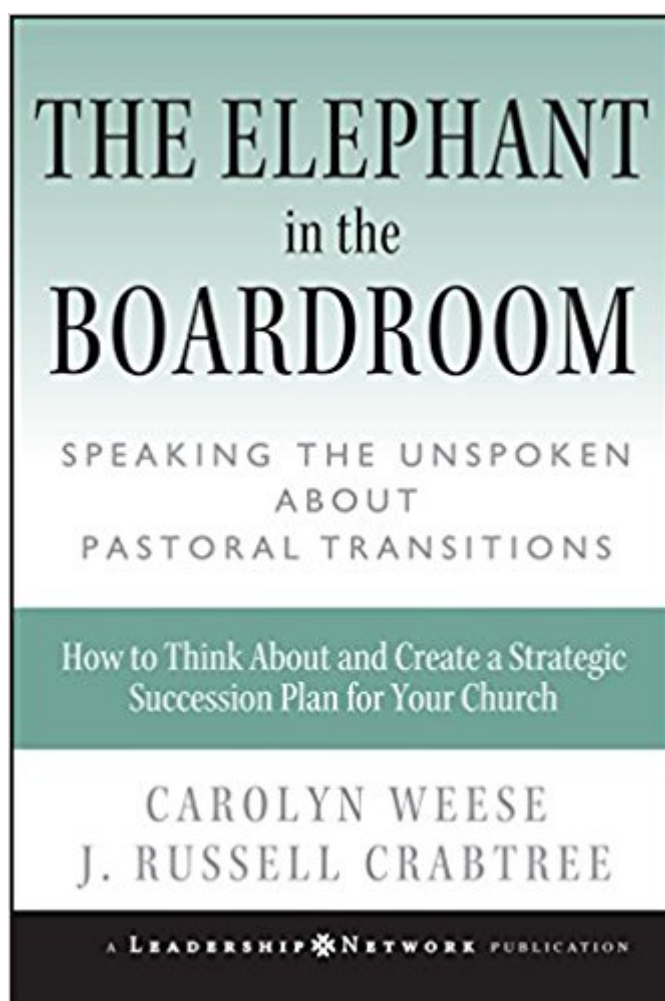


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# The Elephant In The Boardroom: Speaking The Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions



## Synopsis

Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree "experts in the field of church leadership" have written a nuts-and-bolts guide to developing a succession plan for smoothing pastoral transitions. Filled with strategies and solid advice, this handy resource is based in solid research and the authors' many years of experience working with churches in a wide variety of denominations. Weese and Crabtree clearly show that leadership succession should be part of every church's planning process.

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## Customer Reviews

"Carolyn Weese and Russ Crabtree have done churches a great service in breaking the curious silence about pastoral transition, perhaps the most serious threat to churches in the less institutionalized twenty-first century world. Here you will find the reality-based principles that lead to strategic succession." --Bob Buford, founder and chairman, Leadership Network, Dallas, Texas, and author, *Half-Time*

"This is an invaluable book for pastors, lay leaders, and members about how to handle pastoral transition with sensitivity, creativity, and excellence. It not only preserves the church, but enables it to grow and grasp the full potential of the future. This book utilizes profound biblical principles and the finest modern management strategy. I highly recommend this practical and profound book filled with insights and wisdom." --Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, president, Dunamis Christian Ministries, Inc., Hollywood, California

"At last, qualified authorities in church leadership have taken on the question of transition in a thoughtful way. Crabtree and Weese have supplied a

carefully reasoned approach to an event that so often causes major problems for churchesâreplacing their leader. This book is well-written and badly needed.âRev. Dennis McCallum, lead pastor, Xenos Christian Fellowship, Columbus, Ohio âAll of the personal and professional hot button issues involved in a pastoral transition are addressed in this book. They donât just point out the pitfalls, they show us how to get out of them!âDr. David G. McKechnie, pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas âThis practical book should be in the hands of every pastor and board chair. It provides the right answer to one of the most neglected areas of church life todayâeffective leadership transition in the local church.âDr. William O. (Bill) Crews, chancellor, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California âChoosing a CEO is probably the most important thing a corporate board does. The church is no different. This book helps elevate the priority and process of properly choosing a new senior pastor. All congregations would benefit from this book.âTerry Looper, chairman and CEO, Texon Holding, Houston, Texas âPractical advice for a critical problem. The authorsâ explanation of strategic planning and organizational culture is worth the price of the book.âRev. Gary DeLashmutt, lead pastor, Xenos Christian Fellowship, Columbus, Ohio âCrabtree and Weese expose the huge costs and avoidable causes of poor pastoral transitions. They offer a wise strategy to prepare for the inevitable leadership changes every church will face.âDr. George K. Brushaber, president, Bethel College and Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

**THE ELEPHANT in the BOARDROOM** One way or another, every church will eventually lose its pastor or minister yet few congregations prepare for this dramatic event. The pastor's departure evokes a range of reactions and problems; sorrow and grief, uncertainty, loss of mission and momentum, power struggles; yet no one wants to talk about this elephant in the church boardroom. Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree; experts in the field of church leadership; have written a nuts-and-bolts guide to developing a succession plan for smoothing pastoral transitions. Filled with strategies and solid advice, this handy resource is based in solid research and the authors' many years of experience working with churches in a wide variety of denominations. Weese and Crabtree clearly show that leadership succession should be part of every church's planning process. Using assessment tools and quizzes, the book walks church leaders through the process of identifying their particular church's culture type and creating a succession plan that will meet their congregation's needs. Firmly rooted in biblical principles and the best management thinking, *The Elephant in the Boardroom* puts the focus on health, asset building, and resiliency. Its many illustrative examples from real-life situations and solid explanations

offer elders, deacons, board members, and other lay leaders a how-to manual for planning, preparing, and executing a leadership transition.

The first part of the book sets an example of Christ's way of handling transition. It then gives various circumstances in which transition happens and how various role players ought to handle them. Part two is in my view the heart of the book. It posits a theory of four church cultures: the family, the icon, the archival and the replication culture. Each culture must have a different transition approach and failure to adhere to it will result in a failed transition or one that does not favour the health and of the congregation. Part three gives strategic ways of planning for a transition for churches at various capacity levels and using different transitional schemes. The appendix provides tools in a form of a questionnaire, testing the health levels of a congregation and their rediness for a pastoral transition. Overall, the book is a practical guide for those who need a step by step outline in pastoral transition.

This is probably the most insightful book I've ever read. The church I attend is studing this vary issue. The Elephant in the Boardroom may be the issue nobody wants to talk about, but the book could not have been called the Zebra in the Boardroom because Pastoral changes in a church is anything but black & white. Because the issues are so numerous, complex, and sesitive the authors have organized and labeled the issues. A church going through transition identifies with one of four culture types, and one of four Pastor categories. In realiy, I think these labels can bleed into each other, but making these identities, can simplify creating a strategy far ahead of an unexpected change or a much needed change. Pastor may not be the only label. Clergy by other names in various churches may spearhead the strategies outlined by "The Elephant in the Boardroom".  
Bravo!

I read this book after readingÂ Next: Pastoral Succession That WorksÂ and seeing how often it's cited. This book is the theory behind the stories in "Next," but this book is more geared towards smaller churches (< 1,000), while "Next" focused on more glamorous ministries.If you need info for pastoral transition, do not complete your course of study without going through this. It has info that other books don't.Some other reviewers have said that the four church cultures the authors describe aren't perfect boxes, and I agree. At first blush, they seemed to me to be man-made constructions, somewhat arbitrary. They might be; but most of us can envision one or more churches in each category, thus making them useful to spur up thought on how idiosyncrasies of church cultures can severely impact the transition strategy.Also, it's obvious from the title that this book tacitly assumes

the most common form of church government: Professional clergy with a lay "board." I'd like to see more attention given to a structure made up of multiple elders of equal authority, paid or not; but you have to seek out resources like *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* to get that info.

Changes in pastoral leadership are inevitable in any church, and often those pastoral changes come suddenly. What would your church do if your pastor suddenly died, became disabled, received a "call" to move to another church or was reappointed by the district bishop? Churches are usually unprepared for these moments. Why do churches pretend this "elephant in the boardroom" does not exist? Why do churches not speak openly and plan appropriately for these transitions that everyone knows will one day come (even if they be many years off?) Does your church have a plan in place to make that transition as smooth as possible when it happens? What strategies for transition will work best for your congregation? What strategic options do churches have? This book has chapters specifically related to churches with differing styles of church culture and government. It was highly recommended to me by both an Episcopalian priest and a Presbyterian pastor, and this Baptist Preacher found it most helpful! If you are the brand new pastor coming on the field, or the pastor considering a move from a church to another, or a long-term pastor who wishes to mentor a successor, or even a pastor who has no thought of moving from your present position, you need to read this book. It is good stuff!

Value explained retiring ministers allowing the new minister space to develop their style.

I found the book overly complicated by the use of the four different models, the identification of which did not come easily for my church. I was hoping for a more straightforward and linear description of the best practices for transitioning to a new pastor. It would have been helpful to provide a matrix illustration of what the key ingredients of how each of the four models differed from each other.

This book is very helpful for any church to prepare for sudden or planned minister transitions.

Great insights for pastoral transition. The section on church cultures is worth the whole book.

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