

Focus the Task - Worksheet A

A Sample List of Tangible Issues That Need Addressing

This list was compiled by the GAP Committee early in its process of transitioning to biblical eldership and it is used here with the consent of the Elders of Patterson Park Church, Beavercreek, Ohio. Excerpted from the book, “Elder Governance: Insights Into Making the Transition,” by Daniel Evans and Joseph Godwin, Resource Publications (March 2011), Appendix C. Quotes with permission.

“In chapter 10, ‘Are We There Yet?’ we recommended dividing the overall objective into manageable goals to facilitate progress and success. One of the ways that we accomplished this as a GAP Committee was in the development of a list of all the tangible issues. After defining the objective—a smooth transition from a senior pastor / church board model of church governance to a plural elder led model of church governance—the committee began brainstorming. The purpose was to identify all the various issues that we thought the congregation would want to hear, know, understand, or be convinced of in order to proceed ... The result is what follows below. This list provided a framework from which the committee could begin developing its roadmap. The reader should be warned that he or she needs to develop his or her own ‘Tangible Issues’ list, because a particular church’s personality and culture will dictate much of what needs to be included in a list like this.”

Qualifications of an Elder and Deacon

1. Qualifications for Senior and Associate Pastors as currently stated in the Church’s Constitution—will they need modified and how?
2. Qualifications for Elders with respect to spirituality, experience, and age.
3. Qualifications for Deacons as stated in the constitution.
4. Meaning of “husband of one wife.”
5. Meaning of “having his children under control with all seriousness.”
6. Meaning of “having children who believe.”
7. Meaning of “able to teach.” Does this refer to public or private teaching ability? What level of doctrinal knowledge is required of an elder?

Job Descriptions and Functions of Elder and Deacon

1. What are the job descriptions/roles for the vocational pastors?
2. What are the job descriptions/roles for the non-vocational elders?
3. What are the job descriptions/roles for the deacons?
4. Elder roles and process for dealing with false or inaccurate teaching.
5. Terms limits for deacons and elders.
6. Role of non-vocational elders in congregational teaching and preaching.
7. Process of evaluation of vocational elders, non-vocational elders, non-elder pastors, and deacons.
8. Financial remuneration for elders.
9. Frequency of meetings of the elder council.
10. Will meetings for deacons be required, and if so, at what frequency?

11. Development of pastor/elder/deacon ministry teams.
12. Formal deacons versus informal deacons (informal are small group leaders, trustees, finance committee, missions committee, deaconesses, etc).

Process of Appointment of Elders and Deacons

1. Application process for leadership candidates.
2. Congregation's role in determining qualifications of leaders.
3. Formal role of congregation in selecting elders and deacons.
4. Doctrinal evaluation, examination and ordination of elder candidates.
5. Elder doctrinal statement requirements.
6. Selection process for the initial group of elders and timing.
7. Normal selection process for elders and deacons subsequent to the initial cadre.

Church Governance Structure

1. Do all pastors need to be on the leadership team?
2. Do all elders need to be on leadership (governing) team?
3. Can the council of elders be larger than a governing elder team?
4. Role of elders in church discipline.
5. Relation of "Senior Pastor" to elder council.
6. Role of associate pastors (vocational elders) on elder team.
7. Number of elders/pastors on leadership team.
8. Term limits for elders and deacons.
9. Organization and connectivity between pastors, elders, deacons, and congregation for purposes of shepherding.
10. Line of accountability for elders, deacons, and congregation.

Current Church Structural Issues

1. Role of congregation in decision making.
2. Process of discipline of pastors and elders (meaning of "rebuke those who sin in the presence of all so the rest may be fearful of sinning").
3. Deaconesses or deacons' wives?
4. Use of existing church structures (i.e., Sunday school, small groups, etc.) for the purpose of shepherding.
5. Qualifications for committee members.
6. Nature and process for necessary changes to church constitution.

Miscellaneous

1. Potential conflicts of interest for leadership teams (i.e., process for determination of salaries, spouses working on staff, etc.).
2. Issues/problems/advantages of co-teaching pastors.
3. Communication to the congregation of GAP team activities (timing, frequency, and venue).