



# 2-Year Succession Timeline Template:

A Step-by-Step Guide to  
Navigating Leadership  
Transitions in Your Church



Based on the episode "Stability in Transition: Insights on Church Succession from Drake Farmer" on the unSeminary podcast

Leadership transitions are critical moments in the life of a church. Without a clear plan, they can become stressful and uncertain for staff, the congregation, and the leaders involved. This template, inspired by the experiences shared by Drake Farmer during the podcast *Stability in*

*Transition: Insights on Church Succession from Drake Farmer*, offers a comprehensive 24-month timeline to guide you through each stage of the transition process. It provides actionable steps and key milestones to ensure a smooth, prayerful, and strategic leadership handover.



## Phase 1: Foundation & Announcement (Months 1-6)

- **Months 1-3: Initial Discussions & Planning**
  - **Define Transition Goals:** Clarify the reasons for the transition and what a successful process will look like.
  - **Select a Successor:** Begin searching if an internal successor isn't identified.
  - **Craft the Communication Strategy:** Plan how and when the transition will be communicated to staff and the congregation.
  - *"Announcing early can help ease anxieties and give time for acceptance and adjustment." —Drake Farmer*
- **Months 4-6: Formal Announcement**
  - **Public Announcement to the Church:** Share the transition plan with the congregation, focusing on the vision behind the change.
  - **Establish Weekly Mentorship Meetings:** Begin regular meetings between the outgoing leader and the successor.
  - **Introduce the Successor to Key Stakeholders:** Hold informal gatherings to introduce the new leader to staff, board members, and key volunteers.
  - *"Introducing the successor early allows for relationship building before stepping into the role."*

## Phase 2: Mentorship & Relationship Building (Months 7-12)

- **Months 7-9: Deepening Connections**
  - **Successor Shadows the Leader:** The successor participates in key meetings, observes decision-making, and gradually takes on more responsibilities.
  - **Host Listening Sessions:** Create opportunities for staff and congregation members to share hopes and concerns about the transition.
  - **Start Book Study Together:** Read leadership-focused books together to create alignment on values and direction.
  - *"Listening sessions can foster trust and make the community feel heard during times of change."*
- **Months 10-12: Shared Leadership**
  - **Co-Lead Major Events:** The outgoing leader and successor work together to lead key church events or services.
  - **Empower Successor to Make Decisions:** Gradually shift decision-making authority in specific areas to the successor.
  - **Begin Preparing for Formal Handover:** Draft a document outlining the final steps of the transition.
  - *"Empowering the new leader early on helps them gain confidence in their role."*

## Phase 3: Handover & Transition (Months 13-18)

- **Months 13-15: Official Handover**
  - **Finalize the Handover Plan:** Confirm key dates and details for the transition day.
  - **Hold a Commissioning Service:** Organize a special church service to honor the outgoing leader and officially introduce the new leader.
  - **Celebrate the Outgoing Leader:** Host a farewell event to express gratitude and reflect on their impact.
  - *“A commissioning service helps the congregation see the transition as a celebration, not a loss.”*
- **Months 16-18: Successor Takes the Lead**
  - **Successor Leads Weekly Meetings:** Shift full leadership of weekly staff meetings to the successor.
  - **Outgoing Leader Moves to Advisory Role:** For a few months, the former leader remains available as an advisor for any questions or challenges.
  - **Communicate Changes Clearly:** Continue updating the congregation on the new leader’s vision and initiatives.
  - *“Clear communication maintains trust during the first months of new leadership.”*

## Phase 4: Settling In & Evaluation (Months 19-24)

- **Months 19-21: Evaluation & Adjustment**
  - **Conduct a Staff Feedback Survey:** Gather feedback on the transition process and the new leader’s effectiveness.
  - **Hold a Leadership Review Meeting:** Discuss what’s working and what could be improved in the new leadership structure.
  - **Refine Goals for the New Leader:** Set clear goals and expectations for the next 6-12 months.
  - *“Feedback ensures the transition is on track and addresses any concerns early.”*
- **Months 22-24: Vision Casting for the Future**
  - **Vision Sunday:** Have the new leader cast vision for the next season of church growth and ministry.
  - **Staff Retreat:** Organize a retreat to build camaraderie and align on goals under new leadership.
  - **Official Close of the Transition Period:** Announce the official end of the transition period to the church.
  - *“A strong vision at the end of the transition inspires confidence and hope for what’s next.”*

