Rochester
Christian Reformed Church
We Welcome In, Build Up, and Reach Out

Profiles of Elder and Deacon Nominees

(Terms to Begin January 2027)

For your information and prayers, the Council submits these profiles of nominees for election as elders and deacons of Rochester CRC, for terms of three years each. The Rochester CRC Council arrived at this set of nominees by a process of congregational input, prayer, and Council oversight that began in May. Communicant members of the congregation, 18 years and older, will be asked to vote at our **Congregational Meeting, Tuesday, November 10, 2026**. Absentee Ballots are available at the Welcome Center or in the church office.

Retiring Elders: Dan Veenje, Amy Cline
Continuing Elders: David Dill ('28), Jeff Harp ('27), Becky Hughes ('27), Beth Tschorke ('27), Tim Vande Brake ('28)
Retiring Deacons: Charlene DeLallo, Ray Croucher, Dale Chambery
Continuing Deacons: Mary Ann LaPolla ('28), Jake Leakey ('28), Bob Null ('27)

ELDER NOMINEES (2 positions are open.)

Steve Letter, Esa Rantanen, & Neil van Barneveldt



Steve Letter

I was born and raised in the Rochester area, grew up in Penfield, attended Webster Schools and RIT. We have lived near Main and Winton in Rochester for 45 years.

I'm married to Petra who serves as our church sexton, father of three grown children; Rebekah Cooper, Amanda Kuttner and Benjamin. I'm one year retired, formerly employed as an electrical engineer at Kodak Alaris in the photo kiosk development group.

I'm a little bit of a mutt denomination wise. I mostly grew up at First Reformed Church, transferred to Webster Presbyterian, Covenant United Methodist, Trinity Reformed and to RCRC in 2019.

My ministry involvement has included serving as a youth advisor with Petra, Deacon, Council Member, Youth Advisor, Sunday School teacher in past churches. During our time at Trinity I served as an elder and delegate to Albany and General Synods and as classis president, elder supervisor of two vacant churches, and participated with search teams and other committees. I had about 60 hours in mediation training as part of my work with RCA Rochester Classis. While at Webster and Covenant I served on the board for Flower City Habitat for Humanity which remains my favorite service ministry along with Open Door Mission. At RCRC I have served four years as a deacon, special cause liaison and am currently serving on the search team, leading the AV team and helping out on the facilities team.

I'm pleased that God has led us to RCRC where we have found good teaching and fellowship. I've been blessed by many of you who continue to serve during our pastoral vacancy. As an elder I hope to be a blessing in visitation, leadership training and pastoral support. Please be prayerful in your discernment as you consider your choices for leadership.



Esa Rantanen

I hail from Finland, but by now have lived and worked in the US for over half of my life (April 6, 2022, to be exact, marked this rather odd anniversary). I am currently an associate professor of engineering psychology at RIT, in the School of Psychology and Cognitive Science.

My faith journey is too long to be told here, but briefly: I remember reading the Gospels when I was in middle school and starting to think seriously about Christianity. Fast forward to me meeting Ann, who introduced C. S. Lewis to me, and whose books (most, anyway) I devoured in a matter of a couple of months. My faith has been heavily influenced by my training as a researcher and by meeting many very impressive Christian faculty at the universities I have served. At the present stage of my journey I am still fascinated by what may be called "reasonable faith". I love John 1:1-5, where the "Word" means "Logos", which in Greek thought is the divine principle of reason that gives order to the universe and links the human mind to the mind of God.

My wife Ann joined the RCRC in the fall of 2018 and I a couple of months later. How we found this church makes for a good story, but it, too, is too long to tell here (please ask some other time). We have both been impressed and indeed blessed by the warmth and closeness of the RCRC congregation, from our very first visit to the unparalleled outpouring of love and support during our medical crisis in 2019-2020.

I volunteered to be nominated for an elder for a second time because I have enjoyed having an active part in the life of the congregation: I have participated in the Men's Bible Study ever since I joined RCRC, I am leading the Academic Fellowship for students worshipping with us, and I served as an elder from January 2022 to December 2024. I have greatly enjoyed the many social events, community outreach, and especially the educational offerings of RCRC. I would like to help sustain and strengthen these.



Neil van Barneveldt

Neil van Barneveldt has been a member of Rochester CRC since 2003. Served two terms as elder and Clerk of Council. Attended the Synod in 2018.

Currently on the A/V team, sings in the choir, and participates in Men's Bible Study. Worked at CooperVision as a software engineer for twenty years until my retirement in 2024. Dutch citizen, single.

<u>DEACON NOMINEES</u> (3 positions are open.)
Shari Harrison



Shari Harrison

My name is Shari Harrison.
I am a Rochester native and grew up on the west side in Churchville. Jim and I were blessed with three adult children between us and two grandchildren, all who live in the greater Rochester area.

As a child, I was baptized in the Congregational Church in Churchville. I always believed in Jesus but did not understand the personal relationship with him until a Ralph Bell Crusade was held at Parkminister Presbyterian Church in Chili.

I am a retired Trust and Estate Paralegal. I worked in the Chase trust department and in law firms for over thirty years. In both positions I administered trusts under a will and estate administrations in addition to doing Medicaid applications. I had considerable experience in my life allowing me to relate to clients as they placed their loved ones in a nursing home.

My first husband had a serious motorcycle accident and had to be placed in a nursing home and lived there for over 28 years. I know how to support the clients in a way that others may not. In addition, losing Jim 4 years ago helps me to better understand how others feel when they lose a spouse.

Over the years I have served many organizations on their boards and in various capacities including as a Deacon at RCRC and being the chair for 1 of the 3 years. Several years ago, at the request of the elders of RCRC, Jim and I took on chairing a new committee to revitalize small groups within the church. We co-chaired the committee for a few years.

I consider it a privilege to be asked to serve as a deacon at RCRC. When I was working, I considered my job as my ministry. I had the opportunity to share my faith with many clients and prayed for them. I believe these experiences will help me to be a better deacon. I have a heart for the congregation and the struggles I see with in the church body. I would consider being a Deacon a ministry also and would do my best to attend all the meetings and fulfill my commitment to the church.

My top leisure activities include knitting, travel, reading and time with family and friends.