

Brief history of the church

The Holy Church of Phaneromeni is situated in the historical centre of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus and is the largest Orthodox Church in the old part of Nicosia, which lies within the Venetian walls. At the site where the church is situated there was in the medieval times an orthodox nunnery and the nuns were silk weavers.

Following the occupation of Nicosia by the Ottoman Turks in 1571, the monastery was most probably abolished and its church became a parish church.

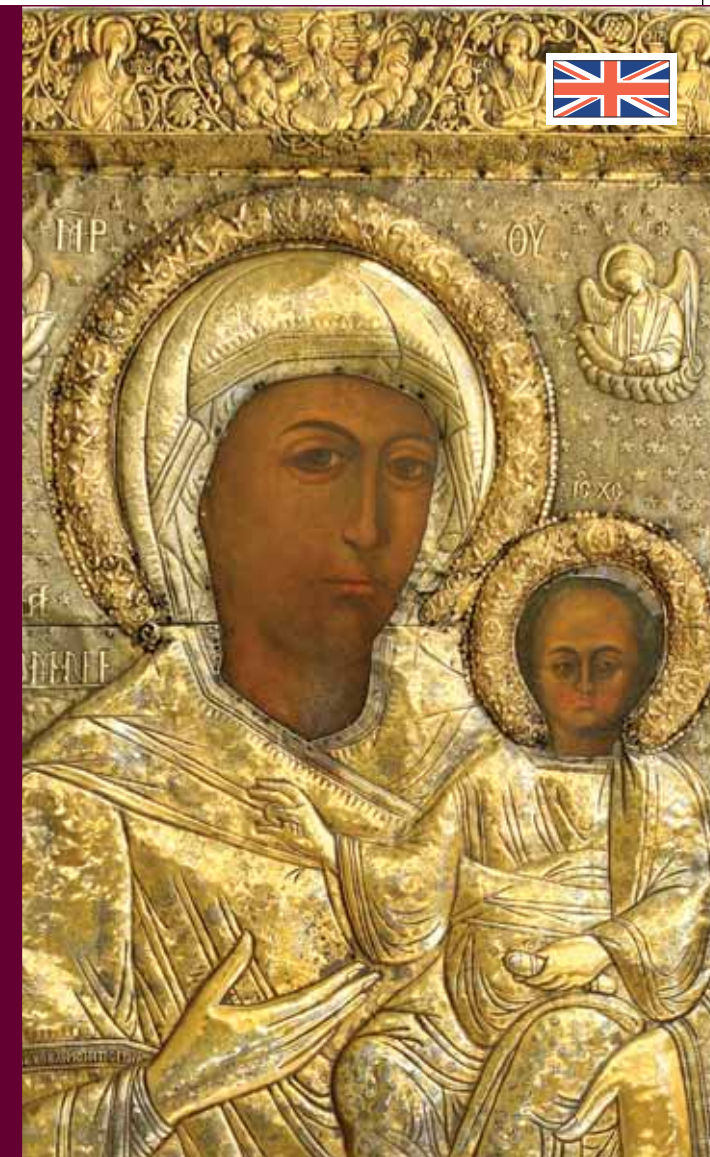
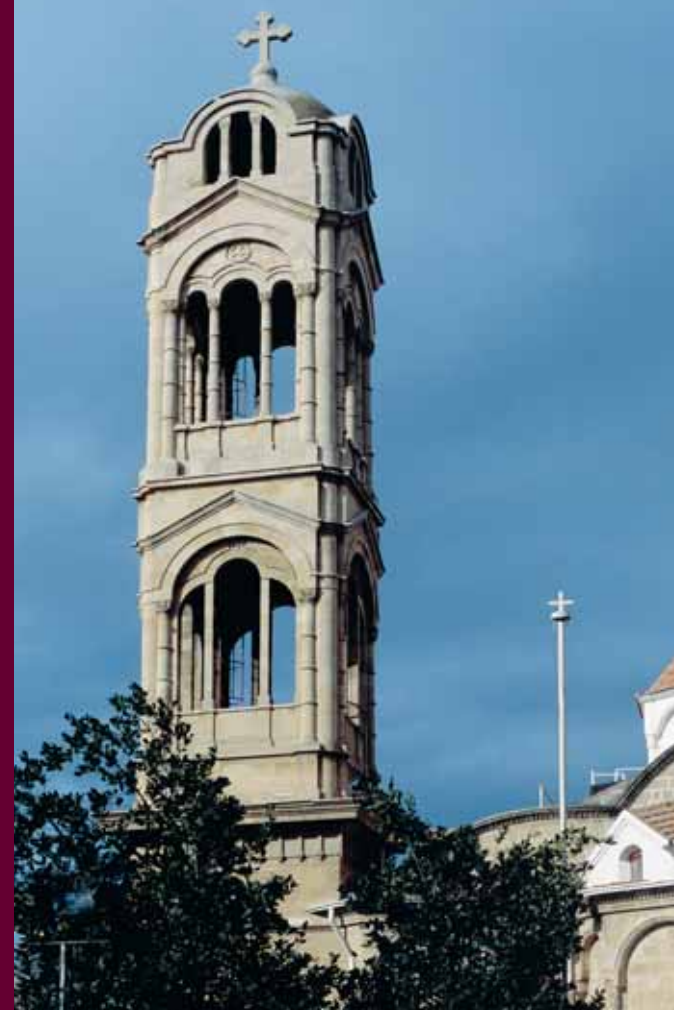
According to legend, the Turks tried many times to convert the church into a mosque. But, eventually, they had to abandoned their effort because the imams, who were posted there, died mysteriously shortly after the assumption of their duties. It is worth noting the effort made to this end by the Turkish governor of Cyprus Kuchuk Mehmet in 1812, which was prevented by the miraculous intervention of the Holy Virgin.

As recorded on a marble inscription, the previous church, which was contained within the monastery, was built in 1715. The intellectual Archimandrite Kyprianos (18th century) refers to the Phaneromeni church as one of nine orthodox churches of Nicosia and describes it as "ancient, very ancient". The church, in its present form, was built in 1872-73.

The existing church was inaugurated on 5 June 1911 by the then Archbishop of Cyprus Kyrillos II, with Hadjiconstanti Hadjiharitou as the "sponsor". The church celebrates 25th March, day of the Annunciation of the Virgin, and the 28th October, the day of Agia Skepi.

The architecture of the church

The church is of the three-aisled Basilica type church with a dome and elements of western architecture. It was dedicated to Panagia (Holy) Phaneromeni because, according to legend, the icon "revealed itself" in the ruins of the church, which was once destroyed by an earthquake. Around the church there are gargoyles (gutters) made of limestone and sculpted by Cypriot master masons. The gargoyles depict stone forms of humans and animals and their themes are drawn from various gothic monuments of Cyprus. The present belfry of the church replaced an older one and was built in 1937-38 by master mason / contractor Koursoumbas on the basis of plans prepared by the architect Th. Photiades.



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The Holy Church of
Panagia Phaneromeni
Nicosia

More information is available in the book: "The Holy Church of Panagia Phaneromeni, Nicosia, Cyprus. Historical Album, Nicosia 2002" issued by the Phaneromeni Church and authored by the Reverend Nicolas Chr. Panagis.



The Bishop's Throne

The bishop's throne is an example of the wood carving art of another famous Cypriot wood sculptor, Artemis Papadopoulos.

The Multilamp

The silver wired "multilamp", which hangs in the middle of the church, is very old and was repaired in 1856 with money raised from the sale of silver donated to the church by Kuchuk Mehmet Pasha, following the miraculous intervention of the Holy Virgin, which prevented him from desecrating the church by turning it into a mosque. It is the work of goldsmith Hadjiioannis Terzipashi G. Eleftheriades.

The Sanctuary

In the sanctuary, the Holy Altar, with the elaborate box, is an exquisite wood carving made by wood sculptor Artemis Papadopoulos. It depicts representations from the Holy Passions. On the altar there is a silver "artoforio" (bread container), which is one of the most beautiful examples of silversmithing of the 20th century, a work by goldsmith Polyvios Kolokos.

The icon of Panagia Phaneromeni

The miraculous icon of Panagia Phaneromeni dates back to the 14th century. It was a palladium of the former holy monastery of Panagia Phaneromeni and depicts the Virgin in the "Odigitria" (leading) style. To the right and the left of the Holy Virgin, within a frame, are depicted the six saints who wrote hymns to the Virgin. According to the inscriptions of the icon, it was considered to be a "rain maker". The icon is kept within the sanctuary and is displayed in the main part of the church for worship on the feast days of the Virgin. There is a copy of the icon on the iconostasis, a 1924 work by painter Adamantios Diamantis. This icon has a silver gilded coating which was made in 1751 by goldsmith Hadji Logis.



The interior of the church

Wall paintings

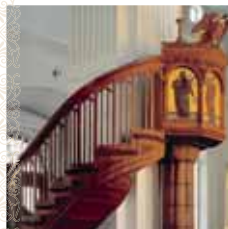
The few wall paintings which decorate the church, are of exquisite art, and have been painted by the renown Cypriot painter Ioannis Kissonergis and date back to 1929. Depicted on the dome are, in the centre, God, Father Pantokrator, in the periphery of the dome are prophets and in the triangle of the dome the four Evangelists. "Panagia Platytera Ouranon" (the Holy Virgin Larger than the Skies) is painted in the niche above the holy altar and is depicted in the Panagia Vlahernitissa style.

Iconostasis

The "iconostasis" of the church is wood, carved and gilded. It has representations from the old and the new testament and dates back to the 18th and 19th century. The icons, which are on the iconostasis, date from the 16th to the 20th century. Most of the icons are silver coated, the work of the well-known goldsmith Polyvios Kolokos.

The Pulpit

The pulpit is the work of the famous wood sculptor M.Ch. Taliadoros and on it are depicted the four Evangelists, painted in 1928 by the famous Cypriot painter Adamantios Diamantis.



The buildings around the church

The Phaneromeni School for Girls

To the east of the church lies the Phaneromeni School known as "Parthenagogio Phaneromenis" (Phaneromeni School for Girls). The building was constructed by the church in 1925 and was completely renovated in 2001. It is in the classical style and the façade is an imitation of an ancient Greek temple. It is now a mixed school and houses an elementary school and a gymnasium (for ages from 6 to 15).



The Phaneromeni Library

The Phaneromeni Library is one of the most important buildings in old part of the town and is situated a few meters northwest of the church. The library started its operation in 1934 and was the main reference library of Nicosia until the Turkish invasion in 1974. Today, the contents of the library have been transferred to the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, which within the compound of the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus.



OHEN Sunday Schools

To the south of the church, again within the churchyard, there is a building which houses OHEN (Orthodox Christian Union of Young People) with rooms for Sunday Schools and which was built in 1953-54.



The Administrative Offices of the Church

There is a two-story building to the north of the church, within the churchyard, which houses the offices of the church. Its neoclassical façade is considered particularly impressive.



The Mausoleum of Cypriot National Martyrs

The Holy Church of Phaneromeni has the special privilege of hosting in its churchyard

the monument, in which the remains of those clerics and laymen, who were massacred by the Turks during the tragic events of the 9th of July 1821, are kept. They include the remains of National Martyr Archbishop of Cyprus Kyprianos and the Bishops of Paphos Chrysanthos, Kitium Meletios, Kyrenia Lavrentios and other prominent clergymen and laymen. Some forty days before those tragic hours, Turks executed also the senior priest of Phaneromeni Church "Ikonomos" Leontios.



In the basement of the mausoleum are also kept the remains of the patriot-fighter Bishop of Mareotis which were placed there in 1981. Dionysios Kykkotis played a leading role in the uprising of the Cypriots in October 1931 against the British rule, known in Cyprus as the October uprising. As a result, he was deported and died in exile. The monument, which is built of Penteli marble (reputedly of the same source as the marble used for Parthenon) was completed in 1930 and its unveiling took place on the 9th of July of the same year.

