

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



675 Red Mills Road Wallkill NY 12589-3292 Phone: (845) 306-1100

March 12, 2020

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES BRANCH TERRITORY

Re: Large Christian Gatherings and the Memorial

Dear Brothers:

We are deeply concerned about the brotherhood in connection with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The current global pandemic reminds us of the description of the ride of the fourth horseman in Revelation chapter 6, which includes mention of "deadly plague." These events strengthen our faith that we are living in the final part of the last days. We are writing to provide additional direction regarding upcoming spiritual gatherings, including the Memorial of Christ's death. Along with the information provided in the letter to all bodies of elders dated March 9, 2020, please note the following.

Large Christian Gatherings: All spiritual events in the United States branch territory that are larger than a congregation meeting, including circuit assemblies, are canceled until further notice. This principle should also be applied to limit the size of weddings and funerals held at the Kingdom Hall. Additionally, multiple congregations should not be combined for meetings during this time period. Congregations previously scheduled for an upcoming circuit assembly will receive further information from their circuit overseer, including direction about baptismal candidates. Please note that this direction does not currently apply to regional conventions and should not interrupt planning for these events.

Memorial Arrangements: If possible, it is preferred that each congregation observe the Memorial by meeting together in public as a congregation. However, bodies of elders will need to be sensitive to any direction they receive from local health authorities. Congregations should not be combined for the Memorial. The attendance should be limited to the number who can comfortably fit in the Kingdom Hall. If this direction results in a change to the location of the Memorial, please update jw.org accordingly. Publishers should be encouraged to support the arrangements made by the body of elders.

Emblems should be passed in the usual manner. As stated in the letter dated March 4, 2020, arrangements should be made to thoroughly clean and disinfect the meeting location for the Memorial before and after *each* event. Sick individuals should be directed to stay at home and to use alternate arrangements. Additionally, attendants should ask all to wash or sanitize their hands when they come into the auditorium and as they leave. After the Memorial, the audience should be encouraged to promptly leave the building to enable cleaning and to minimize overcrowding.

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If the congregation is unable to gather together for the Memorial, the body of elders should arrange for the publishers to meet as field service groups, in small neighborhood groups, or in family groups. In such cases, please follow the instructions in the attached document entitled *Canceling Memorial Locations on JW.ORG*. If it is not practical for the group to assemble together in person, they may assemble via *Skype* or some other electronic means, tying those in the group together. A capable elder could give the talk. If no qualified speaker is present, the group could use the recorded talk posted on *jw.org*. If it is not possible for some to attend the Memorial as a group, they may watch the recording on *jw.org*. Regardless of which congregation arrangement is used, all publishers and interested ones who observe the Memorial should be counted by the elders and reported.

An Assembly Hall will host only one congregation for the Memorial for the evening, if at all. If your congregation was scheduled to attend the Memorial at an Assembly Hall, you will be informed of how this adjustment affects you.

It has been decided that Bethel family members will not travel to other congregations for Memorial assignments. Therefore, if a Bethel family member was scheduled to give the Memorial talk, then the body of elders will need to select another speaker.—*sf* chap. 20 par. 6.

Kingdom Hall Dedications: All Kingdom Hall dedications should be postponed until further notice.

Thank you very much for your diligent efforts to prepare for the observance of the Memorial despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak. We pray that Jehovah's spirit continue guiding you as you set an example worthy of imitation for the flock.—1 Pet. 5:3.

Your brothers,
*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

c: Circuit overseers

Canceling Memorial Locations on JW.ORG

If it is impossible to have the Memorial at the location already listed on jw.org, the congregation secretary can use the following instructions to cancel the location on jw.org:

- (1) Click on the "Edit" button.
- (2) Enter the starting time for the Memorial observance as the time you originally planned to have your Memorial.
- (3) When entering the Memorial location, select "No" to indicate the Memorial is not being held at your Kingdom Hall.
- (4) Under "Search by Address," enter the address of your Kingdom Hall to locate it on the map or manually enter the GPS coordinates of your Kingdom Hall.
- (5) In the "Location Address and Details" field, overwrite any text that appears with the following: "The program will not be held at this location."
- (6) Select "Next," and then follow the onscreen prompts to review and submit the information.
- (7) Remove additional Memorial times and locations previously entered on jw.org, as needed.