

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

2026 Nominees



Congregational
Meeting
Sunday, January 25
in Lewis Hall

ELDER NOMINEES



**Congregational
Meeting
Sunday, January 26
in Lewis Hall**

Greetings to our Family of Faith,

God continues to call faithful Christians to love and serve our church community. A Congregational Meeting has been called for Sunday, **January 25, at 10:40 in Lewis Hall** so that the congregation can hear from the corporation, adopt the 2026 budget, and elect Elders. We hope the enclosed information will help you prepare to elect those who will lead us in key areas of our life together.

The Nominating Team is responsible for submitting a roster of people they believe God is calling into leadership here at First Pres. They have sought out suggestions from the congregation, prayed for God's guidance, and engaged in the process of discernment. With our newly adopted organizational structure, the Nominations Team was tasked with seeking out four Elders for the 2029 Class. Please take time and read about our nominees who have agreed to serve for you, the congregation, should you elect them.

As Presbyterians, our church community is organized and led by the Ordered Ministries of Elders. Elders serve on the Session to strengthen and nurture the faith of the congregation through leadership, government, and discipline. Elders are spiritual guides and mentors for our Captains who chair our Teams: Deeply Rooted: Worship Music, Worship Services, Grow in Faith, Grow in Friendship, Gather, and Care; Core: Media & Communications, Personnel & Policy, Fund Management, Giving, Legacy 200, and Property Maintenance; Branching Out: Day School, Community Ministries, Seasonal Outreach, Hosting, Showing Up, Embracing the Unchurched, and Youth.

The Book of Order gives a beautiful statement about the election of ordered ministries: "Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. The existence of these ordered ministries in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church." Your ministry in this church remains vital and essential to our life together as we anticipate the next year. We hope to see you **Sunday, January 25, at 10:40, in Lewis Hall**.

In Christ,
Revs. Lara & Josh Musser Gritter
Moderators of the Session

Elder Nominees

Class of 2029

Brandon Aron

Dr. Brandon Aron is a general dentist and the owner of Michael Brandon Aron, D.M.D., P.A., where he has provided comprehensive dental care to the Salisbury community since 2003. He earned his Doctor of Dental Medicine degree from the University of Kentucky and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



He maintains active memberships in the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, and the North Carolina Dental Society, reflecting his commitment to professional excellence and continuing education.

He has demonstrated sustained leadership within the Rowan County Dental Society, serving as Treasurer, Vice President, and President.

His dedication to community service includes board service with the Novant Health Rowan Medical Center Foundation, Food for Thought, and the Community Care Clinic of Rowan County, where he was also recognized as Volunteer of the Year.

He has helped lead and has volunteered as a treating dentist with the N.C. Missions of Mercy free dental clinics, providing care to underserved patients.

He is an active member of First Presbyterian Church and previously served as an Elder and as Chair of the Finance Committee. Brandon also served on the Pastor Nominating Committee, taught Sunday School, and volunteered with First Kids. Brandon enjoys playing trumpet during worship services.

He is a member of the Salisbury Rotary Club.

He is married to his wife, Teen, and they have two children, Drew, a freshman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Campbell, a freshman at Salisbury High School.

Outside of his professional commitments, Brandon enjoys playing golf and tennis and cheering for his beloved Tarheels!

Elder Nominees

Class of 2029

Sherry Bryan

Sherry has been married to Fred for 33 exciting years. They have two adult children: Bess, who is married to Brayden Pomajzl, and lives in Charlotte, and Luke, a sophomore at Campbell University. Sherry holds

her Doctorate of Nursing Practice and is a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Kintegra Pediatric Medicine in Statesville.



She served as the Senior High Youth Director from 2001 to 2005. She was also an Elder during those years. Sherry has served on the Worship Committee and the Youth Committee in the past. She was a participant with TWAM for many years. Sherry has participated in many of the activities of church life over the years, using her gifts as needed and possible.

Sherry's daily work includes helping underserved pediatric patients in the federally qualified health center where she works. Other community service opportunities she has participated in include Rowan Helping Ministries Shelter Kitchen, assisted in First Presbyterian's Backpack program, participated in the Reading Buddy program at Overton, and served as a Planner and team member for the Gaston County and Iredell County Back To School Bashes.

Sherry says her talents are in being organized and a good planner, and in helping others. She loves being outside, working in her yard, exercising, spending time with friends, and experiencing cultural foods. Family time is most important to her. She also loves her golden retriever dog, Zeus!

John Drye

John and his wife Lesleigh have been married for 37 years. They have three children: Carley, Alexandra, and Adam. John graduated from Furman University and works with Central Carolina Insurance Agency.

John has been an Assistant Scoutmaster with Troop 443 for over 20 years, a board member with the Rowan County YMCA, an active supporter of the Rowan County United Way Campaign, and a member of the Salisbury Rotary Club. Here at church, he is a Middle School youth advisor, a Middle School teacher, and a confirmation teacher. John has served as an Elder, a Nominations Team member, a Fund Team member and chair, and a High School boys basketball coach.



Elder Nominees

Class of 2029

Blaine Smith

Blaine moved to Salisbury in 1997 with his wife, Andrea and joined First Presbyterian in 1999. Their kids, Olivia, Harrison, and Graham were raised in church youth groups and participated in TWAM mission trips. The move to Salisbury from Archdale was driven by a job change, when Blaine was hired as territory manager for LA-Z-BOY in Western North Carolina.



Blaine is a graduate of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 1979, with a BS in Business Administration. He played baseball there and led the 1978 team to the College World Series as a pitcher. Drafted by the Houston Astros, he played 3 years of professional baseball in the minor leagues with the Astros and the Padres.

Over the years, music has been a constant avocation. Blaine was a member of a “Beach Music Hall of Fame” band that continues to entertain across the Carolinas. He served as interim Music Director at Second Presbyterian Church of Salisbury in 2001. Shortly after that, he was part of the organizational committee that started Life Center Worship at First Pres. Since the beginning of Life Center Worship, Blaine has served as LCW team leader, band leader, or as a key member of the LCW team under several Music Directors.

TWAM Mission trips to Costa Rica and Mexico have also provided music leadership opportunities that Blaine has treasured. Confirmation classes have been another way to engage with the youth of the church. He has entertained at Rowan Helping Ministries to support the youth, when they serve Holiday meals to the community there. It seems a while ago, but there were many VBS productions that Blaine helped lead with the Fishers, John Grubb, Karen DeGraff, and others. There were church retreats that also included music leadership.

Blaine has previously served as a Deacon and Elder at First Pres. He chaired the Worship Committee, Nominating Committee, and participated in the Worship Space Task Force that oversaw the modernization of AV Equipment in the Sanctuary and Lewis Hall.

Blaine has served on search committees for Music Directors that brought Rick Smith, John Stafford, and Teresa de Freitas to First Pres.

Blaine continues to work in the furniture industry as a sales consultant and representative of several companies. Relationships groomed over 40 years continue to be most important in pushing retirement another year down the road.

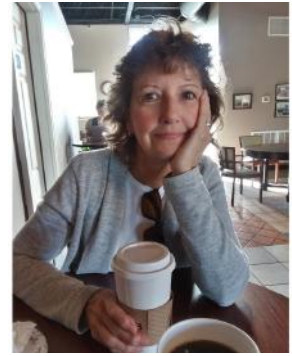
Most importantly, making his daily goal “the pursuit of God’s Will” drives Blaine in the multitasking that has been consistent throughout his life. It is an honor to serve as an Elder and a great responsibility to listen for “God’s still small voice of calm” through the noise of this busy world!

Nominations Team

Class of 2028

Karen De Graaf

Karen De Graaf has been a member of First Presbyterian church for nearly 40 years. She has been married to Dan for 46 years. She has an adult son Daniel and daughter-in-law Amy, who reside in Charlotte. Karen is a retired special education teacher. Currently she has two shops at the Salisbury Emporium where she also works part time. She loves antiques, decorating, gardening, coffee and cats!



Karen has just completed a two year commitment as the team leader for Life Center Workshop. In past years, she has lead search committees for Christian Education, served as an elder and as a Stephen minister. In her many years at FPC she has assisted with Bible School, led Bible studies, taught Sunday School and served on the Christian Education committee. She had the pleasure of working with Dr Lewis on his doctorate focusing on confirmation. Currently she is serving on an LCW committee working with Rev. Heath on his doctoral project.

Outside of the church, Karen participates in an international weekly Bible study (Bible Study Fellowship). She assists throughout the year with Three Wide projects, Project Santa, Rowan helping ministries and Compassion International.

Nominations Team

Class of 2028

Steve Fisher

Steve is married to Robin Ennis Fisher, and they have three sons, Banks (Lauren), Max, and Jack. They are also the proud grandparents of Paul Edward “Teddy” Fisher III. He is a native of Rowan County and a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Kenan Flagler School of Business. He received a Master’s degree in Business

Administration from Wake Forest University School of Business and his Juris Doctor degree from Wake Forest University School of Law. He also holds an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Hood Theological Seminary.

Steve was a practicing litigation attorney in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1992 to 1997. He remains a member of the Georgia, North Carolina, and American Bar Associations. In 1998, he joined F&M Bank as Vice President/General Counsel and currently serves as Chairman and CEO of F&M Bank and F&M Financial Corporation.

Steve serves in various leadership roles with the following organizations: the UNC Nutrition Research Institute, Rowan County United Way, Cabarrus County Economic Development Commission, Forward Rowan and Rowan Growth Partners for Economic Development, Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce, Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, the North Carolina Bankers Association, and the Salisbury Rotary Club. Additional hands-on community service endeavors include: Capstone Recovery, Rowan County Relay for Life, Rowan Helping Ministries, Powercross Ministries, Next Generation Academy, and the Salisbury Community Development Corporation. He is also an active member of First Pres and is/has served on many teams.



Nominations Team

Class of 2029

Karl Hales

Karl Hales is a family man with his wife Lynn, sons: Robert Hales, Alex Hales, and daughter Frances Farmer, plus stepdaughters, Lauren Volkmer, and Sarah Foster. Together, they have 10 grandchildren. He is a retired college professor from Catawba College having founded the Communication Arts Department. In June of 1989, Karl started the Contemporary Christian Sunday School class and has taught the class from that date to now. He has also served on the Scholarship Committee for over 20 years and has chaired that committee for at least 10 of those years. He served on the Flight Crew committee, has participated in both retreats, counseled some ministers in improving their sermons, and helped in the starting of the annual Advent Gatherings before Christmas and has read stories to members each year since 1989. At age 85, I'm not as active in the community as he used to be, but was very active even after retirement in 2005. Though acting and directing with numerous theater groups in the past, he retired from those activities a few years ago. Karl continues his love for teaching and giving speeches whenever possible. He joined the First Presbyterian Church family in February 1989, and has been a loyal member ever since.



Melody Lee

Melody Lee is a faithful, active member of First Presbyterian Church along with her husband, Brian. They have a rich history together which began when they first met during their time at Catawba College. They made their home in Salisbury, North Carolina, where they raised their three children, all of whom are now adults. Melody and Brian are also proud grandparents to three granddaughters, Ella, Scotland, and Emerson. Melody currently works at Salisbury Academy, where she continues to build strong relationships within the community. She also volunteers her time with Rowan County Meals on Wheels and regularly participates in small community outreach projects. Her heart for service reflects her desire to care for others and strengthen the Salisbury community. Faith has played an important role throughout Melody's life. Her father was a minister with the United Church of Christ, serving churches across the East Coast. This shaped her lifelong commitment to church involvement, and her service at First Presbyterian. Melody serves on the Gather Team, has participated in church-wide retreats, and has enjoyed building meaningful relationships within the church family over the years. Outside of work and church, Melody treasures time with her family and friends and enjoys travel and sports events.

