

December 14th, 1992

The Elders  
The Churches

Dear Brothers,

We wrote you a letter dated 5th August, 1992, informing you of our decision to discipline [REDACTED]. We tolerated this brother's persistent divisive activities and admonished him to change his way. After much prayer and consideration, we decided that we could no longer receive him as a brother in the fellowship of the Lord's Recovery. Further, we earnestly requested that as elders you would also refuse this brother fellowship in your local churches. (For details see our letter).

Subsequently we were asked the question: Just because one local church has decided not to receive certain brothers, should all the churches not receive these brothers? You may have the same question.

Because of events that have regrettably occurred among us, we have re-examined the writings of Brother Watchman Nee concerning this question. We are writing to present to you some extracts from the ministry of Watchman Nee concerning the receiving and rejecting of brothers in the light of scriptures such as Romans 16:17 and Titus 3:10. These writings clarify the stand of the Lord's Recovery and the practice of the local churches these many years.

We present the following extracts for your consideration:

### **I. NO LOCAL CHURCH SHOULD ACT INDEPENDENTLY.**

"Therefore, the miniature churches in all the places are but representations of the whole Body of Christ.... This is why **no church can act independently**. All the moves must take care of the whole church. While you are sitting in a meeting, you should not see only the few brothers and sisters next to you, but should see the whole Body of Christ. What you are doing affects not only the one or two hundred people who are meeting with you; it affects the whole Body of Christ. The reason is that we have only one Body. Although you are a member, what you do is what the Body of Christ does." (Watchman Nee, The Assembly Life, chp.2, The Practice of Fellowship, translated from Chinese, our emphasis)

### **II. CONCERNING RECEIVING A BROTHER**

**A. A brother received locally is received into the churches of God.**



"If a brother has been received into the bread breaking meeting, he is not received into the assembly in Hangchow, Tientsin or Soo-Chow, but is received into the churches of God, the (outward) house of God. When we receive a brother in Hangchow, we are receiving him on behalf of the churches in Tientsin, Shanghai, Soo-Chow, and other places. If we intend to receive a person in Shanghai, and we think that the brothers in Hangchow and Peking may not receive such a one, **we should not receive him either. We cannot act independently.**" (Watchman Nee, The Assembly Life)

**B. One local church receiving on behalf of all the churches.**

"If a brother wants to be received into the bread breaking meeting, why must we examine him carefully? It is because we are receiving him not only on behalf of the brothers in Shanghai, but are receiving him on behalf of the brothers meeting in Tientsin, Hangchow, Wenchow, and in other places. Therefore, when this brother goes to another locality to break bread the brothers in the other localities should believe in what the brothers in Shanghai have done, and should receive him into the bread breaking meeting." (Watchman Nee, The Assembly Life)

### **III. CONCERNING REJECTING A BROTHER**

**A. A person excommunicated by one local church is excommunicated by all.**

"A person excommunicated from one local assembly is excommunicated from all the assemblies, and a person received by one assembly is received by all the assemblies. Not only do the assemblies standing on the ground of the church practice this way, even all the denominations practice this way. All those who are excommunicated by the Presbyterians in Shanghai are excommunicated by the Nanking Presbyterians also. If the denominations would do this, we who are standing on the ground of the church and who are expressing the life of the Body of Christ, should not our mutual relationships be more intimate than that in the denominations, and should we not be more one?" (Watchman Nee, The Assembly Life)

Comment: Although Brother Nee refers explicitly to excommunication, the principle is clear that a brother disciplined or temporarily quarantined by one local church is disciplined (temporarily quarantined) by all.

**B. A local church not immediately receiving a brother mistakenly excommunicated elsewhere.**

"If the assembly in Shanghai excommunicates a brother by mistake, and that brother goes to Tsinan, and the brothers in Tsinan realize the mistake, **they cannot receive this brother excommunicated by Shanghai right away.** They have to write to Shanghai first, and check with



the assembly in Shanghai. If the assembly in Shanghai does not agree, the assembly in Tsinan cannot receive that brother." (Watchman Nee, The Assembly Life)

#### IV. THESE PRINCIPLES RESTATED IN BROTHER NEE'S LATER MINISTRY

##### A. The decision of a local church absolutely decisive.

"If anyone is received or refused by a local church, its judgment in the matter must be regarded as absolutely decisive. The local church is the highest church authority. If other churches object to its decisions, all they can do is resort to persuasion and exhortation." (W. Nee, The Normal Christian Church Life, Revised Edition, the Hong Kong Church Book Room Ltd. 1962, p.53)

##### B. Not immediately receiving an innocent brother erroneously disciplined elsewhere.

"If a brother who has been disciplined in Nanking removes to Soochow, and there proves himself to be innocent of the charge brought against him, then Soochow has full authority to receive him, despite the judgment of Nanking. Soochow is responsible for its actions to God, not to Nanking. Soochow is an independent church and has therefore full authority to act as it deems best. But because there is a spiritual relationship with Nanking, it is well for the brother in question not to be received before its wrong judgment is pointed out to Nanking. If Nanking's relationship with the Lord is right, then it will pay attention to what Soochow has to say, but if it refuses to do so, Soochow cannot press anything against Nanking, because Nanking as a local church is directly responsible to the Lord alone and has full authority to decide and act independently of Soochow." (Watchman Nee, The Normal Christian Church Life, the Hong Kong Church Book Room, 1962, p.53, emphasis added)

Comment: According to Brother Nee's fellowship here, we should not receive a brother who is under discipline by another locality until:

- 1) he proves himself innocent, and
- 2) the error in judgment has been pointed out to the disciplining church, and
- 3) the disciplining church is given the opportunity to reconsider their decision before the Lord based on the evidence of the brother's innocence conveyed through fellowship with the other church

#### V. NOT FOLLOWING THE PRACTICE OF THE 'OPEN BRETHREN'



"The principle of the Open Brethren is to care only for their own local assemblies, and to ignore the assemblies in the other places. For them, if a man is excommunicated from the assembly in Nanking, he can still come to break bread in the assembly in Shanghai....But this is never the way or the teaching of the Bible." (Watchman Nee, Assembly Life)

## VI. THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS

### A. Romans 16:17

"Romans 16:17 says, 'Now I exhort you, brothers, to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them.' Therefore, we should not listen to those who are here purposely to criticize us; we should turn away from them. In the future when some brothers who can serve as elders are raised up from the assembly, they can inform the other brothers from whom we should turn away, and from whom we should not turn away. The other brothers should then obey such brothers." (Watchman Nee, Assembly Life)

Comment: The following verse, Romans 16:18, says "For such men do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own stomach..." We were asked "Can you say, before the Lord that these brothers are not serving Christ?" But Paul asks us to "mark those who make divisions...and turn away from them." (16:17) We are asked to discern their division-causing actions, not their inner motives. To use a parallel from contemporary society: When a bank has been robbed, we do not look at whether a person is a college graduate or merely a high-school graduate. We ask 'who has robbed the bank?' Whoever committed the crime is a bank robber, regardless of their education level. [We refer you to Brother Lee's footnotes on Romans 16:17-18]

### B. Titus 3:10

"Titus 3:10 'A factious man, after a first and second admonition, refuse.' Second Thessalonians 3:6 says, 'Now we charge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the things which were handed down to you and which you received from us.' We should leave this kind of factious people outside of our fellowship and should not communicate with them, so that they will feel that they are isolated Christians." (Watchman Nee, Assembly Life)

Comment: Although the Greek word for 'factious' is *hairetikos*, the leading translators and Bible expositors render this as a factious, divisive person, rather than a heretic, as this term is understood today. For example the New International Version renders Titus 3:10 as: "Warn a divisive person once, and then...a second time. After that have nothing to do with him." [Please refer to Brother Lee's footnotes.]

### C Brothers creating a disturbance in the church meetings



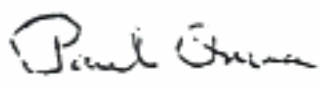





"Question: If a believer has not committed the sins of 1 Corinthians 5, but has disturbed the meeting, and has been stopped by the elders, but would not listen, how should one deal with such a person?"

"Answer: We should inform the brothers to stay away from him. The elders are those who are particularly charged to bear the spiritual responsibility." (Watchman Nee, Assembly Life)

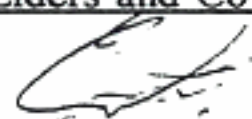


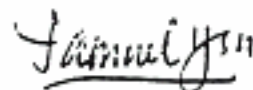
Brothers, we present the foregoing extracts from the writings of Watchman Nee for your prayerful consideration. Although many of these quotations are from Brother Nee's earlier ministry there is no indication in his later writings that he ever changed his views on this topic. It is based upon his understanding of the scriptures and the established practice of the Lord's Recovery since the time of Brother Nee, that we wrote informing you of our decision to discipline a certain brother and requesting that this brother not be received into the fellowship of the local churches you oversee.

Sincerely in Christ,

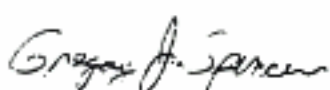


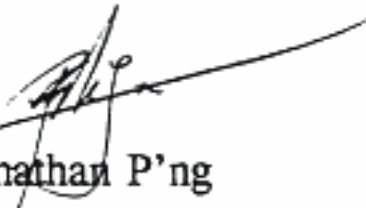

Elders and Co-Workers in North York:

 Paul Onica	 David Wang	 Ron MacVicar	 Robin Lao
 Del Martin	 Roy Hudgins		

Elders and Co-Workers in Toronto

 Kim Soo Chong	 Steve Pritchard	 Nigel Tomes	 Samuel Hsu
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Elders and Co-Workers in Scarborough

 Greg Spencer	 Allen Jones	 David Chao	 Jonathan P'ng
 Bruce Pike			