

CIRCUIT OVERSEER MEETS WITH ELDERS AND MINISTERIAL SERVANTS PROGRAM FOR MARCH THROUGH AUGUST 2018

Note to the circuit overseer:

Kindly commend the brothers for the interest they take in the congregation. Not all cited texts need to be read, nor must every subpoint be discussed (*tg* 18:9)

Theme: “Stay Awake, . . . Carry On in a Manly Way” (1Co 16:13)

LOVINGLY CARE FOR THE CONGREGATION (4 min.)

There is a need to look out for the spiritual welfare of those in the congregation

Today servants of Jehovah experience persecution, natural disasters, economic problems, chronic sicknesses, and many other problems; we must do all we can to assist them (1Pe 5:9)

We have to be alert to the needs of all in the congregation [**Read 1 Corinthians 16:13**]

Carrying on “in a manly way” means courageously serving Jehovah as Kingdom proclaimers despite challenges (*w02* 4/1 15 ¶3)

How can this be done?

- (1) Stay alert to the needs of each publisher
- (2) Courageously protect the unity of God’s flock
- (3) Maintain unity with other congregations

STAY ALERT TO THE NEEDS OF EACH PUBLISHER (12 min.)

Many congregations are experiencing changes due to expansion and adjustments in territories; publishers are often assigned to different congregations

Feeling neglected may cause sheep to withdraw and stray from the flock

Alert, loving shepherds are quick to detect symptoms of spiritual unsteadiness, and they act decisively

Appointed men must take the initiative to welcome publishers who transfer to their congregation [**Read Romans 15:7; Titus 1:8**]

The Greek word rendered “welcome” means “to receive kindly or hospitably, admit to one’s society and friendship”

When a hospitable host in Bible times received friends into his home, he let them know how happy he was to see them

Incoming publishers may be shy, of little means, advanced in age, in poor health, young with one or no parent in the truth, or married to an unbeliever

[Using the box on page 32 of the November 2017 *Watchtower*, show that it takes energy and initiative to shepherd and show love for the brothers]

Situation: A sister who was assigned to your congregation when adjustments were made approaches you. Her closest friends were assigned to a different congregation. She feels isolated and discouraged

Question: What can elders and ministerial servants do to ensure new publishers feel welcome and a part of the congregation? [Invite them to your home for a meal, some form of recreation, or to join you in family worship]

Elders and ministerial servants making the flock feel welcome brings Jehovah’s blessing (Le 19:33, 34; Ps 41:1)

COURAGEOUSLY PROTECT THE UNITY OF GOD’S FLOCK (12 min.)

Satan is enraged because he knows his end is near and wants to destroy our united brotherhood (Ps 133:1, 3; Re 12:12)

His attacks can include efforts to stir up contentions among Christians or to induce them to isolate themselves from Jehovah's organization

We behave "in a manly way" when we courageously protect the congregation's unity

Jesus has provided "gifts in men" to help unify the congregation (*w10* 9/15 18-19 ¶8-9) [**Read Ephesians 4:8, 11-13**]

Teach in a way that deepens the brothers' understanding of the Scriptures

Lovingly readjust others, including fellow appointed brothers, when they display tendencies that can cause divisions (Pr 27:5)

Be alert to make adjustments if we detect any such inclination starting to develop in ourselves (Ro 15:5, 6)

Christ uses "the faithful and discreet slave" to provide unifying direction to the worldwide congregation (Mt 24:45-47)

Question: When handling congregation matters, why should we not rely solely on how a matter was dealt with in the past?

We should be grateful when a fellow servant reminds us of current direction, regardless of his age or experience

Applying it benefits the congregation, strengthens unity, and avoids confusion

Your efforts will help the congregation remain "harmoniously joined together" (Eph 4:15, 16)

MAINTAIN UNITY WITH OTHER CONGREGATIONS (10 min.)

Appointed men are interested in the welfare of *all* of Jehovah's people [**Read Acts 20:28**]

One area involves Kingdom Halls used by two or more congregations

Question: How do appointed men show concern for all the flock when handling issues involving use of the Kingdom Hall? [Showing consideration for other congregations when choosing meeting times, handling maintenance issues, or in determining the financial support provided by each congregation]

In compliance with local law, one congregation may hold title to a Kingdom Hall

Holding title to a Kingdom Hall does not authorize a congregation to make unilateral decisions regarding the use or upkeep of a building shared by congregations (*w15* 7/15 31 ¶19)

Question: When a Kingdom Hall is used by multiple congregations, what arrangement is used to care for the facility? (*od* 110 ¶8)

Cooperating with the Kingdom Hall Operating Committee promotes unity

Appointed men must show love and honor in their handling of matters involving the Kingdom Hall (Mt 7:12; Jo 13:34, 35; Ro 12:10)

CONCLUSION (2 min.)

It is urgent to discern the needs of others and render assistance (1Jo 3:18)

This world is exerting much pressure on Jehovah's servants

The Devil knows that his time is reduced, and he is desperate

By carrying on "in a manly way," we can all courageously show our desire to build up our brothers and maintain unity (2Co 12:19)

[**At this point, the ministerial servants should be dismissed.** Thereafter, please review with the elders the following information and any other matters needing attention]

GROUP OVERSEER—A WEIGHTY AND IMPORTANT ROLE (10 min.)

Elders serving as group overseers and assistants play a key role in protecting, guiding, and caring for Jehovah's precious sheep [**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8**]

[Review the three primary responsibilities of group overseers, focusing especially on the need to shepherd (*ks10* 2:22-23)]

Because of busy schedules and other family and congregation responsibilities, it can be a challenge to conscientiously shepherd each publisher assigned to your group

Make the importance of shepherding a matter of prayer (Php 2:13; 1Pe 5:2, 3)

Question: If you are not currently serving as a group overseer, what can you do to assist in shepherding?

All elders, whether group overseers or not, should 'know well the appearance of the flock' entrusted to their care (Pr 27:23)

[With regard to when and how to make encouraging shepherding visits, make reference to the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 4, paragraph 6, and the February 2, 2014, letter to all bodies of elders]

Regular, loving shepherding visits can do much to address spiritual weaknesses and improper tendencies before they escalate leading to matters that require judicial action

THEOCRATIC PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING WRONGDOING (10 min.)

Serving as judges representing Jehovah takes courage and is a weighty responsibility (2Ch 19:6, 7; Pr 17:15)

Not following theocratic procedures can result in serious consequences, even causing harm to the sheep (1Ch 13:6-11; 15:12, 13b)

[Review with elders the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 5, paragraphs 1-2 and 37-39]

Situation: A concerned publisher informs the elders that a brother went to a party and got drunk. Two other publishers approach the elders to complain of hearing similar reports, and show the elders pictures from social media of the brother with a beer bottle in his hand. The elders also learn that he was pulled over by police and ticketed for driving while intoxicated

Questions: Should the elders immediately form a judicial committee? What should be done if a matter has not been clearly established but there are serious questions? (Pr 18:13, 17; *ks10* 5:38) If there are doubts about whether a matter merits judicial action, what should the elders do? (*ks10* 5:2) [Highlight the following factors: The accusation may, or may not, meet the Scriptural definition of drunkenness. Legal blood-alcohol limits vary depending on local laws and do not necessarily establish that a person was Biblically drunk. The elders have not yet spoken to the accused. Therefore, the body of elders should assign two brothers to investigate this serious accusation. If questions still remain after a thorough investigation, it is best to contact the Service Department for guidance]

At times, elders may feel pressured to take judicial action due to notoriety and/or bad publicity

Strong suspicions and negative hearsay reports do not establish wrongdoing; elders must adhere to the Scriptural requirements

Courageously trusting in and upholding Jehovah's standard of justice will bring spiritual blessings and help protect the sheep (Ps 33:4, 5, 11, 12)