

# Commissioned Co-Laborers

## **Definition:**

Co-laborers are commissioned women who participate in the work God is doing through the Session and Diaconate. They work in a collaborative relationship with our elders and deacons to join in the shepherding and diaconal work of the church.

## **Various Functions:**

At an interpersonal level, co-laborers serve the church by:

- **Caring:** Co-laborers will be supported by elders as they serve on an elder-led care team that intentionally and prayerfully looks after the spiritual and physical needs of church members.<sup>1</sup> In addition to contributing to the overall work of the team, Co-laborers have a unique focus on encouraging women with biblical counsel, a godly perspective, and accountability. Co-laborers also serve as an advocate for women who need to interface with the Session or Diaconate.
- **Developing:** Co-laborers play an important role in raising up future leaders. Through organic mentoring relationships and by participating in existing church programs like the Discipleship Institute, co-laborers can equip and encourage fellow church members in the development and deployment of gifts.

At an organizational level, co-laborers serve the church by:

- **Advising:** Co-laborers meet regularly with the Session and Diaconate to provide input and perspective in matters pertaining to the work of these boards.
- **Participating:** various committees and task-forces facilitate the work of the Session and Diaconate. Co-laborers will be included on these teams as a co-laborer's particular gifts are able to contribute to the needs at hand, whether those needs be organizational, strategic, communicational, etc.

## **Process: Becoming a Co-laborer**

Co-laborers are nominated by the congregation. They then enter a process of training and mutual-discernment. After being examined by the session, those found qualified will stand for election. Those elected are then commissioned by the Session to the work.

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<sup>1</sup> On additional care-team responsibilities and roles, see forthcoming care-team document.

**Tenure and Structure:**

Co-laborers are elected to 2 year terms, and can serve up to 3 terms consecutively. They shall have a chair, who is internally elected each year to a one year term. The chair provides this ministry with a public face, facilitates ad hoc, collective meetings as needed, and plays a special role in providing soul care to fellow co-laborers. For communication purposes, it is also advisable that the chair or another member serve as a staff liaison.

At the beginning of a term, a co-laborer will consult with the Session to decide whether she will serve in a session or diaconal support role. Further specification of roles and responsibilities will be discerned and supported from within those respective boards. Those serving on elder-led care teams come from either role.

Co-laborers will work in close collaboration with the elders and deacons. Because we desire to pursue the mission of Christ in unity, our goal is for our co-laborers' work to be fully integrated into the work of the Session and Diaconate (as opposed to existing as a parallel analogue). Likewise, while our co-laborers will be an invaluable resource to the staff, they do not exist as an appendix to or arm of the staff. Thus our co-laborers do not function as a programming board for women's ministry. As with all ministries of the church, the work of our co-laborers is under the authority of the Session.

**Qualifications: Who may serve as a Co-Laborer**

**Calling:** A nominee should possess both an inward and outward call to the work. The inward call is manifest by a nominee's own desire to serve the church, as well as a belief that she has the gifts necessary to serve in the position. The outward call comes as others in our community recognize a nominee as possessing the gifts and graces necessary for the task.

**Character:** Though no leader can expect to be perfect, as with elders and deacons, co-laborers should love and live into the gospel. They must be mature followers of Christ whose lives reflect a knowledge of how deeply loved they are, and whose lives generally model the character of Christ and display the Fruit of the Spirit (see Rom 16:1, 3; 1 Tim 3:8–13, 5:9–10; Gal 5:22-26).

**Compatibility:** Nominees should wholeheartedly embrace the gospel-centered vision and ministry philosophy of Christ Presbyterian Church. This should already be evident through membership, regular worship, and joyful church-life participation, sacrificial giving (tithing as a minimum guideline), and service to the congregation.

**Comprehension and Conviction:** Co-laborers need to understand and accept CPC's convictions about theology, worship, sacraments, and church government. This involves commitment to the centrality of Christ and his work, the Bible's authority, Presbyterian Church government, and to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (Co-laborers must be in agreement with the key tenets of our theological system and form of government. The session is open to variations on minor issues. Variations will be judged on a case by case basis).