

A Guide to the Art & Architecture of **ST. GEORGE Orthodox Cathedral**



ST. GEORGE CATHEDRAL manifests the love of God to the greater community of Wichita, Kansas. Worship is offered regularly, and Orthodox Christians pray for the whole world. The Cathedral is home to a vibrant community that carries on traditions established by the early Church. The church temple is patterned after Hagia Sophia, built in sixth-century Constantinople. St. George Cathedral, constructed in 1990, is the only Byzantine-style structure in the state of Kansas.

Among the Cathedral's **Byzantine** features are its domes and apses, tiled roof, and decorative brickwork. The curved shape of the domes and arches bears witness to the grace of God pouring from heaven to earth through the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Four large outdoor **mosaics** depict Christ, the Theotokos (“Mother of God”), St. John the Baptist (*right*), and St. George. Crafted in Italy, each mosaic is composed of thousands of pieces of colored glass.



Entering the Cathedral

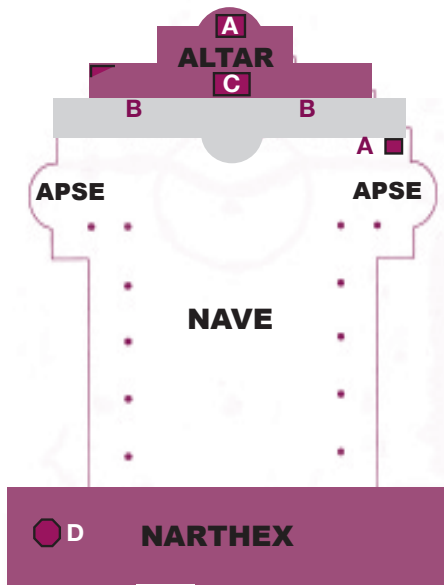


The interior of an Orthodox church reflects the glory of God and the union of heaven and earth in Jesus Christ. The Cathedral's rich decoration, fragrant incense, bells, and chanting offer us a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven.

In keeping with ancient Christian tradition, Orthodox churches face east, toward the rising sun. The Cathedral design is **cruciform** (cross-shaped). The central **basilica** with its columns and pews represents the vertical bar of the cross, while the **apses** on either side form the horizontal arms. This floor plan mirrors the spiritual journey from darkness to light.



The deacon (*left*) censens the Crucifix on Great and Holy Thursday 2025 during the service of the Twelve Passion Gospels.



A Bishop's Throne
B Iconostasis

C Holy Table
D Baptistry



Worshippers enter the Cathedral through the **narthex** on the west side (symbolic of darkness). Baptismal fonts for infants and adults occupy one end of the narthex. Christians enter the Church through the mystery of baptism and participate in Christ's death and resurrection through a three-fold immersion in water.

A carved wooden **iconostasis** (see page 4) unites the nave to the **altar** (right), an enclosed area that corresponds to the Old Testament Holy of Holies. A covered **Gospel** book, candlestands, and tabernacle with a vigil lamp rest on the **holy table**. The bishop's throne stands directly behind the holy table. ("Cathedra" means "seat of a bishop.")

A large icon of the Theotokos "More Spacious Than the Heavens" fills the apse behind the altar. As Birthgiver of God, the Virgin Mary reunites heaven and earth through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The "Communion of the Holy Apostles" appears below.





The Iconostasis sets the altar apart as sacred space. Its oak carvings feature biblical motifs such as crosses, grapevines, loaves and fishes. Each wooden icon panel is painted in egg tempera with a gold leaf background that reflects light back to the viewer.

Christ the Savior (A) is flanked by the Theotokos (B) and John the Baptist (C), a pattern repeated in the Deisis in the apse and in the outdoor mosaics. Archangels Gabriel (E) and Michael (F) appear on the stylized doors.

The Deisis features holy followers of Christ from the first through fifth century AD.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 St. Mary of Egypt (desert ascetic) | 4 St. John Chrysostom | 7 St. George the Trophy-bearer |
| 2 St. Barbara the Great Martyr | 5 St. Basil the Great | 8 St. Anthony the Great (desert ascetic) |
| 3 St. Thekla Equal-to-the-Apostles | 6 St. Stephen the First Martyr | |



The Annunciation of Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary is depicted in egg tempera on the carved entrance (Royal Doors) of the iconostasis. The angelic proclamation of the in-carnation (Lk 1:26-38) heralds the coming of the Savior into the world. A large two-part wall icon of the Annunciation (left, right) was added just below the Deisis in 2025.



The Dome, as the highest point of the Cathedral, contains a large icon of **Christ Pantocrator** (Almighty). This powerful yet compassionate image shows Jesus with the Book of Judgment in one hand while blessing with the other. Inscribed around Him in English, Arabic, and Greek is the **Jesus Prayer** (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me”).

Sixteen **prophets** of the Old Testament (e.g. Moses, Elijah, Ezekiel, Isaiah) ring the base of the dome. These prophets anticipated the coming of the Messiah, and their scrolls foretell Christ’s Incarnation.



Supporting the dome are four pendentives adorned by **Evangelists** Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark (above). Each evangelist is shown inscribing the opening lines of his Gospel. As eyewitnesses of the Lord, the evangelists convey the message of salvation to the human race.



Courtesy Dr. Merrill Thomas

What is an Icon?

An **icon** is a sacred image of Jesus Christ, the saints, or Christ’s life and teachings as revealed by Scripture. The traditional Byzantine icons at St. George are highly stylized, reflecting a spiritual reality outside of time. Icons do not feature shadows, perspective lines, or variations in lighting. Color schemes, clothing, and features of the saints are based on centuries-old tradition. Because icons proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ rather than an individual artistic vision, they usually remain unsigned. The Cathedral iconography was produced at a monastic workshop in Buena Vista, Colorado.



Left: Prophet Moses encounters the Burning Bush on Mt. Horeb and removes his sandals (Ex 3:1-15)

Right: Moses receiving the Law on Mt. Sinai, 50 days after the Passover (Ex 10:1-17)

Corner: The bishop's throne stationed in the nave is adorned with an egg tempera icon of Christ the Great High Priest.

The Colonnade facing the south side of the church depicts scenes from the life of the Prophet Moses. The **Burning Bush** marks the beginning of Moses's ministry to Israel. While Moses was shepherding sheep in the wilderness, God appeared to him in the bush and commanded him to free the Hebrew people. The Church interprets the burning bush as a prefigurement of the Virgin Mary, who held the divine fire within her womb while remaining unburnt. Moses is shown removing his sandals, "for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Ex 3:5).

Moses received the **Law on Mt. Sinai** 50 days after the Israelites escaped Egypt by crossing over the Red Sea. The vertical blue gap in the mountain signifies the "cleft of the rock" where God hid Moses so that he might see His "back" after His glory passed by (Ex 33:22).



The Burning Bush is considered a type (symbol) of the Virgin Mary.



The Transfiguration icon decorating the north colonnade shows Christ on Mt. Tabor conversing with the Prophets Elijah and Moses. The radiance of His appearance made the sun appear dark by comparison, causing His disciples Peter, James, and John to hide their faces from the light. The white rays represent the uncreated light of God by which Christ revealed Himself to them as the God-man (*theanthropos*) who voluntarily assents to the Crucifixion.



The Life of the Mother of God as recorded in Scripture and Holy Tradition decorates the colonnades on either side of the nave. The series begins with the Virgin Mary's birth, celebrated September 8, and concludes with her life in Ephesus at the home of St. John the Evangelist.

Left:
The **Visitation**
of Mary and
Elizabeth (Luke
1:39)

Right:
The **Journey
to Bethlehem**
(Luke 2:4)



The Barrel Vaults

of the Cathedral ceiling meet at the dome to form a cross. The ceiling iconography details the **life and ministry of Jesus Christ** in clockwise order, starting in the south apse and ending at the altar.

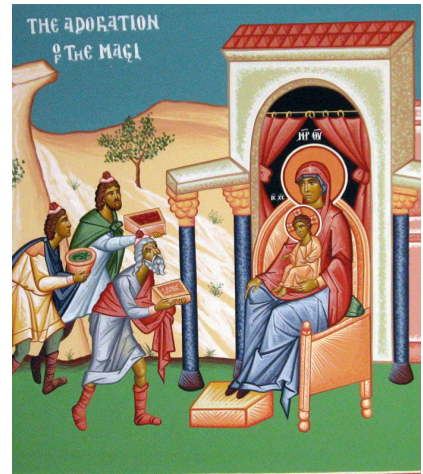


Birth to Baptism • SOUTH APSE

The events surrounding Jesus' birth (**Nativity**) are depicted in the south apse. The Spirit descends in the form of a dove at Jesus' **baptism** in the Jordan (*top right*). After being tempted in the wilderness (Mt 4:1), Jesus begins his public ministry by proclaiming "The Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk 1:15).

Miracles & Parables • NAVE

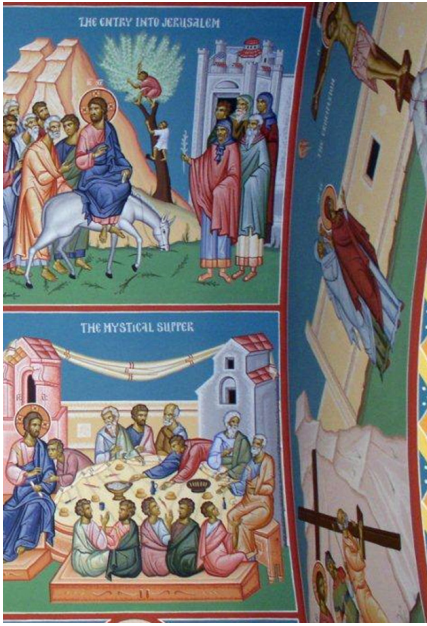
The central rows of icons in the barrel vault in the nave present **miracles** Christ performed during his three-year public ministry. The lower registers feature Jesus' **parables** and teachings as recorded in Scripture.



The Magi offer their gifts to the Christ child (Mt 2:1-11).



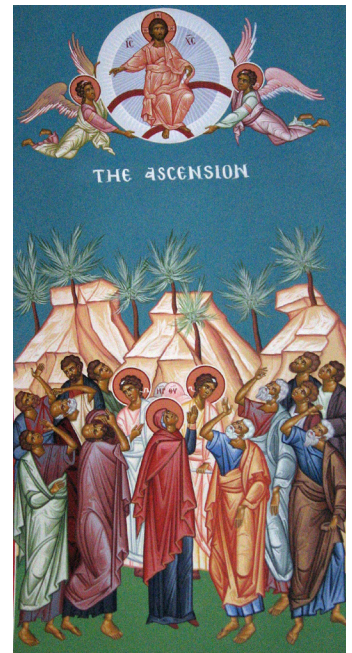
Passion & Resurrection • NORTH APSE



Passion and Holy Week icons in the north apse include the Entry into Jerusalem, the Mystical Supper, and Crucifixion (left). The traditional icon of the **Resurrection** shows Jesus descending into Hades to conquer death and to raise up the souls of the Old Testament righteous beginning with Adam and Eve.

After the Resurrection • ALTAR

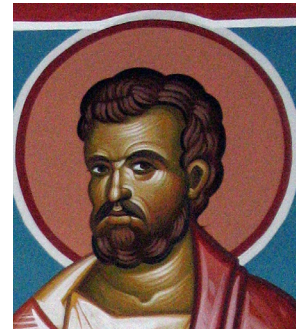
The barrel vault over the altar features Christ's appearances to the disciples during His 40 days on earth after the Resurrection. This period concluded with the **Ascension** (far right). Ten days later, on **Pentcost** (right), the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus descended on the disciples as tongues of fire.





Saints Ancient and Modern

Eyewitnesses of the Risen Lord line the lower register of the Cathedral ceiling along with other holy men and women of the Old and New Testaments. Their halos represent illumination, indicating the saint is filled with the light of the Holy Spirit.



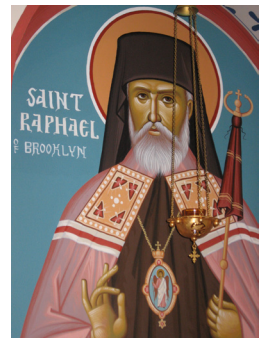
Above: **St. Mary Magdalene**, Equal to the Apostles. Right: **St. Nicodemus** the Secret Disciple (Jn 3:1-9)

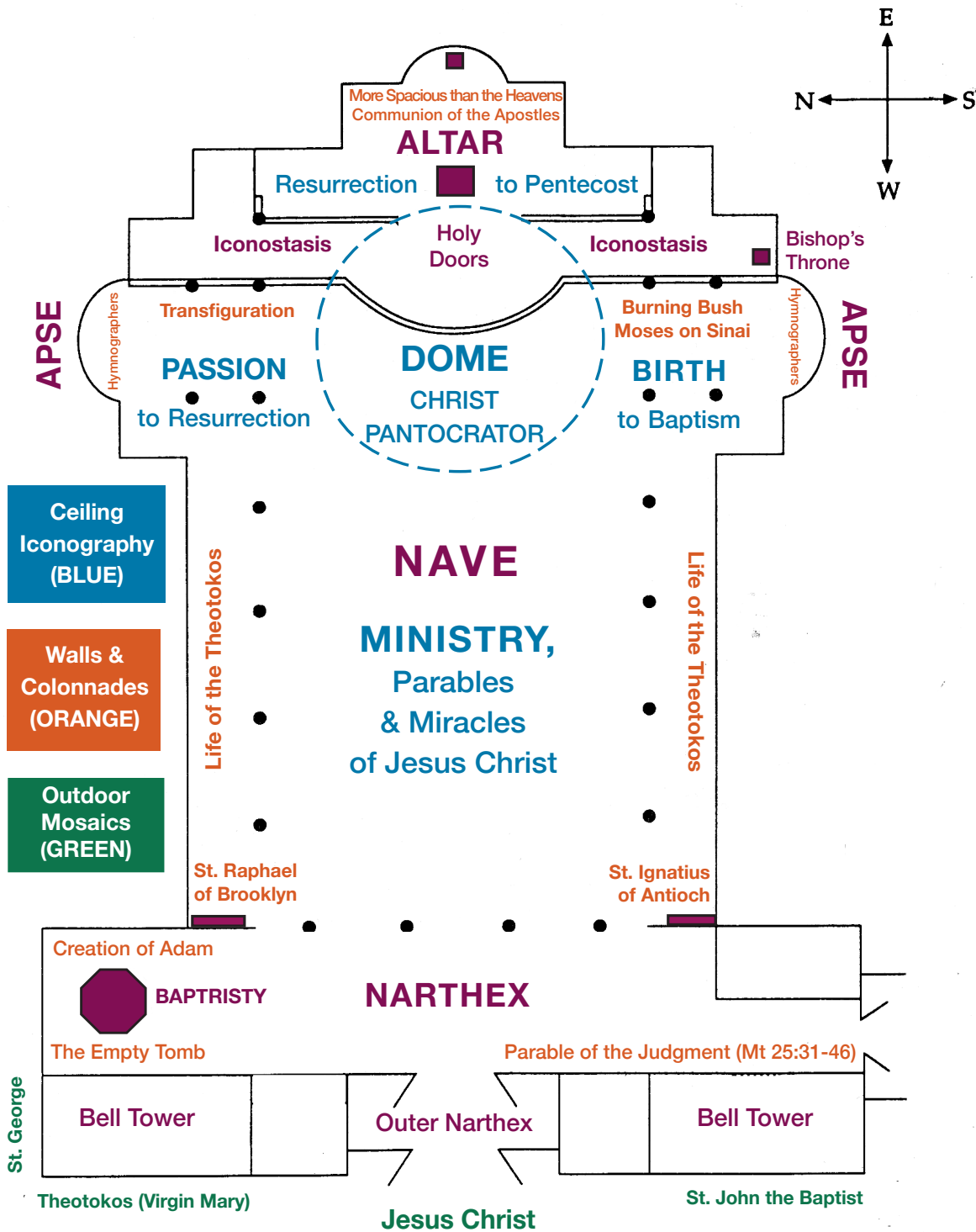


The north and south apses display icons of holy men and women who composed the theologically rich hymns of the Orthodox Church. Above, right: **St. Kassiani**, a ninth-century nun and hymnographer.



Saintly **Orthodox** bishops appear on the walls facing the altar. The north colonnade features 20th century hierarchs **St. Nikolai Velimirovich**, **St. Tikhon** the Confessor, **St. Nektarios** the Wonderworker, and **St. Innocent** of Alaska. A shrine in the nave is dedicated to Syrian-American **St. Raphael** of Brooklyn, founder of the first Antiochian Orthodox churches on the Great Plains.







Parishioners gather with lighted candles for the midnight **Pascha** (Easter) vigil. The clergy prepare to lead an outdoor procession culminating with a Gospel reading and the joyful proclamation "Christ is risen!"

We invite you to
experience the beauty
of Orthodox worship
at St. George Cathedral.
Please join us for vespers,
Sunday liturgy & feast days.



CATHEDRAL TOURS are available for
school and church classes, homeschoolers,
families, and other visiting groups.

To schedule a tour guide,
please contact the St. George office at
(316) 636-4676 • info@stgeorgecathedral.net

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CATHEDRAL

7515 E 13th Street N

Wichita, Kansas 67206

(316) 636-4676

Saturday Vespers

6:00 p.m.

Sunday Divine Liturgy

10:00 a.m.