

From One Generation to the Next: Church Movement Succession Strategies

Church history shows the many strategies adopted by church movement pioneers as they look to transition from the first generation of leadership to the next. Some appoint a leadership successor or hand leadership over to a team convened for the purpose, some form a new denomination, while some simply keep going without any strategic consideration for the future. In 2011 Terry Virgo, who had pioneered and led the Newfrontiers movement to that point, commissioned those that he recognised as his spiritual sons to begin to form their own networks of churches. He effectively multiplied the one network led by him, to multiple networks of churches led by men now recognised as network leaders in their own right. These networks were to be autonomous, yet somehow remain collaborative and interdependent. Such radical intentional decentralisation is very bold and some might consider perilous to the future of the movement. It is an uncommon strategy and this session explores whether multiplying autonomous network leaders can be considered an effective church movement succession strategy.

Maurice Nightingale, originally from London, joined the Newfrontiers network and completed a master's degree studying philosophies of church movement succession after being drawn to explore simple New Testament patterned local church and church leadership principles and practices,. Following a short career as a military engineering officer, Maurice has since been involved for over 25 years in two main areas of service; planting churches and rescuing failing churches. He recently handed over senior leadership of Hope Church Ipswich in the UK and remains a member of the eldership team there. He also serves alongside Mike Betts as a member of the Relational Mission core team. His current responsibilities include the supervision of early-stage church planting on the mainland of Europe, including training and coaching pioneer leaders and developing strategies for both initiating and supporting church plants. Maurice is married, with four children.

I. Newfrontiers

A. Short history and introduction

B. Second generation succession

C. Transition timing

II. Critical elements of movement succession

A. Multiplied centres of autonomous authority

B. Recognising charismatic network leadership

C. Commitment to shared mission

D. Commitment to shared core values

E. A culture of relationships

III. Have these critical elements proved effective?