

August 6, 2021

TO ALL SPECIAL FULL-TIME SERVANTS AT BETHEL AND IN THE FIELD

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is clear that we are moving into another phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. As highly contagious variants emerge, the virus is rapidly spreading worldwide, particularly among those who are not vaccinated. Therefore, we are sharing this important information. Please keep it *strictly confidential*. It should not be shared with others.

The video *2021 Governing Body Update #6* mentioned three important factors to consider concerning vaccination: (1) As Jehovah's Witnesses, we do not have a religious objection to vaccination. (2) Nearly 20,000 of our dear brothers and sisters have died from the COVID-19 virus. (3) In some lands, the "superior authorities" are enacting laws that require vaccination. In other lands they are strongly encouraging their citizens to be vaccinated. As the study note on Romans 13:5 says: "A Christian submits to human governments when a command does not contradict God's laws." - Rom. 13:1-5.

At the present time, 17,957 Bethel family members worldwide have been vaccinated. Yet, we have not received a report of even one Bethel family member having a severe adverse reaction or becoming seriously ill as a result of getting vaccinated. In contrast, we have noted that in the United States branch territory, ninety-nine percent of the publishers who have been hospitalized for COVID-19 or who have died from COVID-19 were not vaccinated. With this in mind and after much prayerful consideration, we have decided that it is our preference that all those in special full-time service at Bethel and in the field be vaccinated if at all possible.

Although vaccination is a personal matter, we must acknowledge that our personal decisions often affect others. Our decisions also affect how we can be used in special full-time service in Jehovah's organization. For example, those who are vaccinated may have greater opportunities to support spiritual activities. How so? More and more regional and national authorities are requiring proof of vaccination before people may publicly assemble. Similar concerns may eventually impact the work of traveling overseers in visiting congregations or in taking the lead at assemblies. It may also be that travel will be restricted for individuals who are not

vaccinated. Even our ability to share in the public witnessing work may be affected. Clearly, in addition to the health benefits, there are good reasons for those in special full-time service to be vaccinated.

In view of the above, we have asked the Health Care Department (HCD) to contact you to learn your current vaccination status. If for some medical reason you are unable to be vaccinated, please inform the HCD accordingly. They may be able to provide assistance.

We pray that Jehovah will give you wisdom as you consider these important matters. Please accept an expression of our love and deep respect for each one of you.

Your brothers,

*Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses*