

VANCOUVER 1992-3, TORONTO 2006-7—REPEATING HISTORY?

VANCOUVER, 1992-3

In the early 1990's the soon-to-be "blended brothers" decided the elders [T. K. Chia, Borgi Chang & David Wang] of the Church in Vancouver were not sufficiently "one with the ministry." They must be replaced. A winning strategy was needed. Why not use the Annual Business Meeting, specifically the elected Board of Directors, to oust the elders? As with most local churches, the existing Vancouver elders had served as directors (trustees) for years. But that could all be changed. If another, pro-LSM, group of directors were elected in place of the elders, the church's leadership would have changed. Is this strategy Scriptural? No. Is it legal? Yes.

Samuel Liu (Liew Chen Si), a Taiwan co-worker, was promptly dispatched to coordinate LSM's campaign. He labored tirelessly for months aided by other workers brought in from outside, including the charismatic Livingstone Lee. The soon-to-be "blended brothers" travelled north to Vancouver—Andrew Yu, Minoru Chen etc. — visited in succession. Conferences and trainings were held week after week on "One Minister," "One Trumpet," "One Voice" etc.

Rather than work directly in Vancouver, nearby Burnaby was used as a base of operations. Samuel Liu gathering the believers for "trainings" on prayer, morning revival, vital groups etc. Coordination meetings were conducted night after night. Gradually a network of saints was produced. Via subtle criticism and unfavourable comparisons of Vancouver with other churches, the saints' confidence in the elders was gradually undermined. An alternative set of 5 leaders, favourable to LSM, was progressively introduced. Finally, as the business meeting (AGM) approached, church members were directed to eject the existing elder-directors and vote in a new board. The Vancouver Church had no fixed voters' list. So, on the day of the Business meeting (June 13, 1993), 30 pro-LSM "visitors" arrived from Hong Kong. Another group from Taiwan also showed up.

In the event these outside reinforcements proved unnecessary. The Vancouver elders, rather than face an ugly scene which would damage the saints, chose not to stand for re-election. So, "without a shot being fired," the Board of Directors was changed. LSM's "Vancouver maneuver" succeeded beyond their expectations. The existing leaders were overthrown and a new board (Robert Lim, Titus Chen & co.) was installed. Legally the directors control the meeting hall, hence the elders (Brothers Chia, Chang & Wang) could be barred from the meeting hall they helped to raise up.

Within a week of the election, the new directors moved to assert their legal authority over the elders. The meeting hall locks were secretly changed. The next evening Samuel Liu presided triumphantly over the first meeting under the new regime. Vancouver's original elders and their supporters were banished from the hall as the new leaders savoured the spoils of success. Having seized the Vancouver meeting hall, the new leaders gained most of the congregation. Samuel Liu's *coupe de tat* was complete. Henceforth, he became known as the "stealer of meeting halls."

In the past the victors get to write history, not the vanquished. So it was in Vancouver. The 5 new directors reported to "all the saints throughout the earth" that the existing elders had pre-announced their "intended resignation from the eldership of the Church" (Letter Aug., 12, 1993, p. 7). However, when contacted directly, the Vancouver elders deny ever making such an offer—they never resigned their eldership. The same letter confirms this by quoting the original elders saying, "We are still elders of the Church in Vancouver," 4 days after the AGM (Letter Aug., 12, 1993, p. 8). Rather than resigning, they expected (naively perhaps) to continue as elders with the two congregations—pro-LSM and non-LSM—coexisting, sharing the meeting facilities. When the original elders protested their ejection from the hall, they were told to seek legal remedy. That was (of course) a cruel jest. It is the director-trustees (not the elders) who have legal authority; the elders' authority is solely

spiritual. Hence, no such recourse existed. The "Vancouver strategy"—use the Board of Directors to oust the elders—worked. Yes, it succeeded, but is it Scriptural? How do those involved reconcile these tactics with Brother Lee's word: "The very great, particular characteristic in the Lord's recovery is to do everything according to the Bible." (*Elders' Training, Book 7, p. 107*)?

TORONTO, 2006-7

Fifteen years later, LSM's blended brothers are frustrated by Toronto's elders. They don't "toe the line." They won't follow LSM's directive to quarantine Titus Chu and eject his co-workers from Toronto. Recently the Toronto Review Committee issued their *Determination and Recommendation*. In it they declared the Church would continue to receive the ministries of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. At the same time, the Toronto church would still invite Titus Chu to minister and his co-workers to serve. They don't intend to be an LSM-ministry church. Frustrating!

What are LSM's blended brothers to do? Why not apply the "Vancouver maneuver"? LSM co-workers were quickly dispatched to the Toronto area. Not to Toronto itself (why risk a direct confrontation?), but to nearby Brampton. Not known for half-measures, prominent brothers were sent—Minoru Chen (a leader among the blended brothers), Livingstone Lee (a charismatic Taiwan co-worker), Samuel Liu ("stealer of meeting halls" and architect of LSM's "Vancouver campaign") and Bob Danker (from LSM's second tier). These brothers, with a supporting cast of outsiders (Greg Spencer, former Toronto elder; David Sissons, Vancouver elder; Rick Persad, FTTA graduate, Vancouver full-timer etc.,) held a "Vital Living Training" in Brampton. That was the first phase in LSM's Toronto campaign, December 2006.

The New Year ushered in the second phase. Suddenly the Toronto area was the "vacation hotspot," despite its freezing temperatures and lack of snow! Minoru Chen returned, to be followed in quick succession by Ron Kangas, Albert Lim and Benson Phillips. LSM-president, Benson Phillips can't remember when he was last in Toronto. A few years ago he said, "I've never been there. I've never even set foot in Toronto, Canada, I don't think." (July 3, 2004). Now, suddenly Brother Benson is "burdened" for Toronto. Those just mentioned are the "big shots." The supporting cast—Rick Persad, Greg Spencer etc—remains in place. The venue for their "Vital Living Training" has changed to Richmond Hill. Their strategy and purpose remain unchanged.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?

Some have asked, "What's the problem? What's wrong with a 'Vital Living Training'?" We ask: "What's the purpose? What's the long-term goal?" Why are so many "big shots" coming to Brampton, a church with only 20 members? Or to Richmond Hill, a church, whose "illegitimate birth" (Albert Lim's term) happened only a few months back. Is the "Vancouver strategy" being applied here? Is history repeating itself? Is there a scheme to overthrow the Toronto elders, seize control of our meeting halls and bring Toronto back into the "LSM fold"? Why are prominent brothers suddenly visiting the Toronto area? Why are there reports that FTTA trainees are moving here? Why are these outsiders trying to influence the saints here? Are they coming here to "deal with the church"? Do they have the right?

A recent posting on an LSM-affiliated website openly admits, "There are many parallels" between "events that took place in the church in Vancouver in the early 1990's and events currently playing out in the church in Toronto." (AFaithfulWord.org, Jan. 22, 2007) We heartily agree with this statement. The crucial "parallels" (we believe) are those outlined above. We encourage both Toronto church-members and objective outside observers to consider what is happening in Toronto in the light of Vancouver's history sketched above.

Brother Lee warned, "Suppose a number of brothers come from other places to a certain locality to deal with the situation in the church there. Any saint who knows the truth and who practices the truth should rise up and say, "Stop! This is a hierarchy. What right do you brothers have to come here and

carry on like this? Who gave you this authority? This is human organization..." [*Truth Messages*, pp. 10-11]

concerned brothers

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