

## Case Study

**Church Name: Grace Baptist Church**

**Pastor's Name: Todd Meadows**

**City/Town: Somerset**

What were your motivations in making this transition?

- The biblical precedent for a plurality of elders/pastors. Our desire is to be as closely aligned with biblical ecclesiology as possible and we believe this means having the two offices of elder/pastor and deacon functioning as the New Testament prescribes.
- The church is healthiest when it is led by a plurality of elders/pastors.
- A plurality of elders increases the longevity of ministry for our pastoral team. A plurality of elders/pastors helps share the load and better enables the leadership of the church to shepherd the flock under their care.

What steps did you take in the process?

- Early on we made sure our people knew that all of our pastors were indeed pastors. We did not have anyone serving in a pastoral role that did not meet the biblical qualifications of a pastor in 1 Tim 3:1-7.
- We taught on biblical leadership as we came to appropriate passages of Scripture.
- We taught the deacons on the biblical role of deacons and elders from Scripture. We were careful to teach anchored in Scripture rather than based on pragmatic reasons/concerns.
  - Worked through books with the deacons: *Deacons* by Matt Smethurst and *Understanding Church Leadership* by Mark Dever
- We revised the Constitution and part of this included a clear articulation of being a Congregational church led by elders and served by deacons. In it, one goal was to clearly articulate and make provision for Lay Elders at Grace. We did this prior to moving toward Lay Elders so that we operated under the current framework/guide for the church. Once the church voted to approve the Constitution, which clearly laid out a plurality of elders as the leadership structure within a Congregational Polity, we began calling Lay Elders.
- During the constitution revision process I discussed the biblical basis and need for lay elders. We had open discussion with the church to allow questions to be asked.

What challenges or hurdles did you face?

- Bringing on lay elders changed the dynamic of our pastoral team and the “rhythm” of our meetings. We made an adjustment to our meetings so that we alternate meeting weekly between staff meeting that is primarily planning/logistical and Council of Elders meeting that is primarily shepherding.
- Determining the time expectations of Lay Elders as they serve.

What were the benefits of this transition?

- The growth/multiplication of wisdom among the Council of Elders has been wonderful.
- The church has a clear understanding of who leads the church in making decisions, the biblical role of deacons and elders according to Scripture, and how it carries out congregational authority with elder leadership.
- It is further allowing and empowering our deacons to concentrate on serving/ministry and exercise their giftedness more appropriately.
- We are continually raising up men from within Grace for pastoral roles. By God’s grace, this will allow us in the future to raise up pastors from within rather than seeking a pastor from another church, which we believe is healthiest for the kingdom.