

May, 2003 - [6604.1](#) This was posted on the site www.discipleforum.com by a member from the Chicago Church. The member was given this letter during his midweek service:

"RESPONSE TO MARTY WOOTEN CHARGES

Prov 18:17 "The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him."

Eph 4:25-28 "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

Eph 4:29-32 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

1 Cor 6:4-6 "Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another-and this in front of unbelievers!" [NIV]
On May 20, 2003, Marty and Cathy Wooten had a letter circulated that gives their perspective of what they believe led to their termination as employees of the Northern Federation World Sector and subsequent events. This is a response to that letter by a group that was chosen by the Wootens to help resolve the issues. We are very sad that there is even a need for us to publicly respond.

The Wootens asked the group consisting of Steve Staten (elder in Chicago), Andy Fleming (evangelist in LA), Al & Gloria Baird (elder and wife in LA) and Bruce & Robyn Williams (elder and wife in LA) in March, 2003 to arbitrate between them and the Northern Federation consensus group. We met many hours over three separate days with all of those involved in the dispute, gathering facts, listening to feelings and helping those involved to sort through issues and restore broken relationships. Our last meeting was on April 18, where all parties involved gave what we thought were heartfelt apologies, asked for and granted forgiveness. Because of what we thought was significant progress, we are shocked and appalled by the Wooten letter. It is as though we had never had our meetings. We feel compelled to briefly comment on several things contained in the letter and to add additional pertinent information:

1. We saw no evidence that Marty Fuqua or anyone else was trying to set up the Wootens' termination or use Catherine Wooten's tragic circumstances as a way to accomplish that. In fact, the Northern Federation paid for Catherine's counseling, travel and expenses while in New York, for Marty and Cathy's trip to New York for counseling, and for Mike Leatherwood and David Graham's trips to LA for additional counseling and gave the Wootens a six-month paid leave of absence to work on the challenges within their family. Tom McCurry is cited in the Wooten letter as support for such a conspiracy theory; Tom told us that he does not believe that Marty Fuqua was trying to get the Wootens fired, and in fact was trying to find a way to keep them in the ministry up to the time of their termination. The final decision to terminate the Wootens was made unanimously by the entire Northern Federation consensus group consisting of John Mannel, Gregg Marutzky, Mark Mancini, Tom McCurry, Reese Neyland and Marty Fuqua.
2. We deeply hurt for Catherine in her traumatic experiences. She should have received more support and compassion from the Fuquas, Neylands and others. The Fuquas and Neylands did apologize to Marty and Cathy for not being more compassionate, expressed great sorrow for not being there for her and offered to get with Catherine and their other children to rebuild the relationships whenever the Wootens thought it would be helpful. However, it is hard to believe that the Wootens, with their indignation towards others' treatment of Catherine, would now choose to expose her tragedy to the entire world in their letter. We told the Wootens that we (most of us are elders) thought the wisest thing for Marty to have done when he saw the seriousness of his family's problems and Catherine's condition would have been to resign his role as elder. To this day, we do not understand his resistance to step down from the position voluntarily and relieve whatever pressure the children apparently felt to not be open.
3. In Fall, 2002, the Wootens threatened a lawsuit over their termination unless they received two or three years of severance. Such threats and actions go directly against the teaching of 1 Corinthians 6:1-11. Not

only was it unscriptural, but it prevented earlier attempts at resolution. Thankfully, the Wootens did take the threat of a suit away in November, 2002, and accepted a reasonable severance agreement.

4. The Wooten letter contained slanderous statements about Reese Neyland and his character. References are made to his "sexual behavior." We investigated this and found that Reese had voluntarily confessed a struggle with pornography (a couple of times a year) to several members in his discipleship group more than a year ago and had completely repented. While we do not want to minimize this sin, the Wootens knew this was the sin, and that Reese had already confessed and repented of it. We are disappointed that the Wootens would choose to use the term "sexual behavior" because of the impression it conjures up in one's mind; we cannot help but wonder why the Wootens would purposely leave such an impression. Reese did use chewing tobacco for many years. He was in denial about the seriousness and sinfulness of it. When he was confronted about it several years ago (before he became an elder), he quit using it then and has not used it since. Months ago, he went back and apologized for his deceitfulness about the frequency of his use.

We closed our meeting on April 18 with a request that the Fuquas, Neylands and Wootens each send us written apologies that they would like to have read to the Central Region of the LA church, which would reflect the healing that had taken place through our meetings. We received apologies from the Fuquas and Neylands, but received nothing from the Wootens. It is our conviction that the Neylands and the Fuquas listened to us in fulfillment of step two of Matthew 18:16. They apologized and repented of the sins they had committed, including the statement that was made to the Central Region Bible Talk Leaders last February, and the Wootens stated that they forgave them. As stated earlier, we did not see any evidence to the accusation made that Marty Fuqua was personally out to remove Marty Wooten from his position with the Northern Federation. Although we did not participate in the decision, we all agreed with the conclusion that Marty Wooten was no longer scripturally qualified to be an elder. However, we do appreciate Marty and Cathy for their years of faithful service in God's kingdom.

The distribution of the Wooten letter shocked us. We believe that their letter is one-sided, slanderous, misleading, divisive and very hurtful to the people mentioned in it and to the church. We do not believe that these actions represent the spirit that God would want any of us to have in a dispute. We do not agree that the Wooten letter can be justified by Matthew 18. We do not believe that this kind of dispute or any other can reasonably be resolved by a group of hundreds of people, nor should it be. Therefore, we do not endorse this attempt to circumvent the collective judgment of an objective, spiritual group chosen and agreed upon by all parties prior to the judgments. We agreed to spend 20 plus hours of arbitration because we were led to believe that everyone would be humble and accept the conclusions of the group regardless of the outcome. The Fuquas and Neylands have continued to demonstrate that humility. We will not continue any further written or public comment on this matter. We implore you to trust the character and integrity of those persons involved in the arbitration process who spent so many hours and made every effort to objectively listen, question, discuss, meditate, pray and discern.

In conclusion, Marty and Chris Fuqua and Reese and Mary Kay Neyland have sincerely tried to be humble and repent. Therefore, there is no scriptural reason to take any action against them.

Pray that the Wootens will see the damage caused by their letter and repent of it. We know this has been a very painful time for the Wooten family, as well as the Neylands and Fuquas and pray that God will bring about healing in their lives.

Respectfully,
Steve Staten, Andy Fleming, Al & Gloria Baird, Bruce & Robyn Williams
May 28, 2003"