

HONORING ST. MICHAEL PARISH

As we celebrate the final Mass of St. Michael's Parish, we honor the many parishioners, families, sacraments, and memories that have filled the Church for more than 100 years. Although the doors of this Church will close, the spirit and love of Christ will always endure. We thank all of the families and parishioners who have served St. Michael's over the years. May God bless all those who have called St. Michael's home.

St. Michael's Church History

Prior to 1866, mass was celebrated in the Section House of the Wabash Railroad in Bement. The Reverend A. Voght was the first to serve the Bement Community. He visited about six times a year. In 1866, the first Catholic Church was erected in Bement on west Moultrie Street. The land was donated and Rev Toner from Champaign came to Bement once a month. In 1872, Father Patrick Bermingham became pastor of the Ivesdale Church and Bement was then made a mission parish of Ivesdale until 1891. In 1888, St. Michael's of Bement erected their second church on the present site, under the leadership of Father Michael Byrnes. The first church building was sold and is believed to have later burned down.

In 1891, Father G. Lentz was appointed the first resident pastor in Bement. A parish house (rectory) was built, and St. Michael was granted full parish standing. St. Michael had been a mission of St. Joseph Parish, Ivesdale, for 19 years. At this time, Monticello became a Mission of Bement. Note, Monticello remained a mission of Bement until St. Philomena was granted full parish standing in the 1960s, so for 70 years!

In 1912, St. Michael's Church was moved across the street to the south, and it remained there until the current St. Michael Church building, a new brick Romanesque-type building, was erected and dedicated on December 18, 1913. The old church was then sold, torn down, and a house was built there.

The current St. Michael church building was dedicated on December 18, 1913. The funds contributed for the new church came from a large contingent of donors, including people in Bement, Monticello, Ivesdale, and Decatur. Here is an excerpt from the dedication booklet:

"The new church is a solid structure. Romanesque style, 45 x 90 ft. The design is strictly church-like, both in the interior and the exterior, and well-proportioned all through. The main body of the church is in the shape of a triple arch, the center nave forming a full semicircle, divided into panels by intersecting arches. The auditorium is free from all obstructions; the ceilings are high. The decoration is in good accord with the architecture, setting off its best features. The tints vary in color, forming a fit background for the ornamentation and blending with a pleasing effect. One of the chief ornaments of the building is the stained-glass windows. The figures are rich and artistic. They form a complete series, representing the Church of God in the Old and New Testaments and throughout the ages, with Christ at the center. The interior finish and the seats are in oakwood, and the floor is maple wood. The altars and communion table are of wood in dull white and gold decoration. Above the main altar is an oil painting representing The Archangel Michael, the patron saint of the parish, with two minor figures of angels in the side panels."

A vibrant parish community grew, and the church celebrated many baptisms, weddings, funerals, and celebrations. Mr. Willard Morris, a lifelong member of St. Michael, was the first baby baptized in the new church. The lot east of the church was purchased in the early 1960s. In 1964, a building drive provided funds for reconditioning the church structure, a new roof installation and a redecorated interior. In 1968 – 1969, the parish hall was constructed. This provided the parish with space for regular gatherings and celebrations, including the annual Turkey Dinner, breakfasts, and funeral meals, as well as a place to hold CCD.

Throughout the 1970's and 1980's and beyond, the parish continued to flourish under multiple pastors, and produced church directories in 1969, 2000, and 2007. St. Michael was again redecorated in 1987 with new carpet and paint. Starting in 1988, St. Philomena Monticello and St. Michael Bement parishes had the same pastor. In 1991, the rectory was torn down, since the pastor shared by Monticello and Bement resided at the rectory in Monticello. In 1992, the church bell, Gabriel, was named and dedicated by Fr. Terrance O'Brien.

In 2023 and 2024, major church building improvements included tuck-pointing of the brick, a new roof, repainting of exterior windows and interior spaces, new exterior doors, and more.

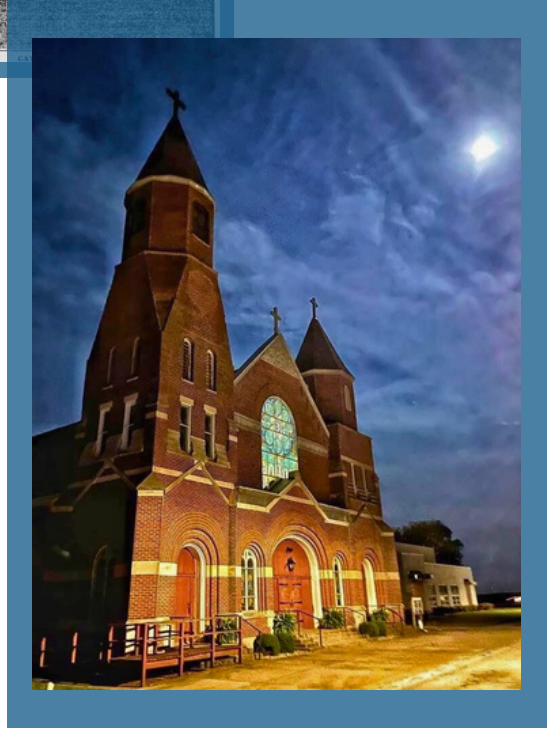
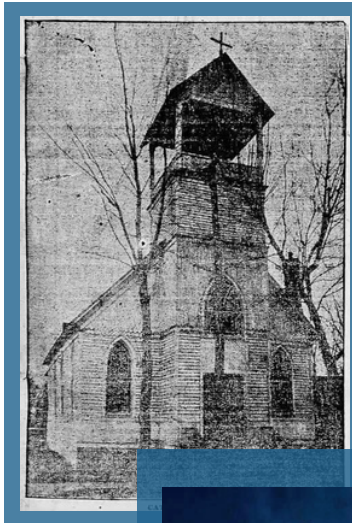


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Pastors of St. Michael's Church

- Rev. A Voght Prior to 1866
- Rev P. Toner 1866 - 1872
- Rev. Michael Byrnes..... 1872 - 1891
- Rev. G. Lentz 1891 - 1897
- Rev. Ernest Howley..... 1897 - 1903
- Rev. Nathaniel McCoffrey1903 - 1903
- Rev. Louis Selva 1904 - 1918
- Rev. William Selk 1918 - 1921
- Rev. Dennis Healy 1921 - 1943
- Rev. Louis Schaeckter..... 1943 - 1945
- Rev. Andrew Dzuryo 1945 - 1952
- Rev. Valetine Liss 1952 - 1957
- Rev. Sylvester Jeaiolowski..... 1957 - 1962
- Rev. P. E. Arensberg.... 1962 - 1964
- Rev. Edward Westerman 1964 - 1967
- Rev. Richard Mullen 1967 - 1972
- Rev. Lawrence Morrissey 1972 - 1978
- Rev. Joseph Marzolf 1978 - 1988
- Rev. Richard Kolczaski..... 1988 - 1990
- Rev. Terrance O'Brien 1990 - 1994
- Rev. Anthony Ego 1994 - 1996
- Rev. Vien Van Do 1996 - 1998
- Rev. Edward Ohm 1998 - 1998
- Rev. Joseph Hogan 1998 - 2001
- Rev. Greg Nelson 2001 - 2005
- Rev. Pat Demuelemeister.....2005 - 2008
- Rev. Bruce Lopez 2008 - 2019
- Msgr. Michael Bliss 2019 - 2025



Choir



Confirmation Class in Hall



Jr. - Sr. High Religion Class