

## **Class of 2028 Officer-Nominees**

Dear Rivermont Family,

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, Randy Davy, Paul Denham, Kevin Hicks

For Deacon: Claire Dodd, Baxter Gordon, Scott Hall, Eddie Ivins, Wistar Nelligan III, Ryan Pickard, Branson Terrell

The election will take place at the Congregational Meeting called by the Session on **Sunday, August 31**, 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 for the Officer of Elder:**



#### **Clay Atkins**

I grew up in Danville, Virginia, where I attended Mount Vernon Methodist Church. It was there that I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. In 1992, while dating my future wife, Betty, I began attending Rivermont, and we were married the following year. In 1995, I officially became a member, and over the next five years, my faith continued to grow and deepen through regular worship, Sunday school classes, and Bible studies. One of the most influential people in my spiritual walk is Paul Cowras, an elder at Rivermont. Paul encouraged me to become more involved in church life, leading me to join the ushers' guild. His mentorship also opened the door for me to serve as a deacon, a role that helped me discover my calling to serve. Since then,

I've been blessed to serve as a deacon, an elder, and in the Men's Ministry. I recently retired from the printing industry. I enjoy hiking, reading, and gardening, but my greatest joy is serving the Lord.



#### **Randy Davy**

God provided me with a godly heritage of Christian grandparents and great-grandparents on my mother's side, and with a father who became a Christian when I was a toddler. I therefore grew up in church, and I accepted all that I was taught, but I think that I misunderstood a lot. During about the fifth or sixth grade, I understood that I was accepted by God through faith in Jesus, not through what I did. A Sunday school class then challenged me to publicly profess my faith in Jesus and be baptized. Throughout my life, God has provided a small army of encouragers and disciples: my parents, my wife, godly Sunday School teachers, small group leaders, friends, wonderful pastors, and Christian authors. It is interesting to me how spiritual growth has often followed

the pattern of my initial faith: in some way or another, God will reveal that I have been trusting in myself, in my own knowledge or goodness, and will then remind me, often through failure, that I am made right with Him only through faith in the Lord Jesus. As Paul writes in Titus 3:5-6: "He saved us, not based on deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."



#### **Paul Denham**

I moved to the Lynchburg area with my family when I was fourteen years old, and I was fortunate to experience my formative years here in the Hill City. While in high school, I met the love of my life, Mary Byrd, and we have been married for 40 years. We have been blessed with four amazing children: Tucker, Tommy, Lap, and Leighton. Tucker and Tommy are married, and the youngest two are now engaged. We are blessed with four grandchildren and one on the way. It has been amazing to watch the miracle of God's creation work through our family. I believe my gifts for ministry are both service and administration, as I find great fulfillment in helping people in need and managing activities. I was raised in a Christian environment all my life. I have significantly

grown in my faith since joining Rivermont. I now truly understand that I am saved by my faith in Christ alone, and through this saving grace, I can help serve others. Our family joined Rivermont over twenty years ago, and the experience has been amazing. By the grace of God, we have all grown in our faith and have come to love this community of believers with whom we enjoy fellowship. I have been guided in my faith by the servant leadership of Jesus, as stated by Matthew 20:28, **"Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**



### **Kevin Hicks**

I have been married to my wife, Nancy, for 29 years. Together we have three daughters—Olivia (27), Virginia (25), and Laura (23). Although I was raised in a Christian home, I did not come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ until after college. While in graduate school in Gainesville, Florida, through the faithful, expository preaching of God's Word in a church much like Rivermont, I was led to believe the gospel fully and know Christ as Savior and Lord. I know the unconditional grace that God provides his people is beyond understanding, yet our only hope for salvation. It was also the hand of God that led me to meet Nancy, whose love for Christ and faithful example have been a continual encouragement in my spiritual growth. Service in the church is both a privilege and a calling. Having previously served as a deacon, I am

humbled by the opportunity to serve again, now as an elder. The role of the session is a vital part of Christ's body, called to shepherd, lead, and serve with humility and wisdom. Professionally, I work as a physician, and I enjoy cycling and running. I am grateful for the Lord's ongoing work in my life and look forward to continuing to grow in grace and to serve Christ's church at Rivermont EPC.

### ***Nominated for the Officer of Deacon:***



### **Claire Dodd**

I was fortunate to grow up in a family of believers (parents, grandparents, and extended family). I was raised listening to Bible stories, memorizing scripture, and attending church. I accepted Jesus as my Savior when I was twelve years old. I believed that God was good, so life was good. I continued in this belief until my senior year of high school, when my parents separated and my father moved out. My older brother had gone to college, and I was left at home with my grieving mother. I felt like I was adrift and decided that if I was going to make it through, I needed to do more than acknowledge the goodness of God – I needed to fully give my life to the one who had always been faithful to me, Jesus Christ. I began to fervently read God's word and spend more time in prayer. I prayed with the expectation that God would

hear me. He had to; he was my only hope. The Lord met me there, in the grief and chaos, and despite the circumstances, I felt a peace I'd never known before. Jesus became real to me. My parents reconciled a year later, which was a gift, but the greater treasure was my renewed faith and relationship with the Lord Jesus. In the ensuing years, there have been more trials. If I'm being truly transparent, the heartbreak and pain of some of those trials have caused me to doubt God's goodness at times. It is in these times, however, that he has revealed more of himself to me. I have felt his love, patience, and abounding grace as he slowly chips away at what needs to be purged from my life and reveals what is most important...a relationship with him. I recognize my need for a Savior, and I am truly humbled that Jesus would die for a sinner like me. I believe the Lord has given me a heart of compassion for his church and a joy for serving God's people. I pray to live a life that glorifies God and shines a light in a dark world.



### **Baxter Gordon**

I was raised in a Christian home. We attended a mainline church regularly. My parents were very loving and supportive of my two sisters and me. During my college years, I drifted away from religion but was aware of "God" and the spiritual nature of life in a general Christian mode. A materialistic worldview never made sense to me; I always knew there was more than that. After college, I married, and we started attending a Presbyterian Church. I trusted that the Triune God would lead me through this process of a relationship with him, even though there are mysteries I don't understand. I have always needed to combine the faith in a living God, the Bible, and truth to guide me. I was greatly influenced by the writings of C.S. Lewis in this. I have felt the providence of God moving me in directions that I had not planned on.

He has sustained me and has led me through many challenges in life. I have been happily married to my second wife, Jane, for 18 years. I have two adult sons from my first marriage, and Jane has three adult children from hers. I am a semi-retired construction engineer. I have two hobbies, racing sailboats and playing tennis.



### **Scott Hall**

Like Timothy and like Augustine, my mother was the most influential person in presenting the Gospel to me. Every day, while 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. 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 as 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, the Lord drove me, and continues to drive me to my knees, and uses those trials and tests to make me into the image of Christ.



### **Eddie Ivins**

Fortunately, I was blessed to have been raised in a Christian family. My parents were saved after they were married. They raised my sister and me in Christian churches that preached the truths of God’s word. My parents were heavily involved in the church. My mother was the church secretary, and my father held various positions as well as taught Sunday school classes as a layperson. In addition to my parents, I was influenced by a dedicated youth leader who was also a layperson who would often spend additional time with me by taking me on late-night sales calls to various hospitals in the Delaware Valley. My parental influence continued into my college years as my father insisted that I

follow my sister and attend Liberty University. I completed my college education immersed in Liberty’s conservative environment. While attending Liberty, I had the continual reinforcement of strong Christian values versus the typical college environment. Upon graduating from college, I moved to Florida and found a very strong group of Christians that continued the positive influence on my life. I spent about five years in Florida, and I moved back to Lynchburg to work for the company where I am currently employed. During one of the slow periods of work, I was able to spend some time in Lynchburg, where I met Julie. God’s graciousness in my life continued when she became my wife. He has also blessed us with three wonderful boys who have professed Christ as their Savior. My boys and I were baptized at Rivermont, where we have been attending for seven years. The Lord has blessed us with a home on a property that constantly manifests God’s marvelous creation. When not working to support my family, I enjoy walking through the woods, working in the yard, fishing the local rivers, and socializing with family and friends.



### **Wistar Nelligan III**

My story is probably relatable and common, so I’ll try not to put you to sleep! When I was in first grade, my parents felt led to start looking for a new church. After visiting Rivermont once, my younger siblings and I kept telling my parents, “We want to go to the new church.” There is a specific moment in those younger years in which I consider myself to be saved. Looking back now, I understand that this was the first time I felt the Spirit come over me. I became one of the Great Shepherd’s sheep. I grew up in a safe home with loving and supportive parents. In this environment, I experienced a lot of success in most everything I did. My college years brought a new environment and a series of big challenges for me to face. I attempted to find solutions to these

problems by questioning everything I had ever known, including the existence of God. At this point, I consider myself to be a sheep who was wandering and lost outside of the herd. Fortunately, we cannot be “unsaved.” Romans 8:39 tells us, “Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” A friend invited me to a Bible study, and this was my turning point. I felt like I was reading the Bible for the first time. I read the Bible as a boy who already knew everything. This is when I began reading it as someone who needed a rescue. The wandering season of life, and my life came to an end. Then a church leader recruited me to help with the children’s Sunday school classes. This person is one of my favorite people, and she was actually my teacher when I was in first grade at Rivermont. So, I had to say yes! I started to learn something about myself. It’s what I love, being around kids. Now, the best part of my week is sharing Jesus with 5-year-olds on Sunday mornings! I find that there is nothing I’d rather do with my weekends. Praise God for bringing me back to the middle of the herd, closer to the Great Shepherd.



### **Ryan Pickard**

I was blessed to have been raised in a loving, Christian home growing up. While I believed in Jesus as my Savior at a very young age, I never really understood what it meant to have a personal relationship with Him until I was in college. I lived out my Christianity from a legalistic standpoint rather than one founded on grace. However, in college, I was faced with the reality that my faith wasn't centered on the gospel, and when my identity as a Christian collapsed during the summer of my freshman year, I was ready to abandon Christianity altogether. By God's grace, He placed me in a leadership role on campus where I was humbled by my own sinful shortcomings and my deep need for a Savior. At that point, the Lord reconciled me to Himself, and I came to understand that my identity

was in Christ alone. Since then, the Lord continues to show me how to live by faith, fully trusting in Him. He shows me that there is nothing I can do to earn my identity, my worth in Christ, because He has already done it. He teaches me how to die to myself as I love and care for my wife and point her to Him. He continues to sanctify and stretch me to trust and seek him daily as I grow as a father to our two children. Each day brings deeper, richer growth as the Lord stretches and calls me closer to Him. I am still in awe of what He has done and the life He has called me to, and the gift of grace it is to taste and see His goodness as I seek to glorify Him.



### **Branson Terrell**

Before being saved, I lived a double life. Growing up in Rivermont EPC, being involved in youth group and Bible studies, and living what seemed from the outside as a morally good life was just half of me. I was dead in my sin, a slave to my sin, and had a mind set on the flesh, which, as we know in Romans 8:6, leads to death. I had professed to be a Christian, but at my very core, my heart was far from God. During my high school and college years, specifically, I sought to live for myself and my own glory. I wanted man's approval, I wanted to be noticed, seen, and liked, and I bore its fruit. I would stretch the truth when telling a story to get more laughs. I would speak badly of friends behind their backs to get other people to like me. In all my searching for joy and fulfillment, I was left empty

and living for myself. My junior year of college, back in 2018, I transferred to Lynchburg College to play golf. They had a college ministry, called Campus Outreach, which I got plugged into. Matt Bradner was the Regional Director at the time, and I knew him from church. So, when the opportunity came for me to participate in the Tuesday morning Bible studies, I thought, of course, I will go. The Lord used Matt during my spring semester to reveal himself to me and to change who I was. Thinking back, I distinctly remember my heart being made new, and the horrible language that I frequently used became distasteful. My desire to be the life of the party and get drunk faded away. The satisfaction in my accomplishments and performance lost its luster. I had been born again. My life post-conversion has been a blessing. I'm still a sinner in dire need of the grace and mercy of the Lord. I am constantly being sanctified, renewed, and transformed by the Lord through the work of the Spirit, yet through his grace, I am a different person. The Lord is conforming me more to be the image of His Son, through the wise counsel of others, accountability from brothers, reading His word, prayer, the use of pastors and theological resources online, and in my marriage. My gifting would include leading, relationships, teaching, and hospitality. Kendall and I host a missional small group during the summers. Also, teaching at church, helping with youth Sunday school, and Financial Peace University with RFN. This is my first time serving as a deacon. I desire to serve the church faithfully. I am excited to specifically help create further community and unity on Sunday mornings during worship, helping new faces find a seat and feel warm and welcomed. I married Kendall in August of 2023. Lanier Piper Terrell was born this past February, and he has been such a joy for us. I work at R. W. Baird, where we provide Wealth Management for families and small businesses. I love the opportunity to help others plan and manage their money faithfully. I love sports, football, golf primarily, and working out. The most impactful man in my life regarding spiritual growth and development is John Piper. I love to listen to his sermons, talks, conferences, and podcasts.