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# St. Michael & All Angels

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Our Parish Story



APRIL 21, 2022



***Celebrating Christ in Community***

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## Who Are We Now

We, the people of St. Michael and All Angels, are a warm, welcoming, and loving community of Anglicans. In our church, we readily and continuously support one another. In our self examination, we recognize that we are diverse in respect to our personalities and opinions, and we seek to grow and learn from one another and our new priest.

Our church is fiscally sound. We have maintained the upkeep on our building, including the addition of a lift and automatic door openers, to be more accessible. We are blessed to have a Memorial Garden (Scattering Garden) for our parishioners. This treasure is located beside our church. Our rectory next door to the church is available for an incumbent to make a permanent home. It is currently rented. Otherwise, we would provide the housing allowance specified in the Diocesan recommendations.

St. Michael and All Angels is a place of both spoken and sung worship using the Book of Alternative Services. We have two Sunday morning services, the 10am service being live streamed. Thursday worship is where uplifting seniors are known as the “angels”. Refreshments and fellowship follow our services.

During Covid our congregation united in one Sunday service at 10 a.m. Many of us gained closer ties and friendships with each other during this uncertain time. With Covid restrictions lifted, the 8:30 a.m. and Thursday services have resumed. Not only did we survive, but we are gratefully amazed at the closer community we are now.

In summary, we have the spirit, people, and finances to continue our momentum to grow as a church for many more years with the leadership of a new minister.

## Strengths and Areas of Concern

We pray for an incumbent who will provide us with ongoing guidance and will continue to build on the legacy of our history as a caring and welcoming people.

St. Michael's has experienced many clergy over recent years. A four-year incumbency was followed by an interim priest. When an appointment of a Rector was made, the parish was overjoyed and full of hope. Most unfortunately this new incumbent died very suddenly, and we were both bereaved and again without clergy leadership. The next clergy was a wonderful interim who came to help us heal for ten months, she was then followed by a one-year incumbency in which the priest came and went all within the framework of the Pandemic. All these events and sequences left the parish feeling lost and isolated. Archbishop Anne was asked to intervene during the last short incumbency, which she did with prudent action.

Our strength is our resilience as a community of faith, and the loving support for each other up this hill of constant change. We have been blessed with the leadership of Bishop Victoria Matthews, known as “Bishop in Residence,” these past 6 months, an appointment made by Archbishop Anne of the Diocese of Algoma. Bishop Victoria has motivated us to begin anew in our ministries as we move from COVID-19 restrictions to in- person worship. Her spot-on sermons provide us with education and food for our hungry souls. A newly restructured Parish Board is full of hope and new ideas. Every position was filled with contagious energy.

Our focus is now on mission and stewardship in our church, community and beyond. The sense of hope and anticipation is present at St. Michael's. We, a dedicated and compassionate people, needed this nudge to move forward after a very challenging two years. An appeal for donations to take us out of deficit was achieved in just one month! We closed 2021 with another annual surplus.

Both the electronic offering program (EOP) and e-transfer of funds has enabled parishioners to contribute regularly regardless of their in-person attendance.

We have many seniors, but the mix of older and younger, different ethnicities and education provide a myriad of gifts to begin again. COVID-19 has reduced our numbers temporarily, but each Sunday we see more people returning to church. We have an enthusiastic Youth leader who hopes to build on past success and our relationship with the Lutheran church youth in our community. We have also begun looking into education for children as well, but possibly in a different format in these changing times.

Since we are a very social group, we look to beginning in-person events again which bind us together in mission and sociability. We love to be a community who works, eats, plays, and prays together while giving to those less fortunate. We invite the community to join us and encourage them to stay.

True to the spirit of Thunder Bay, our numbers decrease in the summer while people leave the city to experience the beauty of our Northwestern Ontario wilderness. In the winter, a few parishioners, mostly retired, travel south to warmer weather.

We are blessed with three part time employees and a host of volunteers. St. Michael and All Angels has an administrative assistant who works part time three days per week. We have a resourceful maintenance man who also works part time hours. Our Music Director is a part time paid position as well. We are in the process of recruiting a new Music Director, but we have enjoyed the guest musicians who play and sing at our services.

### Congregational Development and Diversity

In 2017 four churches in our Deanery met to discuss amalgamations and closures. This was a time of angst and uncertainty. With much prayer and discussion St. Michael and All Angels decided to continue as a single point parish.

In the past year we have seen a resurgence of energy at St. Michael and All Angels. We noticed more parishioners taking on responsibilities and offering to serve on committees. Our Parish Team Leadership Board was restructured and infused with new vitality. We could feel the resurgence of something special happening at St. Michael and All Angels. We are beginning to rebound in numbers and in a sense of common direction.

St. Michael's is an active participant in Deanery and Diocesan meetings and events. We send Synod representatives to all meetings in Sault Ste. Marie. Pre COVID-19, we often hosted the Deanery meetings and events in our church hall.

### Liturgy and Music

Liturgy and music are important to us. We have both audio-visual screens and books for worship and usually use the Book of Alternative Services. There is music at our 10am Sunday service, and the other two services offer quiet reflection.

We have traditional music but are open to new forms of music. We are currently searching for a new musical director who is open to a blend of new and traditional liturgical music.

### Lay Leadership and Mission

St. Michael and All Angels' financial stewardship has allowed us to continue through current challenges and changes. We work with our Deanery of Anglican churches to host events, provide workers, and help at other events such as the Deanery barbecue at Shelter House. In our own church we host family events such as Spaghetti suppers adapted during COVID-19 to Spaghetti sauce and meatball take-out, Beef on a Bun, and Pancakes, open to all in our parish and neighbourhood. These "*funraisers*" are often open offerings and help us support Mission to Seafarers, and the Primates World Relief and Development Fund or another local need. Our goal is to increase our outreach givings from these events to 100%. Our Anglican Church Women's group continues to thrive with strong dedicated women who meet to talk, listen to speakers, and often take on cleaning tasks within the church. Just this year the ACW made a financial donation to a local public school to help provide healthy snacks to children in need. Our women also work with the women of the Lutheran Churches in our communion, with a focus on poverty in Thunder Bay and bursaries for female post secondary students. A Craft Group meets biweekly on Saturdays and a quilting group meets weekly. We open our church to outside groups to use our newly painted basement hall (initiated and completed by volunteers). These include a Breast Cancer Support Group, AA group, Bikers for Christ, and a growing number of others. We have two Bible Study groups who currently meet on Zoom. Most recently, we embarked on A Lenten Study on Van Gogh and The Beauty of Lent. Our well attended studies were open to others in the spiritual community. The Home Bible Study group has been active for more than 20 years meeting in parishioners' homes twice a month for study and conversation. This group adapted to a Zoom format during COVID-19.

In the past we fulfilled a commitment to sponsor education for students in Africa. We also completed our mission to bring potable water to Haiti after their devastating earthquake. We have taken on the challenge of a local Indigenous organization to provide Christmas gifts to children in their care. Monthly we contribute food to the local Regional Food Distribution Centre, but this year we have decided to support our fellow Anglican church, Gathering Table in their foodbank to serve those in need in the downtown area. We have adopted local families within our church to provide for them at Christmas. We support Mission to Seafarers with needed items such as hygiene products, socks, and mitts. This is a large ministry in our Deanery due to the busy port of Thunder Bay.

This year's community outreach supported Grace Place, a local street ministry. Several participants joined in the Coldest Night of the Year Walk and contributed significantly to the cause.

This year our Pastoral Care team is active in reaching out to those parishioners who are lonely or sick. Either a phone call, a visit or the addition to our prayer chain provides hope and comfort.

Our lay leadership is dedicated and resourceful. We have a two Lay Readers, one of which is a Diocesan Lay Reader, and both minister at all three of our weekly services as well as at Bethammi nursing home, a neighbour to our church. Our lay readers could offer the rector the opportunity to get involved with the Sunday School, or take time away as needed.

## Children and Families

Like every other church, St. Michael and All Angels strives to appeal to children and youth. We had strong programs before COVID-19. Both the Sunday school and youth programs have been on hold during the pandemic. Many of our former youth (now young adults) have maintained ties with the church. We have not yet seen a return of many elementary and high school age people to services. We are planning outdoor activities to promote youth participation once the weather is more favourable. We are poised to grow both of these ministries when we are able.

Historically St. Michaels has had a strong generational family base. We now have more first-generation families of diverse cultural backgrounds attending our services.

## Evangelism

One challenge is to welcome those who are open to including us in their walk with God. We struggle with the fact that, for many people church is not relevant. A discipleship study group taught us that we, as Christians, must “fish for people”. We challenge ourselves to invite guests to church to demonstrate our Christian love and introduce them to the community of St. Michael’s.

With the welcome addition of the ability to live stream, our parishioners can remain connected with the church. Families and friends benefit from the opportunity to witness celebrations such as christenings, weddings, and funerals. Others can, and have, joined us from anywhere in the world. This service has enabled parishioners who are away to maintain their relationship with St. Michael’s.

## Education and Fellowship

At St. Michael and All Angels, we have been blessed with spiritual leaders who have fed us with more knowledge about our faith. We look to the sermons to provide us with a relevant teaching experience. We have come together to do book studies, watch Christian movies, and discuss the Bible. We always yearn to learn more. Our communal suppers and social events draw us together in fellowship, and even washing dishes and cleaning up is a time to laugh and share stories. When social distancing became the norm, we were able to meet for education or coffee using zoom. Both the 8:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. families join to partake in food and fellowship, an opportunity to socialize and get to know each other. We excel at these unifying experiences and are excited they can begin again.

## How Do We Wish to Grow

We want to continue to be an essential warm, welcoming, and caring church. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 we feel in person pastoral ministry is an important part of our church.

We want to be inclusive of others who do not share the same lifestyles as we do whether in ethnicity, family, or life choices. We wish to connect with our neighbours and other churches to stay strong in faith and community.

Revitalizing children and youth programming is a priority. We look forward to including the youth in special services and music once again.

We are in the process of rebuilding and expanding our in-person worship post COVID-19. We want to capture and sustain the momentum that we are currently experiencing.

We wish to clearly define and expand our missional objectives and improve our outward focus.

## Our Next Rector

What qualities and skills will our next incumbent possess?

- A hardworking, energetic pastoral priest who will visit and respond to parishioners in hospitals, care settings, and their homes.
- Someone who nurtures and maintains connections - especially with parishioners unable to attend regular services related to physical, emotional, or spiritual challenges.
- A thoughtful and thought-provoking preacher who understands that the Sunday sermon and Children's message is the teaching moment of many parishioners.
- An inspiring teacher of the Christian faith to all ages: in particular, someone who will energize and expand our youth and Sunday School programs. Someone who connects with youth to encourage their interest and questions of faith.
- A pastor who cares for all, the familiar and those who are cautiously curious, by encouraging and inspiring all of us.
- An insightful listener who can hear what is said and perceive what is not.
- A respectful and authentic spiritual leader who nourishes our journey.
- A capable administrator who will be hands-on in overseeing parish programs and reporting in partnership with the Wardens, Parish Board and Vestry.
- A dynamic guide for ministry with practical experience in different kinds of mission projects that can inspire us.
- A joyful person with a sense of humour and with a love of music. Someone who can sing (but there is no audition for that!).
- A cheerleader in all things spiritual, both old and new, traditional, and modern.

We at St. Michael and All Angels continue to strive to be more of what Jesus teaches us to be. The priest that is called to us might not be everything we think we want, but they may bring what we did not know we needed. We are prayerfully open to where God leads us.







*Coldest Night of the Year Walk*







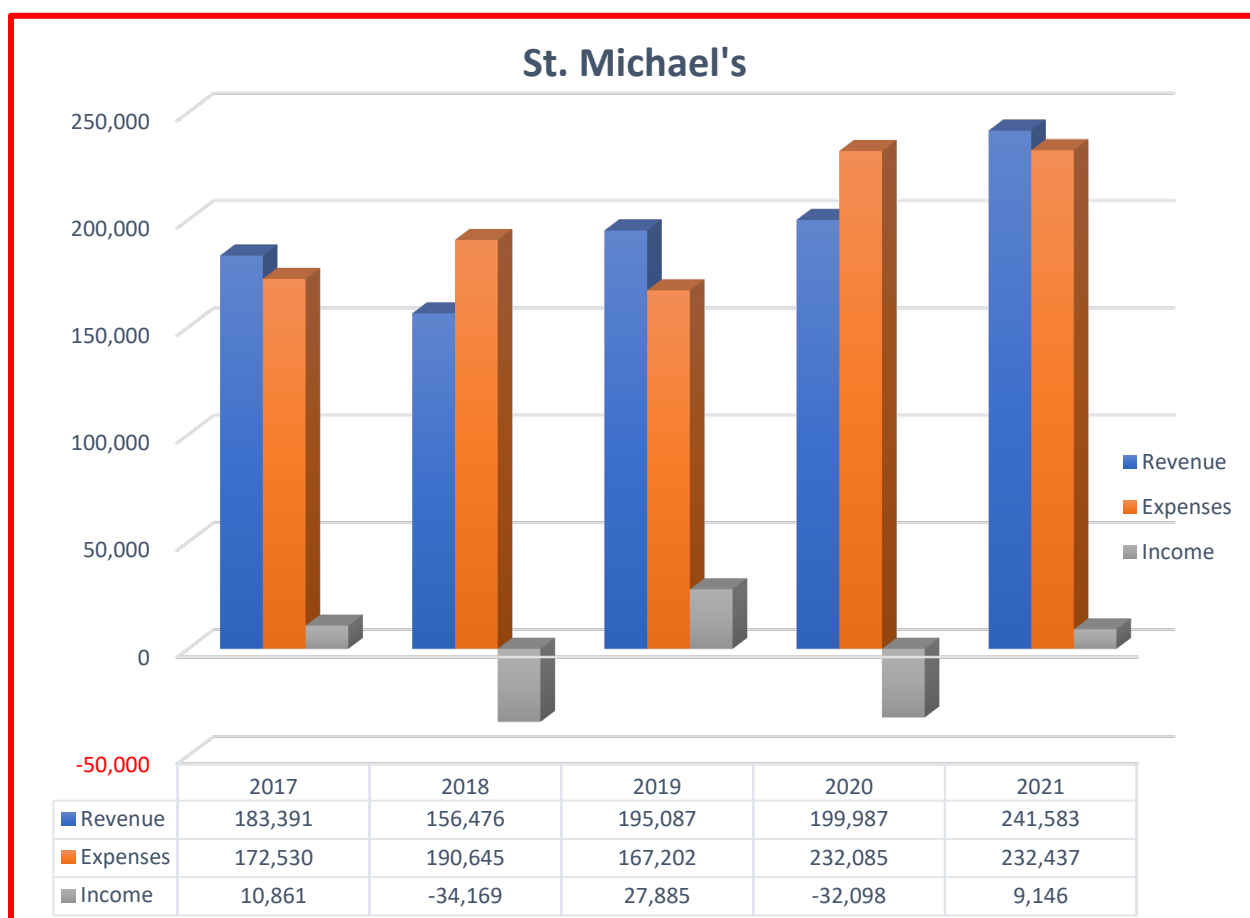
## Financial Appendix

We are cautiously optimistic regarding the financial future for St. Michael's. We are able to financially support a full-time minister. We have no debts and more than \$100,000.00 in savings. We do have an older building and rectory which will require on-going maintenance.

We currently have a rectory (with no mortgage) beside the church which is available if the Minister would prefer to live there.

Although we have used our fundraisers to enhance fellowship, most recently, we have also used the proceeds for our operating expenses. We are hoping to resume holding fundraisers for mission-related causes soon. However, the uncertainty of finances weighs on many while we do not have a full-time minister. The parish responded eagerly to a call to address the 2021 shortfall so that we were able to end the year in a surplus cash position.

We tend to be a financially conservative church, but we welcome mission and outreach challenges. Last year's appeal to assist with the difficulties of COVID-19 restrictions, netted over \$9,000 above expenses. Specific financial information is provided from the Vestry Report.



During the years, 2018 and 2020 (where we show a financial deficit), we completed two proactive projects from accumulated funds. In 2018, our church became fully wheelchair accessible. Modifications included installation of a lift and automatic doors. 2020 was the technology upgrade year. We installed the equipment necessary to live stream, including monitors to facilitate active participation by the congregation.



## Our Larger Neighbourhood

Our neighbourhood is well established with most homes built in the 1940's to 1970's. Our city's boundaries have developed to the west since church began. Our city is diverse in ethnic backgrounds with British, Finnish and Italian being predominant at one time, but now we see many other nationalities including Ukrainian, French, Polish and German and more recently immigrants from Middle Eastern countries. We have a large Indigenous population with many people from northern communities moving south to settle in a big city. We are neighbours with Fort William First Nation.

Our immediate neighbourhood is residential with mostly single-family homes. There are many retired people living in our city and our neighbourhood reflects this as well as families with children. Schools in our area include a public high school, about approximately 5 elementary schools including Catholic and public. Lakehead University is in our extended neighbourhood. This post secondary school attracts local and international students who study in the arts, engineering, health, and other disciplines. We are close to a Seniors' home administered by St. Joseph's Care Group where there is an independent living apartment complex and a long-term care home. There are several apartment buildings in the area along with shopping malls and a few restaurants. Our church is located on busy Red River Road, visible to anyone traveling west through the city.

Historically, our biggest employers in Thunder Bay were the pulp and paper industry, grain elevators at the port, and Bombardier. We are poised to be a hub for mining with the future Ring of Fire north of the city. So, despite losing some resource-based industry, we are thriving with the success of our hospital, universities (Lakehead and NOSM), college, shipping port and innovative small businesses. We have a lively restaurant and arts scene, including our own symphony orchestra in a state-of-the-art venue. Our city supports a thriving country market and local farms that supply many of our restaurants.

Parks and recreational facilities are plentiful. In our own neighbourhood we have Hillcrest Park, Carrick Park, and George Burke Park. We have a number of outdoor rinks and two arenas in the area. Our seniors benefit from the 55 Plus Centre on River Street where programming and workshops are available to this segment of the population. Our Canada Games Complex offers fitness, programs for all ages, and a pool for the general public. We are never far from the beauty of Lake Superior where views of the Sleeping Giant are spectacular in any season. Our waterfront, a focal point for taking in the sights or experiencing the activity on the shore or on the lake is a local treasure. We have condos, hotels, restaurants, a historic train station with new life, and a large marina with an active yacht club. A splash pad for children that becomes a skating rink in winter draws many locals and tourists. Soon we will see our local Art Gallery built on the waterfront.

There are many opportunities for research and education through our university, college, our unique northern law school, and medical school. Many specialists are attracted to our city to work in our hospital research programs and teach in our newest faculties. Opportunities abound for those whose passion is found in entrepreneurship. Thunder Bay has so much potential in our unique setting and hub of Northwestern Ontario.

## History

In the 1860s, the land where St. Michael's now stands was owned by Frances Brown and used as a small cemetery. The property was up the hill from the small settlement on the Lake Superior waterfront that was called the Station, but that was renamed Prince Arthur's Landing by General Garnet Wolseley when he arrived in 1870.

General Wolseley came to Prince Arthur's Landing to lead the Red River Expedition from Lake Superior to Fort Garry in order to establish Canadian sovereignty in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. The trek was very difficult, with many casualties among his troops. A number of Wolseley's men were buried in Frances Brown's cemetery on the hill.

A few years later, Bishop Frederick Fauquier, the Anglican bishop of Algoma, bought the land for use as a cemetery by the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Prince Arthur's Landing and he consecrated it as a cemetery in July 1875.

However, by the late summer of 1887, the Rev. C. J. Machin of St. John's stopped all burials in the cemetery because he realized there could be other uses for the property. By 1900 a few Anglican families living at the top of the hill began gathering in homes for services and Sunday School, and the group of twelve families became known as the Outstation.

The Outstation group met on December 2, 1906 to plan the construction of a new Church and decided that the new parish would be called St. Michael and All Angels. A Mission Hall was built in 1907, as a mission of St. John's, on the lower northwest corner of the cemetery property. The first service was held on June 16, 1907 with Rev. C. W. Hedley of St. John's presiding and 25 people present. The building was heated with a box stove, with kitchen chairs as seats. The first Altar Guild was formed on October 29, 1908.

On May 12, 1917 the Finance and Advisory Committee of St. John's Church passed a resolution (with the Archbishop and Chancellor present) consenting to the division of St. John's parish. By this division St. Michael's was set apart as a Mission separate from three others in the parish, but still under the mother church of St. John's.

A Ladies' Guild was formed in 1912 and a Women's Auxiliary in 1921. The Women's Auxiliary was renamed Anglican Church Women in 1949. A Girls' Guild was started in 1922 and reorganized into the Girls' Auxiliary in 1925. The younger girls split off into the Junior Auxiliary in 1947.

The Boy Scouts were established at St. Michael's on October 10, 1922, and re-established as the 11th Port Arthur troop on January 23, 1950. This troop continued to December 13, 2006.

The first Choir (for men only) was formed in 1924. A Ladies Choir was added in 1946.

In 1927 St. Michael's proposed to improve the church building, and in order to get a mortgage for this purpose, it was necessary for St. John's to give up its interest in the former cemetery property. A "Quit Claim Deed" dated October 31, 1927, was executed by the Incumbent and Wardens of St. John's Church, to the Synod of Algoma, to officially separate St. Michael's from St. John's parish. In 1928 St. Michael's became a self-supporting Mission. However, in the rocky economy, St. Michael's did not go ahead with the planned improvements or the mortgage.

The depression hit the new parish very hard, and the property reverted to the Corporation of the City of Port Arthur when the taxes on the land fell into arrears. The portion of the land on which the church sat was redeemed with a Quit Claim Deed on May 4, 1936.

In 1937-38 the roof of the church was repaired; the east end was expanded with an addition and the exterior covered with Insulbrick siding.

The first pews were purchased, and a curtain hung between the addition and the altar, separating the altar from the Sunday School.



In 1947, Rev. Alvin Thomson was appointed the first fulltime Incumbent at St. Michael's. In June 1949 the building was raised, and a basement was built under it. The basement took six months to finish.



St. Michael's about 1950

In 1950, the congregation of St. Michael's paid \$900.00 to the Corporation of the City of Port Arthur to redeem the rest of the property, including the old cemetery property. On August 3, 1950, the City of Port Arthur conveyed the land once again to the Synod of Algoma. Thus the whole of the original cemetery property (with the exception of a 12-foot strip lost through the widening of Windemere Ave.) is now the property of the Church.

The Rev. Ken Rutter was appointed Incumbent in 1952.

A Little Helpers group for babies and pre-schoolers was formed in 1955 and met monthly. In 1957, at the height of the baby boom, there were 114 young members.

In 1957 Rev. John Jordan succeeded Rev. Rutter.

At the Vestry Meeting in 1958 approval was given to construct a new church building at the corner of Red River Road and Rockwood Avenue. A modern style of architecture was chosen, using laminated wooden beams, exposed brick interior and light-coloured furniture. The project came together quickly, with the foundation stone laid by Archdeacon Hinchcliff on December 4, 1958. The first service in the new building was Trinity Sunday, May 24, 1959, and the new St. Michael and All Angels Church was officially dedicated by Archbishop William Wright on June 8, 1959.

Archdeacon Mark Conliffe was appointed Incumbent in 1968 and served for 33 years. A parish visitation in October that year determined that there were 344 registered Anglicans on the parish roll.

The first seven stained glass windows were installed in the west wall of St. Michael's in 1979. In August 1992 four more stained glass windows were installed.



Stained glass windows on the west wall

Construction of a large addition on the west side of the building began in June 1989.



Addition under construction in 1989

Modern rooms for meetings and classes were added, and the kitchen was updated and expanded. The seating capacity of the nave of the church was increased to 350 with non-fixed seating in the new area, to accommodate a variety of needs.



Non-fixed seating in the addition

A Men's Fellowship Group was started in 1991, meeting for breakfast on the last Saturday of the month. A Tuesday Morning Home Study Group was formed in 1993 and continues to meet biweekly for study and discussion. In October 1994 work started on St. Michael's Memorial Garden and the first scattering of ashes took place in November of that year.

The Rev. Peter Smyth served as Incumbent from February 2002 to June 2011. He added an Irish flair to our church, a paid youth worker position, and introduced us to services from around the world. After almost ten years, Rev. Smyth was replaced by Rev. Lynn Fisher as interim and then Father Chris Harper as incumbent.

Rev. Chris Harper was the first Indigenous Minister in our Diocese. He joined our church from a parish in Saskatchewan. During his ministry from September 2012 to June 2016, we enjoyed several new ways to worship and spent a little more time with people from the communities to the north of us, hosting events such as the annual jamboree.

In October of 2016 Rev. Gordon Holroyd agreed to be our three-quarter time minister. During this time, we completed a discernment process and realized that we wanted to stay an independent, full-time parish. The Rev. Charlene Scriver came to St. Michael's in 2018 to become our incumbent minister and healed many of our frustrations and resentments. She brought a fresh infectious energy that has helped us continue even during our grief after her sudden passing.

We were blessed to have the Rev. Nancy Ringham serve at the Church of St. Michaels. She came out of retirement to guide us through this time of transition. She helped complete projects that Rev. Charlene had begun and was leading us spiritually each week. She brought a passion for youth ministry that has helped to increase both the number of youth and the frequency of our youth meetings.

The people of St. Michael's and All Angels were hopeful, when in 2020 our Concurrence Committee discerned that we were being led to Reverend Enid Pow. Reverend Enid moved on in 2021 to a position in the Diocese of the Arctic.

We celebrated 100 years as St. Michael and All Angels Church in June 2007. Some families in the parish can still trace their loyalty to St. Michael's to the time of the twelve families who initiated the idea of building The Little Mission, while the majority are relative newcomers, each one adding to the vitality of our parish.



St. Michael's in winter

### Links

St. Michael's church website: <https://www.stmichaelstbay.com>

Diocese of Algoma website: <https://www.dioceseofalgoma.com>

City of Thunder Bay website: <https://www.visitthunderbay.com/en/index.aspx>

St. Michael's church Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsthunderbay/>

### Parish Communication

- The website <https://www.stmichaelstbay.com> provides messages, announcements, and methods for keeping in touch
- Currently Sunday services are available with links from our Facebook page or our website <https://www.stmichaelstbay.com/services>
- Announcements are displayed on the monitors prior to the beginning of each service
- Weekly "News and Notes" are emailed to parishioners upon request and copies are available at the back of the church for visitors and those wishing to receive communication in written form.