

KINGDOM HALL DEDICATION GUIDELINES

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1. **Dedication Speaker:** If the bodies of elders using the Kingdom Hall would like to have a qualified Bethel speaker give the dedication talk, a letter from the contact congregation should be sent to the Service Department. The letter should plainly state that all the bodies of elders agree with the request. A specific speaker may be requested. However, the elders should indicate in their letter whether they are willing to accept someone else assigned by the branch office if the specified Bethel brother is not available.

2. Some congregations may choose to have their circuit overseer give the dedication talk. If he is available, the dedication program would have to be scheduled at a time that does not conflict with the circuit overseer's regular schedule for serving a congregation or a circuit. The circuit overseer's schedule is not to be adjusted in order 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 circuit overseer or a local elder, they do not need to write the branch office to request approval. However, the Service Department should be informed of the event. Additionally, when a Bethel speaker is invited, there is no need to include a circuit overseer on the dedication program. Local elders should handle the other parts on the program. Only one dedication speaker is needed.

3. There may be times when a brother assigned to serve as the branch representative at a circuit assembly would also be able to give the dedication talk. In some cases, the assembly assignment is for just one day, either Saturday or Sunday, and the branch representative could be available on the alternate day. Even if the assignment includes a circuit assembly on each day, it may still be possible for the brother to give the dedication talk on one of the two evenings. However, the Kingdom Hall being dedicated would have to be close by, and the congregations would need to agree on having a limited dedication program.

4. Once a speaker is confirmed—whether local or from Bethel—the coordinator of the body of elders or another local elder, will communicate with the speaker about the details of his itinerary and lodging needs. Travel expenses for the speaker and his wife, if he is married, are to be cared for by the congregations involved.

5. **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 invite all the publishers who worked on the building if only one auditorium is used. In such an instance, the original request letter should stipulate that the local elders feel that it would be practical to tie in a neighboring Kingdom Hall so that more could benefit from the dedication program. The location of the additional Kingdom Hall should be specified.
- (2) When a Kingdom Hall or a 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 on which language will be used for the dedication talk and prayer. In those instances, it would likely be practical to request a bilingual speaker, if one is available.

A second program can be arranged for later that same day or on the following day 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 would not be offered during the second program. The speaker would explain that the building was dedicated during the earlier program.

- (3) When two programs are scheduled to be given in two different languages, the speaker may present the same talk for both programs. If he is not bilingual, arrangements should be made for a qualified interpreter to assist.
- (4) The program should generally be two and a half hours or less. After an opening song and prayer, the chairman will make a few brief introductory comments. This will be followed by a part outlining a brief history of the congregations involved, possibly featuring a well-rehearsed group interview of two or three longtime Witnesses who have had a share in the growth of the Kingdom work in the area. The next part could include some local experiences related to how Jehovah's blessing was evident throughout the project. It would be appropriate to include a dignified video or photograph presentation showing a few key elements of the construction project. The video or photograph presentation should last no longer than 15 minutes. (If the dedication is scheduled in place of the weekend meeting, a 30-minute abbreviated *Watchtower* Study similar to what is arranged during the visit of the circuit overseer should be held.) After another song and a few brief announcements, the dedication speaker will be invited to present the dedication talk, which may last from 45 to 60 minutes, followed by the dedication prayer. 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.

Sample Program

10 min: Opening song, prayer, and brief comments by chairman

20 min: History of work in the local area. (Includes group interview of two or three longtime Witnesses, if available)

30-40 min: Construction project and experiences. (May include interviews with key workers)

10 min: Song, announcements, and greetings

45-60 min: Dedication talk and prayer. (If interpreted, additional time may be needed)

10 min: Closing song and prayer

- (5) When two or more Kingdom Halls in a complex are being dedicated, only one dedication program is needed.
- (6) A tour or an open house of the new Kingdom Hall may be arranged prior to the day of the dedication or for a few hours before the dedication program. If appropriate, light snacks or refreshments may be served. However, no alcoholic beverages are permitted. Often this is a fine opportunity to invite businessmen, officials in the community, and others who have become familiar with the construction of the building. It is appropriate to assign an elder to escort such ones to help make their tour and visit informative and pleasant.
- (7) Participants on the Kingdom Hall dedication program should be exemplary dedicated publishers. Hence, there is no provision for government officials or others to address the audience during any part of the program, 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.

- (8) Most Bethel speakers and circuit overseers will have a service talk prepared for this type of 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 does it mean to dedicate a Kingdom Hall?, How are Kingdom Halls used by Jehovah?, or How can we show appreciation for the Kingdom Hall? Many other appropriate topics may be found by researching our publications.

6. **Renovated Kingdom Halls:** If only minor changes have been made, there is no need for a dedication program. There is no such thing as a rededication or reaffirmation. However, during a major renovation project directed by the Local Design/Construction Department, the floor plan and general appearance of the Kingdom Hall may have been significantly changed and considerable restructuring may have taken place. Such major changes have, in effect, resulted in a new Kingdom Hall. In such cases, a dedication program would be in order.

7. **Seating:** Usually, publishers who attend the congregations that use the Kingdom Hall, as well as those who contributed much time, effort, or materials toward the project, are invited to attend the dedication program. However, even when two programs are scheduled, there may be a need to limit the number invited to the dedication program to ensure that the Kingdom Hall is not filled beyond its reasonable capacity. In this regard, the bodies of elders do not need to be so restrictive that the facility ends 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, since some of those invited will not be able to come. Keep in mind that, occasionally, local officials permit the congregations 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. Tying in an additional Kingdom Hall would need to be requested as an exception.