

# TESTIGOS CRISTIANOS DE JEHOVÁ

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February 2, 2014

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Shepherding

Dear Brothers:

In imitation of Jesus, all elders need to cultivate a heartfelt desire to shepherd Jehovah's sheep. (John 21:15-17) We must love our brothers from the heart by feeding and shepherding them willingly. (1 Pet. 5:2) The *Shepherding* textbook provides helpful suggestions on making shepherding visits in the homes of the publishers. At this time, we are pleased to provide the following additional comments that will assist you in fulfilling your responsibility as shepherds in the congregation.

As you know, we have specific arrangements to visit those who have been baptized for one year, to invite inactive publishers to the Memorial, and to make annual visits to certain disfellowshipped persons. Even so, we cannot view shepherding simply as a program that involves making a "shepherding call" once a month. While the *Shepherding* textbook states that a group overseer should arrange to periodically visit all in his group, there is no need for the body of elders to keep a record of shepherding visits, including the date a visit was made, who made the visit, and what was discussed. Nor is it necessary for one elder to make general shepherding call assignments. Although well-intentioned, such programs can overly complicate matters.

All elders, particularly group overseers, must strive to maintain regular, if at all possible weekly, contact with the publishers. (Prov. 27:23) Regular interaction with the brothers and sisters is very much needed and can be accomplished by meaningful visits before and after congregation meetings, by working with them in the ministry, and by visiting or telephoning them at other times. It includes contacting those who are sick, who are missing from the meetings, or who are irregular in the ministry. Such personal interest springs from genuine friendship and brotherly affection. —Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 2:7, 8.

As spiritual shepherds, we strive to deepen our self-sacrificing love for the brothers and sisters so that our concern is evident *at all times*. Without meddling into our brothers' personal affairs, we strive to be a positive influence in the lives of the sheep, helping them to be strong in the faith.—Phil. 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 5:11.

In view of the foregoing, each elder should make the following notation in the margin of his *Shepherding* textbook. Next to chapter 2, paragraph 23, and chapter 4, paragraph 6, please write: "See letter dated February 2, 2014, to all bodies of elders regarding shepherding."

We send our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

*Testigos Cristianos de Jehová*

cc: Traveling overseers

PS TO SECRETARY: This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. Along with this letter you can also download from *jw.org* an updated *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders* (S-22) at this time as well.