



47. Sandy Rapids

All Saints Ukrainian Orthodox Church

Immigrants from Volhynia, Bukovyna, and Galicia began settling in this remote region in the mid-to-late 1920s, with the largest influx occurring between 1929 and 1931. The settlers represented a diverse range of religious backgrounds, including Ukrainian Catholic, Evangelical, and Pentecostal adherents. Each group established its own congregation and built churches in the neighboring settlements, while the Sandy Rapids area saw the formation of a school district in April 1933.

That same year, local farmers secured a piece of land from the government for use as a community cemetery. Recognizing the growing need for Ukrainian Orthodox services, an organizational meeting was held in April 1935, likely at the suggestion of Rev. Ivan Mayba. The congregation then began inviting priests from Smoky Lake to serve the Orthodox faithful of the Sandy Rapids district. Around this time, the initiative group contacted Edmonton-based lawyer Peter Lazarowich for assistance in incorporating with the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada (UGOC). Official incorporation was necessary to secure the legal registration of their cemetery, which was otherwise at risk of forfeiture.

On June 15, 1935, another meeting was held at the home of Wasyl Karasiuk, where a congregation in the name of the Virgin Mary was formally established. The first known liturgy in the Sandy Rapids district was celebrated by Rev. Mayba, and for over a decade, services continued to be held in private homes.



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Challenges and Growth

Due to its isolated location, the Sandy Rapids Orthodox congregation received sporadic pastoral visits from UGOC clergy during its formative years. In late 1940, a congregation member expressed concerns to the Consistory about some Volhynian settlers (described as supporters of "Tsarodoxy" and "katsapism") who were allegedly attempting to seize control of the cemetery on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Mission. The Consistory advised that the church property, registered under the UGOC, could not legally be transferred as long as even a minority of members remained committed to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The matter, which was attributed to the influence of a Volhynian agitator promoting "White Ruthenian" (Belarusian) identity, did not escalate further.

By late 1942, the congregation began planning for the construction of a church and wrote to the Consistory in December, requesting assistance in securing a government permit to harvest timber for the project. Approval was granted in March 1943, and on June 6, the congregation reaffirmed its commitment to the UGOC, recognizing its charter, bylaws, and Sobor decisions. While the church property remained under the congregation's ownership, it was legally tied to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada.

The Second World War exacerbated the UGOC's longstanding challenge of supplying priests to rural settlements, limiting services in Sandy Rapids during the early 1940s. In recognition of this, the Consistory absolved the congregation of its Diocesan Fund obligations from 1940 to 1945. Pastoral care improved significantly after Rev. Senishen's permanent appointment to the Glendon parish district in late 1944. By 1946, the congregation reported six member families and five Divine Liturgies, both of which increased the following year.

Construction and Stability

In 1948, the congregation launched efforts to build a church, initially raising \$300. Members collectively donated 3,500 feet of lumber, and the building's design was modeled after churches remembered from their Ukrainian homeland. Klym Martyniuk, who had previously served as the founding chairman of the Garth Ukrainian Evangelical Church in 1933, was hired as the carpenter at a wage of \$1 per hour. Volunteers assisted with construction, and his final labor costs totaled \$1,100.

The completed rectangular structure featured a large vestibule and two flanking domes adorning the facade. The project was completed debt-free thanks to the congregation's diligent fundraising. In early 1949, the congregation requested that their feast day be changed from the Protection of the Mother of God (St. Mary the Protectress) to All Saints Sunday.

Owning a dedicated place of worship helped stabilize and invigorate the congregation. By 1951, membership had increased to 14 families, and eight Divine Liturgies were celebrated. The number of services rose to eleven by 1953, but the ongoing shortage of a permanent priest in the Glendon district led to concerns that some members might transition to the Russian Orthodox Church. By 1955, difficulties in instilling religious values in younger generations and financial struggles prevented the congregation from sending a delegate to the Sobor.

Despite these challenges, the late 1950s marked a period of growth. Between 1955 and 1960, the congregation regularly hosted 12–13 liturgies per year. Membership peaked at 28 families by 1960, when Bishop Andrew of the Western Diocese consecrated the church. By this time, the interior was fully finished and featured a large and elegant iconostasis.



Decline and Legacy

For several years, the congregation continued to flourish, but as rural depopulation accelerated, membership slowly dwindled. By 1994, the congregation reported 18 adult members, including seven married couples. While services became less frequent, the church remains an important historical and cultural landmark in the Sandy Rapids district.

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Priests

I. Mayba (1935-1936)
H. Wasyliw (1936-1943)
W. Woytowich (1943-1944)
W. Senishen (1944-1949)
W. Boychuk (1949-1950)
P. Satsevich (1950-1951)
Iov Skakalsky (1952-1953)
I. Magas (1953)
S. Hredil (1954)
I. Kulish (1955)
E. Trufyn (1956-1958)
P. Dorosh-Zmiyiwsky (1958-1961)
J. Vitenko (1961-1962)
P. Zubrytsky (1962-1963)
E. Stefaniuk (1963-1964)
O. Sorochuk (1964-1972)
M. Sawchenko (1970)
L. Kubin (1970-1972)
S. Semotiuk (1972-1974)
Shcherban (1972-1975)
A. Chrustawka (1975-1978)
M. Sawchenko (1979-1985)
D. Hohol (1985-1994)
J. Lipinski (1994-present)

Location and Feast Day

Northwest of Iron River, off Highway 55,
at SW 12-63-8 W4, Municipal District
of Bonnyville. *GPS Coordinates:*
54.456690,
-111.025846 | Their *Feast Day* is
celebrated on the Sunday following
Pentecost.

Founding Members

I. Boychuk
J. Charawich
A. Fedchuk
B. Fedir
P. Galiwoda
M. Gurin
I. Haponiuk
J. Haponiuk
E. Karas
W. Karasiuk
A. Sarawanski
P. Sarawanski
E. Sokorinski
W. Shymchuk
J. Woroby

Cemetery

Located adjacent to the church at SW 12-
63-8 W4.

Cemetery Coordinates: 54.456690,
-111.025846

