

APPLICANT INSTRUCTIONS

2018 Special Conventions

As announced, special conventions are being planned for the 2018 convention season in various parts of the world. The convention cities selected are as follows:

Convention City	Convention Month (Specific dates forthcoming)	Host Branch	Programme Language(s)
Oslo, Norway	July	Scandinavia	Norwegian and English
Colombo, Sri Lanka	July	Sri Lanka	Sinhala, English, and Tamil (simultaneous interpretation into Sri Lankan Sign Language)

The official website for the 2018 special conventions is jw2018.org. This site will provide basic information for each convention city and will be used to gather information from delegates to assist with planning activities.

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

All those wishing to apply as delegates for one of the 2018 special conventions should be exemplary publishers who are in good health and who are able to travel without the physical assistance of others. They should not be dependent on a wheelchair, an auxiliary oxygen supply, or similar health-related devices. They should not have problems standing and walking for long periods of time. All applicants should also meet one of the following bulleted requirements:

- 19 years of age or older (as of January 1, 2018) and serve as elders, as ministerial servants, or in some form of full-time service. The baptized mates of such ones may apply as well.
- Baptized for 20 years or longer (as of January 1, 2018). The baptized mates of such ones may apply as well.
- Baptized and unbaptized minor children between the ages of 12 (as of January 1, 2018) and 19 years and are still living at home may accompany their baptized parent(s).
- Baptized adult children still living at home may accompany their baptized parent(s).

Single persons may apply if they either have prearranged a roommate of the same gender or agree to pay the single-supplement price (individual upcharge) for a single occupancy hotel room. The branch offices involved will not be making arrangements for two single delegates to share a room. Individuals who are engaged and will be married before the convention can apply as a group, similar to a married couple. You may invite someone to join your travel group if they attend a congregation in Britain and Ireland that is not specifically invited and they meet the re-

quirements mentioned above. Non-Witnesses should not be invited to travel with or otherwise accompany a delegate to a special convention. If an applicant feels their situation merits an exception, they should discuss this with their elders and if they agree, the elders should contact their branch for direction.

Often the tours and activities arranged by the host branches involve long periods of walking and standing, which has seriously taxed the energies and stamina of some delegates. Depending on the location and time of year, this can be combined with higher temperatures. In the past, applications have been received from individuals with severe obesity and sight limitations not corrected by glasses. Long trips under difficult physical conditions could prove harmful to the person's health and could adversely impact the activities of other delegates. All applicants are encouraged to give serious and prayerful consideration to their health limitations and personal safety before applying to become a delegate. Deaf publishers may apply if they have a hearing applicant in their group who can communicate with the deaf publisher.

In addition to considering the requirements already mentioned, all potential applicants should give attention to important factors such as personal finances and family responsibilities. Although delegates will not be required to use a specific travel agency, **they will be required to stay in the convention city in hotels arranged by the host branch for a minimum of seven nights.** Airfare, hotel stays, and other costs can be expensive, as can the cancellation of arrangements if that became necessary. Additionally, a health emergency in a foreign land can be difficult to manage without adequate insurance. Therefore, consideration should be given to obtaining health and travel insurance. These things highlight the wisdom of Jesus' advice at Luke 14:28 to "calculate the expense." Applicants should be fully prepared to care for the expense of their travel arrangements, their accommodations, their food for the entire trip, and reimbursing the organization for the cost of branch-planned activities. Delegates should not expect local Witnesses to sponsor their visit, nor make unreasonable demands on their brothers in other countries.

Applicants must be exemplary in every respect, including dress and grooming. (2 Cor. 6:3, 4a; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10) It would be good to review the brochure *Dress & Grooming for Visitors Touring Bethel*. Please check with a member of the Congregation Service Committee in this regard. At all times, but particularly when serving as a delegate to a special convention, our dress and grooming should reflect the decency and dignity that befit servants of Jehovah God. (*km* 3/08 p. 3; *od* pp. 125-126) We request that no blue jeans, Spandex outerwear ("spanx"), or other tight-fitting clothing be worn for the duration of your trip. Because of who you represent you are expected to comply with these standards for dress and grooming while traveling, attending the convention, associating with the local brothers, and sightseeing. Please also review the information in the November 1990 *Our Kingdom Ministry* article entitled "Special Conventions Honor Jehovah," pages 7 and 8, paragraphs 1 to 5.

If a publisher speaks a language other than English or the primary language of the host branch, the program and activities for the delegates may not be translated into a language he understands. Therefore, if he chooses to still apply, at least one person in his group should be fluent enough to serve as a translator in English or the primary language of the host branch.

Please note: If the elders in the congregation determine that a publisher has lost his exemplary status, that person would no longer qualify to participate as a delegate to a special conven-

tion. If this change of status occurs after one has entered into a business agreement with a travel agency or other travel provider such as an airline or a hotel, such a person is still responsible to pay any and all expenses due (for example, cancellation fees, unused airline tickets, etc.) right up to the time the person was scheduled to depart. Such a person will be fully responsible for any financial loss associated with his disqualification as a delegate.

CONVENTION ARRANGEMENTS

The emphasis will be for the delegates to benefit, not only from the spiritual association during the three-day convention, but also to spend three additional days with the local brothers before/after the convention so that there may be “an interchange of encouragement by one another’s faith.” (Rom. 1:12) Hence, this would be a span of seven nights in the convention city.

While in the convention city, the days immediately before or after the convention should not be arranged by a travel agency. Instead, the host branch office will create an itinerary for the delegate after receiving his activity preferences on the jw2018.org website (for example, field service, attending gatherings with the local brothers, and visiting places of local interest together). The delegate will need to take responsibility for planning some of his activity in the convention city, including arranging for his own meals, ground transportation from the airport to the hotel and back, and hotel accommodations from the *Approved Hotel List*.

Paperwork and Documentation: In addition to a passport, some countries require a visa or other documentation to enter the country. Since a travel agency will not be involved in planning activities in the convention city before, during, or after the convention, the delegate will be responsible to determine what legal documentation is needed and personally obtain it. Therefore, it is important that the delegate or a traveling companion understand the travel requirements so as to avoid immigration problems both at the time of departure from his home country and at his arrival into the foreign country.

Air Travel: After being selected, delegates can choose one of the following options: (1) Contact a travel agency we have prearranged for the possibility of reasonably priced tickets on a first-come, first-served limited basis. (See heading “Use of a Travel Agency for Auxiliary Tours.”) (2) Contact a travel agency of his choice to acquire airline tickets. (3) Make his own flight arrangements into and out of the convention city.

Hotel Accommodations: No travel agency will be involved in securing hotel rooms in the convention city for the days immediately before, during, or after the convention dates. The selected delegate will be required to make his own reservations directly with one of the hotels listed on the jw2018.org website. This will be for the number of days he is able to stay in the convention city and in accordance with his airline reservations. All delegates are required to use only those hotels on the approved list provided by the host branch, even if a delegate feels that he can find a less expensive room or a private home accommodation on his own. This is for logistical reasons in getting delegates to and from the convention facility each day and for branch-planned activities the days before or after the convention. The hotels contracted by the host branch are of good quality and the negotiated room rates are based on a specific number of rooms being filled in these hotels. Since most of the convention cities are tourist destinations and the hotels have high occupancies, the pricing of some hotels may be higher than at regional convention cities in your home country.

Ground Transportation: The delegate will need to arrange in advance ground transportation to his hotel or arrange upon his arrival at the airport the use of a local car or taxi service, bus, or train to his hotel. Usually there will be brothers at the airport to provide some direction. Regarding transportation to the convention site, if the hotel is not within walking distance, the host branch office will arrange for transportation to and from the facility during the three days of the convention only. They will also arrange for coach transportation for the branch-planned activities before or after the convention dates. The delegate can defray the bus expenses by using any contribution box at the convention.

Food Arrangements: In most cases the hotels will include a breakfast each day as part of the room rate. Under normal circumstances the host branch will make arrangements with a vendor to provide delegates with a box lunch for the three days of the convention. In such cases, delegates can defray the expenses by using any contribution box at the convention. For the remainder of the time in the convention city, delegates will need to be prepared to make their own food arrangements.

Association with Local Brothers: In addition to the three convention days, the delegates are being encouraged to spend some time in association with the local brothers. As mentioned earlier, the association with local brothers might include sharing in the ministry, associating with them at gatherings, or visiting local places of interest together.

Once a selected delegate has confirmed his plans by reserving his hotel accommodations, purchasing his airline tickets, or paying a deposit to a travel agency, he should immediately update the “My Trip” page on the jw2018.org website with this information. Also, he should inform the secretary who will update his delegate status as “Confirmed” on the jw.org website. Delegates who have confirmed their travel plans should submit their preferences for sharing in activities with the local brothers on the jw2018.org website.

Once the host branch office has received a delegate’s (or group’s) preferences, arrangements can be made. Hence, the earlier the delegate confirms his plans, the more likely it will be that he gets his preferences as to the various activities he will enjoy with the local brothers.

Use of a Travel Agency for Auxiliary Tours: As previously mentioned, the use of a travel agency is optional. However, a selected delegate may wish to use a travel agency to arrange a sightseeing tour before or after the seven days spent in connection with the convention.

Since many like to travel with fellow Witnesses for such excursions, delegates may prefer to use the following travel agency prearranged for this purpose. As a reminder, no plans should be made with a travel agency until the delegate has been selected and has received his “Convention Selection Summary” page from the congregation secretary. Once a delegate has been selected to attend a special convention, he may use the appropriate e-mail address below to contact the travel agency.

Four Ambassadors Travel
7400 SW 50th Terrace, Suite 100
Miami, FL 33155
Phone: 1-800-685-4669
Phone: 1-305-444-1991

Website: ic.fourambassadorstravel.com
E-mail: Norway@FourAmbassadorsTravel.com
E-mail: SriLanka@FourAmbassadorsTravel.com

An agency can be helpful in determining what additional travel documentation is necessary, such as a visa, passport, or other paperwork. However, it remains the delegate's responsibility to obtain all necessary paperwork and travel documentation. If a delegate would like auxiliary tours but prefers to make his own air arrangements, he should inform the travel agency that he would like to purchase a "land-only" tour package.

Special Rooming: The host branch office will survey local brothers to determine if limited rooming will be available in private homes. The purpose of such special rooming is to provide more affordable accommodations for delegates who have been in special full-time service for many years or long-time faithful Witnesses who desire to attend a special convention but who are not in a financial position to cover all of the costs.

Special rooming is available for a maximum of seven nights in the convention city. An applicant could inform the elders that staying with the local brothers would make the difference for him (and his mate, if married). While there is no guarantee that special rooming will be available, if the elders agree, the secretary can indicate on the electronic jw.org application that this delegate qualifies for the special rooming provision.

Since special rooming accommodations in the convention city are limited, each guest branch is allotted a specific number of special rooming accommodations that they can assign. If a delegate has been selected for special rooming, the delegate will be informed by the guest branch whether or not private home accommodations can be made available for him. Other members of his travel group must qualify on their own merit to receive special rooming.

Delegates accepting special rooming would be responsible for their own transportation to and from their private home accommodations and the convention, and any branch-arranged activities associated with the convention. If the convention provides bus or other transportation during the seven nights in the convention city, delegates accepting special rooming are responsible for the transportation to and from their private home accommodations and the bus pick-up and drop-off locations. Pick-up and drop-off locations are usually hotels where the majority of special convention delegates are staying.

If a delegate declines private home accommodations and decides to use one of the approved hotels in the convention city, he should inform the branch office immediately using the Convention & Assembly Desk inbox on jw.org so the special rooming provision can be made available to others.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

If more than one member of a family is applying, a separate application is needed for each person in the family. Once your application has been completed, please submit it to the Congregation Service Committee for review. Upon approval, the secretary will use your information as a basis to complete an electronic application on jw.org. Once the application has been electronically entered, an automated e-mail message will be sent to the applicant for him to verify

the submitted e-mail address. If your e-mail address changes at any time, inform the secretary so he can update it on jw.org.

Application Due Date: Please submit the hard copy application to the Congregation Service Committee **as soon as possible, but no later than October 16, 2017.**

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. **One member of the group should be designated to serve as the group contact before 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 must use the same travel group identification.

To obtain a group ID, the group contact should request one from the congregation secretary as soon as possible. He must provide his e-mail address to the secretary in order to receive a group ID. The secretary will obtain a unique group ID from jw.org and provide it to the group contact. The group contact must provide the group ID to the other members in his group for them to include on their respective applications. Using the same group ID will be the only way to link applicants wishing to travel together. This includes friends as well as all family members (even a marriage mate and others in the same household). Also, all members in a group must stay in the same hotel and have the same preferences for activities.

DELEGATE SELECTION

It is not necessary to contact the branch office to determine if a person has been selected. If the “Status Summary” for the secretary on jw.org indicates “Applied,” the person has not yet been selected. If you are selected to attend, you will be notified, and more information relative to the specific convention for which you have been approved will be provided, including the specific dates. Your contact information will also be sent to the host branch office at the time of selection. Once a selected delegate has confirmed his plans by reserving hotel accommodations, purchasing airline tickets, or paying a deposit to a travel agency, he should immediately update the “My Trip” page on the jw2018.org website with this information. Also, he should inform the secretary who will update his delegate status as “Confirmed” on the jw.org website. Delegates who have confirmed their travel plans should submit their preferences for sharing in activities with the local brothers on the jw2018.org website.

If you are no longer in a position to attend, please immediately update the “My Trip” page on the jw2018.org website and inform the secretary that you are cancelling so that he may update your official status on the jw.org website.