



Congregational Report 2020

Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church

Session's Report to the Congregation

Annual Meeting - March 1, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church continues to carry out an active, hopeful and joyful ministry in the north suburbs of Chicago. The RPCNA has maintained a witness to the Chicago area for over a century, and we trust that God will continue to use us to proclaim Christ and uphold the Reformed faith in this region. We are about the business of proclaiming the Gospel to a needy and wanting world. We first equip the saints and send them into the world. Our intention is to prepare our members of Westminster that they are ready to proclaim the Love of Christ.

Worship

We meet each Lord's Day for corporate worship, proclaiming the Word of God and sitting together (monthly) at the Table of our Lord. The ministry of God's Word is expository, and application is made to the life of the church and the individual lives of God's people. In the past year, our Pastor Steve Rhoda has accepted a call and has moved to Terre Haute, IN. The preaching has been continuing with several OPC ordained men coming to Westminster on a regular rotation. None of them are currently pastoring a church and welcome the opportunity to preach on a regular basis. Because they regularly preach here, they have been able to establish some patterns in their preaching and develop some series.

Ordained Leadership

We are blessed to have a Session of three elders, including Rev. Wade Mann who serves as our provisional moderator by appointment of Presbytery. Bob Koch and Jim Ritchhart continues to serve as elders, providing leadership in worship. Bob is also the clerk for Session.

Bob has recently experienced several health issues, resulting in successful open-heart surgery in December and some setbacks in the healing process. He continues to heal and recover.

Fellowship

Recognizing the church as the "communion of the saints," we gave a significant emphasis to fellowship. Beyond our Lord's Day worship, we sat down each Lord's day after worship for meals. On the first Sunday of each month we had our monthly carry-in dinners, which are a bit more organized. The other weeks we call them a brown bag lunch, for people to bring food for themselves. However, people continue bringing casseroles, large salads and desserts to share. Many people drive long distances to attend Westminster and would like to eat a meal before they head home. This helps to accommodate them with an enjoyable time of fellowship. Thus, on average we are together each Lord's Day from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm.

Currently the Facebook page is being updated regularly by Erin Zeller, This is helping to keep it fresh and youthful.

Education

Our educational ministries continue to thrive. We currently have one class that meets each Lord's Day morning: an adult class, which had completed the study of Church History by Ligonier and are now doing a study of 1-2 Peter and Jude. This class has been led by several different members of the church. We also have an occasional ministry called "2nd Assembly". We currently spend time after lunch in prayer and psalm singing, including some new Psalms.

Outreach

In the area of outreach, we continue to seek points of contact with our community. We have worked at social media and have distributed our brochures at some of the local train stations. We need to continue to pray for wisdom on what we can do, with our limited numbers that would be effective and productive.

Ecumenicity

We have enjoyed fellowship with at least one other local congregation and with several Christian organizations. We have regularly exchanged ministry information with Hope OPC in Grayslake, Illinois. In addition, we have had good working relationships with several OPC ordained ministers and candidates who have been helping to fill the pulpit at Westminster.

Property and Facilities

We are extremely thankful to God for the property we enjoy in Prairie View, Illinois. It provides us with a significant presence within the community. Both structures are sound and attractive, though not without maintenance challenges. For many years we have been blessed by the Presbytery Youth Ministry's "Fall Ministry Project". The young people who have come up to help us have completed various maintenance projects in exchange for housing and as much Chicago pizza as they can eat. In general the facilities are in reasonable condition for a 100+ year old facility. A newish septic system and new furnaces and air conditioners for all the facilities have us in reasonable shape. The one current project is to acquire a portion of second street which is abandoned county property along the East side of the church. We are working with our neighbor as they will also obtain half of the land. We plan to have an additional land use agreement which will allow us to utilize a portion for their property for parking. Lawyers of course will need to be involved.

Challenges

Like all local congregations, we are not without our challenges, by which God keeps us humble, prayerful, and conscious of our utter dependence upon Him.

Membership



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We end 2019 with 20 communicant members and 5 baptized members, for a total of 25. This is a decline of 7 from the previous year. The average attendance at worship is 30.. We also have some students from Northwestern University that make it to Prairie View on Sunday mornings.

We are a small congregation with a membership that is strongly committed to the church and its ministry. Most of the congregation drives 35 minutes to an hour to reach church each Lord's Day. We realize that the distance and occasional poor weather lessen our numerical fellowship, and the distance alone prevents a more active fellowship and ministry throughout the week.

1. Busy Members

Though not unique to our congregation, we would yet identify the "rat race" pace of our culture as a significant challenge that we face. It seems that careers, family life, and simple fatigue often reduce our involvement in church ministries. The Chicago area as most other large metro areas will also consume us with greater travel distances and terrible traffic.

2. Finances

2019 ended on a positive note. However, the main reason for this was that we did not have a full-time pastor from September forward. We also received a large single loan payment from Synod to help us with some expenses which we had already taken care of. For example, we installed two new furnaces in the church. Both previous units were over 25 years old and the boiler was leaking and starting to cause damage to the property. God has blessed us with over \$45,000 in reserves as we enter 2020. This is an increase over 2018.

3. Property Maintenance

In general, the properties have been well taken care of. Steve Rhoda made an effort to make sure porches and windows were painted and maintenance items were taken care of. We have resolved some of our toughest issues such as high sulfur content in the water and poor septic system. There is always need for continued maintenance on 100+ year old buildings, but there are no things in crisis at the moment.

Conclusion

These are our major challenges, but this report began with a reference to Westminster as an active, hopeful and joyful ministry, and that certainly bears repeating. Our witness to Christ is clear, our fellowship is deep, and our expectation for the blessing of God is high. We face uncertainties but know that Christ is King and Head of His church and that He bears all power and authority. We pray that He will stir us by His Spirit, prosper us in His grace, and use us in a mighty way for His kingdom and glory. Please support and pray for us to this end. Thank you!

Recommendations

- 1. That Presbytery appoint Wade Mann to continue as interim moderator for Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church.**