



# Introducing RYAN & HEATHER LAUGHLIN



The Pastoral Search Committee is excited to recommend Rev. Ryan Laughlin for your consideration as our next Senior Pastor. Ryan was born and raised in the suburbs of Washington DC, the same city in which, many years later, he would meet his wife, Heather. In 1995, Ryan graduated from West Point (June), was married to Heather (July), and headed to Fort Lewis, WA (August) to commence six years of service as an officer in the Army. In 2001, they moved to St. Louis to attend our denomination's seminary, Covenant

Theological Seminary. After graduation in 2004, until 2007, he served as an Assistant Pastor at MPC. In January 2007, Ryan accepted the call as Senior Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, the pulpit which had previously been so ably manned by Francis Shaeffer and George Robertson. Ryan and Heather have three boys, Nathan, Luke, and Zachary.

There are many opportunities for you learn more about the Laughlins, and while the weekend will be a whirlwind of activity for both them and our church, we encourage you to listen to his heart for the Lord and the Lord's people in his [recorded sermons](#).

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**MEET RYAN AND HEATHER:** *Full schedule at [mcleanpres.org/searchupdates](http://mcleanpres.org/searchupdates)*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24:

**Ryan will preach at all services, we will have a full schedule of services:**

- 9am: McLean Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall; Fairfax Sherwood Center; Livestream
- 10:45am: McLean Sanctuary & Fellowship Hall; Fairfax Sherwood Center
- 5:15pm: McLean Sanctuary

**PSC Coffee Table (McLean Grand Foyer & Courtyard):** Chat with the Pastoral Search Committee and ask your questions between the morning services.

**Churchwide Town Hall:** 6:30pm, McLean Sanctuary (Livestream option available)  
*Time estimate is approximate, Town Hall will begin immediately following the 5:15pm service.*

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31, 12:30PM, MCLEAN SANCTUARY — For all church members to vote on Ryan's candidacy. *More details to follow.*

# THE LAUGHLINS' STORY



**RYAN, TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOURSELF.** I grew up in Bethesda, MD, hopping the Metro, playing club soccer, and cheering on WFT (back when their name and record were different). When I was eight, my father's company moved us to Cairo, Egypt for two years, giving me a big view of the world at a young age. As a high schooler at Landon School, I enjoyed acting in plays, playing sports, and helping lead Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). I studied Literature and Philosophy at West Point, having developed an interest in how good stories explore life's deepest questions.

**HOW DID YOU AND HEATHER COME TO KNOW JESUS AS YOUR SAVIOR?** While I can't remember a time I didn't know Jesus as Lord, I was deeply shaped by the youth ministry at Fourth Presbyterian Church and the Navigators at West Point. Both ministries cultivated my love for God's Word, my identity in Christ, and my desire for the Church to be a winsome witness. Heather was also raised by faithful Christian parents and has known the Lord all her life. Service in the local church and participation in Bible studies has strengthened the rich foundation of gospel truth her family established.

## **HOW DID YOU AND HEATHER MEET?**

Heather and I met in 1994, at a leadership conference in DC. To my delight, we were assigned to the same small group out of 2,000 students. We shared a common love for literature, hymns, and Jesus and, not long after, for each other. We were married the following July (1995) and moved out West for the start of the Laughlin Adventure.



## **TELL US ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN.**

When we left McLean in 2007, Nathan and Luke were still "small and squishy." Not anymore. Nathan (20) is a junior at Covenant College, studying political science and economics and co-captain of the soccer team. Luke (18) is also a Covenant student, playing alongside his brother on the soccer field and pursuing a business degree with a Spanish minor. Zach, barely 12 weeks old when we arrived in St. Louis, is now a freshman in high school. He plays soccer and wrestles and, with his brothers out of the house, is now forced to endure his dad's jokes on his own.

**HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE LORD CALLING YOU TO MCLEAN?** We are humbled and honored to be considered to serve as your next Senior Pastor. Ever since the search committee first approached us, Heather and I have been praying earnestly for the Lord to guide us, and the committee, every step of the way. While saying goodbye to our congregation would be sad, we are truly excited by the prospect of joining you in what the Lord is already doing in and through you at McLean.

# REFLECTING ON CONGREGATIONAL PRIORITIES



Through the congregational survey and roughly three dozen listening sessions, MPC members identified three priorities necessary for the next Senior Pastor: preaching, leadership, and discipleship. Below are the PSC's high-level observations on those priorities drawn from extensive interviews with Ryan, and conversations with fellow pastors, elders, and Covenant Presbyterian Church members who know him well.

**ON PREACHING** | **“I want people to be awed by the Scriptures and to leave with Jesus, not a to-do list.”** Ryan is an expository preacher, working through whole books from both Testaments to teach the whole counsel of God. In listening to over 100 sermons, the PSC consistently observed Ryan demonstrate an awareness and compassion that enabled him to communicate even the hard truths of Scripture in a personal and engaging way. He preaches grace and never loses sight of the Scripture's call for God's people to respond in joyful obedience. Ryan's references consistently noted he focuses on showing Jesus Christ, and in doing so, illuminates the glory of God. *For Ryan's view of preaching in his own words please see: [“Preaching Between a Glide and a Grind”](#).*

**ON LEADERSHIP** | **“We need to get from A to B, but always in a way that values people as God does.”** Several PCA leaders commended Ryan's reputation for fostering unity among his congregation, leadership, and staff. One pastor noted that Ryan reads every room well and delivers remarkable achievements even where opinions differ. His leadership is rooted in a soul-settled belief in God's sovereignty, which enables him to stay calm even when issues are complex or contentious. He believes that Christians can always find unity and common-cause in the fundamentals of the gospel, even on divisive issues. As one of Ryan's elders noted, “Ryan listens to understand, not just to check the box but because he genuinely believes people and their views matter.”

**ON DISCIPLESHIP** | **“Discipleship grows from an understanding of how people become more like Christ.”** Ryan promotes church-wide discipleship through the preached Word and discipleship programs, and teaches about challenging or complex issues in various forums. He and Heather also personally prioritize discipleship through individual “life-on-life ministry.” Each of them disciple a few people at a time, working to spur vertical growth – a desire for a deeper walk with Christ – and horizontal growth – a desire to engage with others and love them well. In the process they teach those disciples how to disciple others, building a culture of discipleship.

**A SHEPHERD'S HEART** | Across two decades of dealing with the profound challenges of pastoral ministry, the PSC has appreciated Ryan's commitment to care for God's people personally, in addition to wanting to leave his current church in a healthy and upbuilding fashion. In Ryan's words: **“I have never lost my wonder and appreciation at being invited into people's most vulnerable moments. You carry the wounds of your people with you. Knowing the stories I am preaching and pastoring into is humbling, rewarding, and very motivating.”**



# RESUME

## EDUCATION

**PhD Candidate, Theology and Culture (ABD)** September 2012-present  
*Thesis topic: "The Preaching of Francis Schaeffer"*  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO

**Master of Divinity** May 2004  
Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO

**Bachelor of Science** June 1995  
United States Military Academy, West Point, NY

## EXPERIENCE

*Covenant Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO* January 2007-present  
**Senior Pastor**

*Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO* September 2007-present  
**Adjunct Professor of Homiletics**

*McLean Presbyterian Church, McLean, VA* June 2004-December 2006  
**Assistant Pastor of Adult Congregational Life and Ministry Operations**

*United States Army* June 1995-July 2001  
**Officer, Medical Service Corps**

## OTHER SERVICE

*Covenant Theological Seminary* January 2009-present  
**Board Member**

*Missouri Presbytery* January 2019-present  
**Moderator**  
**Chairman, Reformed University Ministries Committee** September 2012-July 2017

## AWARDS

**Robert G. Rayburn Homiletics Award** May 2004  
*(for excellence in preaching at Covenant Seminary)*

You may listen to Ryan's sermons by going to <https://www.cpcstl.org/sermons/>