

Great Lakes Brothers' Third Letter to 21 "Blended Co-workers"

TO: The Blended Co-workers
FROM: Great Lakes' Brothers (See attached signatures of 89 brothers)
RE: Great Lakes Brothers' Response to the Blended Co-workers'
(December 6, 2005) FEDEX Letter
DATE: February 28, 2006

Dear Brothers,

We acknowledge the receipt via FEDEX of your December 6, 2005 letter. Our response is in five sections:

- (1) We address serious accusations and correct some statements of fact contained in your letter;
- (2) We address the main points of your December 6 letter under the following 5 topics
 - "Peripheral Issues"
 - "Serious Repercussions of your Letter"
 - "The true Acts 15 Conference... had already taken place"
 - Our experiences concerning fellowship
 - The "Central Issue" – "the propagation of Titus's publications"
- (3) We spell out the stand which we feel a genuine local church in the Lord's recovery should have today, based upon the New Testament, as we have been helped to understand it through the ministries of brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee;
- (4) We enumerate our serious concerns about the current situation and direction of the Lord's recovery among us. We do this under two topics:
 - The tendency towards conformity and uniformity
 - The Organic Body vs. Global Organization -- "*the Body equals the recovery.*"
- (5) We reiterate our request for fellowship.

I. SERIOUS ACCUSATIONS AND INCORRECT FACTS

Your June 4, 2005 letter made serious accusations against Brother Titus Chu. We are concerned about your accusations. They may have far-reaching implications for us, for the churches we serve, and for Titus himself. For this reason, we asked Titus some fact-finding questions, which together with our own understanding form the basis of the responses below.

- 1) Your Dec. 6, 2005 letter to us said, "*We brothers wrote a **private letter** to Titus and deliberately did not circulate it to you or to the churches....*"
 - Titus was perplexed that you regard your letter as a wholly "*private letter.*" You seem to consider it inappropriate for Titus to reveal the contents to others. However, in your "*private letter*" you make requests of the workers and local churches in the Great Lakes area. Clearly these requests go beyond Titus' own private or personal affairs. Therefore Titus felt obligated to let us know the contents of your letter so that we could consider your requests together.
 - Titus was baffled by your implicit assumption that local church issues can be decided unilaterally by the co-workers. Do you expect Titus to decide matters for the churches (such as their "*attending the seven feasts*") without even consulting them? Perhaps others exercise this kind of control; Titus does not.

- Titus was bewildered by your concern about (what you term) a "*private letter*" to him in the light of a **private audio tape** being widely circulated about Titus. We refer to the audiotape of a private telephone conversation between Brother Lee and Titus Chu. The tape-recording of a private phone conversation raises ethical issues. The distribution, transcription, and translation of a **private audio tape** (without the permission of all parties involved) certainly breaches privacy and ethical standards in the USA. Do you brothers know nothing about this tape and its distribution? If you do know, what have you done to restrict the distribution, transcription, and translation of this **private audiotape**?
- 2) You elucidate in great detail the occasions of "*much and thorough fellowship beginning in 1997*" and conclude that, "*we had a total of **over eighty times to fellowship and pray together.***"
- Titus reminds you that 50 of those times were devoted mainly to reading through LSM message outlines and other "informational" fellowship. They were not used to address the "*problems surrounding Titus's ministry.*"
 - Concerning the other "*20-plus special times of fellowship*" Titus asked who initiated the fellowship? Who telephoned to request such times? According to Titus' recollection, in scarcely a single case did any of you brothers ever call him to initiate fellowship! Throughout these past 8 years, it was chiefly Titus who was, and still is, seeking to have fellowship with you brothers.
- 3) You say, Brother Lee "*before his death ... not only **tolerated those problems** [surrounding Titus's ministry] but **positively tried to blend Titus and his work with the other co-workers.** Based upon Brother Lee's example, **the blended co-workers have done their best** to blend in Titus and his work."*
- Since (in your words) Brother Lee "**tolerated those problems** [surrounding Titus's ministry]," why haven't the 'blended co-workers' "*based upon Brother Lee's example*" also **tolerated** Titus's ministry? Where Brother Lee exercised tolerance, it seems you exhibit intolerance!
 - Titus asked, How is it possible that "*the blended co-workers **have done their best to blend in Titus and his work***"? How have they followed "*Brother Lee's example*" in this matter?
- 4) In your Dec. 6, 2005 letter you wrote, "*Titus said in one of our first times together that he intended to stop his trainings, as the brothers felt they were **in rivalry to the FTTA** established by Brother Lee. However, he not only continued his trainings but also expanded his work outside the USA and began to publish his own books after 2001.*" Titus does not consider "*his trainings*" to be "*in rivalry to the FTTA.*" Brother Titus has conducted periodic "10-month labors," which differ in method from "trainings." [Hence, the distinction is not merely semantics.] Titus' "labors" were in response to requests from the leading brothers and based on the needs of the local churches. Should Titus ignore the needs of the saints and requests of the elders?
- a. Titus's "trainings" pre-date the establishment of the FTTA. They began in 1973. The FTTA started in the 1980s. Titus' "trainings" continued even when Brother Lee was overseeing the FTTA. Brother Lee never told Titus that "his trainings" were "*in rivalry to the FTTA*". Neither did Brother Lee ask Titus to stop "his trainings."
 - b. During Titus' Chinese-speaking labor in 1995, Titus gave Brother Lee a copy of his training outline entitled "**Being One with The Ministry to Speak the Healthy Words.**" Brother Lee approved it, telling Titus, "Very good." Titus wondered: Since Brother Lee did not ask Titus to stop "his trainings," why are you brothers doing so now? Is the feeling of "*rivalry*" merely yours and not Brother Lee's?

- c. After the establishment of FTTA, in general, Titus avoided having young college graduates attend his "labors," since the FTTA trained such ones. Titus practiced this restraint. Hence Titus' labors are attended mostly by older saints and those without a college degree – saints not qualified for the FTTA. Why then was it "*felt they [Titus's "trainings"] were in rivalry to the FTTA*"?
- You say Titus "*expanded his work outside the USA.*" Titus understands this as referring to work in Uganda and China carried out by him and his co-workers. Titus reminds you that **it was you brothers who asked the churches in North America to care for the Lord's move in Africa** (and other parts of the world). This request was made at a co-workers' gathering where a number of Great Lakes' brothers were present who can verify this fact. Brother Carl Boebel responded for the Midwest churches by choosing Uganda, since some Midwest saints already had close contacts. **We took you at your word.** The saints prayed, gave both money and people for Uganda and raised up the Church in Kampala. Why then are you now faulting us? Why are you now asserting that Titus "*expanded his work outside the USA*"? Did you only intend that the saints pray and donate money (without taking further action)? Must all the labor in Africa be centrally organized and coordinated through LSM?
 - As for the Lord's work in China, Titus said he started working in China before either you brothers or the Taiwan co-workers began to work in mainland China.
 - Titus refutes your claim that he "*began to publish his own books after 2001.*" This statement is false. Titus' books were available when Brother Lee was still alive. Some brothers printed Titus' 1973 and 1980 training messages in book form. Thousands of copies were reproduced in mainland China and helped many saints there. Titus personally gave one of his books— entitled "**A Sweet Savor**"— to Brother Lee, who joyfully accepted it. Titus asks, Why are you brothers adopting an attitude different from Brother Lee? You make this false assertion—Titus "*began to publish his own books after 2001*"—to substantiate your claim that "*Titus's manifestation of his own work became far greater than what he had done when Brother Lee was alive.*" [p. 3]. Since Titus' books were published and widely distributed during Brother Lee's lifetime, you have not substantiated your claim.
- 5) In your Dec. 6, 2005 letter you said, "*...we recall Brother Lee's admonition... to beware of **ambition to captivate people to be our private coworkers.** We feel that such an unhealthy condition concerning...**already exists in relation to our Brother Titus.** Titus' reference to you...as '**my co-workers**' in his letters to some of us was particularly revealing*" [p. 4]
- Dear brothers, you are surely aware that "**ambition**" is an inner motive, not an outward action. Our inner motives are manifest to God alone; how then can you brothers claim such infallible discerning ability? Yet you assert that, "*such an unhealthy condition [the ambition to captivate private coworkers]...**already exists in relation to our brother Titus.***" Brothers, it appears that you have discerned, prosecuted, judged, and condemned Brother Titus already. In this matter are you not usurping the right of judgment which belongs to God alone?
 - What evidence do you present to substantiate Brother Titus' alleged "*ambition to captivate... private coworkers*"? You say that, "*Titus's reference to you as '**my co-workers**' in his letters to some of us was particularly revealing.*" Yet, in your letter to Brother Titus (June 4, 2005) **you brothers** employed the phrase, "**you and your coworkers.**" It is natural for Brother Titus, in reply, to employ the reciprocal phrase, "my co-workers." Why then do you grasp this term as evidence of ambition? A sceptical reader of your letter might ask whether you are seeking to entrap Brother Titus when you used the phrase, "*your coworkers*"?

- Moreover, if indeed the phrase, “*my co-workers*” manifests “*ambition to captivate people...*” (as you allege), may we ask, was the apostle Paul also guilty of ambition because he calls Prisca and Aquilla, Urbanas, Timothy, Mark, Justus, and Epaphras **his co-workers** (Rom. 16:3, 9, 21; Col. 4:10-11; Phil. 2:25)?
- 6) In your Dec. 6, 2005 letter you alleged, “*Over the 2005 Thanksgiving weekend Titus conducted a conference **in direct rivalry** with the blending time in Atlanta. Furthermore, in December he intends to conduct his own training **essentially in conflict** with the winter training held in Anaheim for all the churches. What a deliberate move on the part of Titus, whose apparent aim...[is] his competing with some of the key gatherings of the Lord’s recovery!*” [p. 4]
- The 2005 Thanksgiving conference, you refer to, **was in Chinese**. It was requested by Chinese-speaking brothers due to the great need among the Chinese-speaking saints in the Mid-West. From the past we know that the vast majority of Mid-West Chinese-speaking saints do not attend far away conferences. Yet they also need a spiritual supply. The serving brothers decided to address this need by holding a Chinese-speaking Thanksgiving conference. We are disappointed by your seeming indifference to these saints’ needs. Neither Brother Titus, nor the serving saints, regard this arrangement as “*in direct rivalry with the blending time in Atlanta.*”
 - Please permit us to inquire: During the 2005 Thanksgiving weekend (other than Atlanta) was there **no other conference anywhere** in North America for any language group – Spanish, Korean or Chinese? We believe that a thorough investigation would reveal that there was. Perhaps even some of the “blended co-workers” were on that occasion conducting such a conference! Why then do you brothers focus exclusively on Brother Titus’ conference?
 - The December training which you refer to was completed before the LSM Winter training began in Anaheim (with its associated web-casts). In fact, a number of saints participated in both Brother Titus’ training and their local “video training.” Where then is the “essential conflict”? Brother Titus has (until this point) scheduled his activities to avoid conflict with Anaheim. Despite his accommodation, you still interpret his conduct as “**essentially in conflict with...Anaheim.**” There was essentially no conflict. Moreover Titus’ training was attended by only 200 saints, whereas more than 4000 were at the Anaheim training, plus thousands more watched the web-cast and video. Titus wonders why you brothers are so concerned about a training of 200?

II. THE MAIN POINTS OF YOUR December 6, 2005 LETTER

1) Our June 12, 2005 Letter raised “peripheral issues”

Your December 6, 2005 response dismissed the Great Lakes Brothers’ June 12, 2005 letter, saying it “*strayed from the focus*” and raised “*peripheral issues.*” We do not regard the proper relationship between the workers (with their ministries) and the local churches as “*peripheral issues.*” You wrote (June 4, 2005) charging Brother Titus to “*lead the other coworkers and the saints **under your influence** back to a peaceful pursuit of Brother Lee’s ministry....*” You also refer to “*the churches **under** your [Titus’] ministry.*” You told Brother Titus to “*join yourself and those co-workers loyal to you to the blending co-workers, with the continuation of your previous work left to...their coordinated oversight.*”

In your letter to Brother Titus, you refer to the saints, the churches and the co-workers in this area. All of these points directly impact us, the saints, and the churches we serve. Hence our response to you is hardly “*peripheral.*” We feel that your statements demonstrate your misunderstanding of the relationship between Brother Titus’ operation and both those co-working with him and the local churches in the Great Lakes area. Since your “diagnosis” is wrong, your proposed “treatment” is also misdirected! For instance, you say, “*lead...the saints **back** to...Brother Lee’s ministry*” which seems to imply a deviation from Brother Lee – a charge we vehemently deny.

We explained in our June 12, 2005 letter to you: "*Brother Titus has never labored to produce a hierarchical leadership that would determine the going on of these churches. Furthermore, he has never exercised his "influence" over the churches and workers to the extent that you have suggested. Therefore, he could never leave "the continuation of his previous work"—including "the churches under [his] ministry"—"to the fellowship of [your] coordinated oversight."* We have never been lorded over by him. Rather, he has brought us to the enjoyment and embracing of Christ as our unique Head, and to the realization that he, as well as all the Lord's servants, are ours, and we are Christ's (1 Cor. 3:22-23)." Our response involves (in our words) "*important matters of truth,*"—firstly that genuine local churches are not "*under*" the ministry of a particular servant of the Lord and, secondly, that no group of workers should seek to dominate other workers in order to subjugate them and bring their work under their own control. These considerations **are hardly "peripheral issues"** and we strongly object to your attempt to lightly dismiss them as such.

2) "Serious Repercussions of Your Letter"

We were motivated to write our June 12, 2005 letter to the "blended co-workers" "*... because of the **serious repercussions** your letter [to Brother Titus] will cause the churches that we serve...*" We are all aware that your letter to Brother Titus was not written in isolation. It is in fact a particular application of your policy of "one publication" (and the associated view of "one ministry" and "one work") which you are seeking to implement throughout the recovery. **The "serious repercussions" to which we refer stem from that underlying policy** and are exacerbated by its particular application to Brother Titus Chu.

In your December 6 response to us, you warn, "*If you spread the contents and issues raised in that letter [to Titus] to the saints, the "serious repercussions" are of your own making, not ours.*" It seems you wish to abrogate all responsibility for the ramifications of your actions, saying, "*the serious repercussions are...not ours.*" Dear brothers, even without your letter to Brother Titus, the "*serious repercussions*" (to which we refer) remain because they **stem from your underlying policy**. We remind you that the issue of "one publication" (along with "one work" and "one ministry") was raised by you brothers. This policy has been (and still is) being promoted by you brothers. May we ask, **who then bears responsibility for the "serious repercussions" of that policy?**

a. Benson Phillips' "Prophetic Word of Warning"

We wish to remind you again of Brother Benson Phillips' "prophetic word of warning" in his preface to **Speciality, Generality & Practicality** which says: "*Concerning the faith we must be very specific and particular (Jude 3; 1 Tim. 6:12); however, **concerning the other things we must follow Paul's example and be general, never insisting that others believe as we do (Rom. 14:1-8). To possess such a spirit of generality is the generality of the church life. If we are special and insist on anything other than the common faith, the oneness will surely be damaged, and divisions will occur.**"* (Benson Phillips, Preface to, **Speciality, Generality & Practicality of the Church-life**) Do you, the "blended co-workers," not stand condemned by Brother Benson's own published words? To damage the oneness and create divisions are surely "*serious repercussions.*" Yet isn't that exactly the result (foretold by Brother Benson) of your insistence on something other than the common faith—"one publication" and related policies? Then who, may we ask, is responsible? Who is trying to enforce this "one publication" policy? Who campaigned since 2002 for this policy? Who is teaching and promoting "one publication" from the podium and in print? Who is trying to systematically impose this policy upon the whole of the Lord's recovery?

It seems you brothers are seeking to relinquish all responsibility for the "*serious repercussions*" resulting from your drastic actions and ill-advised policies by saying, "*the serious repercussions are...not ours.*" You cannot abdicate responsibility so easily. Dear brothers, it is not we who have assumed the position to lead the Lord's recovery. May we humbly ask—since you, the "blended co-workers," claim the position of leadership in the recovery, shouldn't you also accept the responsibility requisite with that position? Isn't it

time you took responsibility for "*the serious repercussions*" of your actions as "leaders"? If the responsibility is not yours, then to whom does it belong?

b. Publishing...to the general public...matters...internal to the recovery

Your Dec. 6, 2005 letter criticizes "*some among [us]*" whom (you allege) "*have already gone far beyond the proper boundary by publishing your views concerning these matters to the general public on www.clevelandonline.org.*" You also refer to another website, www.concernedbrothers.com, as "*mak[ing] available to the general public details of matters that are internal to the recovery.*" [According to our knowledge, the "concerned brothers" website does not claim to represent saints and local churches in the Great Lakes area. As far as we know, it represents the views of some concerned brothers.]

You object to our publishing on the internet. You accuse us of "*mak[ing] available to the general public details of matters that are internal to the recovery.*" Once again, it seems you wilfully overlook your own actions. Why this double standard? The "blended co-workers" posted the document, "**Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**" on the www.LSM.org web-site. By doing so, **you obviously made it available to the general public.** By posting the "One Publication" document on the "world-wide-web," you were (to quote your own words) "*mak[ing] available to the general public details of matters that are internal to the recovery.*" It was soon copied to an opposing website (August 21, 2005) and became (to borrow your words) "*a springboard for further criticism and damaging statements made by all kinds of opposers, including embittered ex-members.*" If the "One Publication" issue is (in your words) "*internal to the recovery,*" why then did you post it on www.LSM.org web-site, thereby making it public? Having done that, how can you turn around and criticize us? Are we to understand that whatever the "blended co-workers" do is justified and whatever others do is condemned? Why the double standard? Do not your own actions totally negate your criticism of us on this point?

In terms of chronology, your **posting on the internet at LSM.org occurred prior to** the posting of any documents by Nigel Tomes or other writers. Yet it seems you deliberately ignore these facts in order to engage in a "blame game." It seems, dear brothers, that you are ready to blame everyone else for public criticism stemming from your actions as "leaders" of the recovery.

c. LSM Litigation

In your December 6, 2005 letter, you even seek to connect our actions (e.g. Nigel Tomes' writings) via a tenuous series of steps, with LSM's litigation against the ***Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions***. **There is in fact no connection.** It is obvious to any reader of the published legal opinion, that the Texas court's decision (January 5, 2006) **focused exclusively** on the contents of the book, ***Encyclopedia of Cults*** (as it should). The legal decision rendered was **not** based upon, nor was its decision influenced by, recent events in the Lord's recovery (e.g. the issue of 'one publication,' anonymous E-mails, Internet websites etc.). If you brothers intend to suggest that LSM's case with Harvest House was "undermined" by a "dissenting group" within the recovery, or by any of our writings, these serious allegations are clearly erroneous. This also amounts to accusing the Texas judges of unrighteous judgment, since you imply that the judges were influenced by considerations extraneous to the case (e.g. the issue of 'one publication,' anonymous E-mails, Internet websites etc.).

Dear brothers, this is a legal matter. If you feel that LSM's litigation with Harvest House was compromised by anyone within the recovery, or any of our writings, we encourage you to substantiate your allegations before the Texas Supreme Court. If you cannot substantiate such allegations in the law courts, please refrain from making unsubstantiated allegations based upon your subjective feelings and imaginations. We understand that you brothers may be deeply disappointed by the recent ruling in the LSM litigation case against Harvest House. However, that disappointment does not justify blaming brothers who have no direct involvement with this case.

d. "Witness Lee was the Acting God"

Since you raised the topic of the LSM litigation, perhaps we can raise a related point. We are all concerned about the negative effects which being labelled a "cult" will have on the saints, the local churches and the Lord's recovery. In December, you brothers were well aware that the Texas judges' decision was imminent. Yet in the LSM 2005 Winter Training, Brother Ron Kangas referred¹ to Brother Witness Lee as the "acting God." Here is one E-mail report we received about that speaking:

[**Editor's Note 1** It would be more accurate to say "Brother Ron Kangas **implied that** Brother Witness Lee was the "acting God." Clearly, many listeners understood it this way (see below). For more on this, see "*Witness Lee, the "Wise Master Builder," & the "Acting God"*" on line at http://www.concernedbrothers.com/WL/WLeeWiseMBAActingGod_2.pdf]

*"When brother Ron said, "to be builders of the house of God, we must be one with the wise master builder who is the **acting God**." My spirit immediately was shaken, but was grieved when he said that the "**acting God**" was **Brother Lee**. Even today, I question myself, "did I really hear this?" and in talking to some of the saints yesterday....sadly I did."*

This E-mail, which originated outside the Great Lakes' area, is representative of a number we have seen. Moreover, we believe our concerns are widely reflected elsewhere in the recovery. Brothers, we do not understand why Brother Ron would recklessly utter such a statement. Certainly many will interpret this statement as "deifying Brother Lee," thus fulfilling one characteristic of a "cult profile"—the exaltation and glorifying of the leader. Brother Ron is not a young or new saint who can be easily forgiven for misspeaking. Ron is an eloquent speaker who delivers carefully crafted messages. Moreover, Brother Ron was ministering as one of the "blended co-workers" at the LSM training before 4,000 trainees and thousands more via web-cast. By his own confession, Ron went beyond anything Brother Lee had ever said with this statement. Brother Ron surely was aware this statement would be seized upon and presented as evidence that we are a "cult." Inevitably Ron Kangas' statement was reported and posted on opposing web-sites within days, where it became (again in your words) "*a springboard for further criticism and damaging statements made by all kinds of opposers, including embittered ex-members.*" In light of this, may we ask, whose writing (and speaking) is producing "*public disgrace*"? Based upon this one incident, is it not hypocritical of the "blended co-workers" to accuse us of providing "*a springboard for further criticism and damaging statements*" and being a cause of "*public disgrace*"?

It seems that Brother Ron Kangas is willing to risk tarnishing all the saints and churches with the "cult" label in order to achieve a little "shock value" by declaring¹, "**Witness Lee was the acting God.**" Brothers, we protest! Even if this speaking by Ron does not appear in print, much damage is already done to the saints and the local churches. [In fact, the published version merely leaves implicit, what Brother Ron explicitly stated from the podium. See **The Ministry**, vol. 10, No. 1, Jan/Feb. 2006, pp. 212-3] Neither is this action offset by your obtaining an "endorsement" from Fuller Seminary. [We refer to a document apparently from LSM and Fuller Theological Seminary being circulated among the saints and local churches.] Brothers, we ask you, if Brother Ron's declaration¹—"Witness Lee was the acting God."—does not represent all the "blended co-workers," will you—the "blended co-workers"—please **issue a public statement through LSM withdrawing this utterance and distancing yourselves from Brother Ron's speaking** on this point? Conversely, if you—the "blended co-workers"—endorse Brother Ron Kangas' speaking, why are you using the saints' money to finance litigation over the **Encyclopedia of Cults**? Why appeal the Texas court's decision? Why did you obtain an endorsement from Fuller Theological Seminary that we are neither a "cult" nor "cult-like"? By Brother Ron's one statement, haven't you already "shot yourself in the foot" on this issue? Isn't this latest speaking adequate "evidence" to convince the wider Christian public that we are indeed a "cult"? Why then are you engaged in litigation and seeking endorsements from "Christianity" Seminaries to establish that we are **not** a "cult"? Please honestly declare to us (and all the saints) your stand on this issue.

e. No Grand Conspiracy

In case you are also tempted to allege any link between ourselves and brothers John Ingalls, Bill Mallon, John So, etc. we want to reassure you that there is no "grand conspiracy" and no "fermentation" involving ourselves and the brothers associated with the 1980's "turmoil." Neither are we "acting in concert" with others. Any "conspiracy theory," alleging such a link is **strictly** "theory"—a fiction produced in the minds of its inventors. We hope that, in your interactions with us and your representation of these matters before others, you could display a normal standard of human decency and Christian ethics and refrain from false and unsubstantiated allegations. We make these comments in the light of reports from the recent elders' gathering at the LSM Winter training.

3) "The true Acts 15 Conference...had already taken place"

Dear brothers, to be frank, we were astonished by your Dec. 6, 2005 claim that, "**The true Acts 15 conference that you requested had already taken place over a period of many months in meetings of the co-workers from all parts of the earth.**" Due to the serious repercussions we foresee arising from your (June 4, 2005) letter to Brother Titus, we wrote saying "**we request a time of fellowship with all the [21] brothers who signed your letter, Brother Titus, and a representative number of brothers from among us. We feel that according to Acts 15 this is the way to resolve any difficulties that have arisen and persist.**" (June 12, 2005) After a delay of almost 6 months, you now assert that, "**The true Acts 15 conference that you requested [has] already taken place...**"

- **All affected parties present in Acts 15**

According to our understanding an "Acts 15" type meeting is constituted by having **all the interested and affected parties attend**. Since a major issue at hand concerns (in your words) "*different works, and especially...different publications*" in the Lord's recovery, the affected parties surely include Brother Titus Chu and Brother Yu Lan Dong from Brazil. However, in your letter to Brother Titus, you acknowledge that Brother Titus was not present. "*At the international co-workers' fellowship in April 2005 **Although you were not present... your ministry and publications were one of the main subjects discussed***" (June 4, 2005). More generally you admit that (in your words) "**the brothers who have expressed disagreement ...on this matter were not present in those meetings**" (June 4, 2005).

Dear brothers, since the brothers most affected by this issue were not present, how can you claim *ex post*, in their absence, that a "true Acts 15 Conference... [has] already taken place"? Surely the absence of affected brothers and even brothers who disagree, violates a necessary condition for a "true Acts 15 conference." Isn't this equivalent to having the counsel in Jerusalem (Acts 15) without the presence of Paul, Barnabus, Peter, James or some other key figures?

- **Brother Silas Wu's Proposal Ignored**

We are aware that Brother Silas Wu, realizing the magnitude of the issues involved, proposed to the "blended co-workers" an "Acts 15-type" gathering to be held in Newton, MA from Thursday September 29 to Saturday, October 1, 2005, immediately prior to the ITERO [Elders' Training] in Moscow [Silas Wu's E-mail dated May 9, 2005]. Brother Silas proposed that brothers Benson Phillips, Titus Chu, and Yu Lan Dong (among others) should be among the attendants. **That proposed "Acts 15 conference" meeting never occurred**. Rather it was pre-empted by the "blended co-workers" issuing the document, "**Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**" (June 30, 2005). Again, we find it ironic, given your non-response to Brother Silas's proposal, that you now claim that a "true Acts 15 Conference... [has] already taken place"!

- **Acts 15 Conference concluded with "One Accord"**

A further characteristic of a "true Acts 15 conference" is "one accord" (Acts 15:25). You acknowledged that Brother Titus was not present at the crucial April 2005 co-workers' meeting. Moreover, other "brothers who have expressed disagreement with [one publication]...were not present in those meetings." Even in the absence of these brothers, based upon your own report, it appears that the April 2005 meeting was characterized not by "one accord," but by "frustration" concerning some "discordant co-workers." You wrote, "The basic **frustration** in this matter is the few co-workers who think differently..." Perhaps you will respond that there was "one accord" among the vast majority who attended. However, "one accord" among **a majority** of co-workers does not equal the "one accord" of Acts 15.

It is clear from your June 4 letter to Titus that major issues were unresolved in early June 2005. Moreover, the E-mail exchanges via fellowship@coworkers.net during June '05 are sufficient proof that there was no "one accord" concerning "one publication" when the document, "**Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**" (LSM, June 30, 2005) was published. Based upon these established facts, we find your assertion that a "true Acts 15 Conference...[has] already taken place" unjustified. Again, since there was **no** Acts 15 conference with all affected parties present, and **no** "one accord" reached (by all parties), the document, "**Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**" (LSM, 30 June 2005) **cannot be regarded** as an Acts 15 decree to be carried out by all the churches.

4) Our experiences concerning fellowship

a. "Eighty Times to Fellowship"

You elucidate in great detail the occasions of "**much and thorough fellowship beginning in 1997**" and conclude that, "**we had a total of over eighty times to fellowship and pray together.**" Brothers, you put great emphasis on the "**quantity**" of fellowship sessions, however, we are greatly concerned about the "**quality**" of the fellowship on those occasions. Whether genuine fellowship occurred is not determined by the hours brothers log in the same room. Some Great Lakes brothers who attended testified their distinct impression that what you term "fellowship" was not an exercise in mutuality, but a "one-way street." It seemed to them that important items had already been decided by an "inner circle" during pre-fellowship. When these items were presented to the whole group, it seemed members of the "outer circle" were expected to endorse, "rubber stamp," and implement them. When important matters have been pre-determined by an "inner circle," how can there be serious fellowship in mutuality? The Great Lakes brothers' impression of that "fellowship" was distinctly hierarchical, that they as "junior members" were being directed by you, the "senior brothers." Can you—the 21 "blended brothers" who wrote to Titus—deny that there was often pre-fellowship concerning many items? Can you deny that some brothers operated as an "inner circle" at many of those gatherings? You may respond that there was no "formal, organized, permanent inner circle." Yet in that case, wouldn't all your qualifying adjectives suggest there was a "virtual inner circle"? In that event, how can there be full and free fellowship in mutuality?

b. Great Lakes Brothers' Declining Attendance

You note in your Dec. 6, 2005 letter that "*for whatever reason most [elders and co-workers from the Great Lakes area] have chosen in recent years not to attend.*" May we inquire, did it ever occur to you brothers to investigate the reasons for the declining attendance from the Great Lakes? Was this ever a cause of concern to you? [Even your use of the phrase, "for whatever reason" would appear to lightly dismiss, in an off-hand manner, any possibility of a legitimate cause.] Had you earnestly inquired why Great Lakes brothers were no longer willing to attend--the lack of genuine, open, two-way fellowship in mutuality was a major contributing factor. You may contest this point, but you brothers were "not in our shoes" during those sessions. Hence, you are not qualified to answer on our behalf.

c. Great Lakes Leading Brothers' Visit to Southern California

Perhaps we can recount a few incidents to substantiate our views. Shortly after Brother Lee's passing in 1997, a large group of (English-speaking) leading brothers and co-workers from the Great Lakes churches flew to California to have fellowship with the S. California co-workers and elders. The manner in which the Great Lakes brothers were treated left a lasting impression. At the scheduled time only one or two S. California co-workers were present. Over the next hour or two, more S. California brothers gradually arrived, yet serious fellowship did not commence because (it seemed) the brothers who "really mattered" were not yet present. Finally, fellowship began, only to be interrupted at frequent intervals by cell-phone conversations. Scheduled events with S. California elders were also poorly attended. Brother Andrew Yu apologized profusely to the visiting Great Lakes brothers, but it seemed he was the exception in showing such concern. Frankly, a number of Great Lakes brothers were offended by the indifference the majority of S. California workers seemed to exhibit on that occasion.

d. Great Lakes Co-workers' Presentation at Big Bear

On a subsequent occasion co-workers from the Great Lakes area prepared a weighty document entitled: **Quotes on Leadership from the Writings of Witness Lee and Watchman Nee**. This document was presented to all the workers and leading brothers assembled at Big Bear (April, 2000). These quotes were intended to provide a basis for fellowship on this crucial topic. However, only one session was devoted to reading through a few sections together. Little fellowship ensued. One of the "blended co-workers" then exercised "closure," by proposing that we defer this material until a later time. No subsequent session occurred. The material was conveniently shelved and never referred to again. The Great Lakes co-workers were however, admonished not to distribute their material to the saints. Brothers, these kinds of incidents caused us to seriously question your willingness to have serious fellowship on matters that concern us.

In spite of the cold shoulder we received, we endeavored to initiate more fellowship. Since Brother Lee's passing, numerous conferences were held in the Great Lakes' churches to which you brothers were invited to minister to the saints in this area and also to fellowship with leading ones and elders. Brothers Paul Neider and Carl Boebel even made a special trip to Southern California related to these matters. We would like to ask, "When have you brothers reciprocated in kind, to initiate fellowship with the Great Lakes brothers?"

e. Phoenix, Arizona [February, 2003]

Moreover, when we tried to fellowship, the result was frequently disheartening. For example, a fellowship among select co-workers was arranged in Phoenix, Arizona.² A number of points were drawn up which were agreeable to all the brothers present. Some points were matters of basic Christian ethics – e.g. problems and offenses would be dealt with directly and personally by the parties involved. It was agreed that **the podium would not be used as a platform for criticism and attack**. After the time, leading brothers among us joyfully presented the points agreed upon by you brothers. The Great Lakes brothers also reported the encouragement they received from the brothers' prayer together in Phoenix.

[**Editor's Note 2** For more on the "Phoenix Accord" see "*The "PHOENIX ACCORD" An Historic Document – Presentation & Commentary*" available on line at http://www.concernedbrothers.com/Phoenix/PhoenixAccordPresentation_Commentary.pdf]

We felt betrayed when the agreements made in Phoenix were violated. The statement concerning not attacking others from the podium was quickly violated. Instead, the platform was used by you brothers to launch more innuendos. Moreover, detailed criticisms were levied against Brother Titus Chu, Great Lakes young peoples' conferences, a Lord's Day morning meeting in Columbus, OH. and articles written by a brother among us. In direct violation of what was agreed in Phoenix, the speakers **did not** express their concerns directly and personally to the brothers involved nor check the accuracy of their accusations with any of us. You claim that the agreement at Phoenix was misused. Brothers,

these are Scriptural principles taught in Matthew 18; they should not depend on ratification in Phoenix!

f. Applying Matthew 18

Brothers, how can we fellowship when matters you previously agreed upon with us seem to be of no consequence in your minds? We hope that our fellowship is with the singleness and sincerity of God. Why is it, brothers, that you expect others to apply Matthew 18 in their dealings with you, when (apparently) you do not apply it yourselves? In the litigation with Harvest House you proclaim publicly, "*Living Stream Ministry and the local churches responded **in a Christian manner based on the biblical admonition put forth in Matthew 18**, requesting a face-to-face meeting to resolve the problem. This offer was repeated to the authors and publisher at least six times in writing and twice in telephone messages over an eleven-month period.*" (www.contendingforthefait.com). Isn't this public statement glaringly inconsistent with your dealings with certain brothers (e.g. Titus Chu, Nigel Tomes) and some Great Lakes churches? Why don't you respond to these brothers and these churches "**in a Christian manner based on the biblical admonition put forth in Matthew 18** requesting a face-to-face meeting to resolve the problem"?

g. Brooklyn Park, MN Conference 2003

A further example was a conference in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, in the Fall of 2003. After the conference, several leading brothers requested fellowship with brothers Ed Marks and Dick Taylor concerning divisions in the church in Rochester, Minnesota. Brothers Ed Marks and Dick Taylor sympathized with the brothers, but pointed out that any meaningful fellowship should include Brother Titus Chu because of his past labor among the Minnesota churches. Brothers Ed Marks and Dick Taylor twice promised that such fellowship would be arranged. No such arrangement was made. In the Spring of 2005, the division in Rochester became more severe. Then the Rochester elders wrote to the S. California co-workers because they felt the "fellowship" some Rochester brothers received during LSM's ITERO training damaged the church. The church elders asked for a clarification of the content and intent of that fellowship. Their request was ignored.

Other leading brothers among us have written E-mails to clarify statements made from the podium during LSM conferences and trainings. Almost all such requests were ignored. In other cases, any answer was made conditional on the writer first responding to a battery of questions (many unrelated to the request). Accusations were even leveled at some brothers who raised questions. These are some of our experiences of seeking to engage you brothers in fellowship. Brothers, may we ask, when will you simply fellowship with us as your brothers in Christ? We apologize if our comments seem excessive, but our conscience testifies that our requests were made with a sincere heart.

h. Concerning Brother Paul Neider

Despite such experiences, in recent years, some brothers still felt before the Lord to seek fellowship with you brothers. Brother Paul Neider attended a co-workers fellowship in April 2005. In your (December 6, 2005) response you justify your letter to Brother Titus based upon a comment made by Brother Paul during this fellowship. [*"One of the signers of that letter, Paul Neider, **participated in the fellowship of the blended co-workers in April** and agreed that the problems that have developed needed to be brought to Titus himself."*] You do not quote Brother Paul in full, nor give the context of his statements. These omissions give an inaccurate impression. Some may interpret your statement – "*Paul Neider, ...agreed*" to mean that Brother Paul endorsed the entire contents of your letter to Brother Titus. Nothing could be further from the truth. Others may deduce that Brother Paul is characterized by duplicity, fickleness or hypocrisy for signing the Great Lakes brothers' (June & Sept.) letters. On one hand, you criticize the Great Lakes brothers for not attending, on the other, it seems you wish to use our participation in the co-workers' fellowship against us!

i. Concerning Brother Nigel Tomes

In June 2005, the brothers on coworkers.net were asked for their input regarding the 8th draft of the document, **Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**. Brother Nigel Tomes responded with his concerns. Most of these concerns were never addressed by the "blended co-workers." The twelve points listed in his **Analysis and Response**, remain outstanding. With no explanation to Nigel or other brothers who expressed concerns, the final document **Publication Work** was published June 30, 2005. Brother Nigel persevered and submitted his, **Analysis and Response**, to all those on coworkers.net. He has never received a response to his 12 points from you brothers. Rather than respond directly to Nigel's concerns, the S. California co-workers issued a letter (September 27, 2005) to all the co-workers worldwide, denouncing his writings as "*Nigel's dissenting document,*" "*works of darkness*" which "*spread spiritual death*" and "*release negative feelings,*" etc. Moreover, your lumping together of Nigel's writings with various anonymous documents amounts to "guilt by association."

Once again, the principles of Matthew 18 were not applied by you. The "blended co-workers" never contacted Nigel directly and personally. You never (to quote your words to Harvest House) "**responded in a Christian manner based on the biblical admonition put forth in Matthew 18.**" Neither have you replied to Nigel's 1st October letter to the S. California co-workers asking for clarification. May we ask, was the S. California co-workers' letter intended to generate fellowship or to produce fear, suspicion and intimidation? Regardless of your intent, we refuse to allow brothers among us to be singled out, "black-listed" and ostracized by you, whether it is Brothers Titus Chu, Paul Neider, Nigel Tomes, or any others. We hope you brothers could listen to our concerns.

j. Fellowship@coworkers.net

Not long after Brother Lee's departure an E-mail facility was inaugurated called "fellowship@coworkers.net" which allowed any leading brother or co-worker on the list to communicate directly with all the other brothers in the principle of "mutuality." In the early years the coworkers.net facility was chiefly used to indicate when brothers could not attend the co-workers' fellowship sessions. Most E-mails contained little of substance. However, in 2005 some brothers began to use coworkers.net to convey their feelings concerning issues such as "one publication."

Abruptly, in early October, the fellowship@coworkers.net facility was unilaterally terminated by LSM without explanation. Brother Bob Danker simply sent a one-line message, "**Dear Brothers, Effective today this email list will be discontinued.**" (Bob Danker, E-mail, Tuesday, October 4, 2005) Brothers, it seems in this case "actions speak louder than words." Who terminated fellowship@coworkers.net? It is you brothers who unilaterally terminated that facility for fellowship. Why? May we ask, are you brothers enhancing or limiting opportunities to fellowship? Are you brothers willing to accept fellowship in mutuality? Or, are you only willing to have "fellowship" on terms dictated by you and when the agenda and channels of fellowship are controlled by you?

The above 10 points enumerate some of our experiences concerning fellowship with you brothers. Some you may dismiss as being of little consequence. However, when taken as a whole, they leave us with a distinct impression about the lack of genuine, open and mutual fellowship in recent years. Brothers, we can say with a clear conscience, we desire such genuine, open and mutual fellowship.

5. The "Central Issue"—"the propagation of Titus's publications"

In your December 6, 2005 letter, you identify as the "*central issue at hand—the problems raised worldwide from the propagation of Titus's publications.*" Along the same lines you refer to "*the problems occurring worldwide because of multiple publication works in the recovery.*"

The issue of "one publication" has been promoted by the "blended co-workers" for a number of years. Indeed, there has been something of a "crusade" to persuade people of

your viewpoint. In terms of spoken messages, this campaign became evident to us in 2002 with Brother James Lee's speaking at the LSM Thanksgiving conference in San Diego, November 2002. In his spoken message, James Lee went so far as to suggest that "one publication" be added to the seven "ones" in Ephesians 4.³ [To our knowledge this word, heard by many at the conference and through web-cast, has never been retracted. It did not appear in the published version see **The Ministry**, vol. 7, no. 2, March 2003, p. 101] [Editor's Note 3 The LSM brothers have protested that the reference was to "seven wonders."]

Subsequently Brother Ron Kangas addressed this topic in the 2004 LSM Summer Training. He said, "**Many are governed by Brother Lee's word, which follows Brother Nee's word, concerning the principle (not the organizational structure) of having one publication work. Others may honestly have a different view. What should we do? We are not here to fight, to argue, or to debate. Let us identify the real issue behind all the differences that arise – somebody is not holding the Head.**" [RK. **The Ministry**, v.8, no.7, p. 183]

The obvious implication of – "**somebody is not holding the Head**"-- is that those who honestly disagree with your "one publication" policy are condemned for "*not holding the Head.*" We contend that most saints would interpret Ron's word in this way. Doesn't this amount to using your control of the podium to launch a blatant attack on those who honestly hold a divergent view?

Later, at the 2004 LSM Winter Training, Brother Minoru Chen touched on this subject. He said, "... whenever we have many different publication works, it means that there are many trumpet sounds. These many different trumpet sounds cause the army of God to be confused. **It is not a matter of right or wrong, biblical or non-biblical...**"⁴ [**The Ministry**, vol. 9, No. 1, Jan. 2005, p. 186]. Brother Minoru Chen went on to criticize the idea that this is a matter of the freedom of speech, "*One strong characteristic of this country is the freedom of speech, which means the freedom of opinion ...However, the Lord's Body is the place with the least freedom.*" [**The Ministry**, vol. 9, No. 1, Jan. 2005, p. 186]. We are aware that "freedom of speech" was strongly argued in co-workers' meetings (e.g. in Phoenix), by some senior and respected brothers who disagreed with the "one publication" policy. In this instance the "blended co-workers" used their "monopoly of the podium" to promote their own interests and depreciate alternative views sincerely expressed by others. May we ask, is it ethical for the "blended co-workers" to use the public podium to attack views which were expressed, in confidence, in a "private" co-workers' meeting?

[Editor's Note 4 For more on this see: "*Not a Matter of...Biblical or Non-biblical*"—What Did Minoru Really Write? What Did Minoru Really Say?" available on line at <http://www.concernedbrothers.com/OP/BiblicalNonBiblicalMinoruChen.pdf>]

Further examples are the speaking of "DT" at the ITERO in Anaheim CA. April 10-12, 2005. "*To do a work within the work, to carry out another ministry within the one ministry, is a very serious matter. Suppose a brother decides to set up his own publishing house in order to send out his messages to the recovery and to develop his own ministry. This will cause trouble. This is like Saul setting up a monument for himself. This is serious.*" [DT, **The Ministry**, v. 9, no. 6, June 2005, p. 152] Brother "DT" then went on to claim "*Please understand that this is simply an illustration and is not directed at anyone in particular.*" Brothers, do you think the saints are that naïve? They know how to "connect the dots." This "illustration," stigmatizing others as "Saul," building up their own kingdom, applies to only a few brothers and was surely applied by many saints to those particular brothers. Again, the power of the podium was used to denigrate others and sow seeds of suspicion among the saints.

These are merely some examples from published messages of the "blended co-workers." We could elaborate at length based upon other Wednesday-night and conference messages. Moreover, the impact of these spoken and printed messages is enhanced by their being re-spoken as "prophesies" in many local church meetings. We note that most of these messages were given prior to the release of the document "**Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**," (June 30, 2005) while "one publication" was still an item of fellowship among the co-workers.

It is evident that there has been a crusade from the platform, beginning Nov. 2002, to indoctrinate the saints in the Lord's recovery with your "one publication" teaching. You have also used your control of the podium to deprecate alternative viewpoints. The "one publication" policy has been systematically taught to the saints over an extended period. At the same time "seeds of suspicion" were sown, via suggestions that producing "another publication" was "to do a work within the work," "not holding the Head," "to carry out another ministry within the one ministry," and to "cause the army of God to be confused," etc.

Inevitably these seeds have sprouted and produced fruit, in the form of (what you term) "**protests of the sense of life**" within the saints and the "**problems**" perceived by co-workers in various places. You now claim that you are merely responding to the "feeling of the Body" expressed by the saints. However, we would counter that these feelings--"**protests of the sense of life**"--**are not independent** of the campaign promoting "one publication" conducted by you brothers. **You have used the power of the podium, the printing press, the web-cast and the practice of prophesying to propagate your "one publication" doctrine, deprecate alternative viewpoints and prejudice the saints against the ministry and publications of Brother Titus Chu, Brother Yu-Lan Dong and others.**

Now, after waging a "successful campaign," you claim that it is "the saints" – "Even if the blended brothers...endorse[d]...Titus' good intentions, **the saints could not ignore... the protests of the sense of life within themselves.**" You say, "It is not a matter of a few comments made from the platform." We agree. The present situation is the result of **many** comments from the platform; in fact there has been **a systematic campaign from the podium and in print** for over 3 years. Certainly the cumulative effects of that crusade cannot be reversed with a "few comments" by you brothers!

III. THE STAND OF A GENUINE LOCAL CHURCH

We wish to state our thoughts, as brothers, concerning the stand a genuine local church in the Lord's recovery should have today, based upon the New Testament, as we have been helped to understand it through the ministries of Brother Nee and Brother Lee. We take as an initial reference point, the publication, authored by "The Co-workers in the Lord's Recovery," entitled, **The Beliefs & Practices of the Local Churches** (Anaheim, CA., Living Stream Ministry, 1978, 22pp.)

[NOTE: The following points are **not** to be taken as the (official or unofficial) stand of any of the local churches with which we are associated. The "stand" of a particular local church requires (among other things) the input and agreement of the corporate eldership in that locality. The signatories of this and previous Great Lakes brothers' letters sign as individuals expressing their personal convictions. Moreover, as authors, should any points need clarification, we reserve **the right to interpret** and explain exactly what is meant by the following points and the right **not** to be restricted by or limited to others' interpretation. A similar caveat applies to all parts of this document.]

1. The Holy Scriptures

- "**We stand on the Holy Scriptures**, not according to any traditional interpretation, but according to the pure Word of God." [**Beliefs & Practices...** p. 4]
- The Bible is our unique standard. "*The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree even if everyone approved of it.*"
- We recognize only two divinely-inspired, completed testaments, the Old Testament and the New Testament (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Rev. 22:18-19). We do not regard the writings of Watchman Nee, Witness Lee or any other servant of the Lord, as having equal or greater authority than the Bible. Their writings are not Scripture and therefore need to be evaluated, discerned and understood based upon the canon of Scripture (1 Thess. 5:21, see the next point).

- "All the teachings, inspirations, and guidance which claim the Holy Spirit as their source must be checked by God's revelation in His Word." [**Beliefs & Practices...**, p. 8-9]
2. **"We Stand on Christ**, the living rock, the foundation stone, the Head of the Body, and the life and reality of the church." [**Beliefs & Practices...**, p. 4]
- "Our unique leader and Head is Christ. We have no official, permanent, organized human leadership. Furthermore there is no hierarchy of any kind and no worldwide leader [or leadership group]. We recognize no person as infallible, and we do not follow anyone blindly." [**Beliefs & Practices...**, p. 16]
3. **"We stand on the genuine unity of the Body of Christ**. We are not sectarian, nor denominational, nor non-denominational, nor interdenominational." [**Beliefs & Practices...**, p. 4]
- "The Church which is His Body" (Eph. 1:22-23) is universal, including all genuine believers in Christ both globally and throughout the church age from Pentecost to the Lord's return.
 - The Body of Christ is inclusive, not exclusive. The Body of Christ is **not** composed merely of those believers who practically meet as local churches in their localities. It does **not** include **only** those believers who recognize themselves as being in the "Lord's recovery." The Body of Christ **includes all** genuine believers in Christ. Hence the members of Christ's Body number not 30,000 or 300,000; rather they are as innumerable as the "stars of heaven" (Gen. 22:17; Gal. 3:29).
 - "We are the Body [of Christ] and He is the unique Head of the Body. No one and nothing can presume to usurp Christ's headship. We cannot tolerate any system, organization, or leadership that insults the headship of Christ. Among us there is no permanent, official, organized leadership. Furthermore there is no hierarchy.... We recognize no sub-heads, nor intermediaries between Christ and the members of the Body." [**Beliefs & Practices...**, p. 12-13] [This does not mean that there is no leadership in the New Testament; apostles took the lead in each company of workers to carry out God's work in the sphere measured to them (2 Cor. 10:13). Elders take the lead in the local church (Heb. 13:7, 17).]
 - We are the Body and Christ is the Head. We cannot tolerate any **de facto** leadership, system, or organization, (even if it claims to be "organic") which insults the headship of Christ. We do not recognize any special person or elite group of believers who claim a particular status by virtue of their "knowing the Body," "having the feeling of the Body," and "moving in the Body."
 - There is no human "universal coordinator of the One New Man," nor "global supervisor of the Body," nor "world-wide overseer of God's building work." We reject, as unscriptural, the concept of an individual coordinator or a group of coordinators (directors, supervisors or overseers, etc.) in these aspects of God's work. We fear this will replicate the "Romish system" of Roman Catholicism. Christ is the unique "Person" of the One New Man (Col. 3:10-11) and the Builder of the Church (Matt. 16:18). The Holy Spirit is the unique Executor of the Body (Eph. 4:4). He does not need men to be His managers, assistants nor to function as global directors on His behalf. We desire to allow the Holy Spirit to exercise His lordship in everything. [W. Nee, **Collected Works**, Vol. 26, p. 425]
4. **Our Attitude towards Believers** while standing on the Ground of Oneness
- "We stand on the ground of the oneness of all believers in each locality; we recognize all the blood-redeemed and Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ as members of the one church in each city." [**Beliefs & Practices...**, p. 4]

- "In the church life, we stand for the unique oneness of Christ's Body. In order to maintain this oneness we meet as believers on the ground of oneness [and] we receive all believers according to the common faith." [**Beliefs & Practices..** p. 13]
- "Although we must, for conscience sake, stand apart from organized religion, we do not stand apart from our brothers and sisters in Christ. In faithfulness to the Lord, we stand on the unique ground of the church for the sake of the Lord's testimony. But **we do not stand in a narrow, exclusive, or sectarian spirit**. On the contrary, **we take our stand on behalf of the whole Body**, we receive all believers even as the Lord has received us." [**Beliefs & Practices...** p. 20]
- We have made mistakes and been negligent in receiving believers and we have offended the Body of Christ and many brothers and sisters. We echo the sentiments expressed by W. Lee, "We have much to learn concerning receiving people according to God and according to His Son. **Because of our negligence in this matter in the past, we have offended the Body of Christ and many brothers and sisters** in the Lord. For this reason, **I had a deep repentance** before the Lord. Brothers and sisters, **I hope that we can see our past mistakes...**" (W. Lee, **The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life**, Chp. 6, emphasis added)

5. Oneness

- We endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, according to the seven ones in Ephesians 4:3-5. We seek to neither add nor subtract from the seven basic items of the oneness which we already possess.
- We seek to practice both the "speciality" and the "generality" of the church-life – insisting on the basic items of the common faith ("speciality") while not insisting that other believers believe or practice the same as we do ("generality") in other matters.

*"Concerning the faith we must be very specific and particular (Jude 3; 1 Tim. 6:12); however, concerning the other things we must follow Paul's example and be general, never insisting that others believe as we do (Rom. 14:1-8). To possess such a spirit of generality is the generality of the church life. **If we are special and insist on anything other than the common faith, the oneness will surely be damaged, and divisions will occur.**" (Benson Phillips, Preface to W. Lee, **Speciality, Generality & Practicality of the Church-Life**, Chp. 4)*

*"We all have to learn that to keep the oneness of the Body we must practice this generality. **If we are special, if we are definite and specific in anything other than our faith, surely the oneness will be damaged.** The oneness will be hurt and **then we will be divided.** The main cause for the divisions among Christians is the neglect of caring for the generality of the church life." (W. Lee, **Speciality, Generality & Practicality of the Church-Life**, Chp. 4)*

6. The One New Testament Ministry and many Ministries

- We recognize that there is one unique New Testament (NT) ministry, the "ministry of the new covenant," "the ministry of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:6-9) to build up the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). Yet, within this one ministry there are many ministers (2 Cor. 4:1) and many ministries (services) (1 Cor. 12:5).
- We recognize that, as believers today, we have a rich inheritance given by the Lord through many ministries over the centuries, especially the ministries of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, the vessels used to raise us up. However, this does not mean that the local churches receive exclusively Witness Lee's ministry and no other ministry. *"Some have said that the Lord's recovery is a one-man show, that there is room only for the ministry of Witness Lee, not for the ministry of anyone else. This is absolutely false. This is not my intention nor is it my practice."* (W. Lee, **Truth Messages**, p. 42)
- The NT Ministry is not exclusive, but inclusive. We recognize that both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee had a portion in the NT ministry. However, we reject the

concept that the NT ministry belonged **exclusively** to either Brother Nee or Brother Lee and that it belongs **exclusively** to any brother or group of brothers claiming to continue the ministry of either brother. [However, this does **not** mean that we reject believers who hold these particular views. Rather, we receive them, just as we receive all whom the Lord has received. (A similar caveat applies elsewhere.)]

- We recognize that all God-given ministries are for the local churches, and no church is for a ministry. [*“Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas...all are yours, But you are Christ’s...”* (1 Cor.3:22-23) see also W. Lee, **The Building Work of God**, p. 139]
- We desire to receive all ministries that build up the Body of Christ and are profitable to the local churches we serve. It is the responsibility of the local church elders to determine, before the Lord, which ministries are profitable for building up and for perfecting the saints in their locality and to guard and protect against damage. (Acts 20:28)
- Ministries should not be a cause of parties or division in the local churches. No NT minister (or group of ministers) should seek to bring a local church (or group of local churches) into their exclusive “sphere of influence” nor seek to exclude other NT ministers from a local church, thereby creating a fissure between churches.
- We agree that in a particular era there may be a “Ministry of the Age” as Brother Nee defines it, *“In every age the Lord has special things that He wants to accomplish. He has His recoveries and His own works to do. The particular recovery and work that He does in one age is **the ministry of that age.**”* [W. Nee, **Collected Works...**, vol. 57, p. 260-1] However, the NT pattern is a ministry (service) carried by a number of ministers (2 Cor. 4:1). Hence the “Ministry of the Age” in Acts 1-2 was carried by “the twelve (apostles),” including not only Peter, but also John, Matthew, etc. We see no NT precedent for identifying “the Ministry of the Age” with the personal ministry of one special servant of the Lord (“the Minister of the Age”).
- We question the wisdom of dogmatically asserting that in each epoch there is one, unique “Minister of the Age,” along with related notions such as one person [or group of people] being “the wise master-builder supervising God’s building work on the whole globe.” We have not yet found adequate support in the New Testament for these ideas. Moreover we fear that the doctrinaire application of these concepts will produce a replica of the “Romish” system of Roman Catholicism. [However, this does **not** mean that we reject believers who hold these particular views. Rather, we receive them, just as we receive all whom the Lord has received.]

7. LSM – Living Stream Ministry

- Living Stream Ministry (LSM) is a Christian publisher. It is a Levitical service to publish and distribute Witness Lee’s messages in various forms. It should not control, lead nor coordinate the local churches. LSM does not have a monopoly (exclusive rights) on publications within the Lord’s recovery.
- ***“The Living Stream Ministry office is **only a business office to serve my ministry for two things: to publish the messages in book form and to distribute these messages in both video and audio tapes. That is all the ministry office should do and nothing elsethe ministry office has always had this specific function and no other function. This little office is a Levitical service serving my ministry to put out the word of God in print and through video and audio tapes.***”** [Witness Lee, **A Timely Word**, 1988, p. 39, emphasis added]
- ***“No one can control the local churches. No one can control anything because we do not have organization among us. I do not control, and **the Living Stream office would not control. Mistakes may have been made in the past. ... No one controls you. All the local churches have the full freedom to go on. As long as you do not do anything against our New Testament constitution, no one would bother you.**”*** [Witness Lee, **A Timely Word**, 1988, p. 40, emphasis added]
- We reject as unscriptural the concept that the Lord’s “up-to-date speaking” (“God’s present oracle”) to the local churches and the saints in the Lord’s recovery occurs **exclusively** through ministry conducted under the auspices of LSM (i.e., the “seven

annual feasts,” the weekly ministry meetings, the FTT, etc.) or **exclusively** through a group of “blended co-workers” associated with LSM. Consequently we also reject the notion that the Lord’s “up-to-date speaking” (“God’s present oracle”) is contained **exclusively** in publications (books, DVD’s, video’s web-casts etc) issued by LSM. [However, this does **not** mean that we reject believers who hold these particular views. Rather, we receive them, just as we receive all whom the Lord has received. We neither prohibit nor discourage saints from reading, studying or pursuing LSM materials.]

8. The Local Church

- “Each local church is autonomous in its administration. Therefore there is no central headquarters [of the local churches]. No particular local church should be regarded as the head church or leading church. On the contrary, all the local churches have the same standing before the Lord.” [*Beliefs & Practices...* p. 16] The genuine local churches are not under LSM nor any global administration of man.
- The administration of the church is local in sphere, carried out corporately by the eldership under the headship of Christ. This is a corporate lead embodied in the eldership. “*Administration local, each answering to the Lord.*” (#824, *Hymns*) This principle is not negated by the fact that there is one Body and one NT ministry.
- We reject as unscriptural the concept of a “global administration,” vested in one person or one group of people who seek to direct the local churches as exemplified by the “directive” – “*All the saints and all the churches everywhere should similarly be restricted to one publication in the Lord’s recovery.*” [“The Blended Co-workers”, *Publication Work in the Lord’s Recovery*, LSM, June 30, 2005, p. 8]
- Since the Body of Christ is universal, we endeavour to maintain good fellowship with all other churches, especially, for practical purposes, the nearby churches. We reject the concept that fellowship between local churches should be mediated through or coordinated by LSM or a group of “blended co-workers” or that fellowship between local churches should be conditional upon participation in LSM-sponsored events.
- Moreover, since the universal Body of Christ includes all genuine believers, our obligations to fellowship are not exhausted “within the Lord’s recovery.” Rather, we recognize that believers not currently meeting with the local churches in the Lord’s recovery are also members of Christ’s Body whose portion we need and whose fellowship we should seek.
- We agree that the ultimate goal of God’s purpose is to produce the built-up Body of Christ (His prepared Bride). However, we question the notion that the local aspect of the church is secondary (“a box holding the diamond”) with the implication that we should pay less attention to the local church than the universal Body. We fear this concept may involve a false dichotomy between the local and universal aspects of the Church, which is not contained in the NT. Scripture does not segregate the local church from the Body. Without building up the local churches, how can the Body be built up in the church age? As Brother Lee has written, “*Without the local churches, the universal church has no practicality or actuality. The universal church is realized in the local churches. Knowing the church in its universal aspect must be consummated in knowing the church in its local aspect. It is a great advance for us to know and practice the local churches.*” (RcV. Rev. 1:4, fn. 2)

9. God’s Work

- **One Work.** There is one work because there is only one God, one Lord and one Spirit. Hence the “work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10) is one because it belongs to the one Lord and is motivated and directed by the one Holy Spirit. The Lord’s one work is to build up the one Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). Its oneness is “divine and mystical”; it does not need to be practically organized nor globally coordinated by man.

One work, many companies of workers

- The Lord's one work is not accomplished through a single group of workers. Rather, the NT pattern shows multiple groups of workers under the leadership of various apostles (Titus 3:13), yet extending the "right hand fellowship" to one another (Gal. 2:9). The concept of a single company of workers under centralized control is "Romish" (Roman Catholic).
- We reject as unscriptural the concept that because there is one Body and one NT ministry there should therefore be one world-wide work in the recovery under the global human administration of one apostle (minister) or a single company of ministers.
- The Holy Spirit is the unique Executor of God's work (Acts 13:2). He never needs man to be His manager, director, coordinator or assistant. We must allow the Holy Spirit to exercise His lordship in everything. No matter how we have sought after His mind, we are never His assistants. We must allow the Holy Spirit to do everything according to His will. [ref. W. Nee, **Collected Works**, Vol. 26, p. 425]
- The attitude of workers towards one another should be tolerant and inclusive, according to the Lord's word: "*He that is not against us is for us*" (Mark 9:40). For one group of workers to exclude or reject other workers or seek to subject other workers to their control (Gal.2:5) is contrary to the Lord's mind. How wonderful if there were no jealousy, rivalry, bitterness, intolerance or undermining between groups of workers, but rather including, honoring, receiving and care (Titus 3:13)!

10. Avoiding the Pitfalls of Organization, Centralization and Control

- We wish to take seriously Watchman Nee's warning--"*Once there was the blessing of the Lord, men organized something to contain the blessing. ...When the grace of God comes, **men immediately set up an organization to keep it. The organization remains, but the content is lost.** However, the cup cannot be broken; there are always those who are zealous to maintain the cup continuously. Here is a matter of principle: The students of Wesley could never be equal to Wesley, nor could the students of Calvin match Calvin. The schools of the prophets seldom produced prophets—all the great prophets were chosen by God from the wilderness. The Spirit of God descends upon whomsoever He will. He is the Head of the church, not we. **Men always think the living water is valuable and must be kept by organization, but it gradually declines** through the generations until it completely dries up."* [W. Nee, **Collected Works...**, Vol. #47, p. 57, emphasis added]

IV. OUR CONCERNS

In our September 24, 2005 letter we listed some matters of serious concern to us. We stated, "*We are concerned that while you are teaching one flow, you may be producing conformity; as you are stressing oneness, you may be producing only uniformity in outward practices; while you are emphasizing fellowship, you may be just exercising control; and as you are speaking about the organic Body, you may be actually establishing a global organization.*"

Your response is that "*your letter **appears to accuse** the blended co-workers of serious behavior...*" (Dec. 6, 2005). Dear brothers, may we ask, why are you so sensitive? We have "serious concerns," which we expressed to you, yet you interpret these as "accusations." Some of you (in another context) have even complained that we "*found you guilty*" in these matters. Brothers, we are aware that frequently, on the podium, you have referred to "concerns" expressed to you by certain saints. Since, apparently, you have an open ear for the "concerns" of these saints, why are we remiss in elucidating our concerns to you? Why do you interpret our concerns as "accusations" and respond defensively? At this point we wish to elaborate on two of these points of concern.

1. The tendency towards conformity and uniformity

We expressed apprehension about (what we perceive as) a tendency towards conformity and uniformity among the saints and the local churches. Yet, in your published

messages, some of you brothers have simply dismissed such concerns. Brother Benson Phillips is on record as saying, "Do not say that you are standing against uniformity and that you cannot agree with such a thing. **Forget about uniformity; we do not have uniformity.**" [BP., *The Ministry*, v. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 37] We do not feel that our concern should be dismissed so lightly by simply asserting, "**Forget about uniformity; we do not have uniformity.**" In fact, we believe that your teachings may serve to reinforce the trend towards homogeneity.

- **No Interpretational differences**

Our concerns were confirmed when we examined your published messages. For example, Brother Ron Kangas' teaching rules out any legitimate differences in Scriptural understanding among the saints. Brother Ron said, "When Christ is the Head practically in our experience, it is **impossible for there to be different interpretations** of the Scriptures. The Head is very clear. **Interpretational differences prove that some members have problems with the Head and are not under the Head**" [RK *The Ministry*, vol.8, no. 7, p. 183] This statement, which appears without any qualification, apparently rules out all differences in interpreting even the parables, types, symbols or prophecies in the Bible, since any such "**interpretational differences**" in Brother Ron's words, "**prove that some members have problems with the Head and are not under the Head.**" Surely a serious application of this teaching will produce a strong tendency to conformity. Moreover, this kind of speaking encourages intolerance towards any understanding of the Scriptures which appears to be different.

- **Zero Tolerance**

On another occasion, when addressing the topic of "one accord" Brother Ron also states, "**As long as we have different views on a minor point, we cannot have one accord (Phil. 3:15)...If one brother has a different view, even if it is on a minor point, we cannot have the one accord.**" [Ron Kangas, *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 2005 p.64] If we take this speaking seriously, according to Brother Ron, the prerequisite for one accord is **unanimity on all points, both major and minor**. Surely this implies absolute conformity as a prerequisite to achieving one accord. Conversely it implies "zero tolerance" towards any alternative points of view. Isn't it legitimate to ask--Will not these teachings--which have been spoken and printed by the "blended co-workers"--inevitably produce conformity and uniformity among us? Doesn't this kind of teaching justify our concerns?

2. The Organic Body vs. Global Organization -- "the Body equals the recovery."

We also stated, in our September 24 letter that, "*We are concerned that...as you are speaking about the organic Body, you may be actually establishing a global organization.*" In part our concern rests upon your interpretation of the Body. You are on record as equating the Body of Christ with those believers within the Lord's recovery. Brother Minoru Chen has written, "*I would say that practically speaking, for us the Body today is just the Lord's recovery. ...In Brother Lee's understanding, the Body equals the recovery. We know that the mystical Body of Christ includes all the believers, all of the redeemed ones in time and in space, but **practically for us today, the recovery is the Body.**" [MC., *The Ministry*, v. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 196]*

You acknowledge the Scriptural definition of the universal Body. Yet, hasn't it been "re-defined" by your words, "**the recovery is the Body**"? It is surely a matter of great import to diminish Christ's universal (mystical) Body, composed of hundreds of millions of genuine believers, down to the 300,000 believers currently in the Lord's recovery around the globe. You have reduced something as "innumerable as the stars of heaven" (Gen. 22:17; Gal. 3:29) to a finite number equivalent to the population of a small-sized city or town.

We know of no precedent either in the Bible, or in the ministries of Brothers Nee and Lee, for such an **exclusive definition of the Body as entailed in the statement--"the Body equals the recovery."** Brother Lee clearly taught us that "*The church is ... an organic Body constituted of all the believers, who have been regenerated and have*

God's life..." [**Conclusion of NT**, p. 2245] Moreover, he says, "...**through the centuries, all God's chosen people were, are, and will be brought into not only the reality but also the practicality of the Body of Christ...**" [**Conclusion of NT**, p. 2106] These statements cover the universality of the Body both time-wise and space-wise. Even when Brother Lee talked of the Body as the aggregate of all the local churches, he surely intended that we understand the "local church" as inclusive of all the believers in that place. Hence, **The Beliefs and Practices** states clearly that "we recognize **all the blood-redeemed and Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ as members of the one church in each city.**" [**Beliefs and Practices**, p. 4]

Over the past decade "the Body" has been emphasized repeatedly in your messages. Yet, what exactly do you brothers mean by "the Body"? We feel that your statement, "**the Body equals the recovery,**" reveals the actual concept underlying much of your speaking about the universal Body. The same concept appears to underlie Brother Ron Kangas' speaking concerning "the Lord's leading in the Body universally" when he says, "**The seven times a year that we come together are for the universal Body, for the speaking to the entire Body and for the Lord's leading to the whole Body.**" [RK, **The Ministry**, vol. 7, no. 9, p. 169]

If the universal Body includes all the believers throughout the age of grace, "speaking to the entire Body" (to quote Brother Ron) **is impossible for any minister today**. Hence Brother Nee says, "the church here [in Matt 18] is local, not universal, for no one could speak at one time to all the children of God throughout the universe. It is only possible to speak at one time to the believers living in one place." [W. Nee, **Normal Christian Church Life**, pp. 51-2]. Brother Ron Kangas appears to claim what Brother Nee says is impossible – to speak to the entire universal Body of Christ!

It seems, however, this contradiction arises from differing concepts of the Body. According to our understanding, Brother Nee holds the Scriptural concept of the universal Body. However, it seems that for you brothers, "**the Body equals the recovery.**" If that is the case, for you to address the "entire Body" merely requires getting everyone to Anaheim or listening to the web-cast and video, where "**we come together...for the universal Body, for the speaking to the entire Body and for the Lord's leading to the whole Body.**" [RK, **The Ministry**, vol. 7, no. 9, p. 169]

Yet, as we understand it, the Bible never teaches that "**the Body equals the recovery,**" nor have we found this concept in Brother Lee's writings. Surely your adoption of a narrow and exclusive definition of "the Body," which differs from both the Bible and the teaching of Brothers Nee and Lee, risks producing something other than the goal of God's economy. We fear that your exclusive definition of Christ's Body may produce a "virtual body," which is in fact a global organization.

V. OUR REQUEST FOR FELLOWSHIP

Your December 6, 2005 letter appears to express a resolute refusal to meet with Brother Titus, "**...What shall we come together to talk about with him?**" It also appears that you are unwilling to meet with us in the presence of Brother Titus, "**we feel that any such fellowship should not be complicated by the presence of Titus.**" Nor are you willing to discuss matters related to Brother Titus, "**such fellowship should not be complicated... by the unresolved issues that we have with him.**"

Yet, despite the above, you say, "**We are open to consider a time or times of fellowship with you.**" Dear brothers, may we ask, what kind of "openness" is that? How can you say "**We are open to consider a time or times of fellowship**" when you seek to impose the conditions just referred to? May we ask, why are you so reluctant to meet with Brother Titus?

We wish to again reiterate our request for "a time of fellowship with [1] all the [21] brothers who signed your letter, [2] Brother Titus, and [3] a representative number of brothers from among us. We feel that according to Acts 15 this is the way to resolve any difficulties that have arisen and persist." (June 12, 2005)

[Signed by 89 brothers serving the Great Lakes area churches]