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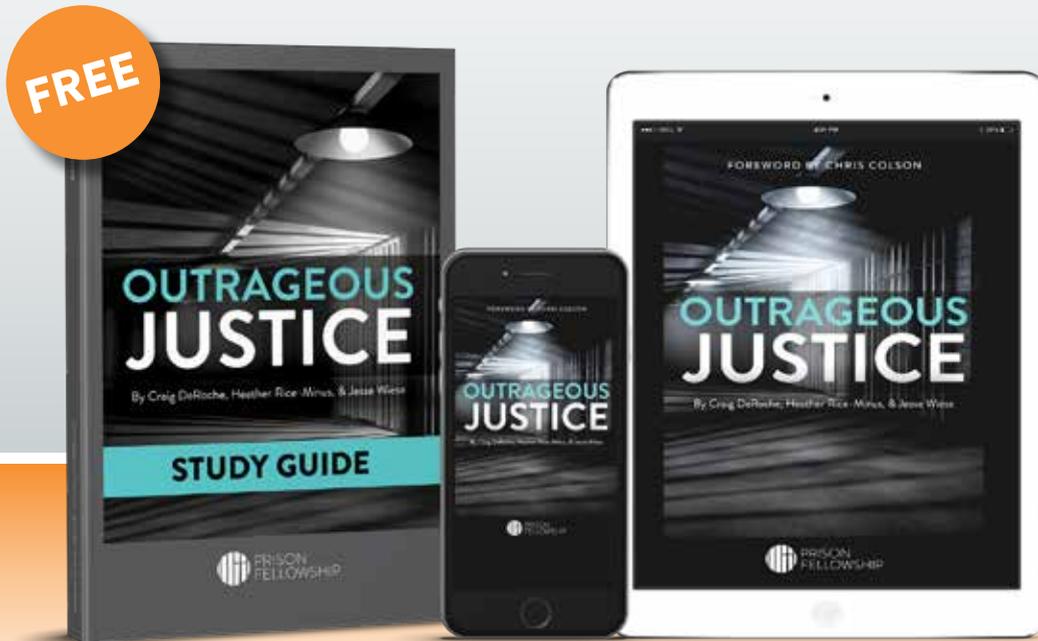
Magazine | Winter 2019/20 | Vol. 5 No. 3



Seven Recent Trends in Leadership Succession

WARREN BIRD

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Today's churches realize the importance of stewarding a succession planning process that builds on their history, honors their aging leaders, and prepares their church for the future.

Let us guide you. Our nationwide network and team of ministry practitioners are here to walk with you through these transitions and help you find the talented candidates you're looking for.

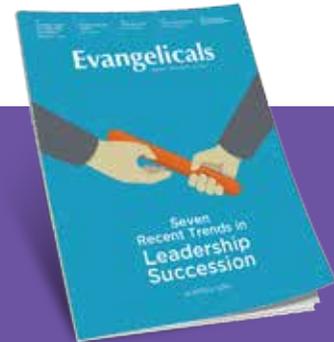
Learn more about Slingshot's succession process by visiting:
slingshotgroup.org/succession



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Evangelicals

The Magazine of the National Association of Evangelicals



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Today's Conversation provides opportunities for you to hear from leading thinkers, theologians, activists, culture-makers and more.

EVENTS

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CONTEXT

Some estimates suggest that from now until 2030, 10,000 Baby Boomers (the generation born between 1946 and 1964) will hit retirement age each day. The contributions of the largest generation in the workforce have been unmatched. The same can be said for churches and ministries.

Largely under the leadership of Baby Boomers, small church plants all across America grew to churches of tens of thousands in attendance, churches and nonprofits harnessed technology to go multi-site, create apps and reach people on the other side of the world, a plethora of new ministries were born and sustained, and on and on.

And now Boomers are leaving the ministries they have been leading for decades — and in many cases the ministries they founded. Almost every day we hear of a well-known pastor retiring or of a newly appointed CEO for a significant Christian nonprofit.

At the National Association of Evangelicals, we have our own story. After twice serving as interim president and having served as NAE president since 2007, Leith Anderson announced he would retire at the end of 2019. This set in motion a detailed leadership succession plan, leading to the election of Walter Kim as the next NAE president.

Information about these leaders and our transition is included throughout the pages of this magazine; however, the main impetus for this magazine edition is to learn about leadership succession together. The data suggests that leadership transitions in our churches and ministries will continue to be a significant part of our experience for the next decade, and we should be ready.

We are grateful for those who have provided guidance to leadership succession — people like Warren Bird, who penned our cover article and offers seven positive trends in leadership succession (Page 14), and Price Harding, who finds CEOs for the largest faith-based nonprofits and shares what not to do in his article on Page 23.

And, we are especially grateful for the many faithful leaders, like our own Leith Anderson, who have led with wisdom, courage and care so that all markers point to a bright tomorrow.



Religion in Today's Public Schools

“ Four-in-10 teens who attend public schools say they commonly (either “often” or “sometimes”) see other students praying before sporting events at school.... Clothing and jewelry are most common forms of religious expression seen in public schools.... About a quarter of teens who attend public schools say they often or sometimes see students invite other students to religious youth groups or worship services. About one-in-six (16 percent) often or sometimes see other students praying before lunch in their public school. And 8 percent report that they commonly see other teenagers reading religious scripture outside of class during the school day.”

“For a Lot of American Teens, Religion Is a Regular Part of the Public School Day,” **Pew Research Center 2019**

Hat Tip to the Canadians

“ We have long been the world's leader [in refugee resettlement]. Our good example has encouraged others to do more. When other countries see us doing less, it gives them license to say we don't have to do this, either. The exception is Canada. Last year they resettled more refugees than we did. Hats off to the Canadians. But we ought to be ashamed that we have done so little.”

Galen Carey, NAE vice president of government relations, in an interview with Baptist News Global



A Denominational Change

“ The insistence in the Evangelical Free Church of America that you must be premillennial is in conflict with our strong value of unity in the gospel in which we major on the majors. And what is central to the gospel — and ought to be central in our Statement of Faith — is that the coming of Christ will be glorious. Our Statement of Faith reflects a desire for unity in the fundamental tenets of the gospel. We are silent on those doctrines which through the centuries have divided Christians, fellow believers who affirm the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. We were silent except in this one place — where we came down on one particular view — and we required that only those who are premillennialists can be full members of our association, and in many cases, of our churches.”

Greg Strand, EFCA executive director of theology and credentialing, explaining the denomination's recent decision to remove “premillennial” from its Statement of Faith



Evangelism Today for Church Health Tomorrow

“The biggest predictor of future faith and growing churches is evangelism. Why do churches survive and thrive? Because they recruit new people. Yet political and cultural shifts toward isolationism, protectionism, and nationalism are morphing into growing tribalism — including in churches and denominations. After World War II, there came generations of globalization. This expanded transportation, grew companies across borders, and produced the largest growth of Christian missions and Christianity in history. Today’s political, economic, and social trends are closing in rather than reaching out. When congregations adopt this inward tilt and prioritize keeping insiders over evangelizing outsiders, they start down the path to atrophy and eventual demise.”

Leith Anderson, in his article, “Bright Hopes for Tomorrow,” published by CT Pastors

Theology of Suffering

“I embarrassingly admit that as a pastor of 25 years at that point, I really didn’t have a theology of suffering. I was an American, middle-class, white guy that had things pretty easy.... I hope I had some empathy for people in crisis. We certainly did a lot of good things at the church for those in various life stages of crisis or pain, but I was more of an outsider looking in.”

John Stumbo, president of Christian and Missionary Alliance, on lessons learned through a medical crisis at NAE.net/stumbopodcast

Congratulations to NAE Leaders

Could not be more encouraged by these announcements by @NAEvangelicals. What a compelling set of leadership announcements. I’m not usually so excited about church news, but this is really great! Thanks be to God!

Alexei Laushkin @foolsconfidence

All of us @gordoncollege congratulate CCI Advisor Walter Kim on his appointment as President of @NAEvangelicals. A superb choice!
D. Michael Lindsay @GordonPres

On behalf of the Latino Evangelicals of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition @NalecNews we congratulate Rev. Dr. Walter Kim as the new president of @NAEvangelicals. Moreover, thanks @leithanderson for your faithfulness & leadership over the years.

Gabriel & Jeanette @salgueros



Great choices, @NAEvangelicals! Prayers for Walter Kim. Esp thankful for new board leadership of @johnkjenkins & @JoAnneLyonGS, who daily live out the faith, loving all neighbors, at home & abroad. I know @WEAnews & @bishopef look fwd to working with you!

Chris Seiple @CSeiple



How Healthy Is Your Board?

**Assessing your board's performance
is the first step to improving it.**

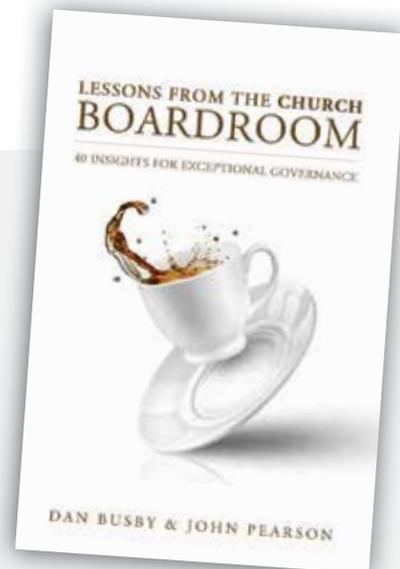


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- ✓ **Take this online assessment to help your board evaluate its performance.**
- ✓ **The Tool is easy to use, absolutely free, and only takes a few minutes to complete.**

(ChurchBoardScore is noted as a bonus resource in the *Lessons From the Church Boardroom* book.)



Order at [ECFA.Church/ECFAPress](https://www.ecfa.org/Church/ECFAPress)

EVANGELICAL CALENDAR

Please join the evangelical community at these events hosted by the NAE and its members. **Your prayers are welcome too.**

Many of these events include downloadable resources for promotion and participation.

FEBRUARY 6-7, 2020

A Body of Belonging: Disability & the Church

Nampa, ID

Northwest Nazarene University
NNU.edu/WesleyConf

This year's Wesley Center Conference will explore how the Body of Christ is incomplete without everyone present, including those with physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities.



FEBRUARY 12-14, 2020

Celebrating Our Story

Orlando, FL

Association for Biblical Higher Education
ABHE.org/annual-meeting

This annual meeting serves as the rallying point for 200 institutions of biblical higher education in North America. Leaders in biblical higher education gather to confer and sharpen their gifts and abilities.



MARCH 4, 2020

Washington Briefing

Washington, DC

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.net/washingtonbriefing

Top-level evangelical leaders gather in the nation's capital to interact directly with leaders in government, think tanks and advocacy organizations.



FEBRUARY 7-8, 2020

IF:Gathering

Dallas, TX

IFgathering.com

Thousands of women will gather in Dallas while more will attend local IF:Gatherings across the country for teaching and worship that focuses "completely, entirely on the person of Jesus."



APRIL 22-24, 2020

Q Conference

Nashville, TN

Q Ideas
Conference.QIdeas.org

The Q Conference is a place for church and industry leaders to be equipped to thoughtfully navigate today's culture. Education by thought leaders and stories from change-makers will inspire a hopeful way forward.

FEBRUARY 7-14, 2020

National Marriage Week

Let's Strengthen Marriage
NationalMarriageWeekUSA.org

Join with others across the country and organize a local marriage event during the week leading up to Valentine's Day. Focus on practical ways to strengthen marriages in your church and community.

APRIL 7-9, 2020

The Outcomes Conference

Dallas, TX

Christian Leadership Alliance
OutcomesConference.org

The Outcomes Conference is the premier leadership training event for those who are called to the faithful stewardship of Christ-centered nonprofits, churches, educational institutions and businesses.

APRIL 29-MAY 1, 2020

Orange Conference

Atlanta, GA

Orange
Conference.ThinkOrange.com

This family ministries team conference will challenge children's, youth and family ministers to hold ministry programs with open hands and to invite a new generation into relationship with Jesus Christ.

✓ NAE Board Elects New Leaders

At its semi-annual meeting on October 17, 2019, the National Association of Evangelicals Board of Directors elected Walter Kim as its next president, effective January 1, 2020. He succeeds Leith Anderson, who has served as NAE president since 2007.

“I am humbled to serve the National Association of Evangelicals, which is a vital influence for good. We have before us the compelling call of gospel witness and work, and it will be an honor to lead this organization,” Kim said.

Other elections made at the board meeting, which was held in St. Paul, Minnesota, include: John Jenkins, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Glenarden, to the office of chair of the NAE board; and Jo Anne Lyon, general superintendent emerita and ambassador of The Wesleyan Church, to the office of vice chair. Jenkins and Lyon currently serve on the NAE Executive Committee, with Jenkins as vice chair. Their new elections will go into effect at the next NAE board meeting in March 2020.

After Anderson announced his plans to retire, the NAE board established the NAE Presidential Search Team — composed of NAE board members — to facilitate a careful search process and to make recommendations to the NAE Executive Committee and Board of Directors. Anderson noted, “Walter’s passion to see the gospel impact lives, transform communities and change culture is contagious.”



Newly elected NAE leaders include from left to right: John Jenkins, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Glenarden; NAE President Walter Kim; and Jo Anne Lyon, general superintendent emerita and ambassador of The Wesleyan Church.

Read a bio of Walter Kim, the new NAE president, on Page 26.



NAE members and friends celebrate the ministry of Leith and Charleen Anderson at an October reception in Minnesota.

✓ Celebrating Leith Anderson’s Leadership

Members and friends of the National Association of Evangelicals gathered at Bethel University on October 16, 2019, in St. Paul, Minnesota, to honor and thank Leith Anderson for his many years of service and leadership to the NAE. Anderson was one of the youngest members of the NAE board when he first joined in the 1970s. He served as interim president twice before he was named president in October 2007.

During Anderson’s presidency, the NAE stabilized and grew with expanded membership, significant grant funding and many new staff and programs, including an annual retreat of denomination leaders, NAE Talk consultations, Evangelical Leaders Survey, Evangelicals magazine, Today’s Conversation podcast, and documents and publications including “Code of Ethics for Pastors,” “When God and Science Meet,” “Theology of Sex,” and “For the Health of the Nation,” among others. As NAE president, Anderson regularly taught in seminaries, addressed evangelical concerns with elected officials, counseled denominational executives, and provided theological and cultural commentary to leading news outlets.

✓ Theology of Sex

Many Christians struggle with how to address the topic of human sexuality, especially in today's context. To provide some assistance, the NAE has re-issued the Bible-based "Theology of Sex." Its pages offer a robust, joyful vision of sexuality that is rooted in God's plan for his creation. Chapters include: Sex in the Beginning; Sex Has Purpose; Sex and the Fall of Humanity; and Sex in Today's World. Discussion questions are included for further reflection.

The booklet was drafted by a team of evangelical scholars from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Bethel University, Calvin College, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, George Fox University, Wheaton College and the NAE Board of Directors.



"Theology of Sex" can be downloaded for free at [NAE.net/theologyofsex](https://www.nae.net/theologyofsex). Printed copies are also available for purchase, with bulk orders discounted accordingly.

✓ U.S. Caps Number of Refugees at Historic Low

President Donald Trump's administration has set 18,000 as the number of refugees that may be accepted into the United States in 2020. This is down from an already low limit of 30,000 for 2019. Set by presidents annually, the ceiling hit 200,000 in 1980 followed by years of fluctuating caps usually above 50,000 and sometimes exceeding 100,000, according to figures compiled by the Pew Research Center.

NAE's Galen Carey told Baptist News Global, "In the 30s we turned back boats full of Jewish refugees. We sent them back to Germany just in time for the Holocaust. We thought we had learned our lesson on that. But it looks like we are once again turning back refugees who are in need of our protection even though many organizations and communities are eager to receive them."

✓ Many "Blessed" By Bless Your Pastor Campaign

The Bless Your Pastor campaign launched by the National Association of Evangelicals in 2019 gained quick momentum as thousands across America signed up to be part of the movement. The campaign focuses on encouraging and equipping America's churchgoing faithful to "show and share God's love" for their pastors, especially during Pastor Appreciation Month in October.

Bless Your Pastor is part of a larger initiative to address financial challenges faced by pastors. NAE's research discovered that 90 percent of pastors feel financial stress, 60 percent receive no healthcare or retirement benefits from their church, half earn less than \$50,000 per year, and 30 percent currently have student loan debt averaging \$36,000.



To join the Bless Your Pastor movement, visit [BlessYourPastor.org](https://www.BlessYourPastor.org).



How Ethical Standards Can Shape Your Pastoral Transition

Evangelical churches are full of pastors serving faithfully. Most pastors serve sacrificially with integrity. But we also know or have read about pastors who have failed to reflect biblical standards.

Seasons of pastoral transition present unique opportunities to ensure that pastors are equipped to live and serve well. Tools like the Code of Ethics for Pastors, developed by the National Association of Evangelicals, can provide a foundation for success. Developed in 2012, the code has become a helpful resource for thousands of pastors who have committed to live by its standards.

In seasons of pastoral transition, the Code of Ethics for Pastors can be used in a number of ways:

1. Reference the code when developing position descriptions and in identifying pastors of good character.
2. Use the code to help your pastoral search committee draft interview questions.
3. Ask your candidates if they could sign the code, and require existing pastoral staff to sign it.
4. Make the code a part of the yearly review process for your pastors.
5. When bringing on new leadership, take the opportunity for your church and leadership team to review and recommit to the Code of Ethics for Pastors and the parallel Code of Ethics for Congregations.
6. Share the Code of Ethics for Pastors with the congregation during the transition process, so they can pray specifically for the incoming pastor.

One of the surprising and interesting reports the NAE team has often heard is about pastors, churches, organizations and denominations that have no code of ethics. The time they are needed is before they are needed.

John Crosby, retired senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Edina, Minnesota, was an original signatory of the Code of Ethics for Pastors and echoes the importance of an ethical code: “One of the reasons I enthusiastically support the NAE Code of Ethics for Pastors is the signal it sends to clergy and congregation alike, that these issues are central to following Jesus and loving his people. Before the headlines sensationalize, NAE has called for the health of pastors and protection of all encountering the Church of Christ.” 

NAE Code of Ethics for Pastors

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. (2 Corinthians 6:3)

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. (Philippians 1:27)

All who are called by God to the ministry of the gospel solemnly commit to a life of joyful obedience and selfless service in order to glorify God and enrich his people. Therefore, a minister will:

Pursue Integrity

I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. (1 Chronicles 29:17)

- in personal character.
Exalt Christ, not self. Be honest, not exaggerating or overpromising; peace-loving, not contentious; patient, not volatile; diligent, not slothful. Avoid and, when necessary, report conflicts of interest and seek counsel.
- in personal care.
Care for the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical dimensions of your person, for "your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- in preaching and teaching.
Interpret the Bible accurately and apply it discerningly: "In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:7-8). Speak the truth in love. Give due credit when using the words or ideas of others.

Be Trustworthy

It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

- in leadership.
Model the trustworthiness of God in leadership to encourage and develop trustworthiness in others. Use power and influence prudently and humbly. Foster loyalty. Demonstrate a commitment to the well-being of the entire congregation. Keep promises. Respond sensitively and appropriately to ministry requests and needs: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10).

- with information.
Guard confidences carefully. Inform a person in advance, if possible, when an admission is about to be made that might legally require the disclosure of that information. Communicate truthfully and discreetly when asked about individuals with destructive or sinful behavior patterns. Tell the truth, or remain discreetly silent: "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret" (Proverbs 11:13).
- with resources.
Be honest and prudent in regard to personal and ministry resources. Refuse gifts that could compromise ministry. Ensure that all designated gifts are used for their intended purpose: "If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

Seek Purity

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

- in maintaining sexual purity.
Avoid sinful sexual behavior and inappropriate involvement. Resist temptation: "Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality" (Ephesians 5:3a).
- in spiritual formation.
Earnestly seek the help of the Holy Spirit for guidance and spiritual growth. Be faithful to maintain a heart of devotion to the Lord. Be consistent and intentional in prayer and scriptural study: "Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- in theology.
Study the Bible regularly and carefully to understand its message, and embrace biblical doctrine. In forming theology, consider biblical teaching authoritative over all other sources.



The rest of the NAE Code of Ethics for Pastors can be viewed and downloaded at NAE.net/pastorscode. The parallel NAE Code of Ethics for Congregations is available at NAE.net/churchcode.

Seven Recent Trends in Leadership Succession

An illustration on a blue background showing two hands. The hand on the left is open and reaching towards the center. The hand on the right is holding a wooden baton, with the baton's tip pointing towards the left hand. The baton is a solid orange-brown color. The hands are rendered in a simple, flat style with light skin tones and dark grey sleeves.

Jeff Lilley, at age 58, completed eight years of service as Seattle Union Gospel Mission's president in 2018. Having previously been executive director of one of the nation's largest camp and conference centers, Lilley felt called back to his home in Southern California to serve as church staff and be closer to his grandchildren.



Warren Bird is vice president of research and equipping at the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, and the author or co-author of 31 books for ministry leaders.

Months later, after a nationwide search, Scott Chin was named as president of the Mission. Chin had followed a common pathway for ministry CEOs: work in the corporate world, shift to a Christ-centered nonprofit, invitation to senior staff at the Mission, and then acceptance of a call to its presidency — in his case, at age 48. Founded in 1932, the Mission loves and cares for the homeless throughout greater Seattle. Now a \$24 million organization, the Mission addresses root causes and breaks the cycle of homelessness by meeting urgent physical needs, building relationships, and offering long-term recovery programs.

More recently, Bob Merritt, after serving as senior pastor for 28 years at Eagle Brook Church in greater Minneapolis, where attendance grew from 300 to more than 20,000 during his tenure, announced his intent to retire in 2020 at age 63.

“I want to hand off the baton when I’m running at full speed so that the whole team wins,” he said as part of his public announcement to the congregation. Indeed, the church is in the best position ever, both financially and numerically. More than 6,000 people began to follow Christ during 2018, and in 2019 Eagle Brook opened its eighth and ninth campuses.

Merritt’s announcement included identifying his successor, Jason Strand, age 40, a long-time teaching pastor at the church. “This past year the board took Jason through a long process of assessing his abilities and readiness . . . and comparing him to other candidates,” Merritt explained to the congregation. Strand then emerged as the board’s unanimous recommendation, which the congregation voted to affirm. “It’s necessary and good for every organization to transition to younger leadership who has a new set of eyes and the energy to keep charging the hill,” Merritt concluded.

What makes these stories newsworthy? In today’s celebrity era, it’s easy to assume that unique and strategic positions like these cannot find a viable successor. Not true. Also today as Baby Boomers move on from ministries they’ve founded or significantly grown, the common stereotype is that new generations lack interest in continuing an organization that operates on such a large scale. Not true either.

In fact, the opposite is often the case. While news media tend to highlight succession disasters (it’s rare to find a headline titled “Smooth, Seamless Succession Here”), the good news is that healthy succession planning is on the rise. Looking back over the last decade or so, the science of succession is being honed among evangelical churches and ministries. Today’s successions tend to involve:



1. More Proactive Planning

The number of boards with a written succession plan is inching upward. Succession conversations are becoming more normal with less stigma and less secrecy. More people are realizing, “Succession planning is an ongoing process, not a single event,” in the words of the book “Next: Pastoral Succession that Works” by William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird.

When William Vanderbloemen and I wrote the first edition of our book, our hope was that this conversation would become no longer taboo. At the time the main market seemed to be pastors and parachurch leaders over 70 who didn’t know how to manage their succession. Now there are entire conferences dedicated to helping all senior staff develop a leadership pipeline, including succession. Now pastors in their 50s are hiring consultants to figure out a 10-year succession plan.

Boards likewise are putting more emphasis on the issue. “Boards have a better understanding that there is a substantial difference between transition of the top leader and succession planning,” says Dan Busby, president of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. “Top leader transition is an intermittent event that is timeline-driven. Succession planning, on the other hand, reflects an ongoing, continuous process that boards, with the help of their chief executive, implement to: create the conditions for the incumbent leader to succeed, understand the organization’s current and future strategy, and ensure that a sound infrastructure is in place whenever the search for the next top leader is launched.”

2. More Players

When a CEO or pastor transitions, it affects spouse, family, staff, board and key donors. When the leader changes, shifts in role for many of these other players seem inevitable. As a result, the concept of succession now tends to include far more than one person. The question of “what does a successful succession look like?” tends today to receive analysis on many levels. They include what success looks like for the leader, for the leader’s family, for the board, for the ministry staff, for the ministry itself, and for the community the ministry is seeking to serve.

3. More Rigorous Vetting of Internal Candidates

Leaders have long understood that when you need to change the culture, you hire from without, but when you want to reinforce the existing culture, you hire from within. Since internal candidates are less disruptive, more value is typically placed on cultivating and selecting a known and trusted person from within the organization, or at least someone with a strong previous relationship to the organization.

Internal candidates may still be preferred, but today a new hoop has emerged for them. The attitude now is that if you have a really good internal candidate, the best thing you can do is conduct a full search, comparing that candidate to others, both internally and externally.

4. More Collaboration

Decision makers are increasingly asking for the outgoing leader’s advice and help. This involves everyone from board chairs to bishops. Even when the leader has no official voice in the process, their boards or other ministry supervisors seek their input and guidance. In fact, as succession planning is increasingly seen as a necessary part of leadership development, leaders are increasingly putting energy into strengthening their talent pool, and doing so as a corporate value, inviting input and participation at every level.

5. More Financial Savvy

Churches and ministries are realizing that their single greatest potential cost in the transition process is recovering from a botched succession. A poor succession can create the proverbial leak in the dam that leads to a loss of momentum, indecision about target audience, a blurring of ministry vision, and disengagement by key volunteers and donors. Like paying for insurance, succession planners often go the extra mile today to vet, onboard, and regularly review the new leader.

Likewise surveys of those who lead Christ-centered ministries affirm that personal finance is often the dominant reason they stay in place far longer than ministry outcomes warrant. Often they lack the financial resources to handle a transition, so they find reasons to hold onto their present position. Smart boards plan early in their leader’s tenure to make sure that they address points of potential financial insecurity in their leader.



6. More Senior Ages

In considering their decision to retire, people today monitor their health and energy more than their age. As a result, retirement successions are occurring at older ages, consistent with the aging of the nation's overall population. For those retiring "older," 70 is the new 60. Sadly, for those with financial challenges — which is the most commonly cited reason for not retiring — the final years too often are ones of organizational decline. For them, waiting longer doesn't serve the church or ministry well.

While some are staying longer due to improved and longer life spans, others are leaving earlier for the same reason: They started young, they led well, and now they want to start a new chapter in a different ministry where they sense God's calling.

7. More Consultants

There is a pronounced rise in the number of search firms that work with faith-based groups. Hiring a successor involves an anxiety-ridden fear of the unknown, even when there's a strong internal candidate. The use of outside organizations or coaches is becoming more common and normal.

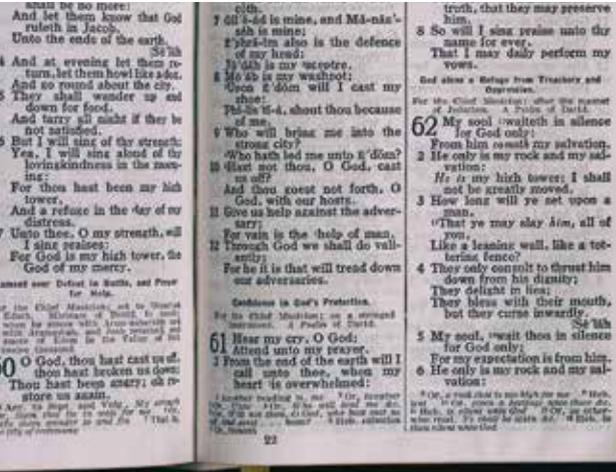
Always Remember: You Are an Interim Leader

As William Vanderbloemen and I advise in "Next": "Sooner or later, unless Jesus returns during your lifetime, there will be a leadership baton pass." Translation: Everyone — in every role — is interim. Someone is certain to follow you. "Thinking about that transition ahead of time might make all the difference in your church's or ministry's legacy," we conclude. **E**

While some are staying longer due to improved and longer life spans, others are leaving earlier for the same reason: They started young, they led well, and now they want to start a new chapter in a different ministry where they sense God's calling.



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A Biblical Model for Leadership Succession

The Bible contains numerous succession stories that we might look to for guidance in our own contexts. One thinks immediately of David succeeding Saul, and of Solomon succeeding David. The Books of Samuel and Kings present a concentrated series of stories of the rise and fall of good and bad leaders. Here we find not only kings, but also prophets, such as Elisha as he succeeds Elijah.

In these narratives a midrashic approach (a 2nd-century Jewish interpretation) will discover a variety of “principles,” and one might list them and draw the requisite conclusions. For example, the story of David’s family and the harem-conspiracy conflict that erupted after his death could suggest to the midrashist that before a succession event, the organization needs to be healthy or else the event will go badly. But is this “principle” really taught by Scripture as a principle, or is it the case that historically this was simply what happened?

Safer than such midrash (still sometimes attempted today) is to examine a succession situation that is explicitly pursuing divine principles. I am thinking, of course, of Jesus.

Preparing the Leaders Who Follow

The same sorts of questions that attend most successions attended our Lord’s ministry as he began to look to the cross. Jesus had always intended that his ministry continue after him. From the outset of his public ministry he associated with himself 12 apprentices (disciples). He chose them specifically for the purpose of succession.

Many others also came to follow Jesus, and we know from Scripture that over 500 followers witnessed his resurrection in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 15). All of them would go on to tell of their time with Jesus and spread his teaching and declare the kingdom. But the 12 were a special subgroup, and Jesus especially poured himself into their lives so that they could become the



people they would need to be. Herein a principle: ideally, a good leader personally prepares his successors.

Spirit-Filled Succession

Jesus did more than let the disciples learn by observing him and walking with him and talking with him privately without the public riddles. Jesus gave them the very Spirit by whom his own public ministry was empowered. He gave them the Holy Spirit, called in the New Testament the “Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9). And Jesus let them gain some experience in doing what he did, a bit at a time. He sent them out to heal, confront evil and proclaim the kingdom, then debriefed (Luke 9–10). But as Calvary loomed Jesus specifically addressed with them the issue of succession. We find two passages in particular in the Gospel of John.

The first passage, John 14:8–20, is set on the night when Jesus was betrayed and arrested. He engages in a very intimate, loving, yet wistful discussion with these disciples with whom he has shared his earthly life these last three years. Philip asks him a question that demonstrates that he and the others still don’t really understand Jesus.

Jesus directs their attention to the mighty deeds that he has done as evidence of his status as God’s Son. Then he says something very important: “He who believes in me will do the mighty deeds I do — and he will do greater things than these, because I am

going to the Father” (14:12). He further promises a new power in prayer because his successors will now pray in Jesus’ name.

Then Jesus explains how these things will become possible. “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he might be with you to the end of the age: the Spirit of Truth.” This presence is what will make succession possible. Jesus further says that he will not leave his disciples as orphans but will come to them and be with them always. This reality, too, will be by the Comforter (14:20). Jesus is explicitly describing how succession will work. Herein another principle for Christian organizations: proper succession, succession that will live, requires the Spirit of Jesus.

Succession planning is never ours alone. Christian organizations are themselves successors to Jesus. In a very real sense, they will not be orphaned as the current leader departs, for that person was never truly the leader. Jesus was and is, and he will be present.

Empowerment and Authority

The second pertinent John passage appears at 20:19–23. It recounts what occurs on Easter evening, the first time that most of Jesus’ followers have seen him alive again. Jesus delivers words of outright succession commission: “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” Implicit also is commission for future generations of successors. In important

ways the disciples were to be for future men and women the leaders that Jesus had been to them.

The next words underline the link: “And after saying this he breathed upon them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit! Whosoever sins you forgive shall stand forgiven; whosoever you do not forgive shall stand unforgiven.’” One may argue about the precise meaning of these last words, but this much is clear: They confer Jesus’ own authority. Herein the third principle: a good leader publicly empowers the successors and openly confers upon them his or her own authority.

Almost immediately after reading John’s words, the reader of Scripture encounters the Book of Acts. Here Luke presents (among others) first Peter and then Paul acting as Jesus’ successors. They preach the kingdom, heal the sick and deliver those held captive by the enemy, just as the Master had done. They even raise the dead by the Spirit of Jesus. This would be the pattern of the next generations as well.

The eminent Yale church historian Ramsay MacMullen, describing the process by which those successors Christianized the Roman Empire by the 4th century, concluded that the gospel spread even more by the power of the Spirit’s deeds than by the power of his words. This living, empowered, biblical succession continues to our own day. 





On Becoming the Pastor

Dave Stone joined Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1989 and served in various ministry roles until being in the senior pastor role from 2006–2019. Southeast has eight locations with an attendance of over 27,000 people each weekend. He is also the author of the Faithful Families series, which offers parents creative ideas, real-life stories, and Scriptural guidance for building families that love God and enjoy being together.

BOB RUSSELL SERVED AS SENIOR PASTOR OF SOUTHEAST CHRISTIAN CHURCH FOR 40 YEARS BEFORE RETIRING IN 2006 AND PASSING THE BATON TO YOU. UNDER BOB'S LEADERSHIP, THE CHURCH GREW FROM 120 MEMBERS TO ONE OF THE LARGEST CHURCHES IN AMERICA, WITH 18,000 PEOPLE ATTENDING EACH WEEKEND. WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO SUCCEED SOMEONE WHO WAS SO SUCCESSFUL IN MINISTRY AT THE CHURCH?

Bob did everything he could to set me up for success. He gave me credibility and opportunity — both publicly and privately. He handed to me a very healthy church that had grown steadily year after year. Since Southeast had not had another senior pastor, I put a lot of pressure on myself — especially in the first year or two. I didn't want to blow it and mess up what God had been doing there for decades. The sad result was that early on I led more by fear than by faith.

WHAT WERE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES YOU FACED AS YOU STEPPED INTO THE NEW ROLE?

One of the few noteworthy challenges I faced was earning the respect of the older adults. I was 44 following my hero who had been there for 40 years, and I think some of our senior adults felt like they were watching a parent reluctantly hand the car keys off to an immature 16-year-old novice. I underestimated how those over the age of 50 would be more nervous to have me at the helm. There is a fear of the unknown and whether there will be a major directional shift. There wasn't, but they didn't believe that until some time had passed.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR PASTORS WHO ARE STEPPING INTO SENIOR LEADERSHIP AFTER A LONG-SERVING PASTOR RETIRES?

Find the most redeeming qualities of your predecessor and speak highly of their accomplishments and their character. Do this from the pulpit, to your staff and to the former pastor ... even after the transition. Continue to work at your relationship with the predecessor and protect it.

WHAT CAN CHURCH BOARDS OR LEADERSHIP TEAMS DO TO HELP THEIR NEWLY APPOINTED PASTORS SUCCEED?

The most important time for board involvement is in the months or years preceding the transition. Take the steps necessary to transition some of the board members prior to the hand off. There is a tendency to avoid board rotation in order to protect institutional knowledge of the organization. While that is important, if you overdose on that, it can become a weapon that hurts the church more than helping it. Make certain to be developing some younger leaders who will buy into the strengths and directional shifts of the new leader. Having the board united in the choice of the successor is a must. If you can get the outgoing leader to publicly support any new initiatives, that is icing on the cake. Fortunately Bob Russell was extremely positive and supportive of my concept of multi-site campuses, and I am 100 percent behind Kyle's leadership and direction.

YOU'VE NOW RETIRED FROM PASTORAL MINISTRY AT SOUTHEAST CHRISTIAN CHURCH. HOW DID YOU DISCERN THAT IT WAS TIME TO RETIRE?

I actually chose the date of my transition five years in advance, and I only told my family and my future successor, Kyle Idleman. Each year that passed I told a few more people, a couple of elders and some ministry friends. They all did a great job of keeping it confidential.

I chose the date early because pastors seem to stay longer than they originally intend to, and their close friends can be blind to decreasing effectiveness. The longer you have the title of senior pastor you can begin to love the title too much if you're not careful and you can start to love the notoriety more than the responsibility.

I believe that the greatest way to influence the age of a church is by the age of the senior pastor.

By choosing a date it insured that I would make decisions that would help prepare Kyle for the role. By telling others it became another layer of accountability to keep my word and not listen to the comments of those few people who would have wanted me to lead until I was 90.

Find the most redeeming qualities of your predecessor and speak highly of their accomplishments and their character.

HOW DID CHURCH MEMBERS AND ATTENDERS REACT TO YOUR RETIREMENT?

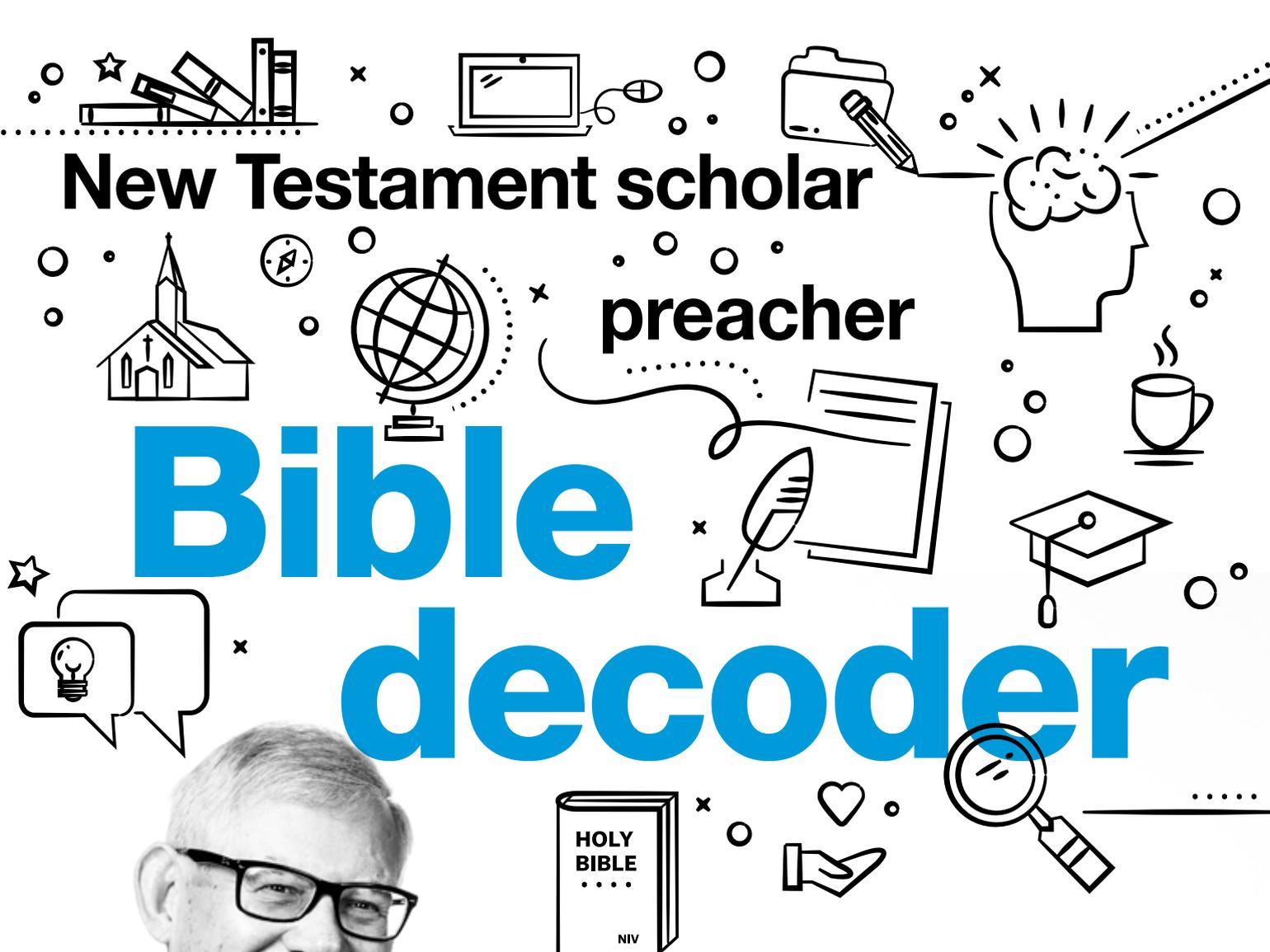
Since I was only 57 most were surprised when I made the announcement — not over who would be the future leader but when. Everyone was kind and supportive of me and in the same breath very excited about the future with Kyle's leadership. Those who had seen the previous transition were the most supportive.

I think that dealing with change becomes more difficult the older someone gets and the longer the previous person had been in that role. People like to think church should be the way it was when they first came; they want to freeze it in that state, but one of the keys to growth is to have small ongoing tweaks. The only constant is change.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR KYLE IDLEMAN AND THE CHURCH?

My hope is that Kyle never has to worry whether I am in his corner or supportive of his decisions. I am confident and convinced that Kyle will continue to preach the Word and keep the focus on Jesus. I believe that Southeast will take bold risks, and his kingdom will grow as a result of it. 





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What Not to Do

Five Mistakes to Avoid in Leadership Transitions

As an executive search firm, we have led more than 100 searches to find CEOs for the world's largest faith-based nonprofits. In every instance, there is a board who is strongly committed to the future of the institution, and in every instance, there is great intent to assure that the transition from the incumbent to the new leader is as accretive as possible to the mission of their organization.

Here are five mistakes that boards should work very hard to avoid:

1. Delegating Succession Planning to the CEO

Selecting the right leader is the most important responsibility of the board, and it should never be delegated to the incumbent leader. As competent as any leader may be, organizations benefit from new thought. The CEO's choice does not give the board its needed influence over the future of the organization.

2. Committing the Role to an Internal Person

While an internal person may ultimately be the best selection, the board should not be restricted to a choice of one. As importantly, circumstances change and so do board members. It is unfair to use assured succession as a tool to retain a leader who may later be surprised by the board's different direction.

3. Hiring in Reaction to the Incumbent

Most search committees really struggle to think of their new hire in entirely independent terms — wanting to either replicate or avoid at all costs the characteristics of the incumbent CEO. The board or search committee needs to think only about the organization — its mission and its future

— and to find the leader who can most likely bring its future and mission to fruition.

4. Allowing the Philosophical to Conflict With the Practical

The perfect theoretical candidate will always be stronger than the real people God uses to lead organizations. Moreover, do not expect a highly qualified external candidate to know the peculiarities of your organization as well as a possibly less qualified internal candidate.

5. Permitting the Incumbent to Determine His/Her Future Role

The board needs to define what role, if any, the incumbent leader will have in the administration of the new leader. While emeritus titles are honoring, the new CEO should not be hamstrung by a board's sentimental or even practical commitments to the incumbent.

There is no greater gift to give to a departing leader than to cap his or her tenure with the assurance of the organization's continued success. And a departing leader's legacy can only flourish if the succeeding candidate actually succeeds and that must become the sole point of focus for a responsible board in any succession consideration. **E**





Know When to Quit

Wayne Gretzky's number has been permanently retired from the National Hockey League. No player will ever again wear number 99. It is an interesting tribute to a player described by Time Magazine as "a most unlikely one." Even in his prime, Gretzky wasn't very fast; his shot was oddly weak, and he was last on the team in strength training. He explained his unlikely success with these words: "Maybe it wasn't talent the Lord gave me. Maybe it was passion." Nicknamed "The Great One," there is a widespread opinion in the sports world that he is not only the greatest hockey player ever but that there may never again be anyone else as good. He led the game even though he wasn't as talented as other players on his team. And he led the team to win four Stanley Cups with the Edmonton Oilers and set a long list of other hockey records.

No one asked him to retire; he decided on his own that it was time. "This is not the first time Gretzky has considered retiring; he talked about it in 1991 and 1993. But each time he has proved too talented; even last year, he led the league in assists. But this year [1999] Gretzky has dealt with persistent neck pain from injury, and though he's the best player on his team, he has seen his skills deteriorate." It was not an easy decision. But Gretzky knew the time had come.

The truth is, there is no formula for knowing when to quit. Most leaders struggle with the decision unless it's made for them by illness, termination, or some other external factor.

Some suggest leaders should develop at least one other significant interest or skill throughout their career. You may passionately lead an organization but also be good at something else, like running a small business, writing, music, stamp collecting, antique auto appraisals, or spiritual direction. Not only will this help you through the leadership years by giving you the benefits of different perspectives and healthy diversions, it will also give you an alternate identity. One reason some leaders stay too long is that they totally identify themselves with their leadership role. She sees herself as the president of the organization. He cannot distinguish between who he is as a dean and who he is as a person. His preaching and personhood are so enmeshed that it is impossible for him to think of continuing as a person without preaching. When a leader has multiple opportunities for self-definition and fulfillment, there is greater likelihood of a wise and timely decision to quit.



The external reason is different. It focuses on the organization or ministry and asks, “Am I able to give the best that is now needed?” Gretzky had to admit that he was past his peak. While still good, he was no longer at the top of his game. The team and the sport that he loved deserved better than he could offer. It was time to hang up the skates. Few leaders are able to make this decision without the advice of others. Unfortunately, long-term leaders seldom get very direct advice on this question from people inside the organization. It may take counsel from outsiders or from other leaders who have stepped down to convince a leader that stepping down is the right decision to make.

Christian leaders, most of all, must be careful they don’t stay in leadership so long that they damage their followers and dishonor their Lord.

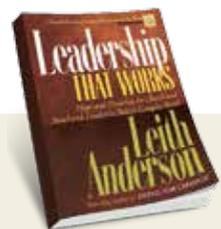
A Standing Ovation

A young English pianist gave his inaugural concert to a full house in a London hall. His music was brilliant, and when he finished, the crowd gave him a long-standing ovation. Young and shy, he retreated backstage. The stage manager urged him to return for a bow and an encore, but the young pianist refused. The manager insisted. “The entire audience is standing and clapping for you,” he said, insisting that the pianist return to the stage. “Not everyone is standing,” the young musician replied. “There is a gray-haired man in the balcony who remains seated.” The manager peeked out. “You’re right,” he said. “But everyone else is standing. He makes no difference. Don’t worry about him. Just go back out there.” The young pianist replied, “He is my teacher.”

Whether young or old, each of us has people whose praise means more to us than everyone else combined. In our audiences we see some more clearly than others and we always want to know if they approve or disapprove of the leadership we have given.

That’s the way it was for another young man whose story is told in the Bible. Stephen was an emerging leader of the new Jerusalem church who took on a very difficult assignment. He set out to present Jesus Christ to a hostile religious crowd. His speech was brilliant, but the crowd turned against him and took up rocks to stone him to death. As the stones hit him, “Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’” (Acts 7:55-56). Usually the Bible describes Jesus as “sitting at the right hand of the Father,” but for Stephen, Jesus stood. Stephen was a leader in tough times — and he finished well.

May you, too, finish well. May you be the kind of leader for whom Jesus stands. **E**



Leith Anderson brings the help and hope that leaders need in today’s complex world. His counsel is sound, practical and full of hope to pastors, church leaders and lay Christians. This excerpt from “Leadership That Works” © 2001 by Leith Anderson is used by permission of Baker Publishing House. Order at BakerPublishingGroup.com.



Editor's Note: Leith Anderson retires as president of the National Association of Evangelicals at the end of 2019, after serving in the role for 12 years and twice serving as interim president. He leaves behind a vibrant organization grateful for his leadership. In this space, we are pleased to introduce the next president, Walter Kim, who was elected by the NAE Board of Directors in October 2019 and assumes the role in January 2020.

Pastor, Scholar and Thought Leader

As a pastor, scholar and thought leader, Walter Kim brings a unique combination of skills to lead the National Association of Evangelicals into the next decade. He is the son of immigrant parents and has lived in major urban centers such as New York City, Vancouver and Boston, in the suburbs of Chicago and Pittsburgh, and in a fading coal town at the foot of the Appalachians. His experience of America reflects the diversity of the country and of the evangelical community.

God used a conversation in a parking lot after watching Star Wars to plant the seeds of the gospel in Walter. A couple of years later, he had an unexpectedly charismatic conversion at a Korean-American Presbyterian conference. This was followed by years of discipleship in white, midwestern evangelicalism, which then ripened in the international reformed theology at Regent College and Park Street Church. Each stage enabled him to enter various denominational streams learning from the best of what each tradition offers.

Walter currently serves as pastor for leadership at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia, and will continue in this role as he leads the NAE. He ministered for 15 years at Boston's historic Park Street Church, a congregation that played a key role in the NAE's founding. Walter has been a member of the NAE board since 2013 and has presented at NAE events, contributed to NAE publications and served on working groups on a variety of issues, including ethics and church life, racial reconciliation and the politics of sexuality.

He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, his M.Div. from Regent College in Vancouver, and his B.A. from Northwestern University in philosophy and history. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America and a licensed minister in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. Walter is married to Toni Kim, and they have two teenagers. ¹

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