

OPENING WORDS

(November 30, 2005)

Introduction

The local churches were established according to the New Testament (NT) pattern of churches as taught by Watchman Nee in his book, "The Normal Christian Church Life." The English version first appeared under the title "Rethinking of Our Mission" (1939). The Chinese version had been published earlier in 1938.

After Watchman Nee was imprisoned by the Communist government in China, his co-workers continued the work. Witness Lee established churches in Taiwan and in South-East Asia. He came to North America in 1962. Under his ministry which stressed life, Spirit and truth, many local churches were established according to the ground of oneness of locality. This "ground" means that all genuine believers according to the common faith would be received into fellowship by the church in the locality where they live and not based upon their views regarding non-essential teachings or practices. Reception into fellowship would be inclusive rather than exclusive. Each local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in that locality.

At this point in our history, there is an urgent need to consider whether we are still taking the same inclusive stand that we took in receiving all believers on the ground of oneness of locality, or whether we have deviated, perhaps unconsciously, from this stand. It is hoped that fellowship regarding this will help us to determine the direction we proceed in, with major and long-lasting consequences. May the Lord grant us His mercy to guide us to be well-pleasing to Him.

Our Concerns

We are a group of concerned saints who desire to practice the church life according to the pattern and the truth in the Bible, our unique standard of truth. We have practiced the church life standing on the ground of oneness of all believers in our localities. By the Lord's mercy, we have enjoyed a church life that has focused on the living Lord operating among us as the life-giving Spirit according to His living Word. We have concerns about the current direction taken by some co-workers since Brother Witness Lee's departure and we sense the need for fellowship to bring clarity to some matters:

The matter of one ministry has been strongly emphasized since Brother Lee's departure. This emphasis has been very confusing to many saints because there are several meanings to the term 'ministry' which have not been clearly differentiated. These meanings include (1) the one New Testament ministry initiated by the Lord, (2) the different individual ministries that are part of this one ministry e.g. the ministries of the apostles Peter, Paul and John, and others, (3) the personal ministries of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, (4) the ministries of other workers, (5) the work of ministry of the saints, (6) Living Stream Ministry (LSM) and (7) "*The Ministry*," a magazine published by LSM. The failure to differentiate these items has led many saints to equate in their own mind Living Stream Ministry with the New Testament Ministry, and to consider that the co-workers who serve in the Living Stream Ministry are the only ones who

carry out the New Testament Ministry. In our view, the co-workers who serve in LSM do indeed carry out their portion of the NT ministry. However they are not the only ones who do so. The Lord has raised up many servants to carry out the NT ministry over the past two thousand years and He still has many servants on the earth today.

We have to ask what is the proper role of the Living Stream Ministry (LSM). Witness Lee established the Living Stream Ministry as a Levitical service to carry out the practical aspects of his ministry such as printing, and distribution of books and tapes. He said “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 else”. (“A Timely Word” 1988, p.39). Is LSM still taking this role or has it taken on a much larger role than originally intended? What are the consequences for the local churches of such a role? Is each local church answerable to the Lord as the Head?

In recent years certain practices that are not items of the common faith have been promoted and mandated in the recovery. This has resulted in issues, problems and divisions among the saints and the local churches. Many saints are unaware of the ramifications created by those matters and they have continued to follow the direction, thereby causing more problems.

When issues arise, groups of co-workers in the Lord’s recovery have not come together to pray and fellowship to the extent that the outstanding issues are resolved, resulting in a peaceful situation in all the local churches. To date the willingness to achieve a comprehensive resolution of the issues has not been demonstrated.

Recent events

Recent events have highlighted the issues among the churches caused by some co-workers:

1. During the LSM Winter Training 2004, a booklet titled “Remaining in the Unique New Testament Ministry of God’s Economy under the Proper Leadership in His Move” was distributed to all trainees. In that booklet, the author(s) cited various portions of Brother Witness Lee’s messages to promote the following items in the Lord’s recovery: one leadership, one work, one trumpet and one publication.
2. During the LSM Summer Training 2005, another booklet titled “Publication Work in the Lord’s Recovery” was made available to the trainees. The author(s) promoted the policy of one publication work in the Lord’s recovery and stated that Brother Lee placed the direction of LSM for the continuation and publication of his ministry in the hands of a group of "blended brothers".

These two booklets were published by LSM without giving the name(s) of the author(s). Both booklets have caused many issues and problems in many local churches. Many saints have become confused, discouraged or hurt and several churches have suffered because of disagreements on these issues. Some churches have even been divided.

Purpose of this Web Site

The purpose of this web site is the following:

- To minister life and present the Biblical truths to strengthen and guide the saints in their Christian walk. In particular, we will study and have fellowship concerning the truth beginning with some of the following important topics:
 - The Body of Christ
 - The New Testament Ministry
 - The local churches
 - The Proper relationship between ministries, work and local churches
 - The Oneness of the Body
 - God's up-to-date speaking
 - Lessons from church history
 - Proper publication work among local churches
- To provide the saints with current facts and relevant information so that they will not be misled due to ignorance of the situation. The saints need to know the problems caused by those issues in other places so that they will not repeat the same mistakes and avoid the same situation in their own localities.
- To share about the positive experiences of church life, including how to shepherd the saints with proper food and protection in the presence of the above issues and problems. These experiences may help other churches to deal with similar issues more effectively.
- To provide a platform of fellowship for those who have the commitment to practice the church life according to the vision of the local churches shown in the Bible.

Hence, we encourage anyone who has relevant experiences to send us an article or report to be considered for posting on this web site. We also appreciate receiving any comment you might have about this web site. All articles and comments should be sent to recovery@concernedbrothers.com. In order to maintain a positive and constructive atmosphere of fellowship, we reserve the right to review submissions and to approve the postings. We will post an article under an alias or a real name according to the author's choice.

Finally, we understand that fellowship about internal issues in an open forum is not the optimal way to have fellowship. However, this is something we feel compelled to do since we have not seen adequate willingness by the co-workers to address those issues through fellowship. If we observe a determination to resolve the above issues according to the truths in the Bible, we will consider whether to continue the postings of this web site, while awaiting the results of such a fellowship.

May the Lord shine on us and those who are seeking the truth and guide us all to practice the church life according to His will.

The Concerned Brothers (CB)