

Toronto Elders' Response

to a

“Declaration & Clarification” by Brothers Ron MacVicar, David Wang and Others

In recent years it became increasingly evident that a “special interest group” existed within the Church in Toronto. Although these saints met with us as the Church in Toronto, they did not subscribe to the view that the Church’s “*administration is local, answering to the Lord.*” Rather, these believers followed the lead of LSM’s “blended co-workers” based in Anaheim, California. They espoused the teachings and implemented the practices promoted by this remote leadership. Essentially this LSM-group became a “Church within the Church” here in Toronto. Moreover, they recruited members from within the Church, promoted their particular views and sought to impose them upon the Church as a whole. Because of our inclusive stand as the Church in Toronto and the historical links between LSM’s “blended co-workers” and Brother Witness Lee, we tolerated the problems caused by this distinct LSM-group. However they were inevitably on a collision course with the Church.

Matters came to a head when LSM’s “blended co-workers” issued a worldwide quarantine of Titus Chu, Nigel Tomes and their co-workers who have labored here for decades. The Toronto elders sought to resolve this issue through a “Determination and Recommendation” Committee which decided against implementing the quarantine in Toronto. However the underlying issues were carried forward to the business meeting in March 2007. The leaders of Toronto’s LSM-group, Brothers David Wang and Ron MacVicar, went to court to challenge the membership process and the proposed by-laws of the Church Corporation. The Ontario court decisively rejected their arguments and ordered them to pay court costs (which, despite repeated requests, have not yet been paid). Moreover, these two brothers stood for election as directors and failed to be elected. Through the decisions rendered at the business meeting Church members clearly rejected the LSM-group’s vision for the Church in Toronto. Instead they gave the Toronto elders a resounding mandate to continue as a genuine local church with a local administration answering to the Lord, not in subjection to any ministry nor for any ministry.

Now, one month later, Brothers MacVicar & Wang have written an open letter¹ to the Toronto elders and issued a “**Declaration and Clarification**” (April 1, 2007) declaring “*Why We Must Separate and Disassociate Ourselves from the Division formed by the Sectarian Leaders of the Church in Toronto.*” Rather than applying the cross, denying the self and laying aside their personal views in order to continue together in oneness with the Church in Toronto, Brothers MacVicar & Wang have chosen to denounce the Church, its stand and leadership. Moreover they declare themselves the only legitimate elders and the LSM-group as the real Church in Toronto. Their pronouncement claims to be a “clarification.” Actually it is designed to obscure and confuse. These documents have been posted on the Internet and are being circulated locally and globally. Therefore their false accusations and erroneous claims must be answered.

First, the Toronto saints should be clear that it is the members of the LSM-group led by Brothers Wang & MacVicar who have left us. It is they who have “*abandoned the assembling of ourselves together*” as the Church in Toronto (Heb. 10:25.) It is they who have rejected us and “separated” themselves; it is they who have “disassociated themselves” from the Church. They were not purged, rejected, ejected or excommunicated from the Church in Toronto. As the Apostle John wrote, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us.*” (1 John 2:19). Ultimately, when we look beyond the “smoke and mirrors” of their obscuring objections and denunciations, they were “not of us” in terms of a shared vision and commitment for the Church in Toronto. Rather their allegiance is to the global leadership of LSM’s “Blended Brothers;” their commitment (a deviation from the biblical practice of local administration) is to establish a Toronto-branch of a worldwide “LSM-ministry Church” in the name of “the Body.”

FALSE ACCUSATIONS ANSWERED

1. Deviating from the Truth

Brothers MacVicar & Wang claim we have “*forsaken the ground of oneness to form a local sect.*” This is utterly false. Today we still proclaim and practice that² “*We stand on the ground of the oneness of all believers...we recognize all the blood-redeemed and Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ as members of the one church in each city.*” It is the LSM-group who have rejected us and separated themselves from us to gather exclusively with those who share their narrow views. It is they who have made “oneness with the ministry” of LSM’s “blended co-workers” the basis for being accepted into their “fellowship.” They assert we are a sect because we reject³ “*the common feeling of the Body in the quarantine of Titus Chu.*” To the LSM-group, apparently the directives of LSM’s “blended co-workers” in Anaheim, California represent “the common feeling of the Body”!

Brothers MacVicar & Wang allege we⁴ “*have abandoned the common fellowship of the saints and the churches, i.e., the unique fellowship of the Body...*” This false allegation twists biblical truth. We ask—what do they mean by “The Body”? They say⁵ “*Nigel Tomes [has] been quarantined by **the Body.***” Which “Body” is this?—the “LSM-Body”? Do LSM’s “blended brothers” constitute “the Body”? Is “the Body” restricted solely to those who meet as the “Lord’s recovery”? No! Christ’s Body includes millions of believers around the globe. Moreover, the Bible has only one fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14) and of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 16:10). “*All genuine believers are in this fellowship*” (W. Lee.) The “fellowship of the Body” is not mediated exclusively via LSM’s “blended co-workers” nor through LSM-sponsored events like LSM’s “7 feasts.” We reject these assumptions, implicit in Brothers MacVicar & Wang’s allegations, as unscriptural and exclusive. We have NOT abandoned the “unique fellowship of the Body,” which includes all believers. We have not “cut ourselves off,” and neither are we isolated. We continue to fellowship with other genuine local churches both nearby and further away. In recent weeks the Church in Toronto received ministry from Brothers Dave Shields (Akron, OH), Vern Yoder (Pittsburgh, PA) and Paul Neider (Cleveland, OH). Our brother, Nigel Tomes spent time recently in Uganda, Africa. Isn’t this part of “the fellowship of the Body”? [Due to lack of space we defer addressing other baseless accusations.]

2. Severing the Church from its Historic Roots—the Ministries of W. Nee & W. Lee

Contrary to this unfounded accusation,⁶ the Toronto elders have NOT sought to sever the church from its historic roots. We recognize the contributions of W. Nee and W. Lee’s ministries to the Church in Toronto. Toronto’s recent “Determination” made this clear, saying:

“Over many years, we have enjoyed and benefited much from the ministries of Bro. Watchman Nee and Bro. Witness Lee, which have been used by the Lord to build up the church here. Though they have gone to be with the Lord, their writings are still with us. The foregoing recommendation should not deter us from continuing to receive spiritual supply from and be inspired by all the riches of our heritage. We exhort the saints to be constituted with these riches and we will endeavor to continually minister these riches to the saints in the church.” [Determination & Recommendation, Nov. 5, 2006]

However, we question the LSM’s “blended co-workers” claim to be the only authentic continuation of Brother Lee’s ministry. Such “apostolic succession” or “continuation” is not according to Scripture. Moreover, LSM’s “blended brothers” have extrapolated Brother Lee’s teachings “beyond what is written” in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6) to include “One Publication,” “One Minister of the Age,” and “One global group of co-workers.” By making these extra-biblical teachings non-negotiable items, LSM’s “blended co-workers” have deviated from Scripture and the ministries of Brothers Nee & Lee and risk creating a global sect. As the Church in Toronto we will continue to take the Bible as our unique standard and receive the riches from W. Nee & W. Lee’s ministries in the light of Scripture. Moreover we subscribe to W. Nee’s teaching that⁷ “*The church is not for the ministry; rather, the ministry is for the church.*” The Church will receive ministries that

are deemed profitable and refuse unprofitable ones. Moreover, the elders take seriously our responsibility to guard the Church against damage. As Brother Lee warned,⁸ *"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..."* We reject as baseless slander Brothers MacVicar & Wang's allegation that⁹ *"we are leading the saints to follow a man, Titus Chu."* Having been with the Toronto elders for decades, these two brothers know in their conscience that this is a lie. We can only guess it results from "psychological projection"—attributing to others one's own motives.

3. Replacing Scriptural Church Administration with Secular Control

Brothers MacVicar & Wang allege¹⁰ *"Your [corporate] 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."*

In common with many local churches, the directors of the Church Corporation act as an interface, managing the physical and financial assets of the Church corporation, while the elders administrate the Church's spiritual aspect. The harmonious operation of both aspects is facilitated by elders serving as directors. Contrary to the two brothers' contention, the new corporate by-laws adopted at the recent business meeting more carefully define the directors' powers than previously was the case. Rather than "transmuting" the Church's administration, the new by-laws constrain the directors by further limiting any arbitrary exercise of authority.

The credibility of these allegations is further called into question when considered against the backdrop of Brothers Wang & MacVicar's own involvement in the Church Corporation. Brother David Wang served for 14 years as a director (and President) of the Church Corporation. Why in all those years did he never object to this *"human and secular organization"*? Brother Ron MacVicar also served as Secretary in the same organization. Why is it that, as soon as they are no longer officers in the corporation, Brothers Wang & MacVicar object to *"human and secular organization"* and call for *"the proper and spiritual administration of the church"*? Why the sudden change of heart? If Brother Wang had taken this stand while Director-President of the Corporation and resigned (for conscience sake) we would find his claim that *"we are compelled as a matter of conscience"* more credible. As it is after Brothers MacVicar & Wang both stood for election as directors at the recent business meeting and failed to be elected, we find their claims incredible!

The two brothers quote W. Nee saying,¹¹ *"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."* Presumably, Brothers Wang & MacVicar fully endorse W. Nee's thought. In that case their stand should be *"We must never have any [corporate bylaws]...no matter how scriptural they may appear. Otherwise we will become a sect right away."* If this is their belief, consistency requires Brothers MacVicar & Wang to repudiate the "Church of the Torontonians" Corporation. That being the case, personal integrity requires them to resign from the corporation. Yet they vehemently state¹² *"We are...not resigning from...membership in the church's corporation."* This manifest inconsistency leads us to question their personal integrity. In this light, their denunciations of "unbiblical hierarchy" and "secular control" appear to be "grasping at straws" to justify their separation from the Church and their formation of an LSM-sect in Toronto of which they are the sole "elders."

CONCLUSION

We have briefly responded to the accusations of Brothers MacVicar & Wang. We will respond later in more detail as time permits. The Church in Toronto continues to stand, as it always has, on the ground of oneness, recognizing *"all the believers in Christ as members of the one church in*

[this] city." We categorically reject as unfounded Brothers MacVicar & Wang's accusation that we are a "divisive sect." As Watchman Nee wrote,¹³ "A sect can choose whom it likes, but we cannot exercise such a choice among God's children; we cannot choose whom we like in the church. Of course, when a man chooses to leave of his own accord, that is a different story." In recent years the Church in Toronto has endured with longsuffering, a "special interest group" existing among us as a "Church within the Church." Members of this LSM-group, led by Brothers MacVicar & Wang, have now declared their intention to "separate and disassociate" themselves from the Church. They were not purged, excommunicated, rejected or ejected from the Church in Toronto. Watchman Nee's words, "when a man chooses to leave of his own accord, that is a different story," apply here. For those of us who continue to stand as a genuine local church in Toronto, let us be assured that we have not departed from our original stand. We will continue to follow the Bible as our unique standard, to benefit from the riches of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee's ministries, to receive ministries which profit the Church and fellowship with other genuine local churches both nearby and further away.

Nigel Tomes,

On Behalf of the Toronto Elders

April, 2007

NOTES:

1. The open letter by Ron MacVicar & David Wang to the Toronto elders is dated April 1, 2007. It has been copied to "The saints in the Lord's recovery" and posted on the "lastadam.com" website. In this letter reference is made to the "Declaration & Clarification" (also dated April 1, 2007) subtitled: "Why We Must Separate and Disassociate Ourselves from the Division formed by the Sectarian Leaders of the Church in Toronto." This second document (which is unsigned) has also been posted on the LSM-friendly website: "lastadam.com." Since both documents were distributed (with covering E-mail) by Brothers MacVicar & Wang we attribute both documents to them.
2. The Beliefs & Practices of the local churches, by "the co-workers in the Lord's Recovery, 1978, p. 4
3. Declaration & Clarification, point 2, p. 2
4. Declaration & Clarification, p. 2 (last paragraph)
5. Declaration & Clarification, p. 1 (middle) A similar allegation—"Titus Chu, who has been **quarantined by the Body**"--is made by the LSM-brothers on the "AFaithfulWord.org" website. See "Has The Truth Changed or Have Some Toronto Elders?" (Part 1, Conclusion) Posted Jan. 22, 2007
6. "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." Declaration & Clarification, p. 3 (top)
7. W. Nee, Collected Works, vol., 61, p. 36
8. W. Lee, Truth Messages, pp. 10-11
9. Ron MacVicar & David Wang, Open Letter (April 1, 2007) p. 3. The Declaration & Clarification document contains an equally unfounded accusation that "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 apostles..." Declaration & Clarification, point 3, p. 2. This is a deliberate misrepresentation. The Toronto by-laws specify that "The elders may...**recognize** what person or persons shall be deemed to be an apostle for the Church of the Torontonians" [Point 10.2] It is not a matter of "selection" (as alleged) but "recognition." The Church in Ephesus tried those who call themselves apostles and are not" (Rev. 2:2.) For this they were commended by the Lord. This surely implies they **recognized** or acknowledged the genuine apostles, while rejecting the false apostles. Does not the Church in Toronto have the right to do the same?
10. Ron MacVicar & David Wang, Open Letter (April 1, 2007) p. 3
11. W. Nee, Collected Works, Vol. 7, pp. 1116-7
12. Ron MacVicar & David Wang, Open Letter (April 1, 2007) p. 1. They say, "We are not abandoning the proper ground of the church, nor are we resigning from the eldership or from the membership in the church's corporation." It is ironic that Brothers MacVicar & Wang deny that this is a genuine local church, deny the other 7 elders [They "have disqualified themselves as elders in the church in

Toronto"] and denounce the Church Corporation as a "human and secular organization." Yet they refuse to resign as elders or from membership in an entity they condemn and denounce!

13. W. Nee, Collected Works Vol. 60, p. 384