

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses Congrégation chrétienne des Témoins de Jéhovah



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June 9, 2014

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN CANADA

Re: Adjusted process to accelerate Kingdom Hall construction

Dear Brothers:

The letter to all congregations of January 24, 2014, introduced a new theocratic arrangement involving the Local Design/Construction Department (LDC) formed at Bethel. It has been established to provide direction for the design, construction, renovation and maintenance of Kingdom Halls, Assembly Halls, and residences used by special full-time servants. It works under the Branch Committee and in cooperation with the Worldwide Design/Construction Department at World Headquarters. The former Kingdom Hall Desk has been replaced by this new department.

This letter will serve to provide direction for bodies of elders in maintaining existing facilities, those in the process of repair and renovation, and for recommending the construction of new Kingdom Halls. The December 11, 2009, letter to all bodies of elders should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed. You may wish to update the congregation copy of the *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders (S-22)* at this time.

Maintenance: Caring for our Kingdom Hall is a sacred duty and privilege extended to all of us. (2 Cor. 6:3) As the use of our facilities increases, wear and upkeep increases. The need for prompt response to maintenance issues becomes ever more important so that problems do not escalate, resulting in higher costs of repair or replacement. Therefore, each year, the body of elders will be supplied with an updated *Kingdom Hall Maintenance/Safety Checklist*, which will need to be completed and returned to the LDC promptly. In addition, every other year, a field representative of the LDC will work with the local body(ies) of elders to perform a thorough maintenance inspection and provide recommendations to the LDC for repair or renovation.

Good maintenance methods and programs are needed. In many areas, however, skilled brothers may not presently be available for certain types of repairs. To respond to this need, the Governing Body has directed that training be made available for elders and ministerial servants to care for basic maintenance items, as needed. This training program will gradually be introduced through the LDC and its appointed field representatives. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

Repair and Renovation: At times, repairs will be needed to buildings and systems. As furniture and finishes wear, congregations may desire to renovate a Kingdom Hall. What constitutes a 'minor' repair or renovation as opposed to a 'major' renovation project? Any maintenance repair or renovation that will cost more than \$5,000, or that physically alters the building or any system in the building, will require the approval of the LDC. Direct replacement of worn or damaged items or equipment with equivalent materials would not be considered as a

physical alteration. Upgrades, redesigns, and changes to the use of the building would be considered as an alteration.

Since congregations will not generally keep more than two to three months operating expenses in local accounts, funding for repairs or renovations exceeding \$5,000 per auditorium will be provided through the branch office after necessary approvals. The body(ies) of elders who are requesting a 'major' project should write to the LDC with the following information: (1) a clear explanation of the need; (2) the urgency of the request; (3) the approximate cost of the proposal if known; (4) the availability of skilled resources within the congregation(s); and (5) the comments of a field representative of the LDC, and circuit overseer, if available. Emergency repairs exceeding \$5,000 per auditorium may be initiated by phoning the branch office at 905-873-4101, extension 2000, and then following up with a written request. The need for emergency service, however, will be minimized by good maintenance practices.

All such requests will be handled promptly. The LDC may respond with additional questions, or may offer some suggestions for material specification or purchasing assistance. The LDC will also assist in locating or providing the skilled brothers needed for such work, if they are not available locally. Since the goal is to provide a prompt response to such inquiries, please be sure to include contact information for available brothers.

New Construction: As congregations and new language groups continue to grow, new Kingdom Halls will be needed. Generally, this need should be discussed during the visit of a circuit overseer. If the matter seems urgent or special opportunities for suitable land or facilities are identified, please write the LDC. All real estate acquisition for Kingdom Halls will be cared for by the LDC. The sale of Kingdom Hall properties is cared for through the Global Real Estate desk, in the branch Accounting Department.

Planning for new Kingdom Halls will be coordinated through the LDC. This will allow for careful examination of the circumstances of each congregation and how the proposal fits with the needs across the country and around the world. Once the need for a new facility is established, the LDC will communicate with local congregations for assistance in the planning process. Special needs of the congregation will be identified and selected brothers may be asked to assist in various stages of planning. When a new Kingdom Hall project has been approved, a meeting will be scheduled with the local body(ies) of elders to outline the construction schedule and to encourage the full support of congregation members in the building project.

New Kingdom Hall building projects will be cared for by Construction Groups. These are limited size teams of special full-time servants with training and experience in construction and in these new theocratic procedures. Congregations involved in the project will still be invited to share in the construction as local volunteers, along with appointed Construction Volunteers who will serve with the groups for two weeks to three months at a time. Congregations may also be invited to provide modest accommodations for these full and part time volunteer workers. Further information about participation in these programs will be forthcoming.

Design for New and Renovated Kingdom Halls: Lesson 25 of the brochure *Who Are Doing Jehovah's Will Today?* provides definition to Kingdom Hall design. "While Kingdom Halls vary in size and design, all are modest structures." Local codes and requirements must be met, but local trends and unnecessary features may add cost, which prevents our donated funds

from being used in the wisest manner. Therefore the Governing Body has directed that standard plans be used for all new Kingdom Hall construction. This will simplify and thus accelerate the pace of construction worldwide, while reducing the final costs to the organization. The use of standardized procurement options will allow for the use of quality materials, which will reduce future maintenance and operation costs.

Financing: The letter to all congregations dated March 29, 2014, and its postscript to bodies of elders, provides direction on the new arrangement for financing theocratic building projects. As stated there, congregations will continue to pay for monthly operating expenses, minor maintenance, and minor repairs from the local congregation account or the Kingdom Hall Operating Committee account, where multiple congregations share a building.

As described in *Instructions for Congregation Accounting* (S-27), the body(ies) of elders should determine a reserve amount of funds that would generally be needed to cover two to three months of operating expenses. This would include utilities, supplies, and seasonal costs such as snow removal. Such a reserve should be sufficient to care for most unexpected maintenance repairs. If the body of elders feels that a local facility has special requirements that are not met by this arrangement, they should write the LDC with all pertinent details. For all other major repairs, renovation, or new construction, financing will be provided through the Kingdom Hall and Assembly Hall Construction Worldwide arrangement, supported by the monthly amounts resolved by each congregation.

Personal Loans: In view of the complications that can arise from obtaining loans from individuals, they should no longer be included in financing requests for a Kingdom Hall project. If an individual wishes to make funds available to advance Kingdom interests, through a loan or in some other manner, they should contact the Charitable Planning Office at the branch. For an outstanding loan that a congregation may have with an individual, the congregation should establish if it has sufficient local funds to care for that agreement. If so, the loan should be repaid as soon as feasible. If not, the body of elders should write the branch for direction and provide all of the pertinent details by means of a completed *Individual Promissory Note* (S-173).

Where possible, all correspondence to the LDC should be submitted as attached files through the secure jw.org Congregation Inbox, addressed to Local Design/Construction.

We are delighted to be working shoulder to shoulder with you in carrying out the Governing Body's direction. (Zeph. 3:9) Be assured that while we see the benefits of the new program whereby the research and decision-making related to Kingdom Hall construction will be transferred to the branch office, when the LDC turns attention to your specific needs, your comments and recommendations will be considered carefully as decisions are made. Along with you, we continue to pray for Jehovah's blessing upon these arrangements. Please accept our warm Christian love and greetings as well as our appreciation for all of your fine work.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

cc: Traveling overseers

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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.