



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

October 12, 2010

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Wedding procedures and Scriptural freedom to remarry

Dear Brothers:

Much fine direction on the subject of wedding procedures and Scriptural freedom to remarry has been included in chapter 12, paragraphs 4-17, of the *Shepherding* textbook. Thus, the letter dated May 15, 1988, to all bodies of elders should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed. However, please note the following additional points that are not included in the *Shepherding* textbook.

Legal requirements: A Kingdom Hall in England and Wales may be certified with the Registrar General as a place of religious worship. It may then be registered for the solemnization of marriages. Application should be made through the local Superintendent Registrar. It is not lawful to solemnize a marriage in a building that is not registered for the solemnization of marriages. There is no legal requirement for a minister who performs weddings to register and provide proof of his ordination to any authority. The presence of a minister is not essential to the contracting of a valid marriage in a registered building. However, the marriage must be solemnized according to some rite or ceremony, in our case that specified by the branch; and an ‘authorized person,’ either a brother approved as such by the authorities or a secular registrar, must be present to care for the legal formalities. Marriage law in Scotland is a little different and all concerned have received very specific information on procedure. While a qualified elder can deliver the marriage talk, it is only the approved marriage celebrant (the elder approved by the Registrar General in Edinburgh) who will, in the presence of the couple getting married, handle the responses. This is the actual legally-required ceremony, to be performed only by the marriage celebrant. In unusual circumstances, the elders should determine the exact requirements and then, if necessary, write to the branch office requesting assistance.

Establishing Scriptural freedom to remarry: It is the responsibility of the individual to produce convincing evidence to establish Scriptural freedom to remarry. The individual, not the elders, bears the responsibility to gather such evidence. If the individual contemplating remarriage admits that he has been guilty of fornication himself after his mate divorced him, the marriage would be considered ended in God’s sight. Or if his former mate has remarried or admitted to committing fornication since the divorce, this too would provide adequate evidence to free one Scripturally. (*w80* 1/15 pp. 30-31) Elders should be very careful when it comes to giving direction on whether an individual is Scripturally free and should consult with the branch office on any questions.

Each elder should make the following notation next to paragraph 4 and paragraph 9 in chapter 12 of the *Shepherding* textbook: “See letter dated October 12, 2010, to all bodies of elders.”

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We pray that Jehovah will bless you as you endeavour to fulfil the weighty responsibilities placed upon you as shepherds of the flock. Please accept an expression of our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN

cc: Travelling overseers

PS to the secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the congregation copy of *Index to Letters—For Bodies of Elders* (S-22) at this time as well.