



# 17. Edmonton

## Saint Elias Ukrainian Orthodox Church

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Following World War II, Edmonton's expanding Ukrainian population required additional places of worship, particularly in the northeast. On October 13, 1957, Father I. Hrycyna, dean of St. John's Church and administrator of the Western Diocese, convened a meeting to establish a new congregation. Two weeks later, on October 27, the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Father M. Fyk at Kendall Hall. He was assisted by St. John's cantor, Peter Paush, and a volunteer choir directed by Alex Dukelsky. Although attendance was modest, interest quickly grew.

Seeking a more accessible venue, the group rented an old United Church at 82 Street and 119 Avenue. Despite its temporary status, the location attracted increasing numbers of worshippers. On December 22, 1957, Father Hrycyna celebrated a well-attended liturgy. Following the service, a meeting was held to officially establish the parish. Sixteen members joined, electing an executive committee led by Nick Brodyk. The parish adopted St. Elias as its patron.

When the United Church lease expired in January 1958, services moved to members' homes, often hosted by Mr. and Mrs. John Ewanciw. During one such gathering, the congregation secured a discounted parcel of land on 66 Street between 118 and 119 Avenues. By April 22, 1958, the property purchase was approved. Legal incorporation was filed with the Province of Alberta on May 2, facilitated by lawyer Peter Lazarowich.

Confident in their mission, the parish initiated a fundraising campaign. The initial collection raised \$1,380. St. John's Church contributed \$5,000, with an additional \$1,000 from its Ukrainian Women's Association. However,



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securing a \$40,000 bank loan required promissory notes from members. On June 20, 1958, the site was sanctified, and Edmonton's Mayor William Hawreliak ceremonially turned the first spade of soil. The Edmonton Journal covered the event. The \$65,000 structure, designed to accommodate 250 worshippers, quickly took shape.

By November 18, 1958, the Board of Directors held their first meeting in the church basement. On November 30, Father H. Metiuk, newly consecrated as Bishop of the Western Diocese, officiated the church's blessing. Initially, the building was unadorned and rectangular, distinguished only by an aluminum cross at its entrance. In January 1959, Sergei Eremenko, a composer, was appointed choir director, serving until 1997. That year also saw the establishment of branches of the Ukrainian Women's Association and the Canadian Ukrainian Youth Association (CYMK). Club Trident was also formed, playing a pivotal role in fundraising.

On March 17, 1959, Metropolitan Ilarion visited St. Elias and blessed the cornerstone. Later that year, the congregation successfully petitioned for Father Ambrosie Chrustawka to serve as its first resident priest. By then, the parish consisted of 111 families and 18 single members. Despite a controversy in 1960–1961 that led some members to leave, Reverend O. Flak's appointment in 1961 restored stability and growth.

Pews were installed in 1961. By 1963, the mortgage was paid off, celebrated with a dinner following Archbishop Andrew's visitation. In 1965, a tri-bar cross was mounted on the roof. In 1967, an ikonostas by artist Wadym Dobrolige was commissioned for \$5,000 and later blessed during a hierarchical liturgy led by Archbishop Andrew. Additional funds were used to refurbish the altar and acquire vestments.

Improvements continued with the installation of chandeliers and lighting in 1968, a public address system in 1971, and electric chimes in 1983. On March 13, 1983, St. Elias hosted the priesthood consecration of Deacon Alexandre Palamarchuk, celebrated by Bishop Boris.

Marking the millennium of Christianity in Ukraine, the church installed bronze entrance doors in 1988. These were adorned with bas-relief images of Saints Volodymyr and Olha. A major remodeling project began in 1992, including brick siding, new windows, two domes, an elevator, and interior repainting. Completed for \$180,000, the renovations culminated in the church's rededication on October 25, 1992, by Archbishop John.

Throughout the 1990s, further upgrades addressed the needs of an aging congregation, including handicapped parking and restroom renovations. By 1994, membership totaled 179. In 2005, the parish expanded further, adding an atrium and cultural center with classrooms, meeting spaces, and a banquet hall.



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### Priests

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Before a permanent priest was assigned, clergy from St. John's Cathedral served the congregation. These included Fathers

- Ie. Hrycyna
- M. Fyk
- M. Kryshtanowych
- A. Chrustawka (1959–1961)
- O. Flak (1961–1989, intermittently)
- M. Derewianka (1991–1999)
- G. Podtepa (1999 – )

### Founding Members

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Nick Brodyk  
Peter Moroz  
John and Rose  
Stechishin  
John and Helen  
Wynnychuk  
Edward Diduck  
George Elaschuk  
Sam Mykityshyn  
Paul Romanko  
John Serink

### Location and Feast Day

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11833-66 Street, Highlands District,  
Edmonton

*GPS Coordinates:* 53.571522, -113.442672  
Their *Feast Day* is August 2.

