



# WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

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SA January 1, 1991

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

From time to time we receive letters asking for guidance on the subject of accommodation for circuit overseers. We appreciate your concern for their physical welfare and your sincere desire to help them stay in this privileged role of fulltime service. We sought guidance from the Governing Body and now wish to convey to all of you their views, as follows:-

1. It is interesting to observe what The Watchtower said on this matter many years ago in its issue of March 1, 1916, under the heading "Entertainment of the Pilgrims": "All friends of the Truth properly feel it an honor and a privilege to entertain the Pilgrim brethren during their brief stays. However, the interests of the Truth and the comfort of the Pilgrims should also be considered. The Elders, or, under their direction, the Class Secretary, should see to it that Pilgrims are entertained in homes where they will not be a burden and where they will be comfortable. Those who travel and preach continuously are more or less under a nervous strain and need comfort, proper rest and some degree of privacy for meditation. All having the interests of the work at heart should, therefore, cheerfully cooperate that the Pilgrim may be entertained in a home where accommodations are suitable. The entire Class would surely be disgraced if the Society's representative were otherwise treated. We are sure that only thoughtlessness on the part of some has made this suggestion necessary."

2. When you open up your hearts and your homes and provide suitable accommodations for your travelling overseers and their wives (if married) during their stay with you, it is deeply appreciated. While they do not expect or desire to be an expensive burden, travelling overseers do appreciate and need clean places in which to stay. Some have health problems or allergies and it is good for the presiding overseer to enquire of the travelling overseer as to any needs in this regard.

3. It would be beneficial for the presiding overseer and another elder to check out the accommodation to be offered to make sure all is in good order and is in accord with what is considered herein. Travelling overseers have a full week of theocratic activity in each congregation. Careful advance arrangements to provide appropriate accommodations will help them fulfil their responsibilities in a fine way. It is good to realize that it is not easy to live in a different place each week, year after year. However, there are little things we can do that will make their stay pleasant.

4. Each of us needs privacy so that we can study, meditate, and get necessary work done. Accommodations in private homes should be selected accordingly. And while our brothers enjoy the company of the travelling overseer and his wife, and we are sure they enjoy yours, they need adequate time to themselves. Sufficient rest is vital if they are to do their assigned work the next day. Travelling overseers follow a schedule that allows them to best serve the spiritual interests of the entire congregation.

5. Arrangements should be made for them to have a place to hang up their clothes. Also clean drawers should be made available, if at all possible. A chair and a table for writing on or on which a typewriter may be placed will be helpful. (Compare 2 Kings 4:10.) Travelling overseers very much appreciate this.

6. As to meals, nothing elaborate needs to be arranged. Travelling overseers deeply appreciate your hospitality and will gladly eat what you provide. Wholesome, nourishing food enables them to feel well physically and to keep up with their schedule. Of course, if they are ill or have health problems, they may not be able to eat certain foods.

7. A number of thoughtful presiding overseers have made it a point at the end of the travelling overseer's stay to ask him about the accommodation which had been arranged for him. This is a good practice and we commend you brothers for showing this extra concern. It is not necessary, and it may not be wise, to have the circuit overseer stay in a different home each time he visits the congregation. For example, if there is only one home that is truly suitable, then it may be best for him to stay there each visit if the householder is willing and it is convenient, rather than 'rotating' him to different homes where the facilities may be inadequate. - 3 John 8.

8. The Society, the travelling overseers and their wives very much appreciate your hospitality. (Rom. 12:13) Truly this is a Christian course and enables the travelling overseer to get the most accomplished and to enjoy a warm relationship with the brothers.

9. If a congregation is unable to provide room and meals and cannot assist in caring for expenses of accommodation, food, and so forth, the travelling overseer may submit his expenses for these items to the Society for reimbursement. At no time does the Society wish the travelling overseer and his wife to be a financial burden to any congregation. - 2 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thess. 2:9.

### Circuit Flats

10. In some metropolitan areas suitable and convenient accommodation may not be available in the homes of the brothers. In these areas the collective body of elders in the circuit or district may decide that it would be more advantageous for the circuit or district to provide a modest reasonably-priced flat for the use of the travelling overseer. Likewise, in some densely-populated areas where cities are fairly close together, it may be more convenient and cost effective for the circuit or district to provide a modest flat for the travelling overseer.

11. In some areas where the distance between congregations or circuits is relatively great, the use of a flat may be impractical. It may be that a number of congregations in an area would be hard-pressed to provide the funds to maintain a flat for their travelling overseer. In such cases the travelling overseer can stay in suitable homes in the circuit. Some have lovingly made their homes available for two or more weeks at a time where circumstances make this practical.

12. Where congregations are willing and able to provide accommodations in the homes of the brothers, as outlined above, it would not be appropriate for travelling overseers to suggest or encourage the brothers to provide a flat. If, after prayerfully considering the factors involved, the collective body of elders in the circuit or district decides that a flat for the travelling overseer is practical and cost effective, the Society has no objection if the elders make such arrangements.

13. A congregation, or several congregations, may have in mind building a new Kingdom Hall or renovating an existing one. They may wish to include a flat which could be used by a travelling overseer. This is a matter for the collective body(ies) of elders using the Kingdom Hall to determine. Whilst construction expenses would be the responsibility of the congregation(s) directly involved in the project, others may assist. In any event, no solicitation should be made of other congregations, the circuit, or individuals to fund the construction. Before a flat is included in the project the congregation(s) using the hall would need to consider this matter by resolution. If the circuit desires to support the project with work and funds, this is left up to the collective body of elders in the circuit.

14. If the collective body of elders in the circuit or the district wishes to work out arrangements with the elders of the congregation(s) owning a flat so that the travelling overseer could use the flat then a contribution, agreeable to the congregations involved, to assist with the expenses should be offered by the circuit(s) for use of the flat.

15. It would not be proper for the travelling overseer to suggest or request an expensive flat and thus place an unnecessary financial burden on his brothers.

We believe these guidelines are sufficient to answer all of your questions relating to travelling overseers' accommodation and expenses. Try to understand the principles involved and then use good judgement in applying them locally according to your own circumstances. Where a flat or other accommodation is available we would be pleased to hear of this so that we can direct to your circuit brothers who will benefit the most from such a loving arrangement.

Thank you for giving prayerful consideration to the various points covered in this letter. We know you will do the very best you can to provide suitable, relaxing accommodation for your travelling overseers.

We take this occasion to send you our warm Christian love and best wishes as you zealously care for the 'flock of God' under your oversight.

Your brothers,

*Watch Tower B. & J. Society*  
OF BRITAIN