

24. oktober 2024

BARNE- OG FAMILIEDEPARTEMENTET
POSTBOKS 8036 DEP
0030 OSLO
postmottak@bfd.dep.no

Regarding decisions to deny state funding and the loss of registration for Jehovah's Witnesses: adjustments in Jehovah's Witnesses' religious practices regarding restricted contact with a person removed from the congregation.

We are writing to you concerning the ongoing court case to be reviewed by the Borgarting Court of Appeal in February 2024, related to the validity of administrative decisions based on Jehovah's Witnesses' religious teachings to limit contact with individuals removed from the congregation or who have chosen to disassociate themselves¹. We would like to inform you of a recent, worldwide adjustment to our religious practice in this area.

This doctrinal adjustment was published worldwide in the August 2024 study edition of *The Watchtower*².

The main adjustments can be summarized as follows:

- **Removal from the congregation remains a last resort.** Before considering the removal of someone from the congregation, the elders will hold several meetings with the individual who has committed a serious sin to try to help them restore their relationship with God.
- **When informing an unrepentant sinner that they will be removed,** the elders will explain that they would like to meet again in a few months. If the person agrees to this follow-up meeting, the elders will warmly encourage them to repent and return. Even if the person has not changed their stance, the elders will reach out periodically.
- **If a baptized minor commits a serious sin,** two elders will meet with the minor and their Christian parents or guardians to understand what steps the parents have taken to help their child make necessary changes and repent. If the minor is receptive and the parents can reach them, the

¹ Previously, we used the term "disfellowshipped" (translated into Norwegian as "ekskludert") for someone removed from the congregation in line with the biblical practice in 1 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 13. However, this term was recently adjusted worldwide to "removed from the congregation" (translated as "fjernet fra menigheten" in Norwegian), based on the wording in the cited scripture. A person who "has disassociated themselves" is one who has renounced their status as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

² [The Watchtower \(Study\) \(jw.org\)](#). Norwegian translation: [Vakttårnet \(study edition\) \(jw.org\)](#).

elders may decide that no further action is needed. The responsibility for correcting children lies with the parents in a loving way. Therefore, it will be even rarer for a baptized minor who commits a serious sin to be removed from the congregation.

- **In the rare event that a baptized minor is removed**, family life and household association will continue. Parents retain a biblical and moral obligation to care for the physical and emotional needs of their minor children.
- **Members of the congregation can choose whether to invite someone who has been removed or disassociated to a meeting.** They may greet the person and welcome them to the meeting. If the person expresses a desire to return, the elders may arrange for someone in the congregation to study the Bible with them even if they have not yet been reinstated. A removed or disassociated person can be reinstated within a few months if they show genuine repentance.

We want to emphasize that Jehovah's Witnesses believe in the biblical directive that believers should limit contact with individuals who have been removed or have disassociated themselves (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:11-13). The degree of limited contact depends on each individual's personal circumstances and conscience. Regardless of the situation, Jehovah's Witnesses believe the Bible encourages love and respect for all people, including those who once shared our faith. Within households, there is no change in social contact; marriages and family life continue as before.

Based on the above, we hereby request that you reconsider your decision of September 30, 2022, in the complaint case regarding the denial of state funding for 2022, as well as the decisions of the County Governor dated January 27, 2022, December 22, 2022, November 7, 2023, and June 18, 2024, regarding Jehovah's Witnesses' right to state funding and registration as a religious community under the religious communities act. In this regard, we refer to section 35, second paragraph, cf. first paragraph, of the Public Administration Act regarding the reversal of a complaint authority.

We kindly request a response to this letter and the above request without undue delay, as per section 11a of the Public Administration Act. If possible, we would appreciate a response within three weeks from the date of this letter, i.e., by November 14, 2024. Should you have any questions regarding the information in this letter or our religious practices, please feel free to contact us.

Best regards,



Jørgen Pedersen
Styreformann
Jehovas vitner

Jørgen Pedersen
Chairman