

GUIDELINES FOR JUDICIAL COMMITTEES AT BETHEL

Judicial committees at Bethel: These are appointed to **handle offenses that are the basis for disfellowshipping** in the same manner as those in the congregations. The judicial committee is appointed by the Branch Committee.—*Branch Organization* 4:35.

Before meeting with the person, each member of the judicial committee should carefully **review the latest information on identifying true repentance and works befitting repentance**. (Also, see the *Shepherding* textbook chapters 5, 6, 7, 8.) When two elders from the judicial committee invite the wrongdoer to the hearing, they should make it clear what the accusation is and that they will be meeting in the capacity of a judicial committee. (*ks10* 6:6) While hearing the case, the judicial committee may encounter complex situations that make a decision difficult. They may want to consult with members of the Branch Committee before reaching a decision.

Confidentiality: There is a **vital need for confidentiality** when handling judicial matters. Judicial committees should not reveal details about the case to unauthorized individuals. **E-mails regarding judicial cases should not be exchanged between members of the judicial committee.** Those called in as **witnesses should be informed of their responsibility also to maintain confidentiality.** If it is necessary to continue a committee hearing at a later time, the members of the committee should submit to the chairman any personal notes they have taken. The chairman will keep these notes in a secure place to prevent breaches of confidentiality. The notes may be returned to the individual elders before the hearing resumes. Upon conclusion of the case, all notes taken by those serving on the committee should be turned in to the chairman to be used in preparing the report and then disposed of.—*ks10* 7:17.

Judicial Reproof: When a person is judicially reproofed, **he should be dismissed and should leave Bethel as soon as reasonably possible.** The judicial committee can work out an early departure date with the brother, giving consideration to the seriousness of the wrongdoing, whether or not he is a threat to the family, his personal circumstances, and so forth.

Restrictions: The *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 7, paragraph 19, says: “In addition, **some judicial restrictions** will be imposed in all cases of judicial reproof.” All restrictions that are imposed, such as not commenting at meetings and not repre-

senting the congregation in prayer, **should be mentioned on the front of this form.**

Disfellowshipping: Normally, disfellowshipped persons should leave Bethel **on the same day** they are informed of the decision. If a decision to disfellowship is reached late in the day, please hold off informing the person until the next morning when all arrangements can be made for transportation, packing his belongings, and so on. This would avoid the problem of a person’s being in the Bethel home after he is notified of the decision of his being disfellowshipped, provided that he does not make an immediate appeal. If he makes an immediate appeal, the appeal committee should hear the case that same day.

Notice of right to appeal: If the judicial committee’s decision is that the person is disfellowshipped, **he may make an appeal in writing to the Branch Committee.** (*Branch Organization* 4:38) Appeals should be heard in an expeditious manner. He should be given the usual seven days to make this appeal even though he would normally leave Bethel on the day he is informed of the decision.—*ks10* 7:27-30; 8:1-3.

Follow-through: The judicial committee should **use this form (A-7) when turning in its written report to the coordinator of the Branch Committee. In the case of disfellowshipping, the S-77 form should also be included.** The report should describe what led up to the wrongdoing. There should be a brief description of the Scriptural offense(s) for which action was taken, such as drunkenness, stealing, and fornication. Was the individual previously counseled? **Please identify the evidence that established the wrongdoing**, such as a confession or the testimony of two or more witnesses. (*ks10* 5:37) Comment on factors that led to the decision, including works that befit repentance or the lack of repentance. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11; *ks10* 7:6-12) If the handling of the judicial case uncovered other problems that need attention, please comment on these in the report.

The **chairman** of the judicial committee should **notify the coordinator of the Branch Committee** of the date of the person’s departure. If the exact date of departure is still unknown at the time the written report is ready, the report should be submitted and **the date of departure added as soon as it becomes known.**

In all cases heard by a judicial committee, the individual will have to depart Bethel, since he was either judicially reproofed or disfellowshipped.