

Belle Center Session Report to Presbytery

The past year has seen blessings and challenges to our Session and in our congregation. We see all – challenges as well as blessings – as being from the wise and gracious hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only King and Head. This report will be in a different format than we have used for several years. First, we will present our blessings to Presbytery's notice, followed by the challenges, and finally other information.

Blessings

1. After many years of prayer here and prayer from the wider church, we give glory to God for raising up men to be local ruling elders. On December 11, 2021, the congregation elected Mr. Bruce Bowers and Mr. Jeffrey Brotherton to the office. Mr. Bowers has attended, as a guest, several of our more recent Presbytery meetings. He has never been ordained, so will undergo ordination, as well as installation, at an anticipated special meeting of the congregation, D.v., on Saturday, 26 February, 2022. Mr. Brotherton has already been ordained and has served as a ruling elder in both the PCA and the OPC. His installation will be, D.v., at the same time. At the same time, we are so thankful for Presbytery's provision of ruling elder Scott Hunt from the Marion, IN, RPC. He has served for several years as a provisional elder, with diligence, joy, usefulness, and with much prayer and a heart-felt unity with our congregation.
2. Our attendance has increased quite a bit over the past several years. We have received people from the OPC, from the PCA, from a "Reformed Baptist" church, and soon anticipate a transfer from the United Reformed Churches. This growth is only by God's working, and so blesses and encourages us. We'd love to see people coming in from the world, and we are thankful for our baptized members making profession of faith. We have an adherent family who is from the PCA and is considering transferring membership, and another adherent from a charismatic background. We anticipate the possibility of another of our young men becoming betrothed to a young lady from outside our congregation, who attends from time to time and has completed most of an inquirer's class. Attendance has improved from 48 to 52, despite the Covid and a membership decrease from 66 to 59. This decrease was mainly due to the transfer of one family to another RP congregation and another family to another church outside of the denomination.
3. Consequent to this growth in attendance has come great improvement in our finances, as reflected in the accompanying budget sheets. Our pastor no longer considers it necessary even to ponder the possibility of forgoing salary as a gift to the congregation, as appeared to him to be necessary a few years ago. In fact, major upgrades to the manse have included new basement stairs and a patched basement wall that has made the basement much drier, as well as just recently the installation of a new furnace, replacing one that was nearly twenty years old and had failed during this winter for a week. As well, last spring, the old garage was razed by men of the congregation and a new one was built that is far dryer and secure than the old one; it only awaits

connection to electrical service. Our last year ended with financial surplus, and we anticipate only a small deficit for this year.

4. Further consequent is the blessing of new gifts and abilities. We now have several people with technological competence beyond that we had before. This has led to us being able, for the past year or two, to live-stream our services to "visitors", to the ill, and others who wish to attend but who are not able.
5. It is nearly a year and a half since we moved into our building. Back in 2007, we began praying that Jesus would build His Church among us, and build us a building, too. All has come to pass in His kindness.
6. There is a spirit of love, care, and delight in one another, shown by the fact that it is hard to get people out the door after worship services! People delight in sharing their lives with one another in prayer and concern. There is a special ladies' prayer group that operates online, and several of our young men, on their own initiative, have met for a time on Sabbath mornings before worship for mutual strengthening in Jesus.

Challenges

1. The first, which is shared by all congregations in Presbytery, is the ongoing Covid pandemic. This has affected, to some degree or another, every family in our congregation. Our pastor was knocked out by it for most of January, being hospitalized for a time. We are so thankful for preaching supplied by the Revs. Steven Work and Jack Baumgardner, both of whom pointed us clearly to justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We have several members with pre-existing problems with their lungs and with diabetes, who are, or were, in great possible danger from the virus. We are thankful that we sustained no deaths due to the Covid virus, nor long-term debility, as far as we know.
2. The second has been the arrest and trial process of Paul and Dana Soma in July, and subsequent matters. Paul has been charged with gross sexual imposition and Dana with child endangering. Their cases are in the local Court of Common Pleas and our county Family Court. Their children have been taken from them, and have been worshipping with Southfield congregation a few times, and now with the Southwest Ohio RPC in Mason, OH. Session, with its small size, has felt overwhelmed at times. We have not proceeded on Church Discipline, yet, since we have no complaint before us, and with a desire not to impede the civil magistrate in his work. We anticipate church discipline procedure to take place after the magistrate has finished his work. When first we heard allegations, we immediately contacted Children's Services and notified families in our congregation. The Somas' arrest and situation were extensively covered in the local media, so it is quite public. Session has asked Presbytery to appoint an investigative committee to help us, in our small size and physical separation, determine facts for any church discipline proceedings.
3. A further challenge is the physically spread-out nature of our congregation. We have families coming from the southwest travelling almost two hours each way. From the northwest, people must drive forty-five or so minutes. From the southeast, families travel thirty to forty-five minutes to get to Belle Center. This makes fellowship, except on Sabbath, difficult. It makes pastoral visitation difficult. But there may be a hidden

blessing to come! Each of these four population centers – Greenville, Ohio; Lima/Bluffton, Ohio; Marysville, Ohio, and the Belle Center/Bellefontaine, Ohio center, could, in God’s adorable providence, be kernels for daughter congregations.

The session of the Belle Center, OH, Congregation met for 7 regular meetings since our last report to Presbytery. The minutes of the session were submitted to the presbytery and approved without correction. Our pastor attended Synod and 2 regular meetings of the Presbytery. Elder Scott Hunt represented us at 2 meetings of presbytery. As well, two men of the congregation have attended Presbytery several times as interested visitors. Due to having no local ruling elders and the pestilence abroad, we have not done family visitation in this past year but hope to accomplish this soon if Providence allows. We hope to visit all families in the congregation. We discussed portions of the Covenant of Communicant Membership with each family, according to our perception of their need(s). We have not had to exercise formal discipline in the past year, but we believe that we foresee this probability soon.

The congregation met three times. Its annual congregational meeting was on February 19, 2022. There was a good spirit among us. The other two meetings since our last report were to elect ruling elders on December 11, 2021, and to ordain and install them on February 26, 2022. We do not currently have congregational officers except for Greg Probst, treasurer.

Our deacon, Greg Probst, serves us admirably. Our deacon coordinates the maintenance of the properties of the congregation in good condition. Greg has served well as our treasurer for several years, and will assist our new treasurer, Lorraine Brotherton, as there is need. At least twice a year, the deacon meets with the session to keep communication open between us; one meeting concerns the budget. We are starting to pray for God to raise up at least one other deacon for us.

We meet each Lord’s Day at Noon for worship. We have now resumed second services and fellowship meals. Our pastor preached through Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels during the first service and has now continued Paul’s Epistle to the Romans in the second service. Following morning worship, we meet as a single group. Several young people attended many of the presbytery youth activities in the past year.

The congregation meets for prayer on Wednesday evenings at 7:30, with an average attendance of four (the same as last year).

We look forward to 2022 as a united congregation with a rather clear vision of where we want to go, as we continue to advance a testimony for salvation by grace through faith in the saving Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and the mediatorial kingship of Jesus in our area.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Pockras, Moderator

Scott Hunt, Clerk

Belle Center RP Church Budget vs. Actual 2021

	BUDGET	ACTUAL
Income	<u>\$ 74,244.00</u>	<u>\$ 102,934.77</u>
Tithes & Offerings	\$ 72,000.00	\$ 84,922.24
Synod' Dividend	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 2,254.10
Interest Income	\$ 44.00	\$ 8.36
Gifts Received	\$ - 0 -	\$ 15,750.00
Fixed Expenses	<u>\$ 5,103.00</u>	<u>\$ 6,262.42</u>
Insurance	\$ 1,900.00	\$ 1,992.00
Taxes	\$ 1,352.00	\$ 1,003.46
Utilities	\$ 1,851.00	\$ 3,266.96
Electric	\$ 360.00	\$ 632.55
Gas	\$ 675.00	\$ 689.80
Sewer	\$ 451.00	\$ 570.00
Water	\$ 209.00	\$ 193.19
BC Cap. Imp.	\$ 156.00	\$ 156.00
Garbage	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Internet	\$ -0-	\$ 1,025.42
Flexible Expenses	<u>\$ 81,964.00</u>	<u>\$ 79,550.63</u>
Church Building Rehab	\$ 8,200.00	\$ 2,048.92
Exterior	\$ 2,500.00	\$ -0-
Furn & Fixt.	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,048.92
Chairs	\$ 3,200.00	\$ -0-
Flowers	\$ 50.00	\$ -0-
Cleaning Supplies	\$ 500.00	\$ -0-

Flexible Expenses Con't**Budget****Actual**

Guest Speakers	\$ 800.00	\$ 278.40
Mercy Fund	\$ 500.00	\$ -0-
Mowing	\$ 150.00	\$ 70.00
Office Supplies	\$ 150.00	\$ 55.00
Pastor's Expense	\$ 55,961.00	\$53,861.12

Book Allow.	\$ 200.00	\$ - 0 -
Health Ins.	\$ 9,600.00	\$ 9,600.00
Housing Allow.	\$ 5,300.00	\$ 5,300.16
Med. Exp. Reim.	\$ 500.00	\$ - 0 -
Mileage	\$ 500.00	\$ - 0 -
Office Exp.	\$ 1650.00	\$ - 0 -
Pension	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 5,250.00
Salary	\$ 33,507.00	\$ 33,507.12
Synod Reg.	\$ 204.00	\$ 204.00

Presbytery Assessment	\$ 813.00	\$ 902.71
RP M&M	\$ 1,870.00	\$ 832.70
Repairs	\$ 11,500.00	\$21,501.78

Church	\$ - 0 -	\$ -0-
Manse	\$ 11,500.00	\$ 21,501.78

Synod's Assessment	\$ 1,470.00	\$ -0-
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Budget**Actual**

Total Budget Income 2021	\$ 74,244.00	\$ 102,934.77
Total Budget Expenses 2021	\$ 87,067.00	\$ 85,813.05
Difference	- \$ 12,823.00	\$ 17,121.72

2021 Asset Summary

Checking Acct. Balance 1/1/21	\$ 23,499.68
Checking Acct. Balance 12/31/21	\$ 43,426.31
Difference	+ \$ 19,926.63
Savings Acct. Balance 1/1/21	\$ 6,156.07
Savings Acct. Balance 12/31/21	\$ 6,160.38
Total cash assets 12/31/21	\$ 49,586.69
Designated Mercy Fund	\$ 2,600.00
Designated Chair Fund	\$ 3,440.00

Budget - 2022

Belle Center Reformed Presbyterian Church

Income

\$ 84,901.00

Tithes & Offerings

\$ 82,640.00

1st Qtr.	\$ 20,660.00
2nd Qtr.	\$ 20,660.00
3rd Qtr.	\$ 20,660.00
4th Qtr.	\$ 20,660.00

Synods Dividend

\$ 2,254.00

Interest Income

\$ 7.00

Checking	\$ 4.00
Savings	\$ 3.00

Fixed Expenses

\$ 64,144.00

Insurance

\$ 1,992.00

Taxes

\$ 1,004.00

Church	\$ 442.00
Manse	\$ 562.00

Utilities

\$ 3,301.00

Electric	\$ 650.00
Gas	\$ 690.00
Internet	\$ 1,025.00
Sewer	\$ 580.00
Water	\$ 200.00

Belle Center Cap. Imp. \$ 156.00

Garbage \$ - 0 -

Pastor's Expense

\$ 57,847.00

Book Allowance	\$ 200.00
Covfamikoi Reg.	\$ 200.00
Health Ins.	\$ 9,600.00

Housing Allow.	\$ 6,000.00
Med. Exp. Reim.	\$ 500.00
Mileage	\$ 500.00
Office Expense	\$ 1,650.00
Pension Exp.	\$ 4,500.00
Salary	\$ 34,483.00
Synod Reg.	\$ 214.00

Flexible Expenses

\$ 27,431.00

<u>Church Building Rehab</u>		\$ 9,500.00
Exterior	\$ 3,500.00	
Chairs	\$ 3,500.00	
Furn. & Fixt.	\$ 2,500.00	

<u>Church Building Cleaning Supplies</u>	\$ 500.00
<u>Flowers</u>	\$ 50.00
<u>Guest Speakers</u>	\$ 800.00
<u>Mercy Fund</u>	\$ 500.00
<u>Mowing</u>	\$ 200.00
<u>Office Expense</u>	\$ 150.00
<u>Presbytery Assessment</u>	\$ 994.00
<u>Synod's Assessment</u>	\$ 1,867.00
<u>RP M&M</u>	\$ 1,870.00
<u>Repairs</u>	\$ 11,000.00
Manse	\$ 10,000.00
Church	\$ 1,000.00

<u>Total Budget Income</u>	<u>\$ 84,901.00</u>
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<u>Total Budget Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 91,575.00</u>
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<u>Difference in Budget</u>	<u>\$ - 6,674.00</u>
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