



Sunday, October 2, 2016

Dear Central family,

God is faithful and our hearts are grateful. Praise his glorious name!

After months of listening to sermons, reading resumes, checking references, studying leadership profiles, traveling to other cities, and meeting potential candidates, we are thrilled to announce that we, your Senior Pastor Search Committee, unanimously believe God has answered our prayers. From the beginning of our search process we have prayed that God would show us the man he has called to be our next Senior Pastor. We implored you to pray for the man God was calling, and you did. Thank you!

**Confidently sensing God's will, we are pleased to recommend our unanimous choice of the Rev. Dr. Clay Smith as our candidate to be the next Senior Pastor of Central Church.** Your committee's vote was truly unanimous; God built and sustained a unique unity within your search committee, and we regard this as a special gift from the hand of God.

We are also pleased to tell you that **Rev. Dr. Clay Smith feels the same assurance of God's call to Central Church.** God has worked in the hearts and life circumstances of Clay and Missy Smith in a unique and mysterious way to call them back to Central. Many of you will remember Clay, his wife, Missy, and their children, Emma and Isaiah, from his prior service at Central before he was called in 2011 as Senior Pastor of Rivermont EPC Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. We believe this is God's plan; in the beginning, we never would have conceived the steps or final outcome. We are praying God will confirm his call by uniting our congregation in calling Dr. Clay Smith in the same way he has united our committee.

Perhaps some background would be helpful. It was essential from the beginning that our recommended candidate exhibit a mature and vibrantly humble relationship with Jesus Christ and a deep commitment to Reformed doctrine and EPC polity. In addition, we focused our search on four major qualities:

1. Biblical teaching, preaching, communicating, and educating

Clay Smith is a strong match in all of these areas. Clay is a comfortable and effective communicator; he makes learning a shared endeavor; he is motivated to affect others through his sermons; he is relational.

2. Strategic leadership for outreach, ministry, and mission

Clay is highly motivated to employ a collaborative and participatory leadership style. Clay builds vision by crafting a mission that is "our mission."

3. Pastoral example, influence, and guide

Clay is a pastor, highly focused on helping those who need assistance and support. He invests in people with direct encouragement and warmth; he has a tender heart.

4. Collaborative and relational manager and team builder

Central's size, with its school and primary emphasis on outreach, requires a leader with managerial skills. Clay's operating style includes both that of a team leader and a facilitator. Clay facilitates organizational effectiveness by building teams, collaborating, building relationships, and investing in people.

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As you may recall, our search began 34 months ago. Initially, we established committee guidelines (how we would work together) and created an initial survey to hear your desires and affirm your priorities. We also sought clarification from the Session on several key areas (the status of our West County site, women deacons, and our governance model) that would influence the type of candidate we would seek; Session's process on these issues took over two years.

Furthermore, we looked at the possibility of considering an internal candidate, Interim Senior Pastor Bob Hopper. This required us to interact with our Session and our presbytery's ministerial committee for permission to consider an interim, which took about ten months, working through various committee schedules. In the end, for a number of personal reasons, Bob asked that we remove his name from consideration.

In August 2015, we engaged the support of JobfitMatters (JfM) as a partner/consultant to assist in our external search. We utilized another survey to affirm Central's core values, assembled an "Opportunity Profile," and produced a video describing Central Church; the "O. P." and video were sent to about *800 people* from our collective candidate lists. JfM personally contacted *109 candidates*. We were blessed with *over 20 candidates who completed the full process* for our consideration. We narrowed our candidate pool to *seven semi-finalists*, and search committee members visited with *five candidates*.

While Clay Smith was personally known to us, he objectively rose to the pinnacle of a large pool of candidates as the very best choice to shepherd Central Presbyterian Church.

We trust you will enjoy getting to know Clay, Missy, and their family as you read the attached biographical sheet. Clay's love for Jesus and his church is real and refreshing. He is dedicated to a strong pulpit ministry and to the advancement of the gospel through making disciples and challenging us to embrace and integrate the gospel in our personal lives and communities.

Clay is a pastor, teacher, husband, father, and leader in the EPC who is deeply loved by the congregation at Rivermont Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Please pray for Rivermont as they grieve the transition of leadership in their family; Clay is committed to leaving Rivermont well.

Clay will be in St. Louis on **Wednesday, October 12** to meet and greet you at our **Town Hall meeting scheduled at 6:30 p.m.** We will gather as a congregation between worship services at **10:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 16** to vote on extending our formal call to Dr. Clay Smith.

On behalf of the entire search committee, thank you! You have supported us well by your prayers and respect. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve you. It has been and continues to be a rewarding, moving, faith-building ministry experience for us. Remembering that our hope and faith is rooted in the bloody cross, empty tomb, and occupied throne of our Savior and King, Jesus, we place our trust in him alone and find this to be our greatest joy.

We hope that you can sense our peace and excitement as we recommend Dr. Clay Smith to you as our next Senior Pastor of Central Presbyterian Church.

In our Lord's service,

Your Senior Pastor Search Committee

David Dunlap	Shelley Milligan
Jim Fiala	Neal Nielsen
Bill Gladney	Ellen Schmidt
Jeff Lindstrom	Barb Wait
Bob Mark	

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## Pastor D. Clay Smith

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### Family

Clay (44), Missy, Emma (13), Isaiah (9)  
Current home is Lynchburg, Virginia.  
Clay's family lives in Mississippi; Missy's family  
lives in West Virginia.

### Early Years

Grew up in Indianola, Mississippi. Professed  
faith in Christ at age 6. Grew in his faith through  
Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) at  
Mississippi State.



### Education

- B.S., Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Mississippi State University, 1994
- M.Div., Covenant Theological Seminary, 1999
- D.Min., Redemptive Leadership, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2013

### Current Ministry

**Senior Pastor, Rivermont Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, 2011-present**

- Served as Senior Pastor and weekly preacher in a 973-member church that has grown during his tenure.
- Led the recasting of vision for a 140-year-old congregation which led to a \$3.1 million building project to implement the vision and mission for a gospel-driven, relationally engaged church.
- Catalyzed the “No Walls” church partnership across racial and denominational lines.
- Developed an “elder pool” of non-installed elders to assist the Session with shepherding functions within the church.
- Enabled the flourishing of 12 full-time and roughly 12 part-time staff.

### Previous Ministry Work

**Senior Associate Pastor, Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Missouri, 2005-2011**

- Served as second preacher and teacher.
- Developed Trio Sunday evening worship service.
- Oversaw all staff for youth education ministries (nursery, children, students), missions, and worship (around 30+ people).
- Led the ministry team that designed and implemented Central's (now 10:45) worship service.

**Adjunct Professor of Homiletics, Covenant Seminary, 2005-2011**

**Assistant Pastor, Covenant Community Church, Scottsdale, Arizona, 2002-2005**

**Director of Relationship Management, Food for the Hungry, 2001-2002**

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## Clay's Ministry Passions

- Leading and equipping — Each of these words are intentional.
- Leadership involves casting vision in ways and using language that moves the congregation toward the kingdom mission God is calling a people to be and do in a particular location at a particular time. This is done through good solid communication of the word, motivating God's people in the grace of the gospel, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Collaborating with the Session in developing vision and walking with other leaders in the congregation. The vision and shepherding ministry of the church is done in partnership with elders God has raised up.

## Some Descriptions of Clay by Others

- "Godly, highly intelligent, thoughtful, loyal, wise, transparent"
- "You can see his wisdom in the way that he's a very good and careful listener. He assesses things judiciously. He's often slow to speak. He doesn't snap to things."
- "He sees ministry as not just programs and operations but about the people."
- "Clay is exactly the sort of guy that Central needs for their next generation of leadership. He does all of the things that the church desperately needs a pastor or leader to do, and he does them well."

## Clay's Favorites

The Smith family enjoys hiking and biking, being in and near the water, and good food!

## Sermons on the Internet

Weekly sermons may be downloaded/listened to at [www.rivermont.org/go/downloads](http://www.rivermont.org/go/downloads).

Recommended downloads include:

- 9/25, "The Grace of Affliction"
- 7/31, "Good Grief"
- 7/24, "Inside Out"
- 6/19, "The Making of a Shepherd"
- 6/12, "What Now"
- 5/15, "More Than Meets the Eye"

## Some Search Committee/JobfitMatters Observations About Clay

- Clay has a confident humility.
- Clay clearly articulates the gospel in every sermon.
- Clay is motivated to affect others through his sermons. He has researched and implemented the concept of building relationships from the pulpit.
- Clay is encouraged by Central's intention to grow toward a gospel-infused, collaborative leadership culture.
- Clay fits best in an environment where people, ideas, a sense of adventure, and an emphasis on service are integral parts of church culture.
- Clay has a high EQ (emotional intelligence) — he is incredibly aware of himself, others, and situations, almost never misreading "what's going on."
- Clay is serving in a church that is healthy and growing. When initially approached by our committee, he was not looking to leave. However, after many conversations, meetings, and much prayer, Clay began feeling a strong sense of call to Central.

## Next Steps

Town Hall meeting: Wednesday, October 12, 6:30 p.m.

Congregational meeting and vote: Sunday, October 16, 10:30 a.m.

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