

Church Profile

PROVIDENCE REFORMED CHURCH

Dear Brother,

You are holding this packet in your hand because you are prayerfully considering, or someone suggested you might prayerfully consider, submitting your name as a candidate to serve as the pastor of Providence Reformed Church in Bakersfield, California. Please allow these pages to serve as your introduction to PRC, its people, the city of Bakersfield, and to us, the Pastor Search Committee.

We are confident that Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, is already moving in the life of the teaching elder He has sovereignly ordained to shepherd PRC and to serve alongside its congregation as we labor for the kingdom together in this place. Pray with us and for us as we listen to and discern the Spirit's direction and know that we have been praying and continue to pray for every man who takes up this packet.

PRC Search Committee

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OUR CALLING

CORE BELIEFS:

We are a conservative and confessional church, which means that we use confessions as secondary standards for our beliefs. Our primary standard is the Word of God, the Bible. Our standards are the WCF, the WCF Larger and Shorter Catechism. When it comes to issues on which both the Scripture and the Westminster standards allow brothers to differ in good fellowship (example: age of the earth, eschatology), so do we.

OUR STORY

RECENT HISTORY:

Five faithful, godly, and much-beloved men have served us as our pastors over the years. Our first pastor was an assistant at a PCA church, Calvary – Glendale, in the Los Angeles area. When a formative group in Bakersfield reached out to Calvary for help and encouragement, Calvary responded by making Brent Bradley available for an afternoon and evening once each week to lead a pioneering Bible study.

In some respects, Calvary was our mother church.

After several months, the core group formed a mission congregation out of the Bible study, and Brent Bradley and his family moved from LA to Bakersfield. Within two years, in September 1979, the church particularized as a congregation of the PCA.

Brent Bradley continued as founding pastor through 1982. Succeeding pastors include Robert Ferguson (1983-1987), Dave Crenshaw (1987-1994), Doug Vanderpol (1995-2001), and Randy Martin (2006-2020).

2002-2006 can be considered to be an asterisk period. Randy Martin moved to Bakersfield in 2002 to be closer to aging parents and in addition to teaching at a Christian High School he provided regular pulpit supply for Providence after being licensed by Pacific Presbytery. He had demitted his credentials in Missouri Presbytery in 2001, but was re-credentialed as a teaching elder by Pacific Presbytery in 2006.

We are seeking a new pastor at this time because Randy Martin retired from full-time gospel ministry at the end of October 2020 and relocated to the Eastern US so that he and his wife would be closer to children and grandchildren. He continues to preach for us live via videoconferencing.

There is a hurdle to overcome in describing a church that is still small after 40 years. PRC's size has been up and down at times but has never exceeded 90 in attendance – except perhaps on one or two special occasions.

Our smaller size permits us to welcome newcomers with attention, sweetness, and encouragement. However, it also means that some newcomers are let down by a shortage of the expected programs or efforts that they think a church should have – and which a smaller congregation struggles to provide.

Most who have come to us and stayed are believers who have been hurt or let down in another setting. Often, they were dissatisfied with the teaching where they were – and sought greater depth and a more Biblical message – usually, but not always – seeking a Reformed perspective.

While still small, Providence has a solid foundation for the future. Leaders, members, and friends are doctrinally sound and enthusiastic Biblical learners. In some settings, small churches are stuck in the past or some rigid formulation – we are not. At most, some members are hesitant – wanting to say the right thing (the Reformed thing) – and cautious about their past influences. This appears to be self-imposed.

Most would like to have more outreach – bridging and mirroring their own life experience – but are looking for an approach that differs from program based evangelistic campaigns. Support and the financial foundation for future ministry are sound – essentially a non-issue. The congregation is multi-ethnic typically including Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, and Korean American individuals and families.

As a place to minister, Bakersfield is easy and hard. People are friendly and unhurried. In some ways, it is a little like the so-called Bible Belt. Acquaintances among neighbors, co-workers, and random community contacts typically have an existing church connection or are close to someone who has. So, if they do not have a personal church connection, they are aware of and have been invited to outreach events by friends and family.

The most common affiliations are conservative, including Baptist, Pentecostal/charismatic, and Roman Catholic connections. Individual outreach often involves comparing and contrasting doctrinal differences. Believer's baptism and the sovereignty of God are often cited as hurdles.

Nevertheless, sin and sinners abound in Bakersfield. This is as true here as any other suburban-metro area. Alienation, immorality, and self-orientation all manifest as concerns of the heart. Bakersfield has some gang and crime influences, but these are somewhat isolated geographically.

We lack the long commutes typical of the major metro areas of California, but it is not unusual for several of our members to be away from home during the week traveling for work projects.

Currently, we meet in an industrial park. We have been meeting here for the past three years. We have not targeted a specific geographic area of the city and most members and friends find the meeting location to be a convenient drive for them. Some drive longer distances from outlying areas because they find that the ministries closer to their homes are theologically weak. We have an interest in developing Spanish-speaking ministry but have not fully charted out that thought. A Spanish-speaking ministry is not linked to our meeting location but could happen here as well as at any other location in the area.

OUR COMMUNITY

CURRENT MINISTRY SIZE:

1. Members and average attendance:

The congregation is made up of 56 members - this number includes the children of communicant members - and 20 non-members who attend regularly and participate faithfully as part of the body of PRC. Of late, average weekly attendance has hovered in the mid-to-high 30s including children. An unusually well-attended service would reach the 50s.

2. Leadership and budget:

The ordained leadership is made up of three ruling elders and three deacons. One of the three deacons is on hiatus from active diaconal duties as his employment keeps him out of the area most of the time. As to budget, the teaching elder is our only full-time paid

position, though we do provide a stipend to one of the ruling elders in his role as our pianist. The church is financially stable with a reasonable savings. A copy of our annual budget report to the congregation can be provided on request.

3. Active, ongoing ministries and their staffing (leadership):

Intersect - our weekly men's study, led by a lay volunteer. During the pandemic it continues to meet online and women have been welcomed to join.

Men's prayer breakfast - biweekly, a bring your own breakfast event in the church library led by a ruling elder.

Nursery and Children's ministries - weekly during the latter part of Lord's day worship.

Nursery and preschool age children receive a children's lesson during the sermon.

Participation is at the parents' option as we welcome the children to remain in the service as well. The nursery is staffed by volunteers from the congregation who have passed a background clearance and led by our volunteer nursery coordinator.

Sunday evening study - weekly (on hiatus during the pandemic) study open to men and women. The study takes place in the home of a member and leadership rotates as we conclude each topic and begin another. The current study is on the book of Hebrews and led by one of the ruling elders.

Not currently active:

Women's weekly study. This study is led by a lay volunteer and is most frequently a book study. There is no volunteer available to lead at this time.

As noted under budget, all staffing for these ministries is unpaid volunteer staffing.

4. Reformation Bakersfield:

PRC participates with three other churches in a ministry called Reformation Bakersfield (reformationbakersfield.com). From the web site: "We are a group of evangelical churches cooperating in an effort to see the local churches in Bakersfield recover a more biblically and confessionally robust understanding of the Protestant faith. ... We will pursue that end through conferences, special joint worship services and events, and

prayer." Information about past conferences can be found at reformationbakersfield.com/sermons.

TARGET MINISTRY AREA:

Bakersfield is a charter city in Kern County, California, United States. It is the county seat and largest city of Kern County. The city covers about 151 sq mi (390 km²) near the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley and the Central Valley region. Bakersfield's population is around 380,000, making it the 53rd-most populous city in the United States of America and the 9th-most populous city in California. The Bakersfield–Delano Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes all of Kern County, had a 2010 census population of 839,631, making it the 62nd-largest metropolitan area in the United States. The more built-up portion of the metro area that includes Bakersfield and areas immediately around the city, such as East Bakersfield, Oildale and Rosedale, has a population of about 520,000.

Ethnic composition	2010	1990	1970	1940
White	56.80%	72.70%	83.60%	94.60%
—Non-Hispanic	37.80%	65.90%	70.80%	n/a
Black or African American	8.10%	9.40%	13.30%	3.50%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	45.50%	20.50%	10.90%	n/a
Asian	6.20%	3.60%	1.10%	—

Kern County is the most productive oil-producing county and the fourth-most productive agricultural county (by value) in the United States. Industries in and around Bakersfield include natural gas and other energy extraction, mining, petroleum refining, distribution, food processing, and corporate regional offices. The city is also the birthplace of the country music genre known as the Bakersfield Sound. There is also a strong aviation, space, and military presence in the county, such as Edwards Air Force Base, the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station, and the Mojave Air and Space Port.

The county spans the southern end of the Central Valley. Covering 8,161.42 square miles (21,138.0 km²), it ranges west to the southern slope of the Coast Ranges, and east beyond the southern slope of the eastern Sierra Nevada into the Mojave Desert, at the city of Ridgecrest. Its northernmost city is Delano, and its southern reach expands just beyond Lebec to the Grapevine, and the northern extremity of the parallel Antelope Valley. (Wikipedia)

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Faith background of target ministry area

Recent data shows that about 49% of Bakersfield residents identify as religious and about 30% of these religious residents are Roman Catholic. Non-Christian religions are in the minority. Non-Catholics/Protestants tend to be Pentecostal or Baptist. A growing trend, including among those who profess faith in Christ, is to deny the label of “religious” for various reasons.

2. Lifestyle groups in the target ministry area

According to recent data, the majority of Bakersfield residents are married (53%). Families who have children under the age of 18 make up about 54% of Bakersfield families. The median age is 30 years old.

3. Primary concerns of congregation members

- a. Retention of young adults and young families
- b. Lack of numerical growth over time
- c. Many responsibilities placed on few volunteers (deacons, nursery workers, etc.).

4. Church program preferences

- a. Mid-week small groups
- b. A robust nursery team
- c. Youth group
- d. Mid-week women’s ministries
- e. Spanish Bible Study

Other notes: We sincerely desire our church to be a place where all of our neighbors would feel welcome and loved across all demographics and cultural divides.

DESIRED PASTOR PROFILE

Providence Reformed Church of Bakersfield, California is seeking a teaching elder (TE) to serve in a lead pastor role. PRC has identified the following priorities as the foundational responsibilities for the lead pastor.

The labor of preaching being the defining labor of a teaching elder's calling, a suitable candidate is to provide expository preaching based on a solid doctrinal foundation which enables the saints to apply and execute God's imperatives while dealing with all that God's providence brings into their lives. Further, as lead pastor, PRC has identified the following foundational responsibilities:

While the Ruling Elders and a few other men teach Adult Sunday School and lead home Bible Studies and several women also teach children in Sunday School and other women in home Bible studies, PRC's TE is expected to provide oversight and counsel to these teachers, as well as laboring alongside them.

The intent of PRC's high priority on the preaching of the word and teaching is the spiritual development of the members. The Good Shepherd sees to the discipling of His sheep. His under-shepherd must do likewise.

The PRC saints expect the TE, along with the Elders, to visit members who are experiencing an emergency or a hospital crisis. The TE is expected to prepare the saints to die well and be ready to see Jesus when He calls them home. It is hoped that the TE will also take time to visit the homes of the congregation.

PRC saints desire a strong Congregational Fellowship. All church fellowship activities on days other than Sunday are rare. While men's fellowship, study, and prayer times have been consistent, similar activities and opportunities for the women have been few and short lived. We are seeking a TE who will take the lead in building the community life of the church.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

One of PRC's ruling elders and our worship leader, **Bruce Brady**, is a lifelong resident of rural Kern County. He teaches private music lessons and conducts the community orchestra near his home. Bruce has been married for eight years to Hannah and they enjoy road trips, watching old movies, and talking baseball stats.

Ruling Elder, **Stew Fleeman** grew up in Southern California – near the beach – but had a desire to be involved in the financial side of Agriculture so the Lord saw fit to bring him to Bakersfield. He is married to Elaine and they have three grown daughters and three granddaughters.

Michael Fleming and his wife, Carol, both grew up in the Bakersfield area. They have five adult children. He is retired from the IT department of CSU Bakersfield. He enjoys studying theology and also spends time hiking and letterboxing with his wife.

Michael Hudson is a ruling elder at PRC and leads a software development team for the county of Kern. He is a distance-learning student with a desire by God's will to enter full-time ministry in the future. While he has lived in Bakersfield for 40 years, he is married to a refugee from the Midwest, Susan. Michael enjoys getting beat at chess by the deacon.

Daphyne Shimeall is an East Coast transplant to Bakersfield. She has been married 25 years to one of the deacons, Jon, and they have two adult children. She has a passion for education and loves to read anything she can get her hands on.