

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

WORLD HEADQUARTERS
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

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PRESIDENT and PASTOR

June 4, 1969

OFFICE OF
RODERICK C. MEREDITH, Second Vice-President

Special Instructions: SAVE!

Dear Fellow Ministers:

Greetings from Headquarters! Many of you may have noticed in your particular areas that you have been receiving fewer new prospective visit requests from Headquarters in the past few months than you might expect. We normally receive fewer visit requests in the six-month period from October through March than in any other time of the year, but we actually received fewer requests from October, 1968 through March of this year than we did in the same period the previous year. The number of new prospectives writing in for a visit during April and May has also been disappointingly low. This means that we must especially concentrate on and give more attention to those who are writing in for a visit.

This subject was discussed at the Conference this year, and in recent months I have emphasized in letters the importance of handling prospectives on a priority basis, but I need to give some specific guidelines for the handling of prospective visits. This special letter of instruction will also explain certain changes in procedures that have been made -- both here at Headquarters and in the Field.

Visit Requests by New Prospectives

The first change will be in the way we handle specific visit requests and specific requests for baptism which come in here at Headquarters. In the past we have sent a "Church Visit Letter" with a "Visit Information Form" on the back of it for the person to complete and return to Headquarters. This caused an extra delay of at least two weeks -- and often longer -- from the time the initial request was received to the time it was forwarded to the local minister.

This was never a great problem in the past since the biggest delay was often during the period after the local minister received the request to the time of the first visit. It has been very common for

prospectives to write in months after they completed the "Visit Information Form" and ask when they would be visited. Some wrote in several times before they were finally visited. This was due, for the most part, to an acute shortage of manpower.

Now, however, although we are still short on manpower, the Field is in the best position by far, in terms of manpower, that it has ever been in before. The men sent out this June, combined with the new elders and visiting teams which were trained in the Visiting Program Training Class this past year, have put us in excellent shape, on the whole. ~~There is really no reason now why we can't get right out on prospectives and properly follow up on them in an organized way in order to help bring along to conversion the greatest number possible.~~

Since we are now able to eliminate the delay in the Field in making the first visit, our procedures here at Headquarters will be geared to get the visit requests to you just as quickly as possible. We will no longer send persons who specifically request a visit or specifically request baptism a "Church Visit Letter" and a "Visit Information Form." Instead, we will forward these specific requests directly to the local ministers. You should receive them within one week after the requests are received here at Headquarters. (This much time is required for us to open the letters, microfilm those with money enclosed, read them, check our records on the person to screen out those that should be handled in a different manner, determine the Church area, type file cards, and have them delivered to you through the mail.)

We cannot, however, send the indirect requests to the local ministers for you to handle since we constantly tell people that "no one will ever call on you." When the request is vague or merely asks about Church attendance, keeping the holydays, or baptism, we must send the "Church Visit Letter" to let them know someone will call on them if they request it. Rather than having to complete the long form, however, we have designed a simple card, which is to be enclosed with the letter. These cards will be handled in the same way the "Visit Information Forms" are now handled, and we will begin to use them within a few weeks -- just as soon as they are printed.

In line with this change, we have changed the procedure as outlined in the Office and Visiting System Manual regarding letters requesting baptism or Church attendance that you might receive locally. The manual states that you should send these letters to Headquarters for us to process first, but from now on, you can handle

the request when you receive it and just send us the blue "New Prospective Member Card" to let us know that the person's status should be changed.

Handling of Visit Requests in the Field

After you receive from Headquarters the letters with specific visit requests or the forms requesting a visit, you should contact the prospectives by phone or letter within 48 hours. Begin doing this as a standard procedure. Let them know that you are the representative of Mr. Herbert Armstrong in the area, that you have received their request for a visit and that you will be out to see them as soon as possible. You should also arrange a definite or at least a tentative appointment at that time unless they are in an outlying area. This will show them that you are interested in them and concerned about their problems and it is the first step in creating a favorable impression and bringing about the receptive attitude that is so important for the first visit.

If the prospective lives nearby, it is best to call him rather than write. If the letter requesting the visit does not give his telephone number, you can usually obtain it from "Information." You should write those who live in outlying areas, however. The "Dear Friend Completion Letter" could be used for this purpose or a brief personal letter could be written. A word of caution, however, for those of you who must write letters occasionally -- we have seen some terrible examples of letters written by ministers in the Field. Be sure that the type on your typewriter is clean and that any corrections you make are neat. Remember that your letter might be the first personal contact the prospective has had with the Work of God! A sloppy letter gives them a sloppy impression of God's Work. Take the time to make any letters that you must write representative of God's Work. Make them neat, tactful and friendly.

After making the initial contact with the prospective by telephone or by letter, be sure to get out to make the first visit within two weeks at the outside, with the exception of those in outlying areas, which may have to wait longer. From now on, we will be especially cognizant of second requests by those who have written in previously but who have not yet been visited. Also, we are re-designing the "Summary Checklist Card" in order to put on the card a blank for the number of unvisited prospectives in each Church area at the end of each week. Since it takes a few weeks to get cards printed and distributed, for the time being all of you should just write in this information in the blank space on the right-hand side of the "Summary Checklist Card" underneath the line for the date. For example: "Unvisited p.m.'s 0."

Guidelines for First Visits

As a review for all of you, I'll give you some guidelines on conducting the first visit. Remember that the first visit is primarily a get-acquainted visit. Be warm and friendly. Don't try to solve all their problems. Your goal should be to leave after the visit with them eagerly looking forward to your next visit. Let them do most of the talking, but guide and lead the conversation so that questions about Church attendance or deep doctrinal points are avoided, if possible. Find out if they are receiving the Correspondence Course and Tomorrow's World. If not, recommend them, as well as other basic literature, such as "Which Day is the Christian Sabbath?" or "The Ten Commandments." Keep the first visit brief -- limiting it to about an hour to two hours so that you leave them wanting more.

Very, very rarely should you invite a prospective to Church on the first visit. After all that has been said and written about inviting prospectives to Church too soon, we still see visit slips on prospectives who have been attending Church for months and are still not ready for baptism. We still see ministers urging lethargic prospectives to make the effort to attend Church. We still get letters from invited prospectives who were offended by the services because they were not ready for Church attendance.

We must all be extremely careful in inviting prospectives to Church -- especially on the first visit. Even though you feel a prospective is almost ready for baptism, you usually should not invite him to Church on the first visit. They should be given enough time to prove themselves first! The only exceptions are prospective Ambassador College students and those who are obviously ready for baptism and have friends or relatives in the Church.

Guidelines for Following-up on Prospectives

By the end of the first visit you will have a fairly good idea of how far along and how interested the prospective is. You can usually determine whether he is a "hot" prospective and is definitely interested in further visits. If so, you could make a tentative arrangement for your next visit by saying something like, "I could stop by again in a couple of weeks if you would like." In order to be sure they get back to an interested prospective by a certain date, some ministers have found it helpful to write down the names of those they plan to revisit on a pocket datebook or on an office calendar. Others set the office copy of the visit card aside as a reminder and file it in the Master File only after the next visit. Whichever way you

personally find it best to schedule revisits and follow-up on "hot" prospectives, be sure to get back to see them within a couple of weeks after the first visit, then again within a month after the second visit.

If after the first visit the prospective is not what you would consider a "hot" prospective, you might leave the next move up to him by giving him your card and asking him to write or call you when he would like another visit. You don't want to push yourself on him. Only God can open his mind, call him and convert him, but we certainly want to encourage him in the right way and give him every opportunity to come along. Be sure to check back with him if he doesn't call or write you within about a month. Call him up or drop him a short letter to see if he has any further questions. If at that time he seems to have lost interest entirely, just delete him. If you feel he is still somewhat interested, keep contacting him every month or two until he either comes along and is ready for baptism or shows by his fruits that he should no longer be considered a prospective member.

By following these guidelines, the "duds" are constantly being weeded out of your files, the interested prospectives are being visited regularly and you are always aware of how the others are coming along.

Guidelines on Deletions

Some ministers feel that deleting a prospective is tantamount to disfellowshipping him, and, therefore, they are reluctant to delete a prospective who really should be deleted and turned back over to L. A. D. for the answering of his future questions. Actually, deleting prospectives who are not growing toward baptism is just a means of keeping your file up to date and a means of keeping our master record accurate. It is much easier to reinstate deleted prospectives later on if they should ever become more interested than to maintain them in your file along with many others who won't come around later. It is best to just delete prospectives who are not growing toward baptism rather than wasting more of your time visiting them or keeping them in your file as "deadwood."

On the other hand, some few ministers are not patient enough and tend to delete prospectives too soon without giving them opportunity to come along. Try to avoid either extreme by working with them until they are obviously not progressing, and then delete them.

Since many who have been deleted in the past do write in for another visit some months or years after they were deleted, it is good to keep their

master card and any pertinent visiting information in the back of your Master File as a "Deletion File." This would be a "dead storage" file, but it could be referred to later on, if necessary, by you or by another minister who is new in the area if some question ever arose about a deleted prospective who has written in for another visit. We will forward those visit requests by deleted prospectives to you for you to handle at your discretion, but ~~we won't change their status back to that of a prospective in our master record unless you notify us by sending in a blue "New Prospective Member Card."~~

The instructions in the Office and Visiting System Manual on page 30 regarding deletions are superseded by these new instructions. The basic change is that you retain the old master card, along with any pertinent visiting information, in a separate section of your file rather than destroying it at the time you send in the green "Deletion Card."

Handling L. A. D. Letters from Members and Prospectives

Since we now have the best ratio of manpower to the number of people served that we have ever had, we can expect not only to keep up with new prospectives as never before in helping bring them along to conversion, but we can also visit and help the members in a way that was never before possible. In the past, L. A. D. has answered many questions from members -- and also from prospective members -- which would have really been better answered by the local minister. Realizing that many of you have just not had the time to handle the questions in letters that come in from members and prospectives, L. A. D. has answered many of the questions which ideally should have been handled locally.

Now, however, L. A. D. will be able to "omit" -- which means not to answer -- many of the letters which they forward on to you. They will answer certain of the letters, especially from prospectives, for the sake of public relations, and certain letters which have questions of a technical nature that are not necessarily better answered on a personal visit. As in the past, they will forward those letters they answer to you for your information along with a copy of their reply. It is not necessary that you keep them unless they contain pertinent information on the person which you would like to keep in your Master File. Otherwise, after looking them over, you can just discard those which L. A. D. has answered.

~~On those letters which L. A. D. has "omitted," however, be sure to handle them in one way or another.~~ Even though you may feel that the

question is a "picky" one, it may be fairly important to the one who asked the question. You will want to schedule a visit right away if it is a "problem" letter, but if it is from a prospective and is only a question to be answered, it could be set aside and handled the next time you visit him.

If the unanswered letter is from a member, you could give it to one of the local visiting teams to handle. We want to discourage members from writing their Bible questions to Headquarters. Some write in just because they like to get letters. A few write in to try to "get around" the local minister. They should ask their questions in Bible Study or when they are visited rather than writing in to Headquarters. You could just explain that L. A. D. is kept busy answering the thousands of letters that we receive from non-members and that it costs quite a bit of money for Headquarters to send personal answers to questions which could have been answered locally.

You should not, of course, advise prospectives not to write in to Headquarters and ask questions, but if we forward those letters to you which you can answer better personally rather than answering them here at Headquarters, they will soon get the point. L. A. D. will answer those which they feel should be answered from Headquarters, but they will omit more letters from members and prospectives as our volume of regular mail gets heavier and heavier.

Please study these guidelines and instructions, and make a special note of the changes that affect you as a Field minister. With all of you following these new procedures and guidelines, I'm sure more prospectives will be brought along more quickly, and when the number of prospectives writing in for a visit increases -- as we hope it will soon -- these procedures should really pay off!

Your brother in Christ,



Roderick C. Meredith

P. S. We are also sending this letter to all ministerial assistants for their information. Let me remind you again to save and USE this letter!

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Journal of Interpersonal Violence