

Report of the Bloomington RPC Session

2021

"Witnessing for Christ in Bloomington for 199 Years"

... but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.

– II Peter 3:18.

Membership:

Communicant: 146 (+6)

Baptized: 47 (+1)

Total: 193 (+7)

Changes:

Professions of faith: 6

Covenant baptisms: 4

Transfers in: 9

Transfers out: 7

Removal: 1

Excommunication: 2

Attendance (in-person only):

AM: 168 (+6) pre-Covid
134 post-Covid (-28)
144 total year (-18)

PM: 122 pre-Covid (+13)
108 post-Covid (-1)
112 total year (+3)

The session met 13 times for regular session meetings and had eight additional meetings for particular purposes, such as communion and membership interviews. One meeting was with the deacons to discuss the possible purchase of the property at 619 S. Lincoln St., and one was to conduct the election of deacons.

Much of the session's work centers around taking care of individuals and families in the congregation. Particularly joyful is the privilege of interviewing new members, and particularly sorrowful is the long and arduous process of exercising discipline with members who have wandered away from the congregation. We have had the responsibility for both this year, and are glad that the former is more often than the latter.

At this time last year, and through the first three months of 2020, the session was doing a lot of planning. Prominent in the beginning of the year, we were discussing the wonderful problem of how to house the continually growing congregation, discussing many different options and even considering bringing in help to think through the problem. Little did we know how we

would be exploring options for really expanding the size of the sanctuary! In addition, we were making plans for various conferences, a visiting choir, family visitation, sending members to TFY, and a session retreat. None of these came to fruition however.

Beginning in March, the session spent a lot of time and energy considering how to best navigate the tortured and byzantine landscape of the last year, how to continue to effectively provide for the spiritual sustenance and growth of the congregation, and how to continue to provide spiritual help and oversight with all of the barriers that have been erected between individuals. The early phase saw the (very reluctant) move of services to a virtual format with a small number of individuals in the sanctuary, and then moving into an alternating service with half of the congregation in each service, to eventually fully reopening by mid-summer. While the planned events and programs did not happen, and classes were back in place by the fall semester. Prayer meetings moved to (well-attended) virtual meetings, and then to our first hybrid meetings starting up in the fall (which are continuing). Psalm books were removed from the pews and projected on the wall behind the pulpit, and then books were put back around mid-summer, and projection was suspended in mid-fall. Along the way, a long process of experimenting with live-streaming techniques has ended up with a very stable system which is ceiling mounted so it doesn't cut into the seating in the sanctuary. One

further logistical weakness was uncovered, which we are still in the process of working on, and that is having greeters who help people, especially visitors, to find seating in the artificially-reduced capacity of the sanctuary. One other major change has been the systematic incorporation of the Moore Room into the sanctuary, which has vastly increased the capacity of the sanctuary to the extent that we have been able to house 80% of our peak attendance in the sanctuary with half of the pews being roped off.

Looking back, the Lord has certainly been good to us! The new capabilities incorporated into the sanctuary, both technical and logistic, seem very useful for our future. Prayer meetings have grown a lot. Our membership class continued. Communion, probably the most challenging of all of our activities in the face of the logistical landscape, has only been disrupted once from our expected plan. VBS continued. Financial support has, incredibly, remained stable. And the session has continued to worry about maintaining contact with members and insuring that they remain regularly committed to gathering with the saints.

Concerning the overall congregational membership, the pattern of numerical growth last year is also reflected in numerical growth, this year, despite all of the obstacles. The following figures give structure to the comings and goings of the calendar year 2020.

1. The average in-person morning worship service attendance before the break in services was 168, an increase of 6 over 2019, and average morning attendance after the congregation was invited to participate again was 134, which is approximately 80% of the figures from the first part of the year.
2. The average in-person evening worship service attendance was 122, an increase of 13 over 2019, and after the break in services was 108.
3. The average SS class attendance was 119 an increase of 15 over 2019, and 101 after the break.
4. The total communicant (146) and baptized (47) membership on December 31, 2020, was 193, a net increase of 7 over 2019.
5. Fifteen new communicant members were added.
6. Six individuals were baptized, two of them with profession.
7. Two baptized members of the congregation made professions this year.
8. Four communicant members and one baptized member were transferred to other RP congregations. Two communicant members were transferred to other reformed churches. One member was removed from the roll due to his withdrawing himself from the congregation towards another congregation in town, and two members, sadly, were excommunicated.
9. Altogether, communicant membership at the end of 2019 was at 140 (not 139 as previously reported) and rose to 146 at the end of 2020. The number of baptized non-communicant members at the end of 2019 was at 46 and increased to 47 by the end of 2020.

One further remarkable providence happened during this chaotic period, and that is that the Lord provided for the purchase of a property near the church. We hope that we will further be able to purchase the property which intervenes between the church building and that property, to provide some flexibility for addressing some of the constraints on the current facility. The new property came up for sale in the middle of the summer, and we closed on it in November. Even more remarkable is the fact that we purchased it with cash, partly from the proceeds of the parsonage which was sold in the 1990's, partly from the persistent set-aside for capital that has been in the budget for several years now, and partly from additional savings. An oversight committee is working through how to manage and use the new assets until such time as we have a plan for incorporating all of the properties together. Please pray for the acquisition of the intervening property.

As if this were not enough, the Lord has also provided three new deacons, Brad Dale, Adam Fritz, and David Perron. What is particularly striking about this is that all of this also came to fruition during the period of chaos in the middle of the year. We have completed the process of examination, and celebrated an ordination service for them on the 31st of January, 2021.

Concerning our pastors, the disrupted situation this last year led to a lot of rethinking of Pastor Holdeman's sabbatical plans. As it turned out he and the session decided to continue with the plans. As part of this, the congregation extended a second summer internship to Samuel Dong, with the particular intent of giving him experience with guidance in producing and delivering a longer series of sermons. He was responsible for a 10-week series on Philippians, which also included 3 more sermons delivered to the BCCC (Bloomington Chinese Christian Church). In addition, he continued working with individuals with whom he and Cherry had developed relationships in the previous internship. The session has been very pleased to have been a part of the equipping of these extraordinarily talented individuals for the work of the church in their home base. The current plan is for them to return to their home congregation to be involved the work of church planting, but it seems very prudent and potentially fruitful for them to have a partial internship this coming summer as well. The congregation approved such a plan at the 2021 congregational meeting.

The past few years have given us the great joy and satisfaction of seeing the Terre Haute congregation become organized and largely self-sufficient, after many years of labor involving various members of our congregation. We note that the session there, by the Lord's provision, has been composed largely of members who used to be part of our congregation, and then have moved to Terre Haute for various reasons. As this congregation has been growing independent, we have been shifting attention (and some financial resources) to what the Lord is doing in the RP church plant in Louisville. Several years ago, the congregation supported David Hanson (currently pastor at the Southside RP congregation in Greenwood), as an intern, and one of his projects was to explore potentially fruitful planting sites, eventually leading to a focus on Louisville. We are excited to see this beginning to take shape. Currently, Pastor McCollum is serving on the oversight body of the church plant, and is contributing additional energy with occasional preaching.

Finally, we note a number of other items which may be of particular interest.

We have been interacting with the overseeing body of the Bloomington Chinese Christian Church, and, given the difficult situation this last year, we are continuing the current arrangement with them, in anticipation of seeing in the coming year how they come out of the closure period (they are still worshipping online). We have great love and care for the

congregation, and for their pastor and his wife, Elijah and Jennifer, and are committed to supporting their work.

We currently have three people taking distance-learning classes from our seminary for various purposes related to equipping them for service in the church. We wish to continue supporting this development.

We have experimented with radio broadcasting on the local Christian-music station for part of the year. We will be trying to assess the degree to which this strategy was helpful.

Finally, we note that Elder emeritus Wendell McBurney has published a (mostly) monograph volume on the topic of supporting the pastoral ministry. Reading through this excellent book triggers many memories and reflections on the past 30 years of growth here in Bloomington, as Wendell's intense involvement on the session here and his witnessing the Lord's work here has informed much of what's in the book. (There's also a guest cameo authorship by Amy Holdeman.) May the Lord continue to give His church new life as he works with us to sanctify us and remove our tendency to serve idols, and to love Him and one another more and more!

As the session looks forward to the upcoming bicentennial celebration in 2021, we are once again reminded of the solid foundation of godly wisdom that has been a hallmark of the congregation's history. We trust that the Lord will preserve us as we put our faith in Him. The Lord has been gracious to us!

Respectfully submitted by the Session of the Bloomington Congregation,

Wes Archer, Eric Cosens, CJ Davis, Ken de Jong, Rich Holdeman, Philip McCollum, & Stephen Shipp

Bloomington Financials:

Income					2020 Budget		2020 Actuals		2021 Budget
	External Income								
		Book Table Income					1,741.74		
		Contributions - Offerings			325,000.00		365,498.29		350,000.00
		Designated Income					5,945.00		
		Diaconal Ministry - Vol. Fund					5,000.00		
		Facilities Capital Income					400.00		
		Facilities: 619 S. Lincoln Income							9,000.00
		Grants					3,806.00		
		Interest - Capital Investments & Savings			2,500.00		815.84		500.00
		Miscellaneous Income			75.00		75.00		75.00
		Offerings & Donations			-		2,800.00		-
	Total External Income				327,575.00		386,081.87		359,575.00
	Designated Income from Savings Revolving Funds				14,386.26		113,385.85		5,462.17
Total Income					341,961.26		499,467.72		365,037.17
Expense									
	External Expenses								
		Book Table Expense					1,697.84		376.91
		Facilities Capital Expense			20,000.00		230,048.09		8,000.00
		Facilities: 619 S. Lincoln St.							12,300.00
		Facilities - Operating			67,890.00		36,924.23		46,890.00
		Finance Committee			7,200.00		7,092.97		10,875.00
	Ministry:	Diaconal			2,500.00		1,189.82		2,500.00
		Educational			8,386.26		4,967.21		14,685.26
		Fellowship			3,200.00		2,140.39		3,300.00
		Library			1,000.00		191.22		1,000.00
		Nursery			350.00		291.42		350.00
		Outreach			5,360.00		8,124.26		5,480.00
		Session			4,275.00		2,727.52		4,275.00
		Student			1,400.00		-		1,400.00
		Technology							3,500.00
		Youth			1,200.00		117.60		1,200.00
	Missions				22,925.00		23,718.80		23,125.00
	Offerings - Disbursements						2,800.00		
	Office Expense				14,500.00		12,226.38		15,870.00
	Pastoral Compensation - Holdeman				98,048.00		98,398.00		100,010.96
	Pastoral Compensation - McCollum				77,730.00		77,980.00		79,692.96
	Pastoral Internship				10,000.00		9,000.00		7,000.00
	Pastoral Expenses				7,300.00		2,343.07		7,300.00
	Presbytery				4,033.80		4,033.80		4,334.17
	RPCNA Works				11,280.00		10,480.00		11,357.00
	Special Funds				23,185.85		2,537.05		25,000.00
	Total External Expenses				391,763.91		539,029.67		389,822.26
	Designated Disbursements - to Savings Revolving Funds								
		Benevolence					5,000.00		
		Book Table					376.91		
		Camp Fundraiser					4,199.00		
		Capital Improvements - 8 yr. plan					13,185.85		
		Facilities Capital			-				15,000.00
		Ministry Hedge							4,000.00
	Total Disbursements to Savings Revolving Funds				-		22,761.76		19,000.00
Total Expense					391,763.91		561,791.43		408,822.26
Net Income					(49,802.65)		(62,323.71)		(43,785.09)