



Passing on the baton

Leadership change is never easy! However much you prepare, pray, plan and hope it never quite works out like you might think. But is it better, or worse? And, how much of it is a process of managing ones emotions? Steve Thomas spends most of his time coaching leaders, so we asked him for a few tips, to get you thinking!

To those passing on the baton

- Ensure those to whom one is passing on leadership feel this is a call of God.
- Prepare and discuss with existing leadership, ensuring that all the leaders are clear that the designated successor can be received by all.
- Consult adequately with the church. Time for prayer, questions, discussion, and evident willingness of receiving the successor.
- Pray and lay on hands to ensure spiritual handover.
- Ensure ongoing mentoring of the successor from someone to ensure discipleship on major pastoral issues, significant leadership issues, provocation on development of church and community life.
- Genuinely attempt always to honour and support the new leadership, pressing

people who referred matters to you back in their direction. Seeking not to 'interfere' while being there to offer wisdom/counsel.

- Keep going back to God and what has spoken to find security. One does not find a great deal of security in other people's emotional agendas, or even in your successor's gifts and abilities (especially when people highlight their failings). Be clear that God has spoken. I am more convinced than ever, that we need to hear God, and we need to encourage and allow every one to hear God.
- Issues of transition of leadership are 10% spiritual and 90% emotional – so deal with the emotional agendas!
- Outside, objective input



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into the process of change is essential, but the local team still need to make the decisions together themselves, and it needs to take as much time as it takes!

- Time for every stage is absolutely vital, and well-founded processes of change cannot be rushed.
- Trust in God for the future is essential now, and in the future when a new leadership starts changing things we have built!
- Definition **now** of how interaction between a future team and apostolic oversight takes place is essential. We cannot make it up later, or 'fiddle' with things in the future. We need to deal with matters of principle ahead of time, and define how working relationships should work.
- Some of the greatest transitions of leadership in the Bible, involved different styles of working, and different fruit in the end. There was continuity, but change and development too. And God was there in it all. (e.g. Moses/Joshua; Abraham/Isaac/Jacob; Elijah/Elisha).

To those receiving the baton

- Ensure that you (and your spouse) feel that this is a call of God.
- Ensure agreement of the team that you are the one who should take the lead.
- There will be inevitable changes of the team under your leadership. There are always transitions in these situations of changes in leadership, but it can nonetheless be painful on all sides handling people who were part of the former team but are not

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part of the new team. Some of this is simply the processes of God working out; some is a question of who is joined to whom in the purposes of God. All changes should be made with due consultation.

- There may be differences of style, motivationally and generationally, in handling issues of leadership. The inevitable "if I were you, I would do this.." sort of approach can be quite a pressure. It cannot be avoided, but must be handled. It is vital to know how your predecessor (and perhaps pastor/mentor) would do things (and why), but with a new set of relational parameters, different factors apply. Now you, as the one in situ, have to find faith for handling people and leading people towards certain agreed goals, and need to do it in a way you genuinely have faith for. Sometimes, therefore the advice has to be heard and acted upon – because it is right and applies absolutely. Sometimes, it needs to be heard, but the successor must find their own way of handling it, and must be left to do it.

(continued overleaf)

"Father, train or mentor many. It is always worth it!

"Expect most to be blessed, some to rise up into senior levels but only one or two to be possible successors.

"Be generous in your attitude. Ensure that men and women, single and married, are being invested into.

"Sow little: get little. Sow generously: reap generously!"

Fraser Hardy
New Zealand



Passing on the baton (*continued*)

When it doesn't work well

I have had to be involved in a number of situations where the process of succession has not been handled very well. The following have been common factors:

- Inadequate definition beforehand of people's roles in the new shape of things.
- Inadequate attention to the emotions involved when people who have once been at the hub of leadership and decision-making are now marginalised (either in reality, or in their own minds).

- Unwelcome and unhelpful 'listening to' or 'entertaining' of people with difficulties with the new shape of things by leaders in the old regime.
- Insecure predecessors, and/or insecure successors.
- Poor communication with predecessors, by those who succeed to leadership.
- Interference by predecessors, instead of trust in God in the process of change.



Steve Thomas leads the European team and used to/still does lead the church in Oxford! He is in transition too.

Leadership: Keegan or Ferguson?

Kevin Keegan and Alex Ferguson are well-known, successful UK football managers. Keegan has led Newcastle, Fulham, England, and Manchester City – none for more than 5 years. At the 3 League clubs he had initial success, leading them to promotion, but he is unwilling or unable to stay for a long period.

Ferguson has been manager at Manchester United for 18 years. He won the European Cup, his greatest triumph, after 12. He has rebuilt the team several times. The church needs 'Keegans' and 'Fergusons'.

An American pastor described himself to me as a 'troubleshooter', going to the aid of ailing churches, turning them round, and then moving on.



Others are in it for the long haul, changing as the job changes. One church pastor described how for 5 years he struggled, 'breaking up the ground' but apparently achieving little. Then for a further 7 years the church and consequently his style of ministry began to change, until in the later stages of his time there, he became the leader of a full-blown charismatic congregation. Of course, there were times when he felt discouraged and considered moving, but he believes God was changing him as well as the church.

Should a 'Keegan' stay? Should a 'Ferguson' go? A healthy church at least asks the question.

Article from www.healthychurch.co.uk