

Exhibit Q

BRANCH ORGANIZATION August 2018

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CHAPTER 1

GOVERNING BODY AND GOVERNING BODY COMMITTEES

1. Governing Body: The Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses is made up of brothers who are anointed servants of Jehovah God. They have the responsibility for giving direction and impetus to the Kingdom work. (Matt. 24:14, 45-47; Rev. 12:17) Like its first-century counterpart, the Governing Body today looks to Jehovah, the Universal Sovereign, and to Jesus Christ, the Head of the congregation, for direction in all matters. (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23) The Governing Body is organized to take the lead as Jehovah directs it by holy spirit. The members of the Governing Body do not regard themselves as the leaders of Jehovah’s people. Rather, like all anointed Christians on earth, they “keep following the Lamb [Jesus Christ] no matter where he goes.”—Rev. 14:4.

2. The Bible says: “Let all things take place decently and by arrangement.” (1 Cor. 14:40) The Governing Body obeys this direction by putting in place various helpful procedures and guidelines that ensure the smooth and orderly operation of the branch offices and the congregations. Responsible Christian men do their part by setting an example of obedience as they put such arrangements into effect. All Christians, especially overseers, should look to Jehovah for guidance and should pray regularly for his direction and blessing. All should show themselves “reasonable, ready to obey” those placed in oversight. (Jas. 3:17) Thus, each group, congregation, circuit, and branch is blessed with a united, orderly body of believers who reflect well on the happy God.—1 Cor. 14:33; 1 Tim. 1:11.

3. While the Governing Body delegates certain details or responsibilities to committees made up of its own members, to committees made up of other dedicated servants of God, or to instruments such as corporations and legal agencies, the Governing Body always takes the lead in promoting the smooth functioning of the organization and the unity of all of God’s people.—Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:5; Heb. 13:17; w01 1/15 pp. 28-31.

4. The Governing Body gives final approval for new publications as well as new audio and video programs.

5. The Governing Body cares for the appointment and deletion of Branch and Country committee members and designates the brother who will serve as the coordinator of the committee. It also appoints circuit overseers and country representatives. In most cases, such appointments are made based on recommendations received from the Branch Committee. The Governing Body also appoints helpers to Governing Body committees as well as headquarters representatives qualified to make branch visits.

6. The Governing Body may arrange for qualified men to care for theocratic assignments in any locality at any time. It is not bound by recommendations received from other elders. Such recommendations serve merely as a guide and may even be rejected for reasons known to the Governing Body. The Governing Body has the prerogative to use its discretion and look into any matters it deems necessary to examine with regard to the Kingdom work.

CHAPTER 2

RESPONSIBILITY OF BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. The Governing Body appoints well-qualified elders to serve as members of a Branch Committee. Each Branch Committee oversees the preaching work in the field and the work in the branch office, the remote translation offices, and any other remote facilities within its assigned territory. As the representatives of the Governing Body in their assigned territory, Branch Committee members must faithfully implement and follow the direction coming from God's Word and "the faithful and discreet slave."—Matt. 24:45-47.

2. Each Branch Committee member must feel a deep sense of responsibility to Jehovah. Thus, he must work diligently to fortify and maintain his good relationship with God. He must be a diligent student of the Bible and be governed by its laws and principles in his personal and public life. (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2) He must be zealous for the ministry. (2 Tim. 4:2) He must be a fine example in following Bethel rules, never feeling that he is above them. (Heb. 13:17) His deep love and respect for Jehovah fuels his desire to be faithful in little and in much. (Luke 16:10; 1 John 5:3) He recognizes that his appointment by holy spirit is a privilege and that it will be taken away if he neglects his spirituality. (1 Tim. 4:14-16) His humble mental attitude moves him to seek out and listen to the opinions of others, to take the lead in showing honor, and to be a peacemaker. (1 Ki. 22:19-23; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:5-8; Jas. 3:17, 18) Like Christ Jesus, he finds joy in unselfishly serving the interests of his brothers. (Mark 6:31-34; John 13:14, 15; Phil. 2:4) Such dedicated spiritual men are truly gifts from Jehovah to

shepherd his precious sheep.—Eph. 4:8, 11, 12; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

3. Each Branch Committee member should be able to give as well as to follow direction. He must keep up-to-date with the policies and direction from the Governing Body and help others in oversight at the branch office to do likewise. [See Chart 2.1.] While he will set a fine example in being willing to work along with his brothers at any task, he will not try to do all the work himself. He will delegate work in a responsible way, helping other spiritual men to be trained and to gain experience so that they too can shoulder weighty responsibilities.

4. Branch Committees also have the responsibility to keep the organization clean. (1 Cor. 5:11-13) They must be courageous in seeing to it that all unrepentant ones are removed from the congregation. Such courageous action builds up respect for the branch office and the Branch Committee. Our brothers should always feel welcome to come to the branch office with any concerns or problems that they may have and be confident that they will receive a hearing ear.—Prov. 21:13.

5. Dealing With People: Each member of the Branch Committee should always treat his fellow servants with love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Eph. 4:32; 1 Pet. 4:17) He must manifest a warm and friendly disposition, being careful never to be harsh or unkind. (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8) If, on account of imperfection, he errs in word or deed, he will be quick to admit his fault and apologize. (Matt. 5:23-25) Following in the steps of Christ Jesus, he provides an

example in honoring others and pursuing peace.—Rom. 14:19; 1 Pet. 2:21.

6. Branch Committee members do not view themselves as superior to their brothers and thus do not desire to be served or feel entitled to special treatment. (Matt. 20:25-28; 23:6-12; 2 Cor. 1:24) As they seek to imitate Christ Jesus, their lowliness of mind makes them refreshing and upbuilding to those working under their oversight.—Matt. 11:28-30; Phil. 2:3.

7. Members of the Branch Committee should be willing to handle problems, taking time to hear both sides and being cautious never to leave even the impression of partiality or favoritism. (Deut. 13:14; Jas. 2:9) They must keep confidential those matters told them in confidence and not talk to their wives or others about individuals' problems or confidential matters of the organization.—Prov. 25:9.

8. Counsel should not be given hastily. (Prov. 18:13) If unsure of the counsel of God's Word, it is best to consult with others and do research before answering. (Prov. 15:22, 28) If a Branch Committee member has a tendency to speak hastily and later to change his mind as to the course he first advised, the brothers will soon lose confidence in his soundness of judgment. If we read directly from the Scriptures when offering counsel, we make clear that God's Word is the authority for making decisions and that we are not simply giving a personal viewpoint.—2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

9. If a Branch Committee member is a foreigner in the country where he serves, he should recognize that the local people have a measure of pride in their land, their culture, and their way of doing things. Whether a foreigner in the country or not, a Branch Committee member should never take the position that the people he serves are beneath him, speaking to them as inferiors. Instead, as their humble fel-

low servant, he must work hard to develop appreciation for the local people and their culture, being willing to adapt himself so as to win their love and respect.—1 Cor. 9:20-23.

10. Nothing contributes more to the happiness of our brothers than the conviction that they are loved and appreciated. (1 Cor. 8:1; 13:4-8) Continue to reflect Jehovah's great love for his sheep. To that end, **committee members should make regular personal visits to each department, speaking briefly with each worker, sharing words of appreciation and encouragement.**

11. Makeup of a Branch Committee: In small branches, it may be sufficient to have three members form the Branch Committee. However, in large branches with printing operations, extensive territories, or a variety of languages, five or more members may be needed. It is desirable that one or more members of the Branch Committee be citizens of the country where the branch is located. Nevertheless, in all cases, spiritual qualifications should be viewed as of greatest importance.

12. The appointment as a member of the Branch Committee or to a position of oversight in the branch organization is not for any specified period of time. Having in mind the advancement of the Kingdom work, the Branch Committee may at any time recommend to the Governing Body a new appointment, a removal, or the reassignment of individuals.

13. Oversight Responsibilities: The Branch Committee prayerfully determines the distribution of oversight responsibilities for the individual members of the committee. These assignments should take into consideration each brother's age, strengths, experience, and personal circumstances. (Rom. 12:3-8; Rev. 1:20) **A Branch Committee member would usually serve as the day-to-day overseer or**

assistant overseer of a key department. The members of the committee may also serve as Branch Committee contacts for additional Bethel departments. A committee member should serve as the overseer of the Service Department. (See 6:36) Usually another Branch Committee member would serve as the Translation Department overseer. A committee member would usually serve as the Bethel overseer in a larger branch office, since his role involves the general oversight of all Bethel Home operations. In printing branches, the printery overseer is usually a member of the Branch Committee. The Branch Committee should consider these matters carefully so that there is a balanced distribution of oversight responsibilities. Adjustments should be made as needed in order to promote good order, the peace of the Bethel family, and the advancement of the Kingdom work.—1 Cor. 14:33, 40.

14. When adjustments in oversight are made, the brothers and sisters working in each Bethel department should be clearly informed as to the brother serving as the department overseer, the assistant overseer(s) and, if applicable, the Branch Committee member designated as the contact for the department. Each Branch Committee member should take an active interest in those working in the departments that he is overseeing. He should endeavor to meet weekly with the department overseers under his oversight.

15. Because of age or infirmity, some members may become unable to accept all assignments in connection with the Branch Committee. If so, the committee may wish to recommend an additional member to help with the workload. Nevertheless, the older and experienced members may be retained on the committee to share their wisdom and insight. (Prov. 16:31) In line with the above, it is not necessary for every member to take the chairmanship in rotation. Brothers 80 years of age or older are not to serve as coordinators

of Branch or Country committees or as overseers of departments, nor are they to serve as contacts for departments. However, dignified assignments should be found for these older brothers. (1 Tim. 5:1, 17) For example, they may serve as assistant overseers if their circumstances permit. Older brothers should be keenly interested in passing on their wisdom and experience to those with whom they work. (2 Tim. 2:2) In larger departments, two brothers could serve as assistant overseers if needed. A department overseer or Branch Committee coordinator who is not yet 80 years of age might modestly decide that it would be best to have a younger brother take on that role. (Mic. 6:8) If so, it would be good for the Branch Committee to take the request into consideration to ensure a smooth transition.—See 6:36.

16. Branch Committee Coordinator:

Each Branch Committee has a coordinator appointed by the Governing Body. He is responsible for coordinating the work of the committee and for any departments that the Branch Committee places under his oversight. He is responsible for sending reports and correspondence to the Governing Body and also for keeping the Branch Committee informed of all communications received from the Governing Body. Branch Committee coordinators and those overseeing various departments will find it helpful to keep a calendar of activities. [See Chart 2.2.] This will assist them in making sure that important matters will be handled on schedule and not be overlooked. The Branch Committee coordinator is responsible for seeing that the minutes of each Branch Committee meeting are kept, showing the date of the meeting, those present, the points considered, and the decisions reached. To provide further training to a brother with potential to serve on the Branch Committee, a larger branch may seek approval from the Governing Body to use him to take the weekly minutes of the committee meetings.

17. Branch Committee Chairman:

There is a chairman at each Branch Committee meeting. The chairmanship rotates annually on January 1. The rotation is usually handled alphabetically. The chairman arranges for the agenda to be prepared and distributed to each member of the Branch Committee. The members should receive the agenda well in advance of the meeting so that they have sufficient time to prepare thoroughly and to give meaningful input. The chairman should notify all members as to the time of the meeting. He will also indicate on the agenda who is assigned to open and close the meeting with prayer. He ensures that there is good order and, along with the Branch Committee coordinator, sees that committee decisions are carried out in a timely manner.

18. Branch Committee Meetings:

The Branch Committee decides when to hold its regular meetings. The committee should not postpone giving attention to its responsibilities or delay in providing direction needed to expedite the work. In nearly all cases, the Branch Committee will meet weekly, but special meetings may be held when needed. In small branches, meetings can be held less frequently according to what may be practical and also depending on the location of the members of the Branch Committee. For obvious reasons, it is good if all members of the Branch Committee can live close enough to the branch to be generally available for such meetings. Minutes should be kept of all Branch Committee meetings. If a member is indisposed or absent, the committee can still function if a majority is present.—See 2:38.

19. The Branch Committee may invite other individuals to come to its meetings for consultation or to present information that will help the committee in reaching decisions.

20. During Branch Committee meetings, each member should express himself freely when he has something

meaningful to add. (Prov. 10:19) It is not expected that all brothers will have the same opinion on all matters. Nevertheless, the Governing Body expects that in most cases the Branch Committee will come to unanimous decisions. In any significant case in which a decision is not unanimous, the Branch Committee should write one letter to the appropriate Governing Body committee, stating the varying views. Pertinent details should be provided, including an explanation as to why some members are for a matter and why some members are against it. Providing the names of those who are for and those who are against a certain decision is helpful. If individual members wish to submit additional comments, these should be sent along with the letter from the Branch Committee. If this direction is followed, there would be no need for a Branch Committee member to send his personal observations or objections about a branch matter in a personal e-mail to someone at headquarters. (Rom. 14:19) If needed, the Governing Body committee will seek direction from the entire Governing Body. If, in rare cases, the urgency of a situation does not allow sufficient time for the Branch Committee to send a letter to the Governing Body explaining the details and differing points of view, the majority decision of the Branch Committee should stand until further direction is received.

21. If the Branch Committee determines that a particular decision is of major importance, it should not decide the matter but should send it to the appropriate Governing Body committee with its observations and recommendations. (Ps. 19:13; Prov. 11:2) This procedure is to be followed even when the committee is unanimous as to how the matter should be handled. When the Branch Committee writes about a weighty matter, the coordinator should make it clear in the letter that the Branch Committee members who were present have read the letter and that

they are in agreement with its content. The names of any Branch Committee members who were absent should be indicated as well.—See 2:39; 3:3; 6:41.

22. Unity on Branch Committees:

From time to time, Branch Committee members may experience personal differences with one another. This often occurs when a brother imposes his personal opinion or preference on others. Of course, responsible brothers may occasionally have a difference of opinion. Despite such differences in thinking, they must continue to work together in love and with mutual respect.—Col. 3:13, 14.

23. Branch Committee coordinators should especially be conscious not to impose their opinion or preference on others in decisions that should be made by the entire Branch Committee. If a member of the Branch Committee lives outside of Bethel, he should be part of the decision-making process to the extent possible and not simply be informed after the fact about decisions that were made.

24. If the peace and unity of the committee are threatened, each member must examine himself carefully to determine what adjustments he must personally make in order to display “the wisdom from above.” (Jas. 3:17, 18) While it is easy to see the faults of others, it takes a mature Christian man to look carefully into the mirror of God’s Word and see his own faults clearly and then work to change. (Jas. 1:23-25) While one or more members of the committee may feel that they are not part of the problem, all must be part of the solution. Therefore, each one should supplicate Jehovah for His divine help to resolve the problem, never allowing place for the Devil.—Eph. 4:26, 27.

25. Continue to work together unitedly as a committee in peace and unity, cooperating closely as a body of mature brothers. (Ps. 133:1; Phil. 2:1-4) “Take

the lead” in honoring one another. (Rom. 12:10) Much is expected of those who have been put in charge of much. (Luke 12:48b) The Bethel family notices the way you deal with one another and imitates your example, whether positive or negative.

26. Recommendations to the Governing Body:

If the Branch Committee wishes to recommend the appointment or deletion of a circuit overseer or a country representative, the *Recommendation(s) to the Governing Body—Circuit Overseer (S-391) form* or the *Recommendation(s) to the Governing Body—Country Representative (A-114) form* should be completed and sent to the Governing Body. While the Branch Committee should give careful and prayerful consideration to the qualifications of each brother being recommended (and, if married, the brother’s wife), extensive additional comments in a separate letter are not needed unless there is something significant to report about the brother (or his wife) that the Governing Body should know when considering the recommendation. The wives of such brothers should not be listed on the recommendation form.—See 2:49; 6:132.

27. All members of the Branch Committee who are in agreement should have their names listed at the bottom of the recommendation form. If a member of the Branch Committee was not present when the recommendations were considered, then the word “absent” should be shown next to that brother’s name at the bottom of the recommendation form. A copy of the form will be returned to the branch office if the appointments and/or deletions are approved by the Governing Body.—See 2:30.

28. Appointments and Deletions of Branch and Country Committee Members:

Branch Committees should plan ahead to meet the future need for committee members. Since it is preferred that brothers being considered

for appointment to the Branch or Country committee attend Gilead School before the recommendation is made, their Gilead recommendations should be submitted to the Service Committee well in advance. (See 6:184, 186.) In the case of Bethel brothers with such potential who are not able to read, write, and speak English fluently, such brothers and their wives, if married, could be invited to attend a future class of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers so that their potential can be further evaluated and their spirituality deepened. If a well-qualified circuit overseer has the potential to serve on the Branch Committee and is being seriously considered for this role, he should be invited to serve at Bethel temporarily to evaluate further his qualifications and determine whether he and his wife can adapt to Bethel life. After the evaluation period, if the Branch Committee continues to believe that he has the qualifications to serve on the committee, he may then be recommended for Gilead. If a branch visit is planned in the coming months, it is usually best to discuss recommendations about prospective committee members with the headquarters representative before submitting the Recommendation(s) to the Governing Body—Branch or Country Committee Member (A-113) form. In addition to the recommendation form, the Branch Committee should supply the Governing Body with a covering letter explaining the reasons for the recommendation and, if available, the headquarters representative's comments. Once the Governing Body confirms the appointment or deletion of a Branch or Country committee member, the HuB Persons record will be updated at world headquarters. The record in HuB should reflect the history of any previous appointments. This applies even if a previous Branch or Country committee he served on was dissolved. When a country office has its own instance of HuB, the data regarding the Country Committee should be maintained in

that office's instance of HuB. If serious questions arise about the qualifications of a Branch or Country committee member, the review should be handled by the Branch Committee and not the brother's body of elders. If needed, the Branch Committee may discreetly obtain information from other elders. After their review, the Branch Committee should forward their recommendation to the Governing Body for a final decision.

29. A newly appointed Branch or Country committee member who is fluent in English and, if married, whose wife is also fluent in English will be scheduled by the Service Committee to attend a future class of the School for Branch Committee Members and Their Wives.

30. Appointments and Deletions of Circuit Overseers: See 6:130, 132, 141-144; 9:95-96 with regard to the qualifications and training of prospective circuit overseers. In cases of death, judicial action, pregnancy, or resignation for health reasons, the Branch Committee is authorized to process the deletion. Thereafter, the Governing Body should be informed of the deletion on the next recommendation form that is submitted. For all other reasons, the Branch Committee should submit to the Governing Body the usual form with a covering letter explaining the recommendation to delete a circuit overseer. The Branch Committee must await approval from the Governing Body before informing him about his appointment or deletion.—See 2:26-27; 9:6-9, 108.

31. Know the Organization: Branch Committee members, whether in a large or a small branch, should seek to become acquainted with all the operations carried on at the branch. They should research how the work can be done in the most effective and beneficial way and do all they reasonably can to help it to be done in that way. A Branch Committee should know if the brothers are accomplishing the best work they can and, if they are not, the

is invited to give a talk on the position of Jehovah's Witnesses on medical matters and the Branch Committee agrees, a copy of the draft text should be sent to the Service Committee for approval. This is not necessary if the brother uses the standard HID/HLC *PowerPoint* presentation.

30. Sponsoring a Medical Conference:

The branch office should not sponsor a medical conference or symposium. HLCs should not initiate a special campaign to invite doctors in their area to an event and should refrain from advertising or giving the impression that they endorse or promote an event, even when Witnesses are the organizers. Furthermore, the branch office should not incur transportation, registration, or lodging expenses for physicians to attend these events. If the Branch Committee believes that an exception may be warranted, the Service Committee should be consulted.

31. Setting Up Display Booths at Medical Conferences:

The branch office should be very selective regarding the type and the number of medical conferences for which it will seek approval to set up a booth. Only conferences attended by doctors who regularly deal with the blood issue are to be considered. Before contracting with the sponsors to exhibit, the branch office should seek approval from the Service Committee, submitting the name of the conference, dates, location, expected attendance, total anticipated costs for exhibiting, and other relevant information concerning the event. The letter to the Service Committee should include assurance that the Branch Committee has sufficient funds in its budget to cover the associated costs. Only the approved booth graphics and signage should be used. Any modifications should be approved by the Service Committee. If a large exhibit booth is requested from a custodial branch, sufficient lead time should be allowed (at least three months). Only the approved presentation kits should be used as

handouts. Branches may write to Hospital Information Services for suggestions on what to include in the information packages for doctors.

32. Medical Devices and Supplies:

Hospitals in developing countries may ask the branch office to donate medical devices, equipment, or other supplies. Before making any commitment, the Branch Committee should write to the Service Committee for direction.

33. Pharmaceuticals:

In developing lands with limited access to basic pharmaceuticals, a branch office may wish to store a small supply of specialized medicine (such as EPO or iron) and/or other basic medical supplies. However, before requesting permission from the Service Committee, the branch office should check with regulatory health agencies in the country to determine the legal requirements that regulate storing these items. If the Service Committee approves the request, the branch office should be judicious in the amount of medicine kept on hand, perhaps storing only a six-month supply or enough for two or three patients. The branch office should submit a *Nonliterature Branch Request*, along with a note referencing the letter of approval from the Service Committee, to replace any items used. Brothers may express their appreciation for this arrangement by donating financially to defray the cost of replenishing the stock of medicine and supplies, though such a donation is not a requirement to benefit from this arrangement.

34. Websites:

Since *jw.org* provides helpful information for medical professionals, neither the branches nor the Hospital Liaison Committees (HLCs) should place information about the Hospital Information Desk or HLC activity on any other website unless the Service Committee grants approval.

SERVICE DEPARTMENT

35. Under the direction of the Branch Committee, the Service Department

cares for matters related to the preaching work and the activity of congregations, elders and ministerial servants, circuit overseers, and pioneers. The Service Department takes a keen interest in the spiritual growth of the congregations and provides valuable feedback to the Branch Committee as to what is needed to accelerate the preaching and disciple-making work. It also arranges assemblies and conventions and various theocratic schools. Brothers in the Service Department prepare responses to reports and inquiries from the field that relate to the preaching work and congregation activities. The Service Department works closely with the Local Design/Construction Department to determine where Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls are needed and their priority. The Governing Body provides direction on such matters through the latest publications on congregation organization, various guidelines, and letters. If there is no clear policy on a matter, the Service Department should forward its questions to the Branch Committee. The Branch Committee may need to consult with the Service Committee or another Governing Body committee for direction.

Department Organization

36. Overseer: A member of the Branch or Country committee will be appointed to serve as the Service Department overseer. (See 2:13.) In most branches, an assistant overseer should be appointed to care for the workload, especially when the overseer is away from the office. In larger branches, two brothers may be appointed by the Branch Committee to serve as assistant overseers. (See 2:15.) Good communication, coordination, and cross-training by oversight will ensure that the workload is distributed evenly and that the department is not overstaffed. In large branches, the Branch Committee may appoint experienced, well-qualified brothers to serve as contacts. These contacts help to oversee the Service Department under the direc-

tion of the overseer and his assistant overseers. Each contact would coordinate the work of specific desks, in addition to caring for his own responsibilities. Based on the recommendation of the Service Department overseer, the Branch Committee determines the number of contacts needed, their responsibilities, and their level of authority.—See Service Department Guidelines, chap. 2, par. 1.

37. Deskmen: In a small branch office, the overseer may be able to handle the work of a Service Department deskman. In most branches, however, the Branch Committee will appoint other qualified elders to serve in the Service Department as deskmen who will care for the reports and correspondence from a number of circuits. The number of circuits assigned to a deskman varies according to the brother's workload, capabilities, health, and age limitations.

38. A deskman should be an experienced elder known for his loyal adherence to theocratic direction. He must be courteous, loyal, and courageous in giving sound Scriptural direction. He must be well-organized and diligent in caring for his responsibilities. He may have gained experience as a Service Desk secretary for several years. Experience has shown that there are benefits for some of the deskmen to have served in the traveling work prior to Bethel. Deskmen should give thorough training to the secretaries in the department with the objective of helping them to take on greater responsibility in the future. (2 Tim. 2:2) In most cases, such a training program would make it unnecessary routinely to transfer circuit overseers to Bethel to serve in the Service Department. However, if there is a need to transfer a circuit overseer to Bethel to serve as a Service Department deskman, the request, along with a complete explanation, should be submitted to the Service Committee. If the Service Committee agrees to release the circuit overseer for Bethel service,

the recommendation will then be sent to the Personnel Committee. (See 4: 10.) When considering this option, the Branch Committee should keep in mind that not all circuit overseers and their wives will be able to adapt to Bethel life.

39. A deskman should be careful to avoid giving his own opinion on service-related matters. His counsel must be sound, based on the Bible and theocratic guidelines. (1 Cor. 4:6) To ensure that proper theocratic direction is relayed to the field, a **proofreading system** should be established. One deskman may proofread the work of another.

40. Service Desk Secretaries: As the workload increases, a brother may be assigned as a secretary to a deskman. Although he may be younger in years and may not have the same level of experience, a secretary must have the spiritual qualities required of a deskman. While it is preferred that a Service Desk secretary be an appointed elder, he would generally not need to be an older brother with many years of Bethel service or field experience. A modest young brother with fine spirituality and the potential to qualify in time to serve as a deskman may be used. His duties would include opening and sorting mail, attaching relevant background material, typing letters, filing, entering information into the computer, and so forth.

41. Desk Groups: As the number of deskmen increases, it may be practical to arrange them in groups of five or six and have them circulate difficult cases. The more-difficult cases can be considered at a weekly meeting. (Prov. 13:10) At the discretion of the Branch Committee, the more experienced Service Desk secretaries could be included in the group meetings in order to further their training. If those in the Service Department cannot resolve a complex issue by using published direction or if a case is of major importance, they will refer the matter to the Branch

Committee. The Branch Committee, in turn, may need to consult with the Service Committee for direction.—See 2: 21; 6:61.

Handling Telephone Calls and Correspondence

42. Telephone Calls: A telephone call should *always* be answered in a kind and loving way. Even though the brother taking the call is busy and it may interrupt his work, reflecting warmth, respect, and concern for the brothers and others is important. One should be as helpful as possible to the individual calling. If the caller is from outside of Bethel, it is not wise for a deskman or his secretary to give his name unless the caller is a circuit overseer. However, there is no objection to providing an outside caller with the desk symbol of the deskman.

43. A telephone memorandum should be made for all telephone calls that deal with important matters and for calls in which direction is given and a record is necessary. The memorandum should include the name of the caller, the caller's telephone number, the congregation, the nature of the call, who took the call, and any direction that was given. If the caller presents a weighty matter, he should be requested to write to the branch office.

44. Incoming Mail: In smaller branches, the Service Department overseer may be able to handle routine mail. In most branches, it may be necessary to have a mail desk or a correspondence clerk assigned to open postal mail. A similar arrangement may be needed to process and route incoming electronic correspondence. Incoming mail is handled in the date order of receipt and according to its urgency. If at all possible, those working in the Service Department should make it their goal to reply to correspondence within two weeks.

45. Requests for Kingdom Hall Addresses and Meeting Times: In most cases, the branch office may provide

any inquirer with basic information about Kingdom Hall addresses and meeting times, or the inquirer may be instructed on how to locate the information on jw.org. There is no objection to replying by e-mail to written requests for such basic information.—See 3:55; 6:49.

46. Correspondence From Other Branches: When another branch writes to an individual in the branch territory, the letter will usually be sent to the Service Department for forwarding to the addressee. In most cases, such letters can be sent directly to the addressee. If there are any concerns about the information being provided or about the addressee, it would be best to send the letter through the congregation, with appropriate direction to the elders.

47. If the letter to the individual is accompanied by a courtesy copy for the branch, the original should be sent to the addressee, as directed above, and the courtesy copy filed in the BRANCH CORRESPONDENCE FILE. If the letter to the individual is *not* accompanied by a courtesy copy to the branch, this means that it was received electronically and printed in the office. The letter may be mailed as outlined above. A photocopy does not need to be made for the BRANCH CORRESPONDENCE FILE, as the electronic file copy will be retained according to the retention policy.

48. Letters sent to those living outside the branch territory are usually not mailed directly to the individual. Rather, after the letter is approved, it is sent to the overseeing branch office to be forwarded to the person or his congregation body of elders. (See 6:45-47.) Exceptions to this general policy are outlined in 6:49-50.

49. Inquiries From Publishers in Other Countries: It is important that all those who consider moving to a foreign land prayerfully count the cost and seek Jehovah's direction. (Luke 14:28;

Jas. 1:5; *od* p. 100; *km* 8/11 pp. 4-6) The branch office should be helpful and respond promptly to any publisher who inquires about serving temporarily or permanently where the need is greater. If a written inquiry is accompanied by a favorable letter of recommendation from the Congregation Service Committee, the Service Department may provide such information as Kingdom Hall addresses, meeting times, and contact information of the coordinator(s) of the body of elders. The Service Department should be sure that any areas being recommended for assistance are safe for foreigners. The reply letter may be sent directly to the publisher via e-mail or surface mail. If the branch office is uncertain about the qualifications of a particular publisher, the letter should be sent to the inquirer's branch office, indicating that the letter should be forwarded to the individual or to his body of elders.—See 6:45.

50. While branches are authorized to provide general information to publishers about the country and congregations needing assistance, the branch is not authorized to provide extensive additional assistance, such as issuing sponsorship or guarantee letters; supplying residency, visa, or other legal forms; locating pioneer partners; and arranging suitable accommodations. These are personal matters that require careful investigation by the publisher before he or she moves to another country. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the individual publisher, not the branch office, to obtain information about visa requirements and work permits.—Gal. 6:5.

51. Certificates or Letters for Jehovah's Witnesses: On occasion, publishers and others associated with a local congregation may request that the body of elders or the branch office provide them with a signed letter or certificate that confirms or explains in some way the person's relationship with the Christian congregation. For example, local authorities in some areas

may require that an elder who performs weddings or one who conducts meetings in prisons register and provide some proof of his ordination as a minister. A publisher or pioneer who is moving to serve where the need is greater in another country may request that the body of elders or the branch office provide him with a letter confirming that he is one of Jehovah's Witnesses in good standing. The immigration authorities in some countries may ask a person who is regularly attending congregation meetings to provide a signed statement from the body of elders confirming that fact. In some lands, baptized Christians are called upon to explain to the authorities their personal and conscientious objection to military service. In neutrality cases, it may be helpful for the authorities to receive a letter or a certificate from the congregation or the branch office confirming that the conscientious objector is an ordained and baptized minister of Jehovah's Witnesses or a full-time preacher of the good news. **The Branch Committee is responsible for carefully determining (1) if the elders or the branch office should be involved in replying to such requests; (2) if so, the approved wording to be used; and (3) for whom such letters and certificates may be provided.** In most cases, the elders or the branch would issue such documents only for publishers in good standing. Any such letters or certificates approved by the Branch Committee should be limited to explaining the facts and not go into detail about a brother's or a sister's personal convictions. (1 Pet. 3:15) Furthermore, any document provided by the branch office on the letterhead of one of the organization's local legal entities should not in any way imply that the organization is sponsoring the person financially or legally. (Gal. 6:5) Publishers and pioneers who move on their own to another land should not be represented to immigration authorities as "missionaries" because they are not sponsored by the organization as

is done for those who are in the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses. If the Branch Committee needs further guidance on such matters involving publishers, pioneers, or others in the field, it should write to the Service Committee. Matters related to the support of members of the Worldwide Order are further described in 3:81-85.

52. Circuit Overseer's Report on a Congregation: *The Report on Circuit Overseer's Visit With Congregation (S-303)* is used by the circuit overseer to give the Service Department a brief report on the spirit of the congregation and any encouragement or counsel given. It is necessary to acknowledge the circuit overseer's report only if further correspondence would be helpful.

53. Appointments and Deletions of Elders and Ministerial Servants: Circuit overseers are appointed by the Governing Body to care for the appointments and deletions of elders and ministerial servants. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) The procedures to be followed by circuit overseers are outlined in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines (tg)*.—See 6:74.

54. The Service Department receives the names, birth dates, and baptism dates of brothers who will be considered for appointment during a circuit overseer's upcoming visit to a congregation. This information is received automatically when congregations use the Web version of the *Recommendations for Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants (S-62)* form to notify their circuit overseer of the recommendation. Congregations with limited Internet access may submit their recommendations to their circuit overseer by means of the printed version of the S-62 form, or the branch office may allow congregations to submit the information to their circuit overseer by means of a phone call or text message. Thereafter, the circuit overseer should immediately forward the information to the branch office. When received by

the Service Department, a check may need to be performed to confirm that there is no legal reason that the recommendation for a brother's appointment should not be considered. Such a legal check may require sending the information to the Legal Department. This legal check is not required on the names of (1) elders and ministerial servants who are recommended because they moved, (2) regular pioneers or those in other forms of full-time service who are recommended as ministerial servants, or (3) ministerial servants who are recommended to serve as elders. If there is no legal reason that the recommendation should not be considered, the Service Department should inform the circuit overseer accordingly. (If the Web version of the S-62 form cannot be used, the branch office may determine the best method of conveying to the circuit overseer that the recommendation may be considered.) The check made by the branch office is not a check of the person's age, marital status, previous appointments and deletions, or the like. That responsibility rests with the body of elders and the circuit overseer.

55. If there is a **legal reason that the appointment of a brother should not be considered** (such as a valid accusation of child abuse), the Service Department should investigate the matter further and determine whether or not the recommendation should be considered by the circuit overseer. If the recommendation may be considered, the Service Department should inform the circuit overseer accordingly without delay. If the recommendation should not be considered, the Service Department should inform the circuit overseer and the elders concerning the reason.

56. If there is insufficient time for the branch office to process a recommendation before the visit of the circuit overseer, the Service Department should inform the circuit overseer that the recommendation will need to be resubmitted in conjunction with the next visit.

57. If the **circuit overseer will be away** from the circuit for (1) less than a month, he may hold any recommendations in abeyance until he returns; (2) one to three months, the branch office should designate another circuit overseer (perhaps a neighboring circuit overseer or one who recently served the circuit) to consider any recommendations received from substitutes; or (3) more than three months, the branch office should assign another circuit overseer to visit congregations in the circuit. If a circuit overseer is unable to communicate with the affected congregations and substitutes before leaving his assignment, the branch office should take the lead in informing them.—See 6:139.

58. At times, the **branch office will assign an appointed elder or a ministerial servant**, such as a special pioneer, Bethel family member, or a graduate of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, to serve in a particular congregation. In such cases, the Service Department should write to the circuit overseer to advise him that they recommend the reappointment of the brother. Thereafter, the circuit overseer may generate an appointment letter to the new congregation and will inform the Service Department using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2).

59. At times, a **brother serving at Bethel becomes involved in misconduct** and the Branch Committee decides that he can stay at Bethel, but no longer qualifies to serve in an appointed position in the congregation. In such a case, the Service Department would send a letter to the body of elders outlining the following: (1) that because of certain misconduct the Branch Committee has determined that the brother may stay at Bethel but his qualifications to serve as an appointed servant have come into serious question and thus the Branch Committee is writing to the circuit overseer recommending that he be deleted, (2) a concise explanation of the brother's

misconduct, (3) the arrangements that have been established at Bethel to provide spiritual help, and (4) that the elders should write the Service Department if the brother is still serving at Bethel when and if they recommend his reappointment. In a postscript to the circuit overseer, it should be recommended that he delete the brother at his earliest convenience.

60. Appeals Involving Deletions of Elders and Ministerial Servants: If an elder or a ministerial servant disagrees with his deletion by the circuit overseer, he should be asked immediately to write a brief letter to the Service Department, with a copy to the body of elders and the circuit overseer, explaining why he disagrees with the deletion. The announcement of deletion will be held in abeyance. Thereafter, the Service Department will select an experienced circuit overseer who, along with the original circuit overseer, will rehear the entire matter. These two brothers will listen to the brother carefully and deal with him kindly and justly. They may consult with the Service Department for advice. After the two circuit overseers have heard the brother's concerns and reached a joint decision, there is no further appeal. If it is decided that the brother should be deleted, the announcement will be made at the next midweek meeting and the circuit overseer will inform the Service Department using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion* (S-2).

61. In very rare situations, a special committee of three or four experienced elders may be needed to handle an unusual and complex case involving one or more congregations. For example, a circuit overseer may alert the Service Department about a serious matter that has called into question the Scriptural qualifications of multiple elders or perhaps even an entire body of elders. If the deskman believes that a special committee should be appointed, he should consult with his desk group and his contact (if contacts have been

appointed in the Service Department) before submitting the recommendation to the Service Department overseer for approval. (See 6:41; Service Department Guidelines, chap. 2, par. 1.) If the recommendation is approved, the Service Department would select the brothers who will serve on the special committee from elders whom circuit overseers have indicated are qualified to handle complex matters. The Service Department would provide direction to the special committee on its handling of the matter. After a thorough investigation and a meeting with the brothers involved, the special committee will then submit its comments and provide a recommendation to the original circuit overseer and another experienced circuit overseer selected by the Service Department. (See 6:60.) If needed, the circuit overseers may consult with the Service Department. However, the two circuit overseers, not the special committee nor the branch office, will make the final determination regarding the qualifications of the brother(s) in question and inform the Service Department accordingly.

62. In the event that a body of elders disagree with a circuit overseer's decision not to remove a brother whose deletion they have recommended and about whom the elders appeal to the branch office, the Service Department should obtain the circuit overseer's comments on the elders' correspondence. What facts did the circuit overseer take into account in rejecting the recommendation the elders made? What efforts did he make to explain kindly the reasons for his decision to the elders? Is there a valid Scriptural basis to the recommendation made by the elders? Is the circuit overseer known to be kind, impartial, and just, or does he tend to be unyielding or to impose his personal viewpoints? With this information, the branch office can determine what counsel, if any, the circuit overseer or the body of elders should receive. It may be practical to

encourage the elders to continue demonstrating their submission to Christ's headship by supporting the arrangement made by the "faithful and discreet slave."—Matt. 24:45-47; w14 11/15 pp. 28-29.

63. Distributing Documents on JW.ORG: Branches are notified when new and revised forms, letters, and outlines are posted on MDS. The Branch Committee will determine whether the item can be used in the branch territory without any adjustments. If so, it may be possible for the Service Department to create a link to the item under the Documents tab on the website. Often minor adjustments are needed to the documents, such as the insertion of letterheads, signature stamps, and the like. Or there may be a need to substitute the word "Province" for "State," to add a statement giving permission for the branch or congregations to keep personal data for individuals on file, to incorporate the monetary denomination used in a specific country, and so forth. In the case of these minor adjustments, the Service Department may make the necessary changes and then upload the document to the local jw.org directory and create a link on the site. If there is a need to alter a document or to create a new form because of unique local circumstances, the Branch Committee should request approval from the appropriate Governing Body committee.—See 6:160.

Processing Judicial Reports

64. Disfellowshippings and Disassociations: The elder serving as the chairman of a judicial committee (or "a committee" in the case of disassociation) is to submit one copy of the *Notification of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77) to the Service Department. Usually there is no need for the elders serving on the committee to submit additional correspondence about the case.

65. Role of Service Desk Secretary: The Service Desk secretary will be re-

sponsible to review the S-77 form to make sure it is complete. If there is anything on the form that is not clear or is missing, the secretary will contact a member of the committee that submitted the form. It may be possible to obtain missing information by means of a telephone call. Once the Service Desk secretary has verified that the form is complete, he will enter the record into the electronic file used by the branch office. If the S-77 form is scanned into an electronic file, there is no need to keep a hard copy. Depending on local circumstances, it is left to each branch office to decide whether there is a need to send a brief acknowledgment to the chairman of the committee that the S-77 form has been received.

66. Role of Service Department Deskman: Though it is not necessary for the deskman to review all S-77 forms, the secretary should be trained to alert the deskman to any unusual or weighty cases. The following list is not comprehensive but simply provides some examples of cases that should be forwarded to the deskman for consideration and careful handling:

- There is a question as to whether there is a valid judicial charge or sufficient evidence to support the charge.—*ks10* 5:2-37.
- The S-77 form reveals that the committee did not inform the individual of the decision.—*ks10* 6:9-10; 7:29-30.
- The individual does not agree with the decision of the original committee and the appeal committee and is now appealing his case to the branch office.—*ks10* 8:14-15.
- The original committee and the appeal committee do not agree on the decision.—*ks10* 8:16-18.
- The committee has submitted correspondence about the case in addition to the S-77 report.

67. The Service Department deskman and desk groups should not be quick to second-guess how a committee cared for a particular matter unless it is clear from the S-77 form and any additional correspondence submitted that the published guidelines in the *Shepherding* textbook and current letters to bodies of elders were not followed. In such cases, the deskman should write to the committee in an effort to help them bring the matter to a conclusion. Thereafter, the deskman or the secretary will update the branch office's files accordingly.

68. With reinstatements, the deskman would not usually need to review the information submitted unless there are some unusual factors. One exception is when it appears that sufficient time was not allowed for the individual to prove that his repentance is genuine. (*ks10* 11:3-5) Depending on the nature of the matter, the deskman may determine to provide the committee with some helpful reminders.

69. Use of HuB and JW.ORG E-mail: Branches using these tools will be able to process and store S-77 forms electronically. The following is a brief explanation of the procedure that they may choose to use:

- A member of the committee submits the S-77 form using [jw.org e-mail](mailto:jw.org).
- Upon receipt, the S-77 form is assigned to a Service Desk secretary for review.
- When the secretary has determined that the form is complete, he will enter the record in the electronic file used by the branch office, such as *Tracking Persons*. An incident could be created linking the form to the tracked person. In the case of a reinstatement, the secretary would update the electronic record and retain the notification in the electronic file system.

- If the S-77 form needs further review by a deskman, the secretary will pass this on to him. After the deskman has completed his review, he will return the correspondence to the secretary who will then update any electronic record of the matter.
- If needed, hard copies of S-77 forms can be scanned into HuB. A record of the matter can be entered into *Tracking Persons*. Any hard copy should be shredded.

70. Rescissions: If the Service Department determines that a judicial action was taken without valid basis, they should assist the elders to see why the wrongdoing did not warrant the formation of a judicial committee. If the elders agree, they should rescind the judicial decision. If a **reproof was previously announced** to the congregation, the elders should make the following announcement: "The announcement of judicial reproof involving [name of person] has been rescinded." Any judicial restrictions that had been imposed should be removed, and the body of elders should determine if the publisher still qualifies for any special privileges he enjoyed before the action was taken. If a **disfellowshipping was previously announced** to the congregation, the elders should make the following announcement: "The announcement that [name of person] is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses has been rescinded." The body of elders should determine if the publisher still qualifies for any special privileges he enjoyed before the action was taken. The letter to the judicial committee will request that the committee reply in writing to the Service Department, providing the date when the rescission was announced. Once the date is received, the records should be updated.

71. Appeal Committees: The circuit overseer is authorized to appoint an appeal committee. For details on the formation of an appeal committee and the

correspondence to be received from it, see *Circuit Overseer Guidelines*, chapter 13.

Forming and Merging Congregations

72. A circuit overseer will assist in organizing the formation of a new congregation if and when it is advisable to do so. A completed *Congregation Application Information (S-51)* form may be submitted to the branch office. Generally, the circuit overseer will sign the application.

73. In congregations or groups with no appointed elders, one or more experienced ministerial servants (or a baptized sister if a baptized brother is no longer available) may be designated to handle some necessary matters temporarily. For example, the branch office may choose to send nonconfidential correspondence to the personal jw.org inbox of a well-qualified ministerial servant. Another option is to ask an elder in a nearby congregation to assist.

74. When the Service Department gives approval for the **formation, dissolution, or merging of congregations**, the circuit overseer will proceed with the appointment of elders and ministerial servants in their respective congregations, using the *Notification of Appointment or Deletion (S-2)*. (See 6:53.) Good communication is needed by the Local Design/Construction and Service departments when considering these adjustments, especially when considering the merging of congregations. During such processes, these departments should keep the following in mind:

- The travel distance for publishers to attend meetings and share in the field ministry is an important factor to consider. The branch office needs to take an interest in the concerns of publishers, including elderly ones and large families with minor children, who may be

required to travel greater distances. Merging congregations in a densely populated area with many Kingdom Halls is different from merging congregations in a large geographic area where Kingdom Halls are far from each other, requiring a significantly longer commute for some publishers.

- While there are advantages when publishers attend the congregation in whose territory they live, it should be made clear to circuit overseers and to elders that they may only *recommend* that publishers attend a certain congregation. In the final analysis, however, each family head is responsible to determine what is best for his family. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for circuit overseers to pressure others to attend a particular congregation.—See *tg* chap. 5, par 24; *km* 11/02 “Question Box”.
- Before the branch office makes a final decision to merge congregations, the local elders need to be given an opportunity to give input on the matter and should not feel that they were forced to accept a decision already made by the branch office.—Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17.

If a merger is approved, care should be taken to see that all elders and ministerial servants are accounted for and appointed to serve with one of the congregations involved. The territory assignment for each respective congregation should be provided. In addition, various printed letters that the new congregation needs for its files should be sent. If there is a large amount of literature on hand, it would be best for the congregations to divide it instead of requesting additional literature for the new congregation. Any specific direction regarding legal considerations for titleholding congregations should be provided by the branch office in the S-392 letter sent to the circuit overseer

approving the recommendations for the merger.

Territories

75. Territory Assignments: The Service Department gives each congregation an assignment of territory to work. (See 6:158.) The Branch Committee and the Service Department monitor the preaching activity in the field, making all reasonable efforts to ensure that the branch territory is thoroughly covered.

76. Effective and Thorough Coverage of Territory: To ensure thorough coverage, branches should follow some general guidelines regarding the size of congregation territories. Local circumstances should be taken into consideration when determining the size of individual territories. Smaller territories give publishers the opportunity not only to cover territory but also to return to help cultivate interest that is found. If territories have fewer homes, publishers may feel more motivated to request a personal territory close to their home or workplace. Publishers may also need further training on how to keep accurate records and on how to give a more thorough witness when working from house to house. (*od* p. 91 par. 32; *km* 4/07 p. 8) If a congregation is unable to work portions of its assigned territory within two years and it is not possible to arrange for assistance from nearby congregations, the unworked territories should be assigned to nearby congregations or listed as unassigned territory.—See 6:80-81.

77. Foreign-Language Territory: The Branch Committee and the Service Department should take steps to be sure that **immigrant communities or indigenous language groups** receive a witness. (See 6:149-152.) The Service Department and circuit overseers should be guided by what is published on this subject in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines*, *Circuit Organization Guidelines*, the letter to all bodies of elders dated October 23, 2015, and the letter to all cir-

cuit overseers dated October 25, 2015.—See also *km* 11/09 pp. 3-5.

78. If there is a sizable population of foreign-speaking people in the branch territory and few publishers are available who speak their language, a **foreign-language class** may be held to train capable publishers and pioneers. Before a language class is held, the branch must identify and train language instructors. Potential instructors must meet the qualifications outlined in *Instructions for Organizing Language Classes* (S-367). A request to train the recommended foreign-language instructors should be submitted to the Service Committee for approval. The Service Committee will arrange for those who have been approved to attend the course “Teaching Methods for Accelerated Language Learning.” Following the training course, the branch may arrange to hold the foreign-language classes. (Helpful forms for organizing the classes are posted on MDS.) These classes should not be held at the branch office. They should be conducted in the foreign-language territory that is being targeted.—See 7:142; *tg* chap. 15.

79. Seldom Worked Territory: If congregations are in need of assistance in working their assigned territory, the congregations and circuit overseers will report this to the branch office. The Service Department will consider what can be done to provide assistance. If it is not possible to make arrangements to assist the congregation to cover its territory and the **territory has not been worked for two years**, the circuit overseer should recommend to the branch office which sections of the congregation’s territory should be assigned to other nearby congregations or listed as unassigned territory.

80. Unassigned Territory: The Branch Committee should make all reasonable efforts to **cover all unassigned territory at least once a year**. A letter may be sent each year to congre-

gations, inviting publishers to apply to work unassigned territory. This letter should include a list of the territories that need to be worked. Individuals willing to assist may indicate to the branch office which territory they would like to work, the number in their group, and the amount of time they can spend in an assignment. (Groups should not be made up solely of single brothers and single sisters.) A group captain should be designated. This information is to be given to the Congregation Service Committee for approval and forwarding to the branch. The Service Department considers the information, makes an appropriate territory assignment, and informs the group captain. After the assignment is completed, the group captain should submit a report to the branch office, outlining what was accomplished and any outstanding experiences.

81. Unassigned or seldom-worked territory could include large foreign- or indigenous-language communities of perhaps thousands of people who do not receive a regular witness. When publishers *in your branch territory* are invited to work unassigned or seldom-worked territories, there is no need to request the approval of the Service Committee.—See 6:76.

82. Isolated Publishers: The Service Department should send the names of isolated publishers to the congregations nearest them. Perhaps an elder or pioneer can visit them from time to time to encourage them and to work with them in the field ministry. The branch office should make arrangements for them to receive literature and any other necessary information. If practical, they could send their field service reports through the nearest congregation and obtain literature there as well. Otherwise, they may request literature from the branch office and report their field service directly to the branch each month, marking “isolated publisher” or “isolated pioneer” on the report. Only one person in the

group should make arrangements for obtaining literature.

83. The role of the circuit overseer in caring for isolated publishers and pioneers is outlined in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines*. If reasonably possible, the circuit overseer should adjust his schedule in order to **visit such ones each year**. After receiving the circuit overseer’s report for the annual visit, the Service Desk will send the isolated publisher, pioneer, or group a warm and encouraging letter. **A record should be kept of all such publishers and groups**, with a separate file for each, until such time as they can either be associated with a nearby congregation or be organized into a new congregation. Then the information in this file is put into the file for that congregation.

84. Special pioneers have been assigned to visit isolated publishers and groups, with good results. Where there is potential to form a new congregation, temporary special pioneers or special pioneers could be assigned.

85. When a regular pioneer requests a permanent assignment to care for an unassigned territory, the branch office will write a letter, enclosing an *Isolated Territory Assignment* (S-63). Only one regular pioneer would be given a certain isolated territory assignment. If more than one pioneer will be working in the same isolated assignment, the other pioneers are assigned by a letter from the office to work with the pioneer holding the territory. The pioneer holding the territory is responsible for making the necessary reports to the branch office on the progress being made in the territory.

86. Book Fairs and Special Witnessing Exhibits: Before agreeing to participate in such an event, the Branch Committee must obtain approval from the Service Committee. The request should be submitted as far in advance as possible but no less than one month

prior to the deadline for registering for the event. The Branch Committee should consider various factors, including the type of organization sponsoring the event, the cost, the estimated attendance, the length of time needed to prepare for the event, and the number of publishers required to staff a booth during the event. Usually it is best to limit participation in such events to only **one or two key events each year**. The letter to the Service Committee should include assurance that the Branch Committee has sufficient funds in its budget to cover the costs associated with participating in the event. Additionally, the following information should be provided:

- a. The name of the organization that is sponsoring the event. If available, a link to the event's website should be included in the letter. The branch should ensure that participating in the event would not call into question our neutral position or associate the branch office with any religious interfaith, social movement, or political activity.
- b. The dates and location of the event.
- c. The estimated attendance.
- d. The size of the booth being recommended. If there are options for booth size, the different sizes and prices of each should be provided. A modest-sized booth, perhaps no more than nine square meters, is preferred. If a larger booth size is recommended, the explanation should be included in the letter to the Service Committee.
- e. The estimated total cost in U.S. dollars. The branch should provide a breakdown of the costs, including entry fees, taxes, equipment rentals or purchases, and the cost of constructing (or repairing) the display. To the extent possible, displays should be designed and constructed in

a way that will allow for reuse. When informed of the voluntary and educational nature of our work, event organizers sometimes will reduce or waive certain fees. The letter to the Service Committee should indicate whether the branch inquired about a discount and the amount of any discount that will apply.

- f. Preliminary sketches of the proposed display, including the dimensions. The branch should avoid giving the appearance of commercializing our ministry. (2 Cor. 2:17) Relatively simple, yet attractive, displays will reflect favorably on Jehovah and his organization. There may be skilled publishers in the branch territory who have the ability, knowledge, and expertise in designing or fabricating displays typically used at these events.

87. Harbor Witnessing: The Service Department should organize harbor witnessing in harmony with *Harbor Witnessing Guidelines* (S-374). If a harbor-witnessing group recommends enrolling in a marine exchange or would like to pay for the storage of literature and/or witnessing equipment, the Service Department overseer or his assistant should carefully review the request before approving it to ensure that it is needed and reasonable. (Phil. 4:5) Any costs involved with harbor witnessing, such as obtaining suitable clothing, equipment, and proper permissions, will be the responsibility of the publisher. (Gal. 6:5) Publishers should not get involved with seaman's missions or other religious organizations in carrying out harbor witnessing.

88. Prison Witnessing: The Service Department should organize the preaching work in prisons according to the latest direction received from the Service Committee. (See the letter to all bodies of elders dated September 8, 2011, and the *Prison Information* (S-68) form.) A record should be maintained

of congregations assigned to care for each prison facility in the country. It should also be noted whether literature can be taken into the prison by the publishers or must be mailed directly from the branch office.

89. Special Campaigns: Unless directed to do so by the Service Committee, **the Branch Committee should not request help from other branch offices to fill special needs in the field.** In countries where there are few publishers and large densely populated areas to cover, the Branch Committee may feel that a **special campaign** would be beneficial. In some cases, it may be possible to invite native publishers who are living in other lands to return and share in the special campaign. Publishers in other countries who speak the local language may also be invited. The Branch Committee should send a recommendation to the Service Committee for its consideration and approval.

Conventions and Assemblies

90. Regional Conventions: Annually, circuit overseers submit the *Convention Program Participant Ratings* form (S-306) to the branch office. This form identifies the **elders who are qualified as convention speakers and their individual ratings.** In larger branch offices, these records are kept in HuB. Brothers who are approved Bethel speakers may be invited to inform the Service Department of the convention(s) that they will attend so that they may be assigned talks. If Bethel speakers volunteer to attend additional conventions using their own personal time away and at their own expense, they may be assigned where there is a need for convention speakers.—See 7:2-26, 80-81.

91. The Service Department will make assignments based on each brother's speaker ratings and the convention speaker grid provided annually by the Teaching Committee. Generally, the chairman and the drama directors

are assigned and notified first, followed by the Bethel speakers, and then local speakers are assigned the remaining parts. Service Department oversight will approve all convention speaker assignments before assignment letters are mailed out.—See 7:25, 80-81.

92. Circuit Assemblies: Two one-day circuit assemblies will be held each year. One assembly (CA-br) will have a visiting branch representative assigned to speak. The other assembly (CA-co) will be served by the circuit overseer without a branch representative being assigned. Arrangements are made according to the guidelines provided each year by the Teaching Committee. Helpful guidance is also found in *Circuit Organization Guidelines* (S-330).—See 7:27-35, 89.

93. The branch will assign the dates of circuit assemblies based on the number of publishers in a circuit and the size and availability of meeting locations. It may be necessary to divide a circuit into two or more sections and have separate assemblies. Circuit overseers will be notified preferably one year or more in advance in order to obtain assembly facilities. If possible, the two annual circuit assembly programs should be separated by at least three or four months. *Circuit Overseer Guidelines* has additional information.

Regular Pioneers

94. Direction regarding the appointment and activity of pioneers is found in the latest publications on congregation organization and in the letter to all bodies of elders dated May 15, 2017. Those leaving an assignment of special full-time service will not experience an interruption in their full-time service history if they are appointed as regular pioneers within three months. Regular pioneers who are sentenced to prison because of their Christian neutrality will have their full-time service history recorded as uninterrupted if they resume the full-time ministry within

three months of their release from prison. (See 4:18-19.) Regular pioneers who accept alternative civilian service may continue serving as regular pioneers if they can reasonably meet the requirements for regular pioneers. When reviewing their overall activity, the elders should show consideration for their unique circumstances when determining whether they qualify to continue serving as pioneers. A person who is performing alternative civilian service may be appointed as a regular pioneer if he is otherwise qualified and is able to fulfill the hour requirement.

95. Transfers to Other Branch Territories: When a pioneer moves to another country, the local branch should send to the new branch the regular pioneer record from HuB. If questions arise about the pioneer's history, the new branch may communicate with the other branch offices that are involved.

Temporary Special Pioneers

96. Temporary special pioneers serve in the same manner as special pioneers. However, they are appointed to serve in **one-year increments for up to a maximum of three years.** This temporary assignment will enhance their qualifications, allowing them to gain experience and to be further evaluated by the branch office. It could be a stepping-stone to a future assignment as a substitute circuit overseer, a special pioneer, a circuit overseer, or a field missionary or to Bethel service. Temporary special pioneers receive their assignment from the Service Department; they do not select their own. Individuals do not apply to become temporary special pioneers. Rather, well-qualified, local single regular pioneers and married regular pioneer couples without children are identified and invited to submit a *Questionnaire for Prospective Temporary Special Pioneer* (S-207).

97. Assignments: Single temporary special pioneers will ordinarily be assigned in pairs. If married, both mates

would need to qualify to serve together as temporary special pioneers. Generally, temporary special pioneers are assigned to remote areas with a ratio of 1 publisher to at least 3,000 or more inhabitants to open up new territories, including those in foreign- or indigenous-language fields. Most branches have territories that are seldom worked or are remote and isolated where there are interested ones and where there is good potential for forming a congregation. Many countries have densely populated urban centers with few publishers in the inner cities. In many lands there is a great need for qualified brothers to help men reach out to become ministerial servants and elders or where the brothers need more training to care for their congregation responsibilities.

98. Qualifications: A prospective temporary special pioneer is a well-qualified and effective **local regular pioneer** and is **usually a graduate of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers** or a graduate of the former Bible School for Single Brothers or Bible School for Christian Couples. **The candidate should be a citizen of the country, between 21 and 45 years of age, baptized three years or longer, in full-time service at least two years, in good health—not having serious limitations or severe health problems—and able to maintain an active schedule.**—See 6:111.

99. If a branch has additional needs in the field, circuit overseers may recommend **others who are not graduates** of the above-named theocratic schools by submitting a *Personal Qualifications Report* (S-326) to the branch office for review. There is no arrangement for appointing as temporary special pioneers those who have a minor child still living at home. It is preferred that the focus be on appointing single men and married couples who have the potential for taking on greater responsibility. However, if such ones are not avail-

able, **well-qualified single sisters** may serve as temporary special pioneers.

100. Any exceptions, including the appointing of foreign pioneers as temporary special pioneers, must be approved by the Service Committee.

If there is an exceptional need that cannot be cared for locally, then the Branch Committee should submit a *Request for Field Missionaries* (S-218) form to the Service Committee. Unless directed to do so by the Service Committee, the Branch Committee should not request help from other branch offices to fill special needs in the field.—See 6: 109.

101. Quota: The Service Committee establishes the total number of temporary special pioneers that may be appointed in each country. If the Branch Committee sees a need to increase the quota of temporary special pioneers, a request should be sent to the Service Committee, stating the number to be added, why they are needed, the number expected to graduate from the School for Kingdom Evangelizers in the coming year, and the publisher-to-population ratios of the language fields where they would be assigned.

102. Graduates of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers: Based on the recommendations of the instructors, the Service Department will determine which graduates in each class could be recommended to the Branch Committee to serve as temporary special pioneers. For more details, see chapter 10 of *School for Kingdom Evangelizers Office Guidelines*.

103. Nongraduates of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers: A candidate who is a local regular pioneer will be evaluated by the Service Department, based on the *Personal Qualifications Report* (S-326) and any recommendation submitted by the circuit overseer. The Service Department will decide whether to recommend to the Branch Committee that a regular pioneer be ap-

pointed as a temporary special pioneer. If approved, the regular pioneer can be sent a letter (S-225) explaining the temporary special pioneer arrangement with the request that he fill out a *Questionnaire for Prospective Temporary Special Pioneer* (S-207). The completed questionnaire is to be carefully checked by the Service Department and thereafter reviewed by two members of the Branch Committee. If they approve, the Service Department will prepare a letter (S-220) appointing the temporary special pioneer and informing him of the location of his assignment, copying the elders of the congregation he will be working with and the circuit overseer.

104. File: A file folder is made to hold a copy of the assignment letter, the questionnaire, and other correspondence related to the temporary special pioneer. His enrollment code in HuB is adjusted to show his start date as a temporary special pioneer (FTS). A record of his monthly field service is maintained in HuB.

105. Hour Requirement: The temporary special pioneer hour requirement is 130 hours a month. Sisters who are 40 years of age or older have a requirement of 120 hours a month. It is understood that a temporary special pioneer who serves as a congregation elder in a remote area may at times be needed for additional short-term theocratic assignments. For example, he may need to serve on a special committee or a Disaster Relief Committee, help with circuit or convention organization, assist in the construction or renovation of his own Kingdom Hall, or serve as a substitute circuit overseer. In addition, he may be needed for a brief period of time to train local elders to care for their responsibilities on a Hospital Liaison Committee. In exceptional situations, the travel time to attend an assigned circuit assembly, regional convention, or Kingdom Ministry School may be unusually long. If such assignments prevent him

from making his hour requirement, a brief explanation, as well as the number of hours spent, should be included on the monthly report submitted on jw.org or on his monthly S-212 report. An explanation should also be written in the “Remarks” column of the *Congregation’s Publisher Record* (S-21) card. However, the hours spent should not be included in the “Hours” column. The branch will also mark the HuB records and consider the remarks when performing the annual review. If a temporary special pioneer is assigned by the branch office to learn a new language in conjunction with his congregation assignment, he may be given a reduced hour requirement of 70 hours a month for up to three months.

106. Experiencing Difficulties: If a temporary special pioneer falls short of his hour requirement for two or three months or encounters serious health issues and is physically unable to meet the requirement, the Service Department may submit a recommendation for his deletion to two members of the Branch Committee for approval. It would be appropriate for the Service Department to write a letter to the temporary special pioneer, expressing appreciation for his service and encouraging him to continue working hard but directing that he return to the regular pioneer work. If the temporary special pioneer objects to the recommendation, he may submit a letter of appeal to the Branch Committee. The entire Branch Committee is responsible for making the final determination.

Special Pioneers

107. The Branch Committee is authorized to appoint special pioneers up to the quota approved by the Service Committee. (See 6:114.) Such individuals often have the potential to serve in other avenues of special full-time service, such as in the circuit work or as field missionaries. Those invited to serve as special pioneers must have the circumstances and desire to

serve wherever the branch office assigns them, and they must be able to meet the hour requirement for this service. They receive their congregation assignment from the Service Department; they do not select their own. As members of the Worldwide Order, special pioneers are provided with a modest allowance to assist them with their living expenses.

108. Assignments: Single special pioneers will ordinarily be assigned in pairs. For married couples, both mates would need to qualify to serve together as special pioneers. Generally, special pioneers are assigned to open up new territories, including those in foreign- or indigenous-language fields in remote areas that have a ratio of 1 publisher to at least 3,000 or more inhabitants. Most branches have territories that are seldom worked or are remote and isolated but have interested ones and good potential for forming a congregation. Many countries have densely populated urban centers with few publishers in the inner cities. In many lands there is a great need for qualified brothers to help men reach out to become ministerial servants and elders or where the brothers need more training to care for their congregation responsibilities.

109. If there is an exceptional need, the Branch Committee may assign temporary special pioneers, special pioneers, and circuit overseers to any country *overseen by the branch office*. Care should be taken so that the costs involved in such transfers and the acquiring of legal residency are kept to a minimum. Since a key objective of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers and the temporary special pioneer arrangement is to help more local brothers and sisters to reach out to meet the needs *within their own country*, those who are assigned by the branch office to serve in another country should keep that focus in mind. Any exceptional situations should be referred to the Service Committee.—See 6:100.

110. Branch offices are not authorized to transfer special pioneers to *other branch territories*. Such requests or recommendations should be referred to the Service Committee.

111. Qualifications: Since the number of special pioneers who may be appointed is limited, the branch office has the weighty responsibility of appointing *qualified* candidates as special pioneers and reviewing their activity annually. (See 9:101.) With the exception of the age requirement, the qualifications outlined for temporary special pioneers also apply to special pioneers. (See 6:98-100.) When the quota allows for it, a new special pioneer will usually be selected from among well-qualified temporary special pioneers who are graduates of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers.

112. Those being considered to serve as special pioneers must have demonstrated a genuine interest in helping people, an ability to maintain the routine and meet the hour requirement, and a determination to stick with an assignment when things are difficult. We want dedicated, hardworking brothers and sisters to be special pioneers, not those who may be disinterested in the work or who are more concerned about material benefits than about the privilege of sharing in this spiritually upbuilding work. We desire to appoint those who are devoted to God and who take seriously their commission as ministers. The primary purpose behind the special pioneer work is to add impetus to the preaching of the good news in areas where little is being done. In addition, the rigorous schedule requires stamina and good health. In isolated areas, upbuilding association may be limited. Appointees should be encouraged to view themselves and their circumstances realistically.

113. While there is no automatic arrangement for individuals leaving Bethel service, the circuit work, or some other form of special full-time service

to be appointed as special pioneers, consideration should be shown to regular members of the Worldwide Order who are **at least 55 years of age and have 25 or more years in special full-time service**. In the case of a married couple, such consideration should be shown if one of the mates meets these requirements. In such cases, the Branch Committee should assign one or two responsible elders at the branch office to meet with the person or married couple and kindly discuss their needs as they prepare to transition out of their current assignment. This meeting could be handled in person or, if necessary, by telephone or videoconference. When conducting the meeting, the elders should inquire if the individuals would like to serve as special pioneers. If so, it would also be good to inquire what they will need in the way of housing and financial assistance. If someone who is at least 55 years of age and has 25 or more years in special full-time service of his own volition asks for a special pioneer assignment, the Branch Committee may consider the request. Careful consideration should be given to each one's spirituality, experience, and personal circumstances. If questions arise as to whether a long-time member of the Worldwide Order qualifies to serve as a special pioneer, the Branch Committee should outline the concerns and provide a specific recommendation to the Service Committee. (See 9:3, 6.) If consideration is given to reassigning any Bethel family members who are 60 years of age and older to the field, the Branch Committee should first consult with the Personnel Committee.

114. Quota: The Service Committee establishes the total number of special pioneers that may be appointed in each country. If the Branch Committee sees a need to increase the quota of special pioneers, a request should be sent to the Service Committee, stating the number to be added, why they are needed, and the publisher-to-population

ratios of the language fields where they would be assigned. Special pioneers who have been given a temporary reduction in their hour requirement by the Branch Committee are included in the quota. (See 6:121.) However, those approved by the Service Committee to serve indefinitely as infirm special pioneers are not included in the quota.—See 6:107, 122.

115. Appointing New Special Pioneers: If the Service Department identifies a need in the field that cannot be met by the use of temporary special pioneers, it can consider appointing special pioneers. A candidate for special pioneer service should be selected from those who have successfully completed three years in the temporary special pioneer work. If the Branch Committee approves the recommendation from the Service Department, the temporary special pioneer should be sent a letter explaining the special pioneer arrangement, with the request that he fill out a *Questionnaire for Prospective Special Pioneer* (S-208). The completed questionnaire is to be carefully checked by the Service Department, and if all is in order, it is forwarded to the Branch Committee for approval. If the appointment is approved, the Service Department sends the special pioneer an assignment letter, copying the elders of the congregation he will be working with and the circuit overseer.

116. In branch territories with just a few circuits, the branch office may have in mind assigning an appointed circuit overseer to serve temporarily as a special pioneer. Before doing so, please provide the Service Committee with information about the brother you plan to reassign. If the brother and his wife, if married, could be used in the circuit work in another land for perhaps up to three years, provide a recent *Personal Qualifications Report* (S-326), translated into English, along with a cover letter describing his qualifications, his citizenship, and the language(s) in which he is fluent. It may be that he could be

used in a nearby country where there is a need for circuit overseers.

117. File: A file folder is made to hold a copy of the assignment letter, the questionnaire, the vow of poverty, and other correspondence related to the special pioneer. His enrollment code in HuB is adjusted to show his start date as a special pioneer (FS). A record of his monthly field service is maintained in HuB.—See 6:176.

118. Hour Requirement: The special pioneer hour requirement is 130 hours a month. Sisters who are 40 years of age or older have a requirement of 120 hours a month. It is understood that a special pioneer who serves as a congregation elder in a remote area may at times be needed for additional short-term theocratic assignments. For example, he may need to serve on a special committee or a Disaster Relief Committee, help with circuit or convention organization, assist in the construction or renovation of his own Kingdom Hall, or serve as a substitute circuit overseer. In addition, he may be needed for a brief period of time to train local elders to care for their responsibilities on a Hospital Liaison Committee. In exceptional situations, the travel time to attend an assigned circuit assembly, regional convention, or Kingdom Ministry School may be unusually long. If such assignments prevent him from making his hour requirement, a brief explanation, as well as the number of hours spent, should be included on the monthly report submitted on jw.org or on his monthly S-212 report. An explanation should also be written in the “Remarks” column of the *Congregation’s Publisher Record* (S-21) card. However, the hours spent should not be included in the “Hours” column. The branch will also mark the HuB records and consider the remarks when performing the annual review. If a special pioneer is assigned by the branch office to learn a new language in conjunction with his congregation assign-

ment, he may be given a reduced hour requirement of 70 hours a month for up to three months.

119. Reassignment: If necessary, special pioneers may be moved after three years. However, there is no need to adjust an assignment of a special pioneer unless circumstances necessitate such a move. If a special pioneer requests to be assigned to another congregation, the Service Department should consider the needs of the field, factoring in any extenuating circumstances.

120. Infirm Special Pioneers: If a special pioneer with less than 25 years of special full-time service is consistently unable to meet his monthly hour requirement, perhaps for six months or so, then it may be best for the person to leave the special full-time service. On the other hand, for those who are **at least 55 years of age and who have 25 or more years in special full-time service**, a reduced hour requirement may be appropriate. For reporting purposes, all special pioneers with an approved reduced hour requirement should be given the FSI enrollment code.

121. If a reduced hour requirement is needed because of **temporary factors**, such as short-term illness or caring for family responsibilities, the Branch Committee is authorized to approve a reduced monthly hour requirement for up to one year without consulting the Service Committee. This is with the understanding that the special pioneer will resume the normal special pioneer routine as soon as possible. This provision takes into consideration that unexpected events can overtake us all.—See 6:114; Eccl. 9:11.

122. It may be that a permanent reduction in a special pioneer's hour requirement is needed because of **long-term factors**, such as chronic or terminal illness or advancing age. Usually it is best for the branch to consult with the special pioneer's body of elders and circuit overseer before determining an

appropriate reduced hour requirement. In some cases, the branch office may be more familiar with the person's circumstances and abilities, such as when a longtime Bethel family member or a circuit overseer is being transferred to serve as a special pioneer. In all cases, the recommendation that a special pioneer have a **permanent reduction** in his hour requirement and that he serve indefinitely as an infirm special pioneer should be sent to the Service Committee for approval. The recommendation should include a complete overview of the special pioneer's circumstances, the reason(s) for recommending infirm status, and the recommended reduced hour quota. In most cases, a reduced hour requirement is better than no hour requirement at all.—See 6:114; 9:87.

123. As needed, the branch office should kindly remind the elders and circuit overseers to ensure that the needs of the infirm special pioneers are being met and that any needed encouragement and shepherding are being given. (John 21:16) **Once the Service Committee approves the initial reduced hour requirement, the Branch Committee is authorized to make any further progressive reductions to the monthly hour requirement without consulting the Service Committee.** Removal of an hour requirement is usually reserved for infirm special pioneers who have extremely limiting circumstances because of advanced age or life-threatening health issues and whose hour requirement has already been progressively reduced.

Circuit Overseers

124. *Circuit Overseer Guidelines* and the latest correspondence from the Service Committee provide detailed information regarding the activity of circuit overseers.

125. Substitute Circuit Overseers: The qualifications for substitute circuit overseers are outlined in *Circuit*

Overseer Guidelines. Generally, substitute circuit overseers are given access to *Circuit Overseer Guidelines* and to the letters addressed to all circuit overseers. Substitute circuit overseers should not be used to care for a circuit for more than three months.—See 6:133.

126. Circuit overseers may submit recommendations for new substitute circuit overseers using the *Personal Qualifications Report* (S-326). Before a brother is recommended to serve as a substitute circuit overseer or a circuit overseer, he must have attended the Ministerial Training School, the Bible School for Single Brothers, the Bible School for Christian Couples, the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, or the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. The Service Department should check to see whether he is qualified to serve on special committees and has been recommended as a convention speaker. After the S-326 is evaluated and if everything is positive, the brother may be sent a *Questionnaire for Prospective Substitute Circuit Overseer* (S-324).

127. A brother recommended as a substitute circuit overseer will receive two weeks of training by an approved trainer prior to being appointed as a substitute circuit overseer. Only experienced circuit overseers approved by the Branch Committee will provide necessary training and evaluation. Those approved as trainers should be the most experienced and qualified circuit overseers. They should be selected from the list of circuit overseers who are approved to make shepherding visits on other circuit overseers. Substitute circuit overseers are **appointed by the Branch Committee**. The Service Department should submit the completed questionnaire and the S-326 forms from the circuit overseer, as well as any other information that would be helpful to the Branch Committee for its evaluation. If the brother is appointed, a letter should be sent to him informing him of this. Further details can be

found in *Guidelines for Processing Recommendations for Substitute Circuit Overseers and Circuit Overseers* (S-385).

128. *Circuit Overseer Guidelines* outlines how circuit overseers can assist substitute circuit overseers who are not meeting the high standard expected of those serving in this capacity. If a substitute circuit overseer is reproved or disfellowshipped or is removed as an elder for any other reason, the date of his **deletion** as a substitute circuit overseer should be entered in HuB. The Service Department may refer complex cases involving a substitute circuit overseer's qualifications to the Branch Committee for consideration. If a single substitute circuit overseer becomes engaged to be married and desires to continue in the substitute circuit work, he should inform the Service Department right away. With regard to obtaining comments on the qualifications of the sister, the Service Department will follow the same procedure as when a single circuit overseer becomes engaged and desires to remain in the circuit work. (See 9:60.) The most recent *Personal Qualifications Report* on the brother should be reviewed. If it would be helpful, the brother's circuit overseer could be asked to provide updated comments.

129. In view of the great trust placed upon circuit overseers, the Branch Committee must give these recommendations very careful and prayerful consideration.—Luke 12:48b.

130. Qualifications: The qualifications for circuit overseers are outlined in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines*. Since the responsibility that is entrusted to circuit overseers of appointing and deleting elders and ministerial servants is a weighty one, those recommended should be kind, impartial, and just. (Ex. 18:21) When handling recommendations, whether for appointment or deletion, the circuit overseer must avoid imposing his personal viewpoints and opinions or setting arbitrary rules.

(1 Cor. 4:6) Before being recommended to serve as a circuit overseer, he should have proved that he strives to imitate Jehovah and His Son by caring for matters with love and patience. (Deut. 10:17; 16:18, 19; Isa. 42:1-4) In this way, he demonstrates deep respect and submission to Jehovah and to the Head of the Christian congregation, Jesus Christ.—See 2:30; 9:95; Eph. 1:22.

- All brothers recommended as circuit overseers should be graduates of the Bible School for Christian Couples, the Bible School for Single Brothers, the Ministerial Training School, the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, or the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead.
- Those recommended should display evidence of good judgment, spiritual depth, loyalty to God's Word and organization, and soundness of mind. Such qualities are more important than having a compelling, charming personality.
- Those recommended for circuit work should have served as congregation elders for a minimum of three years and have at least two years in full-time service, preferably longer.
- The maximum age for those recommended is 45. As an exception, a well-qualified brother who has been in *special full-time service* for a considerable number of years may be recommended until the age of 50. Brothers who are 25 years of age or younger would usually not be recommended.—See 6:132.
- If the brother is married, his wife should be at least 21 years old, baptized three years or longer, and in full-time service for at least two years.

131. Circuit overseers may submit recommendations of substitute circuit overseers for circuit work, using the S-326 form. After the S-326 is evaluated and if everything is positive, the body

of elders should be asked to provide its observations and its recommendation of the brother and, if married, his wife, using the S-326 forms. If a positive recommendation is received from both the body of elders and the circuit overseer, the brother should receive two weeks of training with an experienced circuit overseer. **If all is well, he may be sent a Questionnaire for Prospective Circuit Overseer (S-323). See School for Kingdom Evangelizers Office Guidelines with regard to providing circuit training to graduates. Before a recommendation is sent to the Governing Body, the substitute circuit overseer should have served congregations a minimum of ten full weeks.** An exception would be when a brother has previously served in circuit work or is a graduate of the Bible School for Christian Couples, the Bible School for Single Brothers, the Ministerial Training School, the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, or the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead and has already received ten weeks of training and may have served only a few weeks as a substitute circuit overseer since then.

132. Appointments: Circuit overseers are appointed by the Governing Body. (See 2:26, 30.) There is no need to supply more information than what is requested on the recommendation form unless there are unusual factors that the Governing Body should know. For example, if the Branch Committee is recommending a brother who is not yet 25 years old or a brother who is over 45 years of age, the reasons for making such an exceptional recommendation should be fully explained in a numbered letter. If a brother being recommended previously served as a traveling overseer, the reason for his deletion from that privilege of service should be explained in a numbered letter. Once the branch office has received an approved recommendation form from the Governing Body, the Service Department will then send the brother an appointment letter (S-308) along with instructions concerning his new assignment.—See 6:130.

133. Arrangements for New Circuit Overseers: Branches should have a reasonable number of approved circuit overseers available for use when needed, such as when a circuit overseer will be away for more than three months. (See 6:139.) Newly appointed circuit overseers should be given an FC enrollment. Field missionaries (FMF) who are appointed as circuit overseers should be given an FCF enrollment. If the newly appointed circuit overseer is waiting for a permanent assignment to become available, his circuit assignment should be listed in HuB as “unassigned.” The Service Department should inform a newly appointed circuit overseer who will be covering a circuit for three months or less that when generating letters of appointment or deletion, he should indicate the circuit designation on the letterhead. He should note in the letter that he is temporarily caring for the circuit. If a newly appointed circuit overseer is assigned to care for a circuit for more than three months, he should be assigned to that circuit. (See 6:125; 9:20.) Sometime during a new circuit overseer’s first year in the circuit work, he and his wife will be invited to the branch office for two weeks of training.—See *Service Department Training for New Circuit Overseers* (S-381).

134. Circuits That Span Branch Territories: On a case-by-case basis, the Service Committee may authorize the formation of circuits that include congregations and groups in two or more branch territories. In such situations, the enrollment “Visiting Branch Circuit Overseer” (FCB) should be assigned to any circuit overseer serving congregations in one branch territory who has a primary assignment under the supervision of another branch office. This enrollment will be assigned concurrently with his primary FC (or FCF) enrollment. Use of the FCB enrollment will allow a circuit overseer to create a separate jw.org account for each territory. The branch receiving the visiting branch circuit overseer should provide

to the home branch the name of the circuit and the contact number for the local jw.org help desk. This will allow the home branch to complete the S-134 form letter, which is used to inform the affected circuit overseers of this provision.

135. Circuit overseers crossing branch boundaries should submit a separate *Circuit Overseer Routing* (S-300) form to each branch office outside their home branch territory, indicating only the visits they will make to congregations and groups in that branch territory. This is in addition to the complete S-300 form that they should submit to their home branch office, which should include the weeks that they are serving in another branch territory. The weeks spent outside of their home branch territory should be entered by the home branch as “Miscellaneous” events in HuB. When scheduling circuit assemblies for circuits crossing branch boundaries, each branch office should enter the circuit assembly separately into HuB. This will allow each branch office to keep track of the activity of the congregations under its oversight.

136. Correspondence and Personal Mail: Direction sent to all congregations, all bodies of elders, or other field entities should be made available to all circuit overseers so that they remain up-to-date on such matters. Any of the circuit overseer’s personal mail received at the branch office should be forwarded to his current address.

137. Size of Circuits: Circuits are generally made up of **approximately 16 to 20 congregations**, including isolated groups. One factor to take into consideration in determining the number of congregations to be placed in each circuit is the availability, capacity, and distance to the nearest Assembly Hall. In most cases, a circuit overseer should cover his circuit twice annually.

138. Routing: The circuit overseer submits his routing to the branch office

three months in advance using the *Circuit Overseer Routing* (S-300) form. At the same time, he will send the congregation a *Notice of Visit of Circuit Overseer* (S-302) advising of the dates of his visit. Once the branch office and the congregations have been informed, the circuit overseer should adhere to the routing he submitted. If he feels that a change needs to be made to the routing, he should contact the Service Department and request permission.

139. Absences From the Circuit: A circuit overseer who is away from his circuit for more than three months may be given the “unassigned” circuit designation in HuB or another appropriate enrollment. (See 6:133.) The handling of appointments and deletions of elders and ministerial servants while a circuit overseer is away from his assignment is discussed in 6:57. Situations that may necessitate granting a circuit overseer or his wife a leave of absence are discussed at 9:77 and in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines*.

140. Questions About the Qualifications of Circuit Overseers: The branch office should follow up on any concerns or complaints received about a circuit overseer that raise serious questions about his qualifications. First, the office needs to obtain the facts. (Prov. 18:13, 17) In some cases, it may be best to write to the circuit overseer, informing him of what has been reported, and provide him with the opportunity to reply. Serious matters should be referred to the Branch Committee.

141. If what was reported is valid and has raised serious questions about a circuit overseer’s qualifications, it may be that a kind letter that outlines the observations and provides loving Scriptural counsel will be sufficient to address the concern. (Prov. 27:9; 1 Tim. 5:1; w99 1/15 pp. 21-24) **If needed, the Service Department may ask an experienced circuit overseer or branch representative to discuss the matter privately with the circuit overseer and provide**

him with appropriate Scriptural counsel during the next scheduled shepherding visit. (See 9:114.) If the matter needs to be handled sooner, an experienced circuit overseer could be asked to care for the matter. When a personal visit is made, the assigned brother should submit a report to the Service Department that includes a summary of the counsel he provided to the circuit overseer. The report should also comment on how the circuit overseer responded to any counsel given. Following the visit by an experienced circuit overseer or by a branch representative, the branch office could follow up in writing to express sincere appreciation for the circuit overseer’s efforts in making improvement and to reinforce the counsel given. (1 Thess. 4:1) If this is not the first time that a similar concern has been brought to his attention, the letter from the Service Department could remind the brother of the previous counsel and encourage him to make a more concerted effort to improve. In such cases, the Service Department should copy the Branch Committee on such letters sent to assist the circuit overseer. If, over a reasonable period of time, the circuit overseer does not improve in spite of repeated efforts to assist him, it may be necessary for the Branch Committee to recommend to the Governing Body his deletion as a circuit overseer. A brief summary of the efforts made to assist him should be included in a numbered letter that is sent along with the *Recommendations to Governing Body* form.—See 2:30; 9:96.

142. On occasion, complaints may be received involving **the wife of a circuit overseer.** Out of respect for the headship principle, the Service Department will write to the husband, informing him of the negative report and asking for his comments. He may be encouraged to help his wife. (The brother assigned to make the next shepherding visit on the circuit overseer and his wife should receive a copy of any correspondence to the circuit overseer so that the

brother can offer assistance and counsel if needed.) Appropriate follow-up should be in harmony with the general principles outlined in the preceding paragraph.

143. When an allegation of serious wrongdoing is made about a circuit overseer, the Service Department should appoint two experienced circuit overseers to investigate. If it is established that there is substance to the report and evidence is available that a serious sin has been committed, the two brothers should notify the Service Department so that a judicial committee can be appointed. If there is insufficient evidence to prove that the allegations are true, the two brothers will make a full report of their findings to the Service Department for evaluation. Although a gross sin may not have been committed, it may be that the circuit overseer's conduct is seriously in question. In such cases, the report should be referred to the Branch Committee for its consideration and direction.—See 2:30.

144. If a circuit overseer confesses to serious wrongdoing, two experienced circuit overseers should be directed by the Service Department to investigate. After confirming the nature and extent of the sin(s) committed, they should report back to the Service Department. **The Service Department will appoint a judicial committee consisting of three circuit overseers. Likely, the two who investigated the matter would serve on the committee. The committee's decision, whether reproof or disfellowshipping, is reported to the branch in the normal way. The Service Department would designate a congregation that would hold the records in its confidential file.** (It may be the congregation where the former circuit overseer indicates that he will attend meetings.) An announcement of reproof or disfellowshipping would also be made in that congregation. If the former circuit overseer seeks reinstatement, a

local congregation judicial committee should hear the plea for reinstatement and seek observations from the branch office before reaching a final decision. If the decision is to reinstate, the appropriate notification should be sent to the Service Department.

145. Writing Letters to Former Traveling Overseers: In many countries, there are faithful brothers who formerly spent many years in the traveling work. To encourage such older brothers, branch offices may write a personalized letter from time to time. This shows that the organization is interested in their welfare and appreciates what they accomplished in the traveling work during a big part of their life.—Phil. 2:4; 1 Pet. 5:12.

146. Circuit Overseers in Foreign Service: When a field missionary is appointed as a circuit overseer, he and his wife are registered in HuB with the corresponding foreign service enrollments (FCF and CWF). On rare occasions, a Branch Committee may believe that there is a need to assign a circuit overseer to a distant country in the branch territory other than the land of his birth or citizenship. When such a need arises, the Branch Committee may recommend to the Service Committee that the circuit overseer and his wife be granted the foreign service enrollment. All such recommendations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. While citizenship and country of birth are considered, these are not the sole determining factors. The Branch Committee should carefully consider the following points to ensure that the recommendation is reasonable.—Phil. 4:5.

- Is the assignment in a distant land, making it reasonable to provide them with additional personal time away?
- Does the nature or relative difficulty of the assignment make it reasonable to provide them with considerations similar to those given to field missionaries?

- Will they be in the foreign assignment for a minimum of one year?
- Do citizens of the countries regularly travel back and forth with little or no legal restrictions?
- Why could a local circuit overseer not be used?

147. If after considering these points and any other factors relevant to the specific situation, the Branch Committee believes that there are good reasons to recommend that a circuit overseer and his wife be granted the foreign service enrollment, the brother and his wife should each fill out a *Questionnaire for Prospective Field Missionary* (S-214). A numbered letter should then be sent to the Service Committee along with the completed S-214 form(s) and a copy of the latest *Personal Qualifications Report(s)* (S-326). The S-214 and S-326 should be translated into English. In the numbered letter, a clear explanation should be given as to the reason for the recommendation. If the Service Committee approves the recommendation, the enrollment code in the HuB Person record should be updated to show the start date of the foreign circuit assignment. The foreign service enrollment stops when the foreign assignment ends.

Addressing Local Needs

148. Congregation Needs: If there is a serious matter affecting most or all congregations in the branch territory, the Branch Committee may outline the concern to the Service Committee and provide a recommendation as to how to address the local need. For example, the Branch Committee may recommend preparing an outline to be considered during the local needs part of the mid-week congregation meeting. Some topics may be best handled by circuit overseers when they visit the congregations or at an upcoming Kingdom Ministry School. Generally, it is not wise to prepare new material featuring Scriptural direction on topics such as marriage, funeral customs, or superstitious prac-

tices common in the branch territory. The branch office should not organize special meetings with elders or circuit overseers without the approval of the Service Committee.

149. Evaluating the Need for Translated Publications: The Branch Committee should consider the following two principles before making a recommendation to the Writing Committee to translate publications into a language or to discontinue translation into a language. (See 8:12-19; **Chart 8.1.**) **First, it is unrealistic to expect that most of our publications will become available in all languages.** Our goal is not to translate in the largest number of languages but to follow the lead of the holy spirit to reach the largest number of honesthearted people with the good news. (Acts 13:48; 16:6-10; 1 Tim. 2:3, 4) Language communities that do not demonstrate a potential to form stable groups and congregations have a very limited need for publications. In addition, we must be careful not to pursue languages that are dying or that are preferred simply because of ethnic or tribal rivalries or other factors that do not involve spiritual needs. **Second, groups and congregations may be formed in a certain language even if there are no publications in that language** as long as the brothers and sisters are able to benefit from publications in another language. For example, the brothers may be able to benefit from publications in the national or regional language. (See 7:44.) In such a case, the brothers would conduct their field ministry, give comments and talks, pray, and sing in their first language but use printed publications of another language during their meetings. This simple approach works well where the brothers are multilingual. In addition to their mother tongue, they may know either the main language of the country or a major regional language.

150. Based on the two principles outlined above, the Branch Committee must carefully evaluate the need before

recommending that the first publication or additional publications be translated into a language. To ensure that the Branch Committee has a clear understanding of the needs, the Service Department should obtain the facts from the field. Selected bodies of elders, circuit overseers, field missionaries, and special pioneers may be asked to comment on such factors as the following: What is the size of the language community? How many are dependent on the language? Can most benefit from another language? How many can read their own language? Do they prefer to read another language? Are there spiritually mature publishers who are native speakers or who speak the language fluently? If so, are they willing and able to support this language field, or do they prefer to attend meetings in another language? Are qualified brothers available to take the lead and to care for the spiritual needs of new ones? (Col. 2:6, 7) Are there already groups or congregations in this language in your branch territory? Are you aware of groups or congregations in this language that may be functioning in another branch territory?

151. Evaluating New-Language Publications in the Field: When a new-language publication has been prepared for use in the field, the Service Department should send the S-136 letter to the target-language congregations and circuit overseers, announcing that the newly translated publication is available. The outline “Teach God’s Word to ‘All Sorts of Men’” (S-137), which provides direction on promoting the publication by means of a campaign and practical suggestions to help publishers use the publication effectively in the ministry, should also be sent. The information contained in the *Evaluation of New-Language Publications* (S-138) form will assist the Service Department in evaluating the needs. It would be unwise to accelerate translation of publications into a language if there is little response in the field or if the publishers who speak it are not committed

to attending meetings and preaching in that language. The Service Department should carefully consider these and other relevant factors before recommending to the Branch Committee that additional publications be translated into the language or, conversely, that efforts to develop that language field be discontinued. If the Service Department recommends that efforts to cultivate a specific language field should be discontinued and the Branch Committee agrees, there will be no need to request translation of additional publications. In the rare event that the Branch Committee believes efforts to cultivate a language field with a permanent translation team should be discontinued, the Service Committee should be consulted.

152. Evaluating Spiritual Progress in Language Fields: On an annual basis, the Service Department should provide a **report to the Branch Committee on each indigenous- or foreign-language field** in the branch territory. Are native speakers responding to the good news and progressing to dedication and baptism? If congregations and groups in a particular language field are not prospering spiritually, the Service Department should determine the reasons. What are circuit overseers reporting as to the needs of such groups and congregations? (*tg* chap. 15) What steps have been taken to address the needs? What more needs to be done? (See 6: 75-78.) The Service Department’s report to the Branch Committee should include recommendations regarding further steps that could be taken to cultivate each language field.

153. Overseeing the Needs of the Blind: A brother should be appointed to oversee the work of caring for the needs of the blind and visually impaired in the branch territory. In most cases, the brother should work in the Service Department. However, this work could be done by a brother in another department if necessary. Good communication and cooperation is required

between the Service Department, the Shipping Department, and the Braille Department (if there is one) to care for the needs of the blind. Overseeing this work is not a full-time assignment, but depending on the size of the branch, one or two sisters may assist with gathering information as needed.

Other Desks in the Service Department

154. Field Ministers Desk: A desk may be designated to care for the needs of circuit overseers (including field instructors) and their wives, field missionaries, special pioneers, and temporary special pioneers. The desk assists with matters such as the allowance, health care, housing, leave of absence time, and visas for these special full-time servants. The desk also assists with the identification, training, and recommendations for appointment of substitute circuit overseers and regular circuit overseers. The Service Desks have the responsibility to identify the needs in the territory when assignments for special pioneers and field missionaries are considered.—See 5:142.

155. Convention and Assembly Desk: A desk may be designated to ensure that practical and beneficial arrangements are made for organizing and scheduling conventions and circuit assemblies. Helpful guidance is found in *Convention Organization Guidelines* (CO-1). The desk maintains all files pertaining to regional conventions, including speaker ratings (S-306), convention volunteer reports (CO-53), and so forth. Some larger branches may designate a Program Desk to care for the work involved with assigning convention speakers and interpreters.

156. Master Planning for Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls: A brother in the Service Department should be designated as the contact for the Local Design/Construction Department (LDC). He will work closely with the LDC to develop a master plan of

the number of Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls that are needed and their priority. The master plan is submitted for approval to the Branch Committee. Once approved, the LDC will use this plan to prioritize and administer construction, renovation, and maintenance projects for Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls in the branch territory. The brother in the Service Department will work closely with the LDC to review and study regularly the needs for Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls in order to update the master plan.—See 5:149.

157. Speaking Assignment Desk: The Teaching Committee provides letters and direction that outline the arrangements for Bethel speakers. These guidelines should be followed regarding assignments, expenses, and so forth.—See 7:80-89.

158. Preaching Needs Desk: In addition to making assignments for seldom-worked and unassigned territories, coordinating efforts for special methods of witnessing within the branch territory, and assisting with master planning for Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls, this desk cares for assigning territory boundaries and for producing territory maps. These maps should be prepared using the best map available in the country. Indicate on the state or province maps the territory assigned to each congregation and the boundaries of all circuits. Unassigned territory should also be indicated on this map or on a separate map. The names of circuit overseers followed by the circuit numbers may be placed within the boundary of the area they serve. A *Congregation Territory Assignment* (S-54) letter is sent to each congregation with the exact written description of the outlined territory. It may also be possible to send a map clearly outlining the congregation's assigned territory. The procedure for congregations to follow in adjusting territory boundaries is outlined on the form *Territory Adjustment Request* (S-6).—See 6:75.

159. Theocratic Schools Desk: This desk cares for various theocratic schools, such as the language seminars, the Kingdom Ministry School, the Pioneer Service School, the School for Circuit Overseers and Their Wives, the School for Congregation Elders, and the School for Kingdom Evangelizers.

160. Translation Desk: The Service Department is responsible for translating service-related material, such as school curriculums, forms, guidelines, letters, meeting outlines, and videos. Translation and checking should be handled primarily by part-time commuters and remote volunteers under the coordination of a brother in the Service Department, perhaps a deskman. The permanent project-team approach used by the Translation Department is not needed for most service-related material. This desk also assists with the management of *jw.org* and MDS postings.—See 6:63; 8:20-21.

161. Use of Sisters: Mature sisters may be used for some clerical roles in the Service Department, such as data entry of basic personnel information, territory mapping, and the translation and proofreading of nonconfidential forms and letters. However, sisters should not be involved in handling confidential material so as not to put them in an uncomfortable situation or to be a cause for stumbling to others.

Service Reports

162. Monthly Field Service Report: Branch offices should follow the instructions provided in HuB for compiling and sending the *Field Service Report* (S-81) to the Service Committee. The figures for the S-81 are taken from a careful compilation of the *Congregation Reports* (S-1) and the *Field Missionary/Special Pioneer Reports* (S-212). All publishers are encouraged to report through a congregation. Isolated publishers and pioneers send their reports on the publisher's *Field Service Report* (S-4), indicating that it is from an "isolated publisher" or "isolated pioneer."

The figure for the "Public by Mail" column on the S-81 can be obtained from the month-to-month record of books, brochures, and magazines sent from the branch to the non-Witness public. In addition, all magazines or literature sent out in response to coupons are listed as "Public by Mail." Comments about new peaks in publishers, general highlights of the work, or trends may be submitted in the "Remarks" column. Questions or significant figures should be sent to the Service Committee in a separate letter.

163. A separate *Field Service Report* (S-81) should be submitted monthly for each political entity under the oversight of the branch. Reports should be sent no later than the 28th of the following month. Late or missing reports may be included in the report for the following month. Be sure that any peaks shown do not include reports in excess of the total number of congregations for that month.

164. Annual Field Service Report: Branch offices should follow the instructions provided in HuB for compiling and sending the end-of-year figures.

Files and Filing

165. Since the files in the office are used by many to do their work, **all correspondence must be promptly and correctly identified and filed** so that it can be readily located. As a general guideline, items should be identified immediately upon their receipt in the office and filed within one week of their being completed. The secretary has the responsibility for this and should have a regular routine for filing.

166. Electronic Files: The Service Department should use the HuB Document Management System (DMS) for filing correspondence and other electronic documents. HuB DMS should be set up according to the latest guidelines provided by the Service Committee. If historical documents must be scanned, consult with the WHQ Com-

puter Department before undertaking such a project. Once hard copy paperwork has been scanned and verified, then it can be shredded. Electronic files should be retained only as long as outlined in the remaining paragraphs under this section.

167. Paper Files: If the Service Department files are not maintained electronically, **permanent congregation files** are stored in a very secure, locked area of the branch. Each congregation file has four sections: (1) circuit overseers' reports, (2) general correspondence, (3) reinstatements, and (4) disfellowshippings and disassociations. [See Chart 6.1.]

168. Circuit Overseers' Reports: S-303 and S-2 forms and supplemental letters are kept in the front of the file in date order with the most recent at the front. When a new report is received, a red mark is made on the upper right corner of the preceding report, and the new report is inserted in front of it. If the first report in the file has this red mark, then the most recent report has been removed.

169. General Correspondence: This material is filed directly behind the circuit overseers' reports in date order with the most recent at the front of the general correspondence. The *Congregation Application* (S-51), or in its absence the oldest *Report on Circuit Overseer's Visit With Congregation* (S-303), is filed at the back of the general correspondence. If the last circuit overseer's report prior to the elder arrangement in 1972 is available, it should be stamped "DO NOT DESTROY" and retained just in front of the S-51 form. Correspondence regarding an individual accused of child abuse should be marked "DO NOT DESTROY."

170. Reinstatements: Whether recorded on S-77 forms or in letters from judicial committees, correspondence related to reinstatements is filed directly behind the general correspondence and

S-51 form in the date order of reinstatement, with the most recent reinstatement in the front of this section. The S-77 form and attached correspondence about those reinstated should be destroyed after five years, unless the Service Desk determines there is a specific reason to retain the file. In such a case, the file would only be retained as long as it is necessary.

171. Disfellowshippings and Disassociations: These are kept at the back of the file. The most recent disfellowshipping record is filed at the very back of the folder. When an individual is reinstated, the date of reinstatement is recorded on the S-77 form, which is then filed with the reinstatements, as noted above.

172. Hold File: Each Service Desk maintains a HOLD FILE for pending items. This file typically contains correspondence on matters for which the deskman has requested further information or comments from circuit overseers or elders. It may be best also to keep in the hold file a complete copy of any material routed to Service Department oversight or to the Branch Committee. Every month the secretary should go through the hold file, checking to see whether a response has been made. If the office has not received the requested information or comments within three months, he should check with the deskman to see whether a reminder letter should be sent. When sending a reminder letter to a body of elders, a courtesy copy is provided to the circuit overseer with a blind PS asking him to make certain that the elders respond promptly.

173. Files for Isolated Pioneers and Publishers: When it is not feasible for an isolated group of publishers to be cared for by a congregation, a file folder for each isolated publisher group that cannot yet be formed into a congregation is made and arranged alphabetically according to the name of the place where the publisher receiving mail for

the group resides. All correspondence to and from the group, as well as reports from the circuit overseer for his visits to the group, is placed in this file. When a group is established as a congregation, the contents of the folder are added to the CONGREGATION FILE. A file folder is also made for ISOLATED PIONEERS. The S-4 forms from isolated pioneers are kept for a year in this folder. These files are kept together and not with the congregation files.

174. Circuit Files: The S-2 forms showing the appointment of assembly overseers and assistant assembly overseers are kept in these files.

175. Branch Correspondence Files: When other branches send correspondence to your branch for forwarding to individuals in the field, they usually include a courtesy copy for your branch file. Such copies are filed in the appropriate folder of the BRANCH CORRESPONDENCE FILES, not in the congregation files. If much mail is received from other branches, it may be helpful to sort the mail into categories, such as Branch Accommodations, Donation Letters, Kingdom Hall Information Requests, and Miscellaneous. The respective retention policy should be followed for each category.

176. Special Pioneer Files: A file folder is made by the Field Ministers Desk secretary for each special pioneer or, if married, for each couple. The files are arranged alphabetically. The special pioneer's current congregation assignment, his *Application for Regular Pioneer Service* (S-205), and the S-208 are a permanent part of the file. Also filed here are the two most recent S-326 forms submitted by the circuit overseer and the file copy of any personal encouragement letters sent by the Field Ministers Desk. (Based on the circuit overseer's comments in the S-326 form received each service year, the Field Ministers Desk will determine if additional correspondence is needed.) General correspondence may be disposed of when the files are weeded according

to the branch's document retention policy.—See 6:117.

177. Active and Inactive Circuit Overseer Files: An *active* file folder is made for each circuit overseer by the Field Ministers Desk secretary. This folder contains correspondence from the circuit overseer pertaining to his circuit as a whole, including any S-326 forms that were submitted on the circuit overseer and his wife, the file copies of correspondence written to the circuit overseer in connection with these reports, and correspondence regarding his field activity or his personal affairs. When a circuit overseer discontinues the circuit work, the folder is placed in the *inactive* file.

178. Active and Inactive Substitute Circuit Overseer Files: An *active* file folder is made for each substitute circuit overseer. This folder contains the correspondence regarding his appointment, including the S-324, any S-326 forms, and so forth. When a substitute circuit overseer discontinues the circuit work, the folder is placed in the *inactive* file.

179. “Declaration Pledging Faithfulness” Files: If used, a “Declaration Pledging Faithfulness” is filed by the last name of the person on the declaration. A separate list of names of those in the file should be maintained.—See *Correspondence Guidelines*, pp. 74-75.

180. Files for Those Disfellowshipped and Disassociated: A permanent file of those disfellowshipped and disassociated is kept. If S-79a/b cards are used by the branch office, they are filed alphabetically by last name, first name, and middle name and should be stored in a very secure, locked room.

181. Weeding Section Files: Deskmen are responsible for weeding the congregation files for their section. Not to be weeded are any S-2 or S-52 forms. These are to be kept indefinitely in the congregation file. Any correspondence dealing with the transfer of appointed

brothers from one congregation to another should also be kept indefinitely. At least the last five copies of the S-303 forms and supplemental letters are kept. Older S-303 forms marked “DO NOT DESTROY” are also kept. The schedule for file retention is to be followed. A secretary may weed the files if directed to do so by the deskman. However, the deskman must carefully check the items slated for shredding within a short time of their being weeded by the secretary so that nothing of significance is discarded. The secretary should not shred anything from the files without getting the approval of the deskman.

SCHOOL FOR BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THEIR WIVES

182. The Service Committee invites Branch Committee and Country Committee members and their wives to this eight-week course. There is no provision for a husband to attend without his wife. If married, the following requirements must be met by both mates:

- Currently in some form of full-time service.
- Possess a good understanding of English in order to participate in class discussions and fulfill various student assignments to a reasonable degree.
- In good health and able to travel to the United States without assistance or the need for medical care during the school.—Mic. 6:8; Phil. 4:5; w04 8/15, p. 24, par. 13.
- No dependents.

183. If the availability or eligibility of a Branch Committee or Country Committee member changes, the branch should update the Persons record in HuB. Until the Service Committee sends out an invitation to a specific class, there is no need for a committee member to submit the *Questionnaire for the School for Branch Committee Members and Their Wives*.—See 7:113.

WATCHTOWER BIBLE SCHOOL OF GILEAD

184. Purpose of the School: The purpose of this 20-week school is to provide intensive training in Bible study and theocratic organization for experienced and well-qualified special full-time servants who have already proved that they are mature Christians. With this additional training, these individuals should be able to do more to stabilize and strengthen the field and branch organization. Students are chosen approximately six months prior to the start of each Gilead class. In March, selections are made for the October class. In September, selections are made for the April class.—See 2:28.

185. Basic Requirements:

- Married couples, single brothers, and single sisters between the ages of 25 and 50. As an exception, Branch Committees may recommend brothers whom they feel are qualified to serve as Branch Committee or Country Committee members, even if they are older than 50.
- All must have been in special full-time service for at least three consecutive years. Married couples must have served the last three years together in special full-time service.
- Candidates must have the potential for strengthening and stabilizing the field or branch organization to a greater degree and must have demonstrated that they enjoy serving their brothers and can help others in a kind way to learn and adhere to Scriptural and theocratic direction.
- They must be exemplary in all aspects of Christian living.
- A brother must be an elder who has been serving for a minimum of two consecutive years.
- Must be able to read, write, and speak English fluently.
- Must be in good health. Those who