



EQUIPPER

The monthly e-zine from the U.S. Church Administration and Development (CAD) team of Grace Communion International.

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Dear pastoral leaders:

In the February 11 *GCI Weekly Update*, Joseph Tkach addressed the topic of leadership succession (see <http://update.gci.org/2015/02/leadership-succession/>). In this issue of *Equipper*, we'll develop this topic further, noting related GCI-USA policies and procedures.

CONNECTING

THE MENTORING
RELATIONSHIPS YOU NEED
TO SUCCEED IN LIFE

PAUL D. STANLEY
J. ROBERT CLINTON

In *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton note that church leaders who “finish well” are not those who have reached perfection, but those who, by the Spirit’s power, have been strong in these areas:

1. Intimacy with Christ (through ongoing spiritual renewal)
2. Clear focus on Christ’s priorities (within the sphere of their leadership)
3. Disciplined living (in family relationships, physical health, finances, etc.)
4. Commitment to continuing education (growing in competency)
5. Connection to a network of relationships (providing multiple mentors)
6. Commitment to leadership multiplication (helping others begin and finish well)
7. Plans for a new season of ministry (as the current one draws to a close)

In GCI, we’re committed to helping lead pastors find strength in these areas. Toward that end, we ask all lead pastors to prepare for leadership transitions. This includes naming an emergency contact person (who fills in if the lead pastor becomes disabled or dies). It also includes having a discussion with their Regional Pastor (RP) when the lead pastor turns 62. That discussion will address plans for leadership succession. Though GCI doesn’t have a mandatory retirement age, we ask lead pastors to formulate this plan even if retirement will not occur for several years. Why advance planning? Because effective succession involves multiple steps that can take multiple years. As part of the discussion, we ask lead pastors to address these questions:

1. At what age do you plan to cease serving as lead pastor?
2. What is the current condition of your congregation and what is your projection for the next few years? (See the article on page two.)
3. What options do you see for identifying and preparing the next lead pastor? (See the article on page two.)

As their retirement draws near, the RP will work closely with the pastor, other leaders, and (as appropriate) general members to clarify succession options. Eventual assignment of a new lead pastor (or other pastoral leadership) will be made by Church Administration and Development in accordance with *Church Administration Manual* policies.

My thanks to our lead pastors for their cooperation in this planning process. Because it’s relatively new for us, some who are older than 62 have not yet had the discussion with their RP. If that’s your case, please contact him.

In Christ’s service,

Greg Williams, director of GCI-USA Church Administration and Development

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Leadership succession issues and policies
- 2 Leadership succession factors to consider

Equipping all kinds of churches for all kinds of people in all kinds of places.

Leadership succession: factors to consider

Though of great importance, leadership succession in a congregation is part of a larger picture that has multiple factors. To help you address these factors in your succession planning, here are some things to consider.

Church health

Consider these questions concerning the health of your congregation:

- Is it Christ-centered and gospel-focused?
- Is it attractive to outsiders?
- Does it have strong missional vision and activity?
- Is it cross-generational?
- Is it stable in attendance and finances?

Note: for churches of 30+ members, CAD's *Transformational Church* consulting process is quite helpful in evaluating the current health of the congregation and then discerning the Spirit's direction for the congregation's journey forward. If you are interested in this consulting service, go to www.gci.org/CAD_Services and then contact your regional pastor.

Succession options

There are multiple options for replacing a congregation's lead pastor or otherwise restructuring. Here are a few of those options (and others can be explored in consultation with your regional pastor):

- Advertise through CAD for a new lead pastor (this option is typically available only when the congregation can afford a full-time or part-time employed pastor)
- Develop a younger elder within the congregation to become the new lead pastor (employed or bivocational)
- Bring in an intern or pastoral resident to be mentored to become the new lead pastor (this step is coordinated with the GCI-USA Intern Program)
- Replace the retiring lead pastor with a pastoral team (who share the lead pastor duties)
- Replant the congregation with new leaders in a new location
- Merge the congregation with another, nearby GCI congregation
- Close the congregation

Miscellaneous thoughts

- "Success" is not about *numbers*—it's about *faithfulness*.
- Transitioning out of the lead pastor role is the closing of one chapter and the opening of another. Do not fear the transition.
- Healthy transitions require the attitude of John the Baptist: *I must decrease so another can increase*.
- When it comes to the succession process, there is no *one size fits all*. It's not about formulas, but about discerning the Holy Spirit's lead so we can follow him forward together.
- Effective succession processes take time and involve close partnership within the congregation and between the congregation and the denomination (through the Regional Pastor who will shepherd these processes). A key to a smooth transition will be open dialog and cooperative transparency on the part of all involved.