

## **2026 Belle Center Session Report to Presbytery**

Out of His grace, alone, Christ continues to fulfill His promise: "I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18).

### **Blessings**

We continue to rejoice in a full local Session. Both of our Ruling Elders have served well in the congregation and on Presbytery appointments. As well, we are blessed by an increasingly efficient Deacon board. We have a new member of the Deacons – Mr. Anthony Panichelle was elected, accepted his call, was successfully examined, and was ordained on February 15, 2026. Finances continue to be far better than a few years ago. Again, God blessed with a continued surplus in 2025. The appended financial report was presented to and approved by Session.

Our average attendance for 2025 was 50, down from 2024's average of 54. We had membership increase from the following sources: two by baptism and one by restoration and one by transfer from another denomination. We lost one member by excommunication, five by removal, and one was taken home to glory. Total membership is at 73; 51 communicant and 22 baptized. Since the beginning of 2025 we have had two babies baptized and we look forward to two more arriving later in the year. We rejoice in the blessing of receiving a man restored from excommunication; a former member of another RP congregation in another Presbytery. We proceeded only after seeing what we thought were credible evidences of repentance, and with advice and consent from his former Session. He continues to be a blessing. We rejoice that, even with the losses, we have been blessed with some new adherents. One is the local county extension agent, who lives only a block away from our building. A family of six lives to the northwest of our village only a couple of miles. They have their challenges, but they bring blessing, too.

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. The special ladies' prayer group that continuously operates online and our young men's every-other-week Bible study that were begun in 2023 continue to present. A lady of our church was the leader for RP Missions' Cyprus team. Our pastor is very hopeful that Zion's King already has in place our congregation's future Session and Deacon Board. As a Session, we testify to the value of Synod's TFY program. Most of these young men are "alumni" of it. At least one of their wives is, too. Several young people attended many of the presbytery CYPUs activities, as well as some Alleghenies Presbytery events, in the past year.

We changed our meeting times somewhat. Sabbath School is now at 11 AM, followed by our first worship service at noon. The second worship service is now at 5:30 PM. Second service attendance has increased markedly. With many members having long commutes, in time and mileage, there has been opportunity for the exercise of hospitality by more local people.

Our pastor continues his chaplain work at Mary Rutan Hospital in Bellefontaine, OH. His report on his chaplaincy work is before Presbytery. Our pastor is attempting to learn Portuguese. He has preached twice to a group of Presbyterians in and around Rio de Janeiro,

over the internet, with interpreters. He is also encouraging a young Presbyterian minister in Brasilia. The two of them converse over the internet most weeks, with the young man seeking to improve his English and Phil his Portuguese. Phil hopes to use this to make and cultivate contacts who might be interested in the RPC. With them he has shared resources from RTF and keeps the Rev. Edgar Ibarra of Synod's CASA Committee informed.

## **Challenges**

We have continued health challenges, especially chronic ones. We have people with lung and pulmonary problems, heart issues, arthritis, dementia, and diabetes. Attendance at both the prayer meeting and the second worship service are relatively poor, although improving. We are concerned that some of this is due to spiritual coolness. Some is due to our next challenge:

A continuing challenge is the physically spread-out nature of our congregation. We have a family coming from the southwest traveling an hour and a half each way. From the northwest, people 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 10 stated and 10 called meetings in 2025. The 2024 minutes of the session were submitted to Presbytery and approved without correction. Our pastor attended Synod and 1 regular meeting of the Presbytery. Our ruling elders have been diligent to attend higher courts. Our pastor is currently serving on Presbytery's Church Extension Committee; and the committee studying issues with the property of departing congregations.

The congregation has not met since the last spring meeting of Presbytery. As of the time of the writing of this report, the 2026 annual meeting has not yet occurred. We hope it will be characterized by clarity, concord, and good spirits, as usual.

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 has finished preaching through Luke's Gospel during the first service and is proceeding into Acts, volume II of Luke's work. In the second service, he preached through the book of Job and is now nearly finished in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Before morning worship, we meet for Sabbath School. We have two classes, now: our family class, taught by our minister, currently using G. I. Williamson's Shorter Catechism for Study Classes; and a class just completed for ruling elder and deacon education through material produced by the RPTS, taught by RE Bowers.

The congregation meets for prayer on Wednesday evenings at 7:30, with an average attendance of five, but not infrequently as many as twelve. We would like to see more participation from the congregation, but the physically scattered nature of our congregation does not help.

We look forward to 2026 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