

Passing the Treasure

NIEA leaders learn steps in succession planning

How does an organization plan for when a leader retires, leaves or passes away? That was the question New India Evangelistic Association (NIEA) explored in April 2018 with about 30 staff members in conjunction with LeaderSource during the NIEA Succession Planning Conclave. The two-day seminar was held in Bangalore.

LeaderSource CEO Dr. Malcolm Webber used the metaphor of “passing the treasure” to the next generation. Using examples from his experience in China observing young and old farmers working together, he said passing the treasure requires deliberate effort.

Webber then put succession planning into a spiritual framework. In the past, he said, some believed human involvement in succession planning interrupted the work of the Holy Spirit. But Webber said the effort is collaborative. God expects us to use wisdom and prudence as we participate with Him.

He talked about how the triune God passes “treasure” from Father to Son to Holy Spirit. Then he showed how Jesus’ disciples passed it to the apostles of the early Church, and all the way down to the Church today. Using 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 as a text, he said every good work is built on the foundation of Jesus, and those who have come before us have built upon it. Future generations stand on the shoulders of the present generation. For this reason, present leadership must take responsibility to wisely and effectively pass on their “treasure,” so that careful work is not lost.

Biblical examples

Some leaders hesitate to train new leaders. They may become so preoccupied with what they are doing that they forget to pass on their knowledge. Or they may fear losing



Dr. Alexander Phillip, Executive Director of NIEA, came into leadership unexpectedly when his father, who previously led NIEA, passed away. His experience has helped him and the NIEA board to see the importance of succession planning. The board invited Dr. James Cannon, an NIEA strategic adviser, to teach on the topic at the organization’s National Leaders’ Meeting. These steps laid the foundation for the recent succession planning seminar.



Dr. Malcolm Webber used various biblical examples to teach principles of succession planning.

credit for their work. The group reflected on the succession planning from Moses to Joshua and from Paul to Timothy. Those two leaders exercised trust, wisdom, guidance and affirmation. They also introduced younger leaders to their network of relationships. Fear and uncertainty were not distractions because leaders trusted God to see that kingdom work would continue.

Webber also encouraged the group to reflect on Jesus’s leadership qualities. In Matthew 11:11, Jesus recognizes the great ministry of John the Baptist. Webber said this reflects of an attitude of joy in building up others, which is part of creating “a culture of generational succession.” Then in Mark 3:13-18 Jesus selects disciples – people for whom he would invest particular attention to before eventually giving them responsibility for the Church. In a culture of people development, leaders identify younger leaders and give them specialized training.

The group learned about using the five “C” indicators – Christ, Community, Character, Competencies and Calling – to identify new leaders. They also discussed four dynamics of transformation to design training opportunities for emerging leaders:

- Spiritual: prayer, meditation, reflection
- Relational: mentoring, encouragement, friends, family, fellow believers, counseling
- Experiential: leadership responsibilities, challenging assignments, learning by doing
- Instructional: teaching, interaction and practical application of God’s Word

Seminar participants were encouraged to create action plans for succession in each area of NIEA’s ministry, including Church ministry, training, child care, Bible translation and general administration. They were encouraged to identify “high potential” emerging leaders and to establish broad staff training for succession planning, and more specific training for individual older and younger leaders in mentoring relationships.

NIEA has more than 850 workers. in 12 Indian states They are involved in Bible translation, church planting, village development, medical care and more.