



FACILITATING GENERATIONAL TRANSITIONS IN LEADERSHIP: A Guide for Cultural Language Congregations

Both the gospel and leadership are passed on from generation to generation.

Illustration: 1: Riccardo Annandale, 7x2pe9wjL9M, Unsplash.com

*"So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might **to another generation**, your power **to all those to come**," Psalm 71:18 ESV*

Leadership is not about the next election, *it's about the next generation.* **Simon Sinek**

God began from his earliest covenantal statements referring to the next generations. There's an implicit understanding that we are to proclaim God to the next generations. We are to prepare the next generations for not just faith but leadership in faith so that they, too, effectively disciple their next generations for faith and leadership in God's kingdom. We must hand off everything to the next generation. We see this most explicitly in Paul's instruction to his disciple Timothy, *"...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also,"* 2 Timothy 2:2. There is a literal and figurative passing from generation to generation all things: What Paul received, he gave to Timothy. Timothy is to pass this to a new faith generation of the faithful, who will, in turn, do the same, on and on.

This is inevitable in our cultural churches, too. It's also often a challenge in both our cultural majority and cultural minority congregations. **Yet, we must transition leadership between generations well.**

This whitepaper has been produced by the PAOC Mission Canada's Cultural Language Guiding Group to serve as a resource to everyone in our Fellowship on this topic. The Cultural Language Guiding Group was initiated by the PAOC General Executive's Mission Canada Committee and comprises church and district leaders nationwide.



mission canada
BECAUSE WE MUST
PARCE QUE NOUS DEVONS

Contributors: Joel Spiridigliozzi, Gabriel Jean Baptiste, Rex Ng, Charles Hermelink

FACILITATING GENERATIONAL, CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC TRANSITIONS BETWEEN 1.0, 1.5 AND 2.0 GENERATIONS

Canada has been receiving a steady flow of international immigrants since 1950. In 2000, the number of first-generation immigrants doubled to 1960. As of 2021, international immigrants make up nearly a quarter (22.4%) of the Canadian population, according to [macro-trends.net](https://www.macro-trends.net).

Immigrants arrive in Canada at different ages, including children with their parents. However, it's worth considering whether all migrants, regardless of age, should be regarded as first-generation immigrants and whether they share the same knowledge and connection about their culture and language.

To gain more insight into this topic, sociologist Rubén G. Rumbaut from the University of California adapted the concept of "decimal generations" by Oropesa and Landale (1997) to draw a more apparent distinction between children born to immigrants and those born in the United States. In his article "*Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts*," Rumbaut outlined generations based on the age of immigration into three decimal categories:

- 1.75 generation: early childhood (ages 0-5)
- 1.5 generation: middle childhood (ages 6-12)
- 1.25 generation: adolescents (ages 13-17)

Furthermore, the first generation (1.0 generation) refers to those who were 18 or older at the time of their immigration and were international-born.

The newest category is the 2.5 generation, referring to those with one foreign-born parent. This category is significant for Canada since 44% of our population, as of 2021, already has one foreign-born parent, and this is predicted to rise from 49.8% to 54.3% by 2041.

THE PAOC IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Our fellowship saw many European cultural language congregations established between the 1960s and 1980s, which have moved through the transition of 1.0 to 1.5 and 2.0 generation and beyond. It was and remains natural for cultural language congregations to organize as local assemblies, serving their own and the wider community of other immigrants of the same language. Through the changes that inevitably occur between the 1.0 and 1.5 generations into the later 1.5 and 2.0 generations, a shift happens from ministries in only their cultural language to then including English or French, and later into English or French as the primary language of ministry. This occurs as part of the immigrant experience through the generations. The longer the immigrants remain in Canada, the more likely they will eventually end up in a majority language –

English or French – ministry setting. This is even more true and faster among young children who landed in Canada with their parents, as they have a stronger desire to function in the majority language setting. And it is almost entirely true of 2.0 generations. Thus, cultural language churches will inevitably grapple with this transition as they move into their second generation in Canada. This change is good as well, as it positions the congregation to be effective in making disciples of people from any cultural languages and backgrounds different from that of their origin.

These changes over time can be challenging, yet they don't "have" to be. Through wise counsel, careful planning, thorough communication, and unity, each step and stage of linguistic change can be successfully navigated. When this inevitably-coming change is either ignored or resisted, it becomes increasingly challenging. The heart-felt desire behind this paper is to come alongside with wisdom and grace to prepare and assist.

We affirm and support cultural language congregations. Each is a gift and treasure in the kingdom of God. Each serves its cultural and linguistic communities in ways English and French-language churches cannot. Further, we do not seek to hasten the inevitable linguistic change that will come but rather to facilitate it by planting and nurturing the seeds for successfully navigating this growth process.

A common and strategic feature of this linguistic change is generational transition, the handing of leadership from one generation to the next, who are most often the children of those first-generation believers. And this is a beautiful thing in the kingdom, too. It takes a willing spirit to cooperate with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who "calls" leaders out in the next generations. It takes vision, relationship and investment to see the next generation being called, walking with them relationally in spiritual growth, and instructional investment that includes mentorship and guidance into leadership roles.

God has placed this responsibility in your heart, head, and hands. These three realms of heart, head and hands are essential to a successful transition.

HEART, HEAD AND HANDS

Three essential components have been identified to help these cultural language church leaders transition: the Heart, Head and Hands.

HEART



The heart embodies what we're passionate about: desire, value, pursue, and invest in. Attitudes are the dispositions of the heart and mind toward these things. These attributes of the heart are true for us individually, our leadership roles, and our entire congregations. As leaders, we cultivate these attributes in ourselves and inevitably reproduce them in the people around us. What your heart holds regarding raising up and passing on well the mantle of leadership in the next generation is vital to your success.

To facilitate generational, cultural, and linguistic transition in our cultural language churches, leaders and congregations are encouraged to embrace three critical attitudes: honour, empowerment and humility.

➤ HONOUR:

- *"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10).*
- We honour one another when different generations of leaders and congregants honour each other.

- We honour one another when people from different cultures and language groups are devoted to one another and are willing to learn from one another.
- We must be reminded of what heaven will look like: ***“...there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9a).***

Reflections:

- How do my heart’s attitudes reflect God’s value and mandate of raising the next generation of leadership around me? Identify them in writing. Are there attitudes I need to change, and are there attitudes I need to grow in to better please the Lord in this area? Identify them in writing with action steps and timelines.
- How do I demonstrate in attitudes, words and actions this cross-generational value of empowering the next generation? How can I improve? Who can I ask to give me an outside observation of my behaviour in this area?
- Do I actively honour the cultural and linguistic differences of both those in my congregation and even those groups in our broader community but not yet in our worship fellowship? Who are the other leaders in my congregation, and even a congregational discussion group, with whom we can dialogue on this?
- **EMPOWERMENT:**
 - The biblical truth is that all people can be called and empowered by the Holy Spirit: ***“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17, 18).***
 - Our desire as Christ-followers is to see all people, male and female, of all ages reach their full potential in Christ Jesus.

Reflections:

- How is my spiritual leadership seeing sons and daughters, young men and women, advance in the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and Spirit-led ministry under my administration? In what ways can I better empower them spiritually? Be specific in proposed actions and next-step timelines.

➤ **HUMILITY:**

- ***“Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others,” (Philippians 2:3, 4).***
- If we desire to facilitate generational, cultural, and linguistic transition in our monoethnic and multiethnic churches, we must have a heart of humility. After all, our mindset must be the same as Christ Jesus, ***“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross,” (Philippians 2:6-8).***

Reflections:

- How am I doing in humility, not only before the Lord but also before God’s people? Write an assessment as honestly as possible.
- Am I focused on self-development and fulfillment to the unintentional exclusion of an attitude, value and practice of humility? What do my actions in each of these areas demonstrate?
- In what ways am I intentionally practicing humility in my conversations, attitudes and behaviours with others, especially regarding generational and cultural differences? Be specific.
- As a real test of humility, review your responses to each of the above with trusted friends for their reflection and gentle, objective viewpoint. Be sure to include trusted friends of younger generations and people from different cultural backgrounds than yourself.

HEAD



When addressing cultural challenges within our churches, we believe the solution lies in adopting a **renewed mindset** rather than solely focusing on attracting a particular ethnicity based on our surroundings.

Travelling abroad, we often observe churches that have successfully cultivated diverse communities. These communities of believers aren't necessarily defined by colour or cultural background but have become cohesive entities in their own right. While faith in Jesus is a common factor, they also share a mindset and philosophy that unites them. This leads us to think that part of the solution involves adopting a Spirit-filled perspective in delivering ministry that isn't geared toward a specific group but instead finds a way to embody the qualities of Christ that appeal to people from various backgrounds. This means implementing effective tools while casting a wide net that embraces souls from diverse backgrounds instead of using a fishing rod that may be effective but restricts diversity. Creating such a net requires intentional efforts to craft a language that resonates with those we are reaching out to.

To facilitate generational, cultural, and linguistic transition in our cultural language, church leaders and congregations need to embrace the following three vital biblical truths:

1. The Church as a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual community (Gen. 12:1-3; Dan. 1-6; Acts 8-15; Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2; Col. 1; 1 Thess. 1).

Multi-ethnic communities almost invariably also include multi-lingual communities. Regarding the Church as a multi-lingual community (cf. Acts 2:6b), authors Mark Lau Branson & Juan F. Martinez, in their book Churches, Cultures & Leadership, explain:

“Even as globalization continues to encourage the usage of English as the language of global communication, it is also creating a situation where more languages come into contact with each other and where those who speak ‘subordinate’ languages take more pride in using and maintaining those languages. It is within this encounter of various systems of representation in which churches need to negotiate between Babel, Pentecost, and God’s vision of all peoples, nations and languages worshipping God together. Here the gospel invites leaders to shape congregations that combine creativity, agency, respect and humility to find new ways of both recognizing the influence of English and the role of other languages in the process of being church together,” (pp. 129, 130).

2. The Church as a multi-generational community (2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 1:4).

3. The Church as a reaching community (Matt. 28:18-20).

HANDS



This component is critical in facilitating generational, cultural, and linguistic transition in 1.0 and 1.5 generations in cultural language congregations.

Hands represent what we actually do, not our intentions but our actions. We often interpret our actions by our intentions, yet others often interpret – or misinterpret - our actions in unintended ways. For this reason, it is vital to be as widely dialogical and consultative as possible as we take the values of the heart and the thoughts of our minds and begin implementing the resulting actions.

Here are six practical steps to consider and implement:

Step 1: Make it an intentional discussion point.

Step 2: Commit to an intentional transitional phase with an excellence-focused bi-lingual ministry experience. For example, all portions of the main Sunday gathering will be bilingual, including the welcome, worship, preaching, announcements, and benediction.

Step 3: Implement Leadership Transition

- It is recommended that steps be taken towards transitioning the role of Lead Pastor to a younger leader who belongs to the 1.5 to 3 generation. In some cases, the older generation cultural leader can move into an advisory, mentoring, or second-in-command role. It is crucial for the board, pastoral council members, and congregants to clearly understand who the congregation's Lead Pastor is. When considering a younger leader as the next Lead Pastor, the congregation members will give their affirmation through a membership vote that a district leader or an appointed representative will facilitate.
- It is highly recommended that churches work with district leaders to ensure alignment with the Local Church Constitution or Bylaws and implement best practices.

Step 4: Board and Congregational Support

- Consistently share and teach the broad congregation the importance of a multi-generational church and leadership team. Furthermore, intentionally appoint younger generational leaders to the board or pastor's council.
- Consider developing an 'apprentice' program where spiritually mature younger leaders can begin to serve around the leadership table (as non-voting board members) to learn and grow with older and more seasoned leaders. The goal would be to see the leadership baton passed on from generation to generation at the appropriate time.
- The hope is that cooperation and support are built for the younger Lead Pastor.

Step 5: Transition the primary worship gathering into fully English-speaking. The cultural language group can have their cultural language specific gathering, join the all-English gathering, or be interpreted via other means.

Step 6: Multiply

- Allow the Holy Spirit to help identify another language group in your community that needs to be reached with the message of Christ. Once that group is identified and prayerfully considered, a leader will recruit others who feel compelled to strategize how to build bridges to this new demographic.

- Intentionally foster an environment where the church constantly finds ways to incorporate different cultures and languages meaningfully into your main worship gatherings. Some examples of how to do this are as follows:
 - The public reading of Scriptures in different languages with English subtitles.
 - Corporate prayer time encompassing different languages and age groups.
 - Worship songs sung with unique cultural sounds and experienced in a language apart from English.
 - Intentionally invite keynote or guest speakers whose first language is not English (even if they need to be interpreted). Related to multi-generational transition, be intentional about inviting speakers from different generations.
 - Ensure diversity is represented (ethnic diversity, multi-generational, gender) around each decision-making leadership table.

Key Note: “Champion” Church and Leaders

Identify “champion” churches and leaders currently working through this process or, better yet, having fully worked through it. Have them share their stories (including the challenges) and testimonies. These champion leaders and churches need to include multigenerational leaders in their testimonials.

Examples of champion churches:

- Atmosphere Church (Pastor Carlos Bonilla & Jonathan Bonilla) – Toronto
- Champion Life Centre (Pastor Jerry Berenguer & Paul Berenguer) – Brampton
- Agape Ministries (Pastor Alvin Nicholson & John Reeves) – Toronto
- Be Alive (Pastor Ricardo Jumaquino & Pastor Michael Orteza) – Milton
- International Assembly of God (Pastor Joiachim Dos Santos & Pastor Josie Reis) – Toronto
- The City Church International (Pastor Leonidio Ascencao & Pastor Rui Nunes)
- Grace Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Pastor Worku Mekonnen, New Westminster, BC
- My Father’s Heart, Pastor Peter Elmaasrany, Surrey, BC

CONCLUSIONS:

We highly recommend **sharing and discussing this whitepaper with your district leadership**. We recognize that local and regional uniqueness applies to individual churches and leaders.

We recommend you work prayerfully, carefully, and deliberately in community with your district, church board, ministry leadership team, and broader church body. It may take a year or two to implement all these concepts. Moving too quickly could jeopardize all your good intentions. An African proverb that applies well here: *If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.* This is entirely a “go together” process. And you know, as a leader already, usually the best way to lead fast and effectively is slowly for large groups. We don’t want to scatter all the sheep in fear, misunderstanding or confusion. Rather, transparent consultation, vision casting, value building, encouragement and affirmation, and unity in attitude and action will serve you – and the next generations in the Church – well, to the glory of Christ, Head of the Church.

What are the goals here again?

- To glorify God
- To edify the saints

- To raise new generations of leadership in all our churches
- To have healthy, reproducing local congregations that effectively reach all the peoples – including all newcomers landing in your wider community – in our generation and the next.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES for additional help in this area of ministry:

Books:

- *Churches, Cultures, & Leadership* by Mark Lau Branson & Juan F. Martinez, Intervarsity
- *Intensional: Kingdom Ethnicity in a Divided World* by D.A. Horton, NavPress
- *Leading a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* by Mark DeYmaz & Harry Li, Zondervan
- *The High Definition Leader* by Derwin L. Gray, Thomas Nelson
- *The Culture Map* by Erin Meyer, Public Affairs
- *A Fellowship of Differents* by Scot McKnight, Zondervan
- *Better Together* by Jim Tomberlin & Warren Bird, Fortress Press
- *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* by Gary L. McIntosh, Baker Books

Websites:

- Gatewaycities.ca (Global Gates)
- Wodistrict.org/gta-leadership-resources/

App:

- P4N (Pray for the Nations)