



Transitioning Leadership Ceremony in the GPS Community - Nov. 06

Our Parents of Teens Community is called "GPS" which is an acronym for their mission statement: "Growing in God, Partners in Parenting, Strength in Community." Dave Guth, along with a leadership team, founded the Community in April of 2003. Recently, he decided the time had come to step down in order to concentrate on other ministry passions. For months Dave prayed for his potential successor to clearly come to the forefront. September 24, 2006 was chosen as the day he would make his resignation announcement. As this day approached, Dave thought the will of God in choosing his successor was becoming plain to him. After bouncing the name off me (since I am the Pastor of Adult Ministries and therefore the leader of all the Communities), he asked Doug Dixon if he would be interested in assuming the leadership position. Doug has attended the GPS Community for a couple years. Providentially, he sensed a calling to this ministry and he was open to the possibility. Dave began to transition Doug with many behind-the-scenes tasks. He also assigned to him more upfront ministry involvement during the weekly "hub" meetings when the group gathered together.

A special "Transition Sunday" (October 22, 2006) was scheduled when the group would honor Dave for his 3 ½ years of overseeing this vibrant community of believers. When the day arrived, almost the entire roster showed up! Highlights of the meeting included an overview of the history of how the group came into fruition and Dave's crucial role in it. There was a video tribute. There were testimonies of lives that have been influenced by Dave's ministry. There was good food of course, along with a time of heart-warming fellowship for this body of believers. Following a presentation of gifts to Dave, many in the group gathered around Dave and his wife, Jill, and prayed for God's continued blessing on their family and ministry. Blessedly, this meeting was not just about the past. Dave's heart was to celebrate the moment by having an official *transitioning* ceremony. Dave, an air force veteran, shares where this idea originated:

The outgoing commander and staff usually plan the ceremony and it is a semi-formal event. Military class A dress uniforms are worn. The higher level military staff is always invited along with families of the members. The outgoing commander makes his final remarks usually reflecting on his or her time as the commander. There is then a customary passing of the guide (on which is a squadron flag that has ribbons attached from previous unit awards) from the outgoing commander to the incoming commander. Once this ceremony is completed, the incoming commander has an opportunity to share his remarks. Sometimes the event is held outdoors and the occasion is graced by a fly-over of some squadron aircraft. After the event, there are usually refreshments for the squadron members and their families. I hope this gives you an idea of what it is all about.

Implementing some of the ideas from this tradition, Dave took a few minutes for his final remarks as the Community Leader. Then he officially "passed a baton" to Doug (who had actually planned the agenda). Doug then shared some thoughts from his heart, revealing his plans for leading the GPS community and working with the leadership team in days ahead.



I must say this was a spirit-filled experience for the GPS Community! God was honored as the leaders took their responsibilities as God-inspired callings to shepherd His people as an extension of the pastoral staff of Hope Church.



- Steve Lizzio, Director of ABF Resources and Pastor of Adult Ministries at Hope Church in Mason, Ohio