

Our FAITH,
TESTIMONY,
and
HISTORY

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

TO THE LOCAL CHURCHES AND THE MINISTRY
OF WATCHMAN NEE AND WITNESS LEE

...that I with you may be encouraged among you
through the faith which is in one another,
both yours and mine.

Romans 1:12

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DCP is a project to defend and confirm the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee
and Witness Lee and the practice of the local churches.

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.

This booklet uses the following abbreviations:
CWWN – *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*
WL – Witness Lee

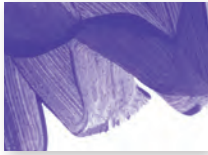
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Throughout this booklet we have included affirmations from respected Christian
scholars and ministry leaders under the heading “What Others Say.”
These, our fellow believers in the Lord, have gotten to know us
through diligent study, dialogue, and Christian fellowship.

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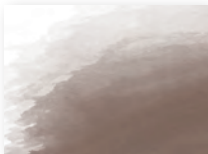
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Introduction

We are pleased to offer this booklet to the Christian public as an introduction to the local churches and to the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

The local churches are a worldwide fellowship of lovers of Jesus Christ who seek to give witness to His marvelous salvation and to bear testimony to the oneness of His Body. In our faith and practice we take the Word of God, the Bible, as our unique standard. Thus, we meet according to our understanding of the pattern of the churches established by the apostles in the New Testament. We affirm “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) and, as this booklet explains, endeavor to cooperate with the Lord to recover the experience of Christ as life, the functioning of every believer in serving the Lord, and the building up of the Body of Christ in a testimony of oneness.

We have greatly benefited from the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, which, over the past nine decades, has brought hundreds of thousands to saving faith in Christ, produced some five thousand local churches, and edified believers on all six inhabited continents. Their ministry, which is published by Living Stream Ministry, stands upon the shoulders of the many great Christian teachers of the past in order to present both the broad span and the spiritual depths of the New Testament truths, particularly from the perspective of the believers knowing and experiencing Christ as their life for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ.

Our

FAITH
FAITH

OUR FAITH

The faith affirmed by the local churches and by the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee is “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), namely:

1.

The Bible is the Word of God, written under His inspiration word by word (2 Tim. 3:16), and is the complete and only written divine revelation of God to man (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19).

There is one God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4b; Isa. 45:5a), who is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19)—coexisting (Matt. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 13:14) and coinhering (John 14:10-11) in three persons, or hypostases, distinct but never separate, from eternity to eternity.

2.

3.

Christ, the only begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 3:16), even God Himself (John 1:1), became a genuine man through incarnation (John 1:14), having both the divine and human natures (Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 2:5), the two natures being combined in one person and being preserved distinctly without confusion or change and without forming a third nature.

Christ died for our sins and was raised bodily from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Acts 4:10; Rom. 8:34), has been exalted to the right hand of God as Lord of all (Acts 5:31; 10:36), and will return as the Bridegroom for His bride, the church (John 3:29; Rev. 19:7), and as the King of kings to rule over the nations (Rev. 11:15; 19:16).

4.

5.

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Eph. 2:5, 8) and in His completed work, resulting in our justification before God (Rom. 3:24, 28; Gal. 2:16) and in our being born of God to be His children (John 1:12-13).

The church as the unique Body of Christ, the issue of the work of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), is composed of all genuine believers in Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12) and, according to the New Testament revelation, is manifested in time and space in local churches, each of which includes all the believers in a given city, regardless of where they meet or how they may otherwise identify themselves (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; Rev. 1:11).

6.

7.

All the believers in Christ will participate in the divine blessings in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (Rev. 21:1—22:5).

These seven items broadly represent what we hold as “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Although our teachings on other, secondary items are also grounded in Scripture, we acknowledge that genuine believers have historically held to many differing interpretations on these matters and continue to do so today. Therefore, we diligently practice to receive all those whom the Lord has received (Rom. 14:3; 15:7).

What Others Say



ELLIOT MILLER, M.A.

Late Editor-in-Chief of the
Christian Research Journal

I find it [“Our Faith”] to be thoroughly consistent with historic, orthodox Christian theology in all of its affirmations. Indeed, it is far more explicit and astute in its orthodoxy than what one normally encounters in statements of faith.

TOM ASCOL, PH.D.

Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida; Executive Director of Founders Ministries and editor of *Founders Journal*



[This] statement of their orthodox, evangelical beliefs...should be welcomed by all who love the Lord Jesus and who affirm the full authority of the written Word of God. As I have grown to know some of the brethren in this movement and have worshiped with them in several of their Chinese churches [during a visit to the Far East] I have been blessed and challenged by their humble devotion to our Lord and commitment to the work of making disciples. May the Lord continue to bless and use them in the extension of His kingdom throughout the world.



PAUL COPAN, PH.D.

Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University, author, and former President of the Evangelical Philosophical Society

The doctrinal statement [of faith] of the Local Church and LSM [Living Stream Ministry] reflects a clear commitment to the fundamental tenets of Christian orthodoxy. In a remarkable spirit of humility, the Local Church has taken great pains to clarify and refine this statement through prayer and conversation with fellow evangelicals. I commend this gracious spirit and urge all true Christians to embrace our brothers and sisters in the Local Church, who share the same faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the Ministry of

Witness Lee

A small sampling of Witness Lee's teaching regarding our faith:

The whole *Bible* is the complete revelation of God; every word and every sentence is inspired by God.

– *New Life Lessons, Volume 1, 18*

He is one, yet three; and He is three, but still one. He is three-one, and this *Triune God* is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19). The Three coexist and coinhere.

– *Elders' Training, Book 2: The Vision of the Lord's Recovery, 7*

We must see the two major aspects concerning the *Person of Christ*. The first aspect is that He is the complete God, and the second aspect is that He is the perfect man.

– *The Secret of Experiencing Christ, 19*

We believe that *Christ*, the Son of God, was *incarnated*, was *crucified* for our redemption, was *resurrected* from among the dead both physically and spiritually, that He has *ascended* to the right hand of God, and that He is *coming again*.

– *Life-study of Ephesians*, 755

Man is justified by God's grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus and also by believing into Christ. The Bible clearly and definitely indicates that a man is not and cannot be justified before God by works; he is and can only be *justified by faith* (Gal. 3:8; 2:16; Rom. 3:22, 28; Acts 13:39).

– *Truth Lessons, Level 1, Volume 4*, 27

If we believe in Him, our sins are forgiven, He comes into us as our life, and we are regenerated. All the regenerated ones are the unique *church*. In whatever locality they reside, they are the local expression of the universal church.

– *The Spirit and the Body*, 217-218

The *New Jerusalem* and all its blessings have been prepared for us by God and are for our enjoyment in eternity in the new heaven and new earth.

– *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Volume 1*, 145

What Others Say



FULLER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**Fuller Theological Seminary
is one of the world's largest
multidenominational
seminaries**

RICHARD J. MOUW, PH.D.

Former President and Professor of
Faith and Public Life



VELI-MATTI KÄRKKÄINEN, TH.D.

Professor of Systematic Theology



HOWARD J. LOEWEN, PH.D.

Dean Emeritus and Senior Professor
of Theology and Ethics



After a two-year study, a panel of Fuller's faculty made the following statement:

It is the conclusion of Fuller Theological Seminary that the teachings and practices of the local churches and its members represent the genuine, historical, biblical Christian faith in every

essential aspect... In regard to their teaching and testimony concerning God, the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the Bible, salvation, and the oneness and unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, we found them to be unequivocally orthodox.

For a full copy of Fuller Theological Seminary's statement, please visit:
<https://an-open-letter.org/en/fuller-theological-seminary/>



GRETCHEN PASSANTINO, M.DIV.

Late co-founder and Director of Answers in Action (AIA) and senior research consultant and editor for Christian Research Institute

I affirm on the basis of my extensive and critical research and analysis that the teachings of Witness Lee, the local churches, and Living Stream Ministry are within orthodoxy in all points of essential doctrine, and that their characteristic practices are within orthopraxy.



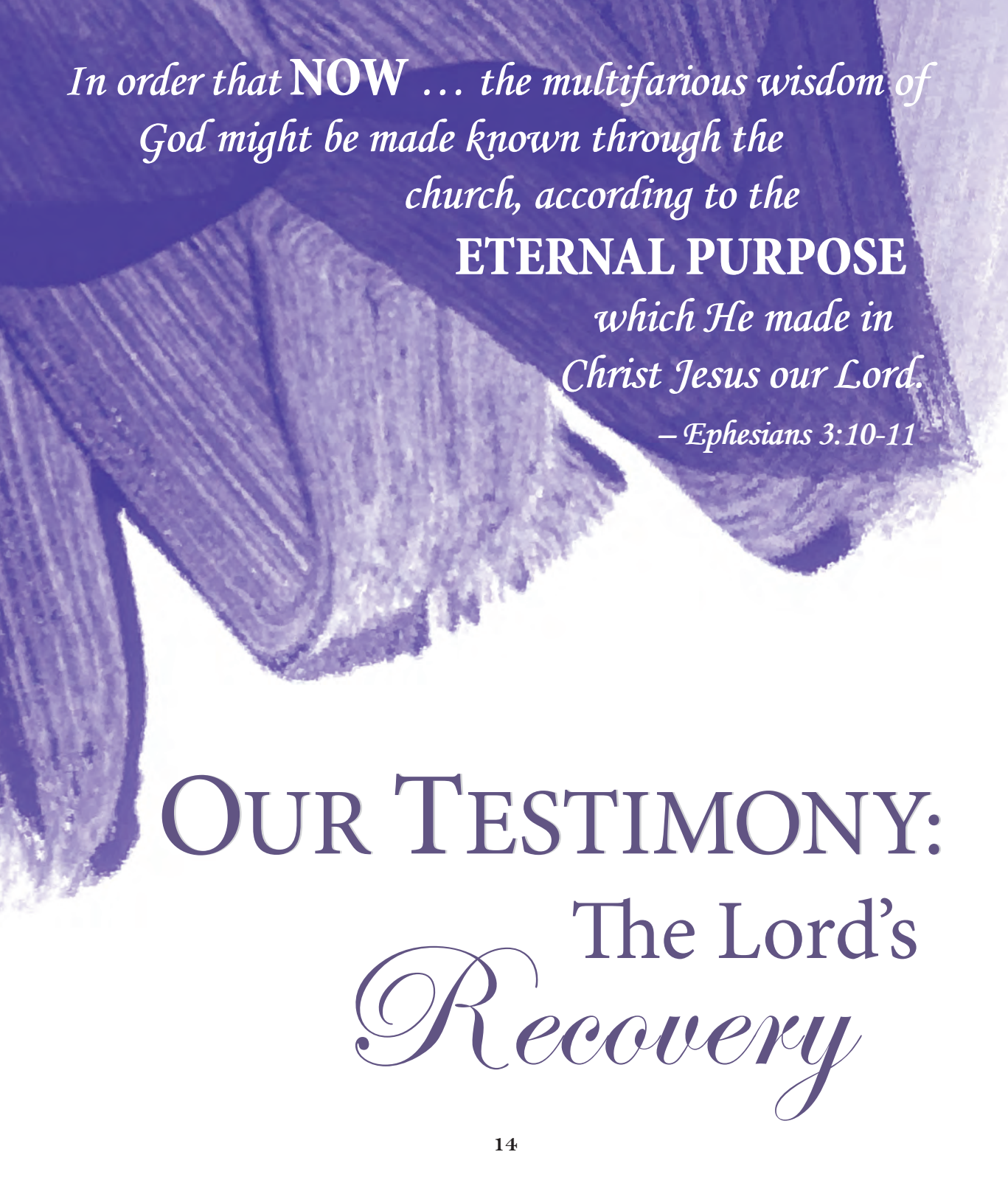
PETER KUZMIC

Distinguished Professor of World Mission and European Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and co-founder and Director of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia

[I] continue to pray that the larger evangelical community in this country and elsewhere will come to realize that your cause is right, and that the deep biblical commitments and Christian orthodoxy of our influential Chinese brothers/teachers should be appreciated.

Our

TESTIMONY



*In order that **NOW** ... the multifarious wisdom of
God might be made known through the
church, according to the*

ETERNAL PURPOSE

*which He made in
Christ Jesus our Lord.*

— Ephesians 3:10-11

OUR TESTIMONY:

**The Lord's
*Recovery***

We believe that today our Lord is moving to recover the fullness of the Christian life and church life as revealed in the New Testament. We seek to co-labor with Him in His work, a work we refer to as the *Lord's recovery*. The word *recovery* indicates a return to a normal condition, implying that something has been lost or has degraded from its original state.

When we speak of the recovery of the church, we mean that something was there originally, that it became lost or damaged, and that now there is the need to bring that thing back to its original state. Because the church has become degraded through the many centuries of its history, it needs to be restored according to God's original intention. Concerning the church, our vision should be governed not by the present situation nor by traditional practice but by God's original intention and standard as revealed in the Scriptures.

(WL, *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, Messages 221-239, 2447)

Shortly after the church was produced through Christ's death and resurrection, deviations from the truth began to creep in. The apostles strove in their epistles to bring the believers back from uplifting the law or elements of human culture and philosophy to properly appreciating the uniqueness of Christ. Nevertheless, over the centuries the church became increasingly bound by traditions, forms,

and ecclesiastical hierarchies to the point that the Bible was locked up for centuries until the Lord began a recovery work through the translation of the Bible and the trumpeting of the truth of justification by faith by Martin Luther and the other Reformers. Since then He has continued to recover many lost truths of the Christian faith in both the understanding and experience of believers. Watchman Nee and Witness Lee stood on the shoulders of those who have gone before in order to recover the proper testimony of the church in this age based upon the truths revealed in the New Testament.

Watchman Nee considered the recovery of what Paul described in Ephesians 4—the perfecting of the believers unto the work of the ministry, the building up of the Body of Christ through their growth in life and mutual edification (vv. 12, 15-16)—as the goal of God's recovery work. Though he acknowledged arriving at such a reality as “the most difficult thing,” he still declared his belief that “there will be a day when God's recovery will reach the fulfillment of Ephesians 4,” and said that of all God's recovery works:

The ultimate work among all these works may very well be the recovery of the Body testimony. God's leading today is to bring us back to the beginning and to recover us to the condition at the beginning.

(CWWN, *Volume 57: The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry*, 221)

What Others Say



HANK HANEGRAAFF

President of Christian Research Institute (CRI), host of the *Bible Answer Man* radio broadcast, and bestselling author

If the early Christian church had one distinguishing characteristic, it was their passion to communicate the love, joy, and peace that only Jesus Christ can bring to the human heart. As we become entrenched in an age of esotericism, it is essential that genuine believers in all walks of life emulate this passion—a passion I have personally witnessed as I shared in fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ from local churches in places as far away as London, England; Seoul, Korea; and Nanjing, China.



PETER KERRIDGE

CEO of Premier Media Group, the largest Christian broadcaster in the United Kingdom

While clearly influenced by early Christian Brethren teaching as well as the profound “inner-life” tradition of early 20th century Great Britain, today their ministry [the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee] transcends any singular context, whether Eastern or Western, and is finding a fresh renewal of popularity and interest around the globe.

Today the Lord is working to recover among the believers:

the genuine experience of **CHRIST AS LIFE**

for

the **FUNCTIONING** *of every believer*

in

a practical **TESTIMONY OF ONENESS**

unto

the building up of the Body of Christ.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST AS LIFE

Jesus said to her, I am the
RESURRECTION

and the

LIFE;

*he who believes into Me,
even if he should die,*


shall LIVE...

– John 11:25

The first critical matter in the Lord's recovery is the experience of Christ as life. The Bible says that every believer in Christ has eternal life (John 3:16, 36) and that Christ has become our life (Col. 3:4). But what is eternal life? In the Gospel of John, the Lord said unequivocally, "I am the life" (John 11:25; 14:6). The Greek word for *life* in this verse has a particular meaning. Three different words in the Greek New Testament are translated as "life" in English. *Bios*, from which we get the English word *biology*, refers to the physical life (Luke 21:4). *Psuche*, from which we get the word *psychology*, refers to man's soulish, or psychological life (Luke 17:33). *Zoe* is the word that the New Testament writers used for the divine, eternal, uncreated life of God. Ephesians 4:18 speaks of those who do not believe in Christ as being "alienated from the life [*zoe*] of God," whereas 1 John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has the life [*zoe*]."

On the one hand, the Lord came to accomplish redemption. On the other hand, He said, "I have come that they may have life [*zoe*] and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10b). *Zoe* is life of another kind and of a source other than our mere human *bios* or *psuche*. It is God Himself, the eternal, uncreated One, embodied in Christ (Col. 2:9), imparted into us.

We cannot separate eternal life from the gift of God. God's gift to us includes both His Son and His divine

 ***Zoe is life***
of another kind and of
a source other than our
mere human bios or
psuche.

It is God Himself... 

life. These two are one gift, for the divine life is in the Son, and the Son actually is the divine life (John 14:6)... The thirst in human life cannot be satisfied by tradition. Our thirst can be quenched only by a living Person, the One who has been given to us to be our eternal life.

(WL, *The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John*, 138)

In his epistles to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that "the last Adam [Christ in the flesh] became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45) and "the Lord [Christ] is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17). The Spirit today is the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:9, 2), making Christ as life real and experiential to the believers.

The Holy Spirit now is the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of life, living and dwelling within us as the reality of the indwelling Christ, causing us to experience the indwelling Christ. The real experience of life is the experience of the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of life living within us to make the indwelling Christ a reality in our daily life.

(WL, *Basic Principles of the Experience of Life*, 26)

This life is not static or passive. Rather, Christ as our life carries forward God's operation within the believers from the point of their reconciliation to God to work out God's complete salvation. Thus, Romans 5:10 says, "For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." Thus, as Witness Lee explained:

Through the death of Christ we have been reconciled to God. This is objective and has already been accomplished.

Now that we have been reconciled to God, we will be saved in Christ's life and by this life. This is the subjective side of God's salvation. Although reconciliation through the death of Christ has been accomplished once for all, to be saved in His life from many negative things is still a daily matter, and it will take place throughout our entire Christian life.

(WL, *The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity*, 209)

The ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee opens up the biblical revelation of this eternal, uncreated life of God in a practical and experiential way. There is no greater need among God's people, and no matter more crucial, than the experience of Christ as life.

What Others Say



TIMOTHY O'FALLON, M.A.

Teaching Pastor at Countryside Christian Center in Clearwater, Florida, and former Professor of Poetical Books and Philosophy of Religion at Florida Beacon Bible College

What would it be like to see “normal Christians” who really experienced Christ daily and through whom Christ could be daily seen? What would it be like to see men and women who no longer try to “produce fruit or concentrate on the fruit produced” in their own soulish power, but who instead live a life of turning their attention to Christ, and who by active surrender enjoy Christ living through them? I thought many times that this would be a glorious thing to behold. And then one day I met the believers of the local churches. I no longer ask the question ‘what would it be like...?’ I know what it is like. I have met such people. And it is glorious indeed.



PAUL YOUNG

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Christian Research Institute

...I can attest to the genuineness of this move of the Spirit on account of the love, joy, and peace of Christ I have personally witnessed and experienced in countless gatherings of the Body of Christ throughout this continent and around the world. I have “tasted and seen that the Lord is good”... I have traveled from Boston to Beijing; from Taiwan to Texas; from Canada to Chile and it is always the same—“see how they love one another!” “Jesus is Lord!” “He must increase and we must decrease.” To be demonstrating and declaring the unsearchable riches found only in a deep, personal relationship with Christ is the heart-beat of the followers I have met within the local churches. All for the Glory of God—being engaged in the process of lifting up Christ so that all men might be moved from “lost” to being “found” in Him.

THE FUNCTIONING OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

*And He Himself gave some . . .
for the **PERFECTING** of the saints
unto the work of the ministry, unto the
BUILDING UP of
THE BODY OF CHRIST.*

– Ephesians 4:11-12

*Out from whom all the **BODY**, being joined
together and being knit together through
EVERY JOINT of the rich supply and through
the operation in the measure of
EACH ONE PART,
causes the growth of the **BODY** unto the
BUILDING UP of itself in love.*

– Ephesians 4:16



Another item the Lord is seeking to recover is the functioning of all the believers to build up the Body of Christ. According to Ephesians 4:11-12, the specially gifted members given to the Body by the Head do not build up the Body directly. Rather, they perfect, that is, equip, all the believers to carry out the work of the ministry.

Through the functioning of the gifted members as the joints of the rich supply and the operation in the measure of each perfected member, the Body of Christ builds itself up in the divine love organically and in mutuality (Eph. 4:16).


Watchman Nee taught the importance of perfecting all the believers to function as members of the Body rather than limiting the Lord's service to the work of a few:

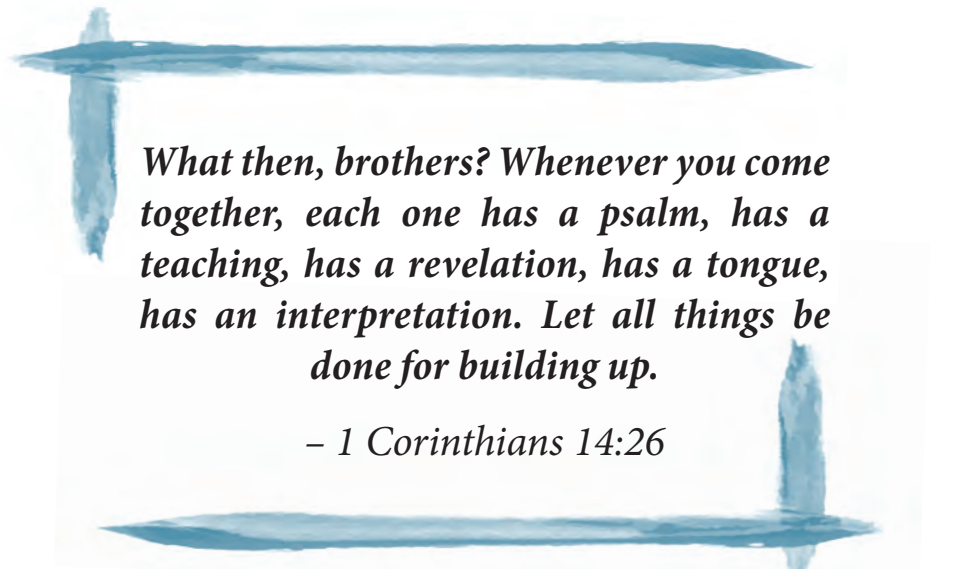
In the church no member should be left out. This is not the way taken by the Lord. Today, if the Lord is going to recover His testimony, He must make all the one-talented ones rise up. All who belong to the Lord are the members of the Body. Everyone must rise up and be in his function.

(CWWN, Volume 51:
Church Affairs, 57-58)



All who belong to the Lord are the members of the Body. Everyone must rise up and be in his function.





What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

- 1 Corinthians 14:26

Witness Lee's exposition of 1 Corinthians 14:26 shows that the early church's meetings were characterized by mutuality in speaking:

The church meeting described in 1 Corinthians 14:26 is full of mutuality. It is a meeting in which all the saints participate by speaking and listening to one another.

(WL, The Excelling Gift for the Building Up of the Church, 23)

Witness Lee explained the crucial link between 1 Corinthians 14 and Ephesians 4 in the building up of the Body of Christ:

On the one hand, 1 Corinthians 14:26 is fulfilled by practicing the revelation in Ephesians 4:11-16; on the other hand, unless the meetings of mutuality as revealed in 1 Corinthians 14:26 are recovered in the practice of the church life, it is impossible to practice the building

up of the Body of Christ as recorded in Ephesians 4:11-16.

(WL, Prophesying in the Church Meetings for the Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ, 19-20)

Witness Lee labored to work this out in practice. In the principle of "each one has" (1 Cor. 14:26), everyone in the local churches is encouraged and equipped to be an active participant in the meetings of the churches. Today, if you visit a meeting of a local church, you will likely find such a meeting in mutuality: not one speaker but many—perhaps twenty or thirty—sharing their portion of Christ from their study of the Word, their contact with the Lord through prayer, and their day-by-day enjoyment and experience of Christ. This, indeed, is a striking characteristic of the churches raised up by the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

What Others Say



HANK HANEGRAAFF

President of Christian Research Institute (CRI), host of the *Bible Answer Man* radio broadcast, and bestselling author

The local churches are an authentic expression of New Testament Christianity. Moreover, as a group forged in the cauldron of persecution, it has much to offer Western Christianity. In this respect three things immediately come to mind.

First is their practice of prophesying—not in the sense of foretelling the future but in the 1 Corinthians 14 sense of exhorting, edifying, encouraging, educating, equipping, and explicating Scripture. In such a practice, constituents are corporately involved in worship through the Word. Second is their practice of pray-reading (in addition to Bible study) as a meaningful link between the intake of Scripture and efficacious communion with God in prayer. And third is their fervent commitment to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).

GRETCHEN PASSANTINO, M.DIV.

Late co-founder and Director of Answers in Action (AIA) and senior research consultant and editor for Christian Research Institute



A Christian believer who joins the local churches will find sound theology, enriching worship, challenging discipleship, and enthusiastic evangelism opportunities. After 40 years of Christian faith, I have not lost my “first love” of Jesus Christ. I recognize that same vibrant Spirit in the local churches.

A PRACTICAL TESTIMONY OF ONENESS

*That they all may be **ONE**;*

*even as You, Father, are in Me
and I in You,*

*that they also may be **IN US**;
that the world may believe*

that You have sent Me.

– John 17:21

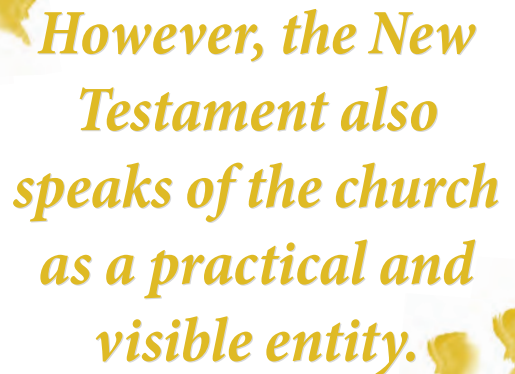
The third crucial item of recovery is the practical testimony of oneness among believers on the earth today. Christians generally agree that the church, the Body of Christ, is one universally and includes all who believe in Christ.

The Bible says that there is only one church. The church which Paul was in is the same church that we are in. The church that we are in is the same church that the apostle John, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and all regenerated persons are in. The church in the Bible is not separated by time, locality, or race. There is only one church, which exists at all times and in all places.

(CWWN, Volume 22: The Assembly Life and the Prayer Ministry of the Church, 55)

Many have referred to the mystical Body of Christ as something intangible and invisible. However, the New Testament also speaks of the church as a practical and visible entity. In the four Gospels, the Lord Jesus spoke of the church twice. In Matthew 16:18 He declared,


“I will build My church.” This is the universal church, the Body of Christ. But in Matthew 18:17, He instructed His disciples that when believers were faced with an intractable problem, they should “tell it to the church.” This refers not to the mystical Body of Christ but to a tangible local assembly of believers.



However, the New Testament also speaks of the church as a practical and visible entity.

Watchman Nee diligently studied the New Testament to find out on what basis churches should be formed and observed a consistent pattern. Whenever people in a certain city believed in the Lord Jesus through the preaching of the gospel, they

*Saying,
What you see write in a scroll
and send it to the seven churches: to
Ephesus and to Smyrna
and to Pergamos and to Thyatira
and to Sardis and to Philadelphia
and to Laodicea.
– Revelation 1:11*



began to meet as the church in that city. Thus, there were the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (13:1), the church in Ephesus (20:17), the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), etc. The Lord instructed the apostle John to write to seven churches and then named seven cities (Rev. 1:11). There were thousands of believers in Jerusalem yet only one church with one administration and in one fellowship (Acts 2:41-42; 8:1; 15:4). We believe that the biblical model for the church that was practiced in the first century (Acts 2:46; 8:1) is more than adequate for the believers today.

We respect that every believer should be persuaded before the Lord as to how to meet and identify himself. Thus we make no distinction between those who meet with us and those who do not (Rom. 15:7; 1 Cor. 1:9). Nevertheless, we feel compelled by conscience to maintain a testimony of oneness to be faithful to our understanding of the Word of God and for the sake of the entire Body of Christ.

What Others Say



EUGENE VAN NESS GOETCHIUS, PH.D., TH.D.

Late Professor of Biblical Languages who held chairs simultaneously in the Episcopal Theological School and the Philadelphia Divinity School

...Every ecumenically inclined Christian will admit that there ought to be only one church in each city—not a single congregation, perhaps, for that could be unwieldy—but one body of Christians sharing one hope and one faith and one Lord, one God (cf. Ephesians 4:4f). The Local Churches may seem to be, and may develop into, “just another denomination”; but their doctrine of “locality” makes them a witness to a genuine Christian ideal: the unity of Christendom.

(The Experts Speak Concerning Witness Lee and the Local Churches, 126)



ELLIOT MILLER, M.A.

Late Editor-in-Chief of the *Christian Research Journal*

Apart from its precision, the only affirmation that sets the statement of faith [of the local churches] apart from others is its assertion that the universal church or body of Christ “is manifested in time and space in local churches, each of which includes all the believers in a given city, regardless of where they meet or how they may otherwise identify themselves (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; Rev. 1:11)”; but there is nothing unorthodox about this assertion, and, in fact, it could be argued that it is a profoundly biblical truth in much need of consideration by Christians today.

Recovering GOD'S ORIGINAL *Intention*

In the late 1960s, Witness Lee published a small booklet outlining how God's enemy, Satan, has damaged the church and how God is working to recover the church back to His original intention. He concluded that booklet by saying:

God is moving in these days to recover. What is the way of His recovery? I believe many of us would like to be in that way. It is just in these three things: 1) the recovery of Christ as life and everything to us, 2) the recovery of the functions of all the members, and 3) the recovery of the proper unity. Not until these three things are recovered among us will we have a proper and adequate church life. There must be a group of believers who realize and experience Christ as their life and content and will take no substitute. Not one member of this group

would be a clergyman or a layman. They are all living, functioning members of Christ. And all of them have abandoned the denominations, sects, and divisions and come to meet on the ground of oneness to practice the proper unity. If there is such a group, there is the Lord's recovery, there is a real expression of the Body of Christ, and there the enemy and all his work are put to shame.

(WL, *Satan's Strategy Against the Church*, 9-10)

How precious it is simply to take the Word of God by faith. It is our testimony that this is possible, and we are endeavoring to practice the biblical revelation concerning the experience of Christ as life, the building up the Body of Christ by the functioning of all the members in mutuality, and the testimony of the oneness of the Body of Christ expressed in local churches all participating in a common fellowship. We believe that what the Lord desires to recover today is for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose—the building up of the Body of Christ. We treasure fellowship in mutuality with all our fellow believers in Christ.

Our

HISTORY

OUR HISTORY

*We all were born in the human history,
but we have been reborn, regenerated,
in the divine history.*

*Now we need to ask ourselves
this question:*

*Are we living in the divine history,
or are we living merely in the human history?*



*If our living is in the world,
we are living in the human history.*

*But if we are living in the church,
we are living
in the divine history.*

— WL, Life-study of the Minor Prophets, 102

Both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were raised in Christian homes in the early twentieth century. As young men they began to serve the Lord in the 1920s in their respective hometowns in the south and north of China. Both diligently studied the classic Christian writers, and both had ministries that bore the unmistakable sign of God's blessing. In 1934 Witness Lee joined Watchman Nee in Shanghai to carry out one work emphasizing the experience of Christ as life and the building up of the church. What followed was a remarkable move of the Holy Spirit. The depths of the truths in the Bible poured forth through their ministry as they labored diligently to bring the believers into a personal and corporate living that matches the New Testament. Their work attracted tens of thousands of followers among native Chinese, most of whom were newly saved.

By the time the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, hundreds of local churches, often called the "Little Flock" by outsiders, had been raised up throughout the country. The local churches were able not only to survive persecution but also to thrive and flourish, because they strongly stressed the need of every member to have a daily time with the Lord in His Word, to learn to serve Him in the gospel, and to have regular fellowship with other believers, including meeting from house to house (Acts 2:46). This pattern affected much of the "underground church" in China. Today it is estimated that there are between eighty and one hundred million believers there. Many of them offer much credit and gratitude to Watchman Nee for the survival of the church in China.

 *In the New Testament age
God has raised up many gifted persons with
many gifts and functions,
but they all belong to
the same one ministry.
This one ministry ministers Christ
for the church.* 

(WL, *Crucial Principles for the Proper Church Life*, 66)

In 1949, prior to the establishment of the PRC, Watchman Nee, with the support of his co-workers, sent Witness Lee to Taiwan to preserve what the Lord had shown them in His Word and initiated through their labor. This decision was shown to be under the sovereign hand of God. Nee was arrested for his faith in 1952, along with many leading ones among the local churches. He was never released, and his direct ministry ended at that time. Before his death in a Chinese labor farm in 1972, he left a note under his pillow that said:



Watchman Nee (1903-1972)

“Christ is the Son of God who died for the redemption of sinners and resurrected after three days. This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ. Watchman Nee.”

Meanwhile, his ministry had found a much wider audience abroad. Five years after Watchman Nee’s arrest, and totally unknown to him, polished notes from a series of messages he had given in


“Christ is the Son of God who died for the redemption of sinners and resurrected after three days. This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ. Watchman Nee.”

Europe in the 1930s were published in a book entitled *The Normal Christian Life*. Over the next ten years this book became immensely popular in Europe and North America, spreading eventually to every inhabited continent. It is widely considered a twentieth-century Christian classic and is receiving renewed interest today. In ensuing years several other titles by Watchman Nee, including *Changed into His Likeness*, *Love Not the World*, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, and *Sit, Walk, Stand* were also published in English. Each achieved great popularity, and by the mid-1960s Watchman Nee had become one of the most widely read authors among Christians seeking a deeper experience of Christ and a more satisfying and biblical approach to the church. Christians from an entire generation, across a wide range of theological orientations, acknowledge Watchman Nee as one of the major influences on their Christian life. Now a new generation is discovering the wealth of spiritual riches in the writings of both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.




Witness Lee (1905-1997)

Upon his arrival in Taiwan in 1949, Witness Lee helped to bring about one of the most notable spiritual revivals of the twentieth century. From a modest beginning with five hundred believers, and in a country largely lacking the knowledge of Christ, tens of thousands soon embraced the Savior, and local churches were established throughout the island. Within six years nearly fifty thousand believers were meeting in the local churches in Taiwan. Furthermore, the work continued to spread throughout the Far East, with churches being established in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, and Korea.



Many thousands of believers today, both within and outside the local churches, appreciate in Witness Lee's writings the same spiritual quality and faithful, insightful development of the divine revelation found in Watchman Nee's works.



In 1962, following the Lord's leading and encouraged by a growing interest in Watchman Nee's writings in the West, Witness Lee moved to Los Angeles and established his work and ministry in North America. Local churches multiplied rapidly throughout North America, followed quickly by churches in South America, Europe, Australasia, and Africa. After the Cold War ended, members of the local churches took the gospel to the Russian-speaking world, resulting in tens of thousands receiving salvation and many local churches being established. At Witness Lee's passing in 1997, there were approximately 2,300 local churches outside of China on all six inhabited continents.

In addition to the extensive expansion of the work that Watchman Nee and he began in China, Witness Lee left behind a remarkable breadth of written ministry. In total he published more than six hundred titles, many now available in more than fifty languages. His *Life-study of the Bible* is a book-by-book commentary on the entire Bible with almost two thousand chapters and twenty-five thousand pages, all of which reveal and make practical the genuine experience of Christ as life and the proper Christian service for the building up of the Body of Christ. These messages became the basis of English and Spanish language *Life-study of the Bible* broadcasts heard on radio stations

in North and South America and Europe. The printed *Life-study* series is complemented by a second series, *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, a topical presentation of major lines of truth, including God, Christ, the Spirit, the believers, the church, the kingdom, the New Jerusalem, and the believers' experience and enjoyment of Christ. He also oversaw the development of a study Bible based on a new translation, *The Holy Bible: Recovery Version*, to which he also contributed extensive outlines, footnotes, and cross-references. Recently, Living Stream Ministry published *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, a set of over one hundred thirty volumes and seventy-five thousand pages spanning over sixty years of ministry. Many thousands of believers today, both within and outside the local churches, appreciate in Witness Lee's writings the same spiritual quality and faithful, insightful development of the divine revelation found in Watchman Nee's works.

Before his passing Witness Lee committed the continuation of the ministry among the local churches to some of his co-workers. These co-workers have overseen the continued spreading of the local churches throughout Europe, India, the Middle East, and Africa. Today there are more than four thousand local churches outside of China. As there is no "headquarters" or formal affiliation, compiling the total number of members is difficult, but conservative estimates range from 1.5 to 2 million members globally. A group of co-workers also minister the Word in various international, national, and regional conferences and visit the churches to bring them on further in the experience of Christ as life, in the development of the functioning of all the members, and in the practice of the church in oneness for the building up of the Body of Christ.

What Others Say



HON. CHRIS SMITH

Representative of New Jersey
in the United States House of
Representatives



Madam Speaker, it is estimated that China has more than one hundred million Christians, and millions of them consider themselves the spiritual heirs of Watchman Nee. Millions more are rightly proud of the contribution Watchman Nee made to global Christianity—he was the first Chinese Christian to exercise an influence on Western Christians—and indeed of his contribution to world spiritual culture.



HON. JOSEPH PITTS

Former Representative of Penn-
sylvania in the United States
House of Representatives



Witness Lee’s speaking and writing continued to emphasize “Christ as life” and God’s desire to “build His church” on the basis of the oneness of God’s people, rather than on any ethnic or cultural differences. This was the same message that he had learned from his spiritual mentor, Watchman Nee. Since the early 1960s the spread of the local churches under Lee’s ministry throughout North and South America, Europe, and Africa has been remarkable.



AIMING WANG

Former professor at Jinling Union Theological Seminary; Chief Editor of *Jinling Theological Journal*, and Deputy Director of the Theological Education Committee of the China Christian Council

During the ten-year period from 2002 to 2012, I continually studied and read through all of the writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. I have gone over some of their more important writings several times... Beginning from about 2008, I came to the definite conclusion that Watchman Nee and Witness Lee ... are spiritual giants in the history of Chinese Christianity.



PETER KERRIDGE

CEO of Premier Media Group, the largest Christian broadcaster in the United Kingdom.

Watchman Nee was the John Wesley of China. His legacy continues to thrive today as millions of people on the mainland of China find faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Witness Lee, his coworker, continued that legacy and broadened it to encompass the West and all six continents. Living Stream Ministry is the faithful custodian of their vision and strives to make Jesus known in a way that upholds their worldview and passion for the Gospel.

Invitation

We hope that you have found this booklet to be helpful in getting to know us, our beliefs, our testimony and our history. We trust that what other respected Christians have said has also served as a valuable introduction to the local churches and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

Perhaps in reading you have been inspired to pursue knowing our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus more fully as life, serving Him with others in mutuality, and taking the building up of His Body as the goal of your Christian life.

If so, we encourage you to explore the exceedingly rich ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, a ministry that opens up from the pages of the Bible the unsearchable riches of Christ and God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:8-11). We also extend to you our warmest welcome to visit any local church for Christian fellowship, Bible study, and worship. To find a local church that meets near you, please visit: **www.localchurches.org**

*Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith
and of the full knowledge of the Son of God,
at a full-grown man,
at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

-Ephesians 4:13

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Living Stream Ministry (LSM) publishes the ministry of
Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

For more information,
please visit the following websites:

www.lsm.org

www.lsmradio.org

www.ministrybooks.org

www.watchmannee.org

www.witnesslee.org

LSM also publishes a scholarly journal called
Affirmation & Critique: A Journal of Christian Thought.

For more information,
please visit the following website:

www.affcrit.com

Defense and Confirmation Project (DCP) and LSM
jointly publish:

www.an-open-letter.org

This site contains a resources section that includes excerpts
from the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee
that expand on and enrich the subjects covered in this
booklet. It also has a section of testimonies with the complete
text of the “What Others Say” excerpts in this book.

