

2023 Belle Center Session Report to Presbytery

With Mary at the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth, joyfully we confess, "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy;" (Luke 1:54). The past year has seen blessings and challenges to our Session and in our congregation. In this fallen world, things are never uncomplicated by sin and its effects, yet, graciously our King rules over all to bless His bride (Ephesians 1:21-23) so that things are never as bad as we fear.

Blessings

1. Last year we rehearsed the blessing of God raising up a local Session. Many or most of you have gotten to meet and to know Jeff Brotherton and Bruce Bowers. They continue to be faithful shepherds and servants of this congregation. Our Deacon, Mr. Greg Probst, has been doing fine work, especially in tending to property issues and making sure that those in need, in our congregation, are helped and blessed materially. He asked that he might give over the Treasurer role for our congregation, so we asked Lorraine Brotherton, our Clerk's wife, to take on this task. Further, with a growing and spread-out congregation, Greg is quite stretched. We are hoping that Jesus will perhaps call a couple of people to serve as Deacons with Greg.
2. Between continued Zoom attendance and "warm bodies", our average attendance for 2022 was 50, a slight drop from our 2021 figure of 52. Much of this is due to the absence of all of the ten members of the Soma family for much of last year. We will refer further to that later in this report. We have lost one communicant member by death. Two men underwent final removal. We had increase of one by profession of faith, transfer by two, and a baptized member making profession. As well, we received four baptized members by transfer and one by infant baptism. Total membership now is 64; 46 communicant and 18 baptized. Three additional adults are in an inquirer's class, and a baby is on the way! As well, a couple of baptized members are preparing for personal profession of faith.
3. Finances continue to be far better than a few years ago. Last year, we noted that 2021 ended with financial surplus, and we anticipated only a small deficit for 2022. God blessed us with yet another small surplus; the first time in quite a while that this has happened two years consecutively.
4. It is now nearly two years since we were able to move into our building. We long prayed that Jesus would build our church, and then build us a building. All of His good promises have come to pass without fail. With growing membership and attendance, we are now beginning, a little, to wonder how long we will be able to use our building! We still need signage out front, but all the rest of the building is in fine shape. We have had to buy a new refrigerator. Further, we needed new chairs for the auditorium and classrooms. Christ Church RP in Marion County, IN, provided their chairs and their 2009 *Books of Psalms for Worship* to our congregation for the cost of transport!
5. 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.

6. Our pastor attended a "Summer Intensive" course at RPTS entitled, "Introduction to the Chaplaincy." This led to his becoming endorsed by the Presbyterian and Reformed Chaplain Commission. What he learned enabled him to be more effective in his work at the Mary Rutan Hospital in Bellefontaine, OH.

Challenges

1. We are thankful that, for now, the Covid threat seems much diminished. Even our local hospital, where Mr. Pockras has been on the chaplain staff since 2017, is forgoing the use of masking. There are very few patients in isolation, most being due to flu. We continue to have people in our congregation with chronic illness including diabetes, pulmonary and respiratory difficulty, cancer, and arthritis.
2. The second has been the continued fallout from the arrest and trial process of Paul and Dana Soma. After trial, Paul was found guilty of gross sexual imposition and Dana pled guilty to child endangering. Their minor children were taken from them; they worshiped with Southfield congregation a few times, and then with the Southwest Ohio RPC in Mason, OH. Session, with its small size, felt overwhelmed at times. We proceeded to Church Discipline. Paul was suspended from membership privileges, with this announced to the congregation. Dana was rebuked, asking that the rebuke be presented publicly before the congregation. As well, she read a prepared confession of sin and asked the congregation to forgive her. Paul was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment in the Ohio Correctional System; within a short time he died. Dana was given probation for one year. The Family Court assigned the care of the five minor children to their oldest brother and his new bride, so that now the children usually worship with us in our first service. The second service is when their mother is able to attend. She, as yet, is allowed no regular contact with her minor children, although we hope that the limitation soon will be ending. Session asked Presbytery to appoint an investigative committee to help us, in our small size and physical separation, to determine facts for any church discipline proceedings. The committee was a help to Session. For this, we thank both the committee and Presbytery.
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/Dublin, Ohio, and the Belle Center/Bellefontaine, Ohio center, could, in God's adorable providence, conceivably be kernels for daughter congregations.

The session of the Belle Center, OH, Congregation met for 11 regular and 10 called meetings in 2022. The minutes of the session were submitted to Presbytery and approved without correction. Our

pastor attended Synod and 2 regular meetings of the Presbytery. Our new elders have been diligent to attend higher courts.

The congregation met once. As of the time of the writing of this report, the 2023 annual meeting has not occurred. We hope to have special meetings to elect deacons, then to ordain and install them.

We meet each Lord's Day at Noon for worship. We have second services and, on the last Sabbath of each month, fellowship meals. The Lord's Supper is celebrated on each fifth Sabbath in months that have them. Our pastor preached through Luke's Gospel during the first service and has now finished Paul's Epistle to the Romans in the second service. He has now begun an expository series on Ecclesiastes. Following morning worship, we meet for Sabbath School. We have three classes, now: our Covenant History class, taught by our minister; an enquirers class taught by Elder Bowers; and a class on church officer gifts and character traits taught by Elder Brotherton. 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 five (one more than last year). We are starting to see more interest in the congregation, and recently eight people were at our prayer meeting. This included our new communicant member who made profession out of the world.

We look forward to 2023 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

Jeffery Brotherton, Clerk

Belle Center Reformed Presbyterian Church

Treasurer Report Year End 12/31/2022

	12/31/2021 Actual	12/31/2022 Actual	2022 Budget	2023 Proposed Budget
Income				
Designated Giving	15,750.00	6,580.00	.00	.00
Interest Income	8.36	33.79	.00	33.00
Synods Dividend	2,254.10	2,277.33	2,254.00	2,277.00
Tithes & Offerings				
		18,537.06	20,660.00	18,954.00
		15,909.26	20,660.00	18,954.00
		15,282.26	20,660.00	18,954.00
		22,233.00	20,660.00	18,954.00
		<u>84,922.24</u>	<u>82,640.00</u>	<u>75,816.00</u>
Total Tithes & Offerings				
Total Income	102,934.70	74,272.70	84,894.00	78,126.00
Expenses				
Insurance	1,922.00	2,069.00	1,992.00	2,100.00
Property Tax Church	.00	165.23	442.00	154.00
Property Tax Manse	1,003.46	1,203.74	562.00	1,408.00
Electric	632.55	757.12	650.00	760.00
Gas	689.80	616.45	690.00	617.00
Internet	1,025.42	1,242.39	1,025.00	1,243.00
Sewer	570.00	641.55	580.00	642.00
Water	193.19	163.47	200.00	164.00
Fees	.00	10.11	.00	.00
Belle Center Cap. Imp.	156.00	158.86	156.00	159.00
Garbage	.00	.00	.00	.00
Spiritual Leadership				
Pastor Salary	33,507.12	35,152.62	35,152.00	37,300.00
Housing Allowance	5,300.16	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
Health Insurance	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00
Med. Exp. Reimburse		.00	500.00	500.00
Pension	5,250.00	5,250.00	4,500.00	5,250.00
Total Pastor Compensation	53,657.28	56,002.62	55,752.00	58,650.00
Pastor Expenses				
Mileage		.00	500.00	500.00
Office Expense		.00	1,650.00	1,650.00
Book Expense		.00	200.00	200.00
Pulpit Supply	278.40	655.08	800.00	700.00
Synods Exp.	204.00	237.00	214.00	240.00
Conference Expenses		.00	200.00	500.00
Sabbath School		45.48	.00	.00
Session Expenses		.00	.00	.00

Belle Center Reformed Presbyterian Church

Treasurer Report Year End 12/31/2022

	12/31/2021 Actual	12/31/2022 Actual	2022 Budget	2023 Proposed Budget
Synod Expenses – Elder		237.00	.00	480.00
Presbytery Expenses		.00	.00	.00
Mileage		.00	.00	200.00
Books		.00	.00	200.00
Building Supplies		395.80	.00	.00
Church Exterior Improvements		.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
Chairs		.00	3,500.00	.00
Furniture and Fixtures	2,048.92	640.62	2,500.00	1,000.00
Supplies, Cleaning and Kitchen		411.94	500.00	450.00
Flowers		.00	50.00	50.00
Exterior Maintenance	70.00	135.00	200.00	300.00
Office Expense	55.00	80.71	150.00	200.00
Presbytery Assessment	902.71	994.00	994.00	1,326.00
Synod Assessment	.00	3,849.00	1,867.00	1,584.00
RP M&M	832.70	1,785.78	1,870.00	1,800.00
Repairs – Manse	21,501.78	3,634.83	10,000.00	7,000.00
Repairs – Church Building	.00	482.70	1,000.00	2,000.00
Total Expense	85,743.21	76,615.48	91,744.00	89,777.00
Total Available Income	\$ 87,184.70	\$ 74,272.70	\$ 84,894.00	\$ 78,126.00
Total Expense	\$ 85,743.21	\$ 76,615.48	\$91,744.00	\$89,777.00
	\$ 1,441.49	-\$ 2,342.78	-\$6,850.00	-\$11,651.00

Assets

Richwood Checking		\$38,853.07
FNC Checking	\$43,426.31	
Citizens Federal	\$6,160.38	\$6,163.65
Richwood Savings		\$1,000.21
Petty Cash Treasurer		\$2,000.00
Petty Cash Treasurer		\$156.78
Total Cash		\$48,173.71

Designated Funds Included in Assets

Designated Mercy Fund	\$2,600.00	\$4,182.46
Designated Chair Fund	\$3,440.00	\$1,088.21
Designated Soma Mercy Fund		\$1,343.48
Total Designated		\$6,614.15
Total Available		\$41,559.56