

April 21, 2020

TO SELECTED BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES BRANCH TERRITORY

Re: Additional Direction Regarding Assistance with Practical Needs

Dear Brothers:

It is a privilege to work along with you and the circuit overseers as we unitedly look out for the welfare of the brotherhood during this deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The Branch Committee has asked that we warmly commend all of you for your fine work in following through on direction aimed at keeping publishers and their families safe and secure.

Recently, members of the United States Branch Committee provided direction in connection with our disaster relief efforts. We were asked to share with you some of the highlights from that meeting. Please note the following key points:

- Congregation elders are usually in the best position to account for and assess the needs of publishers in their congregation. Elders should continue to determine who is in need of medical care, food, medication, as well as personal hygiene supplies or other basic items.
- When speaking with family heads, discreetly ask detailed questions while being careful not to pry into personal matters. Ask questions such as: “Do you have enough food for this week? What about next week? Do you have your medicine for the next two weeks? Who is going to get it for you? Have you applied for financial assistance yet? Do you need help doing that?” This is often best done in a personal conversation as opposed to using a form or survey. There is no way to plan for filling needs if you do not know what the specific needs are going to be.
- Do not panic. Rather, take a measured approach based on the facts. This crisis will likely affect many lives for an extended period. The measured response must focus on stabilizing the brothers spiritually and physically. *Awake!*, No.5 2017, states that “relief efforts focus on helping people to survive, not on replacing everything that was lost. To survive, we need clean water, food, clothing, and shelter from the weather.—1 Timothy 6:7,8.”
- The elders may need to provide guidance on how to conserve food and other supplies.
- As stated in the *Organized* book, the elders should first consider if needs can be cared for through fellow family members or by means of governmental or social programs*. (See *Organized*, chapter 12, paragraphs 13-15) When needs cannot be met through these means, often individual brothers in the congregation can offer some assistance.
- Congregation elders should be alert to monitor the adequacy and fairness of the distribution of relief supplies at the family level. Continue to pay close attention to the spiritual and emotional needs of congregation publishers.—Prov. 27:23.
- If you identify unmet needs in your congregation that cannot be addressed through available resources as described above, please immediately inform your circuit overseer through his jw.org e-mail address. Provide him a general description of the supplies needed and how many they will benefit. The circuit overseer will quickly investigate available resources in the area and immediately communicate with the relief organization for assistance if the need cannot be filled locally.

Additionally, the Branch Committee has also provided direction regarding how humanitarian supplies can be obtained and paid for beyond what can be organized by your body of elders and circuit overseer:

- When your local need for supplies is reported to the Disaster Relief Committee by your circuit overseer or his assistant, we will be able to assist you in one or both of these two ways:
 1. Identify other sources of supplies outside of your circuit. Arrangements will be made to provide you with what is needed.
 2. Provide authorization for you to purchase what is needed locally and then reimburse the purchaser based on the submittal of receipts.

In cases where the DRC will be assisting you in obtaining needed items, you will receive additional instructions. In general, it would not be appropriate to purchase items with the expectation of being reimbursed without first communicating the need to the Circuit Overseer and receiving approval from the DRC. This will help to ensure the best use of dedicated funds.

Since these two approaches are available, congregation or circuit funds should no longer be used to provide humanitarian assistance to affected families.

As you can imagine, this pandemic is taking a heavy toll on our brothers worldwide and the needs of our brothers in other parts of the world is very great. It is our hope that this approach will result in the “equalizing” explained at 2 Corinthians 8:12-15, allowing for needs to be met around the world.

Thank you for your loving labors as we share together in the ‘relief ministry.’—2 Cor. 8:4.

Your brothers,

*COVID-19 – TriState Metro
Disaster Relief Committee*

**Reminder:* Regularly review the COVID-19 Disaster Assistance Documents in the forms section of JW.org and distribute the information in a way that makes this assistance known to those with needs. As directed in the *Announcement* to all elders dated April 10, 2020, please encourage publishers to direct questions they have to you.

c: Selected circuit overseers

Selected field representatives

