

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and welcome to St. Nicholas!

We are a community of believers belonging to the “one, holy, catholic and Apostolic Church” that exists worldwide, and has existed for nearly two thousand years — known as the Orthodox Church. Our parish family is made up of members from a variety of backgrounds. Some of us were born into Orthodox Christian families, but many of us have made a journey that led us ultimately to the Orthodox faith.

Our goal as Orthodox Christians is to open our hearts up to the life-giving grace of God, which comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, is found in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and gathers us into the loving embrace of our Father in Heaven. God’s grace is, in fact, His very presence, the Uncreated Light of His Divinity, the purifying Fire of His love. The Church is the fountain of this grace, and the holy Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Church are the Gifts given to us through which God’s grace especially acts and changes our life. The whole life of the Church — a life of worship, instruction, fellowship and serving one another in sacrificial love — is what God uses to heal us of the sickness of sin, to make His image shine brightly in us, and to raise us up to His likeness.

If you are a newcomer, it is our sincere prayer that you will join us in this journey into the depths of God’s love, and we warmly invite you to make St. Nicholas Church your place of spiritual refuge along the way. For those new to Orthodoxy, we offer this handbook to help you learn about the faith and practices of the Church. New members coming from other Orthodox parishes may find this handbook helpful in getting to know our community. We hope that even long-time members of St. Nicholas will find this to be a useful resource.

Our Parish Mission Statement

Our parish’s official mission statement reads: “St. Nicholas Orthodox Church is a community of the Holy Orthodox Church, committed to the worship of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, united in the Apostolic Faith and the sharing of this faith through prayer, teaching and in loving service to our neighbors and one another; emphasizing evangelism and outreach to the Ark-La-Tex area.”

Our Clergy

As Orthodox Christians, it is important to us that we belong to the whole Church, but the way we belong is through a particular hierarchy. Our bishops are consecrated by Apostolic succession (the Apostles laid hands on bishops, who laid hands on the next generation of bishops, and so on down to our time), and our clergy are all ordained by bishops. Our clergy currently include our Priest, Father (abbreviated “Fr.”) Daniel Bethancourt, and Deacon (abbreviated “Dn.”) Nicholas Olsen. Our Bishop is His Grace, Bishop BASIL of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America. We belong to the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, of which the Archbishop is His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH. Our Archdiocese is part of the Antiochian Patriarchate (the ancient Church of Antioch) of which the first Hierarch is His Beatitude, Patriarch JOHN.

A Note About This Handbook's Purpose

This handbook is intended as a practical resource. There are many other sources to go to for the theology and history of the Church, and for answers to many general or spiritual questions. While the internet is the preferred information source for many people it's not always reliable! We would be happy to recommend books for further reading. This handbook (hopefully) answers practical questions, which those other sources may not address, about being a member of this particular church community. Of course, everything in the Church ultimately has a spiritual purpose. Many of the articles in this handbook briefly address the spiritual reasons for particular things. Its most basic purpose, however, is to provide details of *how* we do things — while only briefly addressing *why* we do things — and to help you to participate in the life of our community. If it happens that you can't find an answer here, please ask Fr. Daniel or another member of the parish.

If you are an inquirer (new to Orthodoxy, seeking a church home) please be sure to see the "Brief Guide for Inquirers and Catechumens."

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