

In the name of the Father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen. Prime Minister Mr Cameron has announced that he will step down after losing the historic referendum. He said: "I don't think it would be right for me to try to be the captain that steers our country to its next destination. "But the big question is who could take the top job and move into 10 Downing Street after Mr Cameron's departure? Who will be his successor, as someone has said, that there is no success without a successor. Succession planning assures, a smooth transition from one leader to the next. According to our reading, Elijah knew he was nearing the end of his life, and he asked Elisha, what he could do for him, before he departed. Elisha replied that he wanted a "double-portion" of Elijah's spirit. As Elijah is being carried into heaven, his man-tile or you can call it outer garment, slips from his shoulders. Elisha picks it up, rolls it up, and strikes the waters of the river Jordan, just as Elijah had done before. By his action, Elisha invokes the power and presence of God. Leadership succession isn't always neat and clean or simple. If we look into the history of Israel, we will see Samuel's sons were not, up to the task of following him in the role of a judge. As a result, he was succeeded by King Saul and David, with the result that kings, replaced judges, as Israel's political and military leaders. What can we learn from these examples of Biblical succession? Most of the leaders planned ahead, for the time, when they can no longer lead. They spend time with their successors to teach them, model leadership, give them responsibility and supervise their work, and mentor them. John Maxwell sums it up well: "The best leaders lead today with tomorrow in mind, by making sure they invest in younger leaders who will carry their legacy forward." If we think about our Presbyterian system, Elder should have been disciple, who can make disciples to the next generation, so that if they have to leave their leadership role for some reason, things will keep running smoothly. It is interesting that none of the leaders in the Bible were seeking a leadership position. They were all underdogs and ordinary men and women. There are several positive examples in the Scripture, of leaders passing the torch to the next generation. In the Old Testament, we see, Moses selected a young man named Joshua, to be his special assistant and he began to invest in him. Joshua then led the nation of Israel in the Promised Land. However, Joshua didn't appoint a leader behind him, which leads to the down fall of the nation. Until King David, who is referred to as "a man after God's own heart", becomes king, who faithfully leads and chooses a successor, his own son Solomon, and prepares him to take over as king, and to carry out the building of God's, temple project in Jerusalem. David even goes so far as to begin gathering building materials for the temple and laying out a design for it. After David's death, Solomon goes on to lead Israel into its most prosperous time, much of which was made possible by David's investment in him as his successor. However, like Joshua, Solomon fails to train up a leader behind him. When his son takes over, the kingdom of Israel splits due to his poor leadership, they could not keep Unity and prosperity. The New Testament also provides us with some examples of passing the torch of leadership. In the Gospels, we see Jesus choosing twelve ordinary men to be his disciples. They go through a period of intensive discipleship training programme, as Jesus prepares them for the incredibly huge task of establishing the church and the Kingdom of God by taking the gospel to the nations. Despite their faults and flaws, they continued Jesus' ministry, leaving a huge impact on the world. The second example from the New Testament is that of Paul and Timothy. Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, meets young Timothy takes him under his wing. Timothy and Paul travelled together all over Asia Minor preaching the gospel, encouraging believers, and planting new churches. The two men became so close that Paul affection-lately refers to Timothy as his spiritual "son". Timothy continued to lead with excellence and to pass the torch to the next generation of believers. In 2 Timothy 1:6-7: we read, "For this reason I remind you, to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you, for God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power, love and self-control." We are all called to develop the gifts that God has given us in order to serve the Lord, and His church. "Succession is one of the key responsibilities of leadership." Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul all did this well: they identified followers who would lead

God's people well after they left. One of the reasons that Paul chose Timothy to be his personal assistant and successor is, because of the potential he saw in Timothy. Like Paul, a leader should seek to identify future leaders, build them up, give them resources, opportunities, and turn them loose to find out their own leadership style. That leadership potential can't be recognised, unless the gifts, that God has given are used and practiced in the church. Like a flame that isn't fanned, spiritual gifts tend to fade, to fade in strength and power, when they are not used and encouraged. In order for others to make use of their gifts, an Elder usually has to be willing to empower them and give them a chance to take responsibility even, if they fail for the first time that is alright. This will prepare them to assume full leadership in the future while still having the benefit of a mentor, a guide, and encourager. Finally, we all should seek and receive the double portion of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, ask and it shall be given un to you. The Fire of the Holy Spirit isn't a weak or fearful torch of the spirit that dwells in us, but the powerful, loving, and comforting Spirit of God. There are not so many highly motivated and qualified people available to run the church. There are not many who are seeking to receive the double portion of the spirit as Elisha did. Therefore, the call to leadership and Eldership is a call to discipleship Training Programme. In this way, ordinary people like us become the instruments by which the gospel is carried to the ends of the earth. As the torch of Christian leadership is passed from one generation to another, the world recognises that it's not the human being; but the power of God in the man and the woman that preserves the gospel until Christ returns. Last week in our season meeting we have realised, that we need to organise an Elders training workshop. It would be good opportunity to identify new elders with the potentials to lead and serve as an elder in our church. Have you ever had an experience, where you knew, God was calling you, to serve as an elder in the church, or to use your gift and your talent for the glory of God, if so just respond to the call, the Lord will energise you with the double portion of His blessings and skills, to do the task with the anointing and with the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's have a few moments of silent reflection.