

A FAITHFUL WORD

S E R I E S S I X

“By the Mouth of Two or Three Witnesses”

**CONCERNING
SECTARIANISM
AND ABUSE OF
AUTHORITY
IN COLUMBUS
AND
MANSFIELD**

Book

3

DEFENSE & CONFIRMATION PROJECT

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Phil. 1:7 – Even as it is right for me to think this concerning you all because you have me in your heart, since both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all fellow partakers with me of grace.

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PREFACE

Deut. 19:15 – One witness only shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin which he has committed; at the word of two witnesses or at the word of three witnesses shall a matter be established.

Matt. 18:16b – ...that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

1 Tim. 5:19 – Against an elder do not receive an accusation, except based upon two or three witnesses.

The warning letter quarantining Titus Chu and certain of his co-workers (see the book *“Mark Those Who Cause Division”*) was issued only after the co-workers had received numerous reports from many parts of the earth about the problems that have been and still are being caused by the work of Titus Chu and those working closely with him. This series of books includes reports from various places regarding the divisive activities and speaking of Titus Chu and his close co-workers.

This volume reproduces the contents of two statements put out by saints in the churches in Columbus and Mansfield, Ohio. These reports provide a firsthand account of the divisive actions taken by ones placed in positions of authority by Titus Chu. These accounts document:

- The deviation of some of the leading ones from the proper standing as the church for the oneness of the Body of Christ;
- The use of false accusations to justify castigating, ostracizing, and ultimately ex-communicating members;
- The abuse of authority and other misconduct of Titus' workers and elders appointed by him; and
- The system of error that Titus Chu has set up to plunder the churches in support of his work and to control his workers and through them the churches in his domain by funneling the financial support of workers through Cleveland.

STANDING FOR “THE CHURCH” IN COLUMBUS

December 27, 2006

Dear saints:

This booklet sounds a call to all our brothers and sisters to faithfully stand for the church in Columbus. Over the past 3 years and 9 months, over \$141,000 of the saints' offerings to the church have been sent to support Titus Chu's work without our knowledge. To provide Titus Chu this level of financial support, the Trustees of the church have sunk the church deeply into debt, put church properties at risk, doubled the church's monthly interest payments, and appear to have diverted funds designated for needy saints, Bibles for America, and other purposes. While we ourselves are nothing and are more than willing to bear the Lord's reproach, you deserve to know the facts concerning the Trustees' mismanagement of church funds and the elders' betrayal of the truth and the trust we have put in them.

We are compelled to stand up for the welfare of the church and for those of you who have given yourselves and your money for the Lord's testimony here. As will be demonstrated, those who declare themselves to be God's authority and who use that claim to practice control will never have the Spirit's confirmation of their authority. Rather, they have disqualified themselves from taking the lead among God's people. We have always taught that true authority in the church is a matter of the measure of growth and ministry of the divine life; it is manifested as life supply in resurrection to the saints, not through demands for the saints' obedience.

This booklet will also demonstrate the effects of Titus Chu's system of organizational hierarchy and control over the funds of the local churches and the churches themselves. Elders' uncomely demands for obedience and money coupled with their apparent redirection of funds to Titus' purposes are the real story here. But first, some background is needed.

A Brief History of the Church in Columbus

In 1977 approximately forty saints from different cities moved to Columbus to stand on the ground of oneness as the church in Columbus, a practical local expression of the one Body of Christ. This vision was revealed to the saints from the Scriptures through the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. The church was incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio in the same year. Among the 40 saints, only 3 brothers held professional jobs and the rest were mostly students. By the Lord's mercy and abundant supply, in the following year, the property on 199 E. 15th Avenue was purchased and a meeting room at the back of the building was added and built by the saints. As the gospel of the kingdom prevailed, the number of the saints meeting together on the ground of oneness increased and a need for another hall on the north end of the city arose. From 1982-85 the property on Sinclair Road was purchased and developed with many saints joyfully participating by giving their time, skill and money to this endeavor.

From the very beginning, the church in Columbus has consistently participated in the semi-annual trainings conducted by Brother Lee and later by the co-workers who are faithful to carry on the same ministry after Brother Lee's passing. After one of the original elders went to serve the Lord in the Czech Republic in December 2000, Titus Chu appointed three new elders to carry out his work and view. Not properly appreciating the importance of fellowship in the Body of Christ both within the church and among the churches, the elders unilaterally canceled the local video trainings in the summer of 2005. Despite the saints' attempts to fellowship with the elders concerning the importance of those trainings to them, in the spring of 2006 the elders unilaterally determined that the church would also no longer allow registration for saints to attend the live training in Anaheim. Saints who felt richly supplied by the ministry in the trainings were permitted only to gather in homes to listen to the audiotapes of the trainings.

In the morning meeting on Lord's day, July 30, 2006, the elders canceled the Lord's Table meeting. Instead of a time to celebrate the Lord's victory over sin, Satan and death, the elders took the podium to strongly condemn Living Stream Ministry (LSM) and the ministry of the co-workers in the international trainings and conferences. The elders publicly denounced LSM as being a divisive factor among the saints and falsely accused those saints who had listened to audio tapes of the trainings of causing problems in the church. The meeting was then summarily dismissed and everyone was literally ordered to leave. The elders verbally closed off all avenues for fellowship concerning the matters and people they had just condemned. Therefore, the only way left for the saints to communicate with the elders regarding what they had publicly spoken was to write a private letter to the elders. After much prayer and fellowship a letter was written and signed by 23 concerned brothers and sisters in the hope that the oneness of the Spirit in the Body could be kept. The elders made no effort to resolve the differences, but instead took great offense. On August 27, 2006, again misusing the podium—which should be for ministering the word of God and not for abuse of authority—the elders publicly condemned each of the 23 saints, accusing them falsely, reading off each of their names in the meeting and excommunicating them from the church in Columbus. No room was left for any fellowship unless the 23 saints “repented” for actions they did not commit.

Since that time, these 23 saints have been repeatedly maligned through public denunciations and the spreading of rumors. On October 27, 2006, the saints wrote to the church trustees requesting their lawful membership in the church be recognized and requiring them, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code 1702.15, to grant access to church financial and other records. Their lawful request was refused outright. After attempts to have fellowship in person or by letter with the elders and after having been physically barred from the meetings of the church, on November 13, 2006, these saints sought relief from the Court. As will be seen, this action also has been misrepresented to the members of the church in Columbus.

MASS EXCOMMUNICATIONS

The recent pronouncement of a mass excommunication of 23 saints in Columbus and the actions taken by elders of another nearby church to throw out almost 70% of its members are unprecedented in the history of the Lord's recovery in the United States. That elders following Titus Chu's ministry feel they must demand money and obedience from long-time members of the local churches and are taking steps to throw out anyone who does not agree with their demands is indeed eye-opening.

Columbus

In Columbus, the elders excommunicated 23 saints at one time for supposedly: forming "a parallel administration" within the church; not giving material offerings "for the local needs;" and not serving the church. The elders further insisted that if a believer cannot be "one" with them, i.e., "obey" (not just submit to) their "authority," they should find some place else to meet. The elders' demand for obedience has usurped the Lord's headship and brought shame to the Lord's name in Columbus.

The elders' chief example of the saints having a "parallel administration" was that some of the saints had gathered to listen to audio tapes from the summer training and invited others to join them. This gathering had been fellowshiped with the elders, but was taken as an excuse to excommunicate 20% of the church!

Concerning the saints' material offerings to the Lord and the elders' demands that the saints offer according to their direction, the amount and purpose for which each saint gives material offerings to the Lord is a matter subject to the Lord's anointing within each saint. The saints' giving of material offerings could never be a condition of fellowship in a genuine local church. Even if the elders' accusations regarding giving were true, for the elders to seek to know, name by name, who gives how much money to what purpose is shameful. For the elders, who should be overseers and shepherds, to deviate to such an extent that they publicly ridicule saints under their care for having failed to make

offerings according to their demands is utterly shameful. The elders' attempts to control the saints' giving are exceedingly improper (2 Cor. 8:3-5, 12—where “not out of...necessity” means not “by being forced or pressed”; 9:7; 1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; 2 Pet. 2:15; Acts 5:4).

In the Lord's recovery we have always honored the giving of the saints as something done in secret (Matt. 6:3-4), a transaction in secret between the giver and the Lord. If some saints were hesitant to put their offering under the hands of the elders and instead gave to other purposes, it could be because of their concern, now confirmed, regarding the elders' management of church's funds, e.g., a significant amount of the money given in the local offering has been diverted by the elders to fund Titus Chu's work each month, or because they simply did not desire their gifts to fund conferences, building projects and other works associated with Titus Chu.

Saints who have poured out their life and substance for the church in Columbus for years have been subjected to the elders' angry demands and have been shouted at in the public meetings. Is it a sin to come together to enjoy the summer training tapes? Is it a sin to give bountifully according to the Lord's leading, even if that money does not go to the elders and their “apostle”? Is it a sin to serve the church according to the Lord's leading? Absolutely not! But to falsely accuse the saints, especially in a public setting, is a sin. And Paul testifies that elders who sin should be openly reprovved before all (1 Tim. 5:20).

Instead of the ground of oneness, the elders of the church in Columbus have made obedience to their directives the basis for receiving believers.

Mansfield

In Mansfield, Titus Chu recently appointed four new “elders.” Simultaneous to notifying the church of their appointment, one of Titus Chu's workers took control of the Mansfield meeting for one hour and 15 minutes and dictated that all of the saints in the

church must adhere to the authority, speaking, and direction set by these “elders.” That outside worker further declared that anyone who would not obey these “elders” explicitly should go elsewhere to meet. This demonstrates once again that, in order to assert the absolute authority of his elders and to control the local churches, Titus Chu, his workers and his elders have betrayed the most basic principles of the ground of oneness on which all genuine local churches stand.

This worker also asserted that in order to be considered a member of the church, the saints in Mansfield must: 1) obey the elders (not just submit), 2) tithe (give 10% of their income) to the church in Mansfield, and 3) participate in the practical service and prayer meetings. When a number of the elderly saints in the church decided to visit a neighboring local church on two consecutive weekends, one of these new elders presumptuously announced that these saints had left the church. The saints returned the next Lord’s day to find the “elders” fully asserting their newfound “authority”: **“The meeting is over, the meeting is over. I am the authority, I am an elder. I have the authority. The meeting is over.”**

The following Lord’s day most of the saints in Mansfield found the meeting hall locked and empty. As they returned to the hall each week only to find it locked, they wrote two letters asking where the meeting was taking place. They received no response. The “elders” first claimed the saints had resigned from the church and later presumed to excommunicate 20 of them, locking them out of the hall and saying they are “no longer received as active members.” These 20 include some of the elderly saints who began the church in Mansfield in 1966.

Repeatedly elders appointed by Titus Chu have demanded obedience to their authority, not knowing the source of true authority. When Moses’ genuine leadership was challenged, he prostrated himself before the Lord in acknowledgment that he had no authority in himself. In Aaron’s case, the proof of leadership was in the budding and blossoming of Aaron’s rod, a

sign that true leadership in the church is a matter of growth in life and the ministry of life in resurrection to the saints.

FALSE ACCUSATIONS

In Columbus, the false accusations have not stopped with a mass excommunication. Repeatedly, the elders have falsely portrayed members' efforts to bring to light error and wrongdoings.

Concerning Our Appeal to the Court

The action of some of the saints to ask the Court to intercede on their behalf has been misrepresented to the saints by the elders. The fact is that the saints have not sued the general membership of the church, but are merely asking the Court to intervene to protect the church and all of its members against financial and other abuses, and to hold the elders accountable for their actions. The saints bringing this action will not profit in any way.

An appeal to the Court (copies of our Complaint available on request or at www.StandForChurchInColumbus.org) was made only when:

1. The elders refused any discussion of the saints' concerns;
2. The elders refused to reinstate the membership of the 23 saints improperly terminated in violation of the church's bylaws; and
3. The elders refused to make the church's financial records available for review in accordance with the laws of the State of Ohio. Those records were requested due to concerns that the finances of the church were being mismanaged.

The Judge has agreed that the 23 saints should be reinstated as members and ordered that the church's records be turned over to them. Furthermore, the Judge advised the elders to work out a negotiated agreement. However, despite their own demands for obedience, the elders have been very slow in complying with the Judge's instructions. In order to have membership restored and

documents produced, the church had to be named in the legal action. The saints are not bringing this action for any personal benefit but, according to Ohio law, they are bringing this action as members on behalf of the church in order for the church to be protected and have the church's losses recovered.

Nothing in our appeal to the Court is aimed at the general members of the church. The appeal is, in fact, concerned with protecting the church and, in particular, the saints' offerings from what appear to be significant financial mismanagement by the Trustees. This concern stems from many facts which have come to light, including:

1. When the meeting hall on Sinclair Road was built, a small number of saints who had the capacity gave the church a low interest rate loan. Through the years the church paid off some of these loans of the saints. By 2005, there were only four outstanding loans left to be paid off. These saints never requested repayment for their loans, knowing that the church was not yet able to repay them. However in March 2005, the elders decided to pay off the remaining loans by obtaining a bank loan at a significantly higher variable rate of interest. In addition, they borrowed \$34,000 beyond what was needed to repay the remaining loans, also at this higher interest rate. This loan doubled the church's monthly payment to retire its debt service. The loan also requires a one-time lump sum payment of \$84,556 in approximately eight years from now. This balloon payment is nearly equal to the original loan balance, and puts all of the Sinclair Road properties at risk as collateral. Moreover, over the life of the loan the saints will have to pay interest totaling \$117,469 (assuming the variable interest rate remains constant), in addition to repaying the principal amount of the loan. It is a very bad financial arrangement for the church in Columbus.
2. In the same year that the elders burdened the church with this additional debt, the church in Columbus sent \$41,250, constituting 32% of the total offerings from members that year, to Cleveland and \$8,000, constituting 5% of the members' offerings, to Willoughby to fund the work of Titus

Chu. In the past three years and nine months, the church has sent \$141,590 to Titus' work through Cleveland and Willoughby. Viewed in this light, the elders' rebuke to saints for not giving for "local needs" seems to be a diversion. Perhaps it is in order to support this large allocation of the church in Columbus' funds to Titus Chu's work that material offerings by saints designated for needy saints or other matters have been delayed or redirected by the elders.

Concerning Attempts at Mediation

Our attempts to arrive at a mediated settlement with the elders have also been misrepresented. We have been portrayed as greedy and as behaving in an uncomely manner. Actually, the opposite has been the case as the following facts show:

1. On the first day, the Trustees' own attorney said our offer is "a very fair offer" and recommended that his clients take it.
2. The elders are not willing to reconcile even though they have said the opposite to the saints. During mediation, when asked if they were willing to reconcile one of the elders present definitively said "No, no." and the other two elders present shook their heads, "No." Given the elders' recent actions and attitude, we must admit that reconciliation is not a realistic option.
3. It is the Trustees who have made unreasonable demands. The very first offer made in the mediation by the trustees demanded that we pay them \$50,000 in cash and pay for the entire debt (the \$123,700 loan at 7.25%) which the elders have rashly incurred by giving more to support Titus' work than the church could possibly afford. Despite their responsibility for the debt, we agreed to pay half of the original loan amount. Our offer is what their attorney called "a very fair offer." This was rejected by the elders.
4. The elder's refusal to give us the corporate name "the church in Columbus" appears to be a matter of pride (fear of losing face) more than a matter of commitment to truth. They admit that newer churches formed by Titus Chu's trainees do not

clearly identify themselves as the church in their locality. The standing the elders have taken is not the standing of a local church as a manifestation of the one Body of Christ on the ground of locality (see the section “A Deviation from the Proper Standing”).

The elders have in fact intentionally removed any association of the campus house with “the church in Columbus.” Although it is owned by the church, in meetings held at that property there is nothing to indicate those meetings have any relationship to “the church in Columbus”. Rather many of those attending the meetings at the campus house have had no idea that there is such an entity as “the church in Columbus,” and for good reason; that property is openly associated with “Oasis Christian Community,” which is registered as a “sports club” at the university. OSU requires that any registered student organization reveal its association with any local organization. In spite of this, Oasis’ constitution gives no hint of any association or connection with “the church in Columbus” and the club has not filed the required papers with OSU stating its association with “the church in Columbus.” In fact, one of the new ones who the elders are claiming before the court as a member of the church in Columbus stated that she has “never been to the church in Columbus.” If this seems like a small point, we encourage you to read the account of the split between the work and the church in Kampala, Uganda, in the section of this booklet entitled, “The Work in Kampala, Uganda—An Example of the Divisive Standing of the Work under Titus Chu”.

5. Despite claims to the contrary, it is the elders themselves who behaved poorly during the mediation and it does not appear that they are negotiating in good faith: (a) one of the elders raised his voice in an ugly display of temper several times during the course of the mediation when meeting with our attorney; we invite you to confirm this fact with the attorneys present; (b) at the last minute, when the parties appeared close to finalizing a settlement, they admitted (or pretended) that they did not have the authority to negotiate a settlement

in the first place. After nine days of delay they effectively discarded all progress toward settlement and insisted on a completely different approach.

Such behavior is not unlike what we have also endured many times when we attempted to fellowship with them. We believe a number of you also have observed similar uncomely behavior first hand.

UNCOMELY ASSERTIONS OF AUTHORITY

The elders have repeatedly demanded that the saints obey their “authority” in matters which extend far beyond the reach of any New Testament authority given to either elders or apostles, for example: controlling who to give to and for what purpose and forbidding saints to listen to the training tapes with others in their own homes. Their temperamental assertions of authority are contrary to the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee as seen in the following portions:

It is a most ugly thing for anyone to speak for his authority in order to establish authority for himself.

I dislike and abhor those who say, “I am God’s appointed authority.”

I hope that no one would stand up to claim that he is the authority.

Suppose you say that God has chosen you and that you have revelation and authority. If others oppose and rebel against you, and if they go to God and also receive revelation, it means that God has not vindicated you or backed you up. In that case it would be useless to speak for yourself....

Nothing is more unsightly than a person who struggles to be an authority. It is the most ugly thing for a person to try to control others in an outward way. Ambition for authority or to be a great one is something that belongs to the Gentiles. We should drive this kind of spirit from the church.

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 47, *The Orthodoxy of the Church & Authority and Submission*, pp. 220-221, 230, 238, 283

If the elders in the church have the attitude that they are the elders, that they have the authority, and that they are here to exercise their authority, that would be one of the ugliest things there is!

Everyone who exercises authority to claim that he is an elder, that he has the authority to deal with such-and-such a matter, and that he will exercise this authority, is using his authority in the wrong way!

In some local churches, I have seen brothers who act as elders by putting on a front. They say, "Oh, I am an elder!" They assume an elder's bearing and speak with an elder's tone. I must tell you that there is nothing more ugly in the church than to see such a thing.

It never works for an elder to try to assume authority in the church by force. Not only will this not be pleasing in the eyes of men, but it will have no confirmation from the Holy Spirit. You can assume your authority, but the Holy Spirit will not be there.

The Elders' Management of the Church, by Witness Lee, pp. 83, 88-89

AN UNSCRIPTURAL SYSTEM OF CONTROL

Why are elders and workers in both Mansfield and Columbus suddenly asserting controlling authority and making uncomely demands for:

1. obedience to human authority, and
2. money to be given according to the elders' directions and Titus Chu's purposes rather than as the Lord leads?

Why are these elders so desperate to keep the churches in Ohio and the surrounding area isolated from any ministry or local church not approving of Titus Chu, even to the extent that they

would throw out saints who have faithfully supported the church for many years? The source of this new and uncomely pattern in the churches in this area is an unscriptural system of control over the elders and the churches through the work of Titus Chu.

How this System of Control Works in Columbus

1. **“Elders” sent from outside Columbus.** Titus handpicked all five elders in Columbus, three of whom were sent from other cities. This practice assures control of the direction (and the money) of the church here. Two of the current elders were sent by Titus from Cincinnati. A third was sent by Titus directly from Cleveland. This practice of sending elders into a local church is against the New Testament pattern of establishing elders from among the local saints. Rather than the elders being appointed from within the church in Columbus, Titus has exercised control by sending those loyal to him from other churches and from his work to be his representatives in Columbus. This is against the New Testament pattern (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) and against the teaching of Brother Nee and Brother Lee:

...elders are chosen from among the local brethren. They are not transferred from other places, but are set apart just in the place where they live, and they are not called to leave their ordinary occupations, but simply to devote their spare time to the responsibilities of the church. The members of the church are local men, and as elders are chosen from among the ordinary members, it follows that they are also local men (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 30, The Normal Christian Church Life, pp. 164-165—see also pp. 41-42, 100*)

However, an apostle is not a pope. If we read the New Testament carefully, we shall see that the elders are not appointed by anyone who is a dictator or who exercises autonomous authority. On the contrary, elders are appointed in the way of life. As the saints in a particular locality meet together to worship God and to serve the Lord, it will be manifested that certain brothers have a greater degree of

maturity than others. Although no one will be fully mature, some will be comparatively mature. Not even in Philippians 3 did Paul regard himself as matured in full. Because maturity is relative, the qualifications of an elder are not absolute. In other words, an elder's qualifications are comparative. Among all the saints in a local church, certain brothers, by comparison, are more qualified and mature than others. These brothers are manifested as such before the eyes of the church, and all the saints clearly realize that these are the ones who should be appointed elders. This appointment does not come either by a vote of the congregation or by the exercise of autonomous authority. Instead, elders are selected according to the insight and foresight of the saints. Based upon the saints' insight and foresight, the apostles then appoint certain ones to be elders. (*Life-study of 1 Timothy*, p. 85)

Shortly after 21 senior co-workers representing the Lord's work in many parts of the earth called upon Titus Chu to repent of carrying out a work of dividing the Body, Titus moved to appoint new elders in various localities in the Midwest and Great Lakes area. This exhibition of contempt for the headship of Christ expressed through the representative members of His Body was Titus Chu's attempt to assert and consolidate his control over the churches in this area. The Columbus elders' and the Mansfield new appointees' actions to kick out those who will not follow Titus Chu's way of division and who want to remain in the ministry that established these local churches reflects similar contempt for both the Head and the Body of Christ.

2. **Financial control of full-time elders and workers.** Titus retains financial control over his "elders" who are "full-time" by keeping them financially dependent on him and his work. This practice is against the New Testament pattern and the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee.

Of course, we realize that Peter had a group of co-workers with him, and Paul had another group of co-workers with him. But their grouping was not an organization. They just went together to serve the Lord. There was neither financial

control nor central control. Paul received the supply from the Lord for his own living, and his co-workers received the supply from the Lord for their own living. They just took care of one another in love. Since there was no organization among them, everything was so clear, free, and simple. (*The Life and Way for the Practice of the Church Life*, p. 108)

Since we are not a mission, and have no man-made organization, no headquarters, no centralization of funds, and consequently no distributing center, how can the needs of all our fellow workers be supplied? This question has been repeatedly put to me by interested brethren. The answer is this: all needs will be met if each one realizes his threefold financial responsibility—first, in regard to his personal family and needs; second, in regard to the needs of his work; and third, in regard to the needs of his fellow laborers. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 158)

3. **Control of the church's finances.** From 2003 to September 2006 the church in Columbus has sent \$141,590, almost 25% of all the offerings received, to near-by churches for the work under Titus Chu's control. Starting in October 2004, the base amount sent directly to Cleveland went up from \$2,000 up to \$3,000 each month. (Mansfield sends over \$1,800 per month.) Such arrangements bear similarities to a feudal system of tribute, in which the local jurisdiction was taxed to fill the coffers of the feudal 'lord,' who then dispatched loyal lieutenants supported by the tribute to govern according to his wishes.

The Columbus elders' submission to Titus Chu's requirements to supply his work with \$29,000-\$49,000 a year has damaged the church in Columbus' financial stability and resulted in the elders' irresponsible borrowing to pay for both the interest on their loan and for regular monthly expenses such as utility bills. The elders in Columbus were appointed by Titus Chu and are intensely loyal to him. This personal loyalty is reinforced by financial arrangements that send a substantial portion of the offerings from the church in Columbus to support his work. Why is it that the elders have

not posted financial statements for the church in Columbus for the past two years?

Titus Chu and those promoting his ministry have spread false accusations that the local churches and the work in the present recovery are a hierarchy with a headquarters, etc. However, a telling sign of a hierarchy is centralized financial control. Columbus' financial records strongly point to the existence of a well-developed hierarchy under the leadership and work of Titus Chu. Even if some money comes back to Columbus, the way in which it is handled strengthens Titus Chu's control over the church here. This hierarchy with centralized financial control effectively negates the "local administration" of the church here. It is indeed ironic that it is Titus Chu's close co-worker and recent visitor to the church in Columbus, Nigel Tomes, who has falsely accused the co-workers of doing what only Titus himself has done, i.e., to build a hierarchy to control the churches. **Just follow the money.**

4. Isolation from the local churches around the earth. Titus Chu has isolated the churches under his control from the rest of the churches by sowing evil suspicions concerning those churches. He declares that the churches which receive the ministry he once received (but not his ministry) are not true local churches but "ministry churches." (Yet, it is apparent by such a sectarian declaration that the real ministry churches are his.) Titus Chu apparently believes, and would have the churches under his control believe, that the vast majority of the churches on the earth have rejected his ministry because the co-workers are jealous of his gift. This self-exalting view has led Titus and his followers to act as though only local churches that receive and follow Titus Chu's ministry are to be trusted.

The elders in Columbus have followed Titus Chu to label the local churches as ministry churches, i.e. not genuine local churches, publicly declaring that they have no defense to offer against those who would call us a "cult"! The elders in

Columbus have also been led by Titus Chu into an abnormal and sectarian practice—cutting the church off from the fellowship of most of the other local churches. This practice is promoted by the elders through their spreading of unfounded suspicions and accusations against genuine churches. This narrow sectarianism has isolated these so-called elders and their followers. The local churches around the earth have not cut the church in Columbus off, but our elders, by sowing discord, have convinced many that they have. It is the elders who are effectively cutting us off from the churches' fellowship.

5. Isolation from the co-workers around the earth who are in a peaceful fellowship under the blessing of oneness (Psa. 133). By suggesting that 63 co-workers from around the globe who pray and labor in one accord should be quarantined and by poisoning the minds of the saints in Columbus against these co-workers, the elders have cut the church in Columbus off from their rich supply and have greatly overstepped their own measure in Christ. The co-workers have not quarantined the church in Columbus. It is our elders who have effectively quarantined us from the co-workers' ministering spirit. Remember, one so-called offense of the saints who were excommunicated from the church in Columbus was gathering to listen to the ministry of the co-workers.
6. Isolation by falsehoods. The isolation of the church in Columbus has been justified by falsehoods told to the church in Columbus by its elders. For example, the elders think the co-workers' fellowship concerning being restricted in one publication work in the ministry in the Lord's recovery is a requirement placed on the saints and the churches. In fact, the co-workers have strongly affirmed the opposite:

...the one publication should not become the basis of our accepting or rejecting any persons in the communion of faith or in the fellowship of the churches; it should not be insisted on as an item of the faith. If any are not inclined to be restricted in one publication, these ones are still our

brothers; they are still in the genuine local churches.
(Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery, p. 9)

Why have our elders told us otherwise?

In another example, the saints have also been told that Living Stream Ministry initiated and is behind the actions being taken by the 23 saints who protested their exclusion from the church in Columbus. This is false. Without hesitation, however, we do welcome fellowship from the churches, saints and co-workers in the Body. However, it can be stated unequivocally that LSM has not been involved. In addition, there has been no attempt to dictate any of our actions. The response of some of the co-workers, churches and saints in supporting us with prayer and fellowship is in the principle of the Body which we have practiced for all of our years in the recovery. We treasure this care.

A DEVIATION FROM THE PROPER STANDING

When the elders' "authority" or the authority of an "apostle" becomes the ground on which a church stands to receive believers, that church has deviated from the proper standing of the church and has become a divisive sect. On page 67 of *The Normal Christian Church Life*, Brother Nee says:

If one or more churches are founded by a certain apostle, and that apostle exercises authority over them as belonging in a special sense to him or to his society, then those churches become sects, for they do not separate themselves from other Christians ... on the ground of difference of locality, but on the ground of the difference of instrumentality of salvation.... [T]he churches over which they exercise control become sects, each bearing the particular characteristic of its leader instead of the characteristic of a local church.

Furthermore, when a local church declares its own "standing" as something unique and distinct from the general standing of all of the local churches in the Body of Christ, as has been done repeatedly in Columbus, this also indicates that the church has

deviated from the proper standing. Titus Chu recognized this in 1989 when he signed a letter to the elders of the church in Anaheim who had made just such a statement. That letter said:

You point out that the standing of the church in Anaheim concerning the church is “the ground of the one Body of Christ.” By such a statement do you mean the ground of the oneness of the unique, universal Body of Christ expressed in each locality? If so, such a standing is common to all the local churches in the Lord’s recovery. Any other standing on this matter is a radical departure from the standing revealed in the New Testament and maintained in the Lord’s recovery through all the years.

Standing on the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ entails a number of matters related to the practice of the church life according to the way ordained by God and revealed in the New Testament.

...[S]tanding on the ground of the oneness of the Body entails a consciousness of the whole Body and not only of the church in our locality. Our oneness is not merely a matter related to the locality we are in, as your phrase “the ground of oneness in locality” would suggest, but is rather the oneness of the entire Body of Christ expressed by all the local churches on the earth...

...[I]f we care for the building up of the Body as an organism and not for the building up of a congregation as an organization, and if we are conscious of the Body and have an earnest care for other churches as expressions of the Body and not merely a consciousness of and concern for the situation in our own local church, we shall have an excellent relationship in fellowship with the other local churches.

Titus Chu has since violated and spoken against these principles which he himself once taught. He has openly criticized the co-workers for speaking concerning the feeling and consciousness of the Body. He has openly rejected the co-workers’ and the saints’ pleas that he bring his work in line with the one work in the Lord’s recovery to build up the Body of

Christ. His work has become increasingly destructive and divisive. That is why the co-workers have publicly warned the saints in the Lord's recovery concerning his ministry. Today, the elders, in their loyalty to Titus Chu, have cut the church in Columbus off from fellowship with all of the churches except those which are loyal to Titus Chu. This is sectarianism.

THE WORK IN KAMPALA, UGANDA— AN EXAMPLE OF THE DIVISIVE STANDING OF THE WORK UNDER TITUS CHU

Saints in Columbus and throughout this area have prayed and offered for over three years in support of a work being carried out under Titus Chu's direction in Kampala, Uganda. We present recent events there as an illustration of the divisive standing now being taken his work.

In August 2003 Tim and Donna Knoppe and Steve and Barbara Lietzau moved to Kampala, Uganda. After two years the Lord had gained a group of approximately 100 saints meeting as the church in Kampala, many of whom had paid a great price to take the way of the Lord's recovery. They were raised up and nurtured through the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee. The Knoppes and Lietzaus went to Kampala with the understanding that their going was being carried out in the fellowship among the co-workers in the one work for the Lord's move. Tim was specifically told that the burden for Uganda had come out of a time of fellowship with the blending co-workers.

In June of 2005, Tim Knoppe learned that the work in Kampala had not been initiated and was not being carried out in coordination or fellowship with any brothers outside of Titus Chu's inner circle. During a visit to the U.S. in June 2005, Tim Knoppe asked Titus Chu directly, "Brother, did you have fellowship with these blending brothers about our going to Uganda?" **Titus Chu's response was, "I don't have to fellowship with those brothers."** Tim said, "But you told me that you fellowshipped with those brothers. That is how I had a

clear conscience to go there.” In July of 2005 Titus Chu asked Tim Knoppe to leave Kampala and move to Detroit.

Titus Chu then sent other workers to Kampala to change the direction of the work. The new workers set about to dismantle the church in Kampala. Financial support for the meeting hall of the church was dropped and the saints were divided into three groups. The saints who were the most clear regarding the truths of the Lord’s recovery were abandoned. Titus Chu’s workers began to carry out a work separate and apart from the church there.

When one of the brothers in the eldership in Kampala expressed his desire to strengthen the oneness of the church by having the dispersed groups meet together frequently, he was rebuked by one of the elders in Columbus who was sent by the work to visit Kampala. In March 2006 the campus workers sent a letter to the elders of the church in Kampala announcing that they intended to continue their work in spite of the lack of harmony between the church and their work. The next day the elders in the church in Kampala wrote to Titus Chu asking him to withdraw his workers from Kampala because the work they were doing was divisive. Titus’ response to this letter was to send more workers to continue his work in Kampala against the fellowship of the church there. At this time Steve Lietzau also withdrew from the work over concerns that the work had been initiated under false pretenses and was a divisive factor in the church in Kampala.

Recently, the leading ones in the church in Kampala have received much supply and edification by blending with workers from London, U.K. and the U.S. and with churches in other parts of Africa. This has strengthened their vision of the Lord’s recovery and the practice of the church life there. The divisive work of those sent to Kampala by Titus Chu also continues. In spite of whatever positive reports they may send back to the saints, the fruit of their work is division.

It is instructive that one of the Columbus elders, who insists that the saints in the church in Columbus obey his leadership, so easily dismissed the desire of the elders in the church in Kampala.

**A CALL TO STAND FOR THE CHURCH IN
COLUMBUS**

We do not rejoice in bringing these matters to light. However, we must be faithful to make known to you what we see taking place in the church in Columbus, in nearby churches, and in the work which so many of our offerings have unknowingly supported.

We ask you to prayerfully consider these matters and we welcome your fellowship and participation in returning to: 1) the proper and genuine ground of the church, the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ; 2) the common fellowship with all the local churches in the Lord's recovery on the earth; 3) a church life without wrongful and authoritarian demands for obedience and money; and 4) the shepherding ministry of many co-working brothers who are faithful to the Lord's unique ministry in His recovery and to the vision of this age.

May the Lord strengthen and bless His recovery!

Keith Kneidel

Gibson Lao

Jefferson Lao

Zhong Yuan Li

Inho Song

Richard Steele

Jimson Tan

Ray Wiseman

Cres Yap

Daniel Yap

www.StandForChurchInColumbus.org

AN OPEN LETTER CONCERNING THE RESUMPTION OF THE LORD'S TABLE IN COLUMBUS

April 22, 2007

To the churches and the saints in the Lord's recovery:

Through much seeking of the Lord's mind in prayer and mutual fellowship with one another, with the churches, and with the co-workers serving in the ministry in the Lord's recovery, we have been led by the Lord to have a new beginning as the church in Columbus and to begin again the breaking of bread in the Lord's table meeting. We respect the sanctity of the Lord's table and the seriousness of partaking of the elements that represent the blood of Christ and both the physical body and mystical Body of Christ. We also respect the gravity of declaring our standing as the church in Columbus, as the practical manifestation of the Body of Christ in this city.

The Lord's table meeting symbolizes the entire new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), in which God dispenses Himself into us as life through the redemptive death of Christ to constitute us members of the organic Body of Christ. Participating in the Lord's table is a declaration that we receive the full efficacy of the death of Christ to enjoy the resurrection life of Christ in oneness with all believers in His one Body. We declare that we gladly receive all believers to participate in the Lord's table based on the fact that the Lord died for them as well as for us.

The Lord's table shows us that the issue of God's full salvation in Christ is the Body of Christ. Therefore, to observe the Lord's table is a declaration that we receive all the members of the Body of Christ as joint participants in the fellowship of the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). The Lord's charge to "discern the body" means that "when we participate in the Lord's table, we must discern whether the bread on the table signifies the one Body of Christ or any division of man,"

whether that division is by denomination or with a divisive spirit (1 Cor. 11:29 and footnote 3, Recovery Version). To be in the one Body is to be in the common fellowship of all the churches (1 Cor. 1:9). We declare that the Lord's table of which we partake symbolizes the fellowship of His one Body as expressed in our oneness with the local churches throughout the earth.

We affirm that the Lord's table in Columbus and our partaking of it as the church in Columbus follow the principles of receiving all believers and being in fellowship with the churches throughout the earth as the representatives of the one Body of Christ. We declare our standing on the genuine ground of oneness, taking the oneness of the believers in the Triune God as our base (John 17:11, 21, 23; Eph. 4:1-6) and our oneness with all the local churches in the unique fellowship of the Body of Christ as our standing (1 Cor. 1:2).

The church in Columbus cannot exist as an entity separate and apart from the common fellowship of all the local churches. Although time and space limit us, our fundamental relationship with all believers is that we are co-members of one organic Body, and our fundamental relationship with all the local churches is that we are one universal church, the Body of Christ. Any "oneness" that is not based on this organic reality and which is not manifested in receiving all believers and participating in the common fellowship of all the local churches is not a genuine oneness, but a sectarian one.

We therefore repudiate the false oneness that some sought to impose on the saints in Columbus, a oneness that was based on the authority of man and that usurped the headship of Christ. That false oneness required the saints to obey the "authority" and the demands of certain ones who had themselves rejected the authority of Christ as represented in the Body by the teaching of the New Testament ministry faithfully followed by the co-workers and thousands of local churches on the earth today. These ones made their own authority, not the redemptive work of Christ, the basis of participating in their "table." They

excommunicated 23 saints who, by gathering to listen to audio tapes of the summer training, were deemed to have threatened their authority. Thus, the cup on their table no longer represents the fellowship of the blood of Christ which is common to all believers; rather it is a cup of division and control.

The sectarian ones have sought to establish a local oneness based on the acknowledgement of their authority as something separate and apart from the oneness of the Spirit and the oneness of the universal church in the common fellowship of all the local churches throughout the earth. They have not only neglected the oneness of the Body but have actively sought to tear down this oneness. They have sought to isolate the church in Columbus from the general fellowship of the local churches, publicly pronouncing that they cannot defend those local churches which receive the ministry of the blending co-workers against the charge of being a "cult." They have sought to sever the church in Columbus from the general ministry in the Lord's recovery, a ministry carried out in much prayer and fellowship by co-workers around the globe burdened to walk in the same steps and to speak the same thing as Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. They have publicly asserted that a quarantine "truly belongs" on those co-workers, and not on Titus Chu. They have sought to isolate the church in Columbus by errantly asserting their "authority" in matters both essential and non-essential to the faith in order to force the church in Columbus into becoming an autonomous domain to support the divisive work of Titus Chu, as well as their own. Thus, the bread on their table no longer represents the fellowship of the body of Christ, but is a bread of division and control.

All of these actions are sectarian and make it impossible for the church to follow those brothers and still remain a genuine local church as an expression of the Body of Christ. They have removed themselves from the proper ground of oneness and become a sect. We cannot in good conscience join them in their deviation, but must instead continue to stand as the church in Columbus for the Lord's present testimony. Although some of

us have endured false accusations at the hands of our sectarian brothers, we joyfully and boldly testify that by the Lord's mercy we can, without enmity, re-establish and participate in the Lord's table in this city.

Our heart cries out for all the dear saints who have been led astray, stumbled, or confused through the recent turmoil. We long that they would all be restored to the flock. Our prayer and our invitation are that our brothers and sisters would return to their inheritance among God's people that together we might all enjoy the Lord's jubilee of grace. We testify that as we have stood for the Lord's interest in maintaining his testimony in Columbus, we have enjoyed His outpoured blessing on the churches in His recovery, a blessing that is first and foremost the bountiful blessing of the eternal life (Psa. 133:3).

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to the Lord for the way in which the saints, the churches and the co-workers have poured themselves out for us in prayer, in fellowship, and in service. We gratefully acknowledge the Lord's shepherding care for us through the members of His Body and rejoice that we can practically participate in the common fellowship of the churches in the Lord's recovery "with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours."

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints,

The saints standing for the church in Columbus

**AN OPEN LETTER OF AFFIRMATION
AND CLARIFICATION
CONCERNING THE CHURCH IN MANSFIELD AND
RECENT EVENTS CAUSING CONFUSION**

May 5, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are writing to you to affirm the standing of the church in Mansfield as an expression of the unique, universal Body of Christ. We do so because of recent events that have transpired in the church in Mansfield, Ohio, and the confusion surrounding those events which make it necessary to speak the truth for the welfare of the Lord's interests in Mansfield and in His recovery throughout the earth.

**AN AFFIRMATION CONCERNING
THE CHURCH IN MANSFIELD**

The church in Mansfield was raised up in 1966 after years of seeking by a number of local believers coupled with a large measure of God's grace and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. The church was established on the unique foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-11) as revealed in the New Testament teaching and fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20). As such, we have always stood upon and for the common faith once delivered to the saints (Titus 1:4; Jude 1:3).

We affirm the foundational truths of the Trinity -- the Father, the Son and the Spirit -- all three divine, co-eternal, co-existent and co-inherent. We hold forth Jesus Christ as our Savior (2 Tim. 1:10) and salvation through His crucifixion (Gal. 2:20) and His shed blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19). We enjoy the Holy Spirit as the indwelling One (Rom. 8:11) and look forward to Christ's return and the manifestation of His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1; Heb 12:28).

Today, we are enjoying the rich fellowship of the local churches around the globe as the expression and practicality of the Body of

Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), and we recognize and receive all genuine believers in Christ as our fellow members of that one, unique Body (Rom. 14: 1-3). We also enjoy the rich supply of the ministry of the age as carried out by so many faithful brothers. This is our history, our heritage, our stand, our joy and our vocation. However, events in recent days have threatened to rob us of this heritage and enjoyment.

THE ABUSE OF “AUTHORITY”

Authority Usurped— A New “Ground of the Church” Mandated

Titus Chu is a full-time, independent worker based in Cleveland, Ohio. He has exerted considerable influence over the churches in Ohio and beyond for many years. He has openly railed against the co-workers who care for the local churches throughout the Lord’s recovery as well as against Living Stream Ministry. In an apparent effort to assert his control in Mansfield, without consideration for the feeling of the saints here and without fellowship with them, on Labor Day, 2006, Titus Chu presumed to appoint four new “elders” to the church in Mansfield.

One of Titus Chu’s co-workers was sent to Mansfield to inform the church of these appointments on September 17, 2006. In the meeting of the church, Titus Chu’s co-worker made an announcement installing this new “eldership” which lasted over an hour. In this speech, he changed the unique standing of the church in Mansfield from being an expression of the unique Body of Christ, inclusive of all believers, to that of the new “elders” with their assumed authority and purposes. He declared that all the members of the church in Mansfield must adhere to the direction, speaking, and authority of these newly appointed “elders.” If any of the members did not agree with this, he said that it would be best for those members to meet elsewhere.

For 40 years the church in Mansfield has welcomed all of God’s redeemed and regenerated people to partake freely of the Lord’s

table. However, Titus Chu's co-worker ended this practice and instituted a new legalistic standard in its place. He declared to the church that partaking of the Lord's table was now a privilege reserved only for members who tithed (gave the church 10% of their income), attended the prayer meetings, strictly followed the elders, and participated in the practical services of the church.

Many of the members of the church in Mansfield were deeply disturbed by these declarations and had no peace to partake of the bread and the wine on the next three Lord's Days. Most of the members of the church did not attend the Lord's Day meetings in Mansfield on October 15. Some of these—including elderly widows with long histories in the church—decided to visit the neighboring church in Elyria.

One of the newly appointed "elders" publicly declared in the Lord's Day morning that a number of members, including those who were visiting the church in Elyria, had left the church in Mansfield. This was not true. There was no contact, fellowship, correspondence, or visit with any of these members branded as "those who have left." Many of these members have met with the church in Mansfield since before that "elder" was born.

The events in Mansfield and the saints' discomfort with the changes were brought up in a fellowship meeting in Iowa City on October 21, 2006. Representatives of twenty other area local churches and some co-workers were in attendance. There was a common agreement among those present that these members of the church in Mansfield should not be forced out of their home church but should feel free to continue to meet as they had for the past 40 years.

The Church Life under Siege by False Authority

The following week the members who were reported to have left the church in Mansfield returned to the Lord's Day morning meeting. The following is a brief presentation of what happened that morning.

The Events of October 29, 2006

The regularly scheduled Lord's Day meeting was held in the hall of the church in Mansfield. After the Lord's table, the symbols were removed and a word of clarification was spoken by one of the "elders" to set the agenda for the following meeting. A number of saints then testified of their experience in the previous week's function held at a retreat facility, Huntington House. Next a message was delivered from Matthew 18 by one of the "elders."

At that point, Tim Knoppe, a visiting brother from the church in Wixom who had served in Mansfield and had a history of shepherding the saints here, stood up to speak. He affirmed the clarification made by the "elder" and began to present a brief history of the Lord's recovery. He then referenced the revelation of Christ and the church in Matthew 16, pointing out the matter of the kingdom and mentioning the practicality of Matthew 18 in order to deal with problems in the church.

At that point Titus Chu's co-worker interjected, "Brother, stay within the bounds of the topic." Brother Tim said that he would. Titus's co-worker replied, "You have two minutes to finish, and stay within the bounds of the topic." Brother Tim agreed to this. But, before he could speak further, Titus Chu's co-worker stood and began to speak. It became apparent that he had no intention of stopping to let Tim continue. Tim then said, "Excuse me. If you would let me speak, I will be finished in two minutes." Titus's co-worker told him that he could not speak any more and that he must sit down. Tim responded, "No, I will not sit down. I have two minutes to finish."

Then, one of the "elders" stood up and announced loudly, "The meeting is over, the meeting is over. I am the authority; I am an elder. I have the authority. The meeting is over." The meeting came to an abrupt end some thirty minutes short of the normal time. Some members began to leave, one member was shouting, the majority sat quietly bewildered. At this juncture, one of the "elders" called the police.

Three squad cars with six policemen came to the meeting hall, where they witnessed church members, many of whom were elderly widows in their 70s and 80s, sitting, standing, and talking. The police found multiple conversations taking place in small groups at a normal volume. The “elder” who called the police left the premises. The police inquired as to the nature of the disturbance. Finding that there was no disturbance, they left the premises after a short period of time. There was no statement taken and no police report was filed.

Some of the elderly ones who had been members of the church in Mansfield since 1966 spoke a solemn, “Shame on you,” to the co-worker of Titus Chu and to the two brothers who remained who had supported calling the police.

There followed an informal time of questions and answers over the next two hours. During this time, Titus’s co-worker visibly lost his temper three times. He said he was sorry the police had been called. He declared that the saints he was addressing (the ones who had reportedly left the church in Mansfield) were his spiritual parents and that he appreciated them for allowing him to learn his leadership skills while living in Mansfield for ten years. He then got on his knees and asked everyone to join him to pray. When no one responded, he stood up and assumed an antagonistic posture, standing within inches of Tim Knoppe’s face and declaring in a challenging voice, “Punch me. Come on, punch me. You want to hit me, don’t you? Come on, punch me.” This display was unprovoked. Brother Tim responded, “Brother you are too close to me. Get back.” When Titus’s co-worker maintained his aggressive stance, Brother Tim gently extended his hand to the brother’s chest and said, “Brother, you are too close. Give me eighteen inches.” Titus’s co-worker strongly responded, “I am not moving.” Brother Tim said, “Okay,” and took one step backward, defusing the situation. Many of those remaining in the meeting hall witnessed these events and would willingly testify as to what happened. After the worker’s outburst, the question and answer session began again, ending at approximately 3:00 P.M.

DIVISION MANIFESTED

The Church in Mansfield—Locked Out

On the following Lord's Day, November 5, 2006, more than half the members of the church in Mansfield arrived at the church's meeting hall for the morning gathering. They found that the meeting hall was locked and empty, the locks on the doors had been changed, and the members were left standing out in the cold. None of them were forewarned that this would happen. Only a select minority of the members had been advised to meet elsewhere.

In this way, the "elders" divided the church in Mansfield; they choose only to contact their supporters concerning the time and place of their meetings. They decided to exclude the majority of the members from the church by their lockout, making their meeting a sect.

On the following Lord's Day, November 12, 2006, once again the majority of the members of the church were locked out and not able to meet in their own facility. Two letters of inquiry were then sent to the four brothers responsible for this action (an additional letter was written at a later date). The hall was once again locked and empty on November 19, 2006. There were no phone calls, no notices, and no answer to the letters of inquiry signed by many long-time members. The same situation happened on the subsequent two Lord's Days, November 26 and December 3, 2006.

The new "elders," the new direction, the influence exercised over the church in Mansfield, and perhaps even the instigation of the lockout appear to have come from workers affiliated with the regional work of Titus Chu, centered in Cleveland, Ohio. This extra-local influence has resulted in a major deviation from the normal church practice that has been enjoyed by the members of the church in Mansfield throughout its forty year history.

We are saddened that an erroneous version of the October 29, 2006, meeting has been posted on the Internet. In the post, a

quote from the 34-year-old “elder” rashly accuses Living Stream Ministry (LSM), a Christian publisher, of pulling strings behind the scenes to impose their control over the church in Mansfield. We can testify that LSM had no part in the events described above.

Rather, these four “elders,” who should have learned to shepherd the saints in love and to serve them as slaves, in only their sixth week as “elders,” locked the majority of the members out of their meeting facility. Their actions as newly minted “elders,” appointed by Titus Chu of Cleveland and installed by the visiting co-worker of Titus Chu, clearly demonstrate that there is outside interference in Mansfield, not by Living Stream Ministry but by Titus Chu and some of his workers.

These events reveal the nature of the new regime of “elders.” Rather than feed the flock, they exercised their assumed authority. In the process they dishonored many saints, including some of those who paid the price to establish the church life in Mansfield forty years ago. This type of behavior should not occur in any of the churches in the Lord’s recovery. It reminds us of the slave in Matthew 24 who mistreats his fellow slaves (v. 49) rather than feeding them (v. 45). For a proper view concerning authority, see the ministry below.

THE TRUTH CONCERNING AUTHORITY

The testimony and practice of the local churches and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee have never condoned the exercise of claimed, presumed authority to control the churches or their members. Please consider the following quotations from Brother Nee and Brother Lee:

To claim authority over the saints indicates that one does not have any authority.

We should never try to bring others under our authority. Such a thing is a hierarchy; it is something of organization. We should not try to rule over the saints. Instead, we should humble ourselves and remain under the throne in the clear sky.

It is shameful for anyone to claim to be the authority in a local church. There is no such thing! In the church there is no human authority.

I would remind all the dear ones who bear responsibility in the local churches never to exercise their authority. We need to realize that none of us has any authority.

It is a serious mistake to exercise authority over others in the church. Nothing is more shameful than this. To exercise authority over the saints is not glorious—it is shameful.

(Witness Lee, *Life-study of Ezekiel*, pp. 116-119)

We must never speak one word to vindicate our own authority; rather, we should give others the full liberty... If they do not want us to be their authority, or if they shy away from us, we do not have to force them to accept us. It is a most ugly thing for anyone to speak for his authority in order to establish authority for himself.

(Watchman Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 47, p. 220)

Elders, therefore, are not appointed to be rulers exercising authority over others. Ruling over others is ugly and base. The elders should never rule anyone. In the Gospel of Matthew the Lord Jesus said that He is the only Lord and Master and we all are brothers (23:8, 10). This means that the elders, the overseers, are also no more than brothers.

According to the New Testament teaching, there is no rank for the elders. There is also no controlling power for the elders, because they do not have any rank. The elders do not have any right to control. The clear word of the New Testament does not allow any ground for the elders to take rank or controlling power.

(Witness Lee, *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 2160-2161, 2164-2165)

I would say a word to the elders concerning their authority: We have to have the basic understanding that there is no authority within ourselves.

Do not think that as long as a person is an elder he has authority. We have to know and understand authority. Only those who understand authority have authority. If the elders do not understand authority, they are not qualified to be elders, and they are not fit to be an authority.

(Watchman Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 61, p. 215)

When seen in the light of the above references, the divisive and presumptuous words and actions of the “elders” in Mansfield stand in stark contrast to the truth in the Lord’s recovery. Such behavior should not be accepted among us; it is not representative of our teaching, our stand, our practice, or our spiritual heritage.

OUTSIDE LEADERSHIP

It is not we, the saints who were excluded and cast out by the “elders” in Mansfield, who have brought in outside leadership. It was the “elders,” Titus Chu, and Titus’s co-worker. The four “elders” were appointed by Titus Chu apart from any fellowship with the members of the church in Mansfield. Their “eldership” was imposed upon the church here. The proclamation of their “eldership,” their installation into office, was made by the visiting co-worker of Titus Chu. Many of the activities of this “eldership,” including those described in this booklet, appear to have been directed by Titus Chu, his co-worker, and possibly others outside of Mansfield.

The church’s financial records that were made available to us show that the “elders” chose to contribute \$1,750 each month from the church in Mansfield’s local account to support Titus Chu’s work plus another \$300 for Titus himself. An additional \$200 was sent to Life Ministries in Willoughby, Ohio, another part of the work of Titus Chu, to support his work in Uganda during this time. Another \$100 each month was spent on an individual’s home in Huntington, Ohio, also related to Titus’

work. In all over half of the church's total monthly income flowed from Mansfield to the work of Titus Chu under the direction of elders appointed by Titus Chu. This raises a red flag that there is indeed an outside leadership that has an interest in controlling the church in Mansfield.

OUR RESPONSE

In response to the extra-local leadership thrust upon the church here, the members called a duly noticed and lawful business meeting of the church in Mansfield on December 1, 2006. Written notices were sent to all the members of the church named on the phone list. Thirty-five members, a significant majority of the church members, attended the business meeting. During this meeting, new trustees were unanimously elected by the members present. Although the "elders" chose not to come, they did hire a lawyer to observe the proceedings.

The "eldership," appointed and encouraged by outside influence, then refused to recognize the legitimate results of this lawful election. They tried to maintain their lock-out of the members of the church and to continue their hold on the church in defiance of the will of the majority of the church members. They continued to attempt to control the assets of the church despite the results of the December 1 business meeting. Because of their actions, we were forced to ask the court to recognize this legitimate business meeting of the church in Mansfield and the election of the trustees.

We believe that in due time the judge will uphold our action as lawful. In the meantime, we urge all the saints in Mansfield, regardless of your feelings on the issues presented herein, to maintain the sweet oneness of the Body of Christ. We welcome you to meet with us as we continue to enjoy the Lord for His satisfaction in the church and His testimony in Mansfield.

DIVISIONS BEYOND MANSFIELD

The divisions caused and perpetuated by Titus Chu and some of his co-workers extends beyond Mansfield. Sadly, the influence of this work has caused turmoil and division in many places throughout the earth, including Toronto, Canada; Columbus, Ohio; and Kampala, Uganda. The facts on these incidents are well documented on <http://www.afaithfulword.org>.

CONCLUDING FELLOWSHIP

We hope that by reading this booklet you can realize, before the Lord, what has transpired in the church in Mansfield. As those responsible to the Lord Jesus, we are compelled to present this detailed record of events. Since an errant version of these events has already been made public on the Internet, we must set the record straight. We do so out of our love for the church in Mansfield, all of its members, and all the local churches in the Lord's recovery throughout the earth.

We hold no bitterness toward the former "elders." Although they are no longer "elders" (if they ever were), they are our brothers and, as such, we ask them to turn from their way and to fellowship with us in Christ. We pray that our situation in Mansfield can be resolved peacefully.

Although we do not have free use of our hall for now, we do continue to meet to break bread, pray, and fellowship over the Word of God. We testify that once again we can sing, "How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity." We invite you to join us in this blessing and to stand for the oneness of the universal Body of Christ expressed in the local churches.

For the Lord's recovery and the church in Mansfield,

Brian Baer

Ben Flieger

Jim Jamerson

Bob Ludwig

Bob Mellick

