

# **THE PROXIMITY FELLOWSHIP**

# **SEASONS OF TRANSIENCE**

A Guide to Continuity and Succession

Companion Guidance to the Charter and Quick Starter

v1.0 — August 31, 2026

[proximityfellowship.org](https://proximityfellowship.org)

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## A Word Before You Begin

Every fellowship lives through seasons. People arrive, serve, grow, move, remain, return, and sometimes leave for good. A graduation, relocation, new responsibility, changing family circumstance, illness, aging, or an ordinary turning of life may alter a gathering that once seemed settled. Proximity Fellowship does not treat such change as an interruption of Christian life. Change is part of the ordinary condition in which Christians learn to gather faithfully.

This Guide exists to help a fellowship meet those changes without confusing continuity with permanence. A healthy fellowship does not need to prove its faithfulness by surviving every departure or preserving one form forever. It should, however, resist becoming unnecessarily dependent upon one Host, leader, teacher, steward, household, or personality. Responsibilities can be shared. Knowledge can be passed on. Leadership can change. A gathering can take another form. Sometimes a season can also end with gratitude and peace.

The central question is therefore not simply, "How do we keep this going?" It is, "How do we remain faithful to Christ and responsible toward one another as circumstances change?" That question leaves room for continuity, succession, multiplication, a new form of fellowship, joining another Christian community, beginning elsewhere, or bringing a particular gathering to a faithful close.

Throughout this Guide, stewardship should remain distinct from ownership. The person who begins a fellowship does not possess it. The person who hosts it does not possess the Christians who gather there. The person who receives responsibility after another leaves does not inherit ownership. Christ remains the Head, and the fellowship remains a shared Christian responsibility under Him.

The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience is companion guidance beneath *The Proximity Fellowship Charter*. It offers practical help for continuity and succession, both within local fellowships and, where appropriate, in the stewardship of the wider Framework. It does not amend the Charter or create new Constitutional Requirements. Its purpose is simpler: to help Christians carry responsibility faithfully, hand it on wisely, and let go without fear when a season has truly changed.

## **Why This Matters More Than It Seems**

When someone who has mattered greatly to a fellowship leaves, the change can feel larger than a practical transition. Relationships have formed around that person's presence. Habits may have developed through that person's service. Others may have learned to depend upon that person for welcome, communication, teaching, prayer, organization, or simply the confidence that someone will make the gathering happen.

None of this is automatically unhealthy. Christian fellowship naturally includes trust, affection, influence, and gratitude for people who serve faithfully. A small gathering may also depend more heavily upon a few people simply because there are few people present. The concern begins when dependence becomes unnecessary, when responsibility, knowledge, relationships, or confidence are concentrated so completely in one person that the fellowship cannot imagine continuing without that person.

A fellowship that can continue gracefully after a significant departure shows something worth noticing. It shows that responsibility was capable of being shared, that other Participants were able to grow into service, and that the fellowship was not treated as the possession of the person who began or carried much of it. Healthy continuity does not diminish the importance of faithful servants. It honors their service without making their permanent presence a condition for the fellowship's life.

Yet continuation is not the only faithful outcome. A fellowship may change form, become part of another Christian community, divide peacefully into other gatherings, or come to a natural end. The deeper measure is not whether one particular gathering survives indefinitely. The deeper measure is whether Christians remain free to follow Christ faithfully, carry responsibility responsibly, and release one another from unhealthy dependence when circumstances change.

This is why continuity and succession matter more than logistics. They reveal what a fellowship believes about ownership, leadership, maturity, and Christ's place among His people. A healthy fellowship prepares people to serve one another faithfully, but also to continue faithfully when a familiar person, role, or season is no longer present.

# **The Shape of a Fellowship Ready for Change**

## **Share Responsibility Early**

A fellowship becomes more resilient when responsibility is shared before a departure makes sharing urgent. Prayer, Scripture reading, hospitality, communication, practical preparation, care, teaching, and other forms of service need not rest upon one person where others are reasonably able to contribute. Shared responsibility is not a strategy for making one leader less important. It is a way of helping more Christians become capable of faithful participation.

## **Let Knowledge Travel**

More than one person should ordinarily understand the practical life of the fellowship. Where the gathering meets, how people are contacted, what recurring responsibilities exist, what access is needed, and what ordinary arrangements help the fellowship function should not remain unnecessarily locked inside one person's memory or accounts. The amount of documentation should remain proportionate. A simple fellowship may need only a few conversations. A more developed fellowship may need clearer records and shared access.

## **Let Relationships Become Shared Life**

A Host or leader may naturally become an important relational bridge, especially at the beginning. Over time, however, the fellowship should become more than a collection of people connected only through one person. Participants should be free to know, encourage, pray for, and serve one another directly. Relationships are not assets that belong to a Host, and people are never part of a handover package.

## **Name Changing Seasons Early**

When a significant change is already foreseeable, honesty gives the fellowship room to respond without panic. A graduation, relocation, changing family responsibility, new work, declining health, or another approaching transition can be named before the final moment arrives. Early clarity allows others to ask questions, grow into responsibility, and discern together what the next season may require.

## **Remain Free to Change**

Continuity does not require preserving one person's habits, personality, schedule, leadership style, or preferred form of gathering. What served one season may be changed where the Charter permits and local wisdom suggests something better. A healthy handover passes on responsibility without demanding imitation. The goal is not to reproduce the person who served before. It is to help the fellowship remain faithful, responsible, and free under Christ as circumstances change.

# A Simple Handover

A handover does not need to become a ceremony or a complicated process. Its purpose is simply to help responsibility, practical knowledge, and appropriate access move clearly enough that the fellowship can enter its next season without confusion or unnecessary dependence. Four questions are usually enough to begin.

## Who

Who is ready to carry what has been carried so far? There does not need to be one replacement for one person. Responsibility may be shared among several Participants, and the next arrangement may look different from the previous one. Those affected should have room to discern together rather than treating succession as one person's private appointment of another. What is passed on is responsibility, not ownership.

## How

Does the person or group receiving responsibility understand how the fellowship has ordinarily gathered, while remaining free to shape things differently where the Charter permits and the fellowship's circumstances call for it? A healthy handover communicates what has been learned without requiring imitation. The aim is continuity of purpose and responsible care, not preservation of one personality, schedule, or style.

## Where

Has the practical knowledge needed for continuity been shared? This may include meeting arrangements, communication channels, recurring responsibilities, keys, digital access, financial information, safeguarding responsibilities, or other matters that genuinely need to continue. The level of detail should remain proportionate. A simple fellowship may need little more than an honest conversation. A more developed fellowship may need clearer records or shared access.

## Why

Has the purpose of the fellowship been spoken clearly enough that those who continue understand more than its routines? The deeper inheritance is not merely where to meet or what usually happens. It is the purpose of drawing nearer to Christ and to one another, under Scripture, with responsibility carried as service rather than possession. Some things should not be handed over casually. Private pastoral information, personal confidences, and sensitive matters remain subject to appropriate confidentiality, consent, safeguarding, and law. People themselves are never transferred. Relationships remain free. A handover should make responsibility clearer without turning another person's life, trust, or conscience into something a leader can pass from one person to another.

## **For Fellowships Whose People Are Always Moving**

Some fellowships gather in places where transience is not an exception. It is the ordinary condition. A university community changes as students graduate. A military posting ends. A season abroad concludes. Mission workers return or move elsewhere. Families relocate for work. Temporary residents come and go. In such settings, continuity is not a distant question to consider someday. It belongs near the beginning.

A fellowship in a transient setting is usually healthier when change is named openly rather than treated as a disruption that everyone hopes will somehow be avoided. Participants can understand from the beginning that the people present today may not be the people present next year. That knowledge need not make relationships shallow. It can encourage people to love one another fully without pretending that faithful fellowship requires permanent proximity.

Shared responsibility becomes especially important in such places. If one person always gathers the group, communicates every detail, teaches every week, holds every practical access point, and carries nearly every relationship, ordinary movement can become a crisis. Where responsibility is shared early, newer Participants can learn the life of the fellowship before older Participants leave, and continuity becomes less dependent upon one personality.

It may help to speak plainly with newcomers about this rhythm. The people here will change over time. That is normal. Those who are present are invited to participate faithfully in the season they actually have, not to preserve one generation of the fellowship indefinitely. Some will remain longer. Some will carry responsibility for a time. Some will leave and serve Christ elsewhere. No one needs to become indispensable in order for a season of service to matter.

In a transient fellowship, continuity should therefore be understood less as keeping the same people and more as preserving healthy Christian responsibility through changing people. What should endure is not one personality or one social circle, but a fellowship capable of receiving others, sharing responsibility, hearing Scripture, serving one another, and continuing under Christ as its human shape changes.

## **When It's Time to Begin Again, Elsewhere**

Sometimes a changing season does not lead to a handover. A person may leave one place and find that the next faithful step is simply to begin again somewhere else. What was learned in one fellowship can travel without requiring the old fellowship to travel with it.

Beginning again does not necessarily mean starting another Proximity Fellowship. A Christian who moves may join an existing church or Christian community, gather informally with a few believers, begin a new Proximity Fellowship where the Framework would genuinely help, or participate in Christian life in another faithful form. Proximity should never become an obligation that must be reproduced wherever a Participant goes.

Where a new Proximity Fellowship does begin, it need not copy the personality, habits, schedule, or practical form of the fellowship that came before. The same Charter may serve Christians in very different circumstances. A new gathering should be allowed to grow from the people, place, convictions, gifts, and responsibilities actually present there, within the boundaries of the Framework.

Leaving one fellowship is also not necessarily an abandonment of it. The people who remain may continue, change form, share responsibility differently, join another Christian community, or eventually bring that gathering to a close. The person who leaves does not carry ownership away, and the people who remain do not owe permanent allegiance to the person who began or once served among them. Christian relationships may continue freely where those involved desire them to continue.

What can travel most faithfully is simpler than an institution: habits of prayer, attention to Scripture, hospitality, mutual care, shared responsibility, humility about leadership, and the confidence that ordinary Christians can gather under Christ. If those things take root somewhere new, the previous season has borne fruit without needing to be reproduced exactly.

## **When a Fellowship Changes Form or Comes to a Natural End**

Sometimes continuity does not mean preserving the same gathering. A fellowship may reach a point where the form that served one season no longer serves the next. The people may remain in relationship while the gathering changes its rhythm, leadership, location, name, or connection to other Christians. Change of form need not mean loss of faithfulness.

A local fellowship may become part of another church or Christian community. It may continue independently under another name, divide peacefully into other fellowships, or adopt another lawful and responsible form. It may also conclude that its season together has ended. None of these possibilities should automatically be treated as failure merely because the original Proximity gathering no longer continues in the same way.

At the same time, an ending should not be romanticized. Some fellowships end after real mistakes, unresolved conflict, exhaustion, poor judgment, or circumstances that could have been handled better. Christian maturity does not require pretending otherwise. Where there is something to learn, repair, confess, forgive, or carry forward more wisely, a faithful ending can make room for that truth without turning the whole season into shame.

Finishing well may also require ordinary practical care. Participants may need to communicate clearly, settle shared expenses, return property or keys, close accounts or communication channels, transfer or dispose of records responsibly, and attend to any safeguarding, legal, financial, or pastoral responsibilities that remain. The scale of such closure should match the scale of the fellowship. A simple gathering should not be burdened with unnecessary procedure, but genuine responsibilities should not be abandoned merely because the gathering is ending.

If a fellowship ceases to use the Proximity Framework, it should represent that change honestly and cease presenting itself publicly as a Proximity Fellowship. What matters most is not permanent attachment to a name or structure. If Christians gathered faithfully, grew in maturity, loved one another, learned to carry responsibility, and are now free to continue faithfully under Christ in another form, the Framework has served its purpose. The fellowship is the purpose. The Framework is the means.

# When Framework Stewardship Changes

## A Different Kind of Succession

Succession within ProximityFellowship.org is different from succession within a local fellowship. The public steward cares for the Charter, the published Framework, its principal resources, essential records, administrative access, and the integrity of the Proximity name. That responsibility does not make the steward the pastor, ecclesiastical superior, or owner of local fellowships. Local Christian life remains locally responsible.

## Stewardship, Not Ownership

At the publication of v1.0, the stewardship of ProximityFellowship.org is carried by the initiator, Michael Lin. This is a present responsibility, not permanent personal authority. A future transition should therefore be understood as the transfer or sharing of stewardship, never the transfer of ownership. No steward inherits possession of the Framework, the local fellowships, or the Christians who use it.

## What Continuity Should Preserve

A change of steward should preserve the Charter then in force, public access to the Framework, the decentralized character of local fellowships, the dignity and freedom of Participants, and the distinction between Framework stewardship and ecclesiastical government. A successor may bring different gifts, experience, methods, and judgment. Continuity does not require reproducing the personality or working style of an earlier steward.

## Prepare Before a Crisis

Reasonable continuity should be prepared before an unexpected absence makes preparation urgent. Essential records, administrative access, publication files, contact information, and other genuinely necessary knowledge should not remain so concentrated in one person that the Framework becomes inaccessible when that person cannot serve. The arrangements should remain proportionate to the actual work. The purpose is responsible continuity, not administrative accumulation.

## Shared, Transferred, or Concluded

Stewardship may eventually be shared among several people, transferred to another person or group, reorganized, or concluded if the Framework itself no longer serves a useful purpose. No particular structure is sacred merely because it came first. Any future arrangement remains accountable to the Charter and should make Proximity less dependent upon one personality rather than more dependent upon one.

## No Steward Is Indispensable

A faithful steward should be able to serve deeply without becoming necessary forever. If Proximity becomes clearer, healthier, more accountable, and more capable of continuing when a particular steward steps aside, that should be welcomed as maturity rather than treated as loss. Christ is the Head. Scripture is the norm. No human being is indispensable.

## A Closing Word

The deepest continuity was never the indefinite survival of one gathering, one leader, one name, or one form. Christian fellowship belongs to Christ, and every human arrangement that serves it remains temporary beside Him. A fellowship may continue for many years. It may change leadership, multiply, join another Christian community, take another form, or conclude after a single season. Its faithfulness is not measured only by how long it remains recognizable.

What matters is that Christians have been helped to gather faithfully, hear Scripture, pray, love one another, carry responsibility, grow in maturity, and become less dependent upon any human personality or structure. What was good may be carried forward. What has completed its purpose may be released. What needs correction may be learned from. No season needs to be preserved merely because it once mattered.

Those who leave should remain free to serve Christ elsewhere without being treated as disloyal. Those who remain should be free to continue without living beneath the shadow of the person who began or previously carried the fellowship. Those who receive responsibility should receive it as service, not possession. And where a fellowship itself comes to an end, gratitude may remain even when the gathering does not.

The same is true of the Proximity Framework. It exists to serve Christian fellowship, not to make Christians permanently dependent upon Proximity. If the Framework helps people draw nearer to Christ and to one another, it has served well. If a local fellowship eventually no longer needs it, that need not be a loss. The fellowship is the purpose. The Framework is the means.

This Guide may be refined as experience brings greater wisdom, but it remains companion guidance beneath The Proximity Fellowship Charter. It cannot amend the Charter or create new Constitutional Requirements by implication. Its purpose is simply to help Christians hold responsibility faithfully, share it generously, hand it on wisely, and release it when the season has changed.

**Christ is the Head.**

**Scripture is the norm.**

**No human being is indispensable.**

This is v1.0 of *The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience*, dated August 31, 2026.

Suggestions, concerns, and thoughtful disagreement may be sent to [info@proximityfellowship.org](mailto:info@proximityfellowship.org).

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# Digital Resources

*Publication links - not part of this publication's text.*

## Read Online

- [Proximity Fellowship Website](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Charter](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Quick Starter](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship: A Guide to Christian Practices](#)
- [The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience](#)

## Downloads

1. **The Proximity Fellowship Charter**  
[EPUB eBook](#) | [Print-ready PDF](#)
2. **The Proximity Fellowship Quick Starter**  
[EPUB eBook](#) | [Print-ready PDF](#)
3. **The Proximity Fellowship: A Guide to Christian Practices**  
[EPUB eBook](#) | [Print-ready PDF](#)
4. **The Proximity Fellowship Seasons of Transience**  
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