

HARBOR CITY SERVANT LEADERS

Dear Harbor City Church,

We are getting closer to election Sunday on April 30th! Below, please find a reminder overview of the rest of the process to elect and then ordain and install these new leaders in our church.

Overview and Calendar

Written Testimonies

Elder

David Rhoads

Elder Assistants

Beth Buckner

Michele Corbett

Kim Elliott

Jackie Vance

Deacon

Joel Baumgartner

Deacon Assistants

Marian Donahue

Tom Graham

Rebecca Lew

Overview and Calendar

Elections for new Elders, Elder Assistants, Deacons, & Deacon Assistants will be Sunday, 4/30.

These men and women have gone through five months of training in theology and ministry. They have passed written and oral exams covering the subjects of Bible, the Westminster Confession of Faith, our Book of Church Order, as well as ministry experience.

We'll have a congregational meeting and vote on Sunday, April 30th, following our Sunday service. All are welcome to attend the meeting, only people who have been received as members of Harbor City Church are eligible to vote. On Sunday, May 7th, we'll have a special service to officially install our Elders and Deacons, and Appoint our Elder Assistants and Deacon Assistants. Here is the list of people we will vote on:

Elder: David Rhoads

Elder Assistant: Beth Buckner, Michele Corbett, Kim Elliott, Jackie Vance

Deacon: Joel Baumgartner

Deacon Assistant: Marian Donahue, Coni Guerra, Rebecca Lew, Tom Graham

On Election Sunday (4/30), you will be able to vote for any and all nominees that you would like to have serving in these roles. You may vote for multiple nominees in each role. Everyone who receives more yes votes than no votes will be elected. It is possible that every person nominated will be elected to the roles for which they've been nominated.

We are so excited about these men and women! They are committed to Jesus and His church. They are eager to lead and serve in these roles.

If you can't remember the specifics of what is required of these roles, [please revisit the sermon series we preached through last year](#) as we launched this process. We expect all of our leaders to embody our [church's five values](#). Here's a brief overview of the roles:

Elders are ordained to Shepherd and Oversee the health of the church. Oversight involves assessing and promoting the health of our church. Shepherding means making sure that everyone in our church is being cared for.

Deacons are ordained to Shepherd and Serve the needs of the church. Shepherding means caring for people. Serving means meeting the physical needs of people and caring for the church's facilities.

Elder and Deacon Assistants are servant leaders who will strengthen the ministry of the Elders and Deacons, providing wisdom, perspective, energy, and effort to ensure that all of our needs are understood and met through the ministry of our church.

Below are written testimonies of each of these leaders. [Here is a link to a video version of each person's testimony](#). In a growing church our size, it's common that you may be voting on people that you do not know personally. We provide these video and written testimonies so that you may get to know them a little better.

If you have any questions, please contact me or one of the elders. And please keep praying for the growing leadership of our church.

Pastor Steven Cooper

DAVID RHOADS—Nominated for Elder

1. When and how did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jesus, please describe how your faith has matured and become more personal as you've grown up.

I was raised in a Christian home and went to Christian school for the majority of my schooling. I was 12 years old when I decided to accept my parents' faith as my own and was baptized at that time. During my teenage years I lived a double life and had one foot in the world and one foot in church. This type of life led me to walk away from church altogether after High School until I was 25 years old. I never walked away from my faith but filled my life with things that would not please God. When I was 25 years old I began to go back to church because the whole time I felt convicted that I needed community and a close relationship with my Savior. Upon entering church again, I was asked to lead the youth group. I told the leaders that asked me that this was not a good idea but they insisted. Six months later God had radically changed my life through these youth. I fell in love with Jesus and dedicated the next 12 years to vocational ministry in churches or Christian schools. Since then my faith has been built up through active participation in Church ministry, study, prayer and community.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

I love fact that God redeems the time that I wasted (and still sometimes waste). The Gospel is true for me because I have seen it transform my life, and have seen where He has brought me from. When the Gospel is truly understood and lived out, it changes everything about life. My work, home, private life, marriage, school, etc... is lived through the lens of this Truth. This Truth is still working on my heart, and can and will work on others' hearts as well.

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

I came to Harbor through an invitation from Sarah Jane (she was at Scott Memorial when I was a pastor there). I had just moved back to California and was looking for a new church to be a part of. This was 7 years ago. God has been working on me through my time at Harbor. I came to harbor hurt from a previous church I worked at, and divorced from my former wife. It took a while to settle in and just worship but God healed me through the community at Harbor. Since then He has led me into ministry in small groups, operations, hospitality, and now Vision Pathways. I have seen tremendous growth in myself during my time here and am excited to see what God has for my future.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

I love the tight knit community that truly cares for one another. This is a church that people can be real without fear of people distancing themselves from you. They want to pray for you and invest in your life. It is the most welcoming church I have been to in a long time.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

I am excited to continue my ministry here at Harbor in Vision Pathways and shepherding whovever God puts in my path. I feel that the role of Elder is something I have done for a long time in my various ministries and I am now excited to potentially be able to do this officially. I enjoy helping and leading as God leads me.

BETH BUCKNER—Nominated for Elder Assistant

1. How did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jeuss, describe how your faith has matured and become personal as you've grown up. (Make this BRIEF!!)

As a daughter of a minister, I became a Christian when I was 11 years old in a performance doctrine that also taught that you lost your salvation. I gave up on the effort of trying to be good enough so that I wouldn't lose my salvation and rebelled against God and church. After great amount of difficulty in my life, God drew me back into church through some friends of mine and after I married we started attending a PCA church where I learned that Salvation occurred through Christ drawing me to him, that he regenerated my heart and chose me as his daughter, that there is nothing dependent on me to gain or lose my salvation.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

God has shown me great examples of his Extravagant Grace through the years by his transforming my life and renewing me daily. I know that the GAP is, and will always be there, but, that Christ has totally closed that Gap and makes me whole and right just as if I have never sinned and just as if I have done everything right. Because of this, I love him more and desire to be what he has made me to be as I am created in His Likeness and through his Spirit in me he gives me power and ability to be Light and Life to show and share him with others.

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

Googled PCA Churches in Downtown San Diego" the first weekend we moved here with the Navy.

God has used Steven's teaching to drill down into the truths of the gospel with his great knack for teaching in very understandable ways. I especially love the teaching of the Fullness of the Gospel Tree Diagram of Christ's Work For Us, In Us and Through Us. It has helped me visually see and retain rich truths of the gospel of What Christ has Done For me in Justification and Adoption that I could never do, What he has done IN me through him transforming me and making me grow and lastly What Christ is Doing Through me by empowering me to serve others in showing and sharing the gospel.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

I love the comfortable and welcoming atmosphere of HCC that displays authenticity and realness. I really like that Pastor Steven is approachable and makes you feel heard as well as cared for.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

I guess what excites me about being nominated as an Elder Assistant is that I know it's not me that is performing a role - It is Christ in me - my True Hope and Glory! I know that He uses broken vessels for his Glory and our Good.

MICHELE CORBETT—Nominated for Elder Assistant

1. How did you become a Christian or own your faith personally? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jesus, describe how your faith has matured and become personal as you've grown up.

I grew up attending a United Methodist church that did not preach the Gospel so while I was very active in Sunday school and youth group, I did not have a true faith. When I was 12, I visited my aunt and uncle in Escondido and my uncle shared the Gospel. It just made sense and I made a commitment right then and there.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

After coming to Harbor, I realized that I had a truncated view of the Gospel. For example, I had always had a passion for faith and work topics, but my church experiences were more geared toward using our talents and money to serve the church. The doors blew off the hinges when I attended Harbor – they announced the beginning of a faith and work ministry on my second visit and I was hooked! I was also exposed to God's view for the city now and not yet. This helped me integrate my faith with my whole life. Being able to connect life outside of church with the Gospel has given me a more full relationship with God. I don't have to bifurcate my life any longer. I have also grown in my heart connection to God – but still lean toward the intellectual side (try as I might!).

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

I came to Harbor after moving to South Park and asking around for churches that had a "social justice bent." I had previously been very involved at Shadow Mountain. Moving into a more urban area, I wanted to find a church closer to home and more focused on the issues in the city. 2 people told me about Harbor – one was Kurt Klassen.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

I love that we are multi-generational and that the single people don't get relegated to the side as misfits just waiting to be part of the core married groups. I love Steven's heart and leadership. I love that we are in the city. I love the faith and work connections. I love the mercy aspects. I love that there are strong women of all ages in the church.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

I have always had gifts leaning toward leadership and administration which, as a woman, makes it hard for some churches to know what to do with me. So I have had to shut down a part of my brain to exist at some churches or find some work-around to fill a fake leadership role. I am excited about the opportunity to use my gifts.



KIM ELLIOTT—Nominated for Elder Assistant

1. When and how did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jesus, please describe how your faith has matured and become more personal as you've grown up.

I was raised in the Methodist faith, attended church with my family as a child and teenager. My family participated in church activities and were involved in church leadership. We said grace at dinner, prayers before bed and sang the old hymns. However, there was not a lot of discussion about having a personal relationship with Christ and I did not learn much theology. It wasn't until sometime after college that I began to yearn for more. I attended to various churches in San Diego, and joined different women's studies over the years.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

What I love most about the Gospel is that I am God's adopted daughter. I try to walk in the confidence that I am His, that I am accepted and complete and loved for who I am because of what Jesus did for me on the cross. As my faith has grown my life is less about striving and I am more content. I no longer fight a battle that has already been won for me.

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

I joined a Christian Professional Women's fellowship group, which is where I met Denise Yohn in a bible study. She told me about her church where she was the director of Faith and Work ministry. That appealed to me. I had struggled finding a church where I felt like I fit in. Traditional churches are not always welcoming to single professional women. After some time I knew Harbor was my home.

The majority of my spiritual growth has occurred during my time at Harbor. I have a difficult time describing it, but my life is just so much richer. I am more content, strive less, have less anxiety and more peace. I attribute this to the work of the Holy Spirit in me through the word and relationships with other Christians. I didn't understand how important it was to live in community. Through community, I have been able to understand my sin and repent. I know without a doubt now that I am a daughter of Christ and live confidently in that love.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

I love many things about Harbor. To name a few....

- The genuine love between our people....it is real and palpable to others
- The amazing preaching which has taught me so much
- The blend of old, young, single, married, varied faith backgrounds....there is such acceptance.
- The church's personal acceptance of me, acknowledgement of my gifts and the opportunities I have been given to use those gifts for the church.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

I am excited about my role as assistant elder because...

- It is a way to give back to the church that has given so much to me
- I am excited about our mission and want to be part of making that happen
- I feel God has given me a specific calling...."to tend to the hearts of God's precious and priceless daughters." To that end, I am honored to be called to leadership and hope that I can represent the interest and needs of women in our church.

JACKIE VANCE—Nominated for Elder Assistant

1. How did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jesus, describe how your faith has matured and become personal as you've grown up.

I remember first loving Jesus in the first grade. I will never forget the intensity of that love, but for most of my life I couldn't tell you what event caused me to love him. I was too young to read the Bible, and no one taught me what I knew about Jesus. Just a few years ago I remembered the life-size, graphic crucifix that had shown little Jackie what Jesus had done for her. In his grace, Jesus left me with only the memory of his love. The horror behind his love was hidden until just the right time. The Spirit brought it to mind as I told the gospel to the basketball players I coached. My story was exactly what one of my fellow coaches needed to believe Jesus would forgive him too.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

It's true! What Jesus did for little Jackie he did for anyone who wants forgiveness and love.

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

John Jackson coached my husband in college. Back then John was the least likely candidate for Christianity. When John and Paul invited Katie and me to a golf banquet in 2003, I was impressed by their conversion story and their transparent, authentic faith, but I thought any church that met in a movie theater had to be a cult. Within a year, we were drinking the gospel Kool-Ade. The gospel began to change me. God gave me a heart and the gift of mercy. He showed me the dark and broken people and places of our city and helped me understand they were the reflection of me. I was overwhelmed with gratitude for his mercy and grace. Now my passion is to love and forgive our city and its people the way Jesus loved and forgave little Jackie.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

Jesus is here! He saved little Jackie at the foot of the cross a long time ago. That's a big deal, but he is doing so much more in me and through me today. At Harbor City Church I am part of our Father's family business. My job is to infuse the culture of San Diego with the culture of heaven. I know that my brothers and sisters have my back and pray continually for me, each other, and the welfare of our city. Anyone who needs comfort and joy will find it here in our safe and welcoming home.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

Using my gifts and experience to encourage our elders. Under their supervision, meeting the needs of our members, keeping them safe, and helping them grow. Contributing to the peace and purity of the church. Advancing the reign and rule of Jesus in our families, workplaces, and city.

JOEL BAUMGARTNER—Nominated for Deacon

1. How did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jesus, describe how your faith has matured and become personal as you've grown up. (Make this BRIEF!!)

I grew up in a Christian home, with Christian parents, going to church, yet I didn't formally decide to follow Christ until I was a senior in high school. As a child, I learned the importance of moral living and Christian service, but I also became self-righteous. In my early college years, I was involved in a close-knit but partially sectarian church. I learned about the importance of sacrifice to follow Christ, the worldwide mission of the church, and submitting to other believers with diverse convictions; but I also became self-condemning, emphasizing sacrifice over relationship with Christ, and acted out of guilt rather than love. In my mid-20s - through relationships with believers struggling with mental illness, homelessness, and homosexuality - I learned about grace, leading to a greater understanding of the gift of salvation, and the unorthodoxy and freedom of Christ. As I entered medical school and further medical training, I learned to love God with all my mind – grappling with theological questions, studying philosophical/bioethical issues, and deeper study of the Scriptures. The next chapter involved meeting Christina, learning to be a husband and father, and starting my vocation as a surgical oncologist, as we moved to San Diego. Through these experiences, I've begun to learn about missional living, viewing my job as a vocation to implement my calling as a Christian, and practicing a living spiritual theology rather than an abstract doctrine; all as I battle against careerism and the urgency of the present.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

I love the fact that the gospel takes seriously the tragedy and rebellion of sin – it doesn't minimize evil or the Fall. I can understand how much my sin costs by remembering Christ's suffering. I also love that the gospel shows that God so loved the world. In saving, renewing, and teaching us through Christ, there is no doubt that God is for us. I love the fact that the gospel is personal: I am so broken that Jesus had to die for me, but I am also so loved that Jesus had to die for me. I love that the gospel is compelling, stereotype-breaking, and provides a framework and understanding of the world.

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

I initially heard about HCC from my previous pastor in Pittsburgh, where we were living prior to moving to San Diego. My relationship with God has grown since being part of HCC by being challenged in sermons, through personal relationships, and in life group to better understand the Scriptures, further my knowledge of God, turn from sin, and to love others, and live missionally. Being nominated for Deacon has itself caused me to further study and search the Scriptures and deepen my relationship with God.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

I love that HCC is gospel-centered, city-positive, and vocation-redemptive. These are the attributes that I see in Scripture as hallmarks of a vibrant church, and are evident in HCC. They are what first attracted me to HCC, and are what keep me involved. Being encouraged to devote my life and vocation to renew the city for glory of God, has been a particularly motivating message that is unique to HCC among other churches I have attended, and it is what stimulates me to be further involved in my church. I also love that HCC addresses challenging issues in the church and Scripture; including past sins of the church, doubt, the role of women in the church, homosexuality, etc.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

My initial response to being nominated for Deacon was trepidation rather than excitement. My natural desire is to continue as a spectator in church, but my conviction has been to invest myself more. I have been convicted by the parable of the talents, where those servants who risked their gifts/investments for a return were rewarded. I sense that God often desires to use our gifts to get a return, even if it seems "risky" to us. My temperament is geared more toward task-oriented and service positions, which may be best-suited for the deacon position. I am excited to see how HCC can better serve the congregation, the volunteers, and the surrounding community.

MARIAN DONAHUE—Nominated for Deacon Assistant

1. How did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jeuss, describe how your faith has matured and become personal as you've grown up.

I've had a relationship with Jesus since I was 6 years old. I grew up in a very traditional church that was very works oriented and perfectionistic, so I believed performance was key to receiving God's love. In 1998, I went to a Michael Card concert at the Spreckles Theatre. There I met Pastor John Tinnin and his wife Paula. They invited me to attend their Church (a PCA Church). It was there I first heard the reformed Gospel. It was like meeting Jesus for the first time! I learned my best performance was dirty rags before God and that I needed to believe and receive God's love! It was the beginning of a new relationship with God.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

I love that the Gospel offers the hope of eternal life, and the reality of Christ with me in this life! I love that the word is Jesus with me and provides perfect truth and grace for the challenges of life! I love that Gods love never fails and never runs out!

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

When my first PCA church closed, I began visiting all of the Harbor Churches. In 2011 I joined Harbor Uptown. My life simultaneously changed and Harbor became my community and truly my family. Through the study of the Gospels, the love of the Pastor and the members, I have grown through difficult circumstances and live a life filled love and hope.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

HCC is. Body of believers who confess Jesus as Lord and who sincerely believe and grow in surrender, no matter how imperfectly, to God's will in each of our lives. I've never known a body who is so sincere.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

The role of Deacon Assistant is exciting to me b/c it is a committed form of service to our church body. I look forward to serving our church with the Deacons and other Assistants because service is a practical way to love my HCC community.

TOM GRAHAM—Nominated for Deacon Assistant

1. How did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jesus, describe how your faith has matured and become personal as you've grown up.

I grew up mostly in Phoenix Arizona got to travel the country when I was younger with my father's business being a professional wrestler some parts of the world England India Japan and Australia which was unusual . My grandma was deeply spiritual woman who raised me took me to church three times a week Sunday morning church and Bible study Sunday night Bible study in church and Wednesday night dinner Bible study and church, I was still not a Christian until I was of age 17. A girl named Cindy Kelly who worked has a missionary and for campus Crusade for Christ led me to receive Christ on my living room couch. And I was extremely involved in church in the coming weeks at North Phoenix Baptist Church where I'd grown up in attended there for seven years, felt the call for the ministry and called to preach, had a license from my church to preach.

I attended Grand Canyon University. Due to some learning disabilities I never graduated Grand Canyon but did attend for 3 1/2 years was involved in many ministerial programs inner-city mission programs summer mission programs and preaching assignments. Went to broadcast school for one year got a job on air radio at KHEP in Phoenix for three years Christian radio station . Did public service announcements news weather segues and commercials . By 1991 I had decided to make some changes my life moved to San Diego it's been very involved in several churches here in 2011 moved back to Phoenix for year then return to San Diego that's how I've come to harbor city church

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

What I love most about the gospel is redemption.

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

I came to harbor church because I had a friend that went there one time. My relationship with God goes year by year.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

What I love about harbor church is the people.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

What excites me is the opportunity to help people serve in the kingdom.

REBECCA LEW—Nominated for Deacon Assistant

1. How did you become a Christian? If you grew up in the church and have always believed in Jeuss, describe how your faith has matured and become personal as you've grown up.

I grew up in a Christian home and I don't remember a time that I didn't believe in God. I accepted Jesus as my Savior at a very young age, and ever since then I've been learning what that means and how it relates to my daily life. I was a typical oldest child who was eager to please and to walk the straight and narrow path. Nevertheless, life has brought many circumstances that have challenged my faith in God.

A few years ago, when I was at the end of a long challenging season, I took a spiritual formation class at our church in Austin. One day the instructor talked about how God uses brokenness to cultivate humility in us. She talked about two kinds of brokenness. One is being broken like a horse, which has to do with our choice to cultivate humility, like when we practice spiritual disciplines. The other is being broken like a twig by life's events, which is stated well by this quote: "Humility comes from our own humiliation." God used this conversation, this concept, to instigate a new season in my life of deep healing. I've gone through two long and distinct series of painful events, or broken twigs, that produced different results in my spiritual growth. Both affected my view of life and God.

The first season occurred when I was young (5th-9th grade), and it produced a sweet, clinging to the Lord. During that time God also began developing in me a framework for grief, loss and fragility of life, as well as a thankfulness for life and wanting to live it to the fullest. The second season occurred many years later, when I was in my mid-twenties. I experienced a different kind of pain and wrestling with God over my perceived control over life. This lasted for about 7 years. I'm so grateful that God is always with me, always leading me, and always drawing me closer to Him...even in those moments when all I could do was manage to struggle through a day. During that second, challenging season there were many times that I felt so alone and forgotten by God; and then I would literally feel the presence of the Holy Spirit comforting me, whispering to me, nudging me, or lifting my chin and giving me a desire to embrace Him. Sometimes when we experience deep pain, it's easy to let our hearts harden so we can find relief in NOT feeling. But God was so gracious, in that, even as my heart crusted over, he wouldn't let it harden completely. He always left a soft spot so that he could touch it and let me feel that I'm still alive.

2. What do you love most about the gospel?

I love that the gospel is alive and constantly changing us, because it is the story of Jesus and his work in our life. The gospel is often talked about as Christ's work on the cross - dying and coming to life 3 days later - everything we celebrate during Holy Week. But the gospel is the ENTIRE redemption story of God from the beginning of time and through the end times. The exciting part is that we are a part of that story and we get to experience God's grace in every ordinary and extraordinary moment of our lives!

3. How did you come to Harbor City Church? How has your relationship with God grown since you've been part of HCC?

We moved to San Diego from Austin, TX last January. It was important to us that we find a Gospel-centered church located near our home, so our google searches helped us locate Harbor City Church based on that criteria. We visited for the first time last February, and then we just kept coming back.

Transitions are hard, and it's easy to get caught up in the moment and lose sight of the eternal perspective. God often uses people to remind us that we need to cling to Him and the hope He offers through ALL seasons of life. Words of truth run freely in our congregation (i.e. sermons, conversations, living life with friends, life groups, etc) and God has used that to anchor me to himself during this time of transition and change.

4. What do you love about Harbor City Church?

I'm glad that we found Harbor City Church a few months after landing in San Diego last year. We have met so many wonderful people and it's exciting to see how God is developing and renewing our congregation. Recently, we have been especially grateful for the people in our life group who have prayed for us and supported us when we really needed it.

5. What excites you about the role you've been nominated for?

As strange as it sounds, I have learned to be grateful for my experiences of pain and suffering. I feel like those experiences have given me something worth giving back to the world. Even though my suffering is not as great as the experiences of many people, it has produced in me an ability to embrace others with gentleness, compassion and humility. I know that God has been preparing me for a new role in the life of his Church, and it seems like this role of Deacon Assistant fits my gifts and desires for how I want to love people. I'm also excited to play a part in helping connect other people with their gifts and desires.