

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions about becoming an independent church

Why are we leaving the EPC?

Our elders began by asking this question: How does our relationship with the EPC impact our ability to fulfill God's calling for Peace Church? In short, the elders came to several conclusions about our relationship with the EPC:

- 1) Our association with the EPC has slowed our ability to integrate new pastors into our church.
- 2) Our association with the EPC has resulted in theological resistance for our pastors.
- 3) Our association with the EPC has not resulted in a positive return on our investment. As a result of their review process, along with much prayer and consideration, our elders ultimately concluded that Peace Church would be best enabled to fulfill our God-given mission by becoming an independent church.

Why are we becoming independent rather than joining another denomination?

Five years ago, Peace Church departed from another denomination, the Reformed Church in America (RCA). At that time, many members and leaders wondered - Why don't we just become an independent, non-denominational church? There were a few reasons, but not least was the fact that the RCA required us to transfer into another denomination in order to retain ownership of our property.

Recently, an evangelical leader noted that denominations have become only increasingly less functional since the 1960s. As we look around us, we notice that growth and vitality seems to be the exception to the rule in denominational churches, while being much more common in non-denominational churches.

Having experienced ministry in both the RCA and the EPC, we believe the best way to pursue our God-given mission in the future is to become an independent church.

Are any of the beliefs of Peace Church changing?

We would like to be very clear - while our association is changing, our beliefs are not changing. We will continue to be a gospel-preaching, Bible-believing church. We want to be faithful to Scripture, make disciples who love and follow God's Word, and help lost

people meet Jesus. We will continue to hold beliefs that are taught in Scripture despite rising resistance in the world around us, particularly on tough issues like gender¹ and sexuality.²

While the Bible alone is our ultimate authority for life and faith, our church has always used creeds and confessions as resources to help us explain and teach the truths of Scripture. When Peace Church entered the EPC five years ago, we adopted the Westminster Confession and Catechisms as our creeds. However, Peace Church had used the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort for the 50 years prior. Following the congregational vote, our elders will consider which of these sets of creeds best help Peace Church explain and teach the truths of Scripture. They are excellent, faithful, and helpful resources. However, now is a great time for our elders to revisit these documents to decide which will be most helpful moving forward.

What will our leadership structure be like as an independent church?

Peace Church will continue to be an elder-led church. Under God, our elder board is the highest level of authority in our church. Our Lead Pastor processes vision and important decisions with these brothers and directs our staff to fulfill the vision set by our elder board.

Without a denomination, what kind of accountability will our leaders have?

Leaders need accountability and support. While denominations are one man-made way to provide those things, we have found that the fellowship of local elders is the best form of accountability and support for church leaders. Our pastors and elders are a close-knit group who both encourage and challenge each other to faithfulness and godliness.

Beyond our own church, we will also continue to maintain good relationships with other churches and church leaders through various networks and conferences.

Will our church bylaws be changing?

Our bylaws are a legal document describing who we are as a church and how our authority structure is organized. Currently, our bylaws state that we are part of the EPC and also contain lots of language from the EPC.

Following the congregational vote, the elders will enter a process of reviewing and revising our bylaws. While some changes will need to be made because we are now an independent church, we would like to reiterate that the main things of Peace Church are not changing - we will continue to be a gospel-preaching, bible-believing, elder-led church.

¹ Peace Church holds the position known as complementarianism. Complementarians believe God created men and women equal in value, but distinct in role. God has given both men and women extraordinary gifts for ministry but has called men into unique roles of Christ-like leadership in the home and in the church while calling women into unique roles of Christ-like submission.

² Peace Church believes that God designed marriage to be between one man and one woman. Homosexual behavior is a sin. However, we love all those who struggle with sin and invite them to trust Jesus, receive grace and live a life of obedience to Him.

How will this affect our current pastors?

All of our current pastors were thoroughly evaluated and heartily affirmed by our elders when they were hired. Upon becoming an independent church, these pastors will be installed at Peace Church and will continue to be recognized as pastors.

What happens if some day we need to find a new pastor?

Of our three pastors most recently hired, none of those pastors came from within the EPC, nor were any EPC pastors among the top candidates for those positions. In years past, if a church needed a pastor, they typically looked within their own denomination. Often, pastors would spend their entire career within a single denomination. However, this is becoming much less the norm.

If Peace Church is in need of a pastor, we will search across denominational lines to find the best candidate. Many agencies exist to help churches in these sorts of situations.

Independence also enables Peace Church to train and ordain new pastors using our own rigorous standards. This will help us to fulfill our calling to multiply leaders and congregations.

How will this affect our ability to support global missions?

None of our current mission partners are denominational missionaries. We support each of them because of their individual commitment to the gospel and the mission to make disciples. We will continue to support them and other such missionaries.

How will this affect our ability to plant churches?

Just as we are currently experiencing, we believe that church planting at Peace Church will largely happen by sending out leaders from within our own church. Independence actually increases our ability to train up and send out ministry leaders to preach the gospel.