

29 October, 2007

Beloved brothers;

The church in Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal began through my reading of books by Watchman Nee. I started this reading in 1988; by 1994 I had received the vision of the church. We began meeting as the church in Gaia without knowing about any other local churches.

In 1995 I contacted Arvore de Vida and visited Brazil. When I testified in Brazil how I received the vision of the church through Brother Nee's writings, the reception was cold. The Brazilians gave the impression that Brazil was the center of everything. I knew Dong Yu-lan but heard very little of Witness Lee. In Portugal, we received workers from Brazil who came regularly to visit. I had not yet been told there were other churches outside of South America even though there were churches in Spain and elsewhere in Europe.

However, I discovered through a series of events that there were other churches in Europe; due to this in 1997, I wrote to Pedro Dong asking him about the churches but he did not answer. Then Pedro invited me to travel with him to visit other saints in Europe. I wondered why Pedro had not told me of the other churches and why he was now inviting me to travel with him only after I learned of the churches independently. I rejected his invitation.

In the beginning of 1998 I obtained the contact information for the saints in Malaga, Spain. I immediately contacted them and went there to visit them. They invited me to a conference in Malaga with Joe Davis and Bill Lewallen. I went to the conference and met saints from other churches in Spain and Europe. Through this, the church in Gaia began to enjoy the fellowship of the churches and to receive the saints and coworkers in the fellowship of the Body of Christ.

Although the Brazilians continued to visit us, their attitude never changed. They still acted as if Brazil was the center of everything. Whenever they spoke about anything good, it was related to Brazil and to Dong Yu-lan's work; whenever they spoke anything bad, it was related to the United States and the co-workers. They always gave the impression that Brazil was the source of the Lord's recovery, not Witness Lee and Watchman Nee. They acted as though they had the unique burden to care for all of Europe and did not need the existing churches in Europe or the fellowship of the co-workers here.

The Brazilian workers tended to manipulate the local Portuguese saints by either promoting them or setting them aside. This activity damaged the testimony in Gaia, Sao Joao da Madeira and Porto. Now there is no longer a church in Porto and only one couple remains in the Brazilian work. When the Brazilians tried to introduce Brother Dong's books into Portugal, I told them that they needed to fellowship with Joe Davis about this. Although we used "Daily Food" for a while, in 1998 I rejected the publications of Dong Yu-lan because they had a different flavor from the books of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

The Brazilians then stopped visiting Gaia and even withdrew from Portugal for a time. In 2006, they returned to Portugal, this time to Lisbon. They ignored the church in Gaia and started their own work in Lisbon including a training center (see attachments). They

also work in San Joao da Madeira and Aveiro. Brother Dong's supporters say that he is the successor to Witness Lee.

Your brother in Portugal,

Jose Belmiro de Silva