

# **Report of the Bloomington Session**

2020

*“Witnessing for Christ in Bloomington for 198 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.*

The year 2019 has been one of growth. As we have been looking back on this year in the context of the 20-plus years that several of us on the session have served, we see this growth as unmistakable in so many ways, and what makes this particularly striking is the persistence of how the Lord has been developing us as a congregation, as image-bearers of Christ, over so many years. It is so clear to us that this is not due to any particularly great actions or planning on our part, nor due to the specific planned actions within the congregation, but it is clearly an outflow of God’s grace to us. We are thankful. Yes, we are grateful also for the diligent work by so many in the congregation, and, yes, we are also thankful for the planning that goes into our work as a congregation, but we are still most thankful for the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as He has worked with us. As we look forward to the coming year, we invite you all to join us in giving our plans and ourselves into the hands of Jesus, that we may know him better, and continue to grow in His grace.

The session meets regularly on a monthly basis, this last year meeting 16 times in constituted sessions, and regularly works together on different matters of the Lord’s work unofficially. Besides the regular, monthly meetings, the session has also met on occasion to interview individuals for communion or for membership. In addition, the session has been in the habit of meeting for a day of prayer and thought in May, reviewing the past year, and working through larger issues that will not fit in the standard bustle of our regular meetings. Of the regular meetings, our habit is to spend a good block of time at the beginning of the meeting, living out the priority of praying for you all. In addition, we regularly spend a large block of time in each meeting updating one another on events in the lives of the congregation, as well as continually working through various situations where members of the congregation are struggling with spiritual issues. The main job of the session, as it plays out in our meetings, is that of spiritual oversight of the congregation. We are always aware of many challenges that our people face, and are also seeking to know how best to be aware of more of them.

Concerning the overall congregational membership, the pattern of spiritual growth this last year is also reflected in numerical growth. The following figures give structure to the comings and goings of the calendar year 2019.

The average morning worship service attendance was 162, an increase of 13 over 2018.

The average evening worship service attendance was 109, an increase of 7 over 2018.

The average SS class attendance was 104, an increase of 10 over 2018.

The total communicant (140) and baptized (46) membership on December 31, 2019, was 186, a net increase of 21 over 2018.

Eleven new communicant members were added. With these also came nine baptized children in two families, and seven children in two families were baptized.

Seven baptized members of the congregation made professions of faith this year.

Five communicant members were transferred to other congregations. Of these, four are children of the congregation moving to other RP congregations.

All together, communicant membership at the end of 2018 was at 127 (not 128, as erroneously reported in last year's report), and rose to 140 at the end of 2019. The number of baptized non-communicant members at the end of 2018 was at 38 and rose to 46 at the end of 2019.

The session continues to work through how best to insure that our attention is properly focused on all of our growing congregation, seeking to insure that all of Christ's people are being nurtured and cared for. While we continue to make progress on this front, we are still working toward a more effective application of what the Lord has laid on our hearts. As always, your prayers for us in this regard are particularly appreciated.

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 continue to be surprised and gratified at the remarkable and beautiful functionality of our facility. It is a wonderful embodiment of the aesthetic of our worship, supporting and encouraging us in our meeting together, helping us open the doors of our hearts to new people, and accommodating our fellowship. Looking to the future, as we continue to see growth in numbers, we recognize the challenge that is put before us of housing a larger congregation. We are contemplating various ways of getting sound advice about the many aspects of a forward looking plan in the coming year.

Last year's congregational meeting saw some discussion concerning opening our doors to Bloomington Chinese Christian Church (BCCC), and with the congregation's support, we have been very blessed by the hospitality that we have given BCCC. So far, the logistics of the arrangement are largely very functional, and in addition, we have been able to work with the Chinese community in a number of ways that we believe is serving the cause of Christ in our community and overseas.

Last summer, the congregation hosted an internship with Samuel and Cherry Dong, which proved very beneficial to the BCCC, as well as to us and to the Dongs. We have extended the current facilities arrangement through the coming year. In the long term, we keep in mind the great potential benefit of BCCC's being able to house themselves, but with the complications of having their pastor detained in China for six months last year, it is not a good time for us to expect them to contemplate a more self-sufficient situation. Related to this indirectly, we note that Pastor Rich Holdeman also was sent from the congregation to support the training of pastors in East Asia in the early summer of this last year. The congregation has also begun supporting the development of Christian curricular materials for children of the Chinese church in China. The Lord continues to use us specifically in connection with His people who are in the Chinese-speaking world.

Pastor Rich Holdeman will be eligible for his second sabbatical, beginning this coming year, and as the previous sabbatical was well-spent in two, consecutive increments, he has applied for a ½ sabbatical this coming summer, wishing to pursue areas of growth in his ministry to the larger church. The session has endorsed this general plan, and also anticipates extending a second summer internship to Samuel Dong, in part to cover the sabbatical period. Samuel and Cherry's work here in Bloomington this last summer was very fruitful, and given their strong grasp of the ministry context here in Bloomington and good relationship with the congregation, we believe strongly that a follow-up period will be very fruitful both for developing their gifts as well as in the Lord's work here in Bloomington.

Various other minor events of the last year are also noteworthy.

Philip McCollum developed prayer cards for the congregation, and a congregational directory, with pictures, was also developed, in an effort to encourage growth in our knowledge of one another commensurate with our growth in numbers.

The congregation hosted *two* musical groups from Geneva College, the Genevans in March, and New Song in July. The session has recommended to the deacons a particular level of support for the college specifically targeted at equipping and supporting RP faculty in the college's Bible department. As the college is owned by the denomination, it is a venue which can support a powerful ministry of the church to students from many different backgrounds.

Considering the dynamic nature of the congregation, the session has decided that it will serve the spiritual good of the congregation to establish a more obviously regular pattern of communion observance by shifting from a quarterly to bimonthly pattern.

Finally, one area of concern this past year has been the work-load shouldered by the deacon board. To help alleviate this and establish a larger framework of

leadership for the congregation, the session arranged for a class to be taught in mercy ministry, with a goal of setting the more general diaconal ministry before the congregation. We anticipate calling a special meeting of the congregation sometime this spring for the purpose of electing deacons. Obviously, as the congregation continues to grow, we may also be in the same situation with respect to the session, but we have not developed a particular plan for extending the session at this time.

With respect to the church beyond our congregation, our session members have fulfilled various responsibilities in addition to presbytery duties. Ken de Jong has been appointed to the Trustees of Geneva College, and is currently chairing the academic affairs committee of the college. Rich Holdeman is a Trustee of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. We praise the Lord that the Terre Haute congregation has been established as an independent congregation, so their responsibilities have been passed on to Joshua Reshey and Russell Lodge, former members of our congregation, and their pastor, Steve Rhoda. Finally, Wendell McBurney serves on the board of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, a large coalition of individuals seeking to develop an appreciation of Reformed doctrine among a broad variety of churches.

Finally, one other milestone of a sorts was also reached this last year in the session, with the retirement of elder Wendell McBurney. The session was glad to confer upon him *emeritus* status, which basically indicates that he can serve on the session if asked, but needs not feel any responsibility to do so. In the conferral, the session minute reads as follows. *The session noted the crucial role he played in keeping the Bloomington congregation open through many difficult years and his work in laying the foundation for the congregation's revitalization, as well as his long and tireless role in guiding the congregation for the more than 30 years since then, at great cost to himself. The session voted to confer upon him the title of elder emeritus, in light of the Lord's remarkable work in service to His church through 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, Wendell McBurney, Philip McCollum, & Stephen Shipp

<b>Income</b>						<b>2019 Budget</b>	<b>2019 Actuals</b>	<b>2020 Budget</b>
	External Income							
							1,924.60	
						320,000.00	354,903.03	325,000.00
							4,205.26	
							4,432.00	
						5,625.00	7,784.44	2,500.00
						75.00	575.00	75.00
						-	8,151.05	-
						325,700.00	381,975.38	327,575.00
						2,875.26	2,010.00	14,386.26
<b>Total Income</b>						328,575.26	383,985.38	341,961.26
<b>Expense</b>								
	External Expenses							
							2,209.95	
							-	20,000.00
						67,220.00	50,642.86	67,890.00
						6,700.00	6,327.75	7,200.00
						2,500.00	3,405.58	2,500.00
						7,865.26	9,123.91	8,386.26
						3,200.00	3,484.94	3,200.00
						500.00	303.39	1,000.00
						350.00	382.64	350.00
						5,360.00	2,816.76	5,360.00
						1,775.00	3,869.91	4,275.00
						1,400.00	261.69	1,400.00
						1,200.00	599.41	1,200.00
						22,895.00	23,556.26	22,925.00
							7,450.00	
						14,200.00	12,480.04	14,500.00
						92,648.00	92,898.00	98,048.00
						76,630.00	76,630.00	77,730.00
						10,000.00	9,450.00	10,000.00
						12,896.28	2,244.74	7,300.00
						5,040.87	5,040.87	4,033.80
						9,300.00	10,802.04	11,280.00
						15,000.00	-	23,185.85
						356,680.41	323,980.74	391,763.91
							500.00	
							3,212.00	
							21.00	
							-	
						15,000.00	15,000.00	-
						4,000.00	4,000.00	
						19,000.00	22,733.00	-
<b>Total Expense</b>						375,680.41	346,713.74	391,763.91
<b>Net Income</b>						(47,105.15)	37,271.64	(49,802.65)