

## **Chaplain Phil Pockras**

### **Annual Report to Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, RPCNA**

**March 3, 2026**

#### **Overview**

In addition to serving as pastor at the Belle Center, OH, RPC, I serve as a volunteer chaplain as part of the chaplain staff at the Mary Rutan Hospital, a regional hospital Bellefontaine, Ohio. Currently there are seven men so serving. Much of my report is unchanged, since the duties and ministry remain similar to previous years. Attached is an evaluation letter from my "supervisor" at Mary Rutan Hospital.

#### **Duties**

As part of the volunteer hospital chaplain staff, I provide religious and other support to all the hospital, not merely patients and families. This has been my primary responsibility. As the longest serving ordained chaplain, I have recruited one other chaplain and have been seeking to encourage the other chaplains to seek further education in their chaplain work. I normally spend one week per month as the on-call chaplain. I must be available around the clock beginning at 0000 on Sabbath until 2400 on the following Saturday. As well, I do rounds from Monday through Friday to see patients who request a visit. I frequently visit with nursing and other staff to see if they need my service.

#### **Ministry Update**

This last year I have continued to study medical and bioethics. I remain endorsed by the Presbyterian and Reformed Chaplain Commission, and I am seeking ways to be able to take units of Clinical Pastoral Education in order, eventually, to become board certified as a hospital chaplain. The PRCC wants its chaplains to keep their ministry oversight judicatories aware of their work, which is why I am submitting this report.

#### **Blessings**

My trip to Mary Rutan Hospital from home normally takes about 15 minutes. During that time I am often praying that I will be a blessing to all with whom I meet. I frequently receive blessing. There is a nurse who often works in the Intensive Care Unit and in the Emergency Department. He is a retired Navy Hospital Corpsman who spent his naval career mostly in caring for Marines. He was very respectful and cordial with me. I found out that he had served in the Middle East with Navy Chaplain Captain Bryan Weaver, whom some of you

might remember from RPTS. Bryan had been a tremendous spiritual help to the former HM2. He appreciates and supports the work of the chaplaincy at our hospital. A second story to share is that in the first week of the year, when I was not the on-call chaplain, the switchboard called me to ask if I could come in to visit with the family of a dying woman. It was snowing fairly heavily. I told them I would be down within half an hour. Someone had not changed my name and contact number for on-call chaplain from the whiteboard in the switchboard room, in God's providence. I arrived safely and found the family. The lady's husband was there with a nephew and niece-in-law of his. He remarked that, the next week, it would be their 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The previous day she had slipped on ice and broken her hip. She had orthopedic surgery earlier in the day in which I was called in. She "died" on the table, but was resuscitated. In the ICU she was comatose. The couple had no church home. I shared the Gospel with the husband, then told him I would talk to his wife, with his permission, explaining that, not infrequently, comatose people can still hear and understand. I did that, spent some time with family, and left a business card with the husband if he wished further help. I've not heard from him since. I have no idea if the wife has died, or of her spiritual condition. God providentially had me there with her, on the near bank of the River of Death. The upshot of stories like these and others that I've shared, is that often, as I'm walking over to my car, I'm praying gratefully for the blessing, unasked-for, that our Father gave to me.

## **Challenges**

The only challenges, currently, are certain limitations on my visitation with patients. I am only allowed to visit patients when asked for. I misunderstood this early in my work and began visiting with family members in waiting rooms and in other places. I was gently instructed not to do this further.

## **Prayer Requests**

Please pray with me that I would be a blessing to patients, families, staff, and even administration and board. Pray that, through me, the Light of the world would shine forth!

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Phil Pockras

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January 19, 2026

**Re: Phil Pockras – Spiritual Care Team**

To whom it may concern:

It is with great pleasure to write this letter of appreciation and gratitude for the spiritual care service that Phil Pockras is providing to Mary Rutan Hospital patients and staff. Phil has faithfully served as a chaplain at Mary Rutan Hospital since 2017. Phil demonstrates empathy, spiritual counsel, and a compassionate presence for those that may be going through hardships or for those that need a listening ear. He is one of the more seasoned and experienced chaplains at Mary Rutan Hospital; therefore, he trains and coaches new members of the Spiritual Care Team with an enthusiastic willingness. Reliability and dependability are also his strong traits, as I can count on him to be present when scheduled and fill in when needed, all with a positive and energetic personality.

I am blessed to have worked with Phil during these past 4 years. His commitment in being a servant of God shines through each day and he passes that bright light onto others. I appreciate his leadership, counseling, and his caring heart. His service with integrity, compassion, and dedication makes him a valuable member of the Mary Rutan team!

Sincerely,

*Julie Klopfenstein*

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