



Volume 28, Number 2  
**FEBRUARY 2019**

# The Cathedral Messenger

*A Publication of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral*

## From Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia:

**Abby Selassie's Journey Home to St. George**

By Victoria Sherry

Ethiopia is the oldest Christian nation on earth. One of the earliest conversions recorded in the New Testament is the baptism of an Ethiopian royal servant by the Apostle Philip (Acts 8). The kingdom of Ethiopia adopted Orthodoxy as the official faith in 300 AD—a legacy that continued until the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974.

The chaos and repression that followed the revolution forced Abebech Selassie and her husband, a Peace Corps volunteer from Kingman, to flee the country. They came to Wichita in 1976. Abby found a job at Cessna, but she was homesick for her church.

"I tried to celebrate the feast days, but without a church or a calendar, I didn't know when they were," she recalled. Three years later, an Ethiopian acquaintance invited her to attend a local Presbyterian Church. She went once.

"I'm Orthodox," she told her friend. A week later, the friend called back. "I found you an Orthodox church. I will come get you Sunday, and we'll go."

"I was so excited that night I couldn't sleep," Abby said. "When I got to St. George, everything was just like back home—the icons, the incense."

"I was crying during the liturgy, although I didn't understand it 100 percent. I couldn't believe there was an Orthodox church here, in Wichita, Kansas."

Howard Jett was the first to welcome her to St. George. "He assured me that this would be my church," she said. One Sunday at coffee hour, Alice Laham gave her some holy oil she'd brought back from Jerusalem, a moving gift.



**Abebech Selessie in the late 1970s, after she arrived in Wichita.**

Finding Orthodoxy in Wichita was a surprise, but the church's patron was already familiar to Abby. St. George is one of Ethiopia's most revered saints. Many churches are dedicated to him, including the largest cathedral in Addis Ababa.

"He's very strong and defeated our enemies. Every year, we hold a St. George pilgrimage to commemorate the day that Ethiopia ended the Italian occupation during World War II," Abby explained.

"During the final battle, people saw a man on a white horse who was massacring the Italians. They [the Italian army] had tanks and guns, but nothing would stop him."

### St. George and the Hyenas

During the wartime occupation, Abby's mother joined the resistance fighters. One night, while hiding in the forest, she became separated from her unit. As she wandered alone, three hyenas approached her. One stood in her path with the others

on either side, growling.

With only a shotgun slung over her shoulder, she froze in fear. "Either you pass or I pass," she said to the hyenas, then cried out, "St. George, save me!"

The middle hyena moved aside. "I walked through them," she told Abby years later, in words recalling Moses' passage through the Red Sea. Every April 23, Abby's mother offered bread to the church and gave to charity in honor of St. George.

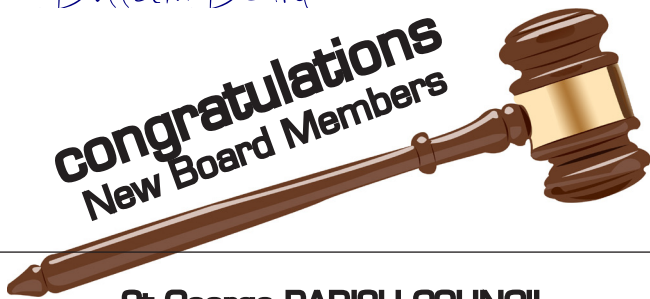
Abby brought her icon of St. George with her when she moved from Ethiopia to Kansas and then to Turkey,

*continues pg 6*

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

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## congratulations New Board Members



### St George PARISH COUNCIL

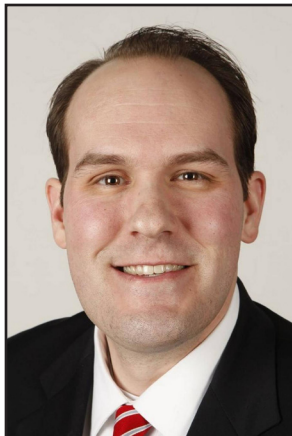
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## JUDGE SEAN HATFIELD

**JANUARY 11, 2019 - 2:25 PM**

Governor Jeff Colyer has appointed Sean Hatfield of Wichita as a District Judge in the 18th District. He will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Warren Wilbert.

Hatfield currently serves as an Assistant Attorney General with the Kansas Attorney General's Office and has a cross-designation as a Special Assistant United States Attorney. He previously was in private practice, served as a municipal prosecuting attorney, and was a guardian ad litem. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Kansas, and a law degree from Valparaiso University.

The 18th District is comprised of Sedgwick County.



## MEMORY ETERNAL

Nancy Farha, 1/23

## WINTER CONTINUING CATECHESIS

### SOURCES OF ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

#### SEGMENT ONE: A ROAD MAP THROUGH THE PHILOKALIA

February 13 – The Sayings of the Desert Fathers  
– Fr. Paul

February 20 – Climbing the Ladder of St. John Climacus  
– Dr. Gaelan Gilbert

February 27 – The Essential St. Gregory Palamas  
– Basiliki Sherry

March 6 – The Witness of Holy Russia  
– Fr. Jeremiah

**Wednesday evenings following Daily Vespers at 7:15.**

## The 18th Annual Men's Lenten Retreat-2019

Mark your calendars now  
for this year's  
Men's Lenten Retreat,  
**to be held March 22-24**  
welcoming this  
year's presenter,  
**Fr. Theodore Dorrance**  
from the Greek Metropolis  
of Denver  
Topic:  
**"Leading a Disciplined Life"**



to register please contact the Cathedral office or email  
[gina@stgeorgecathedral.net](mailto:gina@stgeorgecathedral.net)

## FEBRUARY FASTING



The traditional fasting (from meat, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy products) is observed on Wednesdays and Fridays.  
February 17-23rd is fast free.



## Ninth Annual Eighth Day Symposium

# EROS AND THE MYSTERY OF GOD On the Body, Sex & Asceticism

by Erin Doom

The ninth annual Eighth Day Symposium was unique to the previous eight years in a number of ways.

First, the event venue changed. The Symposium grew out of Orthodoxy Alive, a conference Fr. Paul organized each year at St. George back in the 1990s and 2000s. So naturally, the Symposium has always been at St. George. Due to remodeling of the Fellowship Hall, however, for the first time we had to find a different venue. Thank God for our Orthodox brothers and sisters at St Mary Orthodox Christian Church! They graciously agreed to host the 2019 Symposium and it worked out wonderfully.

Second, for the first time in our history, both the Symposium and the Festal Banquet sold out. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Third, the demographics shifted in two significant ways:

1) The first six or seven years, attendees were mostly Protestant, typically 70-80%. This year participation by Orthodox and Catholics increased dramatically: 31% Orthodox, 23% Catholic, and 46% Protestant.

2) Out of town participation has been steadily growing since the third Symposium back in 2003. But this year was remarkable. Exactly half of the United States of America were represented! Yep, that's right. Attendees traveled into Wichita from as far as Washington, Wisconsin, New York, Maryland, Virginia, and many other eastern states. We also had a handful of people from Washington D.C. and we even had several folks fly in from Canada. For the first time in the history of the Symposium – nine years and counting – we had more attendees from outside of Wichita than we did local folks: 45% from Wichita and the surrounding area vs. 55% non-Wichitans.

Fourth, we made a slight but significant tweak to the schedule. Two years ago, we added a VIP private conversation with the Symposium's keynote speaker as a perk for Eighth Day Members. Those past two conversations with Joseph Pearce and Ken Myers have been a highlight for many Eighth Day Members, or so they've told me. This year, three of the four plenary speakers joined us and the conversation was rich and stimulating. It helped facilitate new friendships among Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants, precisely the sort of thing last year's Symposium advocated. It's essential, I believe, to fulfilling our mission of renewing culture. It was a marvelous way to kick off the Symposium and we'll certainly replicate it next year.

Fifth, for the first time in the Symposium's history, there was a heavy emphasis on the early Church Fathers. We've always celebrated a Church Father at the Festal Banquet, and I've always intentionally integrated the Fathers through morning

contemplations. But the Symposium's plenary presentations have rarely focused on the Fathers. This year, however, without asking them to do so, the plenary speakers focused on St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Maximus the Confessor. Fr. Georges Florovsky tirelessly called for a return to the Fathers as a path forward in the twentieth century. I think he'd be proud of this Symposium!

Sixth, I changed up the format of my morning contemplation on Saturday. Instead of offering my own contemplation infused by the Fathers, I read the first homily on the Song of Songs by St. Gregory of Nyssa, which is printed in our newest issue of Synaxis: The Symposium Journal. It was sublime.

Seventh, for the first time we celebrated a female heroine at the Festal Banquet. Previous heroes include St. Anthony the Great, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. Basil the Great. This year we celebrated one of Orthodoxy's favorites: St. Mary of Egypt. In addition to her fixed feast day on April 1, we commemorate her annually on the fifth Sunday of Great Lent, and on the preceding Thursday each year we read her life during Matins of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. The story of her conversion from extreme sexual promiscuity, influenced so deeply by an icon of the Theotokos, is quite remarkable. And so this evening she was worthy of our veneration as we toasted her as "The Desert Mother of Repentance."

Eighth (because all of my lists have to include the number eight!), there was yet another first this year. Unlike all previous themes, we tackled a controversial topic: "Eros & the Mystery of God: On the Body, Sex & Asceticism." Thanks to our plenary speakers – Hans Boersma on St. Gregory of Nyssa, Adam Cooper on St. Maximus the Confessor, David Ford on St. John Chrysostom, and Ephraim Radner on Scripture (plus a breakout on pornography) – and thanks to the presentations by our own Fr. Paul O'Callaghan ("Adam, Eve & Eros") and Joshua Sturgill ("Art & the Incarnation: Poetry as a Chastely Erotic Art"), I believe we tackled it successfully. Mission accomplished.

I would be remiss if I did not mention two final highlights. First, my wife Christiane Doom made this year's Symposium happen. She single-handedly organized the lunches on both Friday and Saturday plus the entire Festal Banquet, including the dessert auction, all while somehow managing to care for our four children. I have no idea how she did (and does) it! And second, just like each and every other year, Chris Farha and the Cathedral Choir made the Festal Banquet absolutely magnificent. As usual, and as we all know from experience, their singing was glorious. With Chris and her comments as a guide, they took us through the Orthodox wedding service, from beginning to end. And as usual, I've already received a number of comments about how the choir was the highlight of the weekend.

Talk about exposing folks to Orthodoxy! This year the non-Orthodox attendees – 69% of them! – experienced an Orthodox wedding service, were exposed to the story of St. Mary of Egypt, and learned about Eros and the Mystery of God from three of our greatest saints: St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Maximus the Confessor!

# CREATIVE ARTS DAY



## CALLING ALL AGES and Grade Levels!

**Saturday, March 2**  
10:30a-12:30p



**WE NEED YOU!**

**& YOUR**  
*Creative*  
**THEME ideas**

**"I can do all things  
through Christ who  
Strengthens me."  
Philippians 4:13**



ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION  
JULY 21-28, 2019



**Click link for more info**  
<https://ac2019gr.org/>



**CAMP 2019**  
*St. Raphael*  
**Camping  
Season Dates**

**Session 1 — June 30 - July 6**  
**Session 2 — July 7-13**  
**Session 3 — July 14-20**

**Camp is available to all children,  
ages 9-17**

**Go to [www.campstraphael.org](http://www.campstraphael.org)  
online registration will be  
available February 1st.**

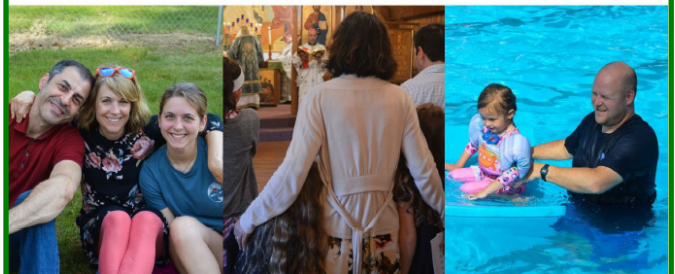
**YABOY!**



**Antiochian Village**  
**Family Camp**

**MAY 24-27, 2019**

**Visit [avcamp.org](http://avcamp.org) for more information**



**Speaker: FR. NICHOLAS LOUH**



**Fostering a  
Healthy Family**

**REGISTRATION OPENS JANUARY 14, 2019**



WAMP

# WAMP 2019

by Drue Ashton



**Campfire  
during the  
blood moon  
eclipse!**

A few weeks ago, the teens of DOWAMA met each other in Wagoner, OK, at Camp St. Raphael. YABOY!!! Wichita brought over 25 teens to WAMP this year, one of the largest group of teens present, so large, we barely fit into our vans. When the Wichita vans parked, we flooded out to reunite with our family.

Pancakes in pajamas. When everyone woke up Saturday, they rolled out of bed and made their way to the dining hall because they didn't even need to change. A dinosaur, Winnie the pooh, and the elf on the shelf were seen that morning enjoying the flapjacks. Saturday night we enjoyed our annual Gong Show (talent show) with comedy skits, singing, and story time with Faris. We were also graced with an appearance from Fr. Heybaby, (Dr. Mosley) from St. Pecans in Georgia, who taught us about avoiding making church about us. Sunday, we began our morning with Divine Liturgy. Sunday evening, we had a dance, a bonfire, s'mores, and watched a lunar eclipse of a super blood moon, a breathtaking phenomenon, that won't happen again for another 2-10 years.

We all enjoyed the speaker, Christian Gonzales, as he spoke to us about following Christ to the Cross. During



his last talk, Christian had us walk to the chapel to pray for the world. When we walked through the door, the warm ambience of tealights around the perimeter of the room created an atmosphere of contemplation and prayer, as statistics about homelessness, child abandonment, alcoholism, and domestic abuse were shared with the teens. However, after each statistic, teens gathered around a map in the center of the room to say a prayer and bring a tealight to the area of the world affected by each tragedy.





## Diocese of Wichita & Mid-America Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

January 7th, 2019

To the Chrst-loving Priest, Deacons, Monastics and Lay Folk of  
the God-protected Diocese of Wichita & Mid-America:

Blessings and greetings on this second day of  
Theophany -- the Synaxis of the Honorable Prophet  
and Forerunner John the Baptist. Happy feast!

I take this opportunity to convey my heartfelt thanks to  
each of you who sent greetings to me and contributions to  
our Diocese's "Bishop Basil Missions Endowment Fund" on  
the occasion of my Name's Day, the feast of St Basil the Great  
which our holy Church keeps on January 1st. I am indeed  
most appreciative of your thoughtful remembrances and  
generous contributions.

As an update on the "Bishop Basil Missions Endowment  
Fund," I am happy to report to you that Metropolitan Joseph  
blessed Archpriest Joseph Longofono of Topeka, KS, a longtime  
priest of our Diocese, to begin his ministry as DOWAMA's first  
full-time "Dean of Chapels" effective, January 1st. I thank you  
for your generous support for this innovative project which has  
been several years in the planning and which was unanimously  
approved by you at our Diocesan General Assembly this past  
June during our 2018 Parish Life Conference in Santa Fe, NM.  
The first three congregations which Father Joseph will serve in  
this new position are Holy Resurrection/Gillette, WY; St John  
the Theologian/Rapid City, SD; and Ss Peter & Paul/Topeka,  
KS. Many and sincere thanks to Archimandrite Jeremy (Davis)  
of Holy Ascension and his hardworking committee which has  
labored so diligently in preparing this proposal and seeing it  
through to its implementation.

Asking our good God -- the All-holy Trinity -- to bless each  
of you with a New Year filled with good news, good health  
and God's peace which passes all understanding.

In Christ,

+Bishop Basil  
Diocese of Wichita & Mid-America  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America



Abby in 1989, shortly before her  
return from Turkey.

where she lived from 1986  
to 1990. It hangs in her liv-  
ing room today.

## An East African Com- munity Takes Root

After four and a half years  
in Turkey, Abby returned to  
Wichita and the newly com-  
pleted Cathedral. There was  
a new priest, "a young monk  
with a beautiful voice," who  
helped her understand the  
English-language services.  
She began attending faith-  
fully every Sunday.

"I love his liturgies so much. Fr. Basil was so strict, and  
told us exactly how to behave in church," she recalled.

Abby extended hospitality to fellow Ethiopians who came  
to Wichita to attend the university or work in the aircraft  
industry. In the 2000s the Marawi family moved here from  
Denver and started attending the Cathedral. Their sons  
Lucas and Jonathan grew up as altar servers.

Daniel Tadesse and his wife Betlehem have raised three  
children at St. George. Betty and daughters Lydia and  
Naomi traveled to Kenya last summer as members of a  
St. George mission team, while son Emmanuel serves as  
an altar boy.

The East African presence  
at St. George includes  
families from Eritrea,  
which borders Ethiopia.  
It's traditional for men and  
women from both coun-  
tries to wear white and to  
remove their shoes upon  
entering the building—a  
sign of respect for the pu-  
rity of the church, accord-  
ing to Abby.



This icon of St. George has  
accompanied Abby Selassie on  
every step of her journey.

Since the Ethiopian  
Church follows the Julian  
calendar, Ethiopians at  
St. George observe those feast days as well—Christmas  
on January 7, for example. The St. Emmanel association  
hosts monthly gatherings for the community.

Abby makes annual trips to Dallas to visit the nearest Ethi-  
opian Orthodox church, but admits that she finds herself  
lost at times during services chanted in ancient G'eez. St.  
George, she says, "is my church now. I came thousands  
of miles and found St. George right here in Wichita, to  
help me serve the Lord."

## Community Support

by Traci Spencer

**we'd love to have you join us!**

"for I was hungry and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger  
and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me;  
I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you

## Completed Projects

### Lord's Diner

On Sunday, January 20th, St. George volunteers served the homeless in our community at the Broadway location. St. George serves at the Lord's Diner the 3rd Sunday of every month. Please let Mikell Awwad know if you can help serve at 250-3016.

### Kansas Food Bank

On Monday, January 28th, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. St. George volunteers served at The Kansas Food Bank and filled bags of food for backpacks for school age children in need to take home over the weekend.  
(photo will be sent next Monday)

## What's Coming Up?

### Cook-Up-A-Storm

On Saturday, February 16th at 10:00 a.m., St. George volunteers will meet in the kitchen to make casseroles and chocolate chip cookies for homeless people at The Warming Souls Center. Please let Cindy Abdallah know if you can help at 648-9576.

### Lord's Diner

On Sunday, February 17th, St. George volunteers will be serving the homeless in our community at the Broadway location from 5-7:30 p.m. Please let Mikell Awwad know if you can serve at 250-3016.

## Next Meeting

### Tuesday, February 12th

12:00 noon in the Conference Room.

**We would love to have you join us!!**

We usually meet the 2nd Tuesday of every month at noon. Please consider sharing your gifts and talents with our community. Please contact Traci Spencer at 371-5599 if you would like to be involved.

### Warming Souls Center

On Tuesday, March 5th, St. George volunteers will help serve the homeless from 6-7:30 p.m. We will meet at The Warming Souls Center, 841 N. Market (park on west side). Please let Traci Spencer know if you can help serve at 371-5599.



**We had 20 volunteers (a record number) and we filled 712 bags for the Food Bank. Thank you for your help!**  
— Kansas Food Bank



**Progress is underway!**

# *The Cathedral Messenger*

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**St. George Orthodox Christian Cathedral**

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