



# WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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## TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

What a joy it is to see the activities of Jehovah's people worldwide increasing year by year. It is evident that we have been experiencing the fulfillment of Isaiah 60:22: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time." As a result of the continuous increase, there is a need for more Kingdom Halls and other facilities.

In the United States, as well as in many other western lands, the need for Kingdom Halls has been met to a great extent by the use of loans from the Society's Kingdom Hall Fund and by the operation of Regional Building Committees. The nearly 40,000 being baptized each year in this country represents hundreds of congregations, and plans for new Kingdom Halls are always in the process of being made. Since 1983, when the Society Kingdom Hall Fund was put into operation, financial assistance and loans from this fund have made it possible to construct 1,444 new Kingdom Halls. During the three-year period from 1992-94, 664 new Kingdom Halls were constructed, and 537 were remodeled. It is commendable that our brothers have kept supporting this arrangement, resulting in the advancement of true worship.—Isa. 54:3, 4.

As you are no doubt aware, property values have increased, especially in many large metropolitan areas. Costs for building materials and equipment have gone up, even though effort has been made to economize and to make the brothers aware of the need to be cost efficient. This is extremely important in view of the need for funds to be used wisely for Kingdom Hall construction not only in the United States but also in other countries. Developments in this field require that we take a closer look at expenditures as well as the entire field of Kingdom Hall construction and remodeling.

To help contain costs of constructing new Kingdom Halls, the Society recently developed a revised set of Kingdom Hall designs on CAD (computer-aided design/drafting), and these have been provided for use by Regional Building Committees in the United States. Considerable time was spent in developing these plans, and it is hoped that their use will reduce the cost of architectural drawings. The plans developed through the regional committees in the future will be based on these conventional designs. In the past, some congregations have paid out large sums of money, in some cases up to even tens of thousands of dollars, for plans from an architect. Using the Society-provided plans should help to reduce the cost of plans as well as the construction costs of the building, since the designs are modest. It would be good for all bodies of elders to use these designs as made available locally through your assigned Regional Building Committee as well as to respond readily to suggestions offered by the regional committee members to eliminate embellishments and other labor-intensive or expensive features in Kingdom Halls.

## FUNDS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION PROJECTS

Whereas the increase in the number of publishers has been quite modest in the United States, there has been tremendous growth in South America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Especially in lands where bans have recently been removed, we are facing problems because thousands of publishers are active and there is a need for branch facilities and there are only a few Kingdom Halls. Hence, the Society has been spending generous amounts of money to support Kingdom Hall construction in South America, Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world. This outlay of funds has been supplemented by support from many of the larger branches.

Funds for construction of new Kingdom Halls in the United States have been provided by the Society's Kingdom Hall Fund. This has been successful because of the generous contributions made to the fund; another factor is that congregations have been regular in repaying their loans. Renovation of Kingdom Halls has been financed generally by other funds of the Society. However, in view of the circumstances in many lands, consideration must be given to ways of providing more financial assistance where there are pressing needs. Therefore, it appears to be the time for moderation in planning for the remodeling of existing Halls and the construction of new Kingdom Halls in the United States so that it will be possible to channel more of the Society's funds into meeting critical needs in other countries. We would like to arrange that both remodeling and new construction be limited to what the Society's Kingdom Hall Fund can support each year. This will allow for more of the Society's other funds to be used in foreign countries. A considerable amount of money will still be made available to meet reasonable loan requests for both new construction and remodeling of Kingdom Halls in this country. Our aim is to economize on Kingdom Hall projects and possibly to delay some renovation projects for a while if there is insufficient money available in the Society Kingdom Hall Fund to care for approved loan applications. In this way other funds of the Society can be used to finance Kingdom Hall construction as well as to construct new branches in other lands. When other branches are able to help, they also give generous support to such projects.

## WHAT ELDERS CAN DO

What can you elders do to support this arrangement? For one thing, endeavor to keep your Kingdom Halls in good repair. Make good use of what you have by considering having an additional congregation use the present hall rather than immediately starting on a new project because a new congregation is formed. If distance, rate of growth, and other factors are favorable, having two or three congregations use a hall is a very economical use of the property. It may even be practical for four congregations to use a Kingdom Hall if their territory is nearby. Especially is this the case in areas in some large cities with excessively high property costs.

Carefully count the cost, and carefully weigh the need before rushing to remodel your Kingdom Hall. It is not necessary to bring it "up to standard" to the point of being comparable in appearance with recently constructed halls. It is not feasible to bring all older halls up to the standard of the newer ones. If a Kingdom Hall is in good repair and is meeting the needs of the brothers, remodeling may not be necessary. This applies even if the upholstery, the carpeting, or the decor of the Kingdom Hall does not look new or is of a style that is not now popular. As long as the building is well maintained, the

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rest rooms are adequate and clean, and the hall is large enough to accommodate those attending, it may not be required to bring things up to code at the present time or to remodel extensively.

On the other hand, if, for example, the roof is leaking, then something needs to be done. If carpeting, upholstery, or other features of the Kingdom Hall do not properly represent a meeting place of Jehovah's organization, then some refurbishing needs to be done. The work should be kept to a modest level instead of making it an expensive project. Whether remodeling or doing new construction, keep in mind that saving \$10,000 to \$15,000 on any project could finance a new Kingdom Hall in a developing country where there is a great need. In some parts of the world, the equivalent of as little as \$3,000 will provide an adequate Kingdom Hall. When congregations in the United States save by trimming costs, they, in effect, contribute toward providing needed halls for brothers in other countries.

Some have felt that their local need was so urgent that they have financed projects through banks or by means of private loans, even with higher interest rates. It has been our experience that within two or three years, as economic factors change, such congregations come to the Society for help in refinancing their loan. This places an additional burden on Society funds. If we limit new Kingdom Hall construction and renovation projects to what the Society's Kingdom Hall Fund can support each year, there will be less demand on other resources of the Society.

A fine principle was stated in paragraph 11 of the insert in the February 1992 *Our Kingdom Ministry*: "Even though a congregation may have accumulated funds sufficient to include extra features in its own Kingdom Hall without seeking a loan, consideration should be given to using conventional designs and to building modestly. This makes additional funds available for use in other theocratic endeavors."

Additionally, we do not want to impose unreasonable demands upon volunteers who have lovingly assisted with construction of Kingdom Halls. Perhaps by balancing things out, there may be a somewhat slower pace to the construction program in the United States. This may allow for some relief, so that those regularly volunteering for Kingdom Hall construction will have more time to handle theocratic responsibilities in the congregations and to take the lead in caring for their families.

In calling these matters to your attention, we feel that all concerned will cooperate in helping to manage properly the finances Jehovah makes available through the generosity of the brothers.

We pray for Jehovah's continued blessing and direction on all of our efforts to work for the advancement of Kingdom interests worldwide. Please be assured that your contributions are very much appreciated.

Please accept our warm love and best wishes.

Your brothers and fellow servants,

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