care for other circuit matters. Friday may be used to care for the branch representative or to conduct the meeting with all pioneers, special pioneers, and field missionaries in the circuit. (See 3:14.) If practical and if the circuit overseer will be presiding at only one assembly that weekend, some portion of the other weekend day should be used for field service. The week of the circuit assembly is considered a workweek. However, the circuit overseer has the flexibility to decide how best to use the time. He and his wife may also use days of personal time away at any time during this week.

## CHAPTER 5 CORRESPONDENCE AND REPORTS

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1. Since circuit overseers see firsthand what is taking place in the field, the reports they submit provide valuable information that helps the branch office to keep up-to-date on matters affecting the evangelizing, teaching, and shepherding work among Jehovah's servants. In addition to providing information requested by the branch office, circuit overseers are welcome to correspond with the Service Department at any time.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

2. When writing a letter to the branch office, circuit overseers should include the following principal parts of a well-composed letter:

- (1) Heading: Should include name, assignment designation, and date
- (2) Inside address: Should include the name of the branch office and, if known, the department or desk concerned
- (3) Salutation
- (4) Body: The first paragraph should explain the purpose of the letter. If the matter is not complicated, the gist of any previous correspondence may be stated in a sentence or two. The text of the letter should be concise, yet clear and complete, giving necessary details. Each specific matter or line of thought merits its own paragraph.
- (5) Complimentary close and name typed below

3. Correspondence should not include a letterhead design that is similar to that used by the branch office. This guideline applies also to correspondence sent by circuit overseers to congregations. Some individuals could wrongly conclude that letters with such a letterhead have been approved by or were sent by the branch office. If local congregations are using questionable letterhead, the elders should be given appropriate direction.

4. It is unnecessary for the circuit overseer to report to the branch office every matter the elders are addressing. If the elders need assistance with handling a judicial matter or other serious wrongdoing and the matter cannot be resolved with the assistance of the circuit overseer, the circuit overseer should advise the elders to contact the Service Department. If it becomes necessary for the circuit overseer to seek direction from or report to the branch office on other matters he is directly involved in, his communication should be clear, specific, factual, accurate, and complete. Pertinent details, such as names, the sequence of events,

and if possible, dates, should be provided. Communication related to child abuse matters should be handled over the telephone.

5. Correspondence should be directed to the appropriate department at the branch office rather than to individuals. If a circuit overseer knows the names of any brothers serving at the branch office who provide direction to the field, it is best that he not share this information with brothers in the congregations.

6. When responding to correspondence from the branch office, circuit overseers should make reference to the desk symbols and date of the letter from the branch office. When writing about an individual, circuit overseers should always provide the person's full name.

7. When referring to a congregation, circuit overseers should provide the complete designation exactly as it appears in the records of the branch office, including the city and province or state.

### ***CIRCUIT OVERSEER ROUTING (S-300)***

8. The circuit overseer submits his routing to the Service Department three months or more in advance using the *Circuit Overseer Routing* form. Routing should be submitted for each full calendar month—not for part of a month or a combination of two months. If a week is split between two months, it should be submitted for the month in which the week begins. For example, the week of Tuesday, January 30 through Sunday, February 4 should be submitted with January's routing. A congregation name should be provided only in connection with a regular visit to a congregation, not in connection with other events, such as pioneering with a congregation. A revised form should immediately be sent to the Service Department if the circuit overseer receives approval to make changes to the routing. (See 5:12.) When a circuit overseer has received approval to visit a group, the event type should be listed as "Miscellaneous" and the name of the group should be entered in the "Comments" field. (See 15:10-12.) When a circuit overseer submits the routing for the brother who will be replacing him in the circuit, the outgoing circuit overseer should communicate with the incoming circuit overseer to confirm his availability. Personal time away should not be submitted using the *Circuit Overseer Routing* form.—See 22:7-12.

9. The circuit overseer may determine the order in which the congregations will be served. Congregations should be notified of the circuit overseer's visit by means of the *Notice of Visit of Circuit Overseer (S-302)* at the same time the *Circuit Overseer Routing* form is sent to the Service Department.—See 4:1.

10. All of the congregations in the circuit should be visited twice each service year, once with each set of outlines. (See 18:9.) If the circuit overseer is unable to do this personally, he should request approval from the Service Department for congregations to be served by a substitute circuit overseer(s). (See 21:13.) When the circuit overseer is determining which congregations will be served by a substitute circuit overseer, he should give priority to the needs of the congregations rather than to his own convenience. (Phil. 2:4) For example, if he knows that a congregation is experiencing serious problems, it would be better for him to serve the congregation rather than to have a substitute circuit overseer do so. Also, to the extent possible, a congregation should not be served by a substitute circuit overseer on consecutive visits.

11. If the circuit overseer can serve all of the congregations once with each set of outlines with weeks left over, he may include in his schedule one or more weeks of pioneering with congregations that he selects. Such weeks may be scheduled at his discretion. These are



fine opportunities for him and his wife to find spiritual refreshment in the ministry with other zealous publishers in a congregation. Though he is not required to do so, the circuit overseer may offer to conduct some of the meetings for field service. However, he will not hold any meetings with the pioneers, elders, or ministerial servants or give any talks that week. He may use the time to prepare for upcoming assignments or to care for other circuit matters. He and his wife may also use days of personal time away at any time during this week.

12. Circuit overseers should keep in mind that when a congregation is informed of a regular visit, many brothers adjust their schedules to support the special week of activity. Some publishers have changed vacation plans when notified of the circuit overseer's visit. Therefore, once a congregation has been informed of a scheduled visit by means of the *Notice of Visit of Circuit Overseer*, the circuit overseer should not arbitrarily change the date of the visit. If a circuit overseer wishes to change the date of a regular visit to a congregation and the congregation has already been notified or the Service Department has already been notified of the visit by means of the *Circuit Overseer Routing* form, he must first telephone the Service Department to obtain approval before submitting a revision.

13. At times, the scheduled visit of one circuit overseer conflicts with that of another circuit overseer. This may occur when two circuit overseers (usually serving in different language fields) schedule visits on the same week to congregations that use the same Kingdom Hall. In such cases, a telephone call should be made to the Service Department for direction on resolving the matter. To prevent such schedule conflicts, circuit overseers whose circuits overlap should contact one another and work out congregation routing before filling out the *Circuit Overseer Routing* form.

### **REPORT ON CIRCUIT OVERSEER'S VISIT WITH CONGREGATION (S-303)**

14. Circuit overseers should avoid making the same comments every week in their reports. Each congregation has unique characteristics and displays a certain spirit. The messages of Jesus to the seven first-century congregations in Asia Minor illustrate that each congregation has its strengths and weaknesses. (Rev., chaps. 2-3) Thus, using identical wording habitually in reports would not be appropriate.

### **REPORT ON CIRCUIT ASSEMBLY (S-318)**

15. The number baptized at circuit assemblies is reported in the *Report on Circuit Assembly*. The form should be submitted immediately following the completion of the assembly (or series of assemblies if the circuit has multiple sections). On occasion, baptisms are performed outside the setting of assemblies and conventions. For example, the elders may make local arrangements to baptize an infirm individual or someone with a communicable disease. Some may be baptized at correctional facilities. Whenever this occurs, the elders will report the number baptized to the circuit overseer. (*sfl* chap. 11 par. 16 pt. 4; chap. 28 par. 15) When completing the next *Report on Circuit Assembly*, the circuit overseer will add these baptism figures to the number of those baptized at the circuit assembly.

### **PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS REPORT (S-326)**

16. When filling out a *Personal Qualifications Report*, circuit overseers should give specific comments and clearly indicate what the individual is qualified for at the present time and what he has potential for in the future. Substitute circuit overseers should not submit *Personal Qualifications Reports* on individuals.

17. Following his first visit to the respective congregations each service year, a circuit overseer should submit *Personal Qualifications Reports* for field missionaries and special pioneers (including infirm special pioneers), as well as for regular pioneers working in isolated territory. If special pioneers are encountering any difficulties with regard to finances or accommodations, this should be included in the report. (See 16:9.) After other visits during that year, the circuit overseer may write a brief letter commenting on the activity and progress of the field missionary or special pioneer whenever there is a need, stating what it is that requires attention. If a circuit overseer reports on areas in which the individual needs to make improvement, he should already have discussed the matter with the individual.—See 12:3.

18. The branch office will monitor and evaluate the progress of all temporary special pioneers and of selected regular pioneers who have attended the School for Kingdom Evangelizers. This evaluation program will last no more than three years after the individual begins temporary special pioneering or graduates from the school. The circuit overseer does not need to complete *Personal Qualifications Reports* on such individuals unless he is specifically requested to do so by the branch office. Circuit overseers should first consult the Service Department before asking individuals whose service is being evaluated to move to another congregation.

### **APPLICATION TO ATTEND THE SCHOOL FOR KINGDOM EVANGELIZERS (G-8)**

19. Upon receiving a completed *Application to Attend the School for Kingdom Evangelizers* from an applicant's Congregation Service Committee, the circuit overseer will hold the application until his next visit to the applicant's congregation. During that visit, the circuit overseer should work with and observe the applicant. (If the circuit overseer is new to the circuit, he may contact the previous circuit overseer to obtain his comments.) Thereafter, the circuit overseer will meet with the service committee to discuss the committee's comments regarding the applicant. The circuit overseer should forward the application to the Service Department only if he is convinced that the applicant has the abilities and circumstances to put the advanced training to good use in an assignment. Otherwise, the circuit overseer should instruct the service committee to provide the applicant with kind counsel regarding areas for improvement. The age policy for applying for the School for Kingdom Evangelizers is between 23 and 65 years of age. However, if a circuit overseer is aware of a candidate whose spiritual qualities and abilities are truly exceptional but the individual is 21 or 22 years old or between 66 and 70 years old, he may invite the person to apply. This option should not be advertised to the publishers or elders in general. Rather, it should be used sparingly for only truly exceptional candidates.

### **CONVENTION SPEAKER RECOMMENDATIONS**

20. The branch office depends on circuit overseers to provide balanced recommendations for convention speakers. (See *Instructions for Rating Convention Speakers and Interpreters* [S-311].) As he visits the congregations, the circuit overseer should compile a list of elders, including younger elders, who might qualify for this privilege. He should write down information about these elders as he observes them in the congregation and on circuit assembly programs. If a brother has the potential for qualifying in the future, the circuit overseer should schedule him for a circuit assembly part so that the brothers involved in the annual ratings meeting will have full opportunity to observe his speaking ability.—See 3:7.

### **RECOMMENDING A NEW CONGREGATION**

21. With the increase in Kingdom publishers comes the periodic need to form new congregations. Circuit overseers should be familiar with *Instructions for Recommending New*

*Congregations* (S-50), the *Territory Adjustment Request* (S-6), and the *Congregation Application/Information* (S-51) form. It is the circuit overseer's responsibility to help the elders prepare the forms correctly and to verify that they are complete before he sends them to the Service Department.

22. Dividing a congregation prematurely can result in two weak congregations. The following factors should be considered before making a recommendation: How many mature publishers would there be in each congregation? Would there be enough qualified elders and ministerial servants in both the new and the existing congregations to care for the meeting parts and other responsibilities? Would dividing the congregation reduce the number attending the meetings to the point that the publishers would be discouraged? If the Kingdom Hall is not large enough to accommodate all who are attending, would it be better as a temporary measure for the congregation to hold two weekend meetings?

23. It is not appropriate for the circuit overseer to influence the elders to propose territory boundaries solely on the basis of personal preference, arranging boundaries so that certain elders are assigned to serve in a particular congregation where he feels they should be. Rather, the emphasis should be placed on selecting territory boundaries that are simple and easily defined. If the circuit overseer feels that a major adjustment in territory boundaries is needed, he should contact the Service Department before pursuing this with the elders of the congregations that would be involved. This is especially important if the proposed adjustment involves several appointed brothers changing congregations.

24. There are advantages when publishers attend the congregation in whose territory they live. In the final analysis, however, each family head is responsible to determine what is best for his family. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for circuit overseers to pressure others to attend a particular congregation. Neither is it appropriate to use this as a basis for determining whether a brother should receive privileges in the congregation or circuit.

## **RECOMMENDING THE DISSOLUTION OF A CONGREGATION**

25. Because of changing economic conditions, local circumstances, and other factors, a congregation may no longer meet the qualifications described in *Instructions for Recommending New Congregations* (S-50). In such cases, the circuit overseer may consider recommending the dissolution of the congregation and merging it with another. Dissolution of one or more congregations might allow for the better use of Kingdom Halls and may assist a congregation that is struggling because of its small size or lack of qualified brothers to take the lead. Circuit overseers should be familiar with *Instructions for Merging Congregations* (S-67).—See 5:24.

## **SUBMITTING EXPERIENCES**

26. Circuit overseers are requested to submit exceptional field service experiences to the Service Department. The accuracy of all experiences should be confirmed with the coordinator of the body of elders. Especially appreciated are experiences about the preaching work that show initiative and resourcefulness on the part of publishers while sharing in various features of the ministry. The experience should provide complete details and should highlight what the publisher did that was different and that proved effective. It should also tell how far the interested person has progressed. If a field service experience, though not exceptional, makes a significant point, it should still be submitted.

27. Other encouraging experiences not directly related to the field ministry may prove to be useful as well. These may include how an inactive publisher was reactivated, how a youth



took his stand or gave a fine witness in school, how an unbelieving mate was helped to accept the truth, how someone simplified his life and was able to enter the full-time ministry, and so forth. If the publisher agrees that his experience may be shared, the following should also be provided when submitting the experience: the name of the publisher who had the experience, the name of his congregation, and the date of the experience. If the publisher does not agree or there was no opportunity to obtain the publisher's consent, then the experience may be provided without including the publisher's name or identifying information.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

28. Circuit overseers should handle confidential correspondence discreetly. (See [23:5](#).) No correspondence from the branch office should be shown to those outside the organization without the express permission of the branch office.

## **BETHEL/CONSTRUCTION APPLICANTS**

29. Those recommended to serve at Bethel or to assist with theocratic construction projects should be good examples in Christian living. Elders should not reason that the spiritual environment associated with such assignments will help someone to overcome a personal problem. If an applicant's standing in the congregation changes so that he is no longer qualified to serve at Bethel or to assist with theocratic construction projects, the elders should promptly notify the branch office. (See *Instructions for Congregation Use of JW.ORG* [S-135].) Circuit overseers should check the Review Applications feature on [jw.org](#) weekly so that applications can be reviewed and processed in a timely manner. If a delayed application is still with the elders, the circuit overseer should encourage them to process it promptly.—See [5:19](#).

## **FORMER SPECIAL FULL-TIME SERVANTS**

30. If a circuit overseer becomes aware of someone who was in special full-time service for a good portion of his life and who now is in need materially, he should inform the Service Department. It would be best for the circuit overseer not to mention to the person that he is writing to the branch office. He should provide as many facts as are known to him regarding the current circumstances and background of the individual.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

31. It is important for circuit overseers to consider carefully what postal address to use. In some situations it may be best for a circuit overseer to use the address of a responsible brother in his circuit who is kept informed of the circuit overseer's schedule of activity and who can forward his mail to him. If such an arrangement is used, the circuit overseer should not list that brother's telephone numbers or email address as his own. Circuit overseers should promptly inform the branch office of any changes in their contact information by adjusting their user profile on [jw.org](#). If Internet access is not available, the *Circuit Overseer's Contact Information* (S-351) form should be used.

## CHAPTER 6 DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

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### PREPAREDNESS

1. Proverbs 22:3 states: “The shrewd one sees the danger and conceals himself.” In harmony with this principle, it is wise to make reasonable advance preparations for potential disasters. Being prepared can help publishers and families take appropriate action when a disaster occurs. Principally, each family head is responsible to prepare for the safety and well-being of his family. Thus, each circuit overseer should make sure that he and his wife are personally prepared for a potential disaster, such as by applying the suggestions in *Awake!* No. 5 2017, pages 1-7. It is also appropriate to keep the matter of disaster preparedness before congregation elders.

### COMMUNICATION WITH BODIES OF ELDERS

2. Before and after a disaster, the circuit overseer needs to maintain good communication with each coordinator of the body of elders in the affected area of his circuit. Therefore, he should provide each coordinator of the body of elders with a telephone number(s) where he can be reached in the event of a disaster. Bodies of elders should closely follow the steps outlined in the *Shepherd* book, chapter 26.

### COMMUNICATION WITH THE BRANCH OFFICE

3. When a disaster is anticipated or occurs, the circuit overseer should contact the branch office as soon as possible. He should be prepared to provide his name, the phone number where he can be reached, his location, and the nature of the emergency. The branch office endeavors to send a report to world headquarters within two days of a disaster, so timely reports on the condition of the brothers are vital.

4. At times, the branch office will communicate with circuit overseers if a disaster is anticipated. Thus, circuit overseers should check their jwpub email and other communication tools regularly for information from the branch office. It is also wise to keep a mobile phone charged if possible.

### CIRCUITS THAT SPAN BRANCH TERRITORIES

5. If a circuit overseer’s assignment spans multiple branch territories, it is preferred that he be the primary point of contact for the congregations affected by an emergency or a natural disaster within his circuit. However, depending on the circumstances, and especially if the circuit overseer is far away from the disaster, the branch office that oversees the affected area may assign a local circuit overseer to coordinate matters.

## **CARING FOR IMMEDIATE NEEDS**

6. When a disaster occurs, the branch office will look to circuit overseers to coordinate matters until either (1) the branch office appoints a brother or a Disaster Relief Committee to coordinate the relief effort or (2) the situation has resolved. (S-180 chap. 1 pars. 5-6) Since lives may be at stake, the circuit overseer should ensure that the brothers are accounted for and that their immediate needs are cared for quickly. He should remind the elders to be safety conscious when providing assistance.—*sfl* chap. 26 par. 11.

7. Practical steps should be taken to care for such immediate needs as medical care, food, water, shelter, and shepherding. This might include pooling available supplies among the brothers. Depending on the circumstances, the immediate needs may be cared for within the affected congregation. (*sfl* chap. 26 par. 7) At other times, it may be necessary to coordinate efforts between congregations or even to contact neighboring circuit overseers. Responsible elders may be used to assist.

## **SHEPHERDING AND REESTABLISHING CONGREGATION MEETINGS**

8. Circuit overseers should visit affected congregations in their assigned circuit as quickly as possible to provide spiritual and emotional assistance. For large-scale or ongoing disasters, the branch office may direct circuit overseers from other areas to provide additional assistance.

9. After a disaster, the need for shepherding by the circuit overseers and selected elders is critical and should be done as soon as possible. The traumatic events of a disaster can cause extreme sadness and anxiety. (Prov. 24:10) Thus, the brothers need the love and attention of kind Christian shepherds. Shepherding those who are disaster victims helps them see their situation from a spiritual viewpoint so that they can cope with their changed circumstances.

10. The following references may be helpful to circuit overseers when shepherding those affected by traumatic emergencies:

- (1) The article “Post-traumatic Stress—What Is It?” in the August 22, 2001, issue of *Awake!*, pages 4-7
- (2) The cover series “Find Relief From Stress” in *Awake!* No. 1 2020
- (3) “The Ministry of Relief,” in *God’s Kingdom Rules!*, chapter 20, paragraphs 10-17
- (4) The article “When Disaster Strikes—Steps That Can Save Lives,” in *Awake!* No. 5 2017, page 7

11. Publishers also need to reestablish their spiritual routine, which includes making time for personal study and family worship, reading God’s Word daily, attending congregation meetings, and maintaining a regular share in the ministry. Therefore, congregation meetings and field ministry arrangements should be reestablished as quickly as possible.

## **COOPERATING WITH DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEES**

12. If a Disaster Relief Committee (DRC) is appointed, the Service Department, in consultation with the Disaster Relief Desk, will provide direction on the level of involvement of the circuit overseer. The circuit overseer should work closely with the DRC to inform it of the needs and what has been done so far.

13. The Service Department will assign substitute circuit overseers to make the regular visits to the congregations if circuit overseers are being used to support the relief effort.

14. Circuit overseers will need to stay in close and constant contact with the coordinator of the body of elders in each congregation in their circuits. Circuit overseers will work with the congregation elders to monitor the adequacy and fairness of the distribution of relief supplies at the family level. Circuit overseers can request assistance from responsible elders to keep in communication with the coordinators of the bodies of elders or to monitor or perform any of these tasks.

## CHAPTER 7 CONVENTIONS

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1. Each year we keenly anticipate the rich spiritual feast prepared for the benefit of Jehovah's people at conventions. The branch office appreciates the work of circuit overseers in recommending program participants, delivering well-prepared talks, and assisting in other ways.

2. The circuit overseer and his wife are given the week of the convention to prepare for, travel to, and benefit from the program. This time may also be used to care for circuit matters, such as preparing for an upcoming circuit assembly or preparing talks for the new service year. They may also use days of personal time away at any time during this week.

3. The branch office notifies circuit overseers of their assigned convention. In most cases, circuit overseers are assigned where their circuit or a portion of their circuit is assigned. It is good to attend the convention where one is assigned, since assignments are made so as to balance the number of circuit overseers who can handle program parts at the various conventions.—See [9:2](#).

4. If, because of personal circumstances, a circuit overseer finds it necessary to attend a convention other than his assigned convention, he should write the Service Department *immediately*, giving the dates and location of the convention he needs to attend and the reason for the request. If approval is granted to attend a convention during a different week, he should submit a revised *Circuit Overseer Routing* (S-300) form for the week he was originally assigned to attend the convention.—See [5:8-13](#).

5. If a circuit overseer wishes to take a week of personal time away (five days) to attend a second convention, this may be done. He should advise the Service Department right away if he is available to handle a program part there. If he is selected as a delegate to an international or a special convention, he will be granted one and a half days to attend one such event. If the convention is scheduled during the week, the amount of granted time away will be adjusted to match the number of weekdays of the convention. (For example, two full days would be granted if the event is held from Thursday to Saturday.) This provision is separate from the yearly one and a half days granted to attend a local assigned convention. A circuit overseer who is selected as a delegate to an international or a special convention may take a partial week(s) of personal time away to attend the convention.

6. Any circuit overseer needing accommodations provided by the convention, whether he is assigned to work at the convention or not, must fill out and submit a *Special Needs Room Request* (CO-5a) form to the Rooming Department well in advance of the convention.

7. Prior to December of each year, the circuit overseer, with the help of the assembly overseer, should make sure that the assembly organization roster described in *Assembly Organization Guidelines* (S-330) is up-to-date in the event it is requested by a Convention Committee(s). The roster should include the name, year of birth, email address, telephone number, and congregation of the assembly overseer, assistant assembly overseer, department overseers, and assistant department overseers. When the roster is requested by a Convention Committee, helpful notations should also be made regarding the health, abilities, and availability of the brothers on the roster, as well as whether any serve as regular or

special pioneers. A list of any other brothers in the circuit who are qualified to serve in convention assignments should be prepared separately with the same information.

## **SERVING AS CONVENTION CHAIRMAN**

8. If a circuit overseer is assigned to serve as convention chairman, the branch office does not arrange for him to take an additional week to attend another convention. He will have a copy of the outlines for each convention part and will be listening to the program. Thus, he will be able to benefit fully from everything presented.—See *Instructions for Convention Chairman* (S-329).

## **ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ATTENDING CONVENTIONS**

9. Because of travel cost and other limiting circumstances, a congregation may find it difficult to attend the convention. If a congregation requests approval to view a recording of or tie in to a convention program and the circuit overseer believes the request has merit, he should contact the Convention and Assembly Desk in the Service Department and provide answers to the following questions:

- (1) Which congregation is making the request? How many are expected to attend at the alternative location?
- (2) What are the extenuating circumstances that prevent the congregation from traveling to the convention?
- (3) Where will the program be viewed? If the program will be viewed in a Kingdom Hall, have the bodies of elders using the Kingdom Hall given their approval? (Meeting schedules should not be adjusted so that the Kingdom Hall can be used to view the program. If necessary, an auxiliary room in the Kingdom Hall or a convenient location other than the Kingdom Hall may be used.) Is a capable appointed brother available to oversee the setup at the alternative location?
- (4) Is the recording of the convention available on JW Stream in the language? If so, this method is preferred over tying in to the convention. Approval will be granted to view only recordings that are available on JW Stream.

10. If the branch office gives approval and publishers from more than one congregation will be attending at the alternative location, the circuit overseer should designate one congregation to serve as host. Additionally, he should assign a capable elder or ministerial servant to oversee the event. This brother would ensure that any necessary arrangements for cleaning, parking, and so forth are cared for.

11. A congregation attending at an alternative location would in most cases conduct its own abbreviated *Watchtower* Study, as is done during the visit of the circuit overseer, rather than view a recording from a past week's study.

12. In rare instances, those approved to attend at alternative locations may include baptism candidates. Such baptisms may be performed if they can take place immediately following the baptism talk. If the candidates will be tying in to the baptism talk, the speaker should be informed of this in advance so that he can acknowledge these candidates while presenting his talk. This advance notice would especially be needed if there are no candidates at the convention location but candidates are present at the alternative location. If the baptism at the alternative location is held on the same day as the baptism at their assigned convention, the number baptized at the alternative location should be added to the number baptized at the convention. Otherwise, the number baptized at the alternative location should be

reported by the elders to the circuit overseer. (*sfl* chap. 11 par. 16 pt. 4; chap. 28 par. 15) When completing the next *Report on Circuit Assembly* (S-318), the circuit overseer will add these baptism figures to the number of those baptized at the circuit assembly.

13. Contribution boxes should be available at alternative locations. Two brothers should collect the contributions and record the amounts received. The funds should be deposited in the bank account of the host congregation. These funds may be used to care for any expenses directly related to the alternative arrangement. Any remaining funds should be forwarded to the branch office. When use of recordings is approved, prayers should be said locally.

## CHAPTER 8 EMERGENCY TIME OFF

1. Circuit overseers sometimes face an emergency, such as the death of an immediate family member. If an emergency occurs, the circuit overseer should call the Service Department for direction before arranging for a substitute. If approval is granted for the circuit overseer to be absent from his assignment, he should provide a letter after returning, stating the nature of the emergency, the specific days he was away from his assignment, and the name of the approved substitute circuit overseer who served in his place. The same procedure should be followed if the wife of a circuit overseer needs to be absent from the assignment because of an emergency.

2. Please bear in mind that emergency time off should be requested only for emergency situations, not for personal needs that should rightly be cared for during personal time away. The Governing Body has lovingly made the provision for those in special full-time service to receive additional days of personal time away, based on their years of full-time service or their age. (See [22:3-6](#).) This arrangement was made so that personal time away would be available not just for rest and recreation but also to care for personal and family matters. Therefore, wise planning of personal time away is important when there is a personal or family situation that will obviously require periodic attention. Of course, some things occur unexpectedly and are beyond one's control.—Eccl. 9:11.

3. When a circuit overseer becomes ill and cannot care for his assignment, he should call the Service Department right away. If he is unable to make the call himself, his wife may call on his behalf. Thereafter, a letter should be sent providing details regarding the illness, the dates of absence, and the name of the substitute circuit overseer (if one was used). If the wife of a circuit overseer becomes ill, so that she is not able to share in the field ministry or be at the meetings for several days, the Service Department should be informed. When there is a long-term illness, the Service Department may request periodic updates.



## CHAPTER 9 EXPENSES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

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1. Customarily, congregations and circuits are very conscious of their privilege to receive circuit overseers hospitably. (3 John 8) The generosity of the brothers is much appreciated and should never be abused or taken for granted. Most brothers who work secularly must carefully watch their budget to care for their expenses. Circuit overseers likewise must carefully monitor their expenses so as not to impose “an expensive burden.” (1 Thess. 2:9) It is important that circuit overseers avoid being extravagant or giving the appearance of wanting the best of everything in the way of food, clothing, apartment furnishings, the latest electronic devices, vacations, and so forth. In this way they will avoid “any cause for stumbling” and will set an example for pioneers and others endeavoring to seek the Kingdom first.—2 Cor. 6:3, 4; Phil. 1:9, 10.

2. Circuit overseers should not take the initiative in requesting that a congregation reimburse them for expenses incurred during the week. They may submit expenses to a congregation only when the elders request these. If the congregation does not provide accommodations or is not able to reimburse the brother, he may submit his expenses to the assembly overseer for reimbursement by the circuit without waiting until the next circuit assembly. Circuit overseers may also submit to the assembly overseer expenses incurred during the week of a circuit assembly, during the week of his assigned convention, and during the week(s) he is conducting Pioneer Service School, whether the school is in his circuit or not. If the circuit does not reimburse the expenses, the circuit overseer may submit them to the Service Department, using the *Circuit Overseer’s Request for Reimbursement* (S-301) form. If a congregation does not reimburse the expenses of a substitute circuit overseer, he too may submit the expenses as noted above. Whenever expenses are submitted for reimbursement, whether to the elders or to the Service Department, receipts should be provided along with the request.—Please note that in some lands it is not permissible for congregations or circuits to reimburse circuit overseers for their expenses. Circuit overseers in such lands should follow the additional direction appearing in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines Addendum*.

3. General weekly expenses include food expenses, routine office expenses, transportation expenses, and certain moderate personal expenses. (See *Circuit Overseer Guidelines Addendum* for branch-specific direction on vehicles or other forms of travel.) Such expenses should be kept as low as possible. These are explained in greater detail below. A circuit overseer may wish to use personal contributions he receives to cover these expenses. Of course, if publishers make personal contributions and specifically indicate that the funds are to be used for expenses incurred during the week, it would be well for the circuit overseer to have this in mind when submitting his expenses.

4. Midday mealtimes are fine occasions for upbuilding conversations, for forming close friendships, and even for shepherding. Thus, when visiting congregations, it is preferred that circuit overseers accept the hospitality of the local brothers for the midday meal as arranged by the elders. Circuit overseers may decide whether they will accept invitations for other meals. They should deeply appreciate the congregation’s hospitality. A circuit overseer

should be discreet when conveying any dietary restrictions he has. He should not give the impression that he expects certain food items.

5. Routine office expenses include stationery, postage, ink cartridges, and other expenses that are incurred in connection with theocratic assignments. If such expenses are higher than usual during a week, rather than asking one congregation to cover them, the circuit overseer should divide them among the congregations or submit them to the assembly overseer. However, it would not be appropriate to submit expenses for cable or satellite television service, personal long-distance telephone calls, or the purchase or lease of computer equipment, photocopiers, and the like. The expense incurred for Internet or mobile telephone service needed to communicate with congregations and the branch office may be covered either by dividing the cost among the congregations or by submitting the expense to the assembly overseer. (See 9:2.) If the congregations or circuit are unable to cover the cost of Internet or mobile telephone service, the expense may be submitted to the Service Department for reimbursement. However, any Internet or mobile telephone service beyond what is needed to communicate with congregations and the branch office would be a personal expense for the circuit overseer to bear. Additional expenses related to Internet or mobile telephone service for the wife of a circuit overseer would also be a personal expense not submitted for reimbursement.

6. Certain moderate personal expenses, such as dry cleaning, shoe repair, and haircuts, may be submitted to the congregation. Nevertheless, these would be minor expenses, and in some cases the circuit overseer may choose to use personal contributions and the monthly allowance to help cover them.

7. Other personal expenses, such as clothing, cosmetics, vitamins, over-the-counter drugs, insurance for personal property, travel trailers and their tow vehicles, or life insurance, should not be submitted to congregations or circuits for reimbursement. (See 1:6.) Neither should requests for reimbursement be submitted for expenses incurred during personal time away. Rather, they should be covered with personal funds. If circuit overseers have a specific need, such as for medications, they should feel free to contact the branch office for assistance.—See [Appendix E](#).

## **EXPENSES INCURRED IN MOVING TO A NEW ASSIGNMENT**

8. Normal travel expenses and reasonable shipping expenses that may be incurred when moving to a new assignment may be submitted for reimbursement to the assembly overseer of the new circuit. (See 9:2.) If the circuit is unable to reimburse the circuit overseer for such expenses, these may be submitted to the Service Department for reimbursement using the *Circuit Overseer's Request for Reimbursement* (S-301) form. If the circuit overseer and his wife will need legal documentation to take up a new assignment, the branch office will be of assistance.

## **PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

9. Monetary gifts should not be made to circuit overseers from congregation, circuit, or convention funds. Likewise, it is not appropriate for individuals to solicit money from brothers and sisters and then provide this as a gift to a circuit overseer. (2 Cor. 8:20; *sff* chap. 10 par. 9) On the other hand, an individual may be moved by appreciation to make a personal contribution to a circuit overseer. Such genuine Christian generosity on the part of the giver and acceptance on the part of the circuit overseer is a private matter that need not concern others. However, soliciting funds from others, even on a personal basis, should not be done.

## **BUSINESS VENTURES**

10. Circuit overseers should not become involved in commercial business ventures. It would be inappropriate for circuit overseers to use their theocratic position or contacts to profit financially.

## **PERSONAL EXPENSE ACCOUNT**

11. A Personal Expense Account (PEA) is made available to those in special full-time service for nonroutine personal needs. Monthly PEA credits are calculated based on the number of years that an individual has spent in full-time service. The month after a person has passed the five- or ten-year mark, the amount of his credit is raised.—See *Circuit Overseer Guidelines Addendum* for branch-specific direction on disbursement of PEA funds.

12. A brother in his first year of circuit work who did not transfer from some other form of special full-time service will receive credit to his PEA for each full month he serves in the circuit work. For example, if a brother begins circuit work in the middle of October, on January 1 he would receive a credit to his PEA only for the months of November and December. However, if a brother transfers from one form of special full-time service to another, his PEA credits would be uninterrupted.

13. If it is necessary for a brother to leave the circuit work and he will no longer be in special full-time service, he may request the balance of his PEA. The request must be submitted before the date of termination of special full-time service, since the account will automatically be closed on that date. While one's PEA for the current calendar year is not ordinarily available until the end of the year, anyone leaving special full-time service may request PEA funds for the full months that he spent in special full-time service during the current calendar year.

14. In the event of the death of a mate, the surviving mate may benefit from the balance left in the PEA of the deceased.

## **HEALTH CARE**

15. See [Appendix E](#) for information on arrangements to assist circuit overseers with health-care expenses.

## **TAXES**

16. As members of a united theocratic order, it is important that circuit overseers comply with appropriate legal requirements. This is particularly so with regard to income-tax reporting. In this matter it is imperative that as a body of circuit overseers and representatives of Jehovah's organization, all carry on their affairs so as to remain irreprehensible, returning "Caesar's things to Caesar."—Matt. 22:21; 1 Tim. 3:2.

17. The branch office will assist circuit overseers with their tax-reporting needs. This relieves them of having to prepare tax returns on their own or seek other help. Having tax returns prepared with this assistance will minimize any problems that might otherwise arise.—See *Circuit Overseer Guidelines Addendum* for branch-specific direction regarding taxes.

## CHAPTER 10 FIELD MINISTRY

Public Witnessing 7-8

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Witnessing to Refugees 10

Harbor Witnessing 11

1. Like traveling overseers in the first century, modern-day circuit overseers take the lead in the work of Kingdom preaching and disciple-making. (Acts 18:5, 6) They are “industrious, not lazy.” They are “aglow with the spirit.” (Rom. 12:11) Though they are teachers and shepherds, primarily they “do the work of an evangelizer.”—2 Tim. 4:5.

2. Circuit overseers should encourage full participation in the field ministry. Their talks should stimulate interest in and enthusiasm for field service. Circuit overseers and their wives take the initiative and warmly invite others to work with them. (See 23:3.) They set an example by being punctual and fully supporting field service arrangements throughout the week. Although their week with the congregation is busy, they should have a full share in the ministry on weekends. Aside from necessary medical appointments, circuit overseers should strive to care for personal matters on their day off. Other activities should not limit working with the brothers on weekends. Many in the congregations who work secularly will have the opportunity to work with the circuit overseer only on the weekend.—See 4:9.

3. Practical five-to-seven-minute meetings for field service should be held. (Of course, when the meeting for field service follows another congregation meeting, it should be shorter.) The circuit overseer should discuss a simple presentation that is well-suited to the territory or consider other practical information that can be used in the ministry that day. With advance preparation, this can be accomplished and the meeting can still conclude within the allotted time, thus setting a good example for the congregation. Organizing large groups of publishers can prove challenging. However, the circuit overseer can do this with the assistance of the group overseers or other elders without abdicating his responsibilities. In his communications with the coordinator of the body of elders, the circuit overseer should ask him to make sure sufficient territory will be provided each day, including Saturday and Sunday. (See 4:1.) The circuit overseer should ask for the names of publishers whose circumstances allow them to be out only on the weekend and who would benefit from working with him.

4. The circuit overseer should train others in various aspects of the ministry, such as door-to-door witnessing, public witnessing, business witnessing, and telephone witnessing. It is good to take a few minutes while working with brothers and sisters to commend them and to discuss ways to improve their ministry. When circuit overseers earnestly endeavor to ‘search out deserving ones’ wherever and whenever they can be found in the territory, this impresses on the publishers the seriousness of the ministry.—Matt. 10:11.

5. While circuit overseers should take the lead in sharing in various features of the ministry, they must exercise care not to “go beyond the things that are written” as regards the methods used to attract people to the truth. (1 Cor. 4:6) It would be inappropriate to promote innovative programs that disguise the true nature of our Bible educational work or hide the fact that we are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

6. Barring temporary health problems and other factors beyond their control, it should be possible for most circuit overseers and their wives to devote about 17 hours each week to the field ministry, or about 68 hours for those months when there are not conventions, assemblies, schools, or personal time away scheduled. (See 4:9.) Field service activity is

reported to the Service Department, using jw.org if possible. Such reports should be received by the Service Department no later than the 20th of each month. Bible studies that are conducted with the same individual or family each week should be reported. The branch office recognizes that the circumstances of many in the circuit work will not allow them to conduct a regular home Bible study each week.

## **PUBLIC WITNESSING**

7. The elders have been provided with direction on how to implement various forms of public witnessing in their assigned territory. As circuit overseers visit congregations, they should be enthusiastic and energized about public witnessing and give it their full support. They should take an active interest in the arrangements for public witnessing that are already in place. Are they effective and practical for the area? Are they dignified, well-organized, and in harmony with direction provided to the elders? Are there additional locations in the territory that the elders should consider as possibilities for public witnessing? Of course, there is a need for balance. Public witnessing should not overshadow the house-to-house work. Additionally, it is understood that in some very rural territories the effectiveness of organized public witnessing may be limited. Circuit overseers should help the elders to display good judgment and reasonableness when evaluating the needs of their territory.

8. *Special Metropolitan Public Witnessing Guidelines (S-71)* has been made available to circuit overseers for use when arrangements for special metropolitan public witnessing have been established by the branch office. Such arrangements often span the assigned territories of many congregations and circuits. Specific brothers are assigned by the branch office to organize the work, including the use of approved publishers from participating circuits in the area. Circuit overseers should familiarize themselves with *Special Metropolitan Public Witnessing Guidelines* and use the principles found therein to help the elders with their local public witnessing efforts.

## **DRESS, GROOMING, AND CONDUCT**

9. If the body of elders agrees that a brother or sister is blatantly and deliberately ignoring *repeated counsel*, and his or her dress, grooming, or conduct is disturbing to the congregation, the elders may determine that the person no longer qualifies to share in the ministry. In such rare cases, no announcement would be made to the congregation.

## **WITNESSING TO REFUGEES**

10. Circuit overseers and bodies of elders should be alert to any influx of refugees into their territory. Circuit overseers should inform the Service Department of such developments as soon as possible, answering the following questions: Have refugee camps or centers been set up? Do the refugees have an established community, or are they scattered throughout the area? What is the estimated population of refugees? What languages do they speak? Once the presence of a refugee community of significant size is identified, the branch office may appoint a circuit overseer to coordinate the efforts to provide a witness. *Guidelines for Witnessing to Refugees (S-197)* has been made available to circuit overseers for use when a circuit overseer receives such an assignment.

## **HARBOR WITNESSING**

11. *Harbor Witnessing Guidelines (S-374)* has been made available to circuit overseers for use when arrangements for harbor witnessing have been established by the branch office. Such arrangements often span the assigned territories of many congregations and circuits.

Specific brothers are assigned by the branch office to organize the work, including the use of approved publishers from participating circuits.

## CHAPTER 11 HOSPITAL LIAISON COMMITTEES

1. When a Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) needs additional brothers to help care for the workload, the HLC determines who should be recommended to the branch office, using the general guidelines set forth below. The HLC will consult the circuit overseer to ensure that the recommended brother is available and qualified to serve in this capacity. While it is unlikely that any brother would have ideal circumstances and possess all the desired qualities, he should measure up to a reasonable degree.

- (1) He should be an articulate, spiritual man who is respected in the area.—1 Tim. 3:7.
- (2) He should be courageous, not easily intimidated, willing and able to speak with doctors, lawyers, and judges.—Ex. 4:10-12; Prov. 29:25.
- (3) He should truly love the sheep and be willing to respond to an emergency at all hours.—Prov. 3:27; 19:17; John 13:35.
- (4) He should be available and accessible. If a brother is often away on business or is difficult to contact, this would limit his ability to assist in an emergency. Brothers who have a flexible work schedule, work part-time, or are semiretired are usually more available to meet with hospital personnel whenever required. This is an important qualification.
- (5) He should be loyal in maintaining confidentiality.—Ex. 18:21; Prov. 25:9.
- (6) He should work well with others. Cooperation and unity are needed to accomplish the work.—1 Cor. 1:10; 12:12-26.
- (7) He should live in or near the city where major hospitals are located, unless special circumstances warrant an exception.
- (8) Some medical background may be helpful, but it is not necessary.
- (9) He should not have so many other responsibilities that he would not be able to carry out this assignment.

2. A regular pioneer who is unable to reach the hour requirement because he spent more time on HLC work than he could receive hour credit for should be given special consideration.—See 4:5.



## CHAPTER 12 ISOLATED PUBLISHERS AND ISOLATED GROUPS

1. It is important to give attention to all publishers living in unassigned territory. The branch office sends the names of isolated publishers to the nearest congregation so that the congregation can maintain contact with them. The branch office also advises the circuit overseer of the number of those associated with an isolated group and the name and address of the one receiving correspondence. If practical, the circuit overseer should arrange to visit them annually and give talks while he is there. Perhaps a day or two could be spent in the ministry with the isolated publishers. Much good can be accomplished in even a brief visit.—See [Chapter 15](#) for direction on multilanguage fields.

2. The circuit overseer may be able to help in getting an isolated group firmly established for organization as a congregation if they are too far away to work under the direction of an already existing congregation. To form a congregation, the isolated group should have, if possible, at least one elder or ministerial servant who can provide the necessary spiritual oversight and take the lead in the preaching work. Where pioneer sisters or other mature sisters help in forming a congregation, they may handle some responsibilities until a qualified brother becomes available. The branch office will ensure that isolated groups having no elders receive essential nonconfidential letters and direction. If a congregation cannot be formed, the circuit overseer should encourage those associated with the group to do what they can to hold meetings, share in the field service, and send their reports to the branch office.

3. If a regular or special pioneer is in an isolated assignment not connected with a congregation, the circuit overseer may arrange for a longer visit, up to a full week. After each annual visit, the circuit overseer should submit a *Personal Qualifications Report* (S-326) for the pioneer.

4. The branch office may arrange for an isolated group of publishers to receive literature if a favorable recommendation for such is received from the circuit overseer.

5. Following a visit with an isolated publisher or isolated group, the circuit overseer should provide the Service Department with a report, stating what he was able to accomplish during the visit and providing any observations and recommendations he may have.



## CHAPTER 13 JUDICIAL MATTERS

Cases Involving Child Sexual Abuse 5-7

Appeal Committees 8-9

Judicial Records 10

Publishers Under Judicial Restrictions 11

1. Circuit overseers should keep before the elders the need to judge always with righteousness, wisdom, and discernment. If a circuit overseer discerns that a body of elders lacks a general understanding of when or how to care properly for judicial matters or how to prepare accurate reports for the branch office, he should take the time necessary to assist them. It would be helpful to review with the elders relevant material in the *Shepherd* book, *Shepherd Addendum*, and other publications from the faithful and discreet slave.

2. If the circuit overseer's help is requested with a specific case and there does not appear to be clear direction in the Scriptures or in other published material, he should encourage the elders to contact the Service Department. For example, when questions arise concerning cases that involve Scriptural freedom to remarry, he should always direct the elders to contact the Service Department.—Prov. 11:2b; *sfl* chap. 12 pars. 70-75; chap. 16 par. 15.

3. Normally, it is best that a circuit overseer not serve on a judicial committee. This prevents possible problems later if an appeal hearing is necessary or if the case cannot be concluded during his visit. If for any reason a congregation does not have enough qualified elders to handle a judicial case, help may be requested from a nearby congregation. Likely, the elders would benefit from the recommendations of the circuit overseer in selecting qualified elders outside their congregation. However, in the extreme circumstance where three elders are not available to serve on a judicial committee, the circuit overseer should call the Service Department and explain the situation. If approved, he may be used to complete a judicial committee of three members.—*sfl* chap. 15 pars. 2-3.

4. At times, it has been necessary to arrange for an interpreter to assist with judicial cases. If there is an elder in the circuit who is proficient in the languages involved, he can serve as an interpreter. If no elder is available in the circuit, the circuit overseer may check with nearby circuits for an available elder, or he may contact the Service Department for assistance. It is not appropriate to use a sister as an interpreter for judicial cases.

### CASES INVOLVING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

5. When the body of elders decides to form a judicial committee to meet with one accused of child sexual abuse, the coordinator of the body of elders will first contact the circuit overseer. The circuit overseer should designate an experienced elder who is on the list of those qualified to handle complex matters to serve as chairman of the judicial committee. If a decision to disfellowship is appealed, the circuit overseer will designate elders to serve on the appeal committee and will designate the chairman. (See 13:6-9.) The chairman will be selected from the list of those qualified to handle complex matters.—*sfl* chap. 14 par. 19.

6. If a person who has been disfellowshipped for child sexual abuse applies for reinstatement, the coordinator of the body of elders will contact the circuit overseer and provide the names of those who served on the judicial committee. Thereafter, the circuit overseer should confirm that the chairman of the judicial committee is still on the list of those qualified to handle complex matters and thus could serve as the chairman of the reinstatement committee. If he is not, the circuit overseer should select an elder who is on the list. If the chairman

of the judicial committee is still an elder in the congregation that took the action but is not assigned to serve as chairman of the reinstatement committee, he will still serve on the reinstatement committee, even though this may result in four elders serving on the committee.—See [20:4](#); [A:1.6](#); *sfl* chap. 14 par. 20.

7. If a person who has been disfellowshipped for child sexual abuse has moved and applies for reinstatement in a different congregation, the coordinator of the body of elders of the new congregation will contact his circuit overseer. The circuit overseer of the new congregation should designate an experienced elder who is on the list of those qualified to handle complex matters to serve as chairman of the reinstatement committee in the new congregation.—See [13:6](#); *sfl* chap. 14 par. 21.

## **APPEAL COMMITTEES**

8. If a judicial committee receives a letter of appeal within seven days from the date the wrongdoer was notified of the decision to disfellowship, the chairman will promptly call the circuit overseer, who should arrange for an appeal committee. (*sfl* chap. 17 par. 1) Before appointing an appeal committee, the circuit overseer should get the name of the accused, his race, the offense(s) he is charged with, and some facts about the case. The circuit overseer will then review the list of elders in nearby congregations and determine who are the best qualified to handle the appeal case. The list of those qualified to handle complex matters may be used as a guide; however, the brothers selected do not have to be on that list. They should be men who are experienced, spiritual, balanced, impartial, up-to-date in reading and studying Christian publications, able to deal kindly with others, highly respectful of the Bible and its principles, and capable of making wise decisions. If possible, the elders selected by the circuit overseer for hearing the appeal should not be from the same congregation as the judicial committee. They should not be related to or have a special relationship with the elders on the judicial committee or the one making the appeal. The circuit overseer selects the chairman of the appeal committee.—See [13:5](#).

9. When the circuit overseer selects elders to serve on an appeal committee, he should remind them to review before and during their deliberations pertinent information in the *Shepherd* book and in any other relevant direction provided by the branch office.

## **JUDICIAL RECORDS**

10. Circuit overseers are not authorized to open confidential congregation judicial records unless they are directed to do so by the branch office.—See [A:1.3](#).

## **PUBLISHERS UNDER JUDICIAL RESTRICTIONS**

11. The elders should closely monitor the spiritual progress of individuals under judicial restrictions and should be alert to remove such restrictions progressively. Some elders confuse the matter of judicial restrictions by referring to the withholding of privileges, such as appointment as an elder, ministerial servant, or pioneer, as restrictions. If needed, the circuit overseer should assist the elders to appreciate the purpose of judicial restrictions and how they are lifted.—*sfl* chap. 16 pars. 19, 22; chap. 19 par. 11.

## CHAPTER 14 KINGDOM HALLS AND ASSEMBLY HALLS

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Assembly Halls 7-8

### KINGDOM HALL MAINTENANCE

1. The branch office is interested in the condition of Kingdom Halls. While most congregations take pride in maintaining the appearance, security, and general good condition of their Kingdom Hall, there may be some instances wherein the elders procrastinate, allowing things to deteriorate. If the circuit overseer observes that attention needs to be given to the cleanliness, safety, or maintenance of the Kingdom Hall, he should take the initiative to ask the elders kindly about this. Perhaps some things can be cared for during the week of his visit or shortly afterward with the assistance of the Local Design/Construction Department (LDC) maintenance trainer. If major issues persist, the circuit overseer should inform the LDC by means of a letter. The elders should be reminded to follow through on any direction received from the LDC.

2. Where two or more congregations use the same Kingdom Hall, the elders may need clarification on the duties of the Kingdom Hall Operating Committee. It may be helpful to review with them the direction the branch office has provided relative to their duties.

### KINGDOM HALL CONSTRUCTION

3. Not every congregation needs to have a Kingdom Hall in its own territory. Rather, attention should be given to the effective use of present facilities. The Local Design/Construction Department (LDC) and the Service Department will determine how best to care for the Kingdom Hall needs in the area. (See [5:21-25](#).) When congregations are involved in the construction or renovation of Kingdom Halls, the circuit overseer should show interest in the project and encourage the brothers to be supportive.

4. When circuit overseers visit congregations, they should take note of any skilled, exemplary baptized publishers who have not yet volunteered and approach them about doing so. They should give particular attention to encouraging younger ones to reach out and accept assignments, whether helping with tasks at their own Kingdom Hall or, if qualified, assisting on a project elsewhere. They should also confirm that the elders are looking for opportunities to train parents and their young ones together on how to clean safely and how to do maintenance tasks. Additional encouragement and commendation for supporting Kingdom Hall construction and maintenance may be included in their talks to the congregation, helping all to realize that this is a form of sacred service.

5. Motivated by love for Jehovah and his organization, those participating in theocratic construction and maintenance activities make sacrifices in order to join in this avenue of sacred service. Maintaining a balanced approach in dealing with these willing volunteers, showing them extra consideration and providing them with due commendation and encouragement, will further motivate them in their self-sacrificing spirit. (Prov. 3:27; Phil. 4:5) When there are construction servants and construction volunteers in his circuit, the circuit overseer will see to it that they are not overlooked for theocratic privileges. If a Construction Group travels often from project to project, the LDC will work closely with the Service Department to ensure

that the group is able to be in attendance during a circuit overseer's visit to a congregation in the area.

## **KINGDOM HALL DEDICATIONS**

6. Some congregations may choose to have the local circuit overseer give the dedication talk if he is available on the date desired. If so, the dedication program will have to be scheduled at a time that does not conflict with the circuit overseer's regular schedule for serving a congregation. Any exception to this must be approved by the branch office.—See *Kingdom Hall Dedication Guidelines* (S-78).

## **ASSEMBLY HALLS**

7. Assembly Halls provide convenient meeting places for theocratic instruction. However, circuit overseers should not promote the development of Assembly Halls or build enthusiasm for a project before being directed to do so by the branch office. If approached by brothers proposing an Assembly Hall project, the circuit overseer should let them know that the planning of Assembly Halls is cared for by the branch office.

8. At times, circuit overseers may have observations on the local Assembly Hall's operation, safety, or condition. It would be a kindness to discuss these matters directly with the Assembly Hall overseer and, if needed, bring them to the attention of the branch office.

## CHAPTER 15 MULTILANGUAGE FIELDS

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1. The impartiality of a circuit overseer sharing the good news with someone who speaks another language has a positive effect on the publishers in his circuit. (Acts 10:34, 35) It is good to encourage interested ones to attend the meetings of the local congregation even if no meetings are held in their mother tongue. Extending a warm welcome to such ones will be upbuilding and will help them to make further spiritual progress.—Rom. 15:7.

2. If there are only a few interested individuals who are dependent on another language and no one in the congregation speaks the language, the interest may be followed up by a publisher elsewhere in the branch territory who speaks the language, perhaps by telephone or videoconference. Additionally, interested persons and publishers who do not understand the language spoken in the local congregation could be allowed to make use of the recordings of meetings, assemblies, and conventions on JW Stream in another language *while continuing to associate with the local congregation*. (od chap. 9 par. 41) If it is possible for such ones to tie in to the meetings of another congregation, the elders will consult with the circuit overseer before finalizing such arrangements.

3. Each time the circuit overseer visits the congregation, he should continue to monitor the progress in the language field. If the circuit overseer determines that a congregation is in need of elders, ministerial servants, or pioneers who speak the language, he may consider submitting the *Congregation Needing Assistance* (S-310) form to the Service Department.

### RECOMMENDING PREGROUPS AND GROUPS

4. Circuit overseers are responsible to submit to the branch office recommendations to form pregroups and groups. Pregroups and groups use a significant amount of resources, and these resources are limited. (Mark 12:42-44) It has been noted that in many cases elders, ministerial servants, pioneers, and publishers are supporting pregroups or groups that show little evidence of growth, with few progressive Bible studies and few, if any, progressing to baptism. In the past, pregroups and groups were allowed to be formed as long as there was a sizable population in the area who spoke a language other than the language of the congregation and at least a few publishers knew the language or were willing to learn the language. However, in many cases, this has resulted in elders, pioneers, and publishers spending many hours trying to learn the language or searching for individuals who speak the language. Often, even after years of hard work, individuals in the territory who speak the

language have not responded. Prematurely forming pregroups and groups can have a detrimental effect on the local congregations, the overall branch territory, and the publishers themselves.

**5. Requirements for Forming Pregroups:** The purpose of a pregroup is to determine whether a language community has a significant interest in learning the truth and the potential to become a group and, perhaps in time, a congregation. In most cases, a determination can be made within two years. (See appendix B in the *Shepherd* book.) Well before the circuit overseer or the body of elders begins to gather support for forming a pregroup, the circuit overseer should obtain all of the facts during his regular visit to the prospective host congregation. He should ensure that the following requirements are met before he submits to the Service Department a recommendation to form a pregroup:

- (1) A significant population—perhaps at least a few thousand individuals—is dependent on the language and lives in close proximity to the Kingdom Hall. Members of this language community would have little or no understanding of the language of an already established congregation in the area. The size and location(s) of the language community should not make it necessary to travel long distances or to spend many hours in search work.
- (2) At least a few exemplary local publishers are fluent and preach in the language and desire to support the pregroup. However, no one should be pressured to support a certain language field, even if it is his primary language.—1 Cor. 11:3; Gal. 6:4, 5; *w17.05* p. 10 pars. 10-13.
- (3) The body of elders is willing and able to take the lead in organizing and evaluating the preaching in the language.
- (4) Some literature from the Teaching Toolbox is available for use in the ministry.

6. Pregroups do not hold weekly meetings. However, test meetings should be held from time to time to determine if individuals dependent on the language are interested in attending meetings. Discernment is needed, as many who wish to learn the language may attend such test meetings. The focus should be, not on the number willing to learn the language, but on the number of interested persons dependent on the language who attend. If only a few such individuals from the field attend test meetings and no publishers are dependent on the language, then there would be no need to form a group.

**7. Requirements for Forming Groups:** The purpose of a group is to provide spiritual food to publishers who are dependent on the language or to those from the territory who are dependent on the language, attending meetings, and progressing toward baptism. A group is also used to accomplish the preaching and disciple-making work in the language community. (See appendix B in the *Shepherd* book.) In addition to the requirements for a pregroup, the following requirements must be met before the circuit overseer submits to the Service Department a recommendation to form a group:

- (1) Either (1) there are publishers who depend on the language for their spiritual food or (2) Bible students in the territory who depend on and prefer the language are attending meetings and progressing toward baptism and publishers who are fluent in the language desire to support the group.
- (2) At least one qualified elder is fluent in the language and is willing and able to take the lead in organizing the group, teaching at meetings, and evaluating the preaching in the language.
- (3) At least one weekly meeting—or one portion of a weekly meeting, such as a public talk or a *Watchtower* Study—would be conducted in the language. These meetings

are for the benefit of publishers and interested persons who are dependent on the language rather than those who are learning the language. Since it is preferred that the meetings be conducted locally, groups should not rely solely on watching recorded programs on JW Stream.

- (4) Literature that is used for the weekly meeting, or one portion of a weekly meeting, is available in the language of the group or in another language in which the majority of Bible students and publishers are literate.

## **MAINTAINING GOOD COMMUNICATION**

8. When a circuit overseer receives notification from the Service Department that a pregroup or group has been approved in his circuit, he will encourage nearby congregations to communicate with the host congregation when they encounter interested individuals who speak the language. In this way the pregroup or group can cooperate with the nearby congregations in giving a further witness and in developing any interest. Interested persons may attend the congregation of their choice.

## **VISITS TO CONGREGATIONS HOSTING PREGROUPS AND GROUPS**

9. When a circuit overseer visits a congregation that hosts a pregroup or group, attention should be given to assisting the pregroup or group spiritually. This might include working with the publishers as they preach in the language. The elders or ministerial servants who are supporting the pregroup or group may benefit from receiving practical assistance in organizing such preaching work. The pregroup or group should be encouraged to work closely under the direction of the body of elders. The circuit overseer will also want to remind the elders of the need to support and shepherd the publishers working in the pregroup or group. Circuit overseers should keep in mind that each publisher or family head must decide which language congregation or group he or his family will attend. No one should be pressured to support a certain language field, even if it may be his primary language.—1 Cor. 11:3; Gal. 6:4, 5; *w17.05* pp. 10-11 pars. 10-13.

10. The circuit overseer should include in his report on the congregation a brief supplementary report on the progress of the pregroup or group and any specific needs that exist. He should comment on the following questions: Does the pregroup or group continue to meet the requirements for forming a pregroup or group? (See [15:5-7](#).) Based on the location of the language community, would another congregation be better suited to host the pregroup or group? Is the population of the language community large enough to support the pregroup or group? Are the local elders taking an active interest in the progress of the pregroup or group? In the case of a group, are individuals from the territory regularly attending meetings and progressing toward baptism, or is the group providing spiritual food to those who depend on the language? Should the group be visited exclusively for an entire week? (Such a visit stimulates and unifies the group even if the circuit overseer does not know the language.) Would it be beneficial to arrange for a visit from a circuit overseer or a substitute circuit overseer who speaks the language of the group if such a brother is available? If the branch office grants approval for a group to receive an exclusive visit by a circuit overseer, whether he speaks the language of the group or not, such visits are to be made no more than once per year.

## **VISITING A GROUP**

11. After receiving approval to visit a group for a separate week's visit, the circuit overseer should adhere to the following schedule. On Tuesday afternoon, review the *Congregation's Publisher Records* (S-21) of the publishers in the group. Make field service arrangements



from Wednesday to Sunday. Attend all the meetings that the group is conducting. If the group has received permission to tie in to or view recordings of another congregation's meetings, join with the group in this as well. (See 15:16.) Arrange to present to the group the public talk being used for the current round of congregation visits. (be p. 55, box) During this special week of activity, the group may have an abbreviated *Watchtower* Study, followed by the presentation of a service talk by the circuit overseer. His talks should be interpreted, and he may agree to have his concluding prayer interpreted. Otherwise, a brother fluent in the language of the group may conclude with prayer. The meeting schedule for the host congregation or other congregations in the Kingdom Hall should not be adjusted for the visit to the group. The circuit overseer may meet with the body of elders of the host congregation if they have questions on how to support the activities of the group better. If needed, the circuit overseer may meet with the regular pioneers and any special pioneers and field missionaries in the group to discuss specific situations that they are facing in the language field. He may also seek input from spiritually mature native speakers. At the end of the visit, submit a brief letter on what was accomplished during the visit to the group, including the following information on the makeup and activity of the group:

- (1) Estimated population of those who speak the language of the group
- (2) Total active publishers (including pioneers and field missionaries)
- (3) Number of regular and special pioneers and field missionaries
- (4) Number of elders
- (5) Number of ministerial servants
- (6) Average meeting attendance
- (7) Number of Bible studies being conducted

12. If a circuit overseer or substitute circuit overseer who speaks the language is approved to visit the group and believes that a brother in the group may qualify for additional privileges, it would be appropriate for him to convey his observations to the circuit overseer who cares for the host congregation. That circuit overseer should consider the matter with the elders during his next visit. Such a consideration of a brother's potential may move the elders to recommend him in the future.—Prov. 15:22.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMING OTHER-LANGUAGE CONGREGATIONS**

13. Since a congregation requires more resources than a group, even more care should be taken before the circuit overseer recommends the formation of a new congregation. Thus, circuit overseers should consider the following questions when determining whether to recommend a new congregation: Would transitioning from a group to a congregation enable more who are dependent on the language to progress spiritually and to grow to maturity? Is there a sufficient population in the language community to allow the publishers to have a meaningful ministry? (See appendix B in the *Shepherd* book and *Instructions for Recommending New Congregations* [S-50].) Do those who depend on the language live within a reasonable distance of the Kingdom Hall? Is there a sufficient number of publishers who speak the language fluently? Is there a sufficient number of elders who speak the language fluently to provide needed shepherding and oversight?

14. A congregation that is formed prematurely can be counterproductive, leaving surrounding congregations with an insufficient number of elders, pioneers, and publishers. If a proposal involves forming a congregation in a foreign or an indigenous language, a significant population in the language community should, in most cases, have little or no understanding of the language of an already established congregation in the area. Circuit overseers should



make recommendations that result in strong congregations with a sufficient number of mature ones who can take the lead in the field and at congregation meetings.

## **VISITS TO OTHER-LANGUAGE CONGREGATIONS**

15. A circuit may include a congregation that speaks a language other than the language of the circuit. In such a case, the circuit overseer's talks should be interpreted, and he may agree to have his concluding prayer interpreted. Otherwise, a brother fluent in the language of the congregation may conclude with prayer. He should indicate in his report on his visit with the congregation whether it would be beneficial to arrange for a visit from a circuit overseer or a substitute circuit overseer who speaks the language of the congregation if such a brother is available.

## **ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ATTENDING CONGREGATION MEETINGS**

16. It is preferable that meetings held by congregations and groups be conducted locally. However, a group or small or isolated congregation may request approval from their circuit overseer to view recorded meetings or portions of meetings using JW Stream. If the circuit overseer agrees that the request has merit, he may approve the request. If recorded meetings are not available on JW Stream in the language, small or isolated congregations and congregations that host groups may request approval to tie in to another congregation's meetings. If the circuit overseer agrees that the request has merit and the other congregation is in his circuit, he should contact the body of elders and inquire if they are willing to participate in this arrangement. If the other congregation is in another circuit, he should contact that congregation's circuit overseer, and that circuit overseer will communicate with the congregation in his circuit. If the other congregation is in another branch territory, the circuit overseer should contact the Service Department in his branch office for direction. Some congregations may request approval to use the provision occasionally for the public talk. If the circuit overseer approves a small or isolated congregation to tie in periodically to the meetings of another congregation, it is expected that the small or isolated congregation will strive to conduct all of its own meetings as soon as possible.

## **CIRCUIT ASSEMBLIES**

17. For instructions on circuit assemblies in another language, see *Assembly Organization Guidelines* (S-330).

## **CONVENTIONS**

18. **Viewing Recordings or Tying In:** A pregroup or group might desire to view a recording of or tie in to a convention program held in another language. A congregation might make a similar request if the convention to which it is assigned will not be presented in the language of the congregation. If a congregation requests approval (whether for itself or for a pregroup or group that is hosted by the congregation) to tie in to or view a recording of a convention program and the circuit overseer believes the request has merit, he should contact the Convention and Assembly Desk in the Service Department and provide answers to the following questions:

- (1) Which congregation is making the request? How many are expected to view the program? Is this request being made for the congregation as a whole or for a pregroup or group that is hosted by the congregation?
- (2) Where will the program be viewed? If it can be viewed at the same time and in the same location as the assigned convention, this is preferred. Perhaps an auxiliary

room at the convention location can be used. If this is not possible, the pregroup, group, or congregation should attend the convention to which they have been assigned and then tie in to or watch a recording of the convention in the other language at another time and location. If the program will be viewed in a Kingdom Hall, have the bodies of elders using the Kingdom Hall given their approval? (Meeting schedules should not be adjusted so that the Kingdom Hall can be used to view the program. If necessary, an auxiliary room in the Kingdom Hall or a convenient location other than the Kingdom Hall may be used.) Is a capable appointed brother available to oversee the setup?

- (3) Is the recording of the convention available on JW Stream in the other language? If so, viewing that recording is preferred over tying in to the convention. Approval will be granted to view only recordings that are available on JW Stream.

19. A congregation that receives approval to view a recording of or tie in to a convention program would in most cases conduct its own abbreviated *Watchtower* Study, as is done during the visit of the circuit overseer, rather than view a recording from a past week's study. The same would be true of a group that normally holds its own *Watchtower* Study. Otherwise, the local elders can decide how to handle matters.

20. If the branch office gives approval for the event to be held at a time and location other than that of the assigned convention and if publishers from more than one congregation will be attending, the circuit overseer should designate one congregation to serve as host. Additionally, he should assign a capable elder or ministerial servant to oversee the event. This brother would ensure that any necessary arrangements for cleaning, parking, and so forth are cared for.

21. Contribution boxes should be available. Two brothers should collect the contributions and record the amounts received. The funds should be deposited in the bank account of the host congregation. These funds may be used to care for any expenses directly related to the event. Any remaining funds should be forwarded to the branch office. When use of recordings is approved, prayers should be said locally.

22. **Simultaneous Interpretation:** If it is not possible for program parts to be presented in the language and it is not possible to view a recording of or tie in to a convention in the language, circumstances may warrant that consideration be given to presenting simultaneous interpretation at a convention. Simultaneous interpretation at conventions is done only after presenting stand-alone circuit assemblies or simultaneous interpretation at circuit assemblies. The circuit overseer should carefully consider with the responsible local brothers whether such interpretation is necessary or practical.

23. In other cases, a different convention may already be scheduled to present the program in the language. If publishers would like to attend such conventions, there is no objection to their doing so. Good communication among the circuit overseers involved will help resolve questions on scheduling a visit to the congregation or group.

24. When the circuit overseer believes it is appropriate, he should send a report to the Convention and Assembly Desk in the Service Department to explain the reasons for the request for simultaneous interpretation. This request must be made by September 1 of the year preceding the convention. The report should include answers to the following questions: How many publishers and interested persons would benefit from simultaneous interpretation of the program? How much of the program can be interpreted? How many elders and ministerial servants qualify to interpret the program? How many other publishers qualify to interpret the program? Would interpreting the program work a hardship on the interpreters or

their families? Additionally, the circuit overseer should include a recommendation regarding which elder he feels could best be used to select the interpreters and coordinate the entire arrangement. (The direction in *Assembly Organization Guidelines* [S-330] regarding simultaneous interpretation at circuit assemblies would also apply in principle to simultaneous interpretation at conventions.) If this request is approved, the branch office will make appropriate arrangements for it.

25. **Sessions:** When sessions in another language are approved, qualified speakers present selected parts directly in that language. Such parts might include the baptism talk, the public talk, and other key talks, with recordings or simultaneous interpretation of the remainder of the program being presented to the extent possible. The sessions are held in a separate room or area in conjunction with a stand-alone convention. If the circuit overseer for a particular language believes there are enough qualified speakers and interpreters, he should recommend to the Convention and Assembly Desk in the Service Department that sessions be held in that language. This request must be made by January 15 a year and a half ahead of the requested convention. In his report he should answer the following questions: How many publishers and interested persons would benefit from this program? How many elders and ministerial servants qualify to give talks and/or interpret the program? How many parts could the appointed brothers realistically present? How many other publishers qualify to interpret the program? Based on the ratings received from the field, the branch office will assign the speakers and simultaneous interpreters for all convention sessions in another language. The branch office will also appoint a brother to coordinate the arrangements for the sessions.

26. **Stand-Alone Conventions:** Eventually, after presenting stand-alone circuit assembly programs and presenting sessions at a convention, the growth in a particular language may warrant that consideration be given to presenting the full convention program. The circuit overseer should send a report to the Convention and Assembly Desk in the Service Department, explaining the reasons for the request. This request must be made by January 15 a year and a half ahead of the requested convention. The report should include answers to the following questions: What is the estimated attendance for the convention? How many elders and ministerial servants are qualified to present talks on the program? If the request is approved, the branch office will make the appropriate arrangements.

## CHAPTER 16 PIONEERS

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1. Circuit overseers should help regular pioneers to remain in the work and should encourage others to consider taking up the pioneer service. When encouraging others to regular pioneer, circuit overseers should not shame, pressure, or coerce them. *Applications for Regular Pioneer Service* (S-205) should not be distributed indiscriminately in an effort to encourage pioneering. Those who pioneer should have a willing spirit prompted by a desire to serve Jehovah more fully.—Isa. 6:8.

### SPIRITUAL AND PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

2. On Tuesday, when the *Congregation's Publisher Records* (S-21) are reviewed, the activity of the pioneers should be noted. After reviewing the records, the circuit overseer may ask a member of the Congregation Service Committee for observations regarding any trends, points for commendation, and areas where help or counsel might be given. He should work in the ministry with all the pioneers during the week, if possible, but especially with those who need the most help. The circuit overseer and the service overseer may be able to offer encouragement and practical suggestions to any having difficulties. If a pioneer is struggling to find a schedule that will allow him to meet the hour requirement, the circuit overseer can assist him by discussing the matter and offering practical suggestions regarding the effective use of time. Other pioneers may need help to be more effective in preaching and teaching so that they will have greater joy in their ministry.

3. Those who are enrolled as auxiliary pioneers during the circuit overseer's visit are invited to attend the entire meeting held with the regular pioneers, special pioneers, and field missionaries in the congregation. Those who auxiliary pioneer during March or April or during a regular visit of a circuit overseer have the option of a 30-hour requirement. This option also applies when a circuit overseer has received approval to visit a group for an entire week. (See 15:10-12.) If a circuit overseer has received such approval, he should inform the congregation of the 30-hour option well in advance of his visit. The 30-hour option is limited to four times per year.

4. The branch office will provide the outline for the meeting with the pioneers during the first half of the service year (S-335). For the second half of the service year, the circuit overseer should prepare his own outline. It should address local needs and contain spiritually strengthening material and commendation for the pioneers' spirit of self-sacrifice. It should also include practical suggestions that will help them continue to be successful and joyful in their ministry.

5. The Scriptures should be used throughout the meeting. Appropriate points from the Pioneer Service School textbook, suggestions from the *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, and information from special meetings with pioneers held in connection with past circuit assemblies may also be used. At times, a pioneer from another congregation may request to attend this meeting. (See 4:12.) The circuit overseer may decide whether his wife should attend this meeting. If the only pioneer in the congregation is a sister, the circuit overseer may ask his wife, the service overseer, or another elder to attend. The circuit overseer should not meet alone with the sister.

6. At the elders' meeting during the week of his visit, the circuit overseer should discuss the activity and circumstances of the pioneers. It is beneficial for the elders to schedule time to work with pioneers in various features of the ministry.

7. It may become obvious that it is not practical for a pioneer to continue serving as such, despite his having been given much help by the circuit overseer and the local elders. Perhaps he is far behind in his hours for the current service year, did not reach the hour requirement during the previous service year(s), and has circumstances that do not appear likely to change soon. If so, the circuit overseer should meet with the Congregation Service Committee and inquire if they feel the pioneer still qualifies. On the other hand, if the pioneer is not reaching the hour requirement because he spent more time working on theocratic projects than he could receive hour credit for, special consideration may be extended.—*sfl* chap. 9.

## **SPECIAL PIONEERS AND FIELD MISSIONARIES**

8. Circuit overseers should take a keen interest in any special pioneers or temporary special pioneers who are serving in a congregation that is being visited. Circuit overseers should spend time with them in field service, get to know them personally, strive to encourage them, offer any suggestions that could help them to be more effective in their assignment, and be sensitive to their needs. During his first visit of each service year to the congregations, the circuit overseer should confidentially talk with the coordinator of the body of elders to get his observations on the activity of each special pioneer and temporary special pioneer, including whether the pioneer is experiencing any difficulties with regard to health, finances, accommodations, and so forth.

9. If a special need exists, the circuit overseer should arrange a shepherding visit with the special pioneer or temporary special pioneer. After concluding the visit to the congregation, the circuit overseer should provide a clear and concise explanation of the special pioneer's situation in the *Personal Qualifications Report* (S-326) that is submitted to the Service Department.—See [5:17-18](#).

10. If it appears that special consideration needs to be given to a special pioneer or that it may be good for the special pioneer to be assigned to a different congregation because of the changing needs of congregations, the circuit overseer should provide his recommendations to the Field Ministers Desk in the Service Department. When the brother or sister is greatly limited due to old age or health problems, the branch office will determine if the special pioneer should have a reduced hour requirement.

11. Field missionaries come under the direct oversight of the branch office and receive annual shepherding visits from Branch Committee members or other elders serving at Bethel. Nevertheless, the circuit overseer should schedule some time with field missionaries when he serves the congregation. He should work with them in the ministry. The missionaries will appreciate any words of commendation and encouragement the circuit overseer offers. During the visit, the circuit overseer should take note of the missionaries' personal circumstances as well as how they are carrying out their ministry. In this way, he will be able to provide a clear and accurate report when it comes time to send a *Personal Qualifications Report* to the branch office. (See [5:17](#).) When the brother or sister is greatly limited due to old age or health problems, the branch office will determine if the field missionary should have a reduced hour requirement.

## **PIONEER SERVICE SCHOOL**

12. For detailed instructions on Pioneer Service School, see *Pioneer Service School Instructor Guidelines* (S-255).

## **INFIRM REGULAR PIONEERS**

13. Before the elders decide to grant infirm status to a regular pioneer, they should consult with the circuit overseer.—*sfl* chap. 9 pars. 18-19.

## CHAPTER 17 APPOINTMENT AND DELETION OF ELDERS AND MINISTERIAL SERVANTS

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1. As appointed representatives of the Governing Body and in accord with the Scriptural precedent at Acts 14:23, circuit overseers are responsible for the appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants, based on the recommendations of the local elders. (*sff* chap. 8) A circuit overseer should not make an appointment or a deletion during his regular visit to a congregation without first discussing the matter with the local elders. When considering the appointment or deletion of an elder or a ministerial servant, the circuit overseer should feel free to consult with the Service Department or another experienced circuit overseer at any time if this would be helpful in making a decision.

2. The responsibility of appointing and deleting elders and ministerial servants is a weighty one. It is entrusted to men who are kind, impartial, and just. (Ex. 18:21) When handling recommendations, whether for appointment or deletion, circuit overseers should avoid imposing personal viewpoints and opinions or setting arbitrary rules. (1 Cor. 4:6) If the elders were to disagree with the circuit overseer, the circuit overseer would need to weigh the facts carefully, making a decision based on the Scriptural qualifications. (Prov. 11:2; 18:13) Circuit overseers should strive to imitate Jehovah and his Son by caring for matters with love and patience. (Deut. 10:17; 16:18, 19; Isa. 42:1-4) In this way, circuit overseers demonstrate deep respect and submission to Jehovah and to the Head of the Christian congregation, Jesus Christ.—Eph. 1:22, 23.

### APPOINTMENTS DURING A REGULAR VISIT TO A CONGREGATION

3. When the body of elders of a congregation has decided to recommend the appointment of one or more brothers in connection with the upcoming visit of the circuit overseer, the Congregation Service Committee will submit a completed *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* (S-62) form at least one month before his visit. If the elders use the Web version of the form, the form is automatically transferred to the circuit overseer and to the Service Department. If the elders use the PDF or paper version of the form, the circuit overseer should immediately forward the form to the Service Department.



**Such recommendations should not be considered until clearance to proceed has been received from the branch office.** Even when clearance is received, this does not indicate that the branch office has endorsed the recommendations. It simply means that the circuit overseer may now give consideration to the recommendations during the upcoming visit. The branch office does not perform a check of the person's age, marital status, previous appointments and deletions, or the like. That responsibility rests with the body of elders and the circuit overseer. If by the beginning of the week of his visit with the congregation the circuit overseer has not received clearance from the branch office to consider a recommendation, he may call the Service Department to inquire about the matter.

4. No earlier than a day or two before the start of the visit, perhaps when other congregation records are provided, the elders will provide the circuit overseer with any background information that has a bearing on the qualifications of the brother(s) being recommended for appointment. Such information might include letters of recommendation (or perhaps letters of introduction) from a previous congregation. During the week, the circuit overseer should make an effort to observe those whom the elders recommend. For example, are they qualified to teach from the platform or on a one-on-one basis? Are they zealous in the ministry? If they are married, are their wives and any children living at home good examples? (*sfl* chap. 8 pars. 3-4) If the circuit overseer believes that the elders have overlooked a qualified brother, he could inquire of the elders the reason(s) why the brother was not recommended, and he may suggest that the elders consider recommending him in connection with the next visit.

5. During the meeting with the elders later in the week, the circuit overseer should discuss the Scriptural qualifications of each brother recommended. At the start of this discussion, the Scriptural requirements should be read aloud from the Bible. The body of elders can benefit from the circuit overseer's experience and observations. He may bring up questions to clarify matters in his own mind with respect to those being considered. The circuit overseer should also take time to listen to the expressions of others. If strong differences of opinion are expressed when discussing recommendations, he should assist the elders by calmly providing Scriptural admonition and kind reminders of what has been published by the organization. The purpose of this discussion is to make a balanced determination of whether an individual measures up to the Scriptural qualifications to a consistent and reasonable degree.—1 Tim. 3:1-10; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

6. A checklist to assist circuit overseers when considering the qualifications of brothers recommended for appointment is provided in [Appendix C](#). The checklist should not be read word-for-word to the elders, since a variety of scenarios are described and not all will apply. Neither should copies of the checklist be given to the elders. If the circuit overseer determines that a recommended brother does not measure up to the Scriptural requirements to a reasonable degree, he will advise the elders accordingly and inform them how they can help the brother to qualify in the future.

7. When the circuit overseer decides to appoint a brother, he and another elder will meet with the brother to inform him of his appointment. If the brother is (1) being appointed for the first time as a ministerial servant or (2) being reappointed as an elder or a ministerial servant for reasons other than his move from one congregation to another, the circuit overseer should ask the following questions: "Is there anything from your past, even before baptism, or in your personal or family life that disqualifies you or that would prevent you from accepting this appointment? Is there any reason why your appointment should not be announced to the congregation? Have you as an adult ever been involved at any time in the past with child sexual molestation?" If the brother answers no to the questions, the circuit overseer should provide the elders with a signed appointment letter that includes the brother's name in the list of those appointed during the visit. (See [17:35](#); [Appendix D](#).) The circuit overseer

should inform the Service Department of the appointment using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form. The appointment will be announced to the congregation at the next midweek meeting.

8. If the brother approved for appointment is not present at the conclusion of the visit and it is necessary to ask him the three questions mentioned in [paragraph 7](#), the circuit overseer should not include the brother's name in the appointment letter, if any, left with the elders at the end of the visit. Rather, when the brother returns, the coordinator of the body of elders will assign two elders to ask the brother the three questions. The coordinator of the body of elders will then inform the circuit overseer of the brother's answers. If the brother answers no to the questions, the circuit overseer should provide the elders with a signed appointment letter. At the midweek meeting following the receipt of the appointment letter, the brother's appointment will be announced to the congregation.

9. If the brother approved for appointment is not present at the conclusion of the visit but it is not necessary to ask him the three questions mentioned in [paragraph 7](#), the circuit overseer should include the brother's name in the appointment letter left with the elders at the end of the visit. When the brother returns, two elders will meet with the brother to inform him of his appointment before it is announced to the congregation.

## **WHEN CONSIDERING THE APPOINTMENT OF YOUNGER BROTHERS**

10. When a brother in his late teens is being considered for appointment as a ministerial servant, the circuit overseer should take into account how the brother has been used in the congregation, what makes him outstanding as a youth, what his theocratic goals are, how zealous he is for the field ministry, and so forth. (*sfl* chap. 8 par. 5) The key factors in any appointment are the spiritual qualifications of a brother and not just his age.

11. Brothers who are appointed as ministerial servants in their late teens or early 20's have the potential to acquire considerable experience in handling a variety of responsibilities. For example, they might serve as a group servant, handle parts during the midweek meeting, give public talks, accompany the elders on shepherding calls, and care for responsibilities in assembly organization. By diligently applying training from the elders, they gain the respect and appreciation of the congregation. Although relatively young in years, exceptional ministerial servants may already be viewed as spiritually older men and qualify as elders in their mid-, or even early, 20's.—Phil. 2:20-22; 1 Tim. 3:1; *w18.08* pp. 11-12 pars. 15-17.

## **CAUTIONS BEFORE APPOINTING CERTAIN BROTHERS**

12. If a brother who was reprovved during the last three years or reinstated during the last five years is being recommended, the circuit overseer should give careful consideration to the *Shepherd* book, chapter 8, paragraphs 7 and 8.

13. Circuit overseers need to be careful about reappointing brothers too soon after their being removed as elders or ministerial servants because of wrongdoing. (*sfl* chap. 8 par. 10) A quick reappointment under those circumstances tends to minimize the seriousness of the wrongdoing in the eyes of the wrongdoer and may be disturbing to those who remember his bad course. (1 Tim. 5:22) Brothers removed for wrongdoing have to live down the reproach they brought on themselves and the congregation before they can be reappointed. This involves building up a convincing record of righteousness that serves to counterbalance the effect of the past wrong. Depending on the gravity of the wrongdoing, this might take many years. In cases of great scandal, a brother might not live the reproach down sufficiently in his lifetime so as to qualify as an elder or a ministerial servant.—Titus 1:6, 7.

14. If a brother is separated or unscripturally divorced, the circuit overseer should ensure that the elders have answered the questions in the *Shepherd* book, chapter 8, paragraph 9, before the recommendation is considered. A brother who married when not Scripturally free would not qualify to serve as an elder or a ministerial servant for many years and not before living down any notoriety or reproach associated with his wrongdoing. (*sfl* chap. 12 par. 11) Neither would he qualify to serve as an auxiliary or a regular pioneer or be assigned to help with the literature, accounts, attendants, or similar assignments.

### **APPOINTMENTS BETWEEN REGULAR VISITS TO A CONGREGATION**

15. When a brother with a favorable letter of recommendation for reappointment moves into a congregation and the circuit overseer's next visit is not in the near future, the body of elders may recommend his immediate reappointment. In such cases, the Congregation Service Committee will submit the *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* (S-62) form to the circuit overseer along with a copy of the letter of recommendation from the service committee of the brother's former congregation. If the recommendation is approved, the circuit overseer should generate an appointment letter to be sent to the new body of elders and inform the Service Department of the appointment, using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form. (See [17:35](#); [Appendix D](#).) If there are disqualifying factors mentioned or questions raised in the letter of introduction from the brother's former congregation, the circuit overseer may encourage the elders to wait until his next visit to make the recommendation so they have an opportunity to observe the brother for a time.

### **APPOINTMENTS IN CONGREGATIONS WITH NO ELDERS**

16. When a circuit overseer is visiting a congregation (or an isolated group not hosted by a congregation) that has no appointed elders, he should use good judgment in determining whether a brother qualifies for appointment based on what he observes and the brother's reputation. If possible, it would be wise to check with the previous circuit overseer or with elders in other congregations who know the brother. Before making the appointment, the circuit overseer should contact the Service Department to see if there is any reason that he should not proceed with the appointment. He should provide the information requested on the *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* (S-62) form either by sending the form itself or by using some other means. If at the conclusion of the visit it is necessary to ask the brother the questions listed in [paragraph 7](#), the circuit overseer may do this without another elder being present.—See [A:1.2](#).

### **WHEN MINISTERIAL SERVANTS SUBSTITUTE AS MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION SERVICE COMMITTEE**

17. In congregations where one or more ministerial servants substitute as members of the service committee, the circuit overseer will discuss with the elders the Scriptural qualifications of the brothers recommended for appointment or deletion. Ministerial servants should not be aware of or be involved in the discussion.

### **APPOINTMENTS OF COORDINATORS OF THE BODIES OF ELDERS**

18. The circuit overseer is responsible for the appointment of the coordinator of the body of elders, based on the recommendation of the body of elders. When needed, this appointment will be made during a regular visit to the congregation. The circuit overseer should review the qualifications cited in the *Shepherd* book with the body of elders. This should be done early in the week of the visit, preferably on Tuesday evening following the congregation meeting. These points should again be reviewed with the elders later in the week when

discussing their recommendations with them. The name of the brother appointed as the new coordinator of the body of elders should be listed in the appointment letter with “(CBOE)” appearing after his name. (See 17:35; Appendix D.) The circuit overseer should inform the Service Department of the appointment by means of the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form unless the brother has been serving temporarily as the coordinator of the body of elders and the Service Department has already been notified.—See 17:19.

19. If a temporary adjustment in the coordinator of the body of elders is made between visits, the Congregation Service Committee will immediately notify the circuit overseer, explaining the reason for the change. The service committee will also submit a *Coordinator of the Body of Elders/Secretary Change of Address* (S-29) form to the Service Department. If an adjustment in the coordinator of the body of elders is made during a regular visit, it is necessary to submit the form only if one had not been previously sent for the brother being appointed.

20. The coordinator of the body of elders is the only position on the body of elders requiring an appointment by the circuit overseer. The fact that this appointment is made by the circuit overseer does not elevate the coordinator of the body of elders above his fellow elders. (1 Pet. 5:5) All elders have equal authority.

21. Circuit overseers should not be quick to ask an elder to move to another congregation to serve as the coordinator of the body of elders. Granted, a situation might arise in a congregation wherein assistance is needed and all on the body of elders agree that it would be practical for a capable elder serving nearby to transfer, but this should be the exception. It is generally better to work with the elders already on the body, providing them with encouragement and practical help in caring for their responsibilities.

## **APPOINTMENTS OR DELETIONS RECOMMENDED BY THE BRANCH OFFICE**

22. At times, the branch office will assign an appointed elder or ministerial servant, such as a special pioneer, a construction servant, or a graduate of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, to serve in a particular congregation. In such cases, the branch office will (1) recommend to the circuit overseer that the brother be reappointed in the new congregation and (2) generate a *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* (S-62) form. At other times, the branch office will recommend a brother’s deletion. In such cases, there is no provision to appeal the deletion. When such recommendations are received, the circuit overseer should immediately send an appointment or a deletion letter to the appropriate congregation, and he should inform the Service Department, using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form. (See 17:35; Appendix D.) He should not wait until his next visit to the brother’s congregation.

## **DELETIONS DURING A REGULAR VISIT TO A CONGREGATION**

23. Recommendations for deletion because of poor judgment not of a judicial nature are usually best submitted during the visit of the circuit overseer rather than between visits. At the start of the visit, the elders will provide any background information, including any conclusion that the body of elders may have already reached, that will help the circuit overseer to have a complete view of the matter. (*sfl* chap. 8 pars. 31-33). The circuit overseer should discuss the Scriptural qualifications of the brother during the meeting with the elders later that week. If the circuit overseer agrees with the recommendation, he and another elder should inform the brother of the deletion sometime before the conclusion of the visit. Of course, an elder who attends the meeting to discuss his qualifications will be informed of the decision at that time.



24. If the brother agrees with the decision, the circuit overseer should generate a letter of deletion to be left with the body of elders and inform the Service Department, using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form. (See [17:35](#); [Appendix D](#).) The announcement of the deletion will be made at the next midweek meeting. If the brother disagrees with the decision, he should be informed of his right to appeal.—See [17:34](#).

25. If a brother's qualifications as an elder or a ministerial servant come into question because of his low hours in the ministry, the circumstances of the individual should be taken into consideration. For example, although time spent working on theocratic projects is not reported as field service, it is sacred service. Thus, a brother should not be penalized if he has spent a great deal of time in such activity and his field service time is lower than others. If a brother is not involved in theocratic projects, the following questions should be considered: Is he doing all that he can reasonably do in view of his age, health, family obligations, and other responsibilities in the congregation or with other organizational matters? Does he look for opportunities to take a visible lead and encourage others in the ministry? Does he have a good attitude toward the work, recognizing its importance and urgency? Can he be allowed time to improve if that is his desire? Perhaps some practical suggestions can be made to help him schedule his time more efficiently. If it is evident that a brother's heart is in the work but his circumstances have limited his participation, then his deletion would likely not be necessary. On the other hand, if it is clear that he shows a poor attitude toward the ministry and has not responded to repeated loving efforts over an extended period of time to help him improve, his deletion may be necessary.

## **DELETIONS BETWEEN REGULAR VISITS TO A CONGREGATION**

26. If serious questions arise concerning a brother's qualifications and the circuit overseer's next visit is not in the near future, the body of elders should follow the procedure outlined in the *Shepherd* book. If after reviewing a brother's qualifications the elders decide to recommend his deletion, the Congregation Service Committee may submit their recommendation to the circuit overseer immediately. Their letter should provide complete details and indicate whether or not the brother agrees with their recommendation. If the circuit overseer agrees with the recommendation and believes it should be processed immediately, the circuit overseer should send a letter of deletion to the body of elders. (See [17:35](#); [Appendix D](#).) Upon receipt of the letter, the coordinator of the body of elders will assign two elders to inform the brother of the circuit overseer's decision. If the brother accepts the decision, the announcement will be made at the next midweek meeting. The circuit overseer should inform the Service Department using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form. If the brother does not accept the decision, he will be informed of his right to appeal, the announcement to the congregation will be held in abeyance, and the coordinator of the body of elders will inform the circuit overseer.—See [17:34](#).

27. If the letter recommending a brother's deletion indicates that the brother disagrees with the elders' recommendation or if the reason for the recommendation is an issue of poor judgment that is not widely known, the circuit overseer may decide to wait until his next visit to consider the matter. In such cases, he should inform the body of elders accordingly. Meanwhile, the brother will continue to serve as an elder or a ministerial servant, and the body of elders will determine what congregation responsibilities he will have in the interim, according to the circumstances.

28. Circuit overseers should not be quick to delete a brother as an elder or a ministerial servant unless there is a solid basis for doing so. One mistake in judgment may not automatically disqualify a brother who has otherwise established a record of faithful service. The following factors might be considered when reviewing his qualifications: Has he been

previously counseled? Has he lost the respect of others? Does the body of elders share a measure of responsibility because of their failure to counsel him? Does he have problems with health, family responsibilities, and so forth? Is he determined to correct matters? How does he personally feel about his qualifications to serve?

29. Some have had their spirituality tested with regard to disfellowshipped relatives. For example, some have attended wedding receptions where disfellowshipped persons were present. Doing so goes contrary to the direction at 1 Corinthians 5:11 to “stop keeping company” with such ones. If the host is going to violate this clearly stated direction and invite a disfellowshipped person to a reception, he has an obligation to inform all the wedding guests that a disfellowshipped person will be in attendance so that they can decide whether to attend.

30. Normally, elders and ministerial servants are not deleted because of advancing age or deteriorating health unless they are Scripturally disqualified and have lost the respect of the congregation. Even if they are becoming senile, it may not be necessary to recommend their deletion unless their actions are so improper that publishers have lost respect for them. If they strongly desire to resign, however, their request should be respected.—1 Pet. 5:2; *sfl* chap. 8 par. 36.

### **SPECIAL FULL-TIME SERVANTS WHO EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES**

31. There might be occasions when the local elders are considering recommending that a brother who is in special full-time service be deleted as an elder or a ministerial servant. After the circuit overseer discusses the matter with the local elders, he should contact the Service Department before making a decision.—Prov. 15:22; *sfl* chap. 12 par. 43.

### **TRANSFERS TO ANOTHER CONGREGATION**

32. At the start of each visit, the elders should inform the circuit overseer of any elders or ministerial servants who have moved out of the congregation since the last visit. If a brother who moved is still listed on *jw.org* as serving in the congregation, the circuit overseer should remind the secretary to follow the direction in *Instructions for Congregation Use of JW.ORG* (S-135) regarding the transfer of congregation person records. In such cases, a letter of deletion should not be provided. If the congregation does not have *jw.org* access, the circuit overseer should inform the Service Department of the transfer.

### **RESIGNATIONS, DELETIONS FOR JUDICIAL REASONS, AND DEATHS**

33. The Congregation Service Committee will immediately inform the circuit overseer of (1) the deletion of an elder or a ministerial servant because of resignation, judicial reproof, disfellowshipping, or disassociation or (2) the death of an elder or a ministerial servant. When the circuit overseer is informed of a deletion resulting from judicial reproof or resignation, he should inform the Service Department, using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form. He should also generate a deletion letter to the body of elders. (See [17:35](#); [Appendix D](#).) If a brother who has died is still listed on *jw.org* as serving in the congregation, the circuit overseer should remind the secretary to follow the direction in *Instructions for Congregation Use of JW.ORG* (S-135) regarding keeping congregation person records up-to-date. No letter of deletion should be sent in cases of disfellowshipping, disassociation, or death. If the congregation does not have *jw.org* access, the circuit overseer should inform the Service Department of the death.

## HANDLING APPEALS OF DELETIONS

34. If an elder or a ministerial servant disagrees with his deletion and wishes to appeal the decision, he should immediately send a brief letter to the Service Department, with a copy to the body of elders and the circuit overseer, explaining why he disagrees with the deletion. The announcement of deletion will be held in abeyance, and the letter of deletion will be destroyed (if one was generated). Thereafter, the Service Department will select another experienced circuit overseer to take the lead in rehearing the entire matter with the circuit overseer, the body of elders, and the brother who has appealed the decision. While the brother will not be present for the entire discussion, he should be allowed to explain his position and answer any questions. The circuit overseers should listen to the brother carefully and deal with him kindly and justly. The circuit overseers may consult the Service Department for advice. After the circuit overseers reach a joint decision, there is no further right to appeal. If it is decided that the brother should be deleted, he should be informed of the decision. The circuit overseer who serves the brother's congregation should generate a letter of deletion to the body of elders and inform the Service Department, using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2) form. (See [17:35](#); [Appendix D](#).) Once the body of elders receives the letter of deletion, the announcement of deletion will be made at the next mid-week meeting.

## LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT AND DELETION

35. A sample letter of appointment and deletion is provided in [Appendix D](#). The exact wording shown in the sample should be used. The letter should include the circuit overseer's circuit letterhead, should be addressed to the body of elders, and should include the names of those being appointed or deleted. The date of the letter will be considered the official date of the appointments and/or deletions noted therein. The original, signed letter should be left with (or be sent to) the elders for them to place in the congregation confidential file. The use of an electronic signature is permitted. A copy of the letter should be retained in the circuit file. (See [A:1.2](#).) No other information regarding appointments and deletions should be retained in the circuit file.

## VISITS BY SUBSTITUTE CIRCUIT OVERSEERS

36. If the congregation will be visited by a substitute circuit overseer, the circuit overseer should inform the elders that the substitute is not authorized to make appointments or deletions. (See [4:1](#); [21:14](#).) At the conclusion of the visit, the substitute should forward his recommendation(s) and those of the body of elders to the circuit overseer for consideration. (There is no need for the substitute to contact the circuit overseer to obtain a decision on a recommendation before the conclusion of the visit.) If the circuit overseer approves a recommendation and it is necessary for the brother being appointed to be asked the three questions listed in [paragraph 7](#), the circuit overseer should direct the coordinator of the body of elders to assign two elders to meet with the brother to ask the necessary questions. The coordinator of the body of elders should then inform the circuit overseer of the brother's answers. If the brother answers no to the questions or it is not necessary to ask the questions, the circuit overseer should provide the elders with a signed appointment letter. (See [17:35](#); [Appendix D](#).) Following receipt of the appointment letter, the elders will inform the brother of his appointment before announcing it to the congregation at the next midweek meeting. Recommendations for deletions received from substitutes should be handled as when such recommendations are received between visits.



## ABSENCES FROM THE CIRCUIT

37. If the circuit overseer will be away from his circuit assignment for *three months or less* (perhaps to care for a family emergency or to conduct a theocratic school), he may be able to continue processing recommendations. If he is not able to do so, he should direct the congregations in the circuit to forward recommendations in connection with a regular visit directly to the Service Department, using the Web version of the *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants* (S-62) form if possible. Recommendations for appointment or deletion between visits should be sent directly to the Service Department during the time the circuit overseer will be away. The consideration of recommendations for appointment or deletion will be handled in the following manner:

- (1) **If away for less than a month:** There is no objection to the circuit overseer holding recommendations in abeyance until he returns.
- (2) **If away for one to three months:** The branch office will designate another circuit overseer (perhaps a neighboring circuit overseer or one who recently served the circuit) to consider any recommendations received from substitutes. The circuit overseer who will be away should direct his substitutes to forward any recommendations to the other circuit overseer. Any appointment or deletion letters should be signed by the other circuit overseer on his circuit letterhead.

38. If the circuit overseer will be away from his circuit assignment for *more than three months*, the branch office will assign another circuit overseer to visit congregations in the circuit.

39. It is preferred that the circuit overseer communicate with the Service Department and the affected congregations and substitutes before leaving his assignment. However, when this is not possible, such as in an emergency situation, the branch office will take the lead in informing the affected congregations and substitutes.

## SHEPHERD BOOK

40. Elders are encouraged to use electronic copies of the *Shepherd* book, if possible. This is advantageous, since the electronic copies may be updated more frequently than the printed version. Elders needing printed copies may inform their service overseer who will then ensure that requests are promptly submitted in the usual manner. In most cases, circuit overseers do not need to maintain a supply of *Shepherd* books.

## CHAPTER 18 SERVICE TALKS

1. The purpose of circuit overseers' service talks is to encourage and motivate the brothers and sisters to focus their minds on doing God's will. As the name implies, service talks should help those in the congregations see the need to occupy their time with the field ministry and other Kingdom-related activities and to reflect on the marvelous things Jehovah is accomplishing today. (Phil. 4:8; Titus 3:8) Through skillful teaching, circuit overseers should help all to view the work that Jehovah has given his people to do before the end of this system of things as a privilege and to work closely with his theocratic organization.

2. Circuit overseers should be alert to note Scriptural points presented during the year in Christian publications and in assembly and convention programs that could be used in their service talks. These points can be developed into flexible outlines on motivating themes. From a reserve of such outlines, circuit overseers can select and tailor talks that meet the needs of the congregation being served each week. Of course, even when using an outline supplied by the branch office (S-341), circuit overseers will want to include points dealing with the specific needs of the congregation, which can be discerned from reviewing the records and from consulting with the elders. The service talk should not be used to give counsel to elders or ministerial servants. If there is a problem within the body of elders or with the servant body as a whole, this should be addressed privately during the elders' meeting and not before the whole congregation.

3. The substance of the presentation should be from God's Word. Excessive humor and stories that merely entertain are not appropriate. The powerful force of the Bible, coupled with God's holy spirit, will have the greatest effect on the audience, since it will motivate, refresh, strengthen, and encourage the brothers. Therefore, key scriptures should be read, explained, and applied to the audience. When giving service talks, circuit overseers themselves should read Bible texts rather than have someone in the audience do this, since they know which point they want to emphasize. Circuit overseers should make the Bible accounts come alive.—Heb. 4:12.

4. The use of simple, dignified visual aids can be effective. (*be* pp. 247-250) If the Kingdom Hall is equipped with video equipment, *still* pictures, graphics, or artwork may be displayed. However, circuit overseers should not project any *moving* video footage on screens or monitors unless directed to do so by the organization. (As an exception, speakers at sign-language meetings may show videos of scriptures and make judicious use of other videos from our organization as a visual teaching aid for the special needs of deaf audiences.) Neither should they contact the branch office to request pictures, graphics, or artwork for use in their presentations.

5. Comments from the audience, as well as other forms of audience participation, should be limited during service talks. Audience involvement might occasionally be used to help make a main point, but for the most part service talks should be talks, not audience discussions. Other congregation meetings provide ample opportunities for audience participation.

6. It is fine for encouraging experiences to be included in service talks. However, caution is needed. On occasion, circuit overseers have related experiences that were inaccurate or fictitious. Therefore, before using an experience, a circuit overseer should make sure that it is authentic. If there is any doubt about an experience, it should not be used.

7. Normally, the outline for the 30-minute service talk on Tuesday night will be supplied by the branch office. This talk should provide commendation and should clearly address one

or two specific needs of the congregation as a whole. Encouragement to regular pioneer and to share in other avenues of full-time service may be included. The circuit overseer should outline the schedule of activity for the week, including making mention of the arrangements for field service, and should build enthusiasm for the visit. All should be warmly encouraged to support the preaching work and congregation meetings fully during the week.

8. The circuit overseer should prepare his own 30-minute service talk to be presented after the *Watchtower* Study. It should be warm and encouraging, highlighting the need for endurance. It should motivate the audience to continue working hard and giving of themselves in loyal service to Jehovah. If any exhortation is needed, it should be presented tactfully and lovingly, especially since many new ones may be in attendance.—*be* pp. 265-267.

9. Circuit overseers may start using the service talk outline provided for the second half of the service year anytime during February but at the very latest by the first week of March. The same applies to the public talk outline (S-319) and the outline for his meeting with the elders and ministerial servants (S-337).

## CHAPTER 19 SHEPHERDING

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Program for Shepherding Circuit Overseers 9

1. Circuit overseers share in the responsibility to shepherd and protect Jehovah's sheep. There are many opportunities for them personally to do shepherding and to help the local elders care for this important responsibility.—Isa. 32:1, 2; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3; *sfl* chap. 25.

2. Time should be scheduled to make two or three shepherding calls during the week of the visit. It would be good for one of the elders or a well-qualified ministerial servant to accompany the circuit overseer on these calls. (See 4:10.) It can be very beneficial for a circuit overseer to call on one who is inactive, irregular, or ill. Much can also be accomplished by means of positive, encouraging conversations with brothers and sisters before and after meetings, when working with them in the field ministry, while sharing meals with them in their homes, and during the noon break at assemblies. Some circuit overseers have found that they can provide good assistance by making a telephone call in the evening.

3. Balance, though, should be exercised. Rather than spending many hours listening to an individual regarding personal problems, a circuit overseer may find it best to allow the local elders who know the person and his circumstances to handle the matter. After listening to the person for a reasonable length of time, the circuit overseer can offer some Scriptural encouragement and refer him to the local elders, who can follow through appropriately.

4. There is no provision for circuit overseers to report the time spent making shepherding calls on baptized persons. However, this is not intended to minimize the importance of making such calls, as efforts in this area can be a real blessing to those who are visited.

### SISTERS

5. At 1 Peter 2:17, we are encouraged to “have love for the whole association of brothers.” Circuit overseers are to be commended for the sincere interest they show to all in the congregation. However, a word of caution is in order when a brother shows too much interest in single sisters, feeling that they need his special attention. It would be improper for a circuit overseer regularly to make telephone calls or send emails or text messages to a sister not his wife. This has led to problems with the sister developing an unhealthy attachment to the brother. Additionally, this type of relationship could adversely affect the brother's own marriage.

6. What can be done when a circuit overseer observes a single sister in need of spiritual assistance? If she is younger and still living at home with her Witness parents, they are responsible to provide the needed spiritual guidance. If she is of age and no longer living at home, the elders in her congregation should be taking the lead in offering needed direction. If the circuit overseer feels it would be helpful, he may provide the parents or the elders with suggestions on how to assist the sister spiritually. In harmony with the inspired counsel at Titus 2:3-5, it may be that the circuit overseer's wife could help single sisters, depending on the circumstances. Of course, he would not want to encourage her to place herself in a situation with a sister who is experiencing complex problems that would drain his wife's time and energies.—See 23:4.

## **OUTSIDE THE CONGREGATION OR CIRCUIT BEING SERVED**

7. During the week that a congregation is being served, it is important that the circuit overseer devote his attention to the needs of that congregation. Balance must be exercised when those outside that congregation ask for his time and assistance. Although it would be a kindness to help in a limited way, possibly by directing them to information in Christian publications or to their elders, he should not allow this to interfere with his schedule. If an overwhelming need to help someone arises and it appears necessary to alter the normal schedule with the congregation being served, the circuit overseer should call the Service Department for approval. Of course, if an emergency of this sort occurs when the Service Department is closed, then good judgment should be used in the matter.

8. Sometimes individuals from outside the circuit ask for help on serious matters. They could be brothers whom the circuit overseer served in a previous assignment. The circuit overseer should kindly remind them that he no longer serves their circuit. They could be directed to Christian publications that might assist them. In many instances, however, it would be best simply to encourage them to consult with their local body of elders or circuit overseer. It would not be wise for a circuit overseer to get involved with problems outside his circuit during personal time away, perhaps hearing someone's grievances and drawing conclusions. He could not know if he had all the facts. In such cases, the matter should be reported to the individual's circuit overseer for his information.

## **PROGRAM FOR SHEPHERDING CIRCUIT OVERSEERS**

9. Circuit overseers and their wives will receive a shepherding visit at least once every two years from a branch representative. The branch representative may be a brother from the branch office or an experienced circuit overseer. Such visits will be made during a circuit overseer's regular visit to a congregation, not during the week of a circuit assembly. The branch office will inform the circuit overseer of the name of the branch representative who has been assigned to make a shepherding visit and of additional information regarding the arrangements for the visit. The branch representative's responsibilities cease at the end of his shepherding visit.

## CHAPTER 20 LIST OF BROTHERS QUALIFIED TO HANDLE COMPLEX MATTERS

1. Each year, the circuit overseer should meet with responsible brothers in his circuit to prepare for the Service Department a list of elders who are qualified to handle complex matters. (Usually, this can be done in conjunction with the meeting held to rate convention speakers and interpreters.) The brothers assisting in preparing this list should be made aware of the following qualifications.

2. Brothers listed as qualified to handle complex matters should have maturity, insight, empathy, balance, discernment, and a fine knowledge of the Scriptures and published direction. They should be known as mild and kind men who are exemplary in manifesting “the fruitage of the spirit.” (Gal. 5:22, 23) They should be able to listen objectively and act impartially. The circuit overseer should be alert to include on the list younger elders who demonstrate these qualities.

3. The qualifications and circumstances of each brother previously listed as qualified to handle complex matters should be reviewed each year. Those listed must continue to meet high Scriptural standards. The circumstances of some may no longer permit them to serve in this capacity. They may have lost some measure of respect because of personal or family problems, or they may have increased family responsibilities or deteriorating health that would prevent them from serving. If anyone is removed from the list, an explanation should accompany the revised list.

4. When preparing the revised list of brothers who are qualified to handle complex matters, the most qualified brother in the circuit should be listed first, the next most qualified brother in the circuit should be listed second, and so forth. For each brother listed, his telephone number and congregation’s name should be provided, along with a brief description of his qualifications and why he is listed in the order that he appears. If some elders would be particularly well-suited to review certain cases, such as those having to do with the qualifications of elders or ministerial servants, financial matters, legal matters, domestic problems, apostasy, child abuse, and so forth, this information should also be provided along with a brief explanation. (See [13:5-7](#).) If a brother is well-qualified but limited as to available time for such matters, his name should be listed in order of qualifications, but the matter of his limited availability should be mentioned.

5. If a circuit overseer feels that there are no brothers in the circuit who are qualified to handle complex matters, a letter frankly stating this conclusion should be sent to the Service Department.

6. The letter to the Service Department containing the revised list should be signed by the circuit overseer and the brothers who have considered this matter with him. It should be signed only when fully completed and checked by all assisting with the preparation of the list. A copy of this letter should be retained in the circuit file.—See [A:1.6](#).

7. Circuit overseers should keep the Service Department abreast of any changes that may need to be made to this list during the year, including changes to telephone numbers. If a brother moves out of the circuit, is deleted as an elder, dies, or for some other reason is no longer available or qualified to be listed, the circuit overseer should inform the Service Department accordingly without delay.

## CHAPTER 21 SUBSTITUTE CIRCUIT OVERSEERS

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### IDENTIFYING AND RECOMMENDING PROSPECTIVE SUBSTITUTES

1. Before a brother is recommended to serve as a substitute circuit overseer, he must first have served as an elder for at least two consecutive years and attended one of the following schools: School for Kingdom Evangelizers, Bible School for Single Brothers, Bible School for Christian Couples, Ministerial Training School, or Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. (See 5:19.) Preferably, those recommended should be pioneer elders in their 20's or 30's who have the potential to qualify for the circuit work within two or three years. Please comment specifically on his humility, his maturity, and his ability to accept counsel and apply Scriptural principles and theocratic guidelines correctly. Single brothers and married brothers who do not have dependent children may be considered. Because of the need for younger brothers to take on greater organizational responsibility, the circuit overseer should recommend all qualified brothers who meet these criteria, even if the circuit already has several substitutes.

2. Brothers recommended as substitute circuit overseers should love their brothers. Their love for the ministry motivates them to be zealous evangelizers. They should be diligent students of God's Word and of Christian publications. In view of the balance and good judgment required of circuit overseers, they should not simply be good platform speakers but must demonstrate balance, discretion, and reasonableness in their personal lives and with members of the congregation, including fellow elders. They should be spiritually mature, up-to-date organizationally, and well-recommended locally. (Acts 16:1, 2; Phil. 2:19-22) They should be outstanding in displaying the fruitage of the spirit. They should be able to get along with people of all sorts. They should have good discernment, being able to get to the root of problems and resolve them peacefully using "the wisdom from above." (Jas. 3:17) They should be capable of offering appropriate counsel when it is needed, not shrinking back out of fear of man. They should treat others with dignity. They should not be rule-oriented but should be open to suggestions, ready to make adjustments in their viewpoint if needed. They should be on the list of those qualified to handle complex matters and should be recommended as convention speakers. (See 5:20; 20:1-7.) Before recommending a brother, the circuit overseer may discreetly ask experienced elders for their observations on the brother but should not reveal to them that the brother is being considered for the substitute circuit work. Brothers recommended to serve as substitute circuit overseers must not have viewed pornography within the last two years.

3. If a pioneer elder is unable to meet the annual pioneer hour requirement because he is caring for theocratic assignments, this in itself does not prevent his being recommended for the substitute circuit work. However, the circuit overseer should provide an explanation with the recommendation.

4. A married brother's wife should also be a pioneer. She should be exemplary in her conduct and in her dealings with others. She should be an effective preacher. She should



understand her role, not speaking for her husband or dominating conversations.—1 Pet. 3:3, 4.

5. If a brother has potential for the substitute circuit work but does not yet qualify, the circuit overseer should identify where improvements could be made and then help the brother to make such improvements by offering practical suggestions. Does he need to improve in his public speaking ability? Does he consistently meet the annual pioneer hour requirement? Could he be more effective in his ministry? Could he improve in his discernment and understanding of theocratic procedures? Is he providing the needed direction for his wife so that she too continues to grow spiritually? At each visit to the brother's congregation, the circuit overseer should review the progress made since his last visit and determine how the brother may be helped to overcome any remaining deficiencies.

6. Circuit overseers should be alert to train and recommend qualified pioneer elders who speak another language and have potential for the substitute circuit work.

7. A circuit overseer can recommend a brother for the substitute circuit work by submitting *Personal Qualifications Reports (S-326)* for the brother and for his wife. When answering the last question, the circuit overseer should confirm whether the brother is on the list of those qualified to handle complex matters and whether he is recommended as a convention speaker. If they are not meeting the annual hour requirement, the circuit overseer should explain the reason. The circuit overseer should clearly indicate whether the body of elders is in agreement with the recommendation. Recommendations of substitute circuit overseers should be updated yearly.

8. When a circuit overseer leaves the circuit, he should provide his comments about the brothers in the circuit who have potential and place the comments in the circuit file. (See [A:1.10](#).) He should include what has been done to train these brothers and what he recommends as the next step in their training.

9. If the branch office agrees that a brother has the potential to serve as a substitute circuit overseer, he will be asked to complete a *Questionnaire for Prospective Substitute Circuit Overseer (S-324)*. Once preliminary approval has been given, the Service Department will arrange for the brother to receive two weeks of training and evaluation by an approved trainer as outlined in *Guidelines for Training Prospective Substitute Circuit Overseers (S-382)*. The training and evaluation will take place in the trainer's circuit. Thereafter, the Branch Committee will decide if the trainee will be appointed as a substitute circuit overseer.

## **ANNUAL WORKWEEK WITH SUBSTITUTES**

10. On a yearly basis, each circuit overseer should arrange for each substitute circuit overseer in his circuit to accompany him when he visits a congregation *other than the substitute's own congregation*. The substitute circuit overseer should share in handling some of the activity for the week. For example, he could conduct one or two meetings for field service, deliver the Tuesday service talk, and present a portion of the outlines to be considered with the pioneers and with the elders and ministerial servants. The substitute's wife may share in the congregation's spiritual activities for that week. Yearly *Personal Qualifications Report (S-326)* updates are not required simply because a brother is an appointed substitute circuit overseer.

## USE OF SUBSTITUTES

11. Circuit overseers should keep the substitute circuit overseers in their circuit up-to-date on policy matters and other instructions from the branch office if the substitutes do not have access to [jw.org](#). This means providing substitutes with copies of letters sent to circuit overseers that involve the work of serving congregations and with copies of the current outlines received from the branch office for the public talk, the meeting with the elders and ministerial servants, the meeting with the pioneers during the first half of the service year, and the service talks. All substitute circuit overseers should be acquainted with the circuit file and its whereabouts in the event that the circuit overseer is absent from his assignment because of an illness or emergency. The circuit overseer should make sure that substitute circuit overseers do not have access to the portion of the circuit file containing information on brothers in the circuit with potential for greater privileges.—See [A:1](#).

12. If an appointed substitute has potential for the circuit work, the circuit overseer should instruct him in assembly organization. Assignments in assembly organization will help him gain practical experience with the various departments. It would be good to schedule him for major parts on the circuit assembly program so that his public speaking and teaching ability can be observed.—See *Assembly Organization Guidelines* (S-330).

13. When a circuit overseer needs to use a substitute, he should first contact the brother he has in mind using and confirm his availability. However, approval should be obtained from the Service Department before final arrangements are made. Requests for the use of substitutes may be submitted on the *Circuit Overseer Routing* (S-300) form. If the need becomes apparent after the routing has been submitted, it is preferred that the request be made in writing when practical. (See [5:10](#); [8:1](#), [3](#).) The circuit overseer should explain why he recommends the use of a substitute circuit overseer. He should also provide the name(s) of the congregation(s) involved, the day(s) or week(s) that a substitute is needed, and the name(s) of the substitute(s) he has in mind using. When a substitute is needed for a full week, it is preferable to use one who is available to serve Tuesday through Sunday.

14. Substitute circuit overseers are not authorized to make appointments and deletions of elders and ministerial servants. (See [17:36](#).) Neither should they submit *Personal Qualifications Reports* (S-326) when serving congregations.

## DELETIONS

15. If a brother is not meeting the high standard expected of one appointed as a substitute circuit overseer, the circuit overseer should first approach the brother privately and offer him counsel on the area of concern. The circuit overseer should make it clear that he is personally interested in the brother and that his goal is to help him to serve more effectively as a substitute circuit overseer. The brother should be given the opportunity to improve over a period of time and should be commended for improvement he makes. The Service Department should be informed of the counsel offered and the brother's response. If after repeated efforts to assist the brother the circuit overseer is convinced that he no longer qualifies, the circuit overseer should inform the Service Department, providing complete details along with his recommendation. He should state whether the brother agrees with the recommendation. If he does not agree and wishes to submit his own letter, the circuit overseer will include it with his correspondence to the Service Department.

16. If an appointed substitute finds it necessary to stop pioneering, this in itself does not disqualify him from continuing to serve as a substitute circuit overseer. However, the Service Department should be informed. If a substitute circuit overseer becomes engaged to be

married, he should inform the Service Department as soon as possible, but no later than 60 days before the wedding, indicating whether he desires to continue in the substitute circuit work. If an approved substitute circuit overseer is removed as an elder, dies, or for any other reason is no longer able to continue serving, the circuit overseer should inform the Service Department immediately, clearly indicating that the brother was serving as a substitute circuit overseer. Brothers will discontinue serving as substitute circuit overseers when they reach 70 years of age.

## **CHANGE OF CIRCUIT**

17. When a brother who was serving as a substitute circuit overseer moves to a different circuit, he must have a favorable recommendation to continue serving as a substitute circuit overseer from his previous circuit overseer *and* be reappointed as an elder in his new congregation before he can again be used in that capacity. Therefore, when a substitute moves out of the circuit, the previous circuit overseer should inform the Service Department of the substitute's new address and congregation. He should clearly state whether he recommends the brother to continue serving as a substitute. If the recommendation is positive, he should briefly explain the reasons for the recommendation. If he does not recommend the brother to continue serving in this capacity, the previous circuit overseer should meet with the substitute privately to explain the reasons for his decision. In his correspondence to the Service Department, the previous circuit overseer should clearly state (1) his reasons for not recommending him, (2) what counsel was given and when it was given, and (3) whether the brother agrees with the recommendation that he discontinue serving as a substitute. If the brother does not agree and wishes to submit his own letter, the previous circuit overseer will include it with his correspondence to the Service Department.

18. If a substitute circuit overseer who has been recommended to continue serving as such moves into a circuit, the Service Department will notify the new circuit overseer of his arrival. The notification will state that after the brother has been appointed as an elder in his new congregation, he may once again serve as a substitute circuit overseer. Once he is appointed as an elder and thus is an approved substitute, no further correspondence should be necessary to confirm his appointment. However, if a brother who has been serving as a substitute moves into the circuit but is not reappointed to serve as an elder in the new congregation, the new circuit overseer should inform the Service Department. He should clearly state that the brother was a substitute circuit overseer and explain why he was not reappointed to serve as an elder.

## **CHANGE OF CIRCUIT BOUNDARIES**

19. If a substitute circuit overseer is relocated to a different circuit because of an adjustment in circuit boundaries, the Service Department will transfer the brother's appointment to the new circuit and will notify the circuit overseers accordingly.

## **RECOMMENDING NEW CIRCUIT OVERSEERS**

20. Much of the same criteria for recommending substitute circuit overseers should be used when recommending new circuit overseers. (See [21:1-7](#).) Without establishing a rule, it is preferred that a brother who is recommended as a circuit overseer first serve as a temporary special pioneer or special pioneer for at least one year. A brother who has served as an elder for at least three years can be recommended as a circuit overseer. Thus, if an exceptional young brother were appointed as an elder in his mid-, or even early, 20's, he could be approved for the circuit work three years later. Recommendations of brothers for the circuit work are made using *Personal Qualifications Reports* (S-326). The circuit overseer should

include the latest copies of the *Congregation's Publisher Records* (S-21) for both the husband and the wife. Recommendations for a brother to serve as a circuit overseer should be updated annually.

21. Before recommending a brother, circuit overseers should consider these points: Does he have a heartfelt desire to serve, or does he seek prominence? Is he a zealous and productive field worker, or does he have little enthusiasm for the pioneer service? Does he share in all facets of the ministry? Is he familiar with theocratic procedures? Does he have good balance in judgment? Is he an effective teacher? Is he known as a humble, discerning man who is willing to listen to others? Does he uphold Jehovah's standards rather than insisting on his own opinions? These qualities are especially important in view of the circuit overseer's responsibility to appoint and delete elders and ministerial servants. (Acts 14:23) Has he cared well for parts on circuit assembly or convention programs? What is his convention speaker rating? Does he have a self-sacrificing spirit? Is he willing to put up with difficulties and discomfort? If necessary, is he willing to live in the homes of the brothers? Is his wife wholeheartedly in favor of pursuing this avenue of service, or is she going along merely to please her husband?

22. Those recommended should enjoy good health and be able to serve in a variety of climates and in any part of the country without complaint. If they have family responsibilities or lingering health problems, it would be best to wait until these are resolved before recommending them for additional privileges.

23. Circuit overseers should inform the Service Department of spiritually qualified brothers with potential for the circuit work who are proficient in another language. Brothers who are recommended to serve as circuit overseers should have the experience, humility, compassion, and understanding needed to deal with a wide variety of people, customs, and circumstances.

24. Circuit overseers need to be cautious about the way they encourage brothers to reach out, because the mere fact that a brother is a substitute circuit overseer does not mean that he will automatically be used in the circuit work. Therefore, circuit overseers should never tell a brother that they have recommended him for the circuit work. This can arouse premature expectations in the brother and might cause him to make radical changes, such as selling his home or business. Then, if the brother is not used, disappointment and problems could easily result. Circuit overseers should encourage substitute circuit overseers to be content with their present privileges and yet be available to accept additional privileges if the opportunity to serve in the circuit work is offered to them.

25. If the Branch Committee agrees with the recommendation that a brother has the potential to serve as a circuit overseer, the Service Department will arrange for the brother to receive additional training and evaluation by an approved trainer as outlined in *Guidelines for Training Prospective Circuit Overseers* (S-384).

## CHAPTER 22 PERSONAL TIME AWAY

[Basic Days of Personal Time Away](#) 2

[Additional Days of Personal Time Away](#) 3-6

[Taking Personal Time Away](#) 7-12

1. The Governing Body has made provision for circuit overseers and their wives to be given personal time away each service year so that time will be available not just for rest and relaxation but also to care for personal and family matters. Therefore, it is good to plan personal time away wisely.

### BASIC DAYS OF PERSONAL TIME AWAY

2. Twelve days of personal time away are automatically credited to each person at the beginning of each service year (September 1) and can be used any time thereafter. If a brother who is not already in special full-time service is appointed to the circuit work after September 1, he will be given a prorated amount of basic personal time away for the remaining full months in the current service year. For example, one who starts in the circuit work on March 1 would receive six days of personal time away upon entering the work, one day for each complete month, March through August. A person transferred from another field of special full-time service to the circuit work would retain the personal time away he had already accumulated.

### ADDITIONAL DAYS OF PERSONAL TIME AWAY

3. There is also a beneficial arrangement for granting additional personal time away each service year until a person reaches the maximum annual credit of 30 days of personal time away. There are three provisions explained below for accumulating additional days of personal time away. All additional personal time away is credited on September 1 for those in special full-time service. If a person enters special full-time service after September 1, any additional days of personal time away will be credited to him on a prorated basis.

4. A seniority credit is based on the number of years a person has been in full-time service. For every two complete years a person has been in full-time service, he is granted one additional day of personal time away. Consider two examples. After a brother has completed two years in full-time service, on September 1 he will be granted 12 basic days of personal time away plus one additional day for his seniority, making a total of 13 days of personal time away. A sister who has completed 15 years in full-time service would be granted 12 basic days of personal time away plus 7 additional days of personal time away for her seniority, making a total of 19 days of personal time away. If a person has had a break(s) in his full-time service history, his seniority will be the combined total of years spent in full-time service.

5. An alternative to the seniority credit is an age credit. Some circuit overseers or their wives have not served for many years in full-time service and thus would not receive many additional days of personal time away based on their full-time service seniority. As shown in the following chart, those 45 years old and older may benefit from this age credit. For example, those reaching 45 years of age prior to completing 12 years of full-time service are granted six additional days of personal time away each year, the same as if they had completed 12 years of full-time service. Those reaching 65 years of age prior to completing 36 years of full-time service are granted the maximum of 18 additional days of personal time away each year. As is true with the seniority credit, the age credit progressively increases every two

years until a person reaches the maximum number of 30 days of personal time away per year. A person will receive *either* the seniority credit *or* the age credit, whichever is greater, on September 1.

Age on September 1	Additional days of personal time away
45-46	6
47-48	7
49-50	8
51-52	9
53-54	10
55-56	11
57-58	12
59-60	13
61-62	14
63-64	15
65-70	18

6. Some circuit overseers may qualify to receive a foreign-service credit of seven additional days of personal time away on September 1. This credit of seven additional days of personal time away is added to the basic personal time away and additional days of personal time away based on seniority or age previously described. Individuals benefiting from the foreign-service credit will not receive more than 30 days of personal time away per service year.

## TAKING PERSONAL TIME AWAY

7. Circuit overseers should give the Service Department advance notification of the dates they will be taking personal time away, using the *Notice of Personal Time Away and Sick Time* (S-305). (See [17:37-39](#).) The circuit overseer should provide the Service Department with information on how he can be contacted if an urgent situation arises.

8. Days of personal time away not used during the service year may be accumulated for use in subsequent years. However, the general policy is that days of personal time away not be borrowed from the next service year's personal time away credits. There have been rare occasions when exceptions have been made because of extenuating circumstances. Those in special full-time service are encouraged to plan personal time away carefully within the limits of days of personal time away already credited. Rather than using up all or most of one's days of personal time away early in the service year, it is the wise course to reserve several days of personal time away for unforeseen circumstances that may arise later.

9. Personal time away cannot be given to another person, with the exception that married couples may share personal time away.

10. When a circuit overseer takes a week of personal time away, the branch office will deduct five days from his accumulated personal time away. A circuit overseer should not schedule days of personal time away during the week he will be making a regular visit to a congregation unless he is selected as a delegate to an international or a special convention. (See [4:19](#); [5:11](#); [7:5](#).) Any exceptions to this direction must be approved by the Service Department.

11. It is better for a circuit overseer and his wife to take personal time away together. This sets a good and wholesome example for the brothers. It is not good for a circuit overseer to take personal time away while his wife pioneers. If it becomes necessary, however, for a wife to take personal time away to handle necessary family business and there is no need for her husband to accompany her, the circuit overseer should contact the Service Department in advance to explain the circumstances and request an exception.

12. It is not necessary for a circuit overseer and his wife to take personal time away in order to move to a new assignment. The branch office will determine how much time is reasonably needed for the move according to the circumstances.



## CHAPTER 23 WIVES OF CIRCUIT OVERSEERS

1. The wives of circuit overseers enjoy an outstanding privilege of service, and they are in a position to do much good as they serve with their husbands. However, the nature of the circuit work involves special challenges and unusual circumstances. Circuit overseers need to help their wives maintain joy and balance in their assignment. Circuit overseers should set aside time for family worship each week. Each circuit overseer should regularly read and study the Bible with his wife to help her stay spiritually strong.
2. When wives of circuit overseers display a quiet and mild spirit, show warmth and love, exhibit a happy countenance, and have an uncomplaining spirit, they win the support and confidence of others. They should set a fine example for others to follow. Each circuit overseer should help his wife to be zealous in field service, to give meaningful comments at congregation meetings, and to display respect for headship by working cooperatively under his direction.
3. A circuit overseer's wife should be with him and share fully in the scheduled activity when he visits the congregation unless circumstances prevent her from doing so. It is preferred that the wife of a circuit overseer work in service with sisters and younger publishers. While it would not necessarily be improper for her to accompany a brother in field service, this should seldom be necessary in view of the number of sisters available. Each circuit overseer should take time to work with his wife in the various features of field service on a regular basis.
4. There are times when a sister might seek out a circuit overseer's wife to discuss a personal problem. In such cases, the circuit overseer's wife needs to be careful not to become involved in matters that should be handled by her husband or the local elders.—See [19:6](#).
5. A circuit overseer should be very careful not to divulge confidential matters to his wife. This can happen inadvertently if he discusses confidential matters—either in person or on the telephone—within earshot of his wife. A circuit overseer's wife should not be used to type reports or letters dealing with confidential information or other congregational matters. If she learns something confidential, this puts her under pressure to maintain that confidence. It is not good to subject her to such burdens.—See [5:28](#).
6. When the branch office directs that a video be shown to the congregation, the circuit overseer is responsible for the presentation. If he needs someone to assist him in setting up or running the equipment, he should select an alert, dependable brother.
7. A circuit overseer's wife should not be away from the assignment unless her husband has first communicated with the Service Department and obtained approval. (See [8:1](#).) Her presence makes a meaningful contribution to the week's visit. As with the circuit overseer, it is recommended that the efforts of his wife be directed toward those in the congregation that is being served that week.—See [19:7-8](#).

## APPENDIX A CIRCUIT FILE

1. The circuit overseer should maintain a well-organized file of information pertinent to circuit activity. The following items should be kept in the circuit file:

- (1) Copies of the last five *Report on Circuit Overseer's Visit With Congregation* (S-303) forms
- (2) Copies of all letters of appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants for the last three years. (For congregations with no elders, such letters should be retained indefinitely. In connection with a deletion in a congregation with no elders, a brief explanation of the reason for the brother's deletion should also be kept.)
- (3) Judicial files for congregations with no elders
- (4) List of those qualified for assembly parts
- (5) Copy of the current convention speaker and interpreter ratings and list of all the speakers who have presented a part at a circuit assembly within the last three years
- (6) Copy of the latest letter to the Service Department listing elders qualified to handle complex matters
- (7) Pioneer Service School instructor recommendations
- (8) Latest assembly organization roster and list of other brothers qualified for a convention work assignment
- (9) List of telephone numbers of other circuit overseers serving congregations that share Kingdom Halls with congregations in the circuit
- (10) List of substitute circuit overseers, with contact information
- (11) Correspondence regarding School for Kingdom Evangelizers graduates in the circuit
- (12) List of brothers with potential for greater privileges, with comments on how they can further be assisted. The circuit overseer should make sure that substitute circuit overseers do not have access to this portion of the circuit file.
- (13) Record of the order in which the congregations were visited during the preceding 12 months
- (14) Information regarding pending problems that were addressed and what might be done to follow through in 'correcting things that are defective.'—Titus 1:5.
- (15) Hospital Liaison Committee information
- (16) A copy of the last *Report on Circuit Assembly* (S-318)
- (17) *Site Inspection Release Agreements* (CO-14), if applicable

2. Once a year, circuit overseers should weed the file of unnecessary items. Unless otherwise specified, routine correspondence can generally be discarded after five years.

## APPENDIX B CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING CONGREGATION ACCOUNTS

1. Review the last two audit reports. Are congregation accounts being audited regularly in harmony with the latest instructions? Were different brothers used to perform consecutive audits? If any issues were noted on the audit reports, please confirm with the coordinator of the body of elders that the items have been discussed with the secretary and the accounts servant and have been corrected.
2. Has the latest bank statement been reconciled in harmony with *Instructions for Congregation Accounting* (S-27)?
3. Does the congregation have an approved resolution for making monthly donations to the worldwide work? Is the amount of this resolved donation reasonable in accord with local circumstances?
4. Are the donations to the worldwide work from the contribution box and the congregation's resolved monthly donation being forwarded to the branch office each month?
5. Is the congregation's approved target balance reasonable, based on expenses for the last three months? If the available congregation funds at the end of the month (amount [k] on the *Monthly Congregation Accounts Report* [S-30]) has exceeded the approved target balance significantly for a number of months, the elders should consider contributing the excess funds to the branch office.
6. When visiting a contact congregation that shares a Kingdom Hall with another congregation(s), review the Kingdom Hall Operating Committee accounts, using the applicable points listed above as a guide.

## APPENDIX C CHECKLIST WHEN CONSIDERING APPOINTMENTS AND DELETIONS

(1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Jas. 3:17, 18; 1 Pet. 5:2)

Before making appointments of elders and ministerial servants, please consider the following, keeping in mind that each brother must measure up to a reasonable degree (*sfl* chap. 8 pars. 1-2):

### 1. Experience and Maturity

- (1) Sufficient life experience and respected by congregation?—See [17:10-11](#); *sfl* chap. 8 par. 5.
- (2) Baptized at least one year?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 1.
- (3) If baptized many years ago, why only now being recommended?

### 2. Family

- (1) Wife and any children living at home good examples?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 4.
- (2) Regular family worship?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 4.
- (3) If separated, divorced, or remarried, what are the circumstances?—*sfl* chap. 8 pars. 8-9; chap. 12 pars. 10-12, 70-75.

### 3. Field Service Activity

- (1) Meaningful, zealous share?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 3; *od* chap. 6 par. 6.
- (2) Restricted share because of other spiritual obligations or theocratic projects?—See [17:25](#); *sfl* chap. 23 pars. 25-26.

### 4. Tested as to Fitness

- (1) Shows himself to be a spiritual man?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 3.
- (2) Cares well for responsibilities?—*od* chap. 6 par. 9; *km* 5/00 p. 8.

### 5. Viewpoint of Elders

- (1) Is recommendation unanimous?—*sfl* chap. 1 pars. 10-11.

### 6. Past Difficulties

- (1) Reproved within the past three years or reinstated within the past five years?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 7-8; *w90* 9/1 p. 24 par. 5.
- (2) Stopped serving as an elder or a ministerial servant within the last five years?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 10.
- (3) Notoriety of past wrongdoing subsided? Definite improvement in area of previous weakness?—See [17:13](#); *sfl* chap. 8 pars. 7-8, 10, 26; chap. 12 pars. 11-12; chap. 14 par. 24.
- (4) Viewed pornography?—*sfl* chap. 13 pars. 5-6.
- (5) Accused of child abuse?—*sfl* chap. 14 par. 24.

Before making appointments of **elders**, please *also* consider the following:

### 1. Shepherding

(1) Received training by elders?—See [17:10](#); *sfl* chap. 25 pars. 4-6.

## 2. Teaching

(1) Able to teach from platform or one-on-one?—See [17:4](#); *w90* 9/1 p. 27 par. 20.

## 3. Past Difficulties

(1) If he was deleted as an elder, should he serve first for a time as a ministerial servant?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 10; chap. 13 par. 8.

Before **deleting** an elder or a ministerial servant, please consider the following:

1. Sufficient Scriptural disqualification?—*sfl* chap. 8 pars. 22-30.

2. Two witnesses to establish accusation?

3. Extenuating circumstances that limit his participation in the field ministry, meeting attendance, and so forth?—See [17:25](#); *sfl* chap. 23 pars. 25-26.

4. Sufficient firm but loving counsel given by elders?—See [17:28](#); *sfl* chap. 8 par. 31.

5. Basis to show extra consideration because of faithfully serving for many years?—*sfl* chap. 8 par. 31.

6. Brother agrees with decision?—See [17:24](#).

**APPENDIX D SAMPLE LETTER OF APPOINTMENT AND DELETION**

**JOHN C. OVERSEER, NY-61**  
123 Kingdom Hall Dr., Anywhere, NY 12345-6789

September 6, 2020

BODY OF ELDERS  
CENTRAL CONGREGATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, ANYWHERE, NY  
C/O DAVID COORDINATOR  
345 MAIN ST  
ANYWHERE NY 12345-6789

Re: Appointments and Deletions of Elders and Ministerial Servants

Dear Brothers:

This is to confirm that I have appointed the following **elder(s)**:

**John Andrew Elder (CBOE)**  
**James Alan Olderman, Jr.**

This is to confirm that I have appointed the following **ministerial servant(s)**:

**David Robert Servant**

This is to confirm that I have **deleted** the following brother(s) from serving as an elder or a ministerial servant:

**Michael James Publisher**

Please accept an expression of my warm Christian love.

Your brother,

*John C. Overseer*

John C. Overseer, NY-61

## APPENDIX E HEALTH CARE

1. Our loving Father, Jehovah God, greatly values all of his loyal servants, and he intimately knows and remembers every detail about each of them. (Matt. 10:30) Regardless of your age, he sees the challenges you face and your spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. Through his spirit and organization, he continually gives power to the weak. (2 Cor. 12:7-10) As you read of faithful ones in the Scriptures and how they suffered for a variety of reasons, you see how Jehovah strengthened them to endure by infusing them with power. He did it for them, and he will do it for you.

2. No doubt you deeply appreciate the generosity of our worldwide brotherhood, whose donations pay for most of your health-care costs. Since caring for your health is primarily a personal responsibility, how can you show appreciation for the provisions made for you? Some ways are by making good choices regarding diet and exercise, by not being overly competitive in sports activities, by getting proper rest, and by maintaining good dental hygiene. Another way is by being open to quality health-care options to which you may not be accustomed.

3. Working under the direction of the Branch Committee, the Health Care Department (HCD) works diligently to find quality health care while at the same time considering how to reduce the cost of such. For example, government health-care programs are used to provide good-quality care to circuit overseers whenever possible. At times, negotiations for discounts are arranged with specific health-care providers. When needed, the Global Health Care Office is consulted regarding viable options in another city or country. At times, good-quality health care outside your branch territory may be identified and approved by a Governing Body committee. If you choose a more expensive treatment plan or provider, you may be responsible to pay for the difference in cost. Additionally, *before* the branch office covers costs for procedures, medications, or diagnostic tests, it would generally be expected that these would have been prescribed or ordered by a licensed health-care professional and that approval from the branch office would have been obtained prior to any treatment. Contact the HCD at your branch office for any questions regarding how to access approved health care.

4. In some cases, circuit overseers serving in another land request health-care appointments during a visit to their home country and, when cost is not an issue, these are often approved. However, there are a number of personal advantages to utilizing local health-care providers when they are available, the foremost of which is receiving care without delay. Another benefit is not using your personal time away for health-care appointments, which takes away from much-needed rest and time spent with family and friends. Therefore, you may find it advantageous to discuss the matter first with your branch office and request a list of good-quality health-care providers near your assignment. We realize that at times there may be extenuating circumstances that necessitate requesting care in other countries. Nevertheless, we ask that you consider this direction before making such a request and remember that approvals for a request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If you decide to request care outside of your branch territory, please seek approval *well in advance* of scheduling any travel.

5. If a health emergency arises while you are visiting another country, get the emergency care you need and contact the HCD at the branch office that oversees that country as soon as possible for assistance. It would also be appropriate for you to update the branch office that oversees the territory where you are serving as soon as possible so that they may assist you with any other pending matters related to your emergency. If you feel it necessary to



obtain the contact information of a branch office whose territory you will be visiting, you may obtain this from your branch office.