



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

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August 25, 2014

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Regular pioneers

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Dear Brothers:

1. This letter replaces the letters dated December 1, 1998, October 2, 2001, and September 5, 2007, to all bodies of elders. Those letters should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and should be destroyed.

2. **Appointments:** The local elders, rather than the branch office, are responsible for the appointment of regular pioneers. However, as outlined in paragraph 5 below, **announcements of such appointments should not be made until the branch office registers the appointments.**

3. When a publisher submits an *Application for Regular Pioneer Service* (S-205), the Congregation Service Committee will obtain comments from the appropriate group overseer and then meet promptly to consider the applicant's qualifications, keeping in mind the following guidelines:

- The information provided by the applicant should be *complete and correct*, including the applicant's full name (no nicknames), birth date, and baptism date. If the applicant cannot recall his baptism date, the month, day, and year should be estimated.
- The applicant must be baptized for at least a full six months.—*od* pp. 113-114.
- The applicant must have a reputation for fine Christian conduct inside and outside the congregation, and the fruitage of God's spirit must be evident in his life.—*km* 8/86 pp. 5-6 par. 22; *od* pp. 113-114.
- The applicant must be able to follow a practical schedule and spend the required number of hours in field service.—*od* p. 114.
- Those who discontinue pioneer service must be off the pioneer list a full six months before starting again.
- The applicant must not have been reprovved or reinstated within the past year, and all restrictions must have been lifted.

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- The applicant should indicate the date he wishes to begin pioneering. No retroactive appointments should be made unless there are *significant extenuating circumstances*, such as an application that was lost by the elders.
- If the applicant has marked “yes” to the question, “Have you ever engaged in sexual child molestation?” and this is the first time the elders have learned of the abuse, two elders should *immediately* call the Legal Department for legal advice. Also, please review the January 1, 1997, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 26-29, and the February 1, 1997, issue of *The Watchtower*, page 29, along with the most recent direction provided for elders on the subject of child abuse. Thereafter, if the body of elders wishes to appoint the individual as a regular pioneer, they should assign two elders to call the Service Department *before* announcing the appointment.

4. Once the service committee has decided whether or not to appoint the applicant, the entire body of elders should be updated on how matters were handled. This should be done before any announcement of appointment is made to the congregation. If the service committee agrees that the applicant is not qualified to serve as a regular pioneer, they should explain their reasons to the applicant. (*km* 8/86 p. 6 pars. 24-26) If the service committee agrees to appoint the applicant as a regular pioneer, they should sign the application and enter it on jw.org as described in paragraph 5. The original application should be kept in the congregation file. Applications should *not* be sent to the branch office unless specific instructions are given to do so.

5. The secretary (or other brother who has been granted the “Enter Member Information” role and who has been assigned to assist him in using jw.org) should enter information from the approved application into the appropriate section of jw.org. (After logging in, click on “Help” [at the top right of the screen] to get detailed instructions for using the site and entering pioneer information.) After the information has been submitted, the new pioneer’s name will be listed under the section “Appointed Pioneers Not Yet Registered.” The secretary should check the site every few days until the pioneer’s name is listed under the section “Regular Pioneers.” Thereafter, the elders should print out the new regular pioneer welcome letter (S-236), found under the “Documents” tab in the “Forms” section, and provide a copy to the new pioneer informing him of the appointment. It is not necessary to transfer the pioneer’s identification number to the *Congregation’s Publisher Record* (S-21) card. An announcement should be made to the congregation at the next Service Meeting that the publisher has been appointed as a regular pioneer. Please *do not* announce to the congregation the appointment of the regular pioneer until his name is listed under the section “Regular Pioneers,” thus indicating that the appointment has been registered by the branch office.

6. **Deletions:** Before deleting an individual as a regular pioneer because of a pioneer’s inability to meet the hour requirement, the Congregation Service Committee should obtain comments from the appropriate group overseer. They should also consider whether the pioneer may qualify for special consideration. (See paragraphs 17-21.) The entire body of elders should be updated on how matters were handled before any announcement is made to the congregation. If consideration must be given to deleting a regular pioneer because he may no longer qualify as an exemplary Christian, the final decision in the matter should be agreed upon by the entire body of elders. If it is decided that the pioneer should be deleted, choose the appropriate reason on jw.org. Choose the option “Personal reasons” for discontinuation because of health, family responsibilities, secular work, and so forth. Choose the option “No longer qualifies” for discontinuation because of a poor example, reproof by a judicial committee, disfellowshipping, and so forth.

7. If the pioneer was reprovved by a judicial committee, he is automatically disqualified and his deletion should be reported immediately on jw.org. If the deletion is because the pioneer has failed to set a good example and he has not responded to counsel, he should be informed of the de-

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cision. Announcements of deletion should read as follows: “This is to inform the congregation that Brother [individual’s name] is no longer serving as a regular pioneer.”

8. **Congregation changes:** If a pioneer transfers to another congregation, the secretary of his former congregation should indicate his deletion on jw.org and should show the reason as transferring to another congregation. Type the name of the new congregation or area in the space provided. Include the country if the pioneer is transferring to a congregation outside the branch territory.

9. The secretary of the new congregation should add the pioneer by entering the appropriate information on jw.org as follows:

- **If transferring from a congregation in the same branch territory:** Click on the appropriate link and enter the pioneer’s name and former congregation. Then click “Search.”
- **If transferring from a congregation in another branch territory:** If the pioneer would like to continue serving as a pioneer, enter his information as if he were a newly appointed pioneer. Be sure to complete the section for full-time service history.

10. **Changes to pioneer information:** Changes to a pioneer’s name, birth date, baptism date, marital status, or spouse’s name may be made on jw.org. If any other information about the pioneer needs to change, please contact the Service Department.

11. **S-202 letters:** If you are able to use jw.org, please destroy any S-202 letters in the congregation file *after* you verify that the pioneer information shown on the site is correct.

12. Those congregations not yet able to use jw.org may continue to send approved *Applications for Regular Pioneer Service* (S-205) to the branch office so that the appointments may be registered. In this circumstance, please *do not* announce to the congregation the appointment of the regular pioneer until you receive an S-202 letter indicating that the appointment has been registered. Congregations not yet able to use jw.org may also continue to use the S-202 letter to inform the branch office of a change in a pioneer’s personal information or to inform another congregation that a pioneer is transferring to their congregation.

13. **Field Service Reports (S-4):** *Field Service Reports* for regular pioneers should be handled in the same way that publisher reports are handled. Late reports should be added to the total activity for regular pioneers on the following month’s report to the branch office.

14. **Procedure for extending and posting hour credit:** The branch office, its representatives overseeing construction or renovation projects, and Convention Committees may assign regular pioneers to assist with a particular project, for which they may be extended hour credit to help them meet their monthly requirement. Hour credit could also be extended to a regular pioneer when working on his own Kingdom Hall if this is done at the request of the branch office or its representatives overseeing the project. Assembly Hall Committees may, in limited cases, grant hour credit to pioneers for work performed at Assembly Halls.

15. When a pioneer’s assistance is authorized, he will keep a record of the hours spent working on the project during the month. He will report this activity to the congregation at the same time he reports his field service activity.

16. Hour credit extended to pioneers should not be included with the field service report submitted to the branch office. Such hour credit should be noted in the “Remarks” column of the *Congregation’s Publisher Record* (S-21) card and should not be included in the “Hours” column.

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The figure in the “Hours” column should reflect the actual hours spent by the pioneer in field service. (Some time should be spent in the ministry during each month.) How much credit can a pioneer receive for sharing in theocratic projects? Those properly authorized are given credit to the extent that the total number of hours actually spent in field service plus time spent on special projects does not exceed the monthly goal of 70 hours. No credit will be carried over to any other month.

17. **Special consideration:** If a regular pioneer reaches at least 800 hours for the year, consideration may be extended to him, rather than removing him as a pioneer. Of course, there may be legitimate reasons why a regular pioneer may not be able to reach even 800 hours for the year.

18. In some situations, pioneers spend more hours in a month on theocratic projects than they can receive hour credit for. Later in the service year, they may need to take a vacation, spend time in secular work, or care for some other pressing issue that precludes their reaching the 70-hour goal for one or more months. They may thus fall short of the 840 hours for the service year. In that circumstance, when the body of elders reviews the activity of the regular pioneers at the end of the service year, they should take into consideration all that such pioneers are doing on behalf of Kingdom interests and grant special consideration to them. A pioneer would not lose his privileges if he has worked extensively on theocratic projects. The elders, being aware of the pioneer’s work to support Kingdom interests, will offer warm commendation. A notation can be made on the *Congregation’s Publisher Record* (S-21) card to indicate that special consideration has been granted.

19. Special consideration should also be granted to pioneers who serve in construction oversight or on Hospital Liaison Committees, Disaster Relief Committees, Assembly Hall Committees, or Convention Committees if they fall short of the annual pioneer hour requirement. All such assignments are forms of sacred service. The spirituality, availability, and willing spirit of pioneers allow them to support Kingdom interests in a special way.

20. **Infirm regular pioneers:** In rare circumstances, a brother or sister may be approved to remain as a pioneer without having a minimum hour requirement. This provision is only for exemplary, longtime pioneers who have a heartfelt desire to serve always as regular pioneers and who feel they would be taking a backward step if they had to discontinue but who are unable to meet the hour requirement because of infirmity. The elders may consider designating such a pioneer as an infirm regular pioneer if he (1) is over 50 years old and (2) has pioneered for at least 15 cumulative years. **This decision should be made only after consulting with the circuit overseer regarding the situation.** This arrangement is not a provision to allow an individual to care for sick relatives, do added secular work, and so forth. Those who first enter the pioneer service when they are 60 or 70 years old do not come under this arrangement simply because of their age. If an older pioneer who develops health problems is willing to transfer to the publisher ranks, there is no need to give consideration to allowing this brother to serve as an infirm regular pioneer.

21. When the body of elders decides that a pioneer may serve as an infirm regular pioneer, a notation should be made on the *Congregation’s Publisher Record* (S-21) card indicating this status for the pioneer. It is not necessary to notify the branch office of this decision. Two members of the Congregation Service Committee should meet with the pioneer to inform him of this loving provision made in his behalf. Encourage the pioneer to continue exerting himself in his ministry to the extent that his circumstances allow. (Luke 13:24; Col. 3:23, 24) Assure the infirm pioneer that he has the full support of the elders in the congregation and that Jehovah is aware of the sacrifices that the pioneer has made during the pioneer’s many years of service.—Heb. 6:10, 11.

22. **Pioneers consistently not meeting the regular pioneer hour requirement:** Pioneers are expected to meet the hour requirement on a consistent basis. Do not allow an extended period of time to pass before giving attention to a pioneer who is not meeting the hour requirement for reasons

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other than those mentioned in paragraphs 17-21 of this letter. Be prompt in talking to the pioneer so that you clearly understand why he has not been able to meet the hour requirement. Is it because of health problems, increased family responsibilities, or secular work? Or has he been self-sparing and somewhat disorganized? Are other activities consuming his time and energy? Once you have identified the problem, you will be able to provide assistance as directed in the July 1998 *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert.

23. After reviewing what is stated in *Our Kingdom Ministry*, determine whether the problem is temporary (lasting one, two, or three months) or ongoing, one that will not be solved in a short period of time. Of course, additional factors should be taken into consideration before a decision is made. How long has the individual been serving as a full-time minister? What is the age of the pioneer? Can special consideration be extended to the individual? In other words, are there legitimate reasons for the temporary problem that the pioneer has experienced, so that he can be allowed to continue pioneering without making up the lost time? Or might it be better for him to discontinue regular pioneer service until his circumstances change? Discontinuing pioneer service for a time may relieve him of the stress of trying to meet the hour requirement while coping with difficult or adverse circumstances. Be balanced and use good judgment when making such decisions. Consider what course of action will be in the best interests of the individual and, at the same time, will uphold the high standards of regular pioneer service.

24. Once the decision has been made, you should follow through without delay. If you delay in handling matters, further problems may develop. A pioneer may begin to minimize the need to meet the hour requirement. Or he may feel stress, wondering when the elders will recommend his removal. A pioneer may try unrealistically to increase the hours he spends in field service in an attempt to reach the hour requirement, thinking that is the only course to be taken. These situations may cause the pioneer to develop a poor attitude or even health problems. Therefore, the long-term interests of the pioneer are best served when elders promptly handle matters.

25. We know you brothers will use good judgment and discretion when handling matters pertaining to the appointment and deletion of regular pioneers. May Jehovah continue to bless your efforts to render loving assistance to pioneers and the efforts of the pioneers as they share with us in preaching the good news "to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) We send our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & J. Society
 OF AUSTRALIA

c: Circuit overseers

PS to secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the congregation copy of *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders* (S-22) at this time as well.