

# What does it mean to be on the consistory of City Church Long Beach?



## How We Select Leaders:

According to their character, competence, calling, capacity, and fit, gladly welcoming people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation into all aspects of church life and leadership.

We're looking for church leaders who:

- support the vision & vision theology of City Church of Long Beach, as described here: <https://www.citychurchlongbeach.org/about>
- actively live out the mission and core values of City Church as described in the attached document.
- ideally, have taken City Church's two core development seminars: (1) shapes for the spiritual journey, & (2) leadership tools.

## Our Polity:

Three mutually accountable, interdependent offices make up our church leadership, known as the consistory. Our expression of these traditional offices is shaped by our particular pastoral context and a centered set theological perspective.\*

In our tradition... <i>(formal language)</i>	In our pastoral context... <i>(our language)</i>
<p><b>Elders</b> maintain order, exercise Christian discipline, and assist in pastoral care. They are responsible for the spiritual life of the congregation. They receive individuals into the membership of a church and plan and participate in the observance of the sacraments.</p>	<p><b>Developers</b> provide support structures to sustain organic development of community and expressions of faith; model and build a transformative community culture of care and challenge, which leads over time toward wholeness; and help set that open table, welcoming all whose hearts are turning toward Jesus.</p>
<p><b>Deacons</b> lead the church in the work of mercy, justice, and stewardship of our resources.</p>	<p><b>Connectors</b> model and encourage us all to be tangibly good neighbors; facilitate partnerships that work toward kingdom wholeness; and alongside our business manager and accountant, oversee the church's finances and resources so that we act with Christ-like integrity, generosity and hospitality.</p>

**Ministers** serve as pastors and teachers of the congregation. They are called by God to preach the Word of God, administer the sacraments (communion and baptism), and care for the members of the congregation, building up and equipping the church for its ministry in the world. They are considered part of the elder board.

**Pastors** literally & figuratively set an open table, where all whose hearts are turning toward Jesus (the literal meaning of repentance) are welcome; encourage those gathered to take the next step on their spiritual journey, over and over again, through the ministers' own wholehearted attempts to follow Jesus and through Jesus-centered conversation and teaching from Scripture; and invite those gathered to experience "unforced rhythms of grace" as they join in the life and work of the community.

- Visit <https://www.rca.org/resources/resources-elders> for the many online resources explaining the ministry of elders and/or <https://www.rca.org/resources/resources-deacons> for deacon resources.

#### **When the Consistory Gathers:**

- Its primary work is communal spiritual discernment, as described in Ruth Haley Barton's *Pursuing God's Will Together*, to set bigger-picture policies and plans for the church to move toward the vision God has given us. This includes setting a yearly budget and broad oversight of the church's finances.
- The lead pastor team, in rotation, serves as consistory president and facilitates the monthly meetings; an elder serves as vice-president.
- Meetings will last approximately 2.5 hours so that we can spend time connecting over food, in scripture, in prayer, and in conversation.
- We are reviewing how long we're asking developers and connectors to serve in their roles; it's currently in the bylaws as a three year period.

#### **Accountability relationships:\*\***

- As they guide the day-to-day outworkings of the church, the lead pastor team is held accountable by the consistory to the bigger-picture policies and plans set by the consistory. This accountability includes the decision to call a pastor or terminate the pastoral relationship (in consultation with the classis\*\*).
- The lead pastor team holds other staff and volunteers accountable to those bigger-picture policies and plans and holds the final authority regarding hiring and firing of employees.

\* For a refresher on centered v. bounded set theology, try <http://therestorationinstitute.com/is-jesus-the-center-or-boundary-of-your-theology/>.

**\*\* What about our denominational connections?**

- A consistory is governed by its classis. A classis gathers minister and elder representatives from a group of congregations, usually according to their geographical proximity. Each classis supervises the congregations and ministers within its bounds. It exercises judicial power over the decisions of individual consistories; receives new congregations into the denomination; ordains, installs, and dismisses ministers; and oversees students of theology. We are part of the Classis of the City (or City Classis) in the Reformed Church in America (RCA). City Classis is a non-geographically bound, mission-centered body.
- The regional synod is the next assembly in the RCA. There are currently eight regional synods in the U.S. and Canada. Each oversees the interests and concerns of the classes within its bounds and creates programs to further the work of the gospel and the denomination in its region. City Classis is part of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics.
- The General Synod is the highest assembly and governing body in the RCA. Its membership is made up of minister and elder representatives from each classis and regional synod. In its annual meeting, the General Synod sets the direction and tone for denominational ministry. It has authority in all matters relating to denominational program and policy. It also has general responsibility over all lower assemblies (regional synods, classes, and consistories). Substantive proposals require ratification by the classes.
- Links
  - Book of Church Order (BCO): <https://www.rca.org/bco>  
The *Book of Church Order* contains the Government, the Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures, the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synods, and the Formularies.
  - Creeds and Confessions: <https://www.rca.org/rca-basics/creeds-and-confessions>
    - The Apostles' Creed
    - The Nicene Creed
    - The Athanasian Creed
  - - The Heidelberg Catechism
    - The Belgic Confession
    - The Canons of Dort
    - The Confession of Belhar