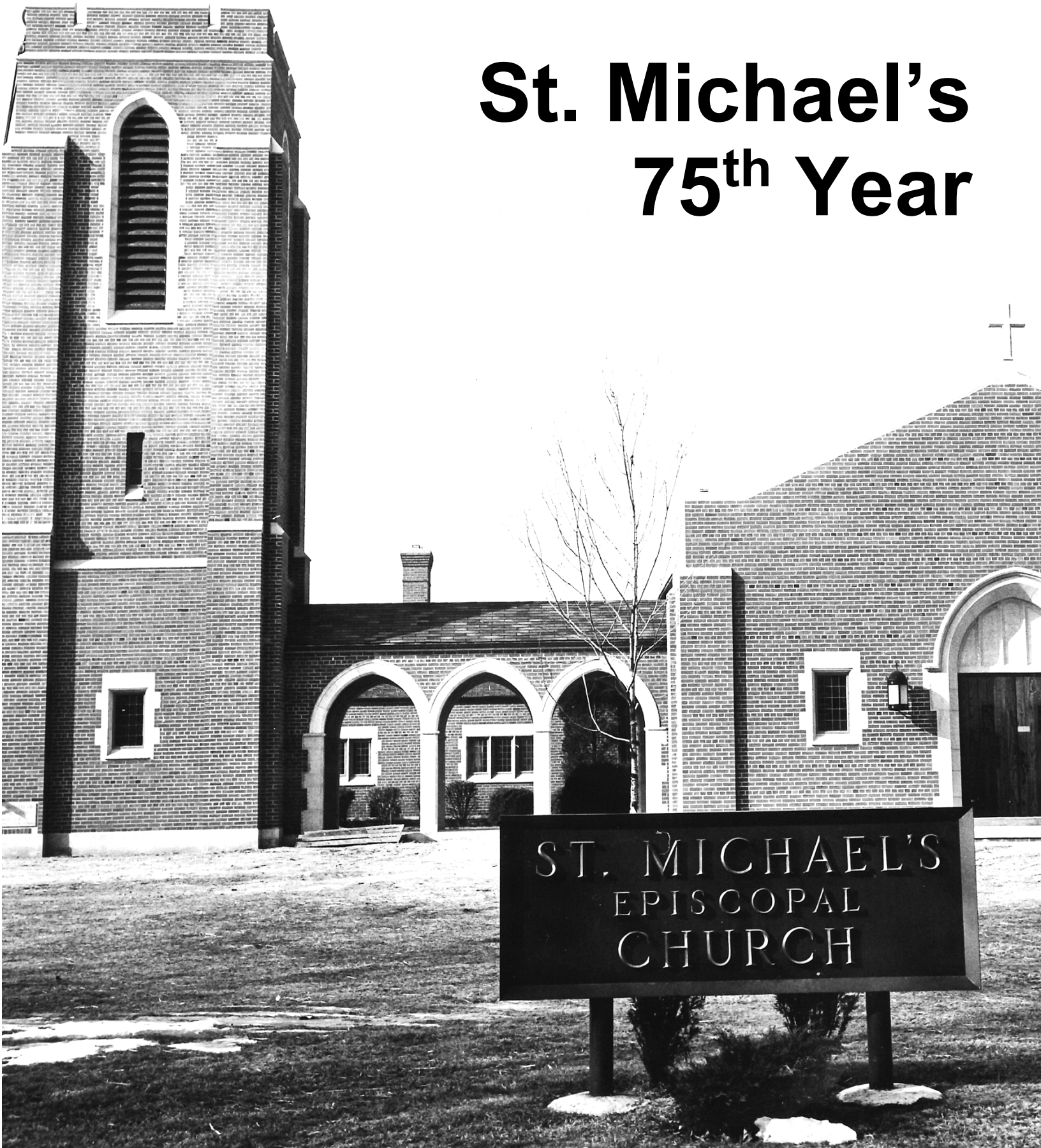


# St. Michael's 75<sup>th</sup> Year



The end of the Second World War brought with it a boom in population, and an end to the building moratorium. Needing to expand, Christ Church appointed their Vicar, the Rev. Edgar H. Yeoman, to the new mission in the old caddy house of the Renmore Golf Club. The first service was held there at 4 p.m. on Sunday, October 26, 1947, with the Rt. Rev. Fran Q. Creighton, Bishop of the diocese of Michigan, and the Rt. Rev. Richard S. Emrich, Suffragan Bishop, in attendance. The building had been converted into an attractive chapel.



However, the population of this mission continued to grow, and a permanent home was needed. In 1950 the property where St. Michael's now stands was purchased. The five-acre tract on Sunningdale Park was the gift of Mr. Mervyn Gaskin, Mr. John Sweeney, and the Women's auxiliary of Christ Church. Ground was broken in October for the new church and a small

wing. The cornerstone was laid early in 1951, and on September 9<sup>th</sup> of that year the church was dedicated by the Rt. Rev Russell S. Hubbard, then Suffragan Bishop of Michigan. 75<sup>th</sup>

Soon the congregation grew large enough to warrant its becoming an independent parish. With Fr. Yeoman as the rector and Frederick Besimer as the Senior warden of the newly elected Vestry—construction of the parish hall, lounge, and kitchen began in June 1954. The new wing was dedicated by Bishop Emrich on October 29<sup>th</sup>, with the parking lot paved two years later. Also, the many beautiful stained-glass windows were designed and installed by Willet Studios of Philadelphia.

Still the population grew. By 1959 St. Michael's had one of the largest Sunday school programs in the diocese—with 88 teachers and 661

students. This meant further expansion was needed. In 1961, more classrooms were added—as well as a new narthex, cloister, and the bell tower. This expansion also meant the thrift shop, formerly located in the attic, now had its own dedicated space. In 1965 the bell tower was also updated with a peal of four bells from the Netherlands.



After serving for twenty-five years and overseeing the growth of this church, Fr. Yeoman retired as Rector in 1972. The rev. James A. McLaren, Canon Pastor at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Detroit, became St. Michal's second Rector on September 4, 1973.

It was during Fr. McLaren's tenure that the "Memorial Garden" was created for the internment of ashes. The ground was consecrated on October 12, 1975. In 1978 the wrought iron fence and brick pillars were erected around the garden. In May 1979 Fr. McLaren resigned to become Director of Crossroads, an Episcopal social service agency in downtown Detroit. Today Crossroads is a thriving ecumenical organization and stands as eloquent testimony to Fr. Jim's commitment to those in need.



In March 1980 the Rev. Robert E. Neily came from southern California to become St. Michael's third Rector, who served until his retirement in early 2006. Fr. Neily was a gifted preacher, educator, and pastor, who often uses baseball stories to illustrate sermon points. At his retirement he was the senior active priest (by date of ordination) in the Episcopal Church USA. In Eastertide 2007 Fr. Bob was seated as an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Detroit, with a large group of St, Michael's parishioners cheering him on. Fr. Neily's tenure saw the first ordained woman to serve on the staff of St. Michael's, Rev. Karen Evans.

The Rev. Marianna Gronek then became the fourth rector of St. Michael's Episcopal Church on April 1, 2008. Her election ends the

congregation's 13-month search for a new senior priest. The Rev. Gronek served as associate rector of St. Clare of Assisi Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor, and was the first woman called to serve as senior pastor of a major Grosse Pointe congregation.

The next big addition to the church came when a Skinner organ, Opus 705, which was originally installed in St. Columba's Episcopal Church on Detroit's east side in 1928, was transported to and installed in St. Michael's after St. Columba closed in 2003. This magnificent organ continues to draw people to St. Michael's.



2019 brought Fr. Michael Bradley from New Hampshire, who saw St. Michael's through a new set of challenges as COVID restrictions set new limitations on how congregations could gather. These challenges were met with outdoor services—featuring harpsichord—and the embrace of new technologies that help reimagine what service is.

As we look forward to the next seventy-five years, we think about the history of the building, the history of its members and leadership, and how St. Michael's will continue to grow to meet the new needs of its community.