

Russellville Presbyterian Church

Founded 1817

The Russellville Presbyterian Church (RPC), affiliated with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), is located in the east central portion of Brown County, Ohio. The church is just north of Ripley, Ohio, where John Rankin, a Presbyterian minister and prominent member of the Underground Railroad helped fugitives escape from slavery in the years before the American Civil War. RPC is situated at the junction of US Highway 62 and Ohio Highway 125 and is at the center of a ten-mile square service area.

Russellville is a small mid-western town in a scenic rural setting with a population of 547. The service area also includes Lake Waynoka, a gated lake community of 1,173, about half are full-time residents. The service area claims about 4,500 out of the total county population of 43,759. The median household income is \$42,528 compared with the U.S median of \$56,516. Thirty-three percent of the households have children age eighteen and under. The area is primarily a bedroom community served by four-lane Ohio 32 to jobs and services available in the Cincinnati area. Although the county is often labeled agricultural, only a small number of residents count farming as the primary source of income.

The area is served by an excellent school system with an elementary school located in Russellville. A local public library, a community center across the street from the church, a part-time police department, and an active volunteer fire and emergency department serve the community. In spite of there being thirteen churches in the service area, a Ministry Area Profile prepared by the Midwest Presbytery (EPC) in 2012 indicates that only 44% are strongly involved with their faith. According to the same study, the incidence of family problems is slightly higher than the U.S. average with a significant portion of those problems involving alcohol and drug abuse.

The majority of the RPC members are Caucasian, over age 65, retired, and have belonged to the church for over ten years. The attendance roster includes 21 individuals with an average Sunday worship attendance of 11. Several groups provide support for church programming. A Session of five elders provides congregational leadership. Presbyterian Women raise funds for missions and support local projects. Liturgy leaders schedule musicians, copy materials, present children's sermons, and conduct the opening of Sunday worship.

Overall, the self-described strengths of the congregation are: concern for people with problems, coming together to work on projects, participating in an active prayer life, being open to the working of the Holy Spirit, sharing with each other, being blessed with musicians, and the ability to do a lot for a small congregation.

The greatest threat to the congregation came in June 1999 when a pulpit supply, upset with the PC (USA) Cincinnati Presbytery's decision about his credentials, led a significant contingent to withdraw and form a separate church. For the next several years, the remnant of RPC has struggled with issues of grief and compromised morale over this very emotional separation.

In 2012, the congregation affiliated with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. With assistance of the Midwest Presbytery (EPC), the congregation called a part-time pastor in 2014-2017 who expertly led the congregation through some very difficult times. An interim pastor served the congregation in 2017-2018.

In 2016, through the work of a vision team, REPC renewed its vision to be faithful followers of Jesus and continue its mission of glorifying God and sharing His love with its neighbors. Reflecting on the core values of grace, faith, hope, and love helped the team in shaping the church's ministry to the community. On July 30, 2017, REPC joyously celebrated 200 years of service to God and the residents of the Russellville community. Once again, God has been faithful to His people!