

## New Orthodox Church to be built in Salt Lake City



The Church of the holy preeminent Apostles Peter and Paul in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is planned to be built by this winter in Salt Lake City, OrthoChristian reports.

After a year and a half of searching for a suitable place, the parish was able to acquire a plot of land of about 5 acres.

Several stages of development are planned as donations come in: the construction of a wooden church in a Russian style for 140 worshipers, a house for clergy, the organization of the first Orthodox cemetery in Utah, the construction of a parish house, and, finally, the erection of a large-scale Byzantine-style cathedral.

It is expected that His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph, the primate of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, will consecrate the wooden church before the next feast of the Nativity.

Sts. Peter and Paul rector Fr. Justin Havens attaches great importance to the fact that the new church will be in a traditional Orthodox style, as many parishes rent or buy former Protestant or Catholic churches, or even former synagogues, and while

they may look like Orthodox churches on the inside, as any Orthodox church in any other place in the world, then externally, only the inscription at the entrance allows one to understand that it is an Orthodox church.

For the parishioners, half of whom are former Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and atheists, it is especially important to use the gifts offered by the rich centuries-old experience of building Orthodox churches, so that it would invoke the Heavenly fatherland from the first glance. It is no coincidence then that a Russian style was chosen, with its onion domes and eight-pointed crosses.

The new church and parish house will serve to develop the Orthodox mission in the area, where the majority of the population is Mormons. The parish currently has 400 members on the books; about 200 attend Sunday services in the cramped temporarily-rented premises. Russians, Serbs, Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians, and Arabs pray there together with those who have converted to Orthodoxy.

The rector, Fr. Justin Havens, has an interesting story. He has lived in Salt Lake City since 2004. Like many others, he came to Orthodoxy from outside, having been raised in a Protestant family on Long Island. During his spiritual search, he visited many churches and became acquainted with many religions and philosophies. Finally, with great joy and relief he found the ancient Church, the Orthodox Church, when he was in college in New Mexico. From a profession as a therapist he turned to the calling of the priesthood—a spiritual doctor.

His wife Seraphima is also a convert. They are raising seven children (and expecting their eighth), all of whom were born in Salt Lake City. “Fr Justin and his family couldn’t be happier in this beautiful city and parish where God has sent them to serve and labor,” the church’s official website reads.

The second priest, Fr. Paul Truebenbach, a former Lutheran, joined the Orthodox Church with the majority of his family in 1996.

The parish of Sts. Peter and Paul hopes to receive help in constructing its new church and developing the Orthodox mission from all concerned people, as the construction budget has not been fully met yet. All efforts are currently aimed at raising funds for the first point of the plan—the construction of a small wooden church. As concerns the Byzantine-style cathedral, the parish hopes to build something similar to the recently-built Church of St. Sava in Allen, Texas, which freely accommodates 300 people.

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