

WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

January 1, 2001

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Between March and August 2000 circuit overseers discussed with bodies of elders how to bring personal and congregation files in line with the Data Protection Act. By now you should have followed all the instructions contained in the "Checklist for Complying With the Data Protection Act". This involved the destruction of most judicial records, minutes and agendas of elders' meetings that contained personal information, letters of introduction, correspondence relating to individuals, and so forth. As a further implementation of new procedures under data protection legislation, we are now giving attention to two areas; files involving child molestation. and the Record of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation (S-79b) cards.

The Congregation Service Committee should meet within two weeks of receipt of this letter and carefully follow all the instructions below. During their next round of visits circuit overseers will check to ensure that these steps have been accomplished.

FILES RELATING TO CHILD MOLESTATION

While congregation files need to be brought into harmony with the Data Protection Act, the body of elders has a serious responsibility to protect children from potential harm. (Psalm 127:3) Elders should be alert to the activity of those who are known to have molested children in the past. (See our letter To All Bodies of Elders in Britain dated November 1. 1995.) Accordingly, the body of elders needs to keep a record of those who have molested children in the past, or who are alleged to have done so. To accomplish this the Congregation Service Committee should create a list named "Child Protection-Psalm 127:3". The list should have six columns headed "Name of Individual", "Identity of Victims or Alleged Victims", "Date", "Elders Handling Matter", "Court Action" and "Congregation Action". This list should be formed even if there are no cases of child abuse currently in your files. In this way it will be available for future use if necessary. The "Child Protection" list should be kept safely in a secure place.

In the appropriate columns show the names of the molester or alleged molester, if known the name(s) of the victim(s) or alleged victim(s) and the relationship of the offender to the victim(s), the date the matter came to light, and the names of all the elders who were involved in some way or another. In the "Court Action" column enter only one of the following two expressions; "convicted" or "alleged." "Convicted" refers to those who were found guilty of child molestation by a secular court. "Alleged" is the term to be used for all other cases. If there has been congregation action tick the "Congregation Action" column and make an entry on the "Specialized Shepherding" list in the normal way. Where the principle in 1 Timothy 5:19 cannot be satisfied enter "none" in the "Congregation Action" column.

Once you have completed the list send all files relating to child molestation to the Society in one of our special blue envelopes. If the correspondence is too bulky to fit in a blue envelope, for this one-off process, clearly mark whatever envelope you use "CONFIDENTIAL-SERVICE DEPARTMENT".

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When a member of the congregation is accused of child molestation remember to contact the Society's Legal Desk immediately. A record should be made on the "Child Protection" list as described above. All correspondence, including judicial records, should be sent to the Society unless directed by the Society to do otherwise.

If elders need to refer to some specific facts about a previous case for some particular purpose they should consult the Society promptly for information and advice.

RECORD OF DISFELLOWSHIPPING OR DISASSOCIATION (S-79b) CARDS

In your files, the only judicial records that should have remained until now, apart from the "Specialized Shepherding" list, are S-79b (formerly S-78) cards for cases handled in your congregation where the person is still living and in a disfellowshipped or disassociated state. For each such individual you should find two new S-77 forms enclosed showing basic details. There is also a sheet enclosed entitled List of Living Individuals Currently Disfellowshipped or Disassociated.

The Congregation Service Committee should destroy each S-79b (or S-78) card and replace them with the enclosed S-77 forms. The forms should be placed in a sealed envelope (one envelope for each case) and kept in a secure place.

In future, if an individual is reinstated or dies, the secretary should tick the appropriate boxes and sign and date the bottom of both S-77 forms. He will then mail one copy to the Society in a special blue envelope. The other S-77 form should be retained in the congregation's confidential file in a sealed envelope.

When replacing the S-79b (S-78) cards with S-77 forms it is likely that a number of congregations will find discrepancies. During the recent destruction of judicial records this has already proved to be the case. On the reverse side of the List of Living Individuals Currently Disfellowshipped or Disassociated you will find instructions on how to handle these situations. Under no circumstances should you attempt to clarify any information by making enquiries with the individual or his family.

Once you have reviewed your files, whether there are any discrepancies or not, the Congregation Service Committee should sign the List of Living Individuals Currently Disfellowshipped or Disassociated and return it to the Society in the enclosed blue envelope. If there is insufficient room on the List for providing details of discrepancies use a separate sheet. The List should be returned to the Society by February 1, 2001, at the latest.

We appreciate your further assistance in caring for congregation matters prudently. May we take this opportunity to send our Christian love and greetings.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & T. Society of Britain

[Official stamp appears here.]