

Class of 2025 Officer-Nominees

Dear Rivermont Family,

August 19, 2022

With joy and thanksgiving to God, the Officer-Nominating Committee has completed its work and presents the following slate of nominees:

For Ruling Elder: Clay Atkins, Jacob Caldwell, Brian Nash, and Rodney Suddith

For Deacon: Claire Dodd, Gary Eaton, Jane Gordon, Scott Hall, Debby Hallgren, Maria Müller, Ryan Pickard, and Todd Scruggs

We will also be electing new members to the Nominating Committee, Class of 2024:

Jacob Caldwell (Vice-Chair), Heidi Foster, Scott Hall

Other returning members are: Vance Pickard (Chair), Sarah Grace Barkley, Christy Murphy, Andrew Pieleck

The election will take place at the Congregational Meeting called by the Session on **Sunday, September 4**, in the Sanctuary, during the Sunday school hour. Please read through the testimonies of personal faith and enjoy getting to know our officer-nominees.

Thankful for your partnership in the Gospel,

The Officer-Nominating Committee

Nominated to the Officer of Elder:



Clay Atkins

I joined Rivermont EPC in 1995. I am employed by Progress Printing Company. I grew up in Danville where I attended Mount Vernon Methodist Church. At the age of 17, my parents divorced, which had a profound effect on me. I started to drift away from the church. While at college, I married a young lady. After 3 years the marriage ended. After the divorce, I entered a dark period in my life. While I may have turned away from the Lord, he kept a firm grip on me. After 5 years, God started to lead me out of my darkness with a new job in Lynchburg. I started dating my wife, Betty, who is a Christian. At her suggestion, I came to church with her. At that first service, God softened my heart and I became fully aware and ashamed of my sin, but the promise of

forgiveness of my sins and the eternal life and love of Christ was awoken in me. I knew I was home. Serving in the usher's guild, as a deacon, and on the men's ministry team has given me many opportunities to serve the church family and community. Through attendance, at church, Sunday school lessons, and small groups my faith and love of the Lord have grown and continue to grow. I am deeply humbled by this call to serve as an elder. Betty and I were married in 1993. My hobbies include hiking, gardening, and working with stained glass.



Jacob Caldwell

As a child, I grew up in a Baptist Church. I don't remember a time when Jesus Christ was not an integral part of my family life. My grandfather was a life-long Methodist minister and we always went to Church on Sundays. My father was a deacon, taught Sunday school, and sang with the choir. I was saved at a young age but, did not really grasp everything that encompassed at the time. I drifted away from Christ during my college years, but, through God's saving grace, he pursued me. He still frequently reminds me that his work in me is not finished. I have clearly seen God working in my life from a young age. My father was a diesel truck mechanic and one day, he got a piece of metal in his eye at work. I was very afraid he was going to be blind because of this

accident. All the way to the hospital, I remember praying over and over and pleading with God to not let my dad be blind. God clearly answered my prayers, and my father's eye was restored; even to the point that when he passed away years later, the corneas from his eyes were used to restore sight to two other people. I currently serve on the Sound Team and also enjoy playing the timpani. I have previously served on the diaconate two times. I am an architect with Dominion Seven Architects here in Lynchburg, and when I am not working, our family is always having fun together in some aspect. We enjoy family game nights and spending time outdoors.



Brian Nash

I have been in the Presbyterian Church all my life, sprinkled as an infant, confirmed as a young teen, and even married a good Presbyterian. In 1975 I joined Rivermont Presbyterian Church. My wife and I raised three children at REPC, my roots are pretty deep in the denomination and this church. I have served as a deacon, and an elder at REPC helped in the kitchen, Vacation Bible School, RFN Bible Club, and taught both children and adults in Sunday school. That's my history but to say that's my story would be incomplete. The first 41 years of my life were spent attending Church, but I was not a believer. In November of 1998, the Lord brought me to my knees and through the Holy Spirit gave me new life. It was through His grace and mercy that someone such as me was saved and in His strength I walk today, trusting in His continued

grace and mercy. My walk at present seems to be centered on the youth of this Church, which I believe is one of the most important and challenging ministries we have. I believe if we don't teach our covenant children, along with their parents, the Word of God they will miss a foundation in Christ to build on in their lives. Lord willing, I hope to continue in His service here at REPC.



Rodney Suddith

I was born into a Christ-centered home and nurtured in the Christian faith by my parents, Sunday School teachers, coaches, and neighbors. As a freshman in college, I was introduced to Reformed Theology, doctrines, and worship. It was there that I was regenerated and begin to grow in faith. Guided by the Word of God, the equipping of the Holy Spirit, and the Reformed creeds, catechisms, and confession, my worldview became more Christ-centric. My professional path has included the Federal Reserve Bank, high school teacher, track coach, Director of Christian Education here at Rivermont, Executive Director of Sports Outreach, and local ministry. God, has faithfully, and lovingly provided a mature Christian mentor to help me navigate the

transitions of career, marriage, family, service, and retirement. Janice and I were married in 1976 and moved to Lynchburg in 1984. We joined Rivermont that same year, and have enjoyed the teaching, fellowship, worship, and nurture of this caring congregation. We are blessed with 4 adult children, three sons-in-law, and 13 grandchildren. In addition to time with family and friends, I enjoy reading, teaching, studying, sharing God's Word, and community involvement. As I prayerfully consider this call to serve as an elder, I am seeking God's wisdom, discernment, and direction; strength from the Holy Spirit, and the compassion and sensitivity of Christ. Using the model of the Good Shepherd, I will strive to further the Gospel and the ministry of our church by serving, teaching, leading, and pursuing.

Nominated for the Officer of Deacon:



Claire Dodd

I was blessed to be born into a family of believers and was surrounded by family that revered and worshipped Jesus. As a child, I had a love for the person and stories of Jesus, but it wasn't until I was entering my teen years that I began to gain a deeper understanding of the gospel and feel a true connection to Jesus as my Savior. I felt conviction over the sin in my heart and knew I was unable to free myself from that sin by my own will. I needed the Lord's saving grace in my life and around the age of 13, I made a profession of faith in my church and was baptized. As a young adult, I sought comfort and guidance in God's word and began to see God's faithfulness through answered prayer and personal spiritual growth. My

faith walk remained constant but perhaps a little lukewarm until my late 20's when a devastating loss left me looking to God for answers. Amidst extreme grief and doubt, the Lord met me in my sadness and revealed himself to me in miraculous ways. Since then there have been more challenges and trials, but with each one, I have experienced God's providence, provision, and abounding grace and love. Now more than ever, I am trusting in Jesus Christ as my Savior and am humbled by the love and compassion of our heavenly Father. It is my desire today to serve Him and His people with my whole heart. I have been married to Jarrett for 30 years and have two grown sons, Harrison and Stewart.



Gary Eaton

I was born and raised in western Michigan, have been married for 30 years, and have four biological and four adopted children. We lived in Maine until about six years ago when we moved to Lynchburg seeking a teaching position at Liberty. My parents are still alive and are believers. We attended a Reformed Church where I was exposed to the Gospel. However, I did not profess faith in Christ on schedule during High School when it was expected of me. While I believed in God, I was a headstrong young man, proud of my growing independence and self-sufficiency. The abstract “surrender to Christ” seemed to run counter to what I was trying to achieve with my life. I did not want to submit to anyone and, like many others, thought that being a decent person was good enough. But

failed to live up to even my “be a good guy” standards, let alone a holy God’s. After college and the Army, I got divorced, left the U.S. Army to attend grad school, and considered getting remarried. Nothing about my life felt settled. For the first time, my thinking began to consider my real future, not just my earthly one. My future spouse, already a believer, kept the issue in front of me and made me realize that my “be a good guy” strategy would not merit salvation. I accepted Christ at age 29, putting my faith in His finished work on the Cross. But I still resisted being changed by the Holy Spirit. My wife will tell you that she doubted my conversion until four years later. Then, I came to a point where my responsibilities felt unbearable, amplified by my fears of the future. Combined with a sober assessment of my failed good guy strategy, I knew that I not only needed a savior but that I needed to yield to the Holy Spirit. I know that I am saved and that the Holy Spirit is working within me. I would have no desire to follow Christ – I remember how I was - but for God’s calling me. I wish I could claim a rapid or even a steady increase in personal holiness. My process of sanctification is ongoing and has not been without setbacks. Nor can I claim a supernatural “calling” detected by my senses. But I can see needs all around, and I know that God has equipped me and has prepared good works for me to do for His kingdom and glory. Subsequent to putting my salvation in Christ’s hands, I have grown spiritually through church attendance, Bible Study Fellowship and other teaching ministries, and godly mentoring. God has made clear He desires a personal relationship and that He desires control of all aspects of my life. I have experienced His grace and His supernatural response to prayer. He has shown me that “there are no coincidences in the life of a Believer,” and has strengthened my belief in His constant presence and indwelling. My spiritual gift is teaching and I have served in various teaching roles in my local church such as teaching Sunday school to children, high school students, and adults, small group leadership/Bible studies, outdoor adventure youth ministry, and serving as a children’s teaching leader with Bible Study Fellowship International. My desire is to live in obedience to Him and follow wherever He leads.



Jane Gordon

When I was in my early 30’s I became depressed, unable to function day after day. At my lowest point, not eating, not going out, I cried out to God to help me because I couldn’t help myself. I went to a church revival meeting and heard in my heart the Bible verse, Matthew 10:39 which says, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” In going on to read the Gospel of John the Lord clearly showed me my sin against Him, a Holy God. The Word became alive and the Holy Spirit revealed to me that I was not worthy by what I did or accomplished, I was worthy because of God’s unending, infinite love for me. He is continually showing me this love through the love of my

husband Baxter, my church family at Rivermont, and through His Word which is more dear to me than I can put into words. I enjoy reading, walking my dog, and spending time in fellowship with the saints. I still struggle with depression, the difference now is hope, hope in the faithfulness of the Lord, and in His promise that He will never leave me or forsake me. My desire is that the Lord will enable me to show that hope as it is revealed in both the Old Testament and New Testament by a faithful and loving God.



Scott Hall

Like Timothy and like Augustine, my mother was the most influential person in presenting the Gospel to me. Every day growing up, and especially before I left for school, she would have me read the Scriptures with her and pray. One day (around age 9) while reading Romans 10:9 (“**that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved**”) I remember asking my mother if I had ever done that. She gladly walked me through the gospel to make sure that I understood that nothing I could do could earn salvation but that it was all of Christ’s sacrifice and God’s free gift. That is the day that I accepted the Lord as my savior.

Through my mother and my youth pastor (James Bennett), I grew in my walk with the Lord, even going to school to become a pastor. Unfortunately, there were times when I did not seek the Lord’s best in my life. It was not until later in life that the words written by Hudson Taylor “**Christ is either Lord of all or is not Lord at all**” forced me to examine where I was in my relationship with Christ. Through some of the toughest times in my life, where He drove and continues to drive me to my knees in brokenness and weeping over my sin, the Lord uses that to make me into the image of Christ.



Debby Hallgren

By God's grace, I cannot remember a time when I did not know the Lord and that I was a sinner saved by grace and that He loved me and gave His life for me! My late husband Marty and our two daughters, Elizabeth (Goode) and Jerusha (Caldwell), joined Rivermont EPC in 1992 after moving to Lynchburg from Long Island, New York. A few years later we hit a difficult family situation where the Church came alongside, surrounded, and supported us—the long-term benefits of that being realized when my husband Marty was hospitalized early during the pandemic and learned he had advanced cancer. The outpouring of love and restoration to Marty prior to his death gave me an

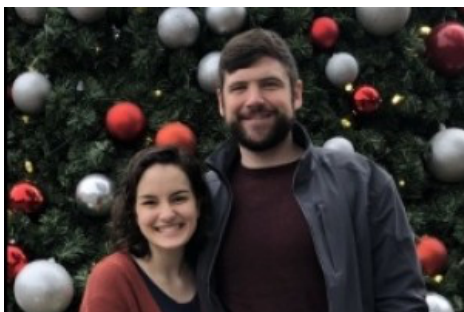
inside look at God's covenantal providence and promises. Over the years I have had various roles at REPC: Sunday School teacher, deacon, usher, choir and bell choir member, and flower guild member. I've also had the weight of being on a pastor search committee and the thrill of participating in two mission trips with Rivermont members. I love being among God's people and look forward to serving as a deacon again. Having the privilege of being deeply rooted in a Bible-believing, mature, confessing, reformed home church for decades brings spiritual growth, stability, comforts, and joy through this earthly journey. To God be the glory.



Maria Müller

Like many people here, Rivermont has been my home for as long as I can remember. However, before Rivermont, I was born in Bulgaria; a post-communist country. From birth to 3 years old I had 3 failed in-country adoptions because of my Romani ethnicity. Often times when the theme of adoption was prevalent it was easy for me to understand how God adopts us into his family. I knew from an early age that we were not a part of God's family because of anything good or bad we did, as it mirrored my own physical adoption. I grew up in the youth group and went through the Confirmation Class. I was happy and secure in my faith and my identity in Christ. Once I hit the end of high school, I began to question my faith and

why it was so important. I began to struggle with my identity, asking myself questions like "am I really saved?" "Do I really belong here?" In 2017 at 20 years old I was diagnosed with PTSD. With that came a lot of anger and resentment. I had no idea how to process the diagnosis and everything that came with it. Instead of leaning into Christ and the Church, I chose to walk away. I never denounced my faith. In my heart, I still knew the truth and the gospel, but because of fear of my brokenness, I felt unworthy. It wasn't until 2019 the summer before Covid that God drew me back to the Church. I became involved with the youth and with that, I was able to create new and meaningful relationships. Initially, I was unsure and a little skeptical, but God in His perfect way made Rivermont home again. Since then, God has opened my heart more and more to the saving grace of Christ and his works done for me.



Ryan Pickard

I was fortunate enough to be raised in a loving, Christian home my whole life. While I accepted Jesus as my savior at a very young age, I never really understood what it meant to have a personal relationship with Christ until I was in college. I lived out my Christianity from a legalistic viewpoint rather than a grace-filled viewpoint. However, in college, I was faced with the reality that what I built my faith around wasn't gospel-centered, and when my identity as a Christian collapsed, I came to the conclusion that being a Christian didn't set me apart in any way. During the summer of my Freshman year, I was ready to abandon Christianity altogether. By God's grace, I was placed in a leadership role on campus where I reconciled my relationship with

Christ, realizing my own sinfulness and need for a savior. It was then that I understood that my identity was in Christ. Since then, the Lord has grown me through various trials and opportunities. God has blessed me by giving me the opportunity to teach and lead a community of believers here at Rivermont. Each day brings new growth in my faith as the Lord continues to stretch me and call me closer to him. I am still in awe of what he has done and what he has called me to do, and I try to live my life now glorifying him in these new opportunities



Todd Scruggs

I was born in Lynchburg, Virginia on December 9, 1967. Before the age of 4, I lived in several places but settled in Dale City, VA where my father's company took us. My dad's job required a great deal of travel and as a result, he was never home. My mother was the Christian influence I had in my life. She made sure that we attended church regularly and eventually lead me to accept Christ. I honestly cannot remember a time in my life when I did not know Jesus Christ. At the age of 8, my parents divorced and we moved back to Lynchburg to live with my grandparents. It was at this point in my life I had some sense that maybe God was not listening to me because he "allowed" my parents to divorce. I wondered whether he truly heard my prayers. I began to pray for a companion with whom I

could share my faith and with whom together we could raise a family in Christ. I soon found out that he did hear my prayers and they were answered by Adrienne (wife of 21 years) and our two sons, Henry (18) and John (15). God has also blessed us with employment at Bank of the James. While I am grateful for my job, it doesn't allow for a lot of spare time. When I do have spare time, I enjoy spending time with my family, traveling, cooking on the grill, and occasionally playing tennis or fishing.