



Readington Reformed Church
Self Study Report
Submitted to the Classis of Delaware/Raritan
Reformed Church in America
June 8, 2026

The mission statement of the congregation is to worship God and make the love of Jesus Christ tangible through care, service, and outreach.

“Above all, we exist to worship God... and make the love of Jesus Christ tangible by caring for one another and those around us and... spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.” This calling is lived out through joyful worship, prayer, fellowship, and the practice of Christian values in daily life, with a commitment to serving both the congregation and the broader community in times of need

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Process and Methodology
- III. Identity and Mission
- IV. History and Context
- V. Congregational Life
- VI. Leadership and Structure
- VII. Financial Health
- VIII. Facilities and Property
- IX. Strengths and Growth Areas
- X. Expectations for Our Next Pastor
- XI. Community Engagement and Outreach
- XII. Looking Forward: Vision for the Next Five Years

Sources

I. Introduction

This Self Study Report represents the collective reflection of the Readington Reformed Church congregation as we prepare to call a part-time pastor to serve with us in ministry. Over the course of many months, our members have engaged in honest conversation, prayerful discernment, and careful self-examination. As the Psalmist writes, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts"* (Psalm 139:23)—and it is in that spirit of openness that we present this report. What follows is the product of that work document that seeks to present a faithful and transparent portrait of who we are as a community of faith.

Readington Reformed Church is located at 124 Readington Road, PO Box 1, Readington, NJ 08870. We can be reached by phone at (908) 534-2077, by email at readingtonreformedchurch@gmail.com or through our website at

www.readingtonreformed.org. We are a member congregation of the Reformed Church in America, affiliated with the Classis of Delaware/Raritan. Our Interim Part-Time Minister and Classis Supervisor is Rev. Robert Fretz who can be reached at (201) 788-6601 or rwfretz51@gmail.com.

We offer this Self Study with both humility and hope. Our congregation is not without its challenges as we are a small church in a rural community, navigating questions of identity, growth, and sustainability that many congregations face today. But we are also a church with deep roots, faithful members, and a genuine desire to continue serving God in this place. We hold to the promise that *"the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6). This document is intended to give prospective pastoral candidates an honest look at our identity, our strengths, our challenges, and our hopes—so that they can prayerfully discern whether God might be calling them to serve with this faithful community in the next chapter of our shared story.

This Self Study is intended as a companion to the Readington Reformed Church Profile. While the Church Profile provides standardized data for the pastoral search process, this Self Study offers the narrative context, congregational reflections, and honest self-assessment that we believe will help prospective candidates truly know not just as numbers on a form, but as a living community of faith with a story worth telling.

II. Process and Methodology

The development of this Self Study has been a deliberate and collaborative process, designed to ensure broad congregational participation and to produce a document that honestly reflects the life, character, and aspirations of Readington Reformed Church. We were guided by the conviction that *"where there is no counsel, plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed"* (Proverbs 15:22). What follows is a summary of the steps we took and the timeline we followed.

In August and September of 2025, the Consistory designed the foundational work of assembling the church profile. Consistory members gathered congregational data, reviewed historical records, and consulted regularly with Rev. Robert Fretz, to ensure

our process and documentation would align with the expectations of the Reformed Church in America.

Work on the church profile began first, with a draft compiled in early October integrating input from Consistory members and church leadership. As the self study process unfolded, its findings were incorporated into the profile on an ongoing basis, shaping and refining the document throughout the entire process. During September and October, the Consistory also designed a congregational survey to capture the perspectives, hopes, and concerns of our members. The survey addressed a broad range of topics, including worship preferences, desired pastoral qualities, congregational strengths, areas for growth, and our collective vision for the future of Readington Reformed Church.

On October 12, 2025, the congregational survey was distributed to all active members and regular attendees. From November 2025 through January 2026, responses were collected, tallied, and carefully summarized by the Consistory. The Consistory identified recurring themes and analyzed the results to inform both this Self Study and the formal Church Profile.

On February 14, 2026, the survey results and preliminary findings were presented to the congregation during a special meeting. This gathering provided an important opportunity for discussion, clarification, and additional input, ensuring that the final document would truly reflect the voices of our members.

In April 2026, the final Self Study was compiled, integrating survey findings, congregational feedback, Church Profile data, and leadership reflections into this comprehensive document. Throughout the process, our goal has been transparency and inclusivity—ensuring that every member who wished to contribute had the opportunity to do so, and that the result is a document our entire congregation can stand behind. Throughout, we have sought to heed the call of James: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him"* (James 1:5).

III. Identity and Mission

Readington Reformed Church is a member congregation of the Reformed Church in America, affiliated with the Classis of Delaware/Raritan. We are currently seeking a part-time pastor to provide spiritual leadership, preaching, and pastoral care for our congregation.

Our congregation's identity and calling are rooted in three enduring commitments: faithful worship, mutual care, and service to our community. In this way, we strive to fulfill the ancient call: *"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Micah 6:8). These core values are the foundation on which our life together has been built for generations. Theologically, the congregation identifies as moderate to conservative, grounded in the Reformed tradition and committed to Scripture-centered worship and teaching. We believe the Bible is not merely a text to be studied but a living word that speaks into our everyday lives—guiding how we raise our families, serve our neighbors, and navigate the joys and challenges of each day. We look forward to partnering with our next pastor as we continue to live out these convictions together in the years ahead.

Our congregation currently has 43 active confessing members, a slight decrease from 44 five years ago. We have 1 inactive confessing member, which is a significant reduction from 8 five years ago reflecting a successful and intentional effort to engage members or to appropriately update the membership rolls. Our average Sunday worship attendance has grown from 25–30 five years ago to 35–40 today, a notable and encouraging increase for a congregation of our size.

Age Demographics

Age Range	Percentage of Congregation
0–20 years	—
20–34 years	5%
35–49 years	10%
50–64 years	35%
65 and older	50%

Racial and Ethnic Composition

Racial/Ethnic Group	Percentage
African American	5%
Asian	—
Caucasian	95%
Hispanic	—
Other	—

We gather for worship each Sunday at 9:30 AM. As noted above, our average attendance has grown meaningfully over the past five years, even during a period of pastoral transition. We believe this speaks to the commitment and vitality of our members, and to the warmth of our community. We give thanks that, as the early church knew, *"the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:47), and we trust that God continues to draw people to this place of worship.

IV. History and Context

Readington Reformed Church is a historic congregation situated in the rural community of Readington Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The immediate area surrounding the church has a population of under 2,500, and the community retains its distinctly rural character quality that shapes both our identity and our ministry.

Our main church building was constructed in 1864, and a Christian Education (CE) wing—providing dedicated space for Sunday School, Bible study, and faith formation programs—was added in 1964, reflecting over 160 years of continuous ministry on this site. The building itself is a beloved landmark in the community, and its preservation is both a point of pride and an ongoing responsibility for our congregation. We are mindful that *"unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain"* (Psalm 127:1), and we believe God's hand has been upon this place from its founding.

Our recent pastoral history reflects both the faithfulness and the transitions that have marked our life together. Rev. Raymond VandeGeissen touched the hearts of our congregation through his musical gifts — leading worship with his guitar and his voice in a way that made Scripture and song feel deeply personal.

Rev. Catherin Gumpert embodied a spirit of generosity that was evident in everything she did, modeling a giving heart that inspired our congregation to open its hands more freely to one another and to those in need.

Rev. Elizabeth Estes brought a gift for encouragement and a refreshing openness to new ideas, lifting the people around her and inviting the congregation to imagine new possibilities for ministry and mission.

Currently, we are served by an interim contract pastor on a part-time basis, who has provided steady and caring leadership during this transitional period.

One of the most meaningful recent experiences in our congregational life was the series of spiritual journey discussions hosted by our Classis Supervisor, Rev. Robert Fretz. Congregants signed up for small-group sessions held after worship over several weeks. During these gatherings, members shared their stories of faith—what brought them to Readington Reformed Church, moments of spiritual insight that shaped their journeys, and their hopes and concerns for the congregation's future. These conversations revealed shared experiences that many of us had never heard before, and they deepened the sense of community and mutual understanding among our members. The spiritual journey discussions reminded us that, while we are a small congregation, we are bound together by deep and authentic relationships with one another and with God. These gatherings echoed the words of Hebrews: *"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together"* (Hebrews 10:24–25).

V. Congregational Life

Worship

Our worship follows the traditional Reformed liturgical pattern as practiced in the Reformed Church in America: approaching God, receiving God's word, and responding to God. Each Sunday service begins with a call to worship, followed by prayers, scripture readings, a sermon, and concludes with a benediction. Our congregation values a very traditional worship style with a consistent order of worship. We gather for one service each Sunday at 9:30 AM.

Worship is the center of our life together. Our members appreciate the reverence, familiarity, and depth of the Reformed liturgy, and they find sustenance in the weekly rhythm of gathering, hearing the Word proclaimed, and being sent out in service. Music is an integral part of our worship, supported by our part-time Music Director and our pipe organ. As the Psalmist exhorts, "*Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth*" (Psalm 96:1)—and our congregation takes joy in lifting voices together in praise.

Educational Programs

Although we are a smaller congregation, we maintain an active commitment to Christian education and spiritual growth. RRC Women's Ministries hosts a spring women's conference each year, featuring a different biblical topic for study and reflection. Additionally, we are blessed by a weekly Bible study that runs from September through June, led by a lay leader from a neighboring Reformed Church. Over the years, these studies have explored a rich range of biblical and theological themes — from the lives and witness of women in the Bible, to foundational topics such as forgiveness, salvation, and sin. This breadth of study reflects our conviction that Scripture speaks to the full depth of human experience and calls us to continually grow in our understanding of God's grace and our own need for it. This same lay leader also leads a fall women's conference, enriching the spiritual life of our women's ministry. We are grateful for these opportunities that reflect Paul's teaching: "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Pastor Joel Davis from the Loft Church — a Wesleyan evangelical congregation rooted in Spirit-led, Scripture-centered ministry — leads a weekly Bible study open to our members and the broader community. These studies explore the compelling intersection of faith and scholarship, examining how biblical, scientific, and historical evidence affirms that Jesus Christ walked the earth — including the writings of first-century historians Tacitus and Flavius Josephus, archaeological discoveries such as the Pool of Siloam and the ruins of Capernaum, and geographic findings that bring the New Testament landscape to life. Pastor Joel also facilitates a monthly men's breakfast Bible discussion, which has become a valued gathering for fellowship and study among the men of our church and community.

Sunday School

We want to be candid about one of our most significant challenges: we do not currently have an active Sunday School program. Only one child regularly attends worship with his parents. Our congregation consists primarily of adults whose own children are now in the 20-to-50-year-old range. The resources for such a program remain available, but drawing young families has been a challenge that many churches face today, as competing weekend activities, youth sports, and shifting family schedules have changed the landscape of children's ministry.

We recognize the need to offer activities attractive to younger generations and to identify members willing to support teaching roles. This is an area where we hope a new pastor's vision and energy can help us discern a path forward. We hold fast to our Lord's words: *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"* (Matthew 19:14), and we pray for the day when young voices again fill our classrooms.

Church Organizations

Despite our size, Readington Reformed Church sustains a remarkably active organizational life. Nine committees and groups meet regularly, involving a significant portion of our membership. The following table summarizes our active organizations—a living expression of Paul's teaching that *"there are many parts, but one body"* (1 Corinthians 12:20):

Organization	Meeting Frequency	Average Participation
Women's Ministries	Monthly	8 people
Building and Grounds / Cemetery	Quarterly	9 people
Camp Fire Ministries	Monthly	6–8 people
Finance Committee	As needed / Monthly reports	3 people
IT Committee	As needed	2 people
Memorial and Student Loan Fund Committee	Quarterly	3 people
Spiritual Care Committee	Monthly	9 people
Hunterdon Quilting Guild	Monthly	45 people
RRC Quilting Group	Weekly	5 people

Women's Ministries fosters fellowship among women of the church and the broader community through charity and outreach projects. The group supports organizations including the Reformed Church Home and Good News Home for Women and also contributes to improvements to the church building and parsonage.

Building and Grounds / Cemetery provides stewardship of the church building, grounds, cemetery, and memorial garden. The committee schedules regular workdays for both interior and exterior maintenance projects. The cemetery subcommittee handles grave sales, interments, record keeping, and ongoing maintenance of the historic burial grounds.

Camp Fire Ministries offers Saturday evening gatherings around the outdoor fire pit for informal discussions connected to the lectionary readings for the following Sunday. These relaxed and welcoming sessions are open to both congregants and the broader community, providing a unique entry point for neighbors to engage with our church.

Finance Committee ensures proper counting and handling of all contributions to further God's work through the church. The committee prepares annual budgets, tracks expenses, handles payroll, manages tax reporting, and oversees banking relationships.

IT Committee oversees the technology infrastructure of the church, including hardware, software, internet connectivity, and audiovisual equipment. The committee also plans for future upgrades to enhance worship, communication, and administrative capabilities.

Memorial Committee establishes policies regarding memorial giving and identifies suitable uses for memorial funds contributed to the church. The committee ensures that gifts given in memory of loved ones are used in ways that honor both the donors and the church's mission.

Spiritual Care Committee ensures that the fellowship, worship, and music needs of the congregation are met. The committee coordinates coffee fellowship after services, special activities and social events, worship supplies, worship assistants, and hymn selections in consultation with the organist.

Hunterdon Quilting Guild preserves and promotes the quilting arts through education, demonstrations, workshops, and exhibits hosted at our church. The guild also provides service quilts to comfort those in the community who are in need—a ministry of practical love and craftsmanship.

RRC Quilting Group crafts handmade items for sale at church functions, donating the proceeds back to the church. Members also accept contracts to hand-quilt for others and demonstrate their craft at local community events.

VI. Leadership and Structure

Consistory Selection Process

The governance of Readington Reformed Church follows the Reformed tradition of shared leadership through the Consistory, which is composed of elders and deacons. This model of governance reflects the biblical pattern in which leaders are called to *"shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly"* (1 Peter 5:2). When vacancies arise, the Consistory appoints a nominating committee consisting of a retiring deacon, a retiring elder, and additional committee members. The Vice President of the Consistory chairs the nominating committee. The committee identifies potential candidates and asks whether they would be willing to accept the call to serve. The Consistory grants final approval of the slate

before it is presented to the congregation for a vote at the annual Congregational Meeting. The names of nominees are posted in the Sunday bulletin for three consecutive weeks prior to the vote, ensuring transparency and congregational awareness.

Present Consistory Composition

Elder	Deacon	Male	Female	Occupation
✓	—	—	✓	Retired
✓	—	—	✓	Retired
✓	—	✓	—	IT
—	✓	✓	—	Chemist
—	✓	—	✓	Retired
—	✓	✓	—	Business Owner / Landscape
✓	—	—	✓	Retired
—	✓	—	✓	Chemical Engineer

Our Consistory reflects a healthy balance of men and women, with representation across professional backgrounds including retirees, scientists, technology professionals, and business owners. This diversity of experience strengthens our decision-making and governance.

Women in Leadership

Women play a vital and visible role in the leadership of Readington Reformed Church. Women currently serve as Vice President of the Consistory, deacons, elders, worship assistants, Music Director, officer of Women's Ministries, committee chairs, treasurer, and lay leaders. This broad participation reflects our congregation's commitment to the full inclusion of women in all aspects of church governance and ministry. We celebrate the truth that in Christ *"there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28), and our leadership reflects that conviction.

Paid Staff

Position	Status
Music Director	Part-time
Custodian	Part-time
Interim Part Time Pastor	Part-time

VII. Financial Health

Readington Reformed Church approaches its financial life with gratitude, transparency, and a deep sense of stewardship. Over the past five years, our congregation has demonstrated consistent generosity, with RCA-related contributions increasing from \$89,000 to \$93,000. This 4 percent growth reflects a steady commitment to the ministry of the church, even as overall membership has remained stable. As Scripture reminds us, “each one must give as he has decided in his heart... for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7), and our giving patterns reflect this spirit.

Approximately two-thirds of our annual operating budget is funded by living donors, a strong indicator that the ongoing life of this congregation is sustained by the active commitment of its people. Beyond member giving, the church receives approximately \$40,000 annually from community organizations and groups who use our facilities, including donations for building usage. These partnerships not only support the church financially but also reflect our role as a gathering place for the wider Readington community. Additional supplemental income is provided each year through the Women’s Ministry Craft Fair, a longstanding and cherished tradition.

The pattern of congregational giving demonstrates both depth and breadth of participation. The table below summarizes the trend in RCA-related contributions over the past five years.

Contribution Trends

Category	Five Years Ago	Today
Total RCA-related contributions	\$89,000	\$93,000

This steady increase reflects the deepening commitment of our members to the financial support of the church's ministry and mission.

The distribution of giving across the congregation further illustrates this healthy pattern. Among our 40 giving units, participation is broad, with a committed core of supporters who provide a strong financial foundation for the church. The table below reflects the current distribution of annual giving.

Congregational Giving Distribution

Annual Contribution Level	Number of Giving Units
Less than \$500	7
\$501-\$1,500	13
\$1,501-\$2,500	4
\$2,501-\$3,500	5
Greater than \$3,500	11

Sixteen givers-representing 40 percent of all giving units-contribute \$2,501 or more annually. This reflects a strong core of committed financial supporters, while the broader distribution shows participation across all giving levels. The church also maintains a Memorial and Student Loan Fund, which provides a designated avenue for honoring memorial gifts and supporting students in ways that align with our mission.

Readington Reformed Church carries no mortgage indebtedness. The only outstanding obligation is an internal amount of approximately \$15,000 owed to Readington Reformed Church Cemetery, which is managed within the church's regular financial processes. Looking ahead, the congregation has identified several significant capital needs including the re-roofing of the Christian Education wing, replacement of aging heating systems, and a long-planned handicap accessibility project-estimated between \$320,000 and \$430,000. These needs are being approached through careful planning, prioritization, and ongoing fundraising.

A natural question for any prospective pastor is whether the congregation can sustain a part-time pastor financially. Based on current financial data, the answer is yes, with important considerations.

The church's total annual income currently stands at approximately **\$133,430**, comprised of **\$93,000** in RCA-related contributions and **\$40,430** from community donations for building usage and other supplemental sources. However, the 2026 budget includes **\$27,600** in building-use donations associated with the parsonage. Should a part-time pastor choose to reside in the parsonage, this income would no longer be available. After removing this parsonage-related income, the church's **adjusted annual income** becomes **\$105,830**.

The 2026 budget also includes **\$20,000 for pulpit supply**, which must be removed when calculating the true incremental cost of calling a part-time pastor. This reduces the baseline expense level before pastoral compensation is added.

Financial Category	Amount
Total Annual Income (original)	\$133,430
Less: Parsonage Donation Income	(\$27,600)
Adjusted Annual Income	\$105,830
Total Annual Expenses (2026 Budget)	\$129,281
Less: Pulpit Supply Already Budgeted	(\$20,000)
Adjusted Annual Expenses (without PT pastor)	\$109,281
Annual Shortfall (without PT pastor)	\$3,451
Part-Time Pastor Total Compensation (Placeholder)	\$52,922
Annual Shortfall (with PT pastor)	\$56,373
Total Available Cash (Reserves + Checking)	~\$250,000
Years Sustainable at Current Shortfall	~4.4 years

Narrative Summary

After incorporating both the loss of parsonage-related income and the full cost of part-time pastoral leadership and removing the \$20,000 already budgeted for pulpit supply, the church would face an annual shortfall of approximately \$56,373. Readington Reformed Church maintains roughly \$250,000 in reserves and checking. At this shortfall level, these reserves would allow the congregation to sustain a part-time pastor for approximately four to five years, assuming no changes in giving, expenses, or investment performance.

While no congregation should rely indefinitely on reserves to fund ongoing ministry, this analysis demonstrates that RRC possesses the financial capacity to support part-time pastoral leadership during a period of discernment, revitalization, and growth. This investment reflects our trust that God continues to guide and provide for this congregation as we seek to call a pastor who will help us live out our mission with faithfulness and hope. The 2026 Income and Budget Statement is attached separately for reference and transparency.

The Consistory remains committed to transparent communication, responsible stewardship, and ongoing evaluation of the church's financial health.

VIII. Facilities and Property

Readington Reformed Church is blessed with substantial facilities that have served our congregation and community for generations. Three buildings are situated on the church property, each serving distinct and important roles in the life of our ministry. We are stewards of these gifts, mindful that *"the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it"* (Psalm 24:1).

Main Building (1864)

The main church building, constructed in 1864, includes a sanctuary of approximately 3,750 square feet with a total seating capacity of approximately 350, including main-floor pews and balcony seating. The Christian Education wing, added in 1964, features five classrooms on the ground floor, two offices and four classrooms on the second floor, a large and well-equipped kitchen adjacent to an event hall of approximately 2,500 square feet, and two sets of restrooms. Parking is available for approximately 100 vehicles.

Parsonage

Adjacent to the main building is the parsonage, a two-story historic home of approximately 1,700 square feet. The first floor includes a living room, dining room, kitchen, family room, and full bathroom. The second floor has three bedrooms and a full bathroom. The home also has a small attic and a utility basement. Approximately \$25,000 in upgrades were completed about five years ago. The parsonage is available for use by the called pastor.

Vintage Barn

A two-story vintage barn with approximately 3,000 square feet of space provides storage for church activities, maintenance tools, and equipment. Additional storage is available in the barn for the pastor or affiliated groups as needed.

Pastor's Study

An office is provided for the pastor within the church building, with additional study space available in the parsonage for those who prefer a quieter working environment.

Capital Expenditure Outlook (Next Five Years)

We want to be transparent about the capital needs that our ageing facilities will require in the coming years. While all systems are currently functional, several significant expenditures are anticipated:

Project	Details	Estimated Cost
Christian Education Wing Re-roofing	Current roof is 35+ years old but remains functional. Estimate does not include unexpected issues that may be discovered during the project.	\$20,000–\$30,000
Heating System Replacements	Oil burner for CE wing (~50 years old) and hot air blower for sanctuary (~75 years old). Both are still functional with regular maintenance.	\$50,000–\$100,000
Handicap Accessibility Project	Elevator access to Fellowship Hall (1st floor) and Sanctuary (2nd floor), Fellowship Hall modifications, and restroom updates. Ongoing fundraising activity is underway.	\$250,000–\$300,000

The handicap accessibility project is a priority for our congregation, as we seek to make our historic building welcoming and accessible to all people. Fundraising for this project is already underway. We are inspired by the conviction that our gathering place should welcome all people, reflecting Isaiah's vision: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people"* (Isaiah 56:7).

IX. Strengths and Growth Areas

Through our survey, conversations, and self-study process, we have sought to be both grateful and honest about where we stand as a congregation. The following assessment reflects what our members have shared about our greatest strengths and the areas where we see the room for growth the most.

Our Strengths

Our greatest strength is the deep sense of family and belonging that characterizes our congregation. Members consistently describe Readington Reformed Church as a place where people genuinely care for one another—where joys are celebrated together and burdens are shared. This is not superficial friendliness but a deeply rooted commitment to mutual care that has sustained us through times of change and challenge. This bond of fellowship reflects the words of the Apostle John: *"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers"* (1 John 3:14).

We are proud of our faithful financial stewardship, which has allowed Readington Reformed Church to maintain stable giving levels over the past five years, even amid demographic shifts and broader economic pressures. This consistency reflects the deep commitment of our congregation and their belief in the mission of the church. Our nine active committees and groups reflect a congregation that is deeply engaged in the work of the church, with members contributing their time, talents, and energy across a wide range of ministries.

Our beautiful and historic property is both a gift and a responsibility. The 1864 sanctuary, the expansive fellowship hall, and the surrounding grounds provide a setting for worship and community gathering that is truly special. Our active community

engagement through multiple cooperative ministries extends our reach well beyond our own membership.

We are grateful for the strong role that women play in leadership at every level of our church governance. And we take encouragement from the fact that our worship attendance has grown during a transitional period without a permanent pastor—evidence, we believe, of the vitality and commitment of this congregation. Our meaningful spiritual programming, including Camp Fire Ministries and multiple Bible study opportunities, reflects a hunger for growth and deeper engagement with Scripture.

Areas for Growth

We recognize that our congregation faces real challenges, and we want to name them honestly. The most pressing is the need to attract younger families and rebuild our youth and Sunday School programs. With half of our congregation over the age of 65 and no children regularly participating in Sunday School, the long-term vitality of our church depends on our ability to welcome and engage the next generation. We trust in Paul's encouragement that *"we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day"* (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Our aging infrastructure, including roofing, heating systems, and the critical need for handicap accessibility—represents a significant financial and logistical challenge that must be addressed thoughtfully and strategically.

We also see opportunities to expand our outreach and visibility in the surrounding community, and to build a digital and social media presence that can reach new audiences. In a world where many people first encounter a church online, our ability to tell our story in digital spaces is increasingly important.

Navigating Differences with Grace

One measure of a congregation's maturity is its ability to navigate sensitive topics with respect, maintain unity, and move forward together. We believe this is one of our strengths, and we want to share two examples that illustrate how our congregation has engaged with difficult conversations.

The first is a historical example involving the American flag that has been displayed in our sanctuary for many decades—a tradition rooted in the congregation's deep ties to the community and its heritage. When differing perspectives arose about the flag's presence in a worship setting, members engaged in respectful dialogue, weighing the historical significance of the tradition together with theological considerations about sacred space. The flag remains in the sanctuary, honoring the congregation's longstanding practice. The process itself demonstrated that we could engage with differing viewpoints, listen to one another, and reach resolution without division.

The second involved differing opinions regarding the teaching and preaching of homosexuality. Our members hold a range of views on this topic. Rather than allowing these differences to divide the congregation, members have demonstrated mutual respect and a commitment to remaining in fellowship with one another even amid disagreement. As a moderate to conservative congregation, Readington Reformed Church approaches these conversations with care, grounding its discussions in Scripture and the Reformed tradition. We do not claim to have arrived at a single position, but we are proud that we have navigated this topic with grace and without fracture.

We share these examples because we believe they speak to the character of our congregation. We are a community that can hold space for honest disagreement while remaining united in our commitment to Christ and to one another. A prospective pastor should know that this congregation values thoughtful, respectful dialogue—even on the most challenging topics. We take to heart the counsel of Ephesians: *"speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ"* (Ephesians 4:15).

X. Expectations for Our Next Pastor

Readington Reformed Church is seeking a part-time pastor to serve with our congregation in this next season of ministry. This position requires a 20-hour per week commitment. We approach this search with a clear sense of what we value and a

genuine openness to the gifts and perspectives that a new pastor will bring. We pray with the confidence of Jeremiah's promise: *"I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding"* (Jeremiah 3:15).

We are a congregation that values traditional Reformed worship and preaching grounded in Scripture. We seek a pastor who can lead us faithfully in the Reformed liturgical tradition, proclaim God's word with clarity and depth, and provide the pastoral care that a close-knit community needs. Visitation of the sick and homebound, presence at times of grief and celebration, and a genuine investment in the lives of our members are qualities we deeply value.

Beyond the essential functions of preaching and pastoral care, we seek a leader who can walk with us through the process of articulating our mission, reimagining our outreach, and exploring how to engage younger generations without losing the traditions and values that define us. We seek a leader who, like Paul, can say: *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth"* (1 Corinthians 3:6).

The right candidate will be comfortable in a smaller, close-knit community where relationships are deep and authentic. Our lay leadership is active and engaged, and we seek a pastor who will work collaboratively with elders, deacons, and committee leaders rather than directing from above. A parsonage is provided on-site adjacent to the church for the pastor's use.

Specific compensation details, including salary, benefits, and expectations regarding hours and responsibilities, are outlined in the Pastor Job Description and Compensation Package documents (Source D), available upon request. Language requirements, special training expectations, and other specific qualifications are under development and will be finalized in consultation with the Classis of Delaware/Raritan.

XI. Community Engagement and Outreach

Readington Reformed Church is committed to ministry that extends beyond our own walls. Through cooperative partnerships with other churches, community-facing

programs, and an intentional outreach strategy, we seek to be a faithful presence in Readington Township and beyond. We are guided by our Lord's commission: *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden"* (Matthew 5:14).

Cooperative Ministry

We value our partnerships with neighboring congregations, which enrich our ministry and extend our capacity. Our cooperative ministries include the Soup and Scripture Bible Study, a shared program hosted by Reformed Churches across Somerset and Hunterdon Counties throughout the Lenten season. We maintain active Women's Ministry collaborations with sister congregations, and our Bible study partnerships with the Loft/Wesleyan Church and North Branch Reformed Church bring additional teaching and fellowship resources to our members.

Our missions support extends to several important organizations, each of which reflects our commitment to serving those in need in our surrounding community.

Starfish is a local interfaith food pantry and emergency assistance consortium serving the Whitehouse Station area, providing emergency food, financial aid, and holiday meals to families and individuals in crisis — and one in which area churches, including our own, collaborate in a spirit of shared service.

Family Promise of Hunterdon County has worked since 1990 to prevent and end homelessness in our region, offering shelter, case management, and stabilization services to families and individuals striving toward safe and permanent housing.

The Reformed Church Home, located in Old Bridge, New Jersey, is a senior living and care community rooted in the Reformed Church tradition, providing compassionate assisted living, skilled nursing, and rehabilitation services to elders in a spiritually grounded environment.

The Good News Home for Women, based in nearby Flemington, is a faith-based residential recovery program that has served women since 1987, offering a holistic approach to healing from addiction — addressing mind, body, and spirit — without regard to ability to pay.

Each year, we co-host an Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service with the Loft Church. Readington Reformed Church has had the privilege of hosting this ecumenical

gathering on our historic grounds for many years, welcoming Christians from multiple congregations and traditions to begin Easter morning together in worship. This service has become a cherished tradition in the broader community and reflects our commitment to ecumenical fellowship and cooperation. We have also had the privilege of hosting Classis meetings at Readington Reformed Church, serving the broader denominational community.

Community Programs

Our facilities provide a gathering place for the wider community. We host Wind Symphony concerts that draw audiences from throughout the region. Our mission's outreach through Starfish, Family Promise, the Reformed Church Home, and Good News Home connects us to the practical needs of those beyond our congregation. The Hunterdon Quilting Guild, which meets monthly in our fellowship hall, brings 45 community members into our building regularly, many of whom might never otherwise visit a church.

Outreach Strategy

Our congregation's strategy for reaching un-churched people in our community centers on increasing awareness through two primary approaches. First, we are partnering with the local township to co-host community events, including community days and multi-organization gatherings that introduce neighbors to our church and its people. Second, we host independent events such as community picnics, symphony concerts, guest choir performances, and blood drives that invite the broader community onto our grounds and into our spaces.

With America's Semiquincentennial—the 250th commemoration of United States independence on July 4, 2026—approaching, our church is exploring participation in local commemorative events to expand community connections and to celebrate the historic character of our congregation and property.

Our approach to outreach is intentionally welcoming rather than **pressured**. We believe that neighbors and visitors are most likely to engage with our church after they have experienced our buildings, met our congregants, and heard about the church through community involvement. We seek to create natural and comfortable opportunities for

people to encounter Readington Reformed Church on their own terms, trusting that the warmth of our fellowship and the faithfulness of our worship will speak for themselves. We trust in the promise that when we faithfully sow seeds of welcome and witness, *"in due season we will reap, if we do not give up"* (Galatians 6:9).

XII. Looking Forward: Vision for the Next Five Years

As we conclude this Self Study, we look to the future with both realism and hope. We are a congregation that has endured seasons of transition with grace and faithfulness, and we believe that the best chapters of our story are still to be written. We take courage from God's promise through the prophet Isaiah: *"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"* (Isaiah 43:19). The following priorities reflect the hopes expressed by our members throughout this self-study process.

Our first and most immediate priority is finding and calling a pastor who will help us grow—spiritually, relationally, and numerically. We do not expect one person to solve every challenge we face, but we do believe that the right pastoral leader, working with our committed lay leaders, can help us build momentum and move forward with purpose.

Rebuilding youth and family ministry programs is a long-term goal that will require creativity, patience, and a willingness to try new approaches. We know that the model of Sunday School that served us well a decade ago may not be the right model for today, and we are open to exploring new ways of engaging families and young people.

Addressing our capital improvement needs, especially the handicap accessibility project—is both a practical necessity and a statement of our values. We want our historic building to be a place where every person can worship, gather, and participate fully, regardless of physical ability. Fundraising for this project is already underway, and we are committed to seeing it through.

We will continue to deepen our community partnerships and outreach efforts, building on the foundation of cooperative ministry and community engagement that already characterizes our church. We want to be known in Readington Township not just as a historic building on the road, but as a living, active, and welcoming community of faith.

Above all, we are committed to continuing to be a faithful and welcoming presence in the Reformed tradition—a congregation where the Word is proclaimed, the sacraments are celebrated, and every person who walks through our doors is met with the love of Christ. We do not know exactly what the next five years will bring, but we know that God has been faithful to Readington Reformed Church for over 160 years, and we trust that faithfulness to continue. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8)—and it is on that unchanging foundation that we build our future together.

Sources

Source A: 2026 Annual Budget (attached)

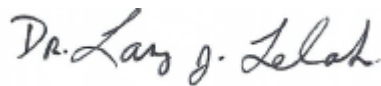
Source B: Church Profile Form (attached)

Source C: Congregational Survey Results Summary (available upon request)

Source D: Pastor Job Description and Compensation Package (provided separately)

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Larry J. Lelah, Search Committee Chair



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