

A FAITHFUL WORD

S E R I E S S I X

“By the Mouth of Two or Three Witnesses”

**CONCERNING
SECTARIANISM
AND ABUSE OF
AUTHORITY
IN TORONTO**

**Book
2**

DEFENSE & CONFIRMATION PROJECT

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DCP is a project to defend and confirm the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee and the practice of the local churches.

Phil. 1:7 – Even as it is right for me to think this concerning you all because you have me in your heart, since both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all fellow partakers with me of grace.

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PREFACE

Deut. 19:15 – One witness only shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin which he has committed; at the word of two witnesses or at the word of three witnesses shall a matter be established.

Matt. 18:16b – ...that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

1 Tim. 5:19 – Against an elder do not receive an accusation, except based upon two or three witnesses.

The warning letter quarantining Titus Chu and certain of his co-workers (see “*Mark Those Who Cause Division*”, book 1 of series 1 of *A Faithful Word*) was issued only after the co-workers had received numerous reports from many parts of the earth about the problems that have been and still are being caused by the work of Titus Chu and those working closely with him. This series of books includes reports from various places regarding the divisive activities and speaking of Titus Chu and his close co-workers.

This volume includes various documents related to recent events in the church in Toronto. The main body of this book includes three documents that were issued on April 1, 2007:

- A Declaration and Clarification by faithful saints standing for the preservation of the church in Toronto on the genuine ground of oneness explaining their reasons for separation from the sectarian leaders.
- A letter from Toronto’s elders Ron MacVicar and David Wang to the brothers with whom they had served in the lead appealing to them to return to the truth, reminding them of the historic roots of the church in Toronto, and pointing out the wrongful system of church government that those leading ones had implemented.
- An invitation to all the churches in the Lord’s recovery to join the saints in their stand for the practice of the church life on the genuine ground of oneness in fellowship with all of the other local churches.

These documents were the culmination of a process that included many appeals. The appendix to this book documents some of those appeals in letters and documents presented to the leadership and the saints in the church in Toronto.

Note: Some elements of style in the letters and documents are not the same as the articles produced by DCP. In order to present these documents in as close to their original form as possible, we have not altered them to conform to our style standards.

DECLARATION AND CLARIFICATION

Why We Must Separate and Disassociate Ourselves from the Division formed by Sectarian Leaders in the Church in Toronto

April 1, 2007

The Lord's recovery advanced significantly in the twentieth century with the revelation that the universal church, the Body of Christ, is expressed on the earth as local churches standing on the ground of oneness. We were captured by this vision and have given our lives for it with the firm conviction that our return to the proper ground, receiving all the believers and having fellowship with all the genuine local churches, was a major step in the fulfillment of the Lord's prayer that all His believers "may be one" (John 17:21). This move to accomplish the Lord's desire and God's eternal economy has not gone unchallenged by His enemy, and the Lord's recovery has suffered periodically from internal turmoil and dissent. At times the leaders of such turmoil have forsaken the ground of oneness to form a local sect with those who would follow them. Sadly, this is exactly what some from among the leadership of the church in Toronto have done.

It grieves us very much to come to this conclusion, but in obedience to the truth in the Word of God we cannot accept or be part of the sectarian group formed by those who have transmuted the proper government of the church into an unbiblical hierarchy that is foreign to the nature of the Body of Christ. In faithfulness to the Lord, His Word, and the vision that He has shown us of His recovery, we must disassociate and separate ourselves from those who have formed a divisive party in the church locally and have severed themselves from the general fellowship of all the local churches (Heb. 13:13; 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Tim. 2:20-21).

This stand does not mean that we separate or disassociate ourselves from our fellow believers, other than those such as Nigel Tomes who have rightfully been quarantined by the Body for divisive activities. In fact, this stand is required in order to

maintain our fellowship and oneness with all the members of the Body locally and with all the local churches universally. Nor does this stand mean that we are forsaking our standing as the church in Toronto or as members of the corporation, “The Church of the Torontonians.” We do, however, reject as illegitimate the manner in which the March 4, 2007, business meeting was conducted, including its determination of membership and adoption of new by-laws.

Those who have formed a divisive sect and replaced the biblical form of church government with a controlling hierarchy have disqualified themselves as elders in the church in Toronto. The extent of their deviation is attested to by the truth, by history, and by imposing a system of wrongful control over the church in Toronto’s corporation, “The Church of the Torontonians,” using human manipulation.

The Truth

The sect’s leaders have deviated from the truth concerning the proper standing of a local church by teaching and practicing a system of error (Eph. 4:14) which divides them from the Body of Christ:

1. They have cut themselves and those who follow them off from the common fellowship of all the local churches on the earth (Rom. 16; 1 Cor. 1:9; Rev. 1—3).
2. They have asserted an unscriptural autonomy in rejecting and opposing the general ministry, fellowship, and leadership in the Lord’s recovery, as well as the common feeling of the Body in the quarantine of Titus Chu (Rom. 16:17; 2 Tim. 1:15; Titus 1:9).
3. They have made clear their intention to establish a special relationship with Titus Chu through man-made by-laws that allow them to select their own apostle(s) to the exclusion of others, contrary to the clear word of the Bible (1 Cor. 12:28; 1:12-13; 3:4, 22). They have also threatened the saints with discipline if they attend meetings where the co-workers who serve all the churches minister (3 John 9-11). When churches align themselves with particular workers, they become sects.

4. They have exercised unscriptural control over members' participation in the fellowship of the Body of Christ by labelling saints from other local churches as "outsiders" and prohibiting them from contacting local saints (1 Cor. 10:16; Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3; 3 John 5-10).
5. They have formed a fleshly and sectarian party (Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 11:18-19; Titus 3:10) by demanding that the saints accept their divisive stand and by publicly disparaging scores of local believers as contentious or "LSM-aligned" because they cannot accept the self-willed "determinations" of certain ones. They have proclaimed that only those who will "go along with" their sectarian "view" are welcome in the church. They have excluded properly appointed elders and genuine shepherds of the flock from their so-called "functional eldership," yet they have claimed to speak for the eldership as a whole. They have threatened discipline or expulsion to any who would point out their errors or receive ministry from the co-workers in the Lord's recovery.
6. They have provided a platform to Nigel Tomes, a brother quarantined for divisive activities (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10), in meetings and on their website, thus participating in the worldwide spread of a contagion of opposing slanders, lies, half-truths, and evil speakings that undermine and attack the ministry in the Lord's recovery and the one accord in the Body of Christ (2 Tim. 2:16-18a; Titus 1:10-13).
7. They have used the meeting for the Lord's supper to enforce their domination over the church. They first denied the bread and the cup to many faithful saints; then they removed the Lord's table meeting from these saints' regular meeting place. In doing this they have made the bread of their table a symbol of their divisive party and not of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29). Thus, the bread and the cup they partake of are not "the fellowship of the body of Christ" and "the fellowship of the blood of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16).

The sectarian ones have left the genuine ground of oneness, which is the oneness of the universal Body of Christ manifested in a locality, and have formed a divisive sect. Because they have abandoned the common fellowship of the saints and the churches, i.e., the unique fellowship of the Body expressed locally

and universally, we are compelled to separate and disassociate ourselves from them.

Our History

The sectarian leaders have sought to sever the church in Toronto from its historic roots—the teaching of the apostles conveyed through the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. The church in Toronto was founded directly through the ministry of Brother Lee, who first visited Toronto to raise up the church in 1968 and who traveled to Toronto for conferences and fellowship numerous times in the early 1970s. Witness Lee initiated the original eldership in the church. His ministry not only established but also sustained the church here. The church in Toronto regularly enjoyed the semi-annual trainings, the ministry station meetings, and the publications put out by Living Stream Ministry. Other brothers who were speaking the same thing and co-working with Brother Lee supplied the church through many conferences in and near Toronto.

In recent months the sectarian ones have joined in a relentless attack on Living Stream Ministry and many of the co-workers who are speaking the same thing as Brother Nee and Brother Lee for the continuation of the Lord's ministry in His recovery. These same sectarian "elders" have also resisted the efforts of many brothers to shepherd the saints in Toronto, including the efforts of two of the early elders Brother Lee appointed to lead the church here. This sectarian group has also purged two of the properly appointed current elders, Ron MacVicar and David Wang, from meaningful participation in the eldership of the church in Toronto, while at the same time failing to deal with Nigel Tomes and instead giving him prominence in the church. The sect's leaders have made it clear that they will receive in fellowship only those saints and churches who reject the ministry of the co-workers labouring in coordination and who accept the ministry of Titus Chu, a brother who has been quarantined by the co-workers and churches over the whole earth for his divisive activities. All of these actions are sectarian.

Secular Control

The new by-laws put forth by the sect's leaders seek to implement a blatantly unscriptural system of church administration. These new by-laws transmute the nature of our corporation from serving the church to controlling the church. They impose a hierarchy of control that is without foundation in the Bible and without precedent in the history of the Lord's recovery. These by-laws replace the scriptural pattern of church administration under the headship of Christ and the shepherding care of the elders with a human and secular organization. The new by-laws vest ultimate authority over the spiritual affairs of the church in Toronto in a secular Board of Directors. This Board of Directors sits above the elders in all aspects of the government of the church. It is empowered to indefinitely suspend elders without notice or recourse and to withhold ratification of the elders' decisions. All of this is organizational, unscriptural, hierarchical, and Nicolaitan in principle (cf. Rev. 2:6, 15).

The new by-laws supplant the legitimate government of the church with an unscriptural, secular system. We are well aware of the solemnity of touching the Lord's delegated authorities, and we respect the authority of the Lord in the church. Our disassociation from these sectarian leaders stands against division, since they themselves have instituted and institutionalized an illegitimate government. *"A man can revolt only against a legitimate government; he cannot revolt against a government which is itself not legitimate. It is rebellion to separate oneself from a legitimate government, but it is not rebellion to separate oneself from a government that is not legitimate"* (The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 50, p. 824).

The new by-laws replace the genuine ground of oneness with obedience to the controlling Directors as the basis of the oneness of the church. In order to remain in a proper standing before the Lord, we must disassociate ourselves from the division produced by this departure from the genuine ground of oneness. To separate ourselves from a division in the Body is not divisive. Rather, it is our responsibility before the Lord. *"If anyone thinks that he should not be divisive, he should first bear in mind what it means to*

be divisive. Being divisive means being divided from the Body. The division in 1 Corinthians 12 refers to a division from the Body (v. 25), not a separation from a group which is not according to the Body” (The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 50, p. 820).

Our Stand

Because of the deviation of the sect’s leaders from the truth and from the historic roots and standing of the church in Toronto and because of their implementation of an unscriptural system of control, we have no choice according to the Word of God and our conscience but to separate and disassociate ourselves from these leaders and their party. We realize before the Lord that it is a serious matter to take this step, but to be subject to this aggressively sectarian leadership would indeed compromise and violate the very oneness of the Triune God expressed in the Body of Christ. Our action is to turn from division and to affirm the Scriptural practicality of the genuine ground of oneness. We are not rejecting our fellow believers but are renouncing a system of error (Eph. 4:14).

Our motives and our standing have been maligned and distorted, but we are not discouraged. We only desire to pursue the Lord in the church life in the Lord’s recovery as we have for decades. We realize that our actions will continue to be misconstrued and misrepresented, but the constraints of conscience and the Word of God dictate that we must follow Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13). When leaders in a church deviate and attempt to change the church’s nature to such an extent that they no longer stand on the ground of oneness in fellowship with all the local churches on the earth, they are no longer building up a genuine church but are building up a sect. In response to the present situation, we are bound by devotion to the heart’s desire of our Father God, by the vision of the practical oneness of the Body of Christ, and by the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace to separate and disassociate ourselves from the division formed by the sectarian leaders in Toronto.

We will continue to meet as the church in Toronto to fellowship, pray, break bread, serve, and worship the Lord as believers

standing on the genuine ground of oneness in fellowship with all the local churches in the one Body of Christ. We welcome your fellowship and participation in 1) remaining on the proper and genuine ground of the church, the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ; 2) remaining in the common fellowship with all the local churches in the Lord's recovery on the earth; 3) maintaining the proper testimony of the bread and the cup of the Lord's supper, and 4) receiving the shepherding ministry of many co-working brothers who are faithful to the Lord's unique ministry in His recovery and to the vision of this age.

We invite all our dear brothers and sisters to join with us as we endeavour to practice the church life according to the teaching and fellowship of the apostles.

[Signed by over 200 saints]

ELDERS' LETTER TO SECTARIAN LEADERSHIP IN TORONTO

April 1, 2007

Dear Brothers,

We are writing to you out of our deep concern for you brothers because of the great responsibility you bear before the Lord. We have great affection for you in the Lord born out of our service with you over the past thirty years. Because of this extensive record, we are all the more heartbroken by your recent actions that threaten to alter the church in Toronto's standing. Your by-laws violate the proper standing of a genuine local church. If we follow them we will lose our standing as a proper local expression of the one Body of Christ in Toronto. Your attempts to impose a human organization on the saints are sectarian and as such compel us to separate and disassociate ourselves from you. Please read this letter in conjunction with the enclosed "Declaration and Clarification."

Brothers, we are not cutting off fellowship with any of the believers in Toronto, other than those such as Nigel Tomes who have been properly quarantined for divisive activities. We are not abandoning the proper ground of the church, nor are we resigning from the eldership or from membership in the church's corporation. Rather, we are compelled as a matter of conscience in the light of the Word of God to disassociate ourselves from you and your party in order to preserve and maintain the church in Toronto in a proper standing in the oneness of the Body of Christ. Your deviations from the truth of the Scriptures, your departure from the historic roots of the church in Toronto, and the unprecedented steps you have taken to change the church's administration and standing are all sectarian.

A genuine local church, although administrated locally in local affairs, must maintain a good fellowship with all the local churches. Ephesians 2:21 shows the universal side of the church as the Body of Christ; the following verse shows the local side. These two must be joined together. The local side cannot be

separated or isolated from the universal side. The church in Toronto enjoyed the sweet fellowship of the churches for decades, but in recent years you have increasingly separated and isolated the church here from the common fellowship among the churches. Apart from the general fellowship of all the churches there is no way for a local church to be in the reality of the Body of Christ. By rejecting this fellowship you have greatly damaged the church in Toronto and, if unchecked, your efforts will destroy the church in this city. This we cannot allow.

“The local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. Any local church that does not keep this universal fellowship of the Body of Christ is divisive and becomes a local sect. Some so-called local churches are not genuine and have become divisions; we do not need to fellowship with such ‘churches’” (A Brief Presentation of the Lord’s Recovery, Witness Lee, p. 44).

An unscriptural claim of autonomy has been used to reject the ministry and leadership in the Lord’s recovery. You have asserted your own authority to name apostles for the church. This is against both the Bible (1 Cor. 1:12-13; 3:4, 22; Eph. 4:11-12) and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Brothers, you have clearly insisted that the church here is independent and autonomous; you have also openly portrayed the fellowship of the other local churches and the co-workers as outside interference. In so doing, you yourselves have abandoned the proper stand of a local church and lost any ground to exercise leadership in a local church.

“Some may have the attitude that their local church is independent and autonomous and should not be interfered with. This is localism. An independent local church is actually a local sect” (The Constitution and Building Up of the Body of Christ, Witness Lee, p. 96).

In addition, you brothers formed a party in the eldership by excluding us from the practical fellowship of the elders. The term “functional eldership” has been used to indicate to others that we are indeed excluded from the eldership. You have created parties in the church by publicly labelling members of the church as

contentious and “LSM-aligned” because they have voiced concerns over decisions you have made which take the church in a sectarian direction.

Your public rejection of the warning letter and quarantine dishonours the word of the many genuine local churches around the globe that testified to the damage caused in their localities by Titus Chu, his ministry, and some of his co-workers. Your rejection impugned the integrity of numerous brothers by discounting their fellowship, the letter of warning, and the quarantine issued by the co-workers in response to the churches. You further cast doubts on their honesty and character by publicly ascribing to them base motives, such as jealousy and ambition, without justification.

You rejected the testimonies of the churches and many brothers without fellowship with the affected churches or brothers. In this, you brothers have departed from our earlier practice of the truth regarding quarantine. When a divisive worker was quarantined by the church in Toronto in the early 1990s, we fully expected that the other local churches would honour our quarantine without further local investigation. Some of you signed letters defending this truth concerning actions in the one Body, calling the response of another church “sectarian” because it did not honour our quarantine. Yet you have now wantonly rejected the quarantine of hundreds of churches and co-workers! Surely this is against the practice of the churches in one Body and is, therefore, sectarian.

The quarantine of Titus Chu was not issued hastily or for the reasons some of you like to ascribe to it. For many years various co-workers, including Witness Lee, tried to help Titus Chu take the blended way, the way of the Body, and to help him overcome his work of isolation. Sadly, these efforts failed. We remained open to Titus for many years despite misgivings, but when we became aware of the damage his ministry had caused to so many other churches around the globe, we realized that we must stand with the quarantine. The problems caused by Titus Chu were not merely local issues but affected many churches in many places, and it was thus not appropriate for the church in Toronto to

perform its own local evaluation of the quarantine. In fact, it was beyond our ability to do so. Furthermore, the disingenuous process you pursued over our protests did not address the real issues in the co-workers' letter of warning. By your actions and your "Determination," you further isolated the church in Toronto from the fellowship of the churches and have created a great offence to the Body.

You have provided Nigel Tomes with a platform to impugn the motives of faithful saints and threaten them with discipline, as well as to attack both the co-workers and the teaching in the ministry in the Lord's recovery. Brothers, you became his accomplices in spreading disinformation and improper twisting of words throughout the whole earth. He remains here an elder and a worker in Toronto without censure for his divisive work while you, his fellow elders, also threaten church discipline and expulsion to any who disagree with you, him, or Titus Chu. You maintain this situation even though Nigel Tomes has been quarantined by the co-workers and hundreds of local churches.

Your condemnation of co-workers in the Lord's recovery and Living Stream Ministry (LSM)—blaming the co-workers and LSM for troubles caused by your own actions, demanding to censor the video trainings, preventing the videos from being viewed in the meeting halls, denigrating those who wish to attend the conferences and trainings given by the co-workers or to receive materials from LSM, and inspiring an atmosphere of distrust of the co-workers and LSM through rumours, innuendoes, and false accusations—is a rejection of the leadership of the ministry in the Lord's recovery and the faithful service that supplies the ministry to all the churches. Brothers, the church in Toronto was established through this ministry and has been nourished and cherished by it since its inception. It is shameful that you have chosen to demonize the many faithful brothers who are labouring to continue the very ministry so crucial to the founding and fostering of the church in Toronto.

The church in Toronto began to have the Lord's table meeting in the summer of 1968 following a May 1968 conference given in Toronto by Brother Witness Lee. Brother Lee continued to visit

Toronto to give conferences at least once a year for the next several years. In addition, some of his co-workers came here to fellowship and give conferences. We were here in those early years and attended many conferences with Brother Lee and his co-workers. We know, as do some of you, that the church here was founded and nourished through the ministry of Witness Lee, not that of another.

For many years the church in Toronto joyfully participated in the conferences and trainings given by Witness Lee and his co-workers. Many saints attended and many more received the ministry through the videos. We enjoyed a rich supply from the ministry station, the international conferences and trainings, and the printed material published by LSM. Now you have rejected the "seven feasts" and the video trainings, instead embracing the quarantined ministry of Titus Chu. You are leading the saints to follow a man, Titus Chu, who is doing his own independent, divisive work and who uses Nigel Tomes, one of the current elders in Toronto, as his mouthpiece. This is more than sectarian.

The leadership of the church in Toronto has historically led the church in the way of the fellowship of the churches and with the co-workers. Many of you were involved in the eldership for years and know how the brothers, especially those who took the lead in the early years, relied upon this fellowship. We should still follow this example. Yet it is this pattern of fellowship that you brothers now reject.

The local churches have always been administered in their local matters by elders. This is according to the New Testament pattern and the clear words of the Bible concerning church governance (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28). To care for the interests of the saints and the church, we formed a non profit corporation, which according to the law must have directors. However, your by-laws elevate the directors of the corporation over the eldership. Under your by-laws the directors can summarily suspend an elder indefinitely without recourse and can effectively overrule decisions made by the elders by refusing to ratify them. Under your by-laws local elders can formally designate "apostles," contrary to the truth that apostleship is an

office in the universal church. Under your by-laws the directors can exercise strong discipline over the saints. Thus, under your by-laws the temporal, secular office of director has been elevated over the eldership, and the elders have been made subject to the directors, effectively establishing a hierarchy with the directors on the top tier. Through these provisions and others your by-laws transmute the proper and spiritual administration of the church into a human and secular organization. This is not according to the Scriptures and is sectarian.

“The Bible has decreed all institutions of the church in a clear way already. We must never have any decrees, whether they are creeds, constitutions, rules, charters, or ordinances outside the Bible, no matter how scriptural they may appear. Otherwise, we will become a sect right away” (The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 7, pp. 1116-1117).

By placing the directors—elected officials established by secular authority—over the God-ordained eldership, you have given the directors extra-biblical power over the elders and the saints. We are perplexed as to how you brothers, whom we have known and laboured with for so many years, could so easily exercise such unscriptural authority and assert your rule over the saints and the church. This abuse of authority is as ugly as it is divisive and sectarian.

Many of the saints have been intimidated by the threats of church discipline you have made against those who disagree with your sectarian direction and your abusive actions in the name of your claimed authority as directors and elders. If they do not obey your edicts, they face your threats of removal. While you insist that others obey you as the local authorities, you reject the authority of the ones the Lord has raised up to take the lead in the ministry in His recovery. The quarantine of Titus Chu was not a local matter, yet you have treated it as such. You have made obedience to yourselves the ground of the church. Your actions betray your claims to authority; your exercise of control is not the biblical, shepherding eldership of a local church (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Dear brothers, you have changed the nature of the administration of the church in Toronto into a sectarian hierarchy. The by-laws

you have promoted are incompatible with the administration and the proper ground of a genuine local church. We cannot participate in such a deviation. We are not resigning from the eldership of the legitimate local church in Toronto, but we refuse to go the sectarian way you are taking.

“For ourselves, we cannot join any sect or remain in one, for our church connection can only be on local ground...”
(The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 30, p. 87).

Brothers, we beg you to reconsider your actions and their consequences. We ask you to remember the wonderful fellowship we have enjoyed personally and corporately for so many years and your own joy at discovering the glorious church life. Recall your own felicitations concerning the local churches, the ministry, and the Lord's recovery. These things should not be discarded lightly.

The sectarian way you are taking can only lead to more division and the loss of much blessing. Consider the history of those in the past who have rejected the scriptural way to practice the church life. Not one group that has separated itself from the general fellowship of the churches in the Lord's recovery has prospered. Rather, all have suffered great loss and further division. In 1 Corinthians 3:17 there is a strong warning to those who would mar or damage the church. Footnote 17² in The Recovery Version says, “*All those who have corrupted, ruined, defiled, and marred the church of God by their heretical doctrines, divisive teachings, worldly ways, and natural efforts in building will suffer God's punishment.*” We pray you would yet turn from your error and be preserved from such grave loss.

As elders we bear a great responsibility before the Lord to shepherd the flock according to God (Heb. 13:17). We have chosen our course in fear and trembling only after much prayer and seeking before the Lord. We testify to you that we are enjoying His unspeakable grace and peace in bearing His reproach as we go forth to Him outside the camp (Heb. 13:13). Our conscience is without offence before the Lord in this matter, and we see the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon those who are faithful in this matter (1 Pet. 4:14).

Brothers, the hour is late. We appeal to you to have a thorough dealing with the Lord in the light of His presence and to turn from your present course. We remain your brothers in Christ and write to you in love.

Your brothers in Christ,

Ron MacVicar

David Wang

cc. The churches and the saints in the Lord's recovery

**AN INVITATION TO THE CHURCHES IN THE
LORD'S RECOVERY FROM THE
CHURCH IN TORONTO**

April 1, 2007

To: All the local churches and the saints in the Lord's recovery

From: The church in Toronto

Dear Saints,

We are deeply appreciative for all of your prayers and your anxious concern before the Lord (2 Cor. 11:28) on behalf of the church in Toronto. As the attached Declaration and Clarification testifies, the Lord has brought us through a period of trials and we are now entering a glorious new stage in the testimony of the church in Toronto.

The church in Toronto is unwaveringly standing on the unique ground of oneness with all the local churches to testify that there is one Body in this universe. We declare that ours is a oneness locally with all the believers and universally with all the proper local churches. To affirm such a standing, we warmly invite you to join us for a weekend conference and a special Lord's Table meeting in Toronto on April 14-15, 2007.

We look forward to a rich time of blending and fellowship with you all.

For the church in Toronto,

David Wang

Ron MacVicar

APPENDIX

An Open Letter to the Dear Saints in Toronto:

25 February 2007

We brothers have laboured and served in the church in Toronto for over 30 years. We treasure our years in Toronto with you in the Lord's recovery and the fellowship among the churches worldwide as the one Body. Our desire is to continue steadfastly in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles and in the healthy teaching that continues to be ministered through faithful brothers throughout His recovery. As such, we are grieved that some have accused us of working to control the church for Living Stream Ministry (LSM), the blending brothers and the Lord's recovery.

We write to you to clarify our concerns and desires and correct any misrepresentations. We also want to bring to light some of the actions taken by some of our elders and directors in recent months—all without fellowship with us (their fellow elders and directors), without our approval and apparently without adequate concern for the negative impact of their actions. These actions have created divisions and fear in the church here. Though we have endeavoured to meet with our fellow elders and directors to reconcile, they have purposefully excluded us from their fellowship. They have removed Brother Ron MacVicar from his role as secretary. At key times, they met by themselves, excluding us except for "last-minute" token meetings after the decisions had been made.

We want therefore to share with you what our desires are, to correct any rumours or misrepresentations about our purposes or those of the out of town brothers and co-workers we have fellowshipped with and try and explain why we feel the proposed actions of the other directors and elders will harm the church in Toronto.

Accusations about a plot by us with LSM, the blending brothers and the Lord's recovery.

Plotting to take over meeting halls or ministering Christ? Some of our elders and directors posted and distributed an article "Why an Early Business Meeting." The article points to many brothers coming to visit from out of town as some sort of sinister plot. We grieve that they cannot celebrate the brothers' visits with us instead of seeing some ulterior motive. We have spoken with some of these brothers (for which we are criticized) and can share with you their testimony and stories. Some brothers came to Toronto at the invitation of brothers in nearby churches (Brampton and Richmond Hill). During their visits, they ministered to the saints concerning the vital groups and how to become vital through prayer and shepherding the saints. There has been no fellowship about "taking over meeting halls" or "taking over the church." The article also incorrectly alleges that the "blending brothers" did not come here prior to their recent visits. A number of coworkers did come to Toronto and the Great Lakes area over the years when *they were invited* including Ed Marks, Dan Towle, James Lee, Minoru Chen, Benjamin Chen, Ron Kangas, and others. None came with presumption or overstepping their measure in the Body. The only reason they did not come more often was that they were not invited. Recently, their proper ministry has been attested to by the response of the 600-plus saints who joined the training in Brampton and Richmond Hill. For your enjoyment, and to listen for yourself to what was truly ministered rather than take someone else's word for it, those messages are available on the web at such sites as: www.lastadam.com.

Who wishes to remove saints from the Church? In that same article they accuse the Living Stream Ministry and "Blended Co-Workers" of wanting to install their "loyalists" in the Church here in Toronto and "throw out the full-timers (Nigel Tomes, Del Martin, Ian Brinksman, Richard Yeh etc.) and their families." This accusation can only be directed at us, the two elders in this local church who have not agreed with their actions. They suggest we would then seek "to lock these brothers out of the meeting halls

and prevent them from serving among the saints.” They have said that by electing directors who are “one with the blended co-workers” (presumably us) this will “mean the Church in Toronto will close its doors to Titus and his co-workers” and that “the present co-workers—Nigel Tomes, Del Martin, Ian Brinksman, Richard Yeh etc.—and their families will be kicked out.”

Let us tell you clearly that this is not what we intend or want. We simply wish the fighting, the fearmongering, the scheming, the intimidation and the threats to end. The claim that LSM is attempting to exercise “remote control” over the church here and is attempting to control the affairs and activities of the church through us is utterly false and against our practices. If this were taking place, we, as your serving brothers, would reject such control. There has been no attempt by LSM to control the church in Toronto or us. Nor have visiting brothers attempted to control our actions, the church here or take charge of church affairs.

Let us also make it clear to the saints in the Church that it is not our desire or intention to “kick out” any of the current co-workers (Nigel Tomes, Del Martin, Ian Brinksman, Richard Yeh, etc.) or their families. Indeed, we believe that under the current by-laws of the church, the directors could not do that. Nor do we believe that is a role that the directors of the Church should have. It is only if their proposed by-law is adopted by the membership on March 4 that the directors will be given the right, for the very first time, to remove someone from membership.

Our desire is to ensure that we can meet peaceably. We have found ourselves pained and grieved because it is the actions of these elders and directors which seem to indicate a desire to control the flock. In their misguided attempts to protect these brothers (which they need not do, since we neither wish to nor have the power under our current by-laws to remove them), they have fallen prey to the temptation of excessively exercising the “control” they believe they have. We ask the readers to review the actions listed below and determine for themselves where the real danger of “controlling” is really coming from in the church in Toronto.

Controlling Actions Taken in the Church in Toronto

Use of Surveillance Cameras. As many of you know, a surveillance camera has recently been set up in the District 1 meeting hall 1 to record the meetings there. No meetings in other districts or in any of the other three halls in Toronto are recorded in such a way. This camera was set up without fellowship with us and has been in place for months. It is no accident that this camera was set up in a district where most of the saints still enjoy the riches of the ministry of the age. This drastic measure is unheard of in our history. Several times some of the elders have accused specific saints who meet in District 1 of various things while those cameras were running. The videotaping and those accusations may be used against those saints. The elders who have implemented this could one day turn this camera on any saint who runs afoul of their teachings and practice. Is this the kind of church we desire to have? Is this the household of God (Eph. 2:19)? We can only conclude that the purpose for that camera in this one district is to intimidate the attendees in that meeting—a true shame to the church leadership and an indication that some leading brothers do not trust in the operation of the Spirit. Rather, they rely on such devices to bring the saints into subjection to them. Is this not Nicolaitanism?

Control of Visiting Saints. Saints visiting meetings in Toronto have been confronted by some of the elders in a hostile fashion. The visitors have been interrogated regarding their motives for being in Toronto. Some have even gone so far as to *forbid* certain saints from fellowshipping with the saints in Toronto *unless they have the permission of the elders—even if those saints are related to them.* When Rick Persad was called to have lunch with a local brother, he joyfully accepted the invitation. But when he arrived he was surprised to find that elder Bob Duncan showed up to ask him whether he had “permission” to meet with this local brother for lunch—a brother Rick had known for over 20 years and who once lived with Rick! He then called Rick a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” Rick then proceeded to ask Bob if he needs the elders’ permission to meet with a saint who is his relative, and Bob said emphatically, “Yes!” Then when Rick stated that he had

permission from Ron MacVicar and David Wang, Bob Duncan replied that these brothers were not part of the “functional eldership.” Do such actions testify of the “love for the brothers” that is the evidence that we have “passed out of death into life” (1 John 3:14)?

Claiming Themselves to be the More Powerful Elders. This novel term, stated by Bob Duncan of a “functional eldership,” appears to have been invented to justify actions taken without fellowship with all of the legitimate elders. They argue for two categories of elders: those who are a part of the “functional eldership” and those they wish to exclude. Why have some of the elders chosen to classify us as not being part of the “functional eldership”? Even more troubling to us is the notion that any elders, “functional” or not, have the authority to tell saints who they can *eat* with and who they can and cannot visit. This is contrary to the Biblical instructions on how to receive one another in the Lord (Rom. 14:1-12). We urge you to reject this type of illegitimate authority on the part of any elders or directors, including ourselves.

E-mails and Letters Threatening Discipline. E-mails and letters have been brought to our attention in which elders have threatened saints with “discipline” for attending meetings in Brampton or certain home meetings that are deemed “not in fellowship with the elders.” Discipline has also been threatened for distributing materials from Living Stream Ministry and for other reasons not supported by Scripture. For example, Steve Pritchard has threatened Ria Spee by e-mail that if she distributes to the saints certain materials that are not “approved by the elders,” she would be subject to “discipline.” Now, it seems, some elders and directors in their misguided efforts to bring the church under their command, are ready to “lower the boom” on anyone who they perceive to be in disagreement with their narrow view of how things should be conducted. This is further evidenced by their proposed by-laws that would bring in a fierce system of discretionary discipline under which anyone deemed to have “formed a party,” would be warned and then ex-communicated. Under such a system, anyone who is not favoured

by two of the three directors could become the target of such authoritarian control.

Manipulating Young Saints against Attending the FTTA. Many of our young people greatly benefited by attending the Full-Time Training in Anaheim (FTTA), where they have been nourished with the truth, helped to experience life, to serve in the Body, to preach the gospel, and to shepherd new ones. Many of us can testify how much benefit we have personally received from such training. Recently, two elders of the church in Toronto—Steve Pritchard and Jonathan P’ng—spent over three hours attempting to manipulate the mind of a young sister who desired to attend the full-time training. They said that the training was “unhealthy” and could “damage” her. Fortunately, this young one is now in Anaheim attending the training along with over 300 other young persons from North America. Why would the elders make such a dramatic change in their stance without any fellowship or apparently any regard for our previous practice? Why would they hide their actions rather than openly fellowshipping among all the elders?

Rejection of the Video Trainings. For over 20 years, the church here has been under the healthy speaking of the leading brothers in His recovery. Now, without any fellowship with us, some of the elders terminated this practice. They will not allow the customary trainings to be viewed in the meeting halls unless they can “censor” the messages prior to viewing. If, as they state, all ministries are “ours” (1 Cor. 3:20-23), why do they prevent the saints from attending the training meetings? The “food” dispensed at the last training was a very rich speaking from the book of Mark. Here is a little tidbit from the first banner: “When we live in the mingled spirit, we are learning Christ according to the reality in Jesus by the Spirit of reality so that His biography becomes our history to be the reality of the Body of Christ.” Surely there is nothing here that requires censorship, and such teaching undoubtedly benefits the church. Yet these same elders—Steve Pritchard, Jonathan P’ng and Robin Lao, among others—rejected this healthy teaching by requiring the training tapes to be subject to their preview—a move never before seen in

the church here or elsewhere that we know of. This surely fulfills Paul's warning to Timothy concerning ones who "will not tolerate the healthy teaching" and who "turn away their ear from the truth" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Home Meeting Invasion. A while ago, elder Robin Lao opened the door of a home unannounced where some saints were gathered so that he could look inside to see who was attending. He did not stay for the meeting, thus indicating to those assembled that he was checking on the attendees. This gave a strong sense to many that he was looking to control all who meet within the boundaries of Toronto.

Meeting at Hall 1. Robin Lao came regularly to intimidate saints attending a Saturday afternoon study session at the hall. He interefered with some of the small groups labouring on portions of the training messages by asking them who they were and where they attended on the Lord's Day. Week after week he carried this out with the result that most of the Chinese-speaking saints ceased coming to the hall due to the intimidation, and our initial number of 40 to 45 shrank to 10 to 15. It was claimed that these saints were part of a divisive group, but this claim was never backed up. Rather, the control pressed several saints into discouragement that caused them to withdraw from the church life until the Brampton trainings were started.

Adding Many Members to Stack the Vote. We believe that the purpose of the early members' meeting on March 4 is designed to give the elders all of the power they need to rule over the flock of God in an unscriptural way. Two directors—Steve Pritchard and Jonathan P'ng—not only have suggested this new by-law without fellowshiping with us and instead hired attorneys to draft these bylaws for them, but they have introduced a new membership process that deviates from our by-laws' requirements in three ways. Firstly, they deny the ability of the membership affairs committee to review and approve prospective members. Instead of the broadly based oversight of 18 saints, they say that 2 of the 3 current directors can determine who to reject or admit. Secondly, they have introduced new criteria that we have never used and are not sanctioned by our by-laws. Thirdly, they propose

to add many members instead of limiting the number of new members to 10% of the current members as has been our practice. That last practice helped provide continuity in our church. These changes are their schemes designed to prevent a fair vote by only admitting people (and many more people at that) who will help them win the vote to change the by-laws and give themselves power. We do not believe this is right and legal and are prepared to challenge this to ensure that these directors comply with the law and our own church regulations. Nonetheless, it shows how far they are prepared to go, regardless of whether it is fair and right to do so.

Removal of Those Who Disagree. Recently, after many years of service, Ron MacVicar was removed as the secretary of the corporation. To date, Ron has not received any explanation for his removal. Now some directors and elders have proposed a slate of directors which excludes David Wang. Just yesterday David Wang was removed as president from the board of directors after 14 years for no specific reason. Is this not a takeover of the church by certain individuals for their own purposes? In a recent letter, they claim that we have “no right” to any position and that it is normal for the directors and officers to change over time. Of course, this is true and we are not here to fight for any position. But this misleading statement is two-faced—the only ones they are “changing” is us—ones whom they have practically chosen to exclude from the “functional eldership” without any fellowship. Meanwhile, rather than offering to step aside themselves, they are amending the bylaws so that *they remain in office for another THREE years* during which there will be no general elections! Is this not the uttermost in hypocrisy? While it was stated that David recently moved out of Toronto, that was *almost 15 years ago* and was not of any concern to anyone until recently. They said the alleged “requirement” to be a resident of Toronto was inadvertently left off the 1994 by-laws, yet in the Letters patent documents both Allen Jones and David Wang lived outside the boundaries of Metro Toronto when the church was first incorporated. It shows the date of David’s election as president as well. To us, serving the Body as a director or secretary has no value aside from how God works through us, but we are

concerned that it is unhealthy if our leadership is composed only of those who believe they should not be accountable to the saints. Their proposed by-law certainly indicates that they believe they should have all of the power to do what they believe is best.

We, as the Lord's servants, have endeavoured to faithfully minister to your needs for many years. Now forces beyond our control are rising up to lead the church in a direction that deviates from the vision and practice we have mutually acknowledged. The disturbing actions listed above are foreign to the Body of Christ and have never been practiced in the church here. The actions of these elders are in stark contrast with Peter's admonition in 1 Pet. 5:1: "Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ....Shepherd the flock of God among you, *overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God....Nor as lording it over your allotments* but by becoming patterns of the flock." These actions also contradict the biblical admonition to serve "...as a slave" (cf. Acts. 20:19).

Based on such actions, we felt we had to write to you as brothers in Christ who have served the church here for over 30 years. Until now, we have withheld public comment in hope that the situation could be restored and we have attempted to reconcile ourselves and urged the directors to cease this controlling behaviour, but the extreme gravity of the actions listed above has caused us to speak out—the stones must cry out (cf. Luke 19:40)! We cannot agree with the above actions and believe that many of you share our conviction concerning the current leadership in the church and the draconian actions some have taken to seize control of the flock of God.

At the next general meeting we urge you to do two things.

1. Nominate and vote for brothers who desire to serve the flock as slaves rather than those who wish to control the flock.
2. Vote against the new by-law and do not permit our directors to seize power for themselves.

Your brothers in Christ,

David Wang

Ron MacVicar

Open Letter from Soan-Lin Liu

February 19, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have been in the church life in Toronto since 1973, and I have treasured my years in the Lord's recovery. However, I am grieved that over the past year and a half (long before the quarantine of Titus Chu and long before the brothers came to minister to us the prayer and shepherding burden) some of our leaders began to exhibit a different attitude toward our own saints in Toronto, the rest of the churches and ministering brothers all over the earth.

I have never seen such bitterness and hostility in announcing a church business meeting as there was in the posting "Why have an early business meeting?" I could not believe that 77 of our own local saints were condemned by that writing simply for petitioning the elders with their concerns over the direction of the church. The extent to which some of the elders are willing to go to assert their own authority is shameful.

Some of the elders demand that "outsiders" get permission before they can even talk to their own relatives in the church here. Since when are there "outsiders" in the Body of Christ? Since when do elders have that much authority? For years our church has not invited the co-workers to come and minister and instead have clung only to Titus Chu and those in his circle. Now when the co-workers come at the invitation of dear leading ones in neighboring churches to perfect the saints in prayer and shepherding, some of the elders in Toronto respond by threatening any saints who attend their training sessions.

These elders claim a mandate is necessary to avoid "remote control" by those outside of Toronto. Who has exercised any control in Toronto except these elders? And who is seeking to control who is recognized as a member of the church? Who has demanded that their directives be followed? Who has set up a camera in Hall 1 to monitor what is said in the meetings? Who has checked license plates at home meetings and entered uninvited into home meetings?

One elder told a visitor that David Wang and Ron MacVicar are not part of the real eldership any more. Who maneuvered to remove Ron as Secretary of the Board of Directors? And who is seeking to remove David from the Board of Directors? Perhaps more to the point—where in the Bible and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee is there justification for such actions which clearly have as their goal the consolidation of the remaining elders' control over the church? In the church life, we have always been taught that authority is based upon the manifestation of resurrection life. Authority in the church is not something the elders assert; obedience is not something they demand.

The controlling ones say the by-laws need to be changed because those regulations are 14 years old. That is not true. The by-laws were revised in 2002. These brothers seem to be willing to step on any Biblical principle in pursuit of their goal. In their new requirements for membership, they determine who is a member based on their participation in church service and financial giving. What ever happened to hidden service and hidden giving? Many saints, particularly the elderly ones such as me, may be limited in terms of what service we can perform. Is not our service in prayer and shepherding of value? Those saints who desire anonymity now must have their giving monitored by the church if they want to be treated as members. Is that right?

I believe what the Toronto website says is true, “the church is under attack.” But it is not under attack from Living Stream Ministry. That ministry's work has been blessed by the Lord, even over the last 9 years with much fruitfulness.

The attack is also not from the co-workers. No. This attack is from the enemy, who wants to sow dissension amongst the saints. The co-workers are honorable brothers in Christ who are serving the Lord with their whole lives.

The controlling elders say the co-workers and others are seeking to purge those that disagree with them. They say that if the co-workers have their way many in Toronto will be “kicked out” along with their families. Who has ever proposed such a thing?

Can they name any church that has been cut of from fellowship because they receive the ministry of Titus Chu? Can they name any brother or sister who has been quarantined other than those who have been attacking the co-workers and the other churches, creating division in the Lord's recovery? Even those who are quarantined are not excommunicated.

The current by-laws do not permit our directors or elders to kick families out of the Church. It is the new proposed by-laws which would let them do this. Beware.

Sadly, it is Toronto's controlling elders who seek to purge those who do not agree with them. They make oneness with them the ground of the church. Is this according to the truth? If the new by-laws are approved anyone who has a different feeling or a desire to receive the ministry that the churches throughout the earth are enjoying will be subject to discipline. Doesn't that make us the church of a particular worker or group of workers? I have never heard of another local church that has such rules. The new by-laws would even give these elders the authority to choose their apostles. Can anyone imagine a scenario other than the controlling elders identifying Titus Chu as our apostle? What happened to "all are yours"?

The elders should serve the saints. They should not seek to entrench themselves and their own authority. They should not seek to exclude or purge their fellow elders. In the last year and a half, some of our elders have repeatedly abuse their position. They have proven themselves unfaithful stewards of the authority that has already been committed to them. If we give them the powers they seek, all accountability will be lost.

Dear saints, I love the Lord's recovery, I love His Body, and I love the church in Toronto. I do not write to you lightly. I am deeply concerned for the future of the church here if we give the controlling elders the authority they seek.

Yours in Christ, Soan-Lin Liu

A Report from Toronto by Rick Persad

Recently on the church in Toronto's Web site some of the elders have claimed the church is under "attack" from "outsiders". There have been many accusations and insinuations but no real substantiation of these claims. The following testimony is offered by one brother who is openly targeted as such an "outsider" on Toronto's Web site. It is an example of the real situation in the church in Toronto and of the undue control exercised by some of its elders.

February 24, 2007

A Testimony

My name is Rick Persad. I live in Vancouver, B.C. In 1976, I began to enjoy the church life in Toronto. I was saved in Toronto, baptized in Toronto and in fact spent many months working full time building the original hall 1 in Toronto. In 1985 I moved from Toronto to Calgary in western Canada, but I still kept in touch with a number of saints in Toronto, including a brother I had rented a room from at one point. He visited my family while we were living in Calgary. The following is an account of an incident that occurred on January 30, 2007, while I was visiting Toronto.

Knowing I was in town, this brother invited me to have lunch with him, so I agreed to meet him at a restaurant close to his work. When I arrived, I discovered Bob Duncan, one of the Toronto elders, was there with him. Bob began by saying that after lunch he had something he wanted to talk to me about. During lunch, I began to fellowship with them concerning some things I had been enjoying in John 15 and Acts 2:46-47.

At the end of our time, the brother I had come to meet with left for work and Bob Duncan and I continued our talk. He told me that I should coordinate with the elders in the church in Toronto before I contacted any saints there. I asked him if he could show

me in the Bible where that was. He responded by saying, “Come on now, brother.” I repeated, “No, really, can you show me that in the Word?” He then said that as a worker, I should coordinate with the elders before contacting any of the saints. I again asked him if he could show me where that was in the Word. He then responded in a strong tone, saying, that I was a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

Brother Bob asked me with whom I fellowshiped before contacting the saints in Toronto. I told him that I had fellowshiped with David Wang and Ron MacVicar, both of whom are elders in Toronto. I asked him if they were not elders. He responded that David Wang did not represent the eldership in Toronto but that he (the brother with whom I was speaking) represented the “functional eldership” there. I then suggested that the three of us—Bob, the brother who had left, and I—get together to enjoy the Word. He responded, “NO!”

I then asked him, “So you mean I cannot fellowship with saints I know here?” Bob replied that I could not. I then asked, “Are you saying that I cannot care for my relatives that are believers here?” To this he said, “If they are under our care (meaning under the care of the elders of the church in Toronto), no.”

I then said to Bob, “Now, you called me a wolf in sheep’s clothing. That is a strong accusation. What do you mean by that?” He responded, “It is a strong accusation”. I asked him exactly what he meant by it. He said it was because of “wolf fellowship.” I asked him, “What is wolf fellowship?” He said that it was “fellowship with a hidden intention”. So, I asked him when I was guilty of engaging in “wolf fellowship.” At that point he apologized and withdrew that accusation.

But Bob still repeated that I should not contact the saints without the permission of the elders. I said, “Well, brother, I guess we have a difference of opinion on this matter and we will both stand before the judgment seat regarding it. However, the good thing is that John saw us fully built up in the New Jerusalem.” He then said that that was for the future but we had to work things out now. At that point we prayed, and then we parted.

Rick Persad

Conclusion

Rick Persad was named in a document distributed among the saints in Toronto as someone “reported to be active in the Toronto area recently.” The document accuses Rick and others listed in it of engaging in divisive activities against the interests of the church in Toronto. In fact, Rick was simply there to contact some of the members of the church in Toronto with whom he had enjoyed a long relationship. **One is his cousin with whom he grew up and who is very close to him.** It was actually the elder’s action that was divisive. By seeking to control the saints’ fellowship, his own view is manifestly organizational and inorganic, devoid of any realization of the Body of Christ or of the universal fellowship among all the members that is vital to their health.

It appears that some of the elders in Toronto assert that their authority extends to withholding permission for acknowledged brothers in Christ to fellowship with their friends and relatives. These elders consider all of the saints in Toronto to be under their control. This sort of overreaching authority is sectarian and should not be named among us. It replaces the universal fellowship of the believers as the Body of Christ with a selective fellowship circumscribed by men. Such a practice transmutes the church from being a genuine local church as the local expression of the one Body of Christ into a local sect. It is a shame for an elder to try to exercise such control over the fellowship of the saints.

Furthermore, the term “functional eldership” as used in this conversation was clearly meant to exclude some of the properly appointed elders from meaningful participation in the leadership of the church. The term “functional eldership” is not one known in the Lord’s recovery and its use in Toronto indicates an ominous development in the church. It indicates that a hierarchy has been established among the elders; with some being only

elders in name while others represent the “functional eldership,” i.e., those in control of the affairs of the church.

That term implies, and facts confirm, that some of the elders and directors in Toronto are staging what amounts to a “coup,” putting dear brothers who have faithfully served the church for decades aside. They are acting presumptuously, outside of the common fellowship of the eldership, to consolidate control in their own hands. Tellingly, these elders’ response to a recent open letter by Soan-Lin Liu did not contradict his statement that “one elder told a visitor that David Wang and Ron MacVicar are not part of the real eldership any more.” Both the control exercised in the name of the “functional eldership” and the hierarchy it establishes should be rejected out of hand.

A Clarifying Word concerning “the church in Toronto”

According to the New Testament, a local church has an “organizational” side, with elders, deacons and the practical assembling of the saints, and an essential and organic side, with Christ as its content and reality to be the local expression of the universal Body of Christ (see Witness Lee, *Elders’ Management of the Church*, p. 223).

Apart from these two biblical aspects of a local church and to meet Canadian financial regulations (Rom. 13:1) the members of a local church may form a corporation and elect Directors who serve as *trustees* to hold the church’s assets *in trust*. It is elementary to understand that such a corporation is not “the church.” It is critical that the Directors of the corporation, even if they also serve as elders in the church, do not use their position *as Directors* to seek influence in the local church.

Thus, “The Church of the Torontonians” and its Directors exist to serve the interests of “the church in Toronto” and to satisfy the requirements of the laws of Canada on the church’s behalf. The Directors of The Church of the Torontonians must not attempt to govern “the church in Toronto” in any way, organizationally or essentially, since to do so would violate the heavenly nature and the divine government of the church in Toronto revealed in the New Testament.

Today the heavenly nature, divine government and biblical standing of the local church in Toronto is suffering great violence by the actions and proposals of Directors of “The Church of the Torontonians” corporation, Jonathan P’ng and Steve Prichard, and some of the other elders.

Steps to Usurp the Corporation & Damage the Church

Step 1—Violating the By-laws: Two Directors of The Church of the Torontonians have insisted on scheduling the business meeting early this year, even before the financial statements have been audited. Last month, in violation of our corporate By-laws, they revised the membership application requirements. A revision

to the By-laws such as this requires the pre-approval of two-thirds of the members. But the two Directors could not win a two-thirds vote without more supporters. So, two weeks ago, insisting on using their new membership criteria, they denied voting membership to the applications of many qualified saints while approving their own supporters.

Step 2—Stacking the Vote: The first order of business on the March 4th Agenda is a vote “approving” their new membership criteria. By this sleight of hand they hope to circumvent the requirement to amend the By-laws until *after* they have swollen the voting rolls with supporters. After this vote, they hope to gain your approval of their pre-selected list of new voters.

Step 3—Completing the Takeover: Once the voting rolls are swollen with new members, the Agenda moves forward quickly to:

- validate the 2006 Financial Statements—which are not audited and are therefore unreliable,
- re-elect themselves and one new director—not David Wang, who was unilaterally removed from the ballot, and, as the coup de grâce,
- approve new By-laws (see below), completing The Church of the Torontonians’ takeover of what was “the church in Toronto.”

One Director, David Wang, has consistently opposed these maneuverings, but he has also consistently been over-ruled by Steve Prichard and Jonathan P’ng. Politicians could not have done a better job of stealing an election.

New By-laws Make a Mockery of “the church in Toronto”

Despite the requirement, embodied in the corporate Letters Patent, to serve the biblical model, the new by-laws methodically overthrow fundamental New Testament teachings concerning the nature and government of the church.

The proposed By-laws formalize a system of error (Eph. 4:14) in which the Directors control the church in Toronto, usurp the role of the elders, and even chose the church's apostle. The authority to discipline the saints has a significant place in this system. The new By-laws set in place an unchallengeable hierarchy of Director-elders over second-class elders, and then the rest of the church.

Following are examples from this system of error:

1. The new By-laws endorse an unscriptural procedure for the elders' decision-making—ruling by majority vote (1.1.12). This fleshly and worldly alternative to knowing the cross and the authority of the Head by being blended together through prayer and fellowship utterly negates God's government in the church.
2. The By-laws give the Directors power to “suspend” an elder indefinitely, without notice and without recourse (9.10). They can overrule the decisions of the elders (5.10). According to the Bible, and contrary to the new By-laws (13.2), the elders are subject to the apostles (1 Tim. 1:9).
3. The new By-laws replace the New Testament definition of apostles with an unbiblical view of a church choosing its own special apostle. Under the By-laws, those elders who are not suspended by the directors decide who will be the church in Toronto's apostle(s) (10.2). This is against the truth. Apostles are appointed by God for ministry to the universal church; there is no scriptural basis for a locality to have its own apostle(s). The New Testament sanctions no special relationship between a church and a particular apostle and, in fact, condemns such a relationship (1 Cor. 1:12-13; 3:22 “all are yours”). “Their ministry is universal for all the churches” (Witness Lee).
4. The Directors are empowered to remove anyone who disagrees with them (4.13.3-6) and impose disciplinary measures (13.5.5).
5. The Directors approve the voters (4.4) and can add ten more votes by granting others honorary voting member status (4.9).

6. The Directors can be removed only by a two-thirds vote at a business meeting (5.6), however a business meeting can be called only by the Board of Directors itself (8.2).

The scope of both the Directors' and the elders' powers in the proposed new By-laws far exceed what is legally required and scripturally allowed. In addition, the new by-laws also contain many loopholes inviting further abuse:

1. Some of the new membership requirements are intrusive and contrary to scriptural principles, e.g. the Board tracks financial contributions (4.1.9), so giving can no longer be in secret (see Matt 6:1-4; Life-study of Matthew, p. 263). It is inappropriate to monitor saints' personal giving.
2. The Board can change the requirements for voting members (4.1.12), allowing it to include / exclude groups of members at will.
3. The Board can refuse membership to anyone who disagrees with them by labelling them as "contentious" (4.1.11). This By-law appears to misapply 1 Corinthians 11:16, which refers to not being contentious about the universal practice of the churches in following the apostles' teaching.
4. The new by-laws give only subjective and ill-defined grounds for depriving members of their vote (4.13.3 through 4.13.5), giving the Board carte blanche to strip members of their voting rights if they disagree with the dominant members of the Board.
5. Under 13.4 and 13.5 all members waive all rights and agree to obey (not just submit) to the authority and discipline of the elders and Directors. This is a condition of being a voting member.
6. According to 13.4.8(e) and 13.4.9, the By-laws allow members to be excluded from the meetings of "the church in Toronto."

About the Proposed Slate of Directors

Re-electing the two Directors who planned this takeover is of concern to us because:

- They have insincerely manipulated both the membership approval process and the annual business meeting for their own ends.
- They proposed new By-laws granting themselves extensive and unbiblical powers, while telling the saints the By-laws just needed to be brought up-to-date.
- They removed Ron MacVicar as Secretary of the Board without cause. He was only told that his continued service was “not in the best interests of the corporation.” This sounds ominously like the provisions put forth in the proposed by-laws that allow Directors to revoke members’ voting rights for “activities against the best interests of the Church.”
- Then, within days they removed David Wang from being President of the Board, a position he held for 14 years, again without cause.

All of these actions are designed to eliminate from positions of responsibility those who disagree with the direction which some Directors are seeking to impose upon the church. They want: (1) the right, contrary to Romans 14, to remove from the church any member with whom they disagree and (2) the ability, contrary to Rev. 2-3, to completely separate the church in Toronto from the common fellowship of all of the local churches in the one Body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), thus making the so-called “church” over which they would preside a local sect.

An Appeal to be Faithful to “the church in Toronto”

As believers in Christ, we generally seek to avoid appeals to secular authority to resolve disputes. However, there are cases where to protect our legitimate rights we should be bold to do so (see Acts 16:37-38; 22:25; 25:10-12; and *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 59, p. 239). In this case, such an appeal is required because two Directors are circumventing the by-laws and flooding the voting rolls with those whom they believe will vote for them. Romans 13:1 should be applied to the Directors in this case. Because they have refused our pleas (Matt. 18) and demonstrated that they will not follow lawful means, we are forced to appeal to the Court.

Our appeal asks the Court to instruct the Board of Directors to do nothing more than to follow the procedures required in our corporate by-laws. It is simply an attempt to ensure that a fair process is followed in admitting new members and to preclude them from packing the membership roll with voters not qualified under the current by-laws and from disqualifying members who are qualified.

Our appeal is an attempt to allow the legitimate membership of the church to hold a fair business meeting.

Your brothers standing for the church in Toronto,

David Wang

Ron MacVicar

Why an Injunction?

March 1, 2007

Dear Saints,

On February 27, a request for an injunction to delay the scheduled March 4 business meeting of the church in Toronto was filed in court. Knowing this action may concern many saints, we want to explain why a request for an injunction was filed as well as the concerns we have with proposed new by-laws and the proposed slate of Directors put forward by a faction of the elders who appear to be trying to remove those who disagree with them from any role in the leadership of the church.

Why an Injunction?

As believers in Christ, we generally seek to avoid appeals to secular authority to resolve disputes. However, there are cases where to protect our legitimate rights we are forced to do so (see Acts 16:37-38; 22:25; 25:10-12; and *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 59, p. 239). In the present situation, such an appeal is necessary because two of the Directors are attempting to circumvent the by-laws of the church in Toronto and to flood the voting rolls of the church with those they believe will vote for them.

Our appeal asks the Court to instruct the Board of Directors to follow the procedures required in our current corporate by-laws. It is simply an attempt to insure that a fair process is followed in admitting new members and to preclude the Board from packing the membership roll with voters not qualified under the current by-laws and from disqualifying members who are qualified. Our appeal is not an attempt to prevent the legitimate membership of the church from holding a meeting.

The church's current by-laws prescribe a method for admitting new voting members. The by-laws define the requirements for membership and indicate that a Membership Affairs Committee will admit those who meet these requirements as voting

members. The membership application used in recent weeks contained requirements that are not part of the membership requirements under the current by-laws; it also deleted requirements that are in the current by-laws. As a result of some of these illegitimate changes, over fifty potential voting members have been denied membership.

The current by-laws state that the Membership Affairs Committee will “ensure that the authority, power and involvement of the living God in the church is represented in the affairs of the corporation.” However the Directors have failed to make provision for the Membership Affairs Committee to function. Thus, two of the three current Directors are attempting to shortcut the procedures required by the current by-laws by instituting new membership requirements and a new membership admission procedure that the current by-laws do not sanction and without the approval of two-thirds of the current voting members.

An appropriate process would be as follows:

1. A business meeting should be held to elect a Membership Affairs Committee.
2. Following that business meeting, saints should be allowed to apply for voting membership in accordance with the current by-laws.
3. Their applications would then be reviewed and approved by the Membership Affairs Committee.
4. Only then would changes to the by-laws and/or election of Directors be considered.

In addition, we have grave concerns about the proposed new by-laws and the proposed slate of Directors

Our Concerns about the Proposed New By-laws

In the common practice of the churches, the Directors are elders. This is because in the biblical pattern the management of the church’s affairs is in the hands of the elders, but the laws for non-profit corporations require that fiscal responsibility rest in the hands of a Board of Directors. The new proposed by-laws

formalize a system in which the Directors effectively control the church, usurp many functions of the elders, and are given powers beyond what is sanctioned in the Bible. The new by-laws give the Directors near absolute power in controlling church affairs that extend far beyond custodianship of the church's financial assets. **The new by-laws also do away with the Membership Affairs Committee.**

The following are some of our concerns:

1. The Directors, not the elders, have the power to grant Honourary voting member status at their discretion (4.9).
2. The Directors, not the elders, approve the voters (4.4).
3. The Directors, not the elders, have the power to remove anyone who disagrees with them (4.13.3-4.13.6).
4. The Directors have the power to ratify or overrule the decisions of the elders (5.10).
5. The Directors have the power to suspend an elder indefinitely without notice or recourse (9.10).
6. The Directors can be removed only by a two-thirds vote at a business meeting (5.6), but a business meeting can be called only by the Board of Directors itself (8.2).
7. The Directors can identify who is the church's apostle (10.2). The New Testament sanctions no special relationship between a church and a particular apostle and, in fact, condemns such a relationship (1 Cor. 1:12-13; cf. 3:22). There is no precedent for a church to designate its own apostle.
8. The new by-laws set up an unscriptural procedure for the elders' decision-making—majority rule (1.1.12). This alternative to knowing the cross and the authority of the Head by being blended together through prayer and fellowship negates God's government in the church. It will formalize the exclusion of the elders who do not agree with the current direction the other elders are taking in leading the church.

These powers are not restricted to the custodianship of the church's financial assets, which is the scope of the Directors' responsibilities required by the law. The new by-laws also contain many loopholes that could potentially be abused:

1. Some of the new membership requirements are intrusive and contrary to scriptural principles:
 - a. The Board determines which meetings count in determining membership (4.1.7), so any home or district meeting the Directors disapprove of will not count.
 - b. The Board determines which services count (4.1.8), so all service must now be public, not hidden (see Col. 3:4; *Life-study of Colossians*, p. 523)
 - c. The Board tracks financial contributions (4.1.9), so giving can no longer be in secret (see Matt 6:1-4 and *Life-study of Matthew*, p. 263)
2. The Board can change the requirements for voting members (4.1.12), so the Board can include or exclude groups of members at will.
3. The Board decides whether a person applying for voting rights is contentious (4.1.11), so they can refuse membership to anyone who disagrees with them.
4. The new by-laws do not define behaviours that can lead to loss of voting membership according to sections 4.13.3 through 4.13.5. The net effect of these clauses is to give the Board carte blanche to strip any member of their voting rights if they disagree with two Board members.
5. The Board can grant voting rights to up to 10 Honourary members. This provision could easily be used to stack the membership voting list with those sympathetic to the Directors, helping to insure their perpetuation.
6. Sections 13.4 and 13.5 require members to waive all rights and obey (not just submit) to the authority of the elders/Directors.

Our Concerns about the Proposed Slate of Directors

In addition, we are concerned about the list of proposed Directors put forward by the faction of elders loyal to Titus Chu. Our concern about these brothers includes among other things:

- Their actions in removing Ron MacVicar as Secretary of the Board. He was told that his continued service was “not in the best interests of the corporation.” This sounds

ominously like the provisions put forth in the proposed by-laws that allow Directors to revoke members' voting rights for "activities against the best interests of the Church."

- Their actions in also removing without cause David Wang as President of the Board, a position in which he has served for 14 years.
- Their actions in manipulating the membership process.
- Their actions in putting forward proposed new by-laws giving themselves extensive and unbiblical powers.

All of these actions appear motivated to eliminate from positions of responsibility anyone who disagrees with the direction which they seek to impose upon the church, namely, the complete alignment of the church in Toronto with the ministry of Titus Chu and separation from the common fellowship of all of the local churches in the one Body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9).

Your brothers in Christ,

David Wang

Ron MacVicar

Open Letter from Ron MacVicar and David Wang

March 4, 2007

Dear Saints in Toronto,

We recently sent an open letter to you concerning dangers that we see the church in Toronto facing. It is a fact that at this time our proper standing as the church is being threatened by division. We must speak up. We have tried to maintain our fellowship with the other elders, but it is a fact that they have excluded and rejected us from their circle.

Yesterday, a letter that purports to be the response of the Toronto “Eldership” (sic) to our open letter and a letter from brother Bob Duncan were put out. We are sorrowful to see that these two writings are so full of contentions of words and incorrect statements. In responding our spirit and our heart have no feeling to debate, but we would point out some facts from which we hope that you can understand the nature of the danger we face together.

The letter they recently posted claims to be written on “behalf of the Eldership” (sic) in Toronto. This is of course not a true statement. It is an example demonstrating that some of the elders here are usurping the eldership and formed a party, since an eldership must include all of the elders. As Watchman Nee and Witness Lee both taught, the plurality of elders in a locality is a safeguard to keep the church from error. The greatest error is to break the oneness of the Spirit and to form a party with others based on opinions. The oneness of the Body of Christ should be expressed in the oneness in the eldership. For this oneness, the elders must pray and fellowship until all are headed up out of their opinions and preferences and into the one Head, Christ.

Brother Bob Duncan has stated that there is a “functional eldership” in Toronto which we are not part of. Yet he also agrees that we are “elders.” This again demonstrates that these brothers have formed a party (Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 11:19) within the eldership, which Bob has called the “functional eldership.”

David Wang is accused by the brothers of denying the local aspect of the church and of subscribing to “one worldwide church” (their words). Dear saints, this is a false witness. We believe in and firmly adhere to the local administration of the church. We also know that the local church is an expression of and owes its existence to “the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Dear saints, please do not doubt our word or allow your view of us to be so easily corrupted.

Together with Living Stream Ministry and the co-workers, we are accused of many misdeeds. Brothers, we beg you to consider our testimony. There is no plot, no campaign by LSM or the co-workers to control any church. This is a fact. Fellowship in the Body is not control. However, fellowship and blending in the Body has been term “invasion” by some who jealously desire their own separate and independent work within and among the local churches. Fellowship universally among the churches is not an invasion, it is fellowship. Although some would make such charges and even perhaps cause you to feel alarm or fear, we and leading brothers all over the earth can and do assure you that LSM and the co-workers are purely for the churches’ benefit.

What is a fact is that the “blending” of the co-workers internationally is not organizational but very living in the Spirit. What is “blending”? To blend requires the brothers to go through the cross by the Spirit, to stop their self-will and their personal works and to drop their opinions and their preferences in order to join together through much and thorough prayer and fellowship for the expression of the Triune God on the earth (Gen. 1:26; John 17).

This is the same blending that, if it could be found among the elders in the eldership in Toronto, would model the oneness in the Triune God and give the saints a living pattern to follow so that the church could be led into harmony. Instead, the flavour of fleshly debate, false accusations against LSM, and slander against co-workers flow out of our fellow elders. This condition in the church should signal a strong caution in those who know His Word not to readily believe accusations against the brothers (Rev. 12:10).

Because it has so much to do with the history and heritage of the church in Toronto we would correct our brothers' misstating of facts when they claim that the church in Vancouver was taken over in the early 1990's and that this is now being "replicated" in Toronto. The facts are at www.afaithfulword.org/articles/TorontoIntro.html. Our fellow elders may assume you have not or wish that you do not read these articles and the source materials that bear some of their names. Those materials show the facts concerning the deviation of the elders who are now usurping both the eldership and the Board of "The Church of the Torontonians."

Concerning all such matters as covered in this letter, Witness Lee has written:

"The biggest problem, the unique problem, is not knowing the Body and not caring for the Body. If we care for the Body and are concerned for the Body, there will be no problem."

"We are here for the Body. Without the backing of the Body, without the backing of the recovery, we have no way to practice the local churches."

"If we practice the local church life and neglect the view of the Body, our local church becomes a local sect."

"The recovery is for the Body, not for any individual or merely for any individual local church."

"If we are going to do something, we have to consider how the Body, the recovery, will react. The problems are all due to the lack of seeing the Body and of caring for the Body. We all need to come back to the truth, and to practice the truth is to take care of the Body."

We commend our brother's words and this letter to the saints for your prayerful consideration and ask you also to read the attached letter. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Your brothers in Christ,

Ron MacVicar

David Wang

What does it mean to stop the Lord's Table?

March 16, 2007

Before the Lord departed from the earth, He personally established the Lord's Supper and said: "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). From the beginning of the church life in the New Testament, all the believers "continued in the teaching and the fellowship of the Apostles, in the breaking of the bread and the prayer" (Acts 2:42). The Bible clearly stated that we should remember the Lord by eating the bread and drinking the wine until the Kingdom comes. Every believer should partake of this divine Table continually for this is the Lord's commandment, the believers' divine right, and the practice of a genuine local church.

We know that the bread on the Lord's Table is not only a symbol of the Lord's physical body; it also signifies Christ's mystical Body. It very much relates to the fellowship of the Body of Christ and the testimony of the oneness of the Body (1 Cor. 10:16-17). There is only one bread on the table, which signifies there is only one Body and one testimony of Christ in the universe. Recently you announced to stop the Lord's table based upon a saying that due to some brothers suing other brothers and bringing them to the court, we cannot come together to have the Lord's table. Is this the truth in the Bible? Who gave the authority to do this?

According to the principle revealed in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, if someone has problems with the Lord or with the saints, by proving himself for the sake of the conscience, he does not take the bread and wine in order not to offend the Lord and His testimony, that is his personal matter. But can you stop the "Lord's" table based upon your being offended by brothers disagreeing with you? If you have problems with saints, for you not to take the bread and wine is your own business. But, how can you stop the Lord's Table for all the saints? Who gave you the right to do this? Who has the authority to put aside the Lord's Table established by the Lord? Your decision overthrew the Lord's command and is defiant of the Scriptures and has denied

the saints' divine right to enjoy the Lord. This is exactly what we have seen in Toronto recently.

The decision made by you, the directors of "the church of the Torontonians", is a willful disobedience to the Lord's command and intentional nullification of the testimony of the oneness of the Body of Christ. The Lord's Table signifies the oneness of the testimony of the whole Body. For you to stop the Lord's Table means you have forsaken the divine oneness, the oneness of the testimony of the Body Christ represented and signified by the Lord's Table. How can you while proclaiming "There is one Body in this universe, and we express it here on earth" make the official announcement to stop the Lord's Table? What a shameful contradiction! You claim you are for the Body, but deny it outrightly; you uplift the Lord with your lips, but nullify His command with your actions.

Are you, the directors, greater than the Lord? Are the by-laws of the corporation greater than the truth in the Bible? Is this still the genuine local church? For you to override the command of the Lord, to strip the right of the saints to enjoy Him, and to forsake the testimony of the oneness of the one Body of Christ is a declaration that you are not the Lord's church but a worldly organization.

David Wang

Ron MacVicar