

# Reference Document

*“The Vow Two Governing Body Members Don’t Have to Keep”*

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

## How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video.

### Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — Sourced from official Watchtower publications (magazines, Kingdom Ministry inserts, books, internal letters), Governing Body video updates, court rulings, government records (county deed records, corporate filings, tax records), peer-reviewed research, or other regulatory filings. Primary sources can stand on their own.
- **SECONDARY** — Sourced from established advocacy/research sites (JW Facts, JW Survey, AvoidJW, AJWRB, Beroean Pickets) or reputable investigative journalism. Secondary sources support claims and are most defensible when paired with a primary or another independent secondary.

**A note on county deed records:** Many claims in this video are based on real estate instruments filed with Baldwin County, Alabama and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. These are public records. Anyone can search them by instrument number, grantor name, or grantee name at [baldwin.al.publicsearch.us](http://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us) (Baldwin) or [meckrod.manatron.com](http://meckrod.manatron.com) (Mecklenburg). Where this document cites a specific instrument number, that number is the canonical reference under which the document is filed.

## SECTION 1: The Premise — Who the Subjects Are

**Claim:** Jody Jedele holds a CCIM (Certified Commercial Investment Member) designation, a graduate-level commercial real estate credential.

- **Source:** *CCIM Institute — What is a CCIM Designation?*
- **URL:** <https://www.ccim.com/about/what-ccim-designation>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official CCIM Institute documentation of the credential’s scope and requirements.

**Claim:** Jody Jedele holds a CIPS (Certified International Property Specialist) designation from the National Association of Realtors.

- **Source:** *National Association of Realtors — CIPS Designation*
- **URL:** <https://www.nar.realtor/education/designations-and-certifications/cips>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official NAR documentation of the credential.

**Claim:** On October 5, 2024, Jody Jedele was appointed a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, becoming one of eleven men who govern the worldwide organization.

- **Source:** *JW.org — “Jody Jedele Appointed Member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses”*
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/news/jw/region/global/Jody-Jedele-Appointed-Member-Governing-Body-Jehovahs-Witnesses/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Watchtower’s own news release announcing the appointment.

**Claim:** Tierra Bella Realty, Incorporated was registered as a North Carolina corporation in March 2006, with Jody L. Jedele listed as an officer.

- **Source:** *North Carolina Secretary of State — Business Registration*
- **URL:** [NC Secretary of State business registration search](#)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official corporate filing record. Search returns Tierra Bella Realty, Inc. with current officer listings.

**Claim:** On September 30, 2011, a Certificate of Assumed Name was filed with the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds establishing “Touchstone International Properties” as a DBA of Tierra Bella Realty Inc., signed by Jody Jedele as President.

- **Source:** Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds, Real Estate Index, Doc #2011110080 (Book 26777, Pages 661–663). Filed 9/30/2011 1:38 PM. Signed by Jody Jedele as President of Tierra Bella Realty Inc.
- **URL:** <https://meckrod.manatron.com/> (search Real Estate Index by document number 2011110080)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county business filing.

## SECTION 2: What the Rank-and-File Was Told

**Claim:** A May 1974 Kingdom Ministry insert encouraged Witnesses to sell homes and property in order to engage in pioneer or full-time service before the end of this system.

- **Source:** *Our Kingdom Ministry*, May 1974, “How Are You Using Your Life?” (page 3)
- **URL:** Available through Watchtower Online Library archived collections and Wayback Machine captures of the original publication.
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication.

**Claim: Watchtower has discouraged higher education across more than five decades of consistent published messaging, including the 1969 *Watchtower*, the October 2005 *Watchtower*, the 2008 Kingdom Ministry, and the October 2011 Kingdom Ministry.**

- **Source:** *JW Facts — Higher Education and University* (research compilation of Watchtower publications on education)
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/higher-education-university.php>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — JW Facts is a research compilation site that quotes and cites Watchtower’s own publications directly. The Watchtower publications referenced are themselves PRIMARY sources.

**Claim: On August 22, 2025, Governing Body member David Splane delivered a Governing Body Update video walking back the long-standing Watchtower position on higher education and reframing it as a personal decision.**

- **Source:** *AvoidJW — “Higher Education Doctrinal Changes — Governing Body Update 2025”*
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/higher-education-doctrinal-changes-governing-body-update-2025/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — AvoidJW summarized and contextualized the official Watchtower update.

**Claim: The April 15, 2006 *Watchtower* article “Let Your Hands Be Strong” (paragraph 13) instructed Witnesses to keep their lifestyle simple and avoid pursuing material things.**

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, April 15, 2006, pp. 25–29, “Let Your Hands Be Strong,” paragraph 13
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2006286>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication archived on the Watchtower Online Library.

**Claim: The July 2016 *Watchtower* Study Edition article “Seek the Kingdom, Not Things” (paragraph 6) counseled members against pursuing material possessions during the “last days.”**

- **Source:** *The Watchtower* (Study Edition), July 2016, “Seek the Kingdom, Not Things,” paragraph 6
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2016526>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication.

**Claim: The December 15, 2012 *Watchtower* article “Maintaining Our Position as Temporary Residents” framed the contemporary world as a temporary place not to invest in materially.**

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, December 15, 2012, “Maintaining Our Position as Temporary Residents”
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2012925>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication.

### **SECTION 3: The Vow of Obedience and Poverty**

**Claim: Approximately 67,000 members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah’s Witnesses are bound by a Vow of Obedience and Poverty — including Bethelites, special pioneers, missionaries, traveling overseers, construction volunteers, and Governing Body members.**

- **Source:** *The Watchtower* (Study Edition), April 2017, “What You Vow, Pay” (w17 April pp. 3–8), paragraph 19
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2017365>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Watchtower’s own canonical statement on the Vow.
- **Key quote:** “Currently, there are some 67,000 members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah’s Witnesses... They are all bound by a ‘Vow of Obedience and Poverty.’”

**Claim: Watchtower’s 1993 *Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom* describes Bethel service compensation as “food, lodging, and a modest reimbursement for personal expenses.”**

- **Source:** *Jehovah's Witnesses — Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, Chapter 18: "Seeking First the Kingdom" (page 295)
- **URL:** Watchtower Online Library — *Proclaimers* book reference (search by chapter title)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication. The page-295 description is also reproduced verbatim in the March 1995 *Our Kingdom Ministry* article "Bethel Service — More Volunteers Needed."
- **Key quote:** "Those at Bethel do not serve for material gain but are satisfied with the provisions made for food, lodging, and a modest reimbursement for personal expenses."

## SECTION 4: Case 1 — Jody Jedele's Commercial Real Estate Career

**Claim:** Jody Jedele was born in Missouri in 1970, joined Bethel at Walkill, New York in September 1990, took a gap from Bethel service roughly between 2005 and 2013 during which he built his commercial real estate practice in North Carolina, returned to Bethel in 2013, was appointed a Governing Body helper in March 2023, and a member of the Governing Body itself on October 5, 2024.

- **Source:** *JW.org Governing Body biography* — published with the appointment announcement, citing Jedele's life-history details and service record
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/news/jw/region/global/Jody-Jedele-Appointed-Member-Governing-Body-Jehovahs-Witnesses/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Watchtower's own published biographical record.

**Claim:** Tierra Bella Realty, Incorporated remains a registered active North Carolina corporation, with Jody L. Jedele listed in the Secretary of State records as an officer of the corporation today.

- **Source:** *North Carolina Secretary of State Business Registration* — corporation entity #0832539
- **URL:** [NC Secretary of State Business Registration Search](#)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official corporate registration record.

**Claim:** By October 2025, the Tierra Bella Realty website had been rebuilt on a new content management system with Jedele's name removed from the public-facing pages, while the Secretary of State records continued to list him as an officer.

- **Source:** *Wayback Machine archives* — comparison of November 28, 2023 and October 2025 captures of the Tierra Bella Realty about-us page
- **URL:** <https://web.archive.org/> (search tierrabellarealty.com captures)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Internet Archive captures of the public website at successive dates.

**Claim:** Mecklenburg County, North Carolina deed records contain multiple deeds in which "JEDELE" appears as a party, documenting Jedele's personal real estate transactions during the 2005–2013 commercial real estate gap period and adjacent years.

- **Source:** *Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds, Real Estate Index*
- **URL:** <https://meckrod.manatron.com/> (search Real Estate Index by name "JEDELE")
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Public county deed records.

## SECTION 5: Case 2 — The Lett Family Background (1984–1992)

**Claim:** On December 12, 1984, Mark R. Lett and Jean F. Lett (Stephen Lett's parents) sold Gulf Shores, Alabama property to Owen Group, Inc. and held a \$900,000 vendor-financed promissory note from Owen Group, secured by a Mortgage Deed recorded in Baldwin County.

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Mortgage Deed, Doc #1984-7047285 (Real Property Book 199, Page 387). Principal: \$900,000.00. Interest: 10% per annum years 1–5. Term: 120 months at \$8,500/month with final balloon. Stated maturity December 12, 1995.
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search Real Estate Index, instrument 1984-7047285)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded mortgage deed, Baldwin County public record.

**Claim: Mark R. Lett, Stephen’s father, died in 1986. The December 18, 1986 Assignment of Note and Mortgage describes him as “recently deceased.”**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Assignment of Note and Mortgage, Doc #1986-6921 (Real Property Book 272, Pages 1672–1674). Recorded December 29, 1986.
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search Real Estate Index, instrument 1986-6921)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county document.
- **Key quote:** “WHEREAS, Mark R. Lett is recently deceased, with no administration nor probate of the Estate of Mark R. Lett being initiated as of this date, Timothy Ray Lett (son), Mark Stephen Lett (son), and Jean F. Lett (widow), being the sole heirs and next of kin of Mark R. Lett...”

**Claim: On December 18, 1986, Jean F. Lett, Timothy Ray Lett, and Mark Stephen Lett executed an Assignment of Note and Mortgage assigning their interest in the Owen Group note to AmSouth Bank, N.A. as collateral for a \$30,000 loan to Jean Lett. Mark Stephen Lett (Stephen Lett, the future Governing Body member) personally signed this assignment in his own hand.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Assignment of Note and Mortgage, Doc #1986-6921 (Real Property Book 272, Pages 1672–1674)
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county document with hand-signed signatures.

**Claim: Between 1985 and 1988, the Lett family acquired four condominium units along the Alabama Gulf Coast (three at Royal Romar Dunes in Gulf Shores and one at Sea Oats in Gulf Shores), originally held in three-way joint ownership by Stephen Lett, Timothy Lett, and their mother Jean.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — original condo acquisition deeds and 1987–1988 transfer deeds (see following entries)
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county deed records.

**Claim: Across 1987 and 1988, Stephen Lett and Timothy Lett conveyed their interests in the four condominium units to Jean Lett. Stephen personally signed each of these transfer deeds in his own hand while serving as a circuit overseer.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Transfer deeds: Doc #1987-24212 (Royal Romar Dunes Unit 318, July 21, 1987); Doc #1988-51245 (Royal Romar Dunes Unit 320, July 6, 1988); Doc #1988-59514 (Royal Romar Dunes Unit 319, October 11, 1988); Doc #1988-62350 (Sea Oats Unit H103, November 10, 1988). Each deed recites consideration of “\$10.00 and other good and valuable consideration.”
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county warranty deeds with hand-signed grantor signatures.

**Claim: On February 9, 1988, Stephen Lett and Timothy Lett conveyed an additional Baldwin County parcel (Section 18, near Hillside Estates, with Highway 12 frontage) to Jean Lett, with Stephen signing in Winnebago County, Wisconsin on February 4, 1988.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Warranty Deed, Doc #1988-39707 (Book 311, Pages 568–570)
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/>

- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county document.

**Claim: On September 10, 1991, Mark Stephen Lett executed a handwritten Power of Attorney in Onslow County, North Carolina, naming his brother Timothy R. Lett as attorney-in-fact for Gulf Shores, Alabama real estate matters.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Power of Attorney, Doc #1992-181805 (recorded September 21, 1992)
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county document.

**Claim: On September 17, 1992 — six years after Mark R. Lett’s 1986 death — the Lett family released and cancelled the Owen Group promissory note. Jean F. Lett signed individually and as an heir; Timothy Lett signed as an heir; and Mark Stephen Lett’s release was signed on his behalf by Timothy Lett, “as agent and attorney in fact,” using the September 10, 1991 Power of Attorney.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Release and Cancellation of Promissory Note, Doc #1992-181804 (Real Property Book 478, Page 1546). Recorded September 21, 1992.
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county document.

**Claim: On January 8, 1993, Mark S. Lett (Stephen Lett) deeded a Hillside Estates parcel to Timothy R. Lett for \$6,000 recited consideration.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Warranty Deed, Doc #1993-193145 (Real Property Book 493, Page 1304)
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county warranty deed.

## **SECTION 6: Case 2 — Stephen Lett’s Governing Body Appointment (October 1999)**

**Claim: Mark Stephen Lett was appointed to the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses on October 2, 1999 (announced January 1, 2000).**

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, January 1, 2000, “New Members of the Governing Body”
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2000007>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication of the appointment announcement.

**Claim: In a March 2020 service-year highlights message, Stephen Lett spoke on behalf of the Governing Body to the worldwide Witness audience.**

- **Source:** *JW.org — Newsroom Highlights From 2020 Service Year*
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/news/region/global/Newsroom-Highlights-From-2020-Service-Year/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower news release.

## **SECTION 7: Case 2 — The 2013 Lagoon Park Purchase (\$500,000)**

**Claim: On October 18, 2013, Norma J. Lewis (the widow of Frank J. Lewis, who had died October 2, 2011) sold Lots 1 and 2 of Lagoon Park (17878 State Highway 180, Gulf Shores, Alabama) to Timothy R. Lett (50% as tenant in common), Mark Stephen Lett, and Susan Lynn Lett (50% jointly with right of**

survivorship) for \$500,000.

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Vendor's Lien Deed, Doc #2013-1425476. Recorded October 18, 2013 at 2:56 PM. Prepared by Sheila Stone Schoen, Attorney at Law, Elberta, Alabama.
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search Real Estate Index, grantor "Lewis Norma J" or instrument 2013-1425476)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county deed.

**Claim: The 2013 Lagoon Park transaction was structured as \$5,000 deposit acknowledged in the deed recitals, plus \$20,000 paid at closing, plus \$475,000 financed by Norma Lewis at 4% interest over a ten-year balloon term (\$500,000 total). The financing terms were embodied in a separate General Security Agreement and Promissory Note signed by Timothy R. Lett alone as Debtor, with Norma Lewis as Secured Party.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — General Security Agreement and Promissory Note, Doc #2013-1425477. Recorded October 18, 2013 at 2:58 PM (two minutes after the Vendor's Lien Deed). Note amount: \$475,000. Term: 120 months at 4% annual interest.
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search instrument 2013-1425477)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county document. Both the Vendor's Lien Deed financing-terms section and the Promissory Note independently confirm the \$475,000 figure.

## **SECTION 8: Case 2 — The 2019 William Wallace Estate Addition (\$60,000)**

**Claim: On April 29, 2019, Norma J. Lewis sold parcels in the William Wallace Estate subdivision (Block 3, parcels 107.001, 107.002, 109.001, 109.003) to the same three Letts (Timothy 50%, Stephen and Susan 50%) for \$60,000, with \$1,000 down and \$59,000 vendor-financed at 5% interest over ten years. The instrument was prepared by Timothy R. Lett himself rather than by a licensed attorney.**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Vendor's Lien Deed, Doc #2019-1804616
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search instrument 2019-1804616)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county deed.

## **SECTION 9: Case 2 — The 2023 Sale (\$940,000) and the Address Line**

**Claim: On July 17, 2023, the three Letts (Timothy, Stephen, Susan) sold Lagoon Park Lot 1 to Charles E. Kirk and Marsha L. Kirk for \$290,000 (\$85,000 down, \$205,000 seller-financed at 4.5% with two \$50,000 principal reductions in 2024 and a five-year balloon).**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Vendor's Lien Deed, Doc #2023-2074757
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search instrument 2023-2074757)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county deed.

**Claim: On the same day, July 17, 2023, the same three Letts sold Lagoon Park Lot 2 to Charles E. Kirk and Jacquelyn G. Napier for \$650,000 (\$15,000 down, \$635,000 seller-financed at 4.5% with a five-year balloon).**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Vendor's Lien Deed, Doc #2023-2074758
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search instrument 2023-2074758)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county deed.

**Claim: On the Real Estate Sales Validation Form accompanying the 2023 Lagoon Park Lot 1 sale, Mark Stephen Lett’s personal mailing address is given as “40 Kings Drive, Tuxedo Park, NY 10987.” The form is signed under penalty provisions of Alabama Code § 40-22-1(h).**

- **Source:** *Baldwin County, Alabama Probate Court* — Real Estate Sales Validation Form filed with Doc #2023-2074757
- **URL:** <https://baldwin.al.publicsearch.us/> (search instrument 2023-2074757)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Recorded county document filed under Alabama statutory perjury provisions.

**Claim: Alabama Code § 40-22-1 establishes the recording-tax statute and the Real Estate Sales Validation Form requirement, with subsection (h) imposing penalties for intentional misrepresentation on the form.**

- **Source:** *Code of Alabama, Title 40, Chapter 22, Section 40-22-1* — Deeds, Bills of Sale, Etc.
- **URL:** <https://law.justia.com/codes/alabama/title-40/chapter-22/section-40-22-1/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Statutory text published on Justia’s legal codes mirror.

**Claim: 40 Kings Drive, Tuxedo Park, NY 10987 is the Watchtower World Headquarters at Warwick, NY, independently confirmed through the FCC radio license database, medical practice registries (Vitals.com, WebMD, Healthgrades), and other public databases that list the “Religious Order of Jehovah’s Witnesses” or “Watchtower” at that address.**

- **Source:** *JW.org* — *Wallkill / Warwick construction project pages* (locating Watchtower’s world headquarters at Warwick, NY); FCC public license database; multiple public registries
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/activities/construction/wallkill-warwick-projects/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Watchtower’s own publications regarding the Warwick headquarters location, paired with corroborating public-database listings.

## **SECTION 10: Counter-Experience — The 2015–2017 Bethelite Layoffs**

**Claim: In May 2015, Governing Body member Stephen Lett appeared on JW Broadcasting and asked the global membership to increase donations because more money was going out than was coming in. The appeal raised an estimated thirty million dollars, per subsequent inside-source reporting documented by AvoidJW.**

- **Source:** *AvoidJW* — “*Problems Facing JW.org*”
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/problems-facing-jw-org/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — AvoidJW reproduces inside-source reporting that branch officials announced the \$30 million figure approximately six months after the Lett appeal during a private seminar.

**Claim: In September 2015, sources inside multiple Bethel facilities reported that letters were being read at morning worship warning of substantial changes to Bethel operations. Layoffs commenced in the winter of 2016, reducing the worldwide Bethel family by approximately 25%.**

- **Source:** *JW Survey* — “*Watchtower in Crisis: Frustration Grows at Bethel as Governing Body Focuses Everything on Warwick*” (September 28–29, 2015)
- **URL:** <https://jwsurvey.org/cedars-blog/watchtower-in-crisis-frustration-grows-at-bethel-as-governing-body-focuses-everything-on-warwick>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — JW Survey reported on the global Bethel downsizing wave based on inside Bethel sources at the time of the events, including a leaked letter read to Bethelites at morning worship in late September 2015.

**Claim: Watchtower implemented a multi-year cost-reduction program asking branches to cut costs by 10–25% and to liquidate equipment, reportedly raising approximately \$30 million from Stephen Lett’s May 2015 donation appeal.**

- **Source:** *AvoidJW* — “*Problems Facing JW.org*”
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/problems-facing-jw-org/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — AvoidJW compiled this overview from inside-source reporting.

**Claim: Paul Grundy, a former Bethelite who served at the Australian branch in the 1990s, has documented the financial conditions of Bethel service: a stipend of approximately \$95 per month with an \$80 monthly travel allowance and a \$400 annual bonus, while obligated to work a minimum of 44 hours over a five-and-a-half-day week.**

- **Source:** *JW Facts* — *Paul Grundy’s Bethel Experience*
- **URL:** <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/experiences/paul-grundy-bethel-experience.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — Firsthand account of Bethel compensation by a named former Bethelite, published on the JW Facts research site.

## SECTION 11: Counter-Experience — Government Regulatory Outcomes

**Claim: In Namibia, the government denied Watchtower’s request to be removed from employer status with respect to its Bethelites. Watchtower was forced to pay social security benefits to its Namibia Bethel staff.**

- **Source:** *AvoidJW* — “*Problems Facing JW.org*”
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/problems-facing-jw-org/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — AvoidJW research documenting the Namibia regulatory outcome.

**Claim: In Sweden, Watchtower’s own 2016 Yearbook Legal Report acknowledges that Swedish authorities characterized Bethel as “a commercial business” employing Bethelites, assessed tens of thousands of euros in employer-and-employee taxes against Bethel and individual Bethelites, and prompted Watchtower to file six separate applications with the European Court of Human Rights to reverse the assessment.**

- **Source:** *2016 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses, Legal Report* (yb16 pp. 31–38)
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/302016053>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower’s own published account of its Swedish tax dispute.
- **Key quote:** “*In Sweden, the authorities assert that Bethel is a commercial business ‘employing’ Bethelites and not a religious community of special full-time ministers. The state has assessed tens of thousands of euros in employer/employee taxes against Bethel and individual Bethelites. To address this issue, Witnesses in Sweden have filed claims in domestic courts and have submitted six separate applications to the ECHR.*”

## SECTION 12: The FICA / Social Security Mechanism

**Claim: Under U.S. tax law, a member of a religious order who has taken a vow of poverty is exempt from self-employment tax. The earnings are tax-free to the individual and are considered income of the religious order. The result: the member accrues no FICA credits for Social Security and receives no Social Security retirement benefits from years of religious-order service.**

- **Source:** *Internal Revenue Service* — *Publication 517: Social Security and Other Information for Members of the Clergy and Religious Workers*
- **URL:** <https://www.irs.gov/publications/p517>

- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official IRS publication explaining the religious-order vow-of-poverty exemption from self-employment tax.

## SECTION 13: Additional Supporting Sources

The following sources provide useful context for the topics covered but are not tied to a specific factual claim in the video.

### 1995 Kingdom Ministry on Bethel volunteers

- **Source:** *Our Kingdom Ministry*, March 1995, pp. 3–6, “Bethel Service — More Volunteers Needed”
- **URL:** Watchtower Online Library — *Our Kingdom Ministry* archive, March 1995
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Reproduces and reinforces the page-295 *Proclaimers* description of Bethel as voluntary service with “food, lodging, and a modest reimbursement for personal expenses,” and confirms the standing recruitment focus on single young men aged 19–35.

### Beroean Pickets — Bethel Layoffs analysis

- **Source:** *Beroean Pickets* — “*Bethel Layoffs Damage Control*” (January 29, 2016) by Eric Wilson (publishing as Meleti Vivlon)
- **URL:** <https://beroeans.net/2016/01/29/bethel-layoffs-damage-control>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Beroean Pickets is an established research and analysis site run by former JW elder Eric Wilson, continuously published since 2013 and routinely cited by other former-Witness research outlets. Documents the February 1, 2016 deadline for the worldwide Bethel downsizing, the 25% reduction figure, and firsthand reader testimony of couples who sold homes, donated proceeds to the Watch Tower Society in connection with construction service at Bethel, and were laid off years later.

### Touchstone International Properties / Tierra Bella Realty community discussion

- **Source:** *Reddit r/exjw discussion of the Touchstone DBA filing*
- **URL:** [https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/1fxqwr1/jody\\_jedele\\_touchstone\\_international\\_properties/](https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/1fxqwr1/jody_jedele_touchstone_international_properties/)
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Community discussion that surfaced and contextualized the Touchstone DBA filing in the broader pattern. The underlying primary source is the Mecklenburg County DBA filing itself (Doc #2011110080, cited above).

### Beroean Pickets — analysis of the April 2017 “What You Vow, Pay” *Watchtower*

- **Source:** *Beroean Pickets* — “*What You Vow, Pay*” (May 28, 2017)
- **URL:** <https://beroeans.net/2017/05/28/what-you-vow-pay>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Independent analysis of the canonical Watchtower article on the Vow of Obedience and Poverty.

### AJWRB — Advocates for Jehovah’s Witness Reform on Blood

- **Source:** *Advocates for Jehovah’s Witness Reform on Blood (AJWRB)*
- **URL:** <https://www.ajwr.org/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Medical-ethics research and reform organization focused on Jehovah’s Witness blood policy. Provides context on the broader pattern of Watchtower doctrinal claims and their human costs.

*This reference document accompanies the EXJW Analyzer video on the Vow of Obedience and Poverty. Every claim above is independently verifiable through the URLs and instrument numbers cited. Where county deed records are referenced, anyone can search them by instrument number at the corresponding county Probate Court or Register of Deeds online portal.*