

History of Witness Lee and the Local Churches

On China Mainland Period

The testimony of the local churches was initiated by Watchman Nee in China during the 1920's. At that time he attracted many people from different Christian denominations to switch over to follow the Lord and seek truth and salvation with him. With the blessing of the Lord many young people also joined in. They devoted all their life for the testimony of the church as well as for the gospel. Brother Nee was really a faithful servant of the Lord. He dispensed much resource and money for the church work, not only money donated by many church members but also his own money. He also devoted all his life and his effort to work for the Lord. He has never collected any registration fees or tuitions from the members, nor has he tried to sell any books or handouts to the members. He taught them all he knew and he worked very hard for the church.

He did not have much time to work for the Lord. For instance, he has taught the first class (training) for six months; he only started the second class for a period of time, but he has established a solid foundation for the testimony of the Lord. In 1939 there was a civil war in China and the mainland was taken over by the Communist government and brother Nee was arrested and put in jail because of his work for the church and finally he died after 20 years in confinement. Brother Nee had established a sound example for the followers and seeds he planted propagated and sprouted up in China as well as in many places all over the world. It is said there might be thirty to fifty million followers on the China mainland today of a work that began with Mr. Nee. The exact number nobody can tell. Only the Lord knows and in due time He will let us know how many there are.

We can tell that the Lord carried out the local church work thru many many people who followed Him. It is not any particular individual who can claim all the credit. For those people who faithfully serve the Lord, all the members will be able to see that. If there is any imposter or corrupted members who did inferior work then their true colors will be exposed sooner or later.

Section 2 The Full Period in Taiwan

The first period from 1938-65

As early as 1938 and even before that, a small group of brothers already started to have fellowship in Taipei. Bro Liu Kiang Yung___ was the first to start to serve full time. At that time he was still single, but he became a full time coworker. Bro Nee once went to Taipei in 1938. It is hard to tell if bro Liu went to Taipei from ___or not. Back in spring of 1938 there were about 20 some members who got together in Taipei. At that time they assembled in a Japanese-style house on Shanghai Road in Taipei. Because it was a Japanese-style house the house had tatami, so the church members had to take their shoes off and sit on the floor. Many church members who came from the China mainland were

not accustomed to this style, so they felt a little uncomfortable at the beginning. Actually, that house was donated by brother Nee and was used for assembly as well as for a lodging facility for the coworkers and church members who went to Taiwan.

After the middle of 1948 the political and military situation on the mainland of China changed rapidly. Many church members followed their schools, universities, government agencies, or the military to move over to Taiwan. As a result, many of these church members were spread out to all different parts of the island, to many different cities and towns. They went as far north as ____? Following the railroad. To the south of Gausheng? In September of the same year, ____ and his family arrived to join the church assembly in Taipei. In November of the same year ____ six brothers and their families went to Taipei from Shanghai on the same ship. Because of that the Taipei assembly increased rapidly to over 50 people. Also in 1948 ____ went to Gausheng because of his job assignment? and teamed up with ____?? married Dec 25 in Taipei. The church members took advantage of the new year holidays and they printed out many fliers, then went out into the busy streets to spread the gospel. They went to different sections of the city including the new part for the gospel and attracted many new members. In the spring of 1949, ____ came to Taipei from the mainland and joined the congregation. At that time there were 150 people who had joined the congregation and the original Japanese house was not big enough for the congregation so often people had had to assemble in different places and in different assemblies. At that time, there were two members who were overseas Chinese from the Philippines ____ and bro _____. They went to buy a piece of property, sect 2. A place to put a wooden structure that could accommodate 350 people. Afterwards that building was not big enough and was rebuilt and expanded into a wooden structure that would accommodate 800 people. This is the current assembly hall number one located on Tien San Ban Liu.

Nee and Lee Come to Visit Taipei

At the beginning of 1949 brother Nee came to Taipei for the second time with the request of fellow members he has established five members ____ to become the Taipei congregation elders. Three of these brothers worked for the church in Taipei on a full-time basis. In April of 1949 Mr. Lee and his family went to Taipei from China mainland. At that time he was very depressed. All the members of the congregation encouraged him from different directions and also coworkers took him to visit many members in the southern part of Taiwan.

At that time there were congregations established in many cities around the north-south railroad, such as _____. His visits to these places helped him to recover from his depression. He became fully charged and ready to go again. Not much later, the construction of the number one assembly hall was completed. After a discussion among fellow members it was decided to call the first all-Taiwan special congregation in Taipei on August 1, 1949. There were over 300 members who participated in this gathering. Among them there were about 70 coming from the central and southern part of Taiwan. There were about 30-40 people from denominations attending. And about 200 members coming from greater Taipei area. All these members

were there long before Mr. Lee arrived in Taiwan. There were also approximately 150-200 members who did not make it to the special gathering. At that time there were about 500 members across the different parts of Taiwan. This is the very first period of church establishment and growth in Taiwan. This rapid growth of church work and the spread of the gospel brought more and more people to join the congregation. The work load increased at the same time. The Lord called many young people to come join the church and to serve. Indeed there were many young people, some of them having just graduated from college, while some were still in college. These young people decided to drop whatever they were doing to come work for the Lord. Because there were a lot of new people coming into the church, there was the need to have a full-time training. At that time many church members decided to ask Mr. Lee to take responsibility for the training exercise. . At that time there were about 100 church members, including some young people leaders from various parts of Taiwan who joined the training class. The training was quite successful. All the people who participated in the training became Mr. Lee's special disciples. Also, because of this experience Mr. Lee established absolute authority over the people who had come to the training. Since many of them were leaders at different assemblies in various cities and towns in Taiwan, he could call on them to carry out many programs and projects. Due to this kind of cohesiveness, there was a period of very good cooperation among church members.

Although Taiwan is an island surrounded by ocean, it is a very open society, and the church members had the opportunity to communicate and have fellowship with other believers who were meeting in the denominations. And, many young people discovered that there are other groups who also work for the Lord. Their ideas were a little different from what they heard from their own church and leaders. So, many of them went to Mr. Lee and asked for a chance to have some fellowship and communication with other groups. With this repeated request, brother Lee agreed to invite brother Sparks from the UK to come to Taiwan to have a couple of special meetings. Through these special meetings, many church members in Taiwan learned many different teachings and different ideas and started to have questionings about Mr. Lee's absolute authority. According to brother Lee, his greatest regret was to ask Mr. Sparks to come to Taiwan. Indeed, after Sparks' visit, some of the coworkers started to have questions and started to split from the 100% followers of Mr. Lee.

As the church work went thru rapid expansion, the financial need and supply also had a big change. In the beginning, the congregation had fewer members and many of them didn't have high paying jobs, so the church finances were rather difficult. But the increase with church members plus the whole economy in Taiwan had a big improvement and people had much better, high-paying jobs so the contribution to the church increased quite a bit.

Among the church members, it was a mostly informal and non-working procedure in handling financials. For instance, the full-time coworkers were told to handle themselves before the Lord according to their own conscience. Really there was nobody taking care of their living, but their assignment and place to work was assigned by chief coworkers. Whatever their assignment was, they had to accept, 100%. No arguments. And

contributions from the donations coming in to the church for the work of the Lord was all collected under a special account and managed by the chief coworkers.

After many years of operation this kind of formal arrangement created some difficulties. For instance, many of the coworkers had a life that was very spartan and close to difficult. But the chief coworkers, because they had the authority to use the church funds, made some expenditures that were questionable.

Witness Lee Business Failures Disrupt the Church

Around 1959 Mr. Lee had some investment failures and he lost a great deal of money. This brought the first financial crisis to the church. All the donations and contributions from the church members were used, and still the church owed people a large amount of money. Because of this situation, brother Lee forced the elders to sell a piece of land belonging to the church in order to pay the debt. That piece of land was located on 19 East Road, section 4, and had been bought by the church to build a training center and a new assembly building. Because of that many coworkers and church members were especially unhappy about this fiasco. Mr. Lee knew this was something that he did wrong and because of that he went to the United States and stayed on the west coast.

After Mr. Lee left Taiwan, the church coworkers formed two sides. One side was Mr. Lee's strong followers, while the other group had questions about some of Mr. Lee's activities. Those two groups had a strong difference of opinion, which greatly impacted the church activities and made much of the church work difficult to carry out. Finally, some of the coworkers who were Lee followers asked Mr. Lee to come back to Taiwan to resolve differences. In the summer of 1969, Lee came back to Taipei. He decided to get rid of those coworkers who disagreed with him. Consequently, there were 1000's of people who left the congregation. At that time almost 30 % of the regular members left, a most serious situation was that about 80-90% of the young members who were college students left the church. This was a very bad example for the church in Taipei to have this type of cleansing massacre and also to establish factionism within the church. Moreover, there was clearly some tendency to promote individualism and worship of a certain idol.

There was another incident that happened toward the end of the 1950's that involved Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia. Mr. Lee and some of the overseas coworkers developed some serious differences because the coworkers could not take Mr. Lee's absolute authority. Everything was dictated by Mr. Lee, and he would not take any input from anybody. In addition some of the well-to-do church members were very unhappy about his handling of the financial matters. This was due to the fact that a lot of the money had been contributed by these church members, and Mr. Lee would handle the finances according to his own viewpoint. The overseas coworkers did not feel they could trust him anymore. Because of the differences they split up. Originally, the Philippines were very important for Mr. Lee because there were several well-to-do church members there who supported the church financially for a long time. So in 1960 the Manila church decided to sever relationships with Mr. Lee totally.

When Mr. Lee left Taiwan to the U.S. in 1960, it was not really that he went there to open up new frontier. Rather, it was because of his own personal failure in Taiwan that he escaped to the U.S. As he left Taiwan, the church work in Taiwan was in serious disarray. Also the Philippines work was split off. This was the first period of our history.

Second Period 1965-75

During the period that Mr. Lee left Taiwan beginning in 1960 till he came back to Taiwan in 1965 to carry out his cleansing exercise, the church work in Taiwan went through a very difficult time. Because of that, there was a lack of cooperation between the coworkers. However, ____ and ____ were going to try their best to keep the church going. After the 1965 massacre ____ and ____ stayed with the church and tried their best to rebuild it. With the blessing of the Lord and the effort of the sweet brothers' leadership, over a two or three year period the church membership grew a lot.

One summer in the Taipei area a camp was held and about a thousand young people came together. There were many children who came to join various activities at the camp as well. The church in different localities in Taiwan went through a rapid recovery period. Therefore, Mr. Lee set up a special international gathering in Taipei in 1968 and invited people from all over the Taiwan area to come to attend, as well as about 160 members from the U.S. and Canada, and another 100 or so from various Southeast Asia regions, Japan, and Europe.

The attendees at the gathering were very impressed to see how the members in Taiwan worked together to establish this beautiful picture and to increase the church membership, so they learned the practice carried out in Taiwan and went back to their own area and became the leaders and the backbone of their church in their own areas.

In the period of the late 60's and early 70's there was a period of recovery and growth of the church in Taipei. We can take a look at the reasons why there was such a successful growth. 1) At that time the leaders of the church work ____ and ____ were not the strong leader type. In other words, they did not dictate. They worked together. They were not selfish. They did not have the desire to hold power in their hands. So under their leadership the coworkers worked together very smoothly and respected each other so that the work could be carried out. 2) there was an atmosphere of freedom within the church. Everyone had the right to speak out. They could ask questions and express their feelings. The elders and coworkers sometimes led the members to express themselves. So the fellowship among the members was open and very much a free-flow. There was no central authority figure to dictate anything. Neither was there anyone who was there to give the one and only teaching to all the members. Consequently, during the assembly there was a lot of fresh air blowing through the church. 3) The coworkers had the freedom to follow their interests and their strength. If someone was good at the gospel, then he would pursue in that area; if someone was good at working with the children, then he would be given opportunity to do that kind of work. If someone was good at

taking care of the sick then he will be assigned to a hospital to work with sick people. Due to these factors, all the church members and coworkers had the chance to fulfill their interest and to do their best in the area where they have their strengths. People were more than happy to do their work, since they were not following orders from any dictators. They enjoyed having the chance serve the Lord. 4) All the churches in Taiwan started to push the family fellowship and leaders asked the church members to do whatever they could do to promote it. In the Taipei church ____ were the ones who were the strongest promoters of this exercise. In 1975 the Taipei church had 22 congregations, 77 assemblies, and over 200 family fellowship groups with over 1000 members. The family fellowship members carried out many fundamental gospel works. They had to have some basic training as a help to take care of the children, to teach them the hymns, and to encourage them to read their Bibles. There were many such activities among family members. At that time I was just married and my residence was within #17 assembly under #3 congregation. I was not a leader nor did I have any responsibility for the assembly fellowship. The brothers did invite me to participate in some of the trainings. There was no tuition to be paid and there was no need to buy any materials or handouts. All the people who participated were on a volunteer basis. People participated not because of any personal gain – they were not for money or fame. They were just there to serve the church, to serve the Lord. Everybody worked together just like a big happy family.

- 5) The remaining coworkers within the church tried very hard to rebuild the youth and children congregation because in 1965 we were massacred. The most damaged part of the church was the college and youth branch. Coworkers that were driven away included the youth leaders. There was a big loss to the church. In Taipei, ____ and Tainan the youth work almost became a vacuum. Some of the people who served in small villages and in small towns were asked to go to Taipei, Tainan, and ____ to rebuild. Supposedly, they were very effective. Within a very short period of time they achieved something really amazing. For instance, in 1965 ____ was assigned from ____ to _____. When he first went over there with ____ and ____ they were looked at by some of the local young members as the running dogs after Mr. Lee. They were throwing eggs and tomatoes on them and yelling and screaming at them. The original youth leader ____ was gone. But after ____ loving and patience and care, explaining what they were going to do, just like a miracle within a year members within ____ University built up from almost nothing to about 150, and the youth congregation in ____ reached a new high. Afterwards, br ____ was assigned back to #3 assembly in Taipei and ____ was assigned to ____ to continue the task.

In another case, in the city of ____ there was a collection of colleges and universities in central part of Taiwan. ____ worked in ____ for many years and he had a good following from the youth and college students in ____ but bec he left the church a lot of college students all disappeared with him. At that time ____ was assigned to ____ from ____ He was responsible for the church work in central Taiwan. ____ was responsible to serve the colleges and universities there. Both of them worked hard day and night with tender loving care and they rebuilt the ____ church congregation.

In the 1965 massacre the third congregation under the Taipei church suffered very severe damage. There are two reasons for this. 1) one of the persons who was fired, ____, was well-respected by all the church members young and old. His knowledge and his work ethic were very much appreciated. The saints were very angry to see what was meted out to him. So, many followed him to leave the church. 2) In the meantime there was a cult movement going on in Taipei that was promoted by a person named _____. It was very popular. Some of the church members who were very anxious to follow the gospel but did not have a good understanding of the truth were fooled by this cult movement and left the church to join that crowd. At that time, ____ was the only senior member who helped out in the hall 3 congregation. After he worked for a period of time and made very little progress he asked for help. He invited ____ and _____. to come from Tainan to Taipei to help him work at meeting hall #3. With the three of them working together, hall 3 started to recover. Within a couple of years they made big progress. During the international special gathering in 1968, the Sunday morning gathering at hall 3 usually had more than 400 people attending. It was so full they had to add seats to the hallway. The youth fellowship usually had to be held in three separate locations - at assemblies 18, 19, and at meeting hall #3. Usually more than 350 people attended. Among them there were about 40-50 high school students, 150 junior high students and another 600-700 children gathered to have meetings in ten different locations. Brother fellowship and sister fellowship in Taiwan Normal University and National Taiwan University were established in 1967, as well.

____ and many other brothers all came to join the church during this period of time. The three examples of congregations that were mentioned above in Tainan, Taichung, and Taipei were only examples of the rebuilding of the churches that took place. The rebuilding was a very broad movement. It not only covered the colleges and universities, it was everywhere. Many students who lived on campus, and the teachers, the faculty, all joined in for the movement. The rebuilding not only existed on campus, but also in society in general. All participated in this effort. The coworkers provided proper training and guidance to the young people and showed them how to work with high school students and junior high children. The whole church environment was just like a big happy family. The older people took care of the young people and there was love and care for each other with no generation gap whatsoever. The older ones really loved the younger ones and the younger ones all respected the elders. There was nobody looking down on the younger people. And the younger people did not look at the older people as outdated or stubborn. All the people were working within the church. There was no concept of position or ranking. There was nobody playing tricks on anybody. So the church was really the witness of the kingdom of God. Everybody got a chance to fulfill or receive what he was looking for. Everyone had the blessing from the Lord. Simply put, during that time the coworkers working at Hall 3 in Taipei were ____ and his wife and _____. In addition, there was _____. They all contributed heavily to the rebuilding and expansion of the #3 congregation. In addition to these coworkers, there were many, many other church members who all loved the Lord and the church and they all contributed their fair share of the work. There was no way we could give all the credit for the rebuilding and expansion to any one or two

brothers, or to any other church member. That is just not fair. Here we are only talking about one congregation. In looking at all the churches all over Taiwan, their expansion and growth could not be attributed to any individual. We could only give this glory to the Lord. This is his work, which has been accomplished under His blessing.

In the early 1960's up to 1965 many churches in Southeast Asia drifted away from Taiwan, but after 1968 we started to re-connect with some of the churches in Taiwan to re-establish the fellowship. Many of them sent letters to Taiwan to ask some of the coworkers to go there to help them. Because of this, ____ often went to Japan, Korea, and ____ later on became stationed in Japan on a long-term basis. He is still there as of today. ____ was sent to Malaysia and ____ was sent to Indonesia and afterwards ____ went to Manila, and ____ went to Thailand, and in addition there were other full-time coworkers or church members in various parts of Southeast Asia who came to Taiwan to join some of the church congregations to work as interns. They include ____ from Indonesia and ____ from the Philippines.

Glorious Atmosphere Did Not Last Long

Unfortunately the glorious atmosphere did not last very long. There was a big change in 1970. In the summer of 1970 there was a special international gathering in Los Angeles. There were about 100 members who came to join the gathering from the Far East, with about two-thirds of them coming from Taiwan. Most of them were the leading coworkers from various churches in Taiwan. In that special gathering, Mr. Lee used strong derogatory language to insult and degrade coworkers from Taiwan. He called them outdated and said all the churches from the Far East were outdated. There were two reasons for him to do so. 1) He wanted to use the free spirit and animated style of the American church members to shake up the members from the east. He wanted the Far East members to believe that the yelling, screaming and jumping up and down by the American church members was an expression that showed that the Holy Spirit had entered into them. He forced the Far East members to accept that they were outdated and that they ought to be ashamed. He wanted to re-establish his absolute authority and power over them. 2) He understood that the church members from the East were passive and submissive. If he could show the church members of the West that he could overpower the well-trained senior church members from the East he could establish his power and authority over the church members in the West also.

What Lee did in his special gathering created two serious consequences. 1) After this special international gathering, the church members went back to Taiwan and tried very hard to transplant what they saw in the U. S. into Taiwan and thus created much conflict and confusion for quite a while. Many traditional church members in Taiwan could not stand the yelling and screaming in the meetings and started to drift away. Many neighbors next to the church could not stand the noise either and were thus violated. This destroyed the good image the church had established with the general public over the years. There were many arguments and conflicts with the outside community. As a result of all the conflict and confusion, there was a great negative impact on the church work.