

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

2821 Route 22, Patterson, NY 12563-2237 Phone: (845) 306-1100



July 30, 2013

TO ALL CONGREGATION SERVICE COMMITTEES IN THE UNITED STATES BRANCH
TERRITORY

Re: 2014/2015 international conventions

Dear Brothers:

We are pleased to inform you that the Governing Body has approved foreign international conventions in eight countries in 2014/2015. All congregations in the United States branch territory are being invited to participate. Along with this letter we have provided an announcement letter that should be read to your congregation at the next two meetings.

As you will see from the announcement letter to the congregation, arrangements for these international conventions are similar to what has occurred in the past two years in conjunction with special conventions. Significantly, the delegates are free to make their own travel arrangements or use a travel agency we have prearranged to assist. Please note the following instructions.

Applicant requirements: We recommend that the elders familiarize themselves with the content of this letter, the announcement letter, the application, and the *Applicant Instructions*. In particular, it will be crucial for the secretary to become very fluent with all aspects of this arrangement. We ask that the elders be very open with those who are not in good health or are dependent on another person to function. If a person has poor health or frailties due to age or some other handicap, it is best to inform him that he should not apply. In the past, applications have been received from individuals with serious sight or hearing limitations not corrected by glasses or hearing aids. Others suffered from severe obesity and could not walk long distances or stand for extended periods of time. In such cases, long trips under difficult physical conditions could prove harmful to the person's health and may also adversely impact the activities of other delegates. Therefore, all applicants are encouraged to give serious and prayerful consideration to their health limitations and personal safety before applying to become a delegate.

After reviewing carefully the criteria for those eligible to apply as found in the *Applicant Instructions*, the secretary will print out a hard copy application for each person desirous of attending who qualifies in all of the categories stipulated. Also, a copy of the *Applicant Instructions* should be provided to each applicant. An application must be submitted for each person (for example, even for individual members of the same household). These should be completed and submitted to the Congregation Service Committee as soon as possible, but no later than **August 31, 2013**.

Electronic application entry: Once the Congregation Service Committee has approved an applicant, the secretary will enter the information into an electronic form that will be available on jw.org. These should all be entered by **September 16, 2013**. After an application has been entered on jw.org, the secretary will be able to print out the information. Thus, please confirm

with the applicant that his information is correct. If any changes are necessary, please enter them by **September 16, 2013**. Thereafter, the signed hard copy applications should be kept in the congregation file.

Travel groups: Effort will be made to accommodate the requests of those who wish to attend the same convention with family members or friends. However, the size of the group will be limited to no more than eight persons. Those from different congregations may comprise one group. However, they all will receive and submit their applications through their own Congregation Service Committee. One member of the group should be designated to serve as the group contact ***before*** the various members' applications are submitted. Generally a brother will serve as the contact. However, if a group is comprised of sisters-only, one of them may act as the group contact. To be linked together, each applicant (including a marriage mate and other family members in the same household) must use the same travel group identification (group ID). The group contact should request a unique group ID from his secretary. The secretary must obtain a unique group ID from jw.org and provide it to the group contact to include on his application. The group contact is responsible to provide the unique group ID to all others in his group so that they, too, can enter the group ID on their applications. This will ensure that the group will remain associated with each other throughout the process.

Special rooming: ***Confidentially***, we will be asking the host branch office to poll local brothers to determine if some might be able to provide limited rooming provisions in private homes. ***This information is not to be made known to the applicants in general.*** However, if the elders are aware of a longtime, faithful servant, perhaps with many years of full-time service, who is not able to fully finance such a trip, he could be encouraged to apply and the secretary can check the box on the electronic jw.org application that this delegate qualifies for the special rooming provision, if available.

Use of jw.org: A "Convention" tab is part of jw.org. One of the local domain administrators for your congregation should add this role to the user account of your secretary (or another elder assigned to assist). This section will be the primary tool for the electronic entry of applications and for our later posting of selection results. ***The secretary should plan to check this site on a weekly basis*** as additional announcements may be posted.

Delegate selection: Once submitted via jw.org, the applications will be reviewed by the branch office. By means of the "Convention" section of jw.org, the secretary will be notified if individuals in your congregation have been selected to attend one of the conventions. The secretary should then notify the selected delegate and provide him with the selection letter that will be printable from jw.org. The contact information of a prearranged travel agency will be supplied in case the delegate chooses to make use of its services. Also, an *Approved Hotel Listing* for the convention city will be provided with instructions regarding how to reserve hotel accommodations. Delegates are to use only those hotels on this list. Other information will be included, such as the exact dates of the convention and what is expected of the delegate.

Change of status: If an applicant or selected delegate is no longer participating at any time, please ***immediately*** indicate this on jw.org. Or, if an applicant or selected delegate changes congregations, please indicate this on jw.org as well. This will keep our records up-to-date. (In addition, please send a copy of the publisher's hard copy application to his new congregation.)

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If an individual selected to attend a special convention loses his exemplary status and is no longer qualified to attend, the delegate should be thoroughly informed of the reason for your decision. Such a person would be fully responsible for any financial loss associated with his abrupt disqualification as a delegate, even up to the time he was supposed to depart.

“Confirmed” delegates: A selected delegate will not be considered to be a “confirmed” delegate until he has purchased air tickets (or paid a deposit with a travel agent he has chosen to create his itinerary) or paid for his hotel room. Thus, the secretary should maintain regular communication with all selected delegates to determine when they have purchased air tickets (or paid a deposit to a travel agent) or paid for his hotel room. The secretary should then immediately update jw.org Web to reflect this. When the secretary notifies the branch office via jw.org that the delegate has confirmed, thereafter, the host branch office will correspond directly with the delegate to ascertain in which hotel he reserved a room and to inquire as to the delegate’s preferences regarding activities with the local brothers and the days these can be scheduled. Thus, it is in the selected delegate’s best interests if he is able to secure air tickets as early as possible in the process, thus confirming his status as a delegate and that he will indeed be attending.

Questions: The following e-mail address is being provided for the secretary to submit questions not answered in this correspondence or in the *Applicant Instructions*: internationalconventions@jw.org. Such inquiries will be answered in a timely manner. Therefore, it should not be necessary to phone the branch office. If an urgent matter arises, needing immediate attention, the following telephone number may be used: (845) 306-3815.

It is hoped that the above information will be helpful to you while you render assistance to publishers in your congregation who show interest in attending one of the 2014/2015 international conventions. We pray for Jehovah’s rich blessings upon all these arrangements. Please accept an expression of our warm love and best wishes.

Your brothers,
*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah’s Witnesses*

cc: Traveling overseers