

TESTIGOS CRISTIANOS DE JEHOVÁ

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SDA:SSC March 12, 2020

URGENT

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Covid-19: Temporary cancellation of meetings and other preventive measures

Dear Brothers:

We are writing to congregations in our branch territory about the outbreak of the coronavirus disease or Covid-19.

The Branch Committee has given prayerful consideration to the direction we have received from the Governing Body as well as pertinent Bible principles such as love for our neighbor. (1 Corinthians 10:24). We have now determined that certain steps are necessary in order to minimize the risk of exposure to our brothers and the local community. Please immediately implement the following measures.

1. Theocratic Activities

- **Meetings:** Congregation meetings in the Kingdom Hall are temporarily cancelled. Elders should arrange for publishers to view recordings using JW Stream. Make sure publishers inform any Bible student about the cancellation of the meetings and the possibility of viewing the meetings together via JW Stream.
- **Field Service:** Many publishers will make their own arrangements. However, if you organize meetings for field service, they should be conducted in smaller groups. (*od* chap. 7 p. 65 par. 20) This would be in harmony with the arrangement of field service groups. The Service Overseer should arrange to have modest amounts of literature available at each field service meeting location. Publishers who decide to make their home available should be sure to clean and disinfect touched objects and surfaces before and after the meeting. Others should be alert to wash their hands with soap and water upon arrival and the need for good hygiene.
- Since many are highly sensitive to the spread of Covid-19, it would be best to discontinue the house-to-house preaching work, business witnessing, and, if advisable, street witnessing. Arrange for publishers to share in other forms of preaching such as witnessing by telephone, text messaging, e-mail, or letter writing. It may be practical to extend the hours of public witnessing so that more have an opportunity to share in this form of the ministry. Nonetheless, in certain areas, elders may decide that it is best to suspend public witnessing. We will let you make the decision based on recommendation of the local authorities and circumstances.
- Encourage publishers to share with others the Bible's message of hope. (Isaiah 61:1) Some have found it helpful to direct attention to the practical information from the jw.org website about how to protect ourselves from an outbreak of disease. Regardless, there will be many more opportunities to help honest-hearted ones who are distressed over world conditions.—Ezekiel 9:4.

2. Shepherding

- Maintain regular contact with publishers to ensure they have good spiritual routine, are able to share in some form of the ministry, and are well cared for. (1 Peter 5:2)

Depending on the circumstances, it may be wise for you to not visit publishers in person since this could inadvertently spread the virus. We encourage you to use good judgment and exercise caution in this regard.

- Assure the brothers that they are not being unfaithful for taking the above precautions during this time of emergency. Let them know that Jehovah will care for them and give them the support of the holy spirit as they work in harmony with this direction.—2 Chronicles 16:9a; Ezekiel 34:12.
- Please continue to share with the publishers kind reminders mentioned in the letter dated March 4, 2020, in connection with Covid-19.
- It is preferred that an elder, preferably the group overseer, share verbally with the publishers announcements that are sensitive in nature. These should not be posted or texted. For all other announcements, the elders may determine how best to share these with the publishers.

3. Special Talk and Memorial

- Invitation Campaign: We understand that this situation will greatly affect the invitation campaign. Therefore, at the minimum, encourage the publishers to hand out printed invitations only to friends, family, or acquaintances. You may print on the invitations the following information when making reference to the meeting location: “jw.org → About us → Memorial → Find a Location Near You → Location to Search Near.”
- At this moment, we are unsure of the extent that the spread of Covid-19 will affect the arrangements for the special talk and Memorial. In the near future, we will provide you with further instructions in this regard.

Please be assured that we have given considerable thought to the foregoing and have taken these measures out of our love and concern for you. (John 15:12) We trust that Jehovah will give us all insight and instruct us in the way that we should go so that we may act wisely. (Psalm 32:8) In the meantime, the branch office will continue to closely monitor the development of Covid-19 and will immediately inform you of any updates as well as when you may resume normal theocratic activities.

We continue to pray for you and are confident that the “Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort” will bless your tireless efforts to care for the precious sheep.—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

Your brothers,

Testigos Cristianos de Jehová

c: Circuit overseers

PS to the coordinator of the body of elders:

If you have not done so already, please implement these instructions immediately. When informing the publishers, please do not post this letter. Each group overseer should share with them pertinent details. Thank you.