



Volume 35, Number 7
JULY-AUGUST 2026

The Cathedral Messenger

A Publication of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral

VBS 2026

**Genesis Road Trip:
It All Starts H.E.R.E.**



Hear God, Encounter God, Repent and Restore and Explore God's Plan were the key points on our Vacation Bible School this summer as we learned about the beginning of people and our relationship with God. On day one we explored "Eden's Farm," hearing about Adam and Eve and learning that sin is a break in our relationship with God, and repentance is the path back to Him. We all learned how important sincere apologies—both to God and others—are essential steps in Christian life. On day two, "Rainbow Mountain Petting Zoo" we learned about Noah and his obedience in a world full of disobedience. Noah stood firm in righteousness and found favor with God. Our children were shown that even when surrounded by poor choices, they are called to live faithfully; and when they see in the rainbow God's mercy and covenant, and are reminded that like Noah, we too are caretakers of creation and recipients of God's loving promises. Day three, "Starry Heavens Campground" taught us how Abraham's story reveals what it means

to walk by faith. We all reflected on trusting God even when the path is unfamiliar or slow to unfold. Abraham is a model for the children and all of us on how to build a deep friendship with God. At the end of our VBS week on day four, hearing the story of Joseph and his brothers, understanding how jealousy led to mistreatment, yet also how Joseph chose mercy over revenge, showing how we can transform pain into peace.

Through the 2026 VBS program our children learned that God is always with us, even in hard times, and that through love and forgiveness we draw closer to Christ. We were all reminded that forgiveness is a hallmark of Christian life, reflecting Christ's own love and sacrifice.

We extend our thanks to all who made this week possible; Fr. Paul, Fr. Aaron, Fr. Mark, Deacon David, our amazing VBS staff and volunteers including our teens who all came together giving of their time and talents in this ministry.

Dean, V. Rev. Paul O'Callaghan • St. George Orthodox Christian Cathedral

7515 East Thirteenth Street • Wichita, KS 67206-1223 • (316) 636-4676 • <http://www.stgeorgecathedral.net>

MEMORY ETERNAL!



Warren John Farha, 5/20

Getachew Gebreyesus, 5/24
(father of Betty Tadesse)

Albert Michael Kinan,
of Orange County, CA, 6/11
(grandfather of Vanessa Farha
and Jacob Corbin)

Presbyteria Coola Dimas, 6/24

Troy L. Sadler, 6/24
(father of David Sadler)

Mabrook! Blessings!

baptisms

Miran George Gebremichael, 5/23

Jackson Theophan Pederson,
Sabin Ratcliff, Timothy Ratcliff,
Trenton Matthew Prichard, 5/30

Mason Seraphim Eskridge, 6/28

chrismations

David DePriest, Natalie Herndon,
Cole Joseph Parmley, Claudia Elizabeth Prichard
and John Senseman, 5/30

many years !

Caring for Children While in Church



Infants and small children are members of the Body of Christ as much as anyone else. Our Lord specifically taught, "Allow the little children to come to me." Thus they belong in Divine Services as integral members of the worshipping congregation.

Yet recently, the amount of shrieking and screeching from babies and small children during Divine Liturgy has become very distracting. It has disrupted the spirit of prayerfulness proper to the Liturgy. Obviously, parents can't predict when a child is going to have a sudden outburst. Nevertheless, they can take care to quickly quiet the child out of consideration for the prayerfulness of others.

It was an unwritten tradition for many years that parents with babies or small children should be seated in the rear of the nave or the balcony, so that noisy children could be quickly taken to the Cry Room and quieted there without creating much distraction. In recent years, the chapel has also been utilized as a place to quiet children while continuing to hear the Liturgy.

A tip to parents: pressing one's index finger to one's lips (the shush gesture) and then gently to the lips of the child, can help them learn the importance of quietude when they become loud in church. As a parish filled with growing families, we encourage parents of small children to be thoughtful and considerate of others in the congregation.

JULY FASTING

The normal fasting traditions are observed:
abstain from meat, poultry and dairy
products on Wednesdays and Fridays.



NAMES FOR COMMEMORATION WHEN OFFERING THE HOLY BREAD

**There is a limit of 32 names total
each for the living and the dead
when offering Holy Bread.**

This allows for the following distribution:

- 4 families: — 8 names each
- 3 families: — 11 names each
- 2 families: — 16 names each
- 1 family: — 32 names

**Please strictly abide by this, using "and family"
where need be instead of individual names.**

AUGUST FASTING

August Fasting The Dormition Fast takes place August 1-14. We fast from meat, and dairy products, fish, and wine except on Saturdays and Sundays when there is an allowance for wine, and on the feast of Transfiguration, Thursday, August 6th, when there is an allowance for fish and wine. A fast day always occurs on August 29 for the Beheading of John the Baptist in which we abstain from meat and dairy products.

My Journey to Orthodoxy

By Sam McCrory



I grew up in a small town named Sterling, KS as an only child of two Reformed Presbyterians. I was raised in a full-five-point Calvinist denomination but, for as long as I can remember being aware of the theology, Calvinism seemed unjust *prima facie* as it reckons salvation as arbitrary. Despite my rejection of my upbringing, in hindsight, I cherish that my parents tried their best to raise me in Christianity and I would likely still be lost if it wasn't for their efforts in my childhood. Nearly everyone I knew in Sterling was some form of Protestant and I grew to lose my faith in God's existence because I had never witnessed a denomination of that met the scriptural description of Christ's Body. I believed that if Christ's Church didn't exist, how could God exist? At best God was a liar if He existed at all.

When I left my hometown for college, as do many angsty young men, I became an atheist. I gave myself over to the passions. The outcome was total emptiness. I wondered if there truly is something beyond naturalist materialism.

While at WSU, I happened across a group of Protestants out of mainland China called the Lord's Recovery. Their infectious zeal drew me in to their college-age bible study. Their denomination's ethos is to restore the practices of the first century Christians as they interpreted them. I hadn't fully bought into their ideas about Christianity but they did inspire me to seek out God. While attending services at the "Church in Wichita" (their local gathering place), I began to explore other religions.

The study of religious texts from various traditions convinced me to look deeper into the Reformed doctrines I had been inculcated with as a child. So, I began to read my way backwards through Christian literary history from the Puritans, to the Reformers, to Renaissance Roman Catholicism. After reading the Protestant texts, I had decided, if

I was to be a Christian, I could not be a Protestant and Catholicism had some intellectual appeal. I had been attending Catholic and Protestant services and began to identify as a traditionalist Catholic.

I didn't stop studying theology and church history and began tangling with the Great Schism. At this point I had no contact with Orthodoxy outside of mentions in the Catholic books I was reading but I had a hard time finding the western position during the Great Schism defensible even after talking it over with some Catholic priests and some folks from St Augustine Seminary. Due to the Catholic Church's claims about itself in light of this, I couldn't be Catholic.

I sought out to learn about Eastern Orthodoxy as it was the only logical possibility left for the True Church, if I was to be a Christian at all. Someone from one of my former online circles happened to live in Wichita and invited me to St George.

Experiencing the Divine Liturgy blew me away. I immediately felt like I had found what I had been looking for. The iconography gave me a profound consciousness of being surrounded by the heavenly cloud of witnesses. The undeniable reverence for a holy God stuck with me. I didn't want to allow my feelings to be the deciding factor, so I attended the catechesis classes and found myself either already instinctually believing in the doctrines or being thoroughly convinced of them after some wrestling. After experiencing all of this, I couldn't see how I could honestly be anything other than an Orthodox Christian. This truly is Christ's Church.

Orthodoxy & Christian Zionism:

Who Are
the Heretics?

Part IV

By Fr. Paul O'Callaghan



In the light of the Apostle Paul's characterization of unbelieving Jews in 1 Thessalonians 2, how can Zionist Christians possibly affirm that such Jews are under God's special blessing? More pointedly, can the state of Israel be held to be under God's blessing by while it permits and even encourages anti-Christian abuse?

From the New Testament viewpoint, such a notion is utterly nonsensical. Even worse, it is positively dishonoring to Christ. For while the Apostle Paul states "they displease God", the underlying assumption of this Christian Zionist teaching is that it is possible to please God and be under his special blessing while explicitly rejecting Christ. In this regard, it is wise to remember the words of Jesus: "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:23).

It is important, however, to stress that although we as Christians refuse to give Jews a specially favored status under the New Covenant, we do not therefore render them to an especially disfavored position. To the Jews as a people belong the great heritage of God's revelation to humanity: "to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law . . ." (Rom. 9:4). God himself called Abraham, and the promise to him passed through Isaac and then to Jacob, from whom the Israelite people were formed. There can be no question that they were a people uniquely elected by God above all others. But that election had a very specific purpose: the Incarnation.

For the eternal Word and Son of the Father to become man, he had to be born in a certain place, be of a certain race, speak a certain language, and practice a religion that testified to him. Another way of expressing this is the

affirmation that the entire purpose of Old Covenant history was to lead up to the person of the Virgin Mary. She was the one woman who was perfectly prepared – spiritually, physically, biologically, culturally, religiously, emotionally, intellectually, linguistically – to give human nature to God. As such, her formation had to take place within the context of belonging to a particular people, and God formed, called, and elected the Israelite people explicitly for this purpose. In her, through the Incarnation, the special purpose of God's election of the Jewish people has been fulfilled. This is all the more true considering that that the incarnate Christ redeemed and saved all humanity from sin, death, and the power of the devil. The purpose of Jewish election has been fulfilled and completed in Christ, and now is no longer in force.

Protestant theologian Loraine Boettner thus has written, "In accordance with this, the entire system of Judaism has been abrogated, brought to an end, and abolished. And in its place the New Covenant has become the authoritative and official instrument for God's dealings with his people, the Church . . . Christ performed his work equally for men of all nationalities and races. It now makes no difference whether one be Jew, American, Japanese, German, Russian, white, black, red or yellow. He has the same right of approach to God through Christ, the same forgiveness of sins, the same hope of heaven."

We as Orthodox Christians treasure our Judaic spiritual heritage. We repudiate any and all anti-Judaic programs and propaganda. But we also reject the notion that Jews or the state of Israel deserve special treatment or enjoy special divine favor. The election of the Israelites has been fulfilled in Christ.



NEW CSA HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Board of Trustees of Christ the Savior Academy is pleased to announce that Valentina Purdef has accepted the position of Headmaster and will be relocating with her family from Arizona to Wichita this summer.

Valentina brings nearly three decades of experience in education and has devoted her professional life to helping children grow academically, personally, and spiritually. Throughout her career, she has served as a classroom teacher, mentor to young educators, curriculum developer, and instructional leader. Most recently, she has taught within the classical Christian educational model at Great Hearts Christian Academies in Gilbert, Arizona.

More importantly, Valentina is a faithful Orthodox Christian whose life and work are deeply rooted in the Church. She is an active member of St. Ignatius of Antioch Orthodox Church in Mesa, Arizona, where she has served in various capacities, including assisting with Sunday School, parish communications, and numerous parish projects. Her husband, Christopher Purdef, serves as a Deacon at St. Ignatius, and together they have raised their son, Andrej, within the life of the Church.

During the search process, Valentina shared that she has long felt called to combine her love of education with her Orthodox faith. For many years, she prayed for an opportunity to serve in an Orthodox school community, and Christ the Savior Academy represented a unique opportunity to answer that calling.



Valentina, Andrej & Dn. Christopher Purdef

As part of her acceptance, Valentina and her family have begun preparations to relocate from Arizona and make Wichita their new home. They are excited not only about serving the school but also about becoming active members of our parish communities and contributing to the growing Orthodox presence in Wichita.

Christ the Savior Academy exists because of the vision, sacrifice, and prayers of our Orthodox faithful. As the school enters this next chapter, we are grateful that God has provided a leader who shares our commitment to forming children in the Orthodox faith while pursuing academic excellence rooted in truth, goodness, and beauty.

Please join us in welcoming Valentina, Dn. Christopher, and Andrej to Wichita and in keeping them in your prayers as they prepare for this transition.

In Christ,

The Board of Trustees
Christ the Savior Academy



The A-Men Gather!

On June 18, the A-Men group gathered for an evening of fellowship and eats! We reviewed the outcome and wonderful reception of the St. George Picnic outing (which raised over \$1000 for the St. George Youth Fund!). Additionally, we discussed upcoming events for the remainder of the year...spoiler alert: St. George Chili Cook-Off in the fall?! STAY TUNED!

Luke Moore discussed the current state of A-Men Theology, which is currently discussing "In the Image of The Father" by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. Interested in receiving communication regarding A-Men Theology?

Please reach out to Luke Moore for more information and to ensure your contact info is up to date.

Fr. Mark concluded our evening with a powerful reflection that shows us that even as men, with all the responsibilities and strength to endure we are expected to have, we must not be afraid or neglect to turn to God the Father for comfort and protection when we encounter evil; both within ourselves and in the world. If we practice this, not only will we be protected and comforted but we will break the evil one's chain and begin to be the light that overcomes the darkness. Amen!

YOU'RE INVITED  FOURTH ANNUAL

SAVE THE DATE

Golf Tournament & Dinner

NEW LOCATION

TERRADYNE COUNTRY CLUB
SEPTEMBER 24TH, 2026
MORE INFORMATION TO COME!



Submitted by Mikell Awaad

Summer Meetings Tuesday, July 14th & August 11th

12:00 noon at the Parish House
We would love to have you join us!!

Please consider sharing your gifts and talents with our community.
Carrie Camden at camden9492@gmail.com if you would like to be involved.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Family Promise

June 28th through July 4th

St George Cathedral volunteers support St Mary Orthodox Church as they host participants of Family Promise. Family Promise empowers families with children to overcome homelessness and housing insecurity. Volunteers can help with meals, driving, setup/teardown, and evening or overnight hosting. Individuals, couples, and families are all welcome to volunteer. To join this effort, contact Jenny Wall at walljenny4@gmail.com.

Emberhope

Second Saturday Workday – July 11th and August 8th 9:00 a.m. to noon. Help is needed for both indoor (organizing the supply room) and outdoor (yard maintenance) projects. Meet at the EmberHope campus in Newton. For questions, contact Meaghan Koci at 818-450-7660.

The Lord's Diner

July 19th and August 16th, 5:00-7:30.

The Lord's Diner provides a hot meal to anyone who has a need. Summer is a great time for teens to earn community service hours at The Lord's Diner, which they can do with a parent present. To volunteer with our St George/St Mary Team contact Pat Milburn at patmilburn74@gmail.com.

Dillon's Community Rewards

Dillons Community Rewards To earn money for St George Cathedral every time you shop at Dillons, designate St George Cathedral as your Community Rewards recipient. For more information go to <https://tinyurl.com/2p9zrezy>



Past Events

Young at Heart Bingo

We had a great time playing Bingo with all of our Young at Hearts!

A special thank you to Chelsea Wilson for calling the bingo games and Illham Saad for the delicious lunch and to all the volunteers who helped make it happen.



The Kansas Food Bank

St George Volunteers serving at The Kansas Food Bank. Thank you to the teens and adults that bagged groceries to go to Kansas communities that don't have their own local food banks.



*The Cathedral
Messenger*

St. George Orthodox Christian Cathedral

7515 East 13th Street North

Wichita, KS 67206-1223

www.stgeorgecathedral.net

Return Service Requested