

Congregation Charter (VersO)

In the wording of May 27, 2009

Preamble. (1) The Christian congregation was formed in the year 33 C.E. at the time of the Jewish Pentecost festival. The Bible report about the events that took place in Jerusalem at that time leaves no doubt that God founded the congregation. (Acts 2:1-47) Preaching and disciple-making led to the formation of new Christian congregations outside of Jerusalem. – Acts 11:19-21; 14:21-23.

(2) As more and more congregations were founded, the apostles and older men in Jerusalem continued to be the main responsible overseers for the expanding religious association now extending beyond national borders. They were the Governing Body for the entire religious association.

(3) Jehovah's Witnesses today follow the pattern of the first century with regard to structure and procedures of their congregations. The members of the congregation make up a close community in which each feels obligated to encourage and further the faith of the other members of the congregation, as well as strengthening them spiritually. They cultivate the unity of spirit and genuine brotherhood. (John 13:34, 35; Hebrews 10:23-25) The congregations acknowledge the direction of the Governing Body prescribed by the statutes of the Religious Association (StRG) and the Branch Committee instituted by it as well as their law of the religious association.

§ 1 Name and sphere of activity. (1) Under religious law, the *congregation* is an independent structural division. Its activity is governed by public religious law. It bears the name "*Jehovah's Witnesses, Congregation ...*" (hereinafter called *congregation*). It is responsible for administering the donations it receives as well as the Property assigned to it by the Branch Committee.

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(2) The *congregation* is active in the geographic territory assigned to it by the branch office and is subject to the supervision of the branch office, which makes use of traveling overseers for this purpose. It also supports the worldwide activity of Jehovah's Witnesses.

(3) The *congregation* and its direction (§ 3) are bound in their activity to the law of the *Religious Association* (par. 4 of the Preamble STRG).

§ 2 Purposes. The purpose of the *congregation* is to fulfill the Biblical commission outlined in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, verse 14 and chapter 28, verses 19, 20. It is the local community of believers that unitedly proclaim the Word of God, especially the message about the name, word and sovereignty of the Almighty God JEHOVAH that it contains, as well as to proclaim the gospel of God's Kingdom under the rule of Christ Jesus. Members of the *congregation*, under the direction of the body of elders, assist one another materially and spiritually so as to enable them to "hold fast the public declaration of [their] hope without wavering," to "consider one another to incite to love and fine works," and to encourage "one another, and all the more so as [they] behold the day drawing near." – Hebrews 10:23-25.

§ 3 Administration. (1) The spiritual administration of the *congregation* is the responsibility of the body of elders, which is composed of the elders appointed to the *congregation*.

(2) Under the direction of the body of elders, those elders who belong to the service committee are authorized to perform their activity within the framework of the *religious law*. The service committee is made up of the coordinator of the body of elders, the secretary, and the service overseer.

(3) Elders are supported in fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in par. 5 by ministerial servants.

(4) Elders and ministerial servants are appointed by the Branch Committee, usually on the recommendation of the body of elders and the circuit overseer. In the event of a move to another congregation, a reappointment for the new congregation is necessary. Elders and ministerial servants usually are removed from their spiritual office by the Branch Committee on the recommendation of the body of elders.

(5) Responsibilities of the body of elders within the geographical territory assigned to the *congregation* include:

1. providing pastoral care,
2. organizing the preaching activity,
3. deciding about requests to be admitted into the *Religious Association* (§ 14, par. 1, 3 StRG), as well as granting and or revoking pre-membership status (§ 14, par. 2 StRG). and also to carry out judicial committee proceedings (§ 15, par. 1, No. 6 StRG),
4. confirming cases of disassociation (§ 15, par. 2 StRG),
5. administering the financial funds and assets of the *congregation* (§ 8, par. 1, 2 StRG),
6. Procuring a Kingdom Hall or another place of worship and caring for its maintenance.

§ 4 Administering funds. (1) The coordinator of the body of elders is responsible for day-to-day transactions.

(2) A decision must be made on all other expenses by the body of elders in accord with the *religious law*. These require the adoption of a resolution by the *congregation*. The *congregation* decides with a simple majority of members in attendance.

(3) The *congregation* is given a monthly financial report. The coordinator of the body of elders arranges for the books to be audited quarterly. After the audit is completed a corresponding announcement will be made to the *congregation*. An additional audit by the circuit overseer is usually made twice a year.

(4) The body of elders has to comply with the directives about administering funds as issued by the Branch Committee.

§ 5 Legal representation. (1) The body of elders is the legal representative of the *congregation*. In the case of day-to-day transactions, it is legally represented by the coordinator of the body of elders or by authorized representatives of the body of elders.

(2) In all other instances two elders jointly represent it legally.

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(3) Proof of representative authority is furnished by a certified document from the branch office, which is dated no earlier than six weeks before.

§ 6 Membership. Members of the *congregation* are all baptized members of the *Religious Association* associated with the *congregation* according to the *religious law*. (§ 14 StRG).

§ 7 Dissolution. In case the *congregation* is dissolved, its assets will be transferred to one of the legal corporations of Jehovah's Witnesses as determined by the Branch Committee or the Governing Body.