

A Mission Study of the Presbyterian Church of Radford Radford, Virginia

Session

Class of 2023	Class of 2024	Class of 2025
Diane Bibb Paige Herndon Tom Mogen Brenda Whisonant	David Young Karen Miller Glenn Young David Lyerly	Wilma Allen Alice Collier D.D. Munsey Robin Troxel

Pastor Nominating Committee

Coley Thomas
Annyce Levy
Carol White
Karen Miller
David Lyerly

Interim Pastor: Steve Willis

Adopted by the Session of the Presbyterian Church of Radford, May 2023

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2

Discernment of God’s Call to the Presbyterian Church of Radford

It has been a year since the former pastors of PCR left our church because of a different calling in their ministries. This period has given the congregation an opportunity to reflect on its past ministry, to engage in its present ministry through the guidance of lay leaders and interim Pastor, and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in discerning its future ministry. This interim period has been complicated by changes in staff members. While this represents a challenge for the congregation, it also represents an opportunity to rethink and imagine new models and new possibilities for how we think about our ministry going forward. This process of discernment is the role of every member of the congregation, but particularly of the ruling elders who are “responsible for the mission and government of a particular church” ... and “to lead the congregation continually to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God.” (Book of Order G-10.0102) The interim period has been a time of searching together to “discover” what God is doing and might do in our midst.

Process

Discernment of God’s call to the congregation is an intentional process, though not always a

formal one. Discussions of God's possible call to PCR have been a formal part of each stated session meeting, and a session retreat was dedicated to that purpose. Of equal importance, conversations arising out of an adult Sunday School class led by the interim pastor have given members of the congregation the opportunity to voice their concerns and dreams. Informal conversations between elders, the interim pastor, and members of the congregation have yielded much reflection on our past and hopes for the future. Over time, this process has yielded as many questions as answers, but a general consensus seems to have emerged.

Community Profile

The Presbyterian Church of Radford is located in the city of Radford, Virginia. Radford is in the beautiful and vital New River Valley region of Southwest Virginia. The city lies on the banks of the New River, in the foothills of both the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains. Visitnrv.com provides a wonderful overview of the New River Valley. Radford is a small city, with a population of approximately 7,000 (not including university students). Radford has excellent medical facilities and public schools and is home to Radford University, with an enrollment of about 8,000 in graduate and undergraduate programs. Radford is located only a few miles from Virginia Tech (ca. 35,000 students), and New River Community College, widely recognized for how it prepares students for career decisions.

The area is home to a variety of high-tech businesses (e.g., Regal Rexnord, Volvo). The area has a unique combination of rural and cosmopolitan life. Recreational opportunities abound for outdoor enthusiasts with close access to the Appalachian Trail, New River Trail, New River, and Claytor Lake. Major industries include higher education and the Radford Arsenal. For more information on the types of outdoor activities and events, <https://www.newrivervalleyva.org/> and <https://thecrookedroadva.com/> provide valuable information and details. In general, Radford is known as a recreation center for the New River Valley. The Riverway is a signature hiking and biking trail in the region. The riverfront in Radford is highly utilized and is the reason why Radford is known as "The New River City."

The Radford downtown area is being revitalized and there is a Farmers Market from May thru October located near the historical Glencoe Museum. Radford hosts a series of free summer music events that take place either in beautiful Bisset Park, which runs along the New River, or at the Glencoe Museum. There are additional festivals throughout the summer and fall, not only in Radford but in nearby Blacksburg (Steppin' Out) and Floyd (Floydfest). If you are into bluegrass music, Floyd Va Crooked Road is on the national registry of bluegrass music. However, music at these events can range from bluegrass to soft rock to beach music and more.

The Presbyterian Church of Radford is located in an older, established neighborhood of tree-lined sidewalks and middle class homes. The church is within two miles of Radford University, the downtown shopping area, and several parks and walking trails.

Church Profile

History

The Presbyterian Church of Radford had its origin in the New River Church, established 1874. In 1890, the congregation petitioned Presbytery to build a new church, the Radford Presbyterian Church. In 1968, Tyler Memorial Presbyterian merged with the Radford Presbyterian Church, to form the Presbyterian Church of Radford. The Tyler Memorial building, which was located on

the Radford University campus, was sold and the monies from that sale have been used to support UKirk, a college-oriented ministry which is an integral part of the church's identity and mission. Some of the funds are used to support Radford University student choir members to further their music education.

Membership

The Presbyterian Church of Radford has a membership of 171 persons. On a given Sunday roughly 50 to 60 attend worship. The age distribution shows that the largest demographic is 65 years or older. Changes in the congregation's make-up have led to a transition from a medium-sized programmatic church with a large education facility, to a smaller forward-looking church with facilities being used for mission and community activities (e.g., Sunday School programs, Necessities Pantry, Bobcat Backpack Program, Boy Scouts, social activities, etc.).

The congregation is made up of warm and loving people dedicated to the Presbyterian Church of Radford and its future. The congregation is very traditional, yet also quite open to new ideas and accepting of people regardless of their status or views on divisive issues. We are committed to the mission of Christ in the congregation, the university and local area, and around the world. Elders of the Session are responsible for interacting with small groups of the congregation. This interaction, in turn, encourages visits and knowledge of the needs of the members and their families.

Facilities

The warm and beautiful sanctuary, built in 1893, seats 200 people. A pipe organ and baby grand piano assist in leading the congregation in worship through music. A two-story educational building, completed in 1963, contains multiple classrooms and a nursery and parlor. A well-equipped, newly-renovated fellowship hall provides space and a kitchen for community activities and congregational fellowships. A two-story house next door to the church functions as the church office. The manse owned by the church was sold several years ago. All of the facilities are well-maintained with recent updates to the church entrance and sidewalks and fellowship hall. The church is completely handicapped accessible.

Finances

The Presbyterian Church of Radford is in a strong financial position. Regular donations for 2022 totaled \$227,846 funding the 2022 expenses of \$243,858. The difference was funded through an annual endowment transfer of \$57,900. The church has an endowment of \$1,276,040. Of this, \$368,378 is designated for the funding of the UKirk ministry.

Ministry and Mission

Church activities include Sunday morning worship at 11 am (10 am in the Summer), Adult and children's Sunday School classes, nursery, and choir. PCR has a long-standing relationship with our local university, Radford University, in part with our UKirk ministry. Recently, UKirk at PCR has focused on providing educational assistance to Radford University students who are active in our music program (choir, piano, and organ). This assistance has been instrumental in providing support for students attending music workshops (e.g., Montreat in Black Mountain, NC).

A key ministry of PCR is the Necessities Pantry. The Necessities Pantry is an outreach mission developed and sponsored by the Presbyterian Church of Radford. The Pantry takes place in our Fellowship Hall once a month, and provides many different types of necessities (toiletries, hygiene products, household cleaning products, etc.) to members of our community. The Necessities Pantry continues to serve the community of Radford each month with drive-through service (since the pandemic began) by providing cleaning supplies and hygiene supplies for those in need in our city. In addition to providing the drive-through service, PCR takes these products to a facility of income-based housing for senior citizens. We welcome monetary donations because we try to keep the items in each bag uniform. This mission of PCR, which goes year-round, continues to grow and now serves well over one hundred families a month (>200 persons being helped each month).

Other ministries include participation and leadership at a local food pantry and soup kitchen (Radford Fairlawn Daily Bread), clothing bank (August Kids), and a weekly backpack program (Bobcat Backpack Program) that packs bags of food for public school children who might otherwise not have food for the weekends. The congregation is very involved in support of several other community missions targeted at serving children and the less advantaged, including the Women's Resource Center, Elf-Shelf, 10 Cents a Meal, the Presbyterian Home of the Highlands, and Angel Tree, which is a Recovery Center for challenged adults. The Presbyterian Church of Radford also participates in special mission offerings including One Great Hour of Sharing, Peacemaking, and Joy Offering.

Recently, PCR has become a Charter Organization for the Boy Scouts of America. The Cub Scout Pack meets twice a month in our Fellowship Hall. The Pack has grown quickly to now include about 35 scouts. Plans are underway to expand the program to include a scout troop for boys and one for girls.

Fellowship is an important part of our church life, and PCR has a number of various activities for this purpose. These include monthly coffees after church (actually more like a meal), lunch bunch once a month for older members, Sunday-in-the-Park in which our church service is held in the Fall at Bisset Park followed by covered dish meal, annual summer picnic in Bisset Park, and other events (food is a common theme). All of these are open to anyone who wants to enjoy fellowship and fun!

Looking Toward the Future of the Presbyterian Church of Radford

The Presbyterian Church of Radford has the following **primary values**:

- The Maintenance of Divine Worship in a traditional style with an openness to new forms and styles.
- A Compassionate Involvement in our Community, serving others with the love of Christ.
- A Loving Fellowship that cares for one another sharing joys and sorrows.
- A Commitment to Exploring Faith through Christian Education and personal relationships in the church and the community.
- A Commitment to University Ministry through support to students at Radford University and New River Community College.

As we look to the future, what **resources** does the congregation have to meet that future with confidence and anticipation?

- A Commitment of a Dedicated Core of Members to Christ and to this Particular Church.
- A commitment to Mission, particularly to the community of Radford.
- A Loving and Welcoming Fellowship.

- An Openness to God's Future.
- A Stable Financial Situation.
- A Beautiful Building and a Commitment to Maintaining It.
- An Educated and Open Membership.

As part of our resources, we are utilizing the guidance provided from a book entitled "Imagining the Small Church: Celebrating a Simple Path". This book was written by our current Interim Minister, Steve Willis. Pastor Willis taught a two-month course in our adult Sunday School class on key principles of small churches. His book and his teachings enabled church members to think more about the purpose of PCR and how we can continue to be successful in our efforts, even as a small church. Pastor Willis' book will continue to be a resource for our congregation as we move forward.

As we look toward the future, what **challenges** face us and cause concern for our future viability as a congregation?

- Ensuring our missions are serving our community and beyond.
- A sense that the traditional "Mainline Church" experience is not valued by the community.

Commitments

The session of the Presbyterian Church of Radford identified four broad goals for the future that reflect both the history and resources of the congregation and the challenges before us. Three of the four might be characterized as having to do with evangelism and outreach. They are:

- Increase the membership of the church.
- Increase attendance at worship.
- Continue to increase our visibility in the community.
- Deepen our ministry to everyone.

For these goals, our congregation and its leadership assume a continued commitment to Christ, to support of one another, to mission, to a traditional form of worship, and to our UKirk ministry. Over the past several years, we have placed emphasis on intergenerational bridge-building between generations, and we expect these efforts to continue. Our various missions use this approach to involve all ages when possible. As part of this effort, our Director of Christian Education continues to add various types of intergenerational activities. For example, children will make cookies for adults on various holidays and supply them to the congregation as they leave the Worship Service. Another example is an intergenerational craft day held during the Christmas season.

There also are activities more specifically designed for children. These include a well-attended children's Vacation Bible School held in the summer that is supported by PCR, St. Jude's Catholic Church, and Grace Episcopal Church (includes about 50 children). Another example is our recently established children's choir guided by our Director of Christian Education and Choir Director. Occasionally our choir, which features members of our congregation and Radford University students, will include special instruments. All these efforts continue to grow at PCR and are in-line with our goal of continuing to build an intergenerational bridge at PCR that includes everyone --- children, high school and college students, and young and older adults.

The congregation seeks the leadership of a called full-time pastor(s) to provide pastoral leadership in facing our future with joy. The challenges that face us are not unique to the

Presbyterian Church of Radford; other churches face the same challenges. At PCR, we can assure that there is a well-experienced group of committed people who provide care for one another, and opportunities for fellowship. They look forward to coordinating their efforts with a full-time, onsite, pastor.

We also recognize that an attitude of outreach grounded in a deepening spiritual life are keys to our future. The congregation is optimistic about its future, recognizing the depth of the challenges before us, and confident in one another and the Lord whom we seek to serve. With God's help, the Presbyterian Church of Radford has an exciting future as a loving congregation of the children of God. Importantly, while our numbers may have decreased some over the past decade, our commitment to serve God and our Community has never diminished.

Optional Links that provide additional information about our church, congregation, and community.

- www.pcradford.org
- <https://youtu.be/YwSSOlYCPo>
- www.radford.edu
- www.vt.edu
- www.nr.edu
- www.nrvrc.org
- visitnrv.com
- <https://www.blueridgepbs.org/local-productions/documentaries/new-river/>