

PHILOPTOCHOS



Philanthropy • Fellowship • Faith in Action



Hagia Sophia

The Church of the Holy Wisdom

The Greatest Church of all Christendom

- Built in 532-537 AD under the reign of Justinian.
- It rises to the height of 184 feet – 41 feet higher than the Pantheon. A true architectural masterpiece for its time and today.
- 10,000 men worked for six years to complete its massive structure.



Things to know about Hagia Sophia



- Hagia Sophia was a Cathedral for over 1000 years, from 527 until September 29, 1453. It was the largest and the greatest Church in all of Christendom.
- It is honored as one of the greatest masterpieces of art and architecture. It remained the largest Cathedral in the world for almost 1,000 years.
- It survived earthquakes, fires and the Iconoclasts.
- During its forced conversion from a Church into a mosque, there was an installation of a minbar (pulpit), mihrab (prayer niche), and fountain. Four minarets for the call to prayer were added at the four corners of the building. The mosaics were covered, and eight huge medallions were added on the columns.

Hagia Sophia was declared a Museum in 1934

- In 1922, the Republic of Turkey began a trend in secularization under its first President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Hagia Sophia was closed in 1931 and reopened as a museum in 1934.
- The mosaics were publicly revealed for the first time in centuries. The icons are considered some of the finest in the world.
- In 1985, Hagia Sophia was included on UNESCO'S World Heritage list.

(UNESCO - an agency of the United Nations that promotes education and communication and the arts. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.)



Religious Freedom

- Is vital to creating a global community committed to peace and understanding.
- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed a decree on July 10, 2020 to re-convert Hagia Sophia to a mosque.
- This order came within hours of a Turkish court ruling wiping away an 80-year-old government decree that had declared Hagia Sophia a museum.
- The July decision has been condemned by Christians all over the world, as well as international leaders and the United Nations.
- Hagia Sophia is a UNESCO World Heritage site.



National Day of Mourning July 24, 2020

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America stated,

“The Lord does not triumph by destroying others, but by destroying death by His own death. We do not conquer with the sword, but with the truth. And ultimately, we are victorious because we remember. We remembered where the Tomb of the Resurrection was even after the Romans buried it beneath tons of rock and pavement. We remembered where the Cave of Bethlehem was even though it was defiled by alien sacrifices. And we will forever remember – until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ – what our Ἁγία Σοφία is. In her essence, in her stones, in her walls, in her icons, and in her heart, which can never be taken away!”





**2007 National Philoptochos Pilgrimage
to Constantinople & Cappadocia
lead by His Grace Bishop Andonios of Phasiane**



What can we do?

- As members of the global community, we must continue to be educated to and aware of changes to Hagia Sophia.
- As members of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, we respectfully request the Republic of Turkey to respect religious freedoms and rights. We request Hagia Sophia be restored to its status as a museum and as a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- We will continue to pray that the Turkish government respect the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and reopen the Theological School of Halki.



The Theological School of Halki



- Since 1971, its classrooms and rich library, where His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew recalled moments from when he was a student of the historic educational institution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been closed by the order of the Turkish government.
- It is worth noting that approximately one thousand theologians, originating from various countries, graduated from the School of Halki during its 127 years of continuous operation, and then served the Church. Many among them became Patriarchs, Hierarchs and University Professors.



**We pray for wisdom
and to inspire wisdom in others.**

