

TORONTO ELDERS' RESPONSE TO A PUBLIC LETTER

Entitled: "Tyranny of Church in Toronto Overbearing Elders Exposed"

Introduction:

A letter from a Toronto brother, Soan-Lin Liu was recently posted on the "lastadam.com" website (Feb. 20, 2007), under the following description:

"The church in Toronto's oppressive elders' insufferable and overbearing behavior towards the local saints display their highhanded and imperious authoritarian arrogance in expecting unquestioning obedience of its domineering and dictatorial exercise of power."

The link from the phrase "**authoritarian arrogance**" leads to:

"Tyranny of Church in Toronto Overbearing Elders Exposed 2001-02-20
Read a local brother's love and longing for a normal church life [here](#)"

The title "**Tyranny of Church in Toronto Overbearing Elders Exposed**" is repeated under, "Fellowship." Brother Soan-Lin Liu's letter can be accessed from both places. It is reproduced below. The Toronto elders' response is included together with the text. For clarity the **Toronto Elders' Response** is indicated in red.

----- Letter starts here-----

19 February 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have been in the church life in Toronto since 1973, and I have treasured my years in the Lord's recovery.

Elders' Response: Dear Brother Soan-Lin Liu,

It is unfortunate that you have chosen to address the Toronto "Brothers and Sisters" directly, rather than bringing your concerns to the elders of the church. We would expect that a brother with your experience, having "been in the church life in Toronto since 1973," would know the value of fellowship in the church-life. However, instead of bringing your concerns directly to the elders who you accuse of wrong-doing, you have chosen to address the Toronto saints directly via a public forum on the Internet and other means. Brother, why have you not applied the biblical principles of Matthew 18, where the Lord told us to first address our complaint to those who have offended us? This you have not done. You have failed to apply these basic scriptural principles.

Moreover the posting of your letter on the Internet under the heading "**Tyranny of Church in Toronto Overbearing Elders Exposed**" conveys the impression that you endorse these serious accusations. This title already accuses Toronto's elders of being "overbearing" and practicing "tyranny." Moreover one has to navigate through a forest of accusations to reach your letter. Along the way the headings further accuse the Toronto elders of being "oppressive" and "insufferable." The elders are charged with "highhanded and imperious authoritarian arrogance," and a "domineering and dictatorial exercise of power." The reader navigates through these serious and unsubstantiated accusations against the Toronto elders before arriving at your letter.

Brother, do you endorse these accusations against Toronto's elders? If you do, (may we ask) why have you not followed the biblical instruction to bring your accusations to the Apostle (1 Tim. 5:19)? Your failure to apply basic biblical principles causes us to question—Have you really learned what you ought in your years in the church-life here?

You are described as a "local brother" with a "love and longing for a normal church life."

Yet, (may we ask) how can you expect a "normal church life" when you violate basic spiritual practices? Brother, your "love and longing" need to be matched by practicing the truth—"walking in truth" (2 John 4).

However, I am grieved that over the past year and a half (long before the quarantine of Titus Chu and long before the brothers came to minister to us the prayer and shepherding burden) some of our leaders began to exhibit a different attitude toward our own saints in Toronto, the rest of the churches and ministering brothers all over the earth.

Elders' Response:

We did not have "a different attitude" (as you allege.) Nor are we aware of having displayed a different attitude. Please realize that this is your subjective evaluation of others' attitude. May we ask--How was this (alleged) "different attitude" exhibited? Could it be that a different attitude was first manifested by certain saints in Toronto, other churches and certain blended co-workers?

I have never seen such bitterness and hostility in announcing a church business meeting as there was in the posting "Why have an early business meeting"?

Elders' Response:

Brother, you appear again to be subjectively imputing motives or feelings of "bitterness and hostility" into others' writings. No such motives or feelings as you describe exist. Please try to lay aside your subjectivity and consider things in an objective manner. The article, entitled, "[Why have an early business meeting?](#)" was intended to inform the saints of the reasons for having a business meeting at this time and the expected impact of decisions to be made at the annual business meeting.

I could not believe that 77 of our own local saints were condemned by that writing simply for petitioning the elders with their concerns over the direction of the church.

Elders' Response:

You refer to the November letter, with 77 names, received by the elders after the decision rendered by Toronto's Review Committee. As you know, the Review Committee was established in Toronto to consider the "Warning Letter" issued in Whistler, BC (Oct. 2007) and to render a decision as to its application here in Toronto. All voting members were given the opportunity to express their views, both orally and in writing. You were among those who spoke to this issue.

After careful and prayerful consideration the Review Committee rendered its "[Determination & Recommendation.](#)" At that time the elders exhorted the saints to "forget the things behind," accept the Committee's decision and endeavor to go forward in harmony. The 77-person letter was in direct opposition to the elders' exhortation, seeking rather to re-visit the issues. As such the elders' considered this action by the 77 against the best interests of the whole Church. Brother, we hope that you could view this matter in terms of the whole Church, rather than in terms of the benefits to a minority "special interest group."

The Toronto elders responded to the 77 confirming that the Determination was final. However the letter of the 77 was subsequently posted online (on lastadam.com,) perpetuating the unrest and aggravating the situation.

Moreover, we must take issue with your characterization of these 77 as "local saints." In fact several of those named were not resident in Toronto and have not participated in the church-life here for a considerable time. Brother Liu, (in all honesty, we must point out that) this includes some of your own family members, whose names appeared among the 77. Others whose names appear, when contacted, acknowledged that they had little or no knowledge of the letter's contents. Moreover, some temporary visitors to Toronto from Korea (who have since left) were also named. Brother, in the light of these facts, how much credibility should be given to that letter of the 77? May we ask you to reconsider--How many are truly "local saints"?

The extent to which some of the elders are willing to go to assert their own authority is shameful

Elders' Response:

Brother Liu please advise us on what basis do you allege the elders "assert their own authority"? According to what criterion have you discerned it is their "own authority"? Perhaps you have forgotten that the elders are appointed by the Holy Spirit to shepherd the "flock" (Acts 20:28). Moreover, the believers are charged to "obey the ones leading you and submit to them..." (Heb. 13:16.) The local-church elders surely have some God-given authority, according to the Bible. Realizing this, it may be unwise of you to assert so dogmatically that the elders are exercising their "own authority."

Some of the elders demand that "outsiders" get permission before they can even talk to their own relatives in the church here. Since when are there "outsiders" in the Body of Christ?

Elders' Response:

To our knowledge (after checking) no visitor was told by any elder that they need "permission before they can even talk to their own relatives in the church here." We are not aware of any such event. We can only assume that this report is the result of either an honest misunderstanding or deliberate twisting. If you think this matter should be investigated further, please could you cite the instance where this event is alleged to have occurred.

There are no genuine believers who are "outsiders" in relation to Christ's Body. Nevertheless, we are dealing with matters of the practical local church, not merely with the mystical Body. In terms of the practical local church-life, there surely are "outsiders." The Apostle Paul charged the Ephesian elders to shepherd the Church. He specifically warned that "fierce wolves would **come in** among you, not sparing the flock." (Acts 20:29) The fact that they could "come in" surely implies they are "outsiders," who must be guarded against. As elders of the Church in Toronto we are cognizant of our responsibility to guard the Lord's interest here.

Since when do elders have that much authority? For years our church has not invited the co-workers to come and minister and instead have clung only to Titus Chu and those in his circle.

Elders' Response:

Your allegation, that "For years our church has not invited the co-workers to come and minister," displays your lack of knowledge of church affairs here. In fact for more than a decade, virtually every year, the Toronto elders invited specific "blended co-workers" to visit Toronto and join the ministering at our conferences. When one "blended co-worker" was not available, often another "blended co-worker" was invited. The historical record shows the frequent invitations by the Church were repeatedly declined by the "blended co-workers" themselves. It is not that we did not invite. It was they who declined our repeated invitations. That is why the recent flurry of visits by "blended co-workers" to the GTA stands in stark contrast with their previous absence. You appear to be misinformed when you state (as you do) that "For years our church has not invited the co-workers to come..." The facts of our history show otherwise. Reports to the contrary are without foundation.

Now when the coworkers come at the invitation of dear leading ones in neighboring churches to perfect the saints in prayer and shepherding, some of the elders in Toronto respond by threatening any saints who attend their training sessions.

Elders' Response:

Previously when the Toronto elders invited specific "blended co-workers" to visit Toronto, they declined. Now, without any fellowship with the Toronto eldership, these brothers conducted trainings in nearby cities (Brampton & Richmond Hill). Brother Liu, perhaps you are unaware that there are unresolved issues related to the "Church in Richmond Hill" in particular, which have been emphasized by Brother David Wang. Brother David even prevailed upon Brother Steve Pritchard to accompany him to Anaheim to fellowship with

the "blended co-workers" concerning this. No resolution was reached. In the continued presence of unresolved issues between Toronto and the churches in both Brampton and Richmond Hill, and in the absence of prior fellowship with the visiting brothers, the Toronto elders considered it prudent to discourage saints from participating in those GTA activities. Brother Liu (may we remind you) that you were not party to all the fellowship regarding these matters, nor do you have full information concerning this. We humbly suggest therefore that it is unwise of you to pre-judge these matters. We can assure you that the elders were seeking to shepherd the flock in Toronto according to God. (1 Peter 5: 1-2)

These elders claim a mandate is necessary to avoid "remote control" by those outside of Toronto. Who has exercised any control in Toronto except these elders? And who is seeking to control who is recognized as a member of the church? Who has demanded that their directives be followed? Who has set up a camera in Hall I to monitor what is said in the meetings? Who has checked license plates at home meetings and entered uninvited into home meetings?

Elders' Response:

Perhaps your statements indicate that you do not understand the proper boundary between the church and "the ministry," nor its relationship to other ministries, other churches and other members of the Body. You appear to have confused the two spheres—the ministry and the church. What you have called "control" (by the elders) may in fact be proper local oversight. It is proper for such oversight ("control") to be exercised by the elders in Toronto. What is not appropriate is "remote control" over the local church by extra-local persons or groups of persons, however much one may admire them. In recent years the "remote control" (we referred to) has taken the form of directives and edicts (although they are not identified as such) from some in "the ministry." Recent examples include the "One Publication" policy (June 2005) and the "Warning Letter" of quarantine (Oct. 2006.) In these cases, it appears that elders and churches which did not "fall in line" were targeted, attacked, denounced, embarrassed etc. There seems to have been systematic campaigns to enforce these "directives" in local churches, contrary to the church's own stand on these issues. May we ask you--Doesn't this amount to attempted "remote control"?

The local elders here (on the contrary) have not demanded that their directives be followed. They have not quarantined those who expressed a different view. Perhaps you should re-visit the question of who is exercising "control," and whether that exercise is proper and scriptural.

One elder told a visitor that David Wang and Ron MacVicar are not part of the real eldership any more. Who maneuvered to remove Ron as Secretary of the Board of Directors? And who is seeking to remove David from the Board of Directors?

Elders' Response:

Brother, you ask: "Who maneuvered to remove Ron...? And who is seeking to remove David...?" Your use of the word "remove" in this context seems to impute some malevolent intent. Brother Ron MacVicar was not "removed," as secretary by "maneuvering" as your statement alleges. The Secretary of the Board of Directors is chosen by the directors of the corporation. This position does not belong to Brother Ron MacVicar (or any other person) by right. It is not his personal possession. It is simply a type of deacon's function, assisting the directors in the efficient operation of the Church-corporation. The directors can appoint whomever they consider is most suitable for this task, and the Board is entitled to substitute officers in the best interests of the corporation. It is not a kind of honorific position which your statement seems to assume. Again you seem to be subjectively attributing motives to actions. Your assumptions about motives which you impute to others are unfounded.

Again, your question: "who is seeking to remove David from the Board of Directors?" shows a serious misunderstanding. No one is seeking to "remove David." In our recent history, the positions of directors are filled annually at the business meeting. The director's position does not belong to Brother David Wang (or any other brother) as a matter of right. The

directorship is not Brother David's (nor any other director's) personal possession. It is perfectly normal for an elder to serve as director for a number of years, then have another elder pick up that responsibility. We are grateful that for many years Brother David Wang has served as a director. At every business meeting where an election of the Board of Directors takes place, the Board is in a sense "vacated" and either the existing directors are re-elected or replaced by new directors. At the up-coming Business meeting, the voting members have the right to nominate Brother David Wang as a director if they choose to do so. Brother David also has the right to accept that nomination and stand for election if he chooses to do so. Therefore it is inaccurate for you to assert that some are "seeking to remove David from the Board of Directors," as if to imply some malevolent intent.

Perhaps more to the point-where in the Bible and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee is there justification for such actions which clearly have as their goal the consolidation of the remaining elders' control over the church?

Elders' Response:

Once again dear brother, you seem to be influenced by your subjective feelings about others' motives when you assert: they "clearly have as their goal the consolidation of the remaining elders' control..." Brother on what basis can you be so certain of the validity of your subjective evaluation of the elders' motives? Please remember that only God truly knows our hearts and we are admonished not to judge one another. Moreover, we remind you, that you are not cognizant of the whole situation. In the absence of full information, what may appear to you as a "consolidation of...control," may in fact be the protection of the Church in the best interests of the members and the carrying out of God's purpose through the Church.

In the church life, we have always been taught that authority is based upon the manifestation of resurrection life. Authority in the church is not something the elders assert; obedience is not something they demand.

Elders' Response:

Brother concerning authority (as with many other truths) there is more than one aspect. Yes, authority is "based upon the manifestation of resurrection life." Yet is that the only aspect? Are you suggesting that there is no authority associated with position? The Bible tells us to be subject to masters, rulers and governments (even those who are unrighteous. 1 Pet. 2:18) Their authority has nothing to do with "the manifestation of resurrection life." Brother, please re-consider, perhaps your statements indicate you still have much to learn (as we all do.) With that realization, perhaps we should not be so dogmatic in our assertions. For example, within the family, the father has both the position and the life (and love) as the basis for his "authority." Under normal circumstances mainly it is the life (& love) that are manifest. However, under abnormal circumstances, the father may need to stand upon his "position" as father. This is the "other side" of authority.

The controlling ones say the by-laws need to be changed because those regulations are 14 years old. That is not true. The by-laws were revised in 2002. These brothers seem to be willing to step on any Biblical principle in pursuit of their goal. In their new requirements for membership, they determine who is a member based on their participation in church service and financial giving. What ever happened to hidden service and hidden giving? Many saints, particularly the elderly ones such as me, may be limited in terms of what service we can perform. Is not our service in prayer and shepherding of value? Those saints who desire anonymity now must have their giving monitored by the church if they want to be treated as members. Is that right?

Elders' Response:

Brother, it seems your difficulties arise (at least in part) due to confusion between the Church in Toronto as a spiritual entity and the Corporation as a legal-practical entity. Nothing related to service and financial giving in the church-life (along the lines you

mention) is affected by changes in the bylaws, nor the membership procedures. There is no reason for the saints' participation in the Church in the areas of service and financial giving to be impacted by the bylaws of the Corporation.

However, in terms of participation in the Corporation as a legal-practical entity, there is a need for us to adopt measurable and verifiable criteria. The same principle applies in terms of tax-deductible donations to the Church. If a saint desires to give to the Lord by offering to the Church, either anonymous cash donations or verifiable check-donations (or cash donations in marked envelopes) are equally valid. However, if a saint wants to avail himself (or herself) of the government's tax deduction provisions, verifiable donations are required. The choice is up to the individual saint. We respect their decision. However, the directors are not free to violate tax laws at their whim by issuing tax receipts for non-verifiable donations. Similar considerations apply in the conduct of the Church of the Torontonians Corporation. If a saint wants to participate as a voting member in the Corporation, the directors wish be able to verify that they have satisfied the criteria of supporting the church financially. By adopting objective, verifiable criteria for new memberships the process is seen to be fair, unbiased and equitable. We hope this allays your concerns on this point.

I believe what the Toronto website says is true, "the church is under attack." But it is not under attack from Living Stream Ministry.

Elders' Response:

You say "the Church is not under attack from LSM." However, can you honestly and reasonably deny that LSM and the "blended co-workers" are attacking the church? What about the "[Has the truth changed or have the Toronto elders?](#)" series written by anonymous writers and posted on an LSM-sponsored website [afaithfulword.org](#)? Perhaps Brother Liu, you have yet to carefully read these articles. We believe an objective reader would conclude (as we have) that these articles on the Internet constitute an "attack" on the Church in general and the Toronto eldership in particular.

That ministry's work has been blessed by the Lord, even over the last 9 years with much fruitfulness. The attack is also not from the co-workers. No. This attack is from the enemy, who wants to sow dissension amongst the saints. The co-workers are honor-able brothers in Christ who are serving the Lord with their whole lives.

The controlling elders say the co-workers and others are seeking to purge those that disagree with them. They say that if the co-workers have their way many in Toronto will be "kicked out" along with their families. Who has ever proposed such a thing?

Elders' Response:

Brother, perhaps you should ask: "Has such a thing ever happened?" The answer is "Yes, it has!" We are aware of recent events in other local churches which set a potential precedent for what could happen in Toronto. We did not make these statements lightly.

Can they name any church that has been cut off from fellowship because they receive the ministry of Titus Chu? Can they name any brother or sister who has been quarantined other than those who have been attacking the coworkers and the other churches, creating division in the Lord's recovery? Even those who are quarantined are not excommunicated.

Elders' Response:

Dear Brother, You ask: "Can we name any brother...?" We regret to inform you that we can indeed "name a brother...who has been quarantined other than those [named at Whistler.]" Brother David Canfield of Chicago was quarantined by the Church in Chicago (not permitted to join the Church meetings including the Lord's Table). We could name others, both in the Far East and in the West. There are multiple cases of brothers being prevented from serving in various churches—e.g. the Church in Seattle, WA & the Church in Bellevue, WA—because they refused to endorse LSM's 'one publication' policy. Brother, your challenge to us to "name names," seems to indicate that you have very little knowledge of the overall situation, beyond the incomplete information which you appear to have received.

The current by-laws do not permit our directors or elders to kick families out of the Church. It is the new proposed by-law which would let them do this. Beware.

Elders' Response:

Contrary to your assertion, the current bylaws give the directors of the corporation the authority, as a normal and incidental aspect of the directors' powers, to determine the utilization of the corporation's assets—including the meeting halls and church-owned houses. As such the directors have certain powers to "kick families out" of both meeting halls (e.g. Hall #2, the "Campus House") and other church-owned properties. The new bylaws do not confer any authority to "kick out families" which does not already exist. Brother, your understanding of both the present and proposed bylaws is erroneous. Your assertion is incorrect.

Sadly, it is Toronto's controlling elders who seek to purge those who do not agree with them. They make oneness with them the ground of the church. Is this according to the truth? If the new by-laws are approved anyone who has a different feeling or a desire to receive the ministry that the churches throughout the earth are enjoying will be subject to discipline. Doesn't that make us the church of a particular worker or group of workers? I have never heard of another local church that has such rules. The new by-laws would even give these elders the authority to choose their apostles. Can anyone imagine a scenario other than the controlling elders identifying Titus Chu as our apostle? What happened to "all are yours"?

Elders' Response:

Brother your final paragraph contains numerous unfounded accusations, erroneous assertions and incorrect implications, and shows again that (probably) you have confused the Church, which is a spiritual entity, with the Corporation, which is a legal-practical entity. We are not able to respond to all these accusations in a short letter. For example, it is simply erroneous to assert that under the new by-laws "anyone who has a different feeling or a desire to receive the ministry...will be subject to discipline." The saints in Toronto have always had the freedom to pursue whatever ministry material they feel is profitable. The elders do not dictate the spiritual exercise of individuals or families. However, we are opposed to efforts by a "special interest group" within the Church to impose their particular view upon other saints and the Church in general.

The elders should serve the saints. They should not seek to entrench themselves and their own authority. They should not seek to exclude or purge their fellow elders. In the last year and a half, some of our elders have repeatedly abused their position. They have proven themselves unfaithful stewards of the authority that has already been committed to them. If we give them the powers they seek, all accountability will be lost.

Dear saints, I love the Lord's recovery, I love His Body, and I love the church in Toronto. I do not write to you lightly. I am deeply concerned for the future of the church here if we give the controlling elders the authority they seek.

Yours in Christ,

Soan-Lin Liu.

Elders' Response:

Again Brother, if you are "deeply concerned for the future of the church," the Lord's way, the Biblical way is for you to bring your concerns to the eldership of the Church. We regret that you have not done this. By adopting other methods you risk damaging the Church for which you profess to have "deep concern." We still invite you to bring your concerns to us.

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