



# WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

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TA:TSA March 30, 1998

TO BODIES OF ELDERS IN  
ENGLAND AND WALES

Dear Brothers:

Re: Congregation Constitution – Business Meetings

Article 7 of the Congregation Constitution states that the body of elders will meet for a business meeting at least three times a year. It would be appropriate for the business meetings to be part of two of the quarterly elders' meetings and the third business meeting to be held in conjunction with the circuit overseer's visit. The purpose of the meetings is to satisfy legal requirements and they should be kept as simple as possible. Items of a spiritual nature should not be discussed or recorded at these meetings. Following the conclusion of the business meeting the normal quarterly elders' meeting can commence.

We have enclosed the following:

1. **Agenda For Second Business Meeting.** We suggest that all bodies of elders hold this meeting in April 1998, even if no circuit visit is scheduled or you are not due for your quarterly elders' meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to record what amounts to an original database of all the congregation business details relevant to the Congregation Constitution at the date of the business meeting. It will be necessary for the business meeting to consider all the items shown on the agenda and to record the relevant details. Subsequent business meetings need only deal with the relevant items where there are changes to the details which have been recorded at the second business meeting or to deal with any new matters arising since this meeting.
2. **Format of Minutes of Second Business Meeting.** This is a draft format of what can be stated under each item of the agenda. This will indicate to you what information should be recorded and discussed.
3. **Example of Minutes of Second Business Meeting.** Please note that this is for your guidance only and a fictitious congregation has been created for this purpose. The draft Minutes indicate the type of information that should be recorded in the congregation's Minutes Book. As the Charity Commission can call for copies of all business meeting Minutes and the congregation accounts, it is important that the wording you use in the Minutes consistently reflects the language and requirements of the Congregation Constitution and in this way the Charity Commission will be satisfied that the legal obligations are being strictly adhered to.

4. **Draft Agenda for Third and Subsequent Business Meetings.** This draft agenda covers all items discussed in the second business meeting. However, if there have been no changes affecting an item it is not necessary for this to be put on the agenda and discussed. For this reason, subsequent business meetings can be relatively short and only where there are additions or adjustments need an item be put on the agenda. From time to time there may be other items not shown on the draft agenda which should be added to the agenda. However, where possible, additional items can be incorporated under the headings shown on the draft agenda.

For the business meeting to proceed it is necessary to comply with Article 7, point 2, of the Constitution. To avoid having to postpone the meeting because too few persons are present, it would be practical to have brothers confirm beforehand that they will attend the meeting.

Please refer to our letter TA:TSB October 10, 1997, "To All Bodies of Elders (All Congregations in England and Wales) Re: Congregation Constitution – Meetings" for the format relating to the Minutes of the meeting of the body of elders.<sup>1</sup> There is no objection to the presiding overseer and secretary preparing beforehand draft minutes of the meeting containing all the information required, and passing beforehand a copy of these to all the elders. Then the draft minutes can be read at the meeting. Any changes to the draft minutes can be made by signing in the margin by the alteration. This should simplify and speed up the business meetings.

The presiding overseer, along with the congregation secretary, should ensure that following the second business meeting subsequent business meetings are held three times annually, if possible coinciding with the quarterly elders' meetings and one visit of the circuit overseer.

We hope the enclosed information will be helpful to you in discharging your legal obligations, while at the same time giving priority to the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

Please accept our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*Watch Tower B. & J. Society*

OF BRITAIN

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<sup>1</sup> Some elders are automatically disqualified from serving as Charity Trustees by reason of being subject to a current bankruptcy order, or having been convicted of an offence involving dishonesty or deception. Elders who are in this category can attend the business meeting but are unable to vote on the issues in question. If an elder is in either of the latter two categories the Congregation Service Committee should contact the Society.—See letter to elders reference LEA December 4, 1997.