



57. Therien

Saint Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church

The founding meeting of St. Michael's Ukrainian Orthodox Church was held on August 16, 1936, at the home of John Horiachka. Twelve residents of the Therien district resolved to apply for acceptance as the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Mission of St. Michael. Around this time, Fr. Ivan Mayba celebrated the first Divine Liturgy in the community. Later that year, in December, the congregation submitted a request to Alberta's Department of Lands and Mines for a two-acre plot on the northeast corner of Matvii Pszyk's unpatented homestead.

On January 14, 1937, Fr. Ieronim Hrycyna in Edmonton wrote to the Consistory, acknowledging that he was unaware of the initiative but encouraged its support, ensuring that the land title would be registered under the church's name. Following extensive correspondence between the Consistory, the congregation, and the Province of Alberta, the necessary legal documents were issued in the spring of 1937.

Construction and Early Years

Within months of securing the land, the congregation constructed a modest cruciform sanctuary, adorned with a single dome. The church was formally blessed by Archbishop Ioan Theodorovich, likely during his late summer 1940 visit to east-central Alberta.

Details of this early period remain scarce, but it is known that Fr. Senishen was responsible for constructing the ikonostasis during his tenure as pastor for the Glendon district. By 1944, St. Michael's had ten paid members, and three liturgies were celebrated. By 1948, the number of liturgies increased to five, and by 1950, services had doubled to ten, despite only six members.



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However, the number of liturgies shrank back to five over the next two years.

By 1953, the congregation reported losing members to Glendon, making it difficult to contribute to the Diocesan Fund. Despite challenges, an article in *Ridna Nyva* the following year noted that the founding executive still led the church and that ten Orthodox families remained in the district—mostly immigrants from Bukovyna and Galicia. The article expressed optimism, stating: *“Organizational work is developing with us and has good prospects.”*

Decline and Dissolution

Despite optimism, another letter to the Consistory in 1957 revealed a deteriorating situation. With only three remaining members, the congregation considered selling the church and cemetery. Nevertheless, the loyal core persisted. In 1962, they wrote to Winnipeg for guidance on acquiring icons for their ikonostasis, stating that they could only afford prints, not original works, due to financial constraints.

By 1965, membership had grown to seven, but it was clear that the congregation was struggling. A few years later, the decision was made to dissolve the congregation, as members were now attending services in neighboring communities. On January 5, 1970, Mary Borovetz, a former secretary, informed the Consistory that St. Michael’s Church had been relocated to Kiev’s-K-Hi Ukrainian Orthodox

Youth Camp on Moose Lake, northeast of Bonnyville, for preservation and use as a chapel.

Though the relocation ended the active existence of the Therien congregation, it continued to retain ownership of the cemetery and original church property.

Final Disbandment and Sale of Property

In 1981, former members decided to sell the church property and divide proceeds between Holy Trinity Church in Glendon and Saints Peter and Paul Church in Gifford, where Therien’s faithful now worshipped. Acting on the Consistory’s advice and assisted by Fr. Sawchenko, a general meeting was held at Bill and Grace Hyshka’s home in Glendon to finalize asset distribution.

During discussions, members expressed concerns about the church relocation process and the Consistory’s involvement in disposing of the property. Ultimately, a resolution was passed to formally disband St. Michael’s Ukrainian Orthodox Church. A second resolution was also unanimously adopted, specifying that if there were no outstanding debts, the land should be sold only to a former parish member, with proceeds directed to Glendon, Gifford, or Kiev’s-K-Hi Camp.

The matter was then assigned to lawyer Russell Dzenik, who was requested to meet with former members and clarify all aspects of the agreed-upon transactions.



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Priests

- I. Mayba (1936)
- H. Wasyliv (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 (1964-1970)
- M. Sawchenko (1970)

Location and Feast Day

At SE 35-61-9 W4. *GPS Coordinates:*
54.238219, -111.027142 | Their *Feast Day* is November 21.

Founding Members

- J. Horiachka
- A. Kindrakevich
- M. Kmet
- D. Kuchan
- M. Luhowy
- H. Masluk
- I. Oshust
- H. Paladichuk
- D. Prociuk
- M. Pszyk
- A. Stasyk
- N. Tkachuk

Cemetery

Located at SE 35-61-9 W4, the congregation retained ownership of the cemetery after the church was relocated.

