

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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May 16, 2013

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS AND TRAVELING OVERSEERS

Re: Kingdom Hall dedications

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letter dated November 3, 2004, regarding Kingdom Hall dedications. That letter should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed. As the life-saving message of the Bible reaches the far corners of the earth, an increasing number of lovers of truth rejoice at their prospect of 'going to the house of Jehovah' for weekly Christian gatherings. (Ps. 122:1; Heb. 10:24) Inasmuch as thousands more keep accepting God's loving invitation, new Kingdom Halls are needed and older Kingdom Halls need to be renovated. Hence, we are pleased to provide updated direction that should be read carefully by all elders and followed when a Kingdom Hall dedication program is arranged.

Dedication speaker: If the congregation(s) would like a Bethel brother to give the dedication talk, a duly signed letter should be sent to the branch office. A specific speaker may be requested if desired. However, if the specified Bethel brother is not available, a different Bethel speaker will not be provided unless the elders indicate in their letter that they are willing to accept someone else assigned by the branch office. When writing, please use the official name and number of the host congregation.

Travel expenses for the speaker (and his wife, if he is married and she is invited) are to be cared for by the congregation(s) involved. Some congregations may choose to have the local circuit overseer or district overseer give the dedication talk if one of those brothers is available on the date desired. If so, the dedication program would have to be scheduled at a time that does not conflict with the traveling overseer's regular schedule for serving a congregation or a circuit. The traveling overseer's schedule is not to be adjusted so as to care for this privilege. As another option, a qualified local elder could be asked to serve as the dedication speaker. If the elders decide to invite a traveling brother or a local elder, they do not need to write the branch office to request approval. However, a brief note should be sent to the branch office to report the scheduled event. Additionally, when a Bethel speaker is invited there is no need to include a traveling overseer on the dedication program. Local elders should handle the other customary parts on the program. Only one dedication speaker is needed.

There may be times when a Bethel brother assigned to serve as guest speaker at a special assembly day program would be able also to give the dedication talk if the new Kingdom Hall is located in close proximity to the assembly venue. In some cases, the special assembly day assignment is for just one day, either Saturday or Sunday, and the Bethel speaker could be available on the alternate day. Even if the assignment includes a special assembly day program on each day, it may still be possible for the brother to give a Kingdom Hall dedication talk on one of the two evenings. The Kingdom Hall being dedicated would have to be close by, and the congregation(s) would need to be in agreement with such a limited dedication program.

Generally, once a speaker is confirmed—whether local or from Bethel—the coordinator of the body of elders, or another local elder of his choice, will communicate with the visiting brother about the details of his itinerary and lodging needs.

Program format: Modesty should be reflected in the format of the dedication program. The following guidelines should prove to be helpful in this regard.

- (1) Generally, the dedication talk is presented only at the Kingdom Hall being dedicated. However, there may be times when circumstances would warrant an exception. For example, when several congregations are involved, it may not be possible to include all the publishers who worked on the building if only one auditorium is used. Or the dedication speaker may be a member of the Branch Committee. In those instances, the original request letter should stipulate that the local elders feel it would be practical to tie in a neighboring Kingdom Hall so that most could benefit from the dedication program. The location of the additional Kingdom Hall should be specified.
- (2) Kingdom Hall dedication programs are usually held on a Saturday. However, if the dedication will be on Sunday instead of the Public Meeting and the regular congregation *Watchtower* Study, the program should feature a 30-minute abbreviated *Watchtower* Study similar to what is arranged during the visit of the circuit overseer.
- (3) Any slide or video presentation should be limited to about fifteen minutes in length, including just a few of the main aspects of building the Kingdom Hall. This presentation should be dignified and its content in good taste, since the program is an occasion to praise Jehovah for his blessing on the project.
- (4) When a Kingdom Hall or Kingdom Hall complex accommodates more than one congregation, **all the bodies of elders should be equally represented** at the discussions of the dedication arrangements, including the request for a speaker, whether he is local or from Bethel. When congregations are not all of the same language, the bodies of elders must agree as to which language will be used for the dedication talk and prayer. In those instances, requesting a bilingual speaker, if available, would likely be the more practical option. A second program can be arranged later on Saturday, or on Sunday, for the benefit of the language group selected to attend at the later time. The main difference between the two programs would be that a prayer specifically dedicating the building to Jehovah's worship will not be offered during the second program. The speaker would explain that the building was dedicated during the earlier program.
- (5) When two programs are scheduled to be given in two different languages, the speaker may present during the second program the same talk he gave earlier. If he is not bilingual, arrangements should be made for a qualified interpreter to assist.
- (6) The program need not be longer than two—or two and a half—hours. Generally, after an opening song and prayer, the chairman will make a few brief introductory comments. This will be followed by a part including a brief history of the congregation(s) involved, possibly featuring a couple of interviews of longtime Witnesses who have had a share in the growth of the Kingdom work in the area. Then, another part could include some local experiences related to how Jehovah's blessing was evident throughout the project. A slide or video presentation 15 minutes in length or less, showing only a few key elements of the construction project, would also be appropriate. (As outlined above, if the dedication is scheduled in place of the regular Public Meeting and *Watchtower* Study, an abbreviated 30-minute *Watchtower* Study should be slated at this point.) Last-

ly, after another song and a few brief announcements, the visiting speaker will be invited to present the dedication talk, which may last from 45 to 60 minutes. The entire program will conclude with song and prayer. Please bear in mind that any experiences or interviews during the program should be to the point. All participants should be reminded that emphasis is to be placed on Jehovah and the effect that the project had on the community and the brothers, not on technical aspects of how the building was constructed.—Ps. 127:1.

- (7) When two or more Kingdom Halls in one building are being dedicated, only one dedication program is needed for the entire complex.
- (8) A tour of the new Kingdom Hall, or an open house as it is often called, may be arranged, if practical, for a few hours before the dedication program. But if desired, or if more practical, this activity could be arranged prior to the date of the dedication. If felt appropriate, light snacks or refreshments may be served. However, no alcoholic beverages are permitted. Often this is a fine opportunity to invite businessmen and officials in the community who may have become familiar with the construction of the building. It is appropriate for an elder to be assigned to escort such ones and to make their tour and visit informative and pleasant. A similar provision may be made for other guests as needed.
- (9) Participants on the Kingdom Hall dedication program should be exemplary dedicated active Jehovah's Witnesses. Hence, there is no provision for government officials or others to address the audience from the platform on any occasion, just as is the case at all of our theocratic gatherings. If an official wishes to make a brief speech or offer expressions of appreciation at a dedication program, he may be received hospitably and given audience by a few responsible brothers in a separate room before or after the program.
- (10) Most Bethel speakers and traveling overseers will have a service talk prepared for this type of an occasion. In any event, a Kingdom Hall dedication talk should clearly explain how Kingdom Halls are used for Jehovah's worship. Topics such as the following could be developed: What it means to dedicate a Kingdom Hall, How Kingdom Halls are used by Jehovah, or How we show appreciation for the Kingdom Hall. Many other appropriate topics may be found in the *Watch Tower Publications Index* or *Watchtower Library* under "Kingdom Halls."

Renovated Kingdom Halls: Questions have been raised as to whether renovated Kingdom Halls should be dedicated. If only minor changes are involved, there is no need for a dedication program. There is no such thing as a rededication or reaffirmation. However, at times the floor plan and general appearance of the Kingdom Hall are significantly changed. Considerable restructuring may have taken place. For example, restrooms, classrooms, the stage, and literature and magazine counters were perhaps changed or relocated. Such major changes have, in effect, made for a new Kingdom Hall. In such cases a dedication program would be in order.

Seating: Even when two programs are scheduled, it may be that some bodies of elders feel there is a need to limit the number invited to the dedication program because the number of publishers involved would fill the Kingdom Hall beyond its reasonable capacity. However, do not be so restrictive in this regard that the facility will end up not being filled to capacity for the dedication program. Inviting ten to fifteen percent more than the number of seats available often results in a full auditorium forasmuch as some of those invited will not be able to come. Some congregations also invite those who contributed much time, effort, or materials toward the construction work, but

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at times these individuals are unable to attend because of other theocratic commitments. Keep in mind that, occasionally, local city officials also permit the congregation(s) to set up loudspeakers in the Kingdom Hall parking area so that overflow seating can be arranged. In addition, as pointed out earlier, depending on the number of congregations involved, there may be times when a telephone or video tie-in to a neighboring Kingdom Hall would be warranted, especially if the dedication speaker is a member of the Branch Committee. As noted in point 1 above, tying in an additional Kingdom Hall would need to be requested as an exception.

Undoubtedly, more Kingdom Halls will be needed as the harvest work goes on. (John 4:35) We trust this letter will be helpful to you when discussing future Kingdom Hall dedication arrangements so that “all things take place decently and by arrangement.”—1 Cor. 14:40.

Please be assured of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

PS to 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.