

Class of 2026 Officer-Nominees

Dear Rivermont Family,

September 1, 2023

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

For Ruling Elder: Russ Matney, Andrew Shields, Chris Smith, and Earl Weaver

For Deacon: Grant Barkley, Beth Doan, Reid Goss, Evan Harris, Eric Harrison, Steve Mullen, and Drew Neiderer

We will also be electing new members to the Nominating Committee, Class of 2025:

Earl Weaver (Co-chair), Sarah Grace Barkley, Kelli Johnson, Kaye Moomaw,

Returning members are: Jacob Caldwell (Chair), Heidi Foster, Scott Hall

The election will take place at the Congregational Meeting called by the Session on **Sunday, September 3**, 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:



Russ Matney

Growing up in Grundy, VA, I experienced a blessed childhood. Raised in a Southern Baptist Church, I accepted Christ and received a believer's baptism at the age of ten. Meaningful growth in Christ occurred in my mid-twenties, guided by the Holy Spirit, I determined to earnestly seek Him. In 1996, I was married to Karen, a faithful lover of Christ. In 2000, I lost my father to suicide. Through this brokenness, my trust in Him increased, and God's comfort was magnified. From 2002-2005, Karen and I were blessed with Christopher, Jonathan, and Elizabeth. In 2007, the deepest valley came when Karen was diagnosed with breast cancer, which she fought until going home to Christ in 2012. Through this trial, God's love and grace were profoundly exhibited by the body of Christ. Throughout this battle, I learned to trust and find peace in Him. God's provision continued, and I married my lovely wife and helpmate Erika, in 2013. She has been a balm for our wounds and another evidence of our gracious God.

Currently, our children are in college. We are praying for His guidance, as we prepare for a new chapter in our lives. I have a background in engineering, project management, and operational excellence. My favorite book is *Desiring God* by John Piper, and I enjoy the outdoors and studying history. Through my life experiences, I empathize and desire to help those facing hardship. I am willing to stand in the gap, where needed, to ultimately glorify Him by "pressing on" (Phil. 3: 13-14).



Andrew Shields

It is humbling to be nominated for Ruling Elder. I am a Lynchburg native. My wife Liza and I have been married for almost 20 years and we have 3 children, Brooklyn, Payton, & Bryce. I was raised in a Christian home and baptized at the age of 13. However, my personal relationship with Christ began in the fertile field of adversity that I experienced through my parents' divorce when I was 17. The Lord got my attention as He planned to use me as His vessel to comfort my Mom during that season of grief. I wanted to run from this responsibility more than I had ever run from anything in my life when it became clear that running to the Lord was precisely what I needed. I remembered Jonah and how he ran from his calling. This remembrance brought incredible grief and brokenness as I realized the extent of my sin. The Lord had opened my eyes to the depravity of my heart and it was like a flood. He revealed so much sin in my life and that my life brought no honor to Him. I fell on my knees that night and begged for His forgiveness and asked for the power to follow Him faithfully for the rest of my life.

While I have not done this perfectly, I have felt His relentless pursuit of me in all areas of my life. He continues to shape me into Christlikeness today through various trials and tribulations and has even shown me how to "consider it all joy" when I face them, as encouraged in James 1:2.



Chris Smith

My coming to a saving faith in Jesus Christ began by being raised in a Christian home. My parents strove to instruct me in the faith through regular church attendance, participation in Sunday school, and Bible reading and prayer at home. I made a profession of faith at the age of nine, but like so many youths from a Christian background, I fell away during my high school and college years. It was not a case of wild living, but one of self-righteousness because I avoided that sort of thing! Fortunately, the Lord drew me back to Himself after graduation when I started attending the church I had grown up in (First Baptist of Friendswood, Texas). From there, I was active in the singles ministries in two other churches in the greater Houston area. When I was 28, I experienced another important spiritual turning point when I was

introduced to Reformed theology by friends. I grew up Southern Baptist, but from my first exposure to Reformed teaching (R. C. Sproul's video series *Choosing My Religion*), it took root, and over a three-year period, I was "converted" (so to speak!). Dr. Sproul's *The Holiness of God* and *Chosen by God* was instrumental in helping me read, interpret, and understand Scripture in powerful ways that completely transformed my heart and mind. I was called as an elder in 2019 and the experience of serving on the Session over the past three-and-a-half years has been a great blessing and quite humbling. The demand to act as the mind of Christ for REPC has made me ever more aware of the need to humble myself before the Lord, my fellow elders, and this congregation, as well as His command in Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others." In all humility, God has been unbelievably gracious. He saw me through the 15 years I worked my way through graduate school, brought my beautiful wife, Margaret into my life, and brought us to Lynchburg, where I teach history at Liberty University and teach Bible study in the John Knox Class. *Soli Del Gloria!*



Earl Weaver

We moved to Lynchburg from Greenville, S.C. when I was a toddler, and was blessed to grow up in a Christian home. My father was a Sunday school teacher as both our parents plugged us into youth group on Sunday evenings along with Sunday school and worship services almost every Sunday that I can remember. Wednesday Night Supper was something we always looked forward to as well and while those were fond memories I somewhat drifted through my college time and early in my insurance career. I do remember a time earlier in my youth when I almost drowned but was saved by what I referred to as a "guardian angel" and knew deep down it was the Holy Spirit that came to my rescue! While it didn't resonate with me at the time, and as I grew into my career, the Lord continued to pursue me by putting Betsy Cutchin into my life. It wasn't until after we dated for a period of time that we came to Rivermont and met with Lowell Sykes whom I came to know years ago through his son, Laddie in high school. It was somewhere during my early years at Rivermont that I came to the realization that Jesus paid the penalty for my sins on the cross and it was at that point I truly began to trust Him as my Lord and Savior and to know my salvation was totally the Lord's doing. John 6:44 comes to mind: "No one can come to me unless the Father

who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." And, so it was with me. Amazing how the Lord works! Anyway, the Holy Spirit moved in our hearts to the point of getting married at Rivermont and a couple of years later blessing us with a precious family in Trey and Laird. Personally, my walk with the Lord has been continuous, as Jesus Christ moved me through the years to be involved in the Usher guild, teaching in the Youth House, Six Grade class, along with 2 separate calls on the diaconate and one call of serving on Session. Through prayer, I am once again humbled to answer His call to serve as an elder on Session and give all Praise, Honor, and Glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Nominated for the Officer of Deacon:



Grant Barkley

I was blessed to be raised in a Christian home. I was taught very early on and realized at a young age my need for Christ. By God's grace, he brought me into His family at a young age. My parents, pastors, and other mentors have disciplined me throughout my youth and my knowledge and understanding of God have grown over time. Moreover, through various trials, the Lord has consistently shown me His plans are better than mine, and through these trials, my faith has deepened tremendously. I am returning to serve on the diaconate for another term. I look forward to continuing to serve REPC in this capacity through my spiritual gifts of service, administration, and leadership. My wife Sarah Grace, and I have been members of REPC since 2018. Our son Theodore is one year old and we are so grateful to raise him with the body at REPC. I work at Orano USA as a Human Resources Business Partner.



Beth Doan

I was raised in the Catholic Church in an observant family. I was taught to feel the weight of my sin and guilt but never the freedom of salvation. In high school through a friend, I came to a saving faith, understanding the completeness of what Christ has done for us and for our salvation. In this, I found faith and freedom and finally peace. Since then, with some bumps in the road, I have continued to pursue God and He has never abandoned me. One promise I embrace is nothing can separate me from His love – Rom 8:38-39. I enjoy studying the Bible in order to come to a greater understanding of God's nature and His will and who I am in Him. I teach so that I can help others understand more about God and all He has done for us. Through personal experiences, I have developed a passion for the Church, the body of Christ, to help it grow into a stronger fellowship where no one is forgotten or feels left out. I have served one prior term as a deacon and am excited to continue to serve the body in this way. My husband Andrew and I have been married for 28 years and we have a spoiled cat and two even more spoiled dogs. I am currently taking a break from working and enjoy knitting, baking, reading, gardening, and helping out my folks.



Reid Goss

I am one of three boys by two loving parents in a "culturally Christian" environment. We were in church most Sundays and heard about Jesus, God, and the Bible often. I essentially equated all of it with "be a good person." To me, God was real but unapproachable; even scary and mean. As early as I can remember, I knew that God knew when I misbehaved, that he was angry, and that somehow Jesus was involved in making Him love me again. Looking back now, I had no idea where Jesus fits into the picture. What did His death on the cross have to do with me? I couldn't figure it out. In the fall of 2011, I arrived at Lynchburg College with two goals: Excel on the baseball field and embrace my new "freedom" away from home. Thankfully, God was gracious to rather quickly show that both of those things were far too fleeting and small to satisfy me. I met Evan Harris that year and, through His (God's!) patient pursuit of me, he helped me to understand what I never really understood; Why did Jesus' death matter? Sometime during that spring or summer of my freshman year, God, through His Word, opened my eyes to the fact that Jesus' death was *in my place*. My sin, the things I felt genuine conviction over, was real and worse than I ever could have thought. It warranted death and Hell. *That* is what Jesus took in my place—that's why His death and resurrection mattered, and why knowing Him was so sweet.

Since then, my life has been marked by God's kind work of sanctification. I have seen a steady, albeit messy, growth in Christlikeness... all a testament to His sustaining and refining this weak sinner. I have the unique joy of serving with Campus Outreach; evangelizing and disciplining young men as they walk through their college years and beyond. My and my family's prayer is that God would use our imperfect efforts to equip and send out more gospel laborers into His harvest. The gospel message that so gripped me over a decade ago continues to work mightily on Lynchburg's campus. It's a joy to have a front-row seat.

Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die. William Cowper



Evan Harris

As a college freshman, a relationship with God wasn't on my radar. Rather, pursuing academics while having as much fun as I could was at the center of what I wanted from college. A month into my first semester I met a man who worked for the college ministry, Campus Outreach. As we became friends he asked me questions about my views on God, Jesus, and the Bible. The first time he shared the gospel with me I realized I was a sinner and didn't understand the grace of God. The Lord used my friend's life and our conversations to show me His grace. Near the end of my freshman year, the Lord changed my heart and I repented of my sin for the first time and placed my trust in Christ. In the following years, I joined Bible studies and began learning how to study the scriptures, pray, and share my faith. Today, God is still teaching me about His grace and how to walk with Him in every area of life. Serving and helping to meet practical needs is something I enjoy. The opportunity to do this at REPC during weekly worship and in our community is exciting. My wife Katie, and I will celebrate ten years of marriage this fall and we have three children (Foster, Charlotte, and Evelyn).



Eric Harrison

I come from a background of denominationally diverse believers and consistent churchgoers. My mother was a practicing Roman Catholic. My father's side of the family was church officials in a 50-member Southern Baptist church. As I reflect on my formative years, I realize that my knowledge and grasp of the faith itself were quite limited. I always genuinely believed in the Holy Trinity and that I needed to have faith in Jesus Christ so I could be saved from my sins, but I hadn't fully grasped the true power of the Gospel and my need for it. My wife Bethany and I started attending

Rivermont about a decade ago and I began reading scripture regularly. Rivermont has been instrumental in weaning my spiritual life off milk and onto solid food. We have two boys, Austin (12) and James (9). Often their disobedience frustrates me, especially when it is something they've been disciplined for before. Of course, I love them very deeply despite and during their times of disobedience. Once I have calmed down, I frequently think about how my repeated sins against a Holy God are even worse than my children's actions. I realize that God's love for me is even deeper than mine for my children; so deep He would give His own child so that my relationship with Him can be repaired. These moments are powerful for me. I'd like to help Rivermont continue to be a church that helps people attain that deeper connection to the faith and to their need for the Lord. I am sure He will direct the talents He has blessed me with to His purpose with the guidance of the session. I look forward to serving.



Steve Mullen

I was fortunate to be born into a Christian family. My mother was one of eight children and my father was one of four children. My parents, my two sisters, all my aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents attended church and were, as best I could tell, Christian people who had various commitment levels and varying beliefs about Jesus Christ and the church. I attended kindergarten at the Presbyterian church I grew up in, where I was baptized and confirmed. I cannot remember a time I did not love God, and His faithful Son Jesus, which does not mean my faith hasn't been tested and tried many times throughout my life. Fortunately, my *family* was *very* stable, caring, loving, and free of tragedy when I was young. The first time I remember having a life-changing spiritual need in my life was in 1974 when I was 11 years old. I had recently joined the Boy Scouts, went to a 10-day

Wilderness Camp, and was incredibly homesick and concerned about my family (It was the first time I had been away from home for an extended period of time). The heartsick loneliness drove me into the woods by myself every day praying, sometimes weeping, and always pleading with God to take care of my family and to allow me to see them again. As far as I know, I have prayed every day of my life since that time. Though I believed, prayed, and loved God, sadly, sin was too much my ever-welcome companion in my life as a teenager and in my college years. Many of the sins from that time of life cause me spiritual shame to this day. I married my high school sweetheart in 1986, and we remain married to this day, with two grown children, who are both married, and employed, and have given us three grandchildren. As time passed and life progressed, I experienced some serious health problems; the Lord was gracious to make His presence known to me deeply then, and now. The Good Shepherd is kind to look after His sheep. I have been fortunate to know many great Christian people in my family, personal life, and church who helped me grow in the faith, and I am grateful for their *influence* in *my life*. I have failed *my faithful Savior every day* of *my life*, sometimes in small **ways**, and sometimes profoundly, but I have no one else to turn to, and I am grateful He always encourages me to turn to Him in the sorrow of my sins. Because of the closeness God has allowed me to experience with Him at times, I believe my "minor sins" in old age, are in some ways, much worse than the great sins of my youth. Through all my many joys in the Lord, and the many repeated failings of my sins, it is my objective to read from the Gospels (and the Bible), every day of my life, to spend significant times in prayer each day... hoping to love the Lord my God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself and to live, think, meditate, and pray like Jesus did when He was on this earth.



Drew Neiderer

Through God's grace, I grew up in a Christian home, immersed in scripture at school and church. Around age 5 or 6, I professed my faith and was baptized at West Lynchburg Baptist Church. While genuine, my early faith was largely driven by a fear of hell. As I matured, my theological understanding expanded, but my love for Christ didn't match. Entering Virginia Tech, the Lord surrounded me with a Christian community through Campus Outreach, led by Matthew Shaughnessy and sponsored by REPC. Witnessing genuine faith beyond cultural norms ignited a desire for deeper devotion, nurtured by Chip Cowser and others. I discovered that God's love went beyond tolerance; He cherished me as His child, covered by Christ's perfection. This revelation fueled a lasting longing to follow and serve Him. After college, away from my Christian circle, I found growth through various avenues, notably at Rivermont. Currently, the Lord continues shaping me through preaching, Sunday school, RFN's, Life Group, REPC Music Ministry, and Men's Group. The grace I encountered in college propels me to serve the church, deepen my understanding through Scripture and teaching, and engage in community. God has blessed me with a growing family—wife Julie, daughter

Francie, and another baby expected soon. As a financial advisor at Selective Wealth Management, I guide individuals in wise financial stewardship.