Saint Michael & All Angels
Episcopal Church in Corona del Mar, California
Parish Profile • January 2022

Traditional. Modern. Inclusive.
Introduction

St. Michael and All Angels is a close community striving to make Christ known in all we do. We hope this profile gives a sense of who we are and whom we feel God is calling us to be.

Guiding Prayer

O God, author of our common story, we give you thanks for our communal life together. We thank you for sustaining us in times of joy and sorrow, trial and triumph. We pray that as you guide us, we may follow where you lead, always striving to love you and our neighbors in accordance with your gracious will, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

St. Michael and All Angels Transition Committee

Canon Lynn Headley, Chair
Beth Bianchi
Brooke Pauley
Don Sheetz
Elizabeth Henry
Jill Faller
Melinda Rader
Michael Boor
Pat Albers
Steve Dulson
Our Story

At St. Michael’s Story Day in April of 2021 all attendees who were able were asked to stand. Then the leader asked the people to sit down if they had been a part of the parish for fewer than five years, 10 years, 15 years…as the years grew longer there were still many, many people standing. It was easy to see that this was a long lived and invested community.

In church time, the 60 plus year history of St. Michael's and All Angels Episcopal Parish church is a short chapter. But in human years, many of our regular parishioners have been here for a large percentage of its existence, and the church has been here for them.

In 1960, the first worship service was held at a local Congregational church. Organized by the Mission Council, services moved to the chapel of St. James’ Parish Day School on Fifth and Marguerite in 1963.

In 1966, the parish had its first change in leadership when founding vicar, Edward Powell Allen, left to begin his tenure as the chaplain for the newly opened University of California Irvine.

The year 1967 was formative in the life of the young church. Early on the vestry called The Reverend John Rogers Davis from his previous position in Arizona; and on May 10th ground was broken on the 3.6-acre site purchased from the Irvine Company. On Easter Eve 1968, the first service was held in the newly completed sanctuary.

Expanding rapidly, the parish consisted of 172 families by 1972 with an active Sunday School of 115 children. Work was finished on the parish center in 1976.

Father Davis retired in 1986. In 1987 the vestry called the Rev. Peter Haynes from his ministry at UC Berkley. Under Fr. Haynes’ tenure the campus expanded to include St. Michael’s Court an enlargement to the Parish Center that includes a basketball court, five classrooms, a nursery, and a large kitchen.

Like other mainline congregations there were challenges to sustaining church membership, however the parish continued to be active in the local and larger community. Annual Lenten programs such a Metric-Ton of Food spread God’s love in real and meaningful ways throughout the community and across the border. Two clergy whom St. Michael and All Angels had sponsored for
ordination were raised to the episcopacy; The Rt. Rev. Dr. Edward J. Konieczny becoming the fifth bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma and The Rt. Rev. Diane Jardine Bruce made history as the first female bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. In addition, in 1999 and 2011 Fr. Haynes led parish pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Other mission projects included Habitat for Humanity, sponsorship of Share Our Selves families, The Red Wagon, and various one-time projects.

As St. Michael and All Angels celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2010, the church continued to innovate while maintaining its solid footing in the traditions of the church. Godly Play became the curriculum at Sunday School; and a Vacation Bible School as well as seasonal pageants, community fellowship, children’s leadership in worship, acolytes provided young families worthwhile and engaging opportunities. The congregation that had earlier embraced enlarging the campus buildings turned their attention to transitioning the grounds to water-wise plantings in 2015.

Fr. Haynes retired in 2017 and in 2018 the vestry called the Rev. Michael Seiler, who had also acted as interim rector. Under his tenure, the North Wing was converted to a chapel with the purpose of fortifying small group worship. With his retirement in 2020, the Rev. Susan Pinkerton became interim priest-in-charge. Through it all Saint Michael and All Angels continues to be a centerpiece in the lives of the many families who call this sacred place their spiritual home.
Our Area

Corona del Mar is a place whose opportunities are as vast as the sea for which it is named. The beach beckons, with swimming, sun, and surf, but the mountains of Big Bear are still within driving distance. Along the beach and elsewhere are many hiking and walking trails. Our temperate weather means the outdoors can be enjoyed all year round.

Though beach volleyball and boating are perennial favorites, sports are hardly confined to those doable on the water or outdoors. In fact, spectators and players can enjoy all sports at all levels—from neighborhood pickleball to elite high school athletes to a baseball game at Angels Stadium, there are all kinds of ways to get active.

We are also home to a robust arts community. Segerstrom Center for the Performing Arts hosts world-class music performers and national touring companies of Broadway shows and is home to the South Coast Repertory Theater. The Bowers Museum, Discovery Science Center, and Newport Sports Museum hold regular and rotating exhibits for all ages. Local restaurants cater to every palate and budget, from chef driven restaurants to family run cafes serving authentic cuisine from around the world. We also have a wide array of markets from farmers markets to those that cater to our diverse population, and a sprawling shopping mall a short distance from the church campus.

At every level, our local schools are top tier, from Lincoln Elementary, a stone’s throw from our own campus to our middle and high schools with rigorous academics and nationally ranked sports programs, to the University of California at Irvine, as well as several local private options.
The Diocese of Los Angeles strives to feed hungry hearts. Under inspiring and committed leadership and spanning six counties and some 147 congregations, we are multilingual, committed to justice and peace among all people and respecting the dignity of every human being.

Area Demographics

Demographic Information from MissionInsite (2020)

St. Michael and All Angels is located in Corona del Mar, which is part of Newport Beach. Costa Mesa and Irvine are neighboring cities.

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Our Worship

Worship is the heart of what we do as a community. The regular rhythms of prayer, singing, and sacraments keep us connected to God and to one another. Pre-pandemic times had two Rite II services, along with a Tuesday morning Eucharist and a Wednesday noontime Eucharist with anointing for healing. Now, of course, all of these have changed. Even when interrupted and forced to change by the pandemic, our commitment and joy in fellowship remains unwavering.

Our Choir

Music has always been a very important part of worship at St. Michaels. Our congregation has been supportive and enthusiastic both in their singing during the liturgy and in their funding of the choir. We have been aided by the leadership of our current Director of Music, Dr. Ray Urwin, and professional section leaders. In addition to our music for the Sunday and holiday services we have special Evensong events for Lent and Advent. Another highlight is Praying Our Goodbyes, a service connected to All Saints Day to honor the losses in our lives. Some years ago, the Friends of Music was formed for the purpose of sponsoring musical events such as Sunday afternoon concerts and providing funding for the purchase of music and the hiring of additional musicians to enhance our Easter and Christmas services. When surveyed, nearly half of parishioners ranked “singing hymns and service music” as among the most important parts of our worship. Grounded in the grand Anglican choral tradition and (pandemic allowing) led by our excellent choir, but also including highlights like a U2-charist and Jazz Vespers, music was consistently among the elements of our common life we most missed in the throes of the pandemic, and, as restrictions have eased, we are most grateful to have gained back.
Our Common Life

Sunday Eucharist is the cornerstone of our worship. Lay participation is robust, with a regular rotation of lectors, intercessors, ushers, choir members, and acolytes. We relish engaging sermons that apply scripture to daily living, and we are nourished by the Body and Blood of our Lord. Along the walls of our sanctuary, the Stations of the Cross remind us to walk the way of Jesus. When we receive communion or during a baptism, the congregation is invited to stand in our circular chancel, a living tableau of our connection to one another in Christ.

Our Chapel

Completed in 2020, our North Wing was converted to a chapel. During the pandemic, it served as an intimate space from which to stream Zoom services. It also hosts our Tuesday morning Eucharist and special prayer services. Often celebrating saints’ feast days and always culminating in coffee and conversation, this midweek time of fellowship is much cherished.

Our Prayer Group

In 2019, the parish Prayer Group was organized by Father Seiler. The group meets regularly, both in-person and virtually, to pray for those on our parish prayer list. Ever since, and all throughout the pandemic, we have gathered in-person and virtually to lift up the petitions and thanksgivings of our community.
Our Campus

Our parish campus provides space for our wide variety of worship, fellowship, and mission activities. 62.8% of those surveyed listed campus maintenance as a crucial aspect of administration. In various capacities, we also make space available to St. Monica’s Coptic Orthodox Church, as well as Alcoholics Anonymous, after-school programs, and the local private school.

The Parish Center comprises several Sunday school classrooms, including one dedicated to our Godly Play curriculum. It also includes a basketball court and two kitchens. Michael’s Room, the multipurpose heart of our parish center, serves as a place to fellowship, a large classroom, or a dining room. The Davis Library, named for founding rector Fr. John Davis, contains books and other media that parishioners can check out. The Library and our Conference Room contain flat screen TVs, ideal for Adult Education or meeting settings.

Our Grounds

The temperate California climate allows us to make varied and frequent use of our grounds, which are outfitted with drought-tolerant landscaping. Our patio is the hub of our after-worship fellowship on Sundays and during the week, complete with umbrellas, chairs, and tables. The rose garden yields magnificent roses in due season, and the labyrinth is a meditative space to pray. The Memorial Garden, where the ashes of loved ones are interred, is a quiet, enclosed space to remember our loved ones. Other highlights include Praying Our Goodbyes, a service connected to All Saints Day to honor the losses in our lives. During Vacation Bible School each July, the entire campus is transformed to locales as far-flung as Iceland, the Holy Land, and Mexico for our young pilgrims to explore.
As part of our transition process, the Vestry engaged in a mutual ministry review. The MMR confirmed how very much we care about our work and each other. We acknowledge the value in others’ ideas and celebrate others’ accomplishments. We focus energy on solutions instead of problems. All have a sense that people assume the best intentions on the part of others. Our St. Michael’s community has shown bravery in the face of changing circumstances. 78% of those surveyed called acknowledgment of time and talent a crucial part of stewardship. At St. Michael’s, stewardship encompasses care of ourselves, our spaces, each other, and our neighbors.

Like many mainline churches across the country, our community has lost pledges over the last several years. Even in this last year, however, despite our physical separation, Eucharistic fast, and untold challenges, we collected 95% of pledges, up 57% from 2017. As one person put it, “when asked, people were ready and willing to give.” Fr. Seiler helped to flatten out the decline in attendance that we had seen for more than a decade, and we regret that his departure and the pandemic stilted that progress. While not uncommon, the 6 largest givers in the church contribute approximately 28% of all pledge income. We are hopeful that under a new rector, as we emerge from the pandemic, growing our membership will enable us to continue to grow the programs and maintain the campus in a manner of which we are all proud.
Our Finances

For at least past three years of 2019, 2020, and 2021 the budget approved for St. Michaels has been balanced and net outcome at end of year has been consistent with plan. The trend in overall income has dropped less than the trend in pledge income due to increases in donations associated with facilities use. While net pledging units have trended lower, there have been additions partially offsetting, though amounts of newer pledge units tend to be smaller. The COVID period was not disruptive to our overall financial profile; income and expenses dropped proportionally, and pledges largely remained stable.
Our Mission

We rejoice in being a community of believers committed to sharing the Good News of Christ's love, breaking bread together, fellowshipping with one another, and caring for our neighbors.

Someone wisely remarked that for us at St. Michael’s, “Christian education is a spiritual discipline.” This is true across all ages. Our Godly Play program exposes children to Bible stories in an expansive and innovative way, and our Vacation Bible School is multisensory, engaging, and wholly original. Our preteens and teenagers serve as acolytes, and in their Sunday school classrooms are encouraged to bring every question. Our adults eagerly and faithfully attend and frequently lead our after-church offerings on Bible study, church tradition, and spirituality, as well as various fellowship groups and book studies throughout the week. We thirst for knowledge of God together.

Traditional

• 64% of those surveyed have attended for 20 years or more

• We have a great love of the prayerbook liturgy and the hallmarks of the church year that anchor us

• We love classic hymnody and organ music as integral to our common life.

Modern

• 64% of those surveyed participated in Zoom worship. We managed the Zoom learning curve because we were committed to staying connected.

• In addition to Zoom worship, we readily adapted many of our fellowship opportunities to Zoom or hybrid models, meaning those of us in other cities or states feel seamlessly connected to us.

• We also used the pandemic as an opportunity to both cherish and recommit to some aspects of our common life together, and to release or modify others.
Inclusive

• We are committed to racial reconciliation
• In the early part of the millennium, we took a stand on LGBT+ inclusion, and our commitment to radical welcome has grown and continued in the days since.

Among the areas that need improvement, the mutual ministry review said, are the challenges of finding and funding opportunities for innovation that will energize our community and promote growth.

We also want to build on our sense of mission. Over the past year, despite COVID’s challenges, we met the needs we saw by:

• Stocking the food pantry at a local preschool.
• Providing diapers, blankets, and other essentials for the families served by MOMS OC, which serves underprivileged mothers, babies, and families.
• Collecting hygiene items collection for Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter.
• Families Forward Thanksgiving Food Drive: An overflowing barrel of Thanksgiving dinner ingredients.
• SOS Adopt-a-Family for Christmas.
• Giving to diocesan and UTO COVID funds.
• Funding wheelchairs for disabled people in impoverished countries by Free Wheelchair Mission.
St. Paul tells the church in Corinth, “For in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Were you to visit St. Michael’s on any given day, you would see vibrant mission and ministry evincing manifold spiritual gifts that bear fruit in our parish and in the larger community.

Christian education is a cornerstone of St. Michael’s. Children, youth, and adults grow in the faith in deep ways and ask probing questions of ourselves, the Scriptures, and the world.

Sundays at Nine: Our Adult Education series is a popular favorite, including Kerygma Bible Studies, videos, and staff and parishioner presentations on a variety of topics, sacred and secular.

Tuesday Night at Mike’s: Born out of the separation of the pandemic, this lay-led group meets weekly on Zoom for prayer, reflection, and fellowship. Topics have included the Book of Common Prayer, racial reconciliation, and Bible and book studies.

Thursday Men’s Group: This faithful group of men meets Thursdays on the patio for reading, fellowship, and discussion on a variety of topics, including science and religion and biographies.

Inklings: An homage to C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and their group of literary luminaries, this group discusses Lewis’s life and works. Recent favorites have included The Screwtape Letters, George MacDonald’s The Princess and the Goblin, and a trip to see a staging of the Great Divorce.
**The Bible Challenge:** This group meets the third Sunday of every month to read and discuss books on a variety of spiritual topics. We recently worked our way through a book on the Presiding Bishop’s Way of Love.

**Prayer Shawl Ministry:** This new faithful group of knitters prays together weekly as they make warm, beautiful prayer shawls as tangible reminders of God’s love to parishioners in grief or crisis.

**Compass Rose Society:** St. Michael’s belongs to this worldwide association of Anglicans.

**Alternative Gift Fair:** In this annual wintertime festival, parishioners and outside vendors make handicrafts and other goods to raise funds for mission projects.
Our Future

There are manifold gifts to a community like St. Michael’s. Church feels like ours, because so many of us have been there for so much of it. Two long rectorates created a sense of stability. Fr. Seiler’s retirement came unexpectedly, and on the heels of exciting momentum juxtaposed against the time of pandemic. We keenly feel what one respondent told us: “Our church needs a thoughtful leader who will take us into what is next.”

Part of what we hope is next is more young families. As one person put it, “Our congregation is aging; the services and programs of the parish need to take that into account. At the same time, we need to be open and welcoming to new people in order to sustain membership, perhaps even grow.”

The ideal candidate will be a confident preacher and teacher. “Music and liturgy are essential in the Episcopal Church, as is the rector’s ability to interpret and to teach within an informed and cordial atmosphere. Of equal importance are his/her intellectual and educational backgrounds, along with honestly enthusiastic and socially warm endeavors.”

Our ideal rector will help us build on our sense of mission. “Mission and goals are number one. Everything else is a given.”

We hope our new rector will invite us as true partners to that vision. “The members possess an awesome array of talents that are being utilized more effectively by the simple act of welcoming the offerings instead of shutting them off. This supports the vitality of the parish and should continue to be encouraged.”

This time of transition has invited this community to ask, “Where is God moving in the church right now? Where is there a ‘quickening’ of the Spirit?” We need a rector who continually asks that question, and whose teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and leadership will help us strain to listen for the answer. God promises to make all things new, and we pray that our new rector will point St. Michael’s at all times and in all places to the reconciling love of Jesus, and to follow where he leads.
Story Day Word Clouds

As part of this transition process, we drew our community together and asked them a series of questions, and later generated word clouds representative of their responses.

Question 1: What brings you and holds you to Saint Michael and All Angels?
Question 2:
Where do you join Saint Michael’s parish life and work?

Acolyte  Christian Ed  Choir
Lay Reader  Roses  Small Groups
Phone Tree  LEM  Weekday Services
VBS  Worship  Music
Fellowship  Friendships  Deacon
Godly Play  Bible Study  Helping
Altar Guild  Teller  Women’s Group
Commissions  Usher  Book Club
Mission  Tuesday at Mike’s

Question 3:
What could you take away from Saint Michael’s and not miss it?

Avoidance  Poor Sharing  Meetings
Isolation  Indecision  Inaction
Poor Communication  Lack of Participation
Cliquess  Hard Feelings
Pre-School Fiasco
Question 4:
What single parish endeavor would change Saint Michael’s the most?

- Young Families
- Vibrant Leadership
- New Voices
- Outreach
- Engaging Homilies
- Stability
- Celebrating
- Being Open
- Caring
- Community Service
- Sharing
- Participation
- Engaged Parishioners
- Bible Study
- Inclusivity
- Liturgical Variety

Question 5:
What two things do you want to emphasize to the Transition Committee?

- Upbeat
- Available
- Active
- Intellect
- Evangelism
- Vibrant Leadership
- Social Responsibility
- Spirituality
- Communicate
- Outreach
- Stability
- Kindness
- Reconciliation
- Extrovert
- UCI
- Families
- Liturgy
- Disciplined
- Music
- Wisdom
- Enthusiasm
- Community Service
- Christian Ed
- Finances
- Stewardship
- Engaging Homilies
- Pastoral Care