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September 1, 2018

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Handling Cases of Drug Abuse

Dear Brothers:

As noted below, the procedure for handling the misuse of marijuana and the abuse of medical, illicit, or addictive drugs has been adjusted to harmonize with the procedure for handling the misuse of tobacco.

Elders should use good judgment in weighing the circumstances and extent of the wrongdoing when determining whether a judicial committee should be formed for misuse of tobacco or marijuana or the abuse of medical, illicit, or addictive drugs. For example, one or two elders may handle matters by means of counsel if a Christian abused an addictive drug or smoked cigarettes on *one or two occasions and the matter is not widely known*. The coordinator of the body of elders should be informed. However, a judicial committee is required for a *practice* of abusing addictive drugs, including betel nut, marijuana, and tobacco.—2 Cor. 7:1; *lvs* pp. 110-117; *lv* pp. 93-96; *w06* 7/15 pp. 30-31.

If a medical doctor authorizes and/or prescribes marijuana for a medical problem, a Christian may choose to make use of this form of treatment. Although no judicial action would be taken, if an issue arises in the congregation, the elders will need to determine whether the individual can be viewed as exemplary. The proper use of addictive drugs under medical supervision, such as for pain management, would not require judicial review. When questions arise, please consult with the Service Department.

Each elder should cross out chapter 5, paragraph 14, bullet 4, and chapter 5, paragraph 15, in his copy of the *Shepherding* textbook. He should make the following notation in the margin: “See the September 1, 2018, letter to all bodies of elders.” This letter has been added to the list of letters that will be cited in *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders* (S-22).

We send our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,



ZWEIGBÜRO ZENTRALEUROPA

c: Circuit overseers