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A Pastoral Letter to the Community Around St. Michael and All Angels

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After much prayer, careful conversation, and faithful discernment, the congregation of St. Michael and All Angels has voted to conclude its ministry and close the church as of Christmas 2026. This decision has not been made lightly. It comes after years of thoughtful consideration, reflection on our mission, and a deep commitment to being responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to us by God.

For generations, this congregation has gathered to worship, celebrate life's joys, mourn its sorrows, serve the community, and proclaim the Gospel. The faithful witness of countless members has left an enduring mark on this neighborhood and on the lives of those who have passed through these doors. We give thanks for that legacy and for all who have sustained this ministry through the years.

At moments like this, it is natural to grieve what is ending. Yet Scripture reminds us that God's work is never confined to a particular moment, structure, or building. Again and again, the people of God struggle to recognize the new things God is doing.

Jesus echoes this truth in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. There, the faithful servants are those who recognize that what has been entrusted to them must be used wisely and courageously for God's purposes. The servant who seeks only to preserve what once was loses sight of the possibility of what might yet be. As we considered the future of St. Michael and All Angels, we understood stewardship not simply as preserving a building at all costs, but as faithfully responding to the realities before us and making decisions that honor God's gifts with integrity.

And perhaps most importantly, we hear God's promise through the prophet Isaiah:

> *"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"* (Isaiah 43:18-19).

These words do not diminish the value of the past. Rather, they remind us that God's future is always larger than our expectations. What appears to be an ending may, in God's providence, become the beginning of something we cannot yet imagine.

We also wish to clarify the future of the church property. Like all Episcopal parish property, the building and grounds are held in trust for the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York. Upon the closure of St. Michael and All Angels, responsibility for the maintenance, care, and future disposition of the property will rest with the Diocese. Decisions regarding the building's future role in the community will be made by diocesan leadership in accordance with their discernment, responsibilities, and vision for ministry. **Once the final service has been held, all building use by outside agencies will be terminated.**

While this chapter is coming to a close, we trust that God is not finished with this community. The Church is ultimately not defined by stone walls, stained-glass windows, or familiar pews. The Church is the people of God, sent into the world to bear witness to Christ's love wherever they may be.

As Christmas approaches, we will gather with the community one final time in this sacred place to celebrate the birth of the One who entered a changing and uncertain world with the promise that God is always making all things new.

The final service of St. Michael and All Angels will be a Christmas Eve Eucharist on December 24, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. We invite all current and former parishioners, neighbors, friends, and members of the wider community to join us for this service of the celebration of the birth of Christ, whose light continues to shine into every ending and every beginning.

Though this service will mark the conclusion of our life together as a congregation, it will also be an opportunity to proclaim our confidence that the Church's mission continues wherever God's people gather in faith and love. As we sing once more the familiar hymns of Christmas and hear again the story of Emmanuel, "God with us," we will entrust our future, and the future of this community, to the God who continually leads his people into new and unexpected chapters of grace.

We ask for your prayers for our congregation, our neighborhood, and the Diocese as we enter this next chapter. May we meet this moment not only with gratitude for what has been, but with hope for what God is yet bringing to life.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Dr. Jason M. Miller
Priest in Charge, St. Michael and All Angels

Questions may be addressed to the church office at the phone or email above or the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York at 716.881.0660.