

Leadership Election 2026

Elder & Deacon Candidate Profiles

Calvary Church has scheduled its annual election of elders and deacons for SUNDAY, JANUARY 18 at the conclusion of the morning worship service. Calvary members ages 18+ who are in attendance on campus on January 18 are eligible to vote. No absentee ballots will be accepted. *Please note, there are candidate profiles on the front and back pages of this document.*

Elder Candidates

Calvary **ELDERS** serve four-year terms. **Two of the three candidates will be elected.**



Dennis Abbott

FAMILY: Married to Cheri for 34 years; we have three adult children.

TESTIMONY: I was raised in a Southern Baptist church in Florence, SC, and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior at age 12 during a Billy Graham conference. Though I drifted from Him through high school and college, the Holy Spirit continued to convict me. At 29, I surrendered fully and rededicated my life to Christ. For the past 37 years, I have sought to walk faithfully with Him, growing in His Word and serving wherever He leads.

MINISTRIES: Currently, I serve as a teacher for the Family Life ALG and on the Worship Ministry team as a kettle drummer. I previously served two terms as an elder (2016–2020 and 2021–2025). I served on the Finance Committee from 2016–2020 and chaired the committee during both terms (2017–2025). Also served on the Executive Committee during both terms. I was the Campaign Committee Chair for the Reach Welcome Grow expansion project. I've also served as a Middle School Group Leader and in the HOME Ministry.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I do not take a position that I want to accomplish this or that. I only wish to remain open to His will and direction and to respond accordingly. I will seek His perfect wisdom to use the spiritual gifts He has given me—teaching and administration—to provide servant leadership and discipleship to others. It is my prayer that I will be used to assist Calvary Church to continue its unwavering commitment to teach God's inerrant Word, follow Christ and His teachings, and respond effectively to opportunities to fulfill the Great Commission.



Bill Bailey

FAMILY: Laura and I have been married for 44 years; we have two grown children and four grandchildren.

TESTIMONY: By God's grace, I grew up in a Christian home where my mother modeled faith and actively served in church. There I first heard the Gospel, recognized my need for salvation, and trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I was baptized and became involved in church life. After drifting during college, God drew me back through the question, "If there is no God, where did love come from?" (1 John 4:7). Convicted of selfishness, I confessed my sin, experienced His forgiveness, and rededicated my life to Christ. Since then, I have pursued a deeper relationship with Him through studying and applying His Word. To God be the glory.

MINISTRIES: I am the primary teacher for the Life Application ALG. I am a facilitator in a Calvary Support Group, HeartCare, focused on trauma healing. I regularly teach the "Spiritual Leadership" elective course. Laura and I host and facilitate a Bible study for Calvary young adults.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I desire to use the gifts and abilities He has given me to oversee, love, and serve the body of Christ, which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).



Ryan Smith

FAMILY: Married to Katy for 13 years; we have four young children.

TESTIMONY: My mom led me to the Lord when I was seven years old. We were reading the story of Jesus' crucifixion, and the Lord impressed on me the magnitude of my sin and my offense against a holy God. At the same time, I also saw the great lengths to which Jesus went to provide a way of salvation. I repented of my sins, called upon the Lord to save me, and He did! In college, I struggled with the assurance of my salvation. Was I really saved? Was I sincere when I prayed? John 10:28–30 assured me that I am safe in the arms of my Savior, Jesus Christ, and I rest on his finished work, not mine.

MINISTRIES: I served as a deacon from 2021 to 2023 and started my second three-year deaconate term in January of 2025. I've served in various leadership capacities, including deaconate vice-chairman, head of the parking lot committee, Missions Council liaison, and Finance Committee member. I have also served in the Nursery and as a coach for CHAMP Sports for many years. I serve in Kid Zone twice a month, teaching first graders with my wife as co-teacher. I also served a four-year term on the Missions Council. I am also serving as a mentor in the Awana C-track program on Wednesday evenings.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I want to be used by God wherever there is a need, ultimately for His glory.

Deacon Candidates

Calvary DEACONS serve three-year terms. **Eleven (11)** of the 12 candidates will be elected.



Lowell Beers

FAMILY: I've been married to Cindy for 43 years.

TESTIMONY: I was raised by Christian parents who faithfully brought me to church and set a godly example at home. When I was six years old, I received Christ as my Savior at a church summer camp. I understood that I was a sinner and needed God to make me a new person, so I committed myself to Him. God has graciously guided me throughout my life, including my educational and career choices. I earned a B.A. in Bible and theology from Azusa Pacific University. I have served on staff with three wonderful ministries: Prison Fellowship, Samaritan's Purse, and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. It is extravagant grace offered by a wonderful Savior (2 Corinthians 5:21), and I am forever grateful that He offered it to me.

MINISTRIES: Cindy and I became members of Calvary in 2009. We serve in the Food Pantry and Food Service ministries. I am one of the co-teachers of the Life Application ALG.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I would be honored to serve Calvary Church in whatever capacity I am needed. Whether through teaching, encouragement, discipleship, outreach, or other support, I would aim to fulfill God's calling of all church leaders "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).



Kenly Brice

FAMILY: Married to Ines; we have one teenage daughter.

TESTIMONY: Before age 11 in Haiti, I committed my life to Jesus, growing up in a strong Christian environment where my family was actively involved in church leadership, prayer meetings, missions, and worship. Despite witnessing negative influences, I remained focused on seeking God. A pivotal Sunday message led me to embrace Christ as my Lord and Savior fully. Though my journey was not without challenges, I reaffirmed my faith and was baptized in my late teens after moving to New York. Shortly after, I met Ines, who also came to faith and was baptized. Together, we have been active members of Calvary Church since moving to Charlotte.

MINISTRIES: I am currently a greeter and have served in several ministry events and programs, including the Car Show, Family and Friends Day, Communion, and Children's Ministry. I participate in two men's Bible studies, sometimes hosting and leading them.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I am excited about God's work at Calvary. God has gifted me with servant-leadership skills. I'm committed to the mission of Calvary Church and fully support our church's focus on God's Word. I have a passion for evangelism, discipleship, and a desire to serve and grow more.



Douglas Chen

FAMILY: Married to Shelly for 28 years; we have two sons attending college and one teenage son.

TESTIMONY: I was not raised in a Christian home, as my parents immigrated from China and loosely followed Eastern religion. I was invited to a church youth group by a classmate during the lowest point in my life after being suspended in high school. Confronted with my own sinful nature and the need for a Savior, I committed my life to Jesus during my senior year. My critical spiritual growth occurred through Intervarsity Christian Fellowship while at Yale University. I learned there to love Scripture, love others, and to be loved. In even the most liberal of environments, God's light and truth (Lux et veritas) shone through. Since then, my brother and parents have all come to know the Lord. I am thankful that my entire family is eternally secure in Jesus.

MINISTRIES: I currently serve as a deacon and as a member of the Missions Council. I assist with the Prison Ministry, Ushers, Luke 14 Banquet, and serve in Preschool Ministry with Shelly. I co-lead the Calvary Asian American Fellowship and have ministered with several GO Trip teams.

How I desire God to use me in this role: It would be a great joy to serve the Lord's church and body for another term. As a family physician, my calling has been to serve others and to remind patients to look to God for healing. I simply hope to be obedient to the Lord in serving Him and His people at Calvary in similar ways.



Phil Comstock

FAMILY: Married to Carol for 54 years; we have two grown children and two grandchildren.

TESTIMONY: My conversion came during the men's Bible Study Fellowship classes I began in 1995. During my time in BSF, I realized that Jesus Christ was my personal Lord and Savior; all I needed to do was accept His grace, repent of my sins, and begin following Him. I admitted that I am a sinner to the core and believed God gave His son as atonement for my sins. I had a new outlook on everything, and all my relationships began to change. I now worship the one true God, understand Jesus Christ is my Savior, and look to the Holy Spirit for daily guidance. I realize He will always forgive me and lead me.

MINISTRIES: I have been a deacon and continue to lead or serve in various Calvary ministries (Street, Military, Operation Christmas Child, and Communion). I also teach children in Zone 345 and have served as a leader in Awana. I have been on five GO Trips: the Philippines (twice), Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Romania.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I want to serve God as He wishes to use me. If it is His will that I be elected, I want to serve as the Lord leads and the Session directs. I have no agenda other than wishing to serve our Savior Jesus Christ as a spiritual servant, leader, and teacher at Calvary. I am called to this position by the Holy Spirit and desire to follow that direction. To Him be glory forever. Amen.



Lonnie Craven

FAMILY: Married to Debbie; we have two adult children and one grandchild.

TESTIMONY: I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior around age six. While growing up, I attended church a few times. During my teenage years, I listened to many Billy Graham messages and rededicated my life to Christ. While in college, I attended a few Bible studies, but was lukewarm about my faith. It was not until I considered marriage that I committed my life to serving Christ at home, at work, and in church.

MINISTRIES: I have served in Calvary Worship Ministry since 2015. I have helped with Calvary Kids Music Camps, Student Orchestra, and as a Care Team Leader. I have also served on the Missions Council and with ESL, the Luke 14 Banquet, and Watchman Prayer. We have participated in missions trips to Brazil, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, and Romania, sharing Christ through concerts and testimonies as orchestra musicians with the Global Missions Project. Before joining Calvary in 2014, we traveled on missions trips to Ecuador, Guatemala, and Honduras with the International School Project, a ministry of Campus Crusade.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I want to grow more in my personal relationship with Jesus. And I am open to new areas of ministry as a deacon. At present, God has given me three strong desires: to serve, to encourage believers and non-believers, and to guide them closer to Christ. As a deacon, I believe I will have many opportunities to serve, encourage, and challenge others in developing a stronger personal relationship with Jesus.



Bill Crawford

FAMILY: Married to Crystal; we have two adult children and one teenage son.

TESTIMONY: I accepted Christ as a youth at a church revival when I was presented with the Good News and God's plan of salvation. While my profession was genuine, I did not understand how to have a personal relationship with Christ. Without a strong personal relationship with my Savior, I struggled to follow Him consistently and grow in spiritual maturity. In my early adult life, I strayed from the Lord and relied on my own strength. At the age of 33, I attended a spiritual retreat weekend, *The Walk to Emmaus*, where I received teaching on the importance of submission to Christ and growing in a personal relationship with Him. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, I strive to walk daily in His grace and grow in my faith.

MINISTRIES: I currently teach the eighth-grade Student Life Group, serve in Hearts & Hammers, and help with the Communion team. Previously, I served in VBS, Zone 345, CHAMP Sports, Street Ministry, and the Food Pantry.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I am called to serve with love, grace, and humility as modeled by Christ. My passion is to apply biblical knowledge and spiritual gifts in daily life. I endeavor to serve others through the encouragement of God's Word, praying through life's circumstances, and offering support in our journey of growing in Christ.



Scott Lauritzen

FAMILY: Married to Gabriela; we have one teenage daughter.

TESTIMONY: By God's grace, I attended a Christian elementary school where I first learned about Jesus and the Gospel. Although I accepted Christ at a young age, my faith lacked depth. In high school, I rededicated my life at a Christian camp, but it was largely an emotional response. During college, I drifted into a sinful lifestyle and lost interest in spiritual matters. Years later, while attending Calvary Church, I came under deep conviction during a sermon in 2015 and realized I had never truly been saved. Soon after, I joined a men's Bible study and began reading Scripture. Psalm 32:5 led me to genuine repentance, and I surrendered fully to Christ. Since then, the Lord has transformed my heart and life. Though I still battle sin, I now desire to walk in obedience and serve Him faithfully. I am profoundly grateful for His saving grace and the renewed passion to honor Him.

MINISTRIES: I currently serve in the Jail Ministry and help with the Communion team. Also, I have been involved in the Prison Ministry, CHAMP Sports, and the Shoe Outreach program.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I hope to serve the Lord by discipling others, teaching God's Word, and helping advance Calvary's mission of "being and making authentic followers of Christ."



Chris Murphy

FAMILY: Married to Kathy; we have two adult children.

TESTIMONY: I grew up believing that salvation depended on whether my good deeds outweighed my bad deeds. That changed when my brother invited my wife and me to an evangelical church. For the first time, I was given a Bible and heard clear teaching from Scripture, including Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, and 1 John 5:13. This was new for me, as we did not use the Bible at our current church. As I sat down to listen, I realized this message was unlike anything I had ever heard. Over time, I came to understand the truth of God's Word, confessed my sins, and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.

MINISTRIES: We have been members of Calvary since 2008. I serve at The Gathering café several days each week. I am active in Men's Bible Study and the Christian Living ALG. I have served with the Special Needs, High School, and Prison Ministries.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I desire to serve the congregation by faithfully using my spiritual gifts to support Calvary's mission. In recent months, I have grown in boldness and in awareness of the Holy Spirit's prompting, which has opened opportunities for meaningful conversations and for sharing the Gospel. It is my prayer and commitment to continue allowing God to work in and through me for His glory.



Jerry Paris

FAMILY: I was married to my wife, Naomi, for 50 years; she passed away in June 2022.

TESTIMONY: I grew up in the Catholic Church and learned its teachings, but had not made a personal commitment to Christ. After meeting Naomi at work in Chicago, we got married in 1971. Initially, we did not attend church, but after moving to Indiana, friends invited us to a Presbyterian congregation in Valparaiso, marking the start of our spiritual journey. When we relocated to Charlotte in 1985, we began attending Calvary Church, where Pastor Ross Rhoads' message on Romans led my wife and me to profess our faith publicly.

MINISTRIES: We both joined Sunday adult classes and volunteered in the Food Service Ministry. I served as an usher and now faithfully attend the Life Application ALG.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I am committed to the mission of Calvary and the emphasis on preaching and teaching the Word of God. I enjoy meeting and greeting people who visit our church. My prayer is that we never forget the many people who had a vision and love for Calvary Church.



Lester Pena

FAMILY: Married to Lenge; we have one teenage daughter and four young children.

TESTIMONY: In January 2010, my three-year marriage ended, leaving me with a three-year-old daughter and a sense that my world had collapsed. At the time, I had been working at a dental lab, where my boss consistently demonstrated the love of Christ. He often invited me to church, but I initially declined. Through his example, I saw what a God-centered marriage and life could be. After sharing my struggles with him, I eventually accepted his invitation to attend church. On Resurrection Sunday in 2010, following a night of trying to numb my pain with alcohol, I felt compelled to go. Burdened by despair, I heard a message that spoke directly to me: "There is someone here with a pain and burden in their heart, and the Lord wants you to let go." At that moment, I surrendered my life to God, asking for forgiveness and peace. Although my circumstances did not improve immediately, I experienced a peace that surpassed understanding. Nearly 16 years later, I continue to grow in wisdom and knowledge of God and remain grateful for the sacrifice that saved my soul.

MINISTRIES: At Calvary, I just started serving in The Gathering café. I also volunteered at the Queen City Pregnancy Resource Center for three years, and last November, I officially joined their staff. I get to encourage men and, most importantly, share the Gospel with those who come to the center with unexpected pregnancies and some who are abortion-minded. I help with translation, and in the Esperanza class, I do the devotional in Spanish and also lead the Father's Place ministry.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I want to serve where and how the Lord would have me. I want to be obedient to His calling to serve at Calvary as a deacon and fulfill all the roles it requires.



Nolan Schmidt

FAMILY: Married to Janice; we have two adult children and eight grandchildren.

TESTIMONY: In 1957, at age six in Denver, CO, I often reflected on a plaque in my bedroom that read: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." One Saturday night, those words weighed heavily on my mind. The next morning, I knelt by my bed and prayed — asking Jesus to forgive my sins, enter my life, and protect my soul in life and beyond. I then shared this decision with my family at breakfast. That prayer marked the defining moment of my conversion to faith in Jesus.

MINISTRIES: I actively serve in the Calvary Choir and have previously held teaching, deacon, and elder roles across multiple churches during our relocations.

How I desire God to use me in this role: My desire is to be constantly pursuing a closer relationship with Christ and to be open to His leading and direction in the deacon role as He sees best.



Ebenezer Moses Yaluka

FAMILY: Married to Keziah; we have two young children.

TESTIMONY: As a child, I attended church regularly but had not yet developed a personal relationship with Christ. During high school, while reading the Word of God — a practice instilled by my parents — I was deeply moved by the final chapters of the Gospel of John, which describe the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. I was captivated by the profound love Jesus demonstrated on the cross. In that moment, I repented of my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. Since then, His Spirit, the Word of God, and my personal quiet time have guided me in growing deeper in my knowledge and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

MINISTRIES: I serve as a substitute teacher for the Renewing Your Mind ALG. I participate in the Go2Proclaim Outreach Ministry on the third Saturday of every month. Additionally, I attend the church prayer gathering on Wednesday evening. Outside of Calvary, I am passionate about sharing the Gospel with non-believers.

How I desire God to use me in this role: I believe God has gifted me to be a servant-leader. I am committed to the mission of Calvary. I support the strong emphasis on the teaching of the Word of God and testify to the Lord Jesus at every God-led opportunity. I have a calling for evangelism and discipleship, and I believe strongly in the power of prayer. I'm excited about all that God is doing at Calvary as we seek to follow His direction.