

Christ Church Parish and Ministry Profile

Christ Church, Anglican

Brownsville, PA

July 2024

History of Brownsville

The town of Brownsville was one of the early American settlements along the Monongahela River, which travels north and feeds into the Ohio River at Pittsburgh. Locals like to say that, early on in its founding, that Pittsburgh wouldn't amount to anything as it was too close to Brownsville. As Americans expanded from the original colonies after the revolution, Brownsville became a hub for travel and shipping to western settlements. The national road ended in Brownsville, making it a gateway to the frontier.

In the 1800's, the town was known for manufacturing steam boats that would travel the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, taking advantage of easy access to east coast lumber and Appalachian coal. The town continued to grow and prosper throughout the middle of the 20th century, as coal, steel, and manufacturing jobs built a booming economy during WWII.

During the region's 1970s steel crisis, Brownsville was hit hard. Like most of the region, manufacturing jobs became rarer, steel mills shut down, and coal mines became less profitable as a result. Those three economic pillars that helped Brownsville become a picturesque mid-century small town collapsed, and since that time, the economy has not rebounded. Highways and airplanes also reduced the need for shipping via rivers.

Since that economic bust, the regional economy has stabilized, but "good jobs" outside of telemarketing, food service, and retail work have continued to be scarce. Although there has been some new work in the region due to the availability of natural gas and barge building, Brownsville remains an area of economic depression. About half of our families live at or below the poverty line. Like many economically depressed areas, drug use is a widespread problem, and Brownsville is on the front line of the region's opioid epidemic.

Despite the bleak economic profile, Brownsville is a welcoming and warm community. The town hosts grocery stores, a Wal-Mart, a handful of quick service restaurants, multiple banks, parks, and a library. A nearby drive-in theater shows first run movies. The town also hosts the famous Nemacolin Castle, a mansion that overlooks the river valley and acts as a local historical society. Route 40 runs through town, and provides quick access to nearby Uniontown PA, and the relatively new Route 43, built by the Pennsylvania Turnpike, makes the drive up to Pittsburgh quick and easy. The town also boasts a healthy civic life, with waterfront concerts during the summer and an extremely active ministerial association.

Parish History

Christ Church Brownsville is one of the most historic congregations in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh. Anglicans began worshipping in the town of Brownsville as early as 1759, as British

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troops headed from Cumberland to Fort Pitt and stopped at Redstone Creek to build a fort. From the late 1700's to the 1820's, Anglicans worshiped privately and quietly in log churches along the national road as "the forms and ceremonies of the English were met with great prejudice." The present grounds of the church were purchased with the intent of building an Episcopal parish in 1796, and the first church building was completed on the property in 1823.

Its current stone building was completed in 1857 and consecrated in 1859; it has been in continual use for over 150 years. Alongside the church is a graveyard where many of the town's founders and church's founders are buried. The property includes a rectory and once included a parish house, originally built in 1842. Anglicans have continued to worship at Christ Church throughout the 1900s.

Although the church has suffered through the economic struggles of the region, it retained effective ministry throughout the 1970's and 1980's. Starting in the mid 90's, Fr. Stan Burdock served as the priest in this parish faithfully for nearly 20 years, and is fondly remembered by many who have long standing membership within the parish. In 2009, Christ Church joined the majority of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh and voted to sever ties with the Episcopal Church over issues of biblical authority. In recent years, its clergy and lay leadership have continued to be an active part of the ministerial, and the community requests use of the building for choir performances and historic tours.

Christ Church has historically been a family church. Since 2014, the church's priests have ranged from fulltime to part time and the congregation has a retired deacon that lives locally in town. Only about half of the membership role lives in Brownsville, with many commuting from as far away as Belle Vernon and Charleroi (about a 30 minute drive) for services. It currently has a six-member vestry, a secretary, treasurer, and two wardens.

The congregation is open to a variety of worship styles, drawing from all three of the Anglican streams (Catholic, Charismatic, and Evangelical) for its weekly worship services. It currently uses the Texts for Common Prayer liturgy, long form, and uses both a piano and organ for its service music. Congregants use a projector screen for music and a printed bulletin for the rest of the liturgy.

The 2023 budget for annual operating expenses is \$166,788. The congregation is grateful for the faithful giving of generations past, which have resulted in the establishment of an endowment for the purposes of maintaining its building and other property needs. In a typical year, about \$35,000 of the budget comes from the regular giving and plate offerings.

A New Season of Ministry and Mission

The congregation has spent considerable time in prayer and discernment for a new season of ministry. The vestry firmly believes God is calling a fulltime rector to Brownsville to proclaim the Good News and lead the congregation to minister to the lost and build God's kingdom in our small community.

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Although small in numbers, the congregation is faithful in its responsibilities and committed to the gospel. A Rector at Christ Church must be young at heart, ready to lead, and love Jesus above all else.

The congregation has a long history of ministering to young people, the poor, and the addicted. A Rector at Christ Church must be comfortable, gifted, and called to serve, minister, and lead in these areas. Families are very important to us and ministry is expected to be through this lens. Finally, a Rector at Christ Church must be a doer of the Word.

The congregation is small. In many ways, you will be leading a church plant with a core group of saints, church buildings, and a budget.

Proposed Parish Profile Numbers for 2023 Annual Report

Annual Worship Services: 54

Average Sunday Attendance: 22

Membership Roll: 27

Child Members: 9

Young Adult Members: 3

Adult Members: 15

A successful Rector likely has gifts in evangelism, missions, and faith. In many ways you have what the world calls “an entrepreneurial spirit.” You are not afraid of the unknown, you enjoy risk taking, you are passionate and motivated as well as resilient, you have a strong work ethic.

Some of the requirements and responsibilities important to the vestry include

- You believe you are called to Brownsville and will live here and be engaged in the life of the community
- You appreciate the importance lay ministry and have experience equipping congregations
- You understand that Anglicanism have something unique to offer our community and are steeped in an understanding of the formularies and love the liturgy; they shape your teaching and preaching
- You have or will have a vision, strategy, and plan for Christ Church
- You have a pastor’s heart and a heart for the lost, you serve with humility
- You seek accountability

Please also see the document [Christ Church Rector Duties](#).