

19. Edmonton

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Saint Michael the Archangel

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of St. Michael the Archangel traces its origins to a meeting held on April 19, 1959, in the home of Hryhorij and Maria Sorochan. A group of committed individuals resolved to establish a new church to serve the spiritual needs of the growing Orthodox community in north Edmonton. Many Ukrainians had settled in this area as the city expanded beyond its traditional ethnic neighborhoods.

The first Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Reverend Mykhailo Fyk, took place on May 29, 1959, at Calder Elementary School. The school served as the congregation's gathering place for two years. Reverend Fyk, occasionally supported by Reverend M. Chomiak, guided the fledgling community as it grew.

On December 18, 1960, parishioners passed a resolution to seek formal membership in the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada. Leadership transitioned to Steve Chornlesky, and discussions began about acquiring a local United Church building. In January 1961, hosted by Petro Popowich, the congregation finalized financing plans. Lawyer Russell Dzenick was retained to negotiate the transaction.

On February 7, 1961, the congregation reaffirmed its intent to affiliate with the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada. This decision was unanimously supported at a special meeting nine days later. Though documentation for incorporation was delayed by twenty years, the congregation successfully acquired Chalmers United Church at 121 Street and 129 Avenue, taking possession on April 5, 1961. With only \$1,794 in its bank account, renovations were postponed, and services commenced immediately.

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The sanctuary's official opening and blessing took place on November 26, 1961.

The establishment of a dedicated worship space spurred the congregation's growth. By the end of 1961, twenty services had been held, generating \$6,300 in income against \$5,000 in expenses. Membership included 36 families, and 32 children attended Sunday school. A Ukrainian Saturday school, launched in September 1961, enrolled 24 students by year-end and operated until the early 1980s. A local branch of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada was also established.

In the fall of 1963, Reverend Hryhorii Wasyliv assumed pastoral duties, serving for nine years. During his tenure, the congregation faced challenges but grew stronger. Membership dipped to 18 in 1964 but steadily rebounded. By 1967, preparations began for a new church. The old United Church was demolished after Easter, and construction began in July. Services were held in the new building by October. Designed by John Belzac, a draftsman and church treasurer, the new structure featured a tripartite design with three domes. The church was consecrated in 1968 by Bishop Andrew.

The new church's \$112,000 construction cost created a financial burden, prompting fundraising efforts like bingo nights. By 1972, finances had improved enough to commission

a \$22,000 iconostasis painted by renowned artist Sviatoslav Hordynsky of New York. Parishioners contributed by gilding the ornamental woodwork. The icon screen was blessed on November 21, 1976, by Bishop Boris in a service attended by many local clergy.

In 1977, a parish residence was built north of the church at 12105-130 Avenue for \$108,000. This marked a milestone in the congregation's development. On December 21, 1980, the congregation formally adopted the constitution of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada to clarify its legal status for grant applications. By 1982, the parish priest also served Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Calmar. In 1989, the original manse was exchanged for a new residence at 12928-121 Street, closer to the church.

A significant milestone came in 1990 when St. Michael's was proposed as a base for missionary work in northwest Edmonton and St. Albert. That same year, the congregation built a \$500,000 parish hall designed by Paul Grekul. Officially opened on June 15, 1991, the hall featured a large stage and multipurpose facilities, symbolizing the parish's vitality.

By 1994, St. Michael's had 120 members, reflecting the fulfillment of its founders' vision and decades of perseverance.

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Priests

M. Fyk, with support from Reverend M. Chomiak (1959-1963)
H. Wasyliv (1963-1972)
I. Stus (1972-1977, 1983-1989)
S. Semotiuk (1977-1983)
I. Furgal (1989-1990)
M. Parfeniuk (1990-1993)
P. Hnatiw (1993-1995)
V. Kouchnir (1995-1999)
I. Konstant (1999-2000)
M. Sawchenko (2000 -)

Location and Feast Day

12104-129 Avenue, Calder district,
Edmonton.

GPS Coordinates: 53.588837, -113.530964
Their *Feast Day* is November 21

Founding Members

H. Sorochan
D. Mycak
W. Tacey

