

OUR KINGDOM MINISTRY

January 2004

For United States of America

km-E Us 1/04 Vol. 47, No. 1

Dear Kingdom Publishers:

Like the early Christians, we today regularly come together at assemblies where "quite a crowd" has gathered. (Acts 11:26) Since 1965, we have been using Assembly Halls for assemblies and conventions where suitable rented facilities are not available. Presently, there are 40 Assembly Halls in the United States branch. A new one is near completion in California, and plans are progressing for another in Georgia. More are needed, and arrangements for these are under way.

During these difficult economic times, the cost of Assembly Hall construction and operation is constantly rising. Thus, the Governing Body has 'calculated the expense' and directed that a standard Assembly Hall design be developed. (Luke 14:28) The aim is to build modest-sized halls that utilize simpler, less costly finishings. This will allow projects to move along more quickly with volunteer help. At the same time, efforts will be made to ensure that the buildings are practical, comfortable, and attractive in appearance. Our prayer is that standardizing Assembly Hall design will save money, time, and labor, allowing us to give more attention to the all-important preaching work.

—Matt. 24:14.

It is a pleasure for us to be working together with you in Jehovah's service. We send our warm Christian love to all of you.

Your brothers,
U.S. Branch Office

The Excelling Value of Divine Wisdom

¹ Some people think that Jehovah's Witnesses should focus their efforts more directly on helping to alleviate the problems facing mankind today. Such persons fail to see the excellency of our Bible educational work. It is as the apostle Paul wrote: "The speech about the torture stake is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is God's power." (1 Cor. 1:18) Indeed, we know that the Christian ministry is the most important work being done on earth today.

² **A Better Life Now:** Human efforts to solve mankind's problems have yielded very limited results. Legislation has not stopped the proliferation of crime. Peace treaties and peacekeeping forces have not brought an end to war. Social programs have failed to eradicate poverty. (Ps. 146:3, 4; Jer. 8:9) In contrast, the Kingdom message has transformed the lives of millions by helping them to put on a new personality that is acceptable to God. (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:9, 10) In so doing, they enjoy an im-

proved quality of life right now.—1 Tim. 4:8.

³ **A Bright Future:** In addition to helping us meet the immediate challenges of life, divine wisdom enables us to plan effectively for the future. (Ps. 119:105) It spares us the futility of trying to reform the present system of things. (Eccl. 1:15; Rom. 8:20) How grateful we are that we are not squandering our lives in pursuit of goals that are only an illusion! Rather, we center our efforts on Jehovah's sure promise of "new heavens and a new earth" in which righteousness will dwell. When Jehovah's day of judgment arrives, it will be unmistakably clear that those who relied on divine wisdom made the right choice.—2 Pet. 3:10-13; Ps. 37:34.

⁴ Although divine wisdom may seem impractical to those steeped in "the wisdom of this system of things," it is in reality the only practical course to follow. (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:6-8) Hence, we continue to proclaim throughout the earth the message that originates with God, who is "wise alone."—Rom. 16:27.

1. How do many people view the Christian ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses?
2. (a) What has been the fruitage of human efforts to solve mankind's problems? (b) What results has the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work produced?
3. In what ways have you personally benefited from divine wisdom?
4. What might you say to help people in your territory see the excellency of the wisdom contained in God's Word?

SERVICE MEETING SCHEDULE

Week Starting January 12

Song 224

10 min: Local announcements. Selected Announcements from *Our Kingdom Ministry*. Using the suggestions on page 4, demonstrate how to present the January 15 *Watchtower* and the January 22 *Awake!* In each case, both magazines should be offered as a set, even though only one is featured. After each demonstration, highlight some good aspects of the presentation.

15 min: "The Excelling Value of Divine Wisdom."* As time permits, invite audience to comment on the cited scriptures.

20 min: New Publications We *Rejoiced to Receive!* Audience discussion. We were delighted to receive two new releases at the "Give God Glory" District Convention. "*See the Good Land*" is unlike any other publication in our library. Each two-page spread presents a revealing look at a different aspect of the Promised Land. Point out some of the details appearing on various maps. Suggest practical ways this publication can be used. *Learn From the Great Teacher* will enhance the spiritual well-being of our children. Mention some of the timely subjects covered, showing how parents and young ones can benefit. Invite audience to comment on how they are putting these new publications to good use.

Song 186 and concluding prayer.

Week Starting January 19

Song 95

5 min: Local announcements.

10 min: Question Box. Talk by an elder.

15 min: Local needs.

15 min: Filling the Need for Assembly Halls. Talk and audience discussion based on the *Proclaimers* book, pages 328-32. Conclude by reading the letter from the

branch office that appears on the front page of this issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry*, and highlight the benefits of the new arrangement.

Song 73 and concluding prayer.

Week Starting January 26

Song 158

12 min: Local announcements. Accounts report. Remind publishers to turn in field service reports for January. Using the suggestions on page 4, demonstrate how to present the February 1 *Watchtower* and the February 8 *Awake!* In each case, both magazines should be offered as a set, even though only one is featured. In one of the presentations, demonstrate how you might offer the magazines to a neighbor.

15 min: Apply God's Word in Your Life Each Day. Talk and audience discussion. Encourage all to make good use of *Examining the Scriptures Daily—2004*. Discuss comments from the foreword, pages 3-4. Ask the audience what they personally find to be the best time to consider the daily text. Discuss the text and comments for the day with the congregation. Invite the audience to comment on how we can make practical application of the information. Encourage all to consider briefly how they can apply the material when they discuss the text each day.

18 min: Cultivating Friendships With Fellow Believers. (Prov. 18:24; 27:9) Talk and audience discussion based on the December 1, 2000, *Watchtower*, pages 22-3. One of the blessings of true worship is the opportunity to make real friends. Our companionship at meetings, in field service, and on other occasions provides a rich source of encouragement. How can we cultivate friendships with others in the congregation? Review the box "Six Steps to a Lasting Friendship," and invite the audience to comment on how each point can be

applied in our dealings with our brothers.

Song 177 and concluding prayer.

Week Starting February 2

Song 204

10 min: Local announcements. Mention literature offer for February. Review presentations for offering *Draw Close to Jehovah* in the January 2003 *Our Kingdom Ministry*, page 3.

20 min: "Keep Strict Watch on Your Use of Time."* Invite audience to comment on what they do to keep nonessential activities from infringing on spiritual pursuits.

15 min: Imitate Paul as He Did Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1) Audience discussion. Like Jesus, Paul took advantage of opportunities to witness to "those who happened to be on hand." (Acts 17:17) What opportunities are there to do this in our territory? Who are "on hand" when we go shopping, are at work or school, or take public transportation? Whom might we come in contact with when at home? Invite audience to relate experiences that they have had in witnessing to people they met during everyday activities.

Song 151 and concluding prayer.

* Limit introductory comments to less than a minute, and follow with a question-and-answer discussion.

OCTOBER SERVICE REPORT

Number of:	Av. Hrs.	Av. Mags.	Av. R.V.	Av. Bl.St.
Sp'l Pios.	186	105.9	94.9	46.2
Pios.	94,550	68.6	46.6	21.4
Aux.Pios.	24,600	50.6	38.3	13.7
Pubs.	870,300	9.4	8.4	3.6
TOTAL	989,636			Baptized: 2,650

We are happy to report a new peak in regular pioneers! The total of 94,550 regular pioneers reporting is an increase of 28 over the previous peak of 94,522 in December 1999.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ Literature offer for **January**: Any book published prior to 1988 that the congregation may have in stock. If you do not have any of these in stock, please check if nearby congregations have a surplus of older publications on hand that you can use. Congregations that do not have older books may offer *Mankind's Search for God*. **February**: *Draw Close to Jehovah*. If this publication is not available, you may use the *Creation* book (large or small size) or the *Revelation Climax* book as an alternative offer. **March**: *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. A special effort will be made to start home Bible studies. If people already have this publication, *Pay Attention to Daniel's Prophecy* may be offered. **April**: Feature individual copies of both *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* When making return visits on interested people, include those who attend the Memorial or other theocratic events

but who are not actively associated with the organization. Concentrate on placing the *Worship God* book. Every effort should be made to start a home Bible study, especially if some individuals have already studied the *Knowledge* book and the *Require* brochure.

■ Starting in February, and no later than March 7, the new public talk for circuit overseers will be "Whose Values Do You Cherish?"

■ Congregations should make convenient arrangements to observe the Memorial this year on Sunday, April 4, after sundown. Although the talk may start earlier, the passing of the emblems should not begin until after sundown. Check with local sources to determine when sundown occurs in your area. Since no meetings other than those for field service are to be held on that day, appropriate adjustments should be made for the *Watchtower* Study to be conducted at another time. Circuit overseers will need to adjust their meeting schedule for the week

according to local circumstances. Although it is desirable for each congregation to hold its own Memorial observance, this may not always be possible. Where a number of congregations normally use the same Kingdom Hall, perhaps one or more congregations can obtain the use of another facility for that evening. Where possible, we would suggest a minimum of 40 minutes between the programs so that all may benefit fully from the occasion. Consideration should also be given to traffic conditions and parking, including the dropping off and picking up of passengers. The body of elders should decide what arrangements would be best locally.

■ For those who wish to make donations to the worldwide work electronically, a set of instructions is available to explain this arrangement. For further information, call 718-560-5000 or write to Watch Tower, Office of the Secretary and Treasurer, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201-2483.

QUESTION BOX

■ How can we ensure proper timing of congregation meetings?

Time moves swiftly when we are sharing something good with friends. For this reason, it can be a challenge to handle meeting parts within the allotted time. What can help?

Start on time. When the entire congregation meets, it may be helpful to invite the audience to take their seats a minute or two beforehand so that the meeting can begin at the designated time in an orderly way. (Eccl. 3:1) Meetings involving smaller groups, such as meetings for field service, should not be delayed to wait for those who may arrive late.

Prepare thoroughly. A key to good timing is advance preparation. Get the objective of the assignment clearly in mind.

Identify the main points, and make these stand out. Avoid getting sidetracked by minor details. Keep the presentation simple. If the part includes demonstrations or interviews, rehearse them in advance. To the extent possible, time your part while practicing it out loud.

Apportion your material. Whether your assignment is a talk or an audience discussion, you may find it helpful to divide the material into sections. Decide how much time to spend on each section, and indicate this in the margin of your notes. Then monitor your timing during the presentation. In an audience discussion, avoid the pitfall of entertaining so many comments in the introductory portion that you have to rush through weightier material that appears later. *Watchtower* Study conductors should allow suf-

ficient time to consider the review box at the end. They should also be careful not to infringe on the time allotted for the concluding song and prayer.

Conclude on time. If a meeting consists of several parts, such as the Service Meeting, each speaker should be conscious of when his part is to begin and end. What can be done if the meeting is running behind schedule? One or more of the brothers may be able to make up the time by focusing on main points and eliminating some details. The ability to do this is one mark of a skilled teacher.

As an audience, we can assist the brother conducting by keeping our expressions brief and to the point. All of us, therefore, can contribute to meetings that take place "decently and by arrangement."

—1 Cor. 14:40.

Keep Strict Watch on Your Use of Time

¹ In this age of time- and labor-saving devices, many find themselves with seemingly more things to do and less time in which to do them. Do you find it challenging to maintain a good spiritual routine? Do you wish you had more time for the ministry? How can we make the best use of our time?—Ps. 90:12; Phil. 1:9-11.

² **Identify Time Wasters:** All of us should periodically examine how we use our time. The Bible urges: “Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves, because the days are wicked.” (Eph. 5:15, 16) Consider the challenges presented by advances in information technology. While computers and other electronic devices have legitimate uses, they can become a snare if we fail to keep strict watch on our use of time.

—1 Cor. 7:29, 31.

³ Each of us should ask himself: ‘Do I spend time each day reading or answering E-mail messages that are little more than an annoyance? Am I often engaged in making telephone calls or sending text messages about trivial matters? (1 Tim. 5:13) Do I find myself browsing the Internet without any purpose or aimlessly switching from channel to channel when watching television? Has a preoccupation with electronic games begun to infringe on my study of God’s Word?’ Such pursuits can subtly rob us of our spirituality.—Prov. 12:11.

1. What challenge do people everywhere face today?
- 2, 3. What challenge does information technology present, and how can each of us make a self-examination?

⁴ **Using Time Wisely:** Electronic devices tend to commandeer both our time and our attention. A youth who was heavily into computer games admitted: “Sometimes when I had played before going out in the ministry or to a Christian meeting, I found it very difficult to concentrate. I was almost always thinking about how I would solve a certain game problem after getting home. My personal study and regular Bible reading suffered. My joy in serving God began to decline.” Recognizing that he needed to make changes, he deleted all his computer games. “That was really tough,” he recalls. “I was more attached to games than I had thought. But I also experienced a great feeling of victory because I knew that I had done it for my own good.”—Matt. 5:29, 30.

⁵ It may be necessary to take such measures if there are areas in which you need to make adjustments. Could you buy out a half hour each day from nonessential activities? That is about how much time it would take to read the entire Bible in one year. How spiritually rewarding that would be! (Ps. 19:7-11; 119:97-100) Set definite times for Bible reading, meeting preparation, and the field ministry. (1 Cor. 15:58) Doing this will help you to keep time wasters in check and will help you to “go on perceiving what the will of Jehovah is.”—Eph. 5:17.

4. What adjustment did one youth make, and why?
5. How can we buy out time for spiritual pursuits, and how do we benefit from doing so?

What to Say About the Magazines

THE WATCHTOWER Jan. 15 ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH’S KINGDOM

“Because broken promises are so common nowadays, many find it difficult to place their confidence in anyone. Do you think there is anyone whose promises we can trust? [Allow for response. Then read Joshua 23:14.] This magazine shows how we can build confidence in God’s promises recorded in the Bible.”

Awake! Jan. 22

“This is what the personal name of God looks like in the Hebrew language. [Show cover.] Some people feel strongly that this name should never be spoken aloud. Others use it freely. This issue of *Awake!* examines this controversy. It also discusses how we can come to know God by name.” Read Psalm 83:18.

THE WATCHTOWER Feb. 1 ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH’S KINGDOM

“Most of us try to take care of our physical health. However, recent studies suggest that our well-being is also affected by our spirituality. Do you think that this is possible? [Allow for response. Then read Matthew 5:3.] This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses how we can satisfy our spiritual need.”

Awake! Feb. 8

“Many today lead busy lives and could use more rest. Perhaps you will agree with these words written over 3,000 years ago. [Read Ecclesiastes 4:6. Then allow for response.] This issue of *Awake!* presents helpful information on how to recognize and cope with the problem of sleep debt.”