

Announcement

July 11, 2020

FOR ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES BRANCH TERRITORY

1. As you were informed, the branch office has been giving careful consideration to the risk factors for exposure to COVID-19 throughout the branch territory, including local regulations and other factors, with the possibility of resuming certain theocratic activities. Therefore, please note what is outlined below:

2. **Judicial Matters and Reports of Wrongdoing:** Your body of elders may now decide to use the Kingdom Hall for meetings of judicial and reinstatement committees in accordance with direction from the secular authorities. This also applies to investigating reports of serious wrongdoing.

3. Please observe the following direction during such meetings:

- The total number of persons present must be in adherence to secular laws and restrictions and should not exceed 10 persons.
- Participants must be willing to meet at the Kingdom Hall and should not include persons who are sick or at higher risk for infection.
- All present should take necessary precautions to reduce the risk of exposure. This includes maintaining physical distancing of six feet or more and using face coverings. In the rare case where members of the same household are in attendance, the distancing required between them can be relaxed. All areas used should be thoroughly disinfected before *and* after the meeting. It is preferred that the main auditorium be used to allow for physical distancing.

4. Adherence to this direction will require good communication between bodies of elders to ensure confidentiality and to avoid scheduling conflicts.

5. As a reminder, videoconferencing should not be used for handling judicial matters, including reinstatement hearings. If use of the Kingdom Hall is not possible due to the above factors and the body of elders believes that the matter needs to be handled immediately, two elders should contact the Service Department for direction.—*sff* chap. 15 par. 8.

6. **Elders' Meetings:** Your Kingdom Hall is not to be used for quarterly meetings of the body of elders or to determine which elders will serve on a judicial committee or which two elders will investigate reports of wrongdoing.

7. Regardless of direction from secular authorities, Kingdom Halls should not be used for any other theocratic activities until the branch office provides written approval to do so. Please continue to be guided by the latest version of the document *Direction Related to COVID-19 Pandemic for Bodies of Elders*.