

39. Myrnam

Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church

The first Ukrainian Orthodox Divine Liturgy in the Myrnam area was celebrated on September 6, 1925, by Rev. I. Kusey, as reported in *Ukrains'kyi Holos* on October 7, 1925. A formal Ukrainian Orthodox congregation was organized in Myrnam in 1930, during a period of growth spurred by the arrival of the railway three years earlier. However, the hardships of the Great Depression delayed the construction of a dedicated place of worship for more than a decade, with services held instead in the New Myrnam School.

As the economy improved at the outset of the Second World War, the Orthodox faithful in Myrnam intensified their activities and took on the challenge of building a church. The congregation officially joined the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada on January 26, 1941, when the necessary documents were filed with the Consistory in Winnipeg. Fundraising efforts began in 1940, and construction of the sanctuary commenced in 1943. The work crew included Wasyl Dolinsky, Michael Kawich, and Philip and Dmytro Hucal, with Wasyl Topolnitsky handling the electrical wiring. The first liturgy in the new church was celebrated by Rev. L. Diachina in 1944.

The rectangular wood-frame structure featured a full basement, a medium-sized dome over an entranceway tower housing the belfry, and two smaller domes at the corners of the facade. The new church quickly became the hub of Ukrainian Orthodox community life in Myrnam, which reached its peak vitality over the next two decades.



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Post-War Growth and Development

Between 1941 and 1950, a total of 111 church services were held at Holy Trinity Church. During this period, the congregation had approximately 150 active members when entire families were counted. In 1951, Rev. I. Shwetz, who had served as the resident priest since the end of the war, reported a paid membership of forty, a figure that remained constant for several years.

The Myrnam district of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church included Musidora, Morecambe, South and North Slawa, Brosseau (Mamaesti). At one point, there was even consideration of transferring responsibility for Two Hills to the district. The strong network of sister parishes enabled the district to embark on the construction of a manse. By the summer of 1952, the basement was dug, and a builder was contracted to complete the house by winter. The finished residence was blessed on November 30. One parishioner proudly stating in a letter to the Consistory that “everyone was pleased that it was going to become one of the nicest residences” in the Orthodox Church in Canada.

Although contributions for the manse came from across the district, most funds were raised within the Myrnam congregation, reflecting its vibrant activity. In 1952-1953, eighteen services were celebrated at Holy Trinity, and there were proposals to increase liturgies to twice monthly. In that same period, seventy liturgies were celebrated across the district, including in Gratz and Toporivtsi, marking a high point in the region’s spiritual life.

The formal consecration of Holy Trinity Church took place on July 19, 1953, during a visitation by Metropolitan Ilarion, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the sanctuary’s construction. The ikonostasis was painted in 1958 by the renowned artist Wadym

Dobrolige (1913-1973), funded by a successful \$1,400 fundraising drive.

Challenges and Decline

Rev. M. Kryschuk assumed pastoral duties in the Myrnam area in 1958, marking his first assignment after ordination. His appointment revitalized the local Orthodox community, which was facing increasing competition from other denominations. The congregation had 28 registered members at the time, rising to 34 the following year and reaching 40 by 1962. However, by the late 1960s, the congregation began to shrink due to the migration of young people to cities and the gradual passing of senior members.

In 1969, with the departure of Rev. M. Sawchenko, the manse was left vacant, and the Myrnam district was amalgamated with Two Hills. As part of this reorganization, responsibility for All Saints Church in Lloydminster (established during Rev. Kryschuk’s tenure) was transferred from Myrnam to the Vegreville district. Despite strong protests from the Holy Trinity executive and appeals for a permanent priest, the shortage of clergy prevented this from happening. Consequently, Myrnam became dependent on priests based in Two Hills and later in Edmonton.

By 1974, the church had 29 members and 20 occasional attendees, with nine liturgies and one feast day service celebrated by Fr. Zubrytsky. A lighted cross was added to the exterior of the church in 1978, thanks to a donation by Mr. and Mrs. Zaparyniuk.



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Renovations and Modern Era

Several renovations were carried out in the 1980s. The exterior walls were restructured, the domes were repaired and repainted, and the cedar shingles were replaced with sheet metal roofing. The interior of the church and

the basement hall were also repainted, and the floors in both areas were refinished.

Despite these efforts, the congregation continued to experience a decline, reflecting broader demographic shifts and the challenges faced by rural parishes.



Priests

- I. Kusey (1925-1928)
- I. Mayba (1928-1932)
- D. Stratychuk (1932-1935)
- T. Horbay (1935-1938)
- S. Symchych (1940-1942)
- L. Diachina (1942-1946)
- J. Shwetz (1946-1951)
- M. Flak (1951-1952)
- T. Horbay (1952)
- S. Hredil (1952-1958)
- M. Kryschuk (1958-1961)
- A. Chrustawka (1961-1966)
- S. Symchych (1965)
- D. Denesiuk (1966)
- W. Melnychuk (1966-1968)
- M. Sawchenko (1969-1972)
- P. Zubrytsky (1969-1974)
- S. Semotiuk (1974-1977)
- P. Zubrytsky (dates unknown)
- M. Sawchenko (1985-1994)
- W. Sapiha (1994-present)

Cemetery

Located on the north side of Highway 45, east of Myrnam, one and a half miles from the church, at SE 13-54-9 W4. Cemetery Coordinates: 53.65818, -111.19265

Location and Feast Day

East side of the town of Myrnam, north of the railway tracks, at SW 14-54-9 W4, County of Two Hills. GPS Coordinates: 53.662505, -111.225476 | Their Feast Day is celebrated on Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter.

Founding Members

- W. Kotyshyn
- N. Bednarsky
- P. Bednarsky
- P. Danelovich
- A. Elnitski
- P. Koshovsky
- V. Kefiuk
- F. Myshaniuk
- S. Mulka
- W. Plishka
- J. Maksymiuk
- T. Plishka
- V. Sakowsky
- L. Yaremchuk
- M. Yaremchuk
- J. Yasheyko



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