



Archon Architekton

Christ J. Kamages FAIA

National Leader of Faith Community Design



Archon Arkitekton, a two-word title that best describes Christ Kamages' life-long commitment to faith and architecture. Christ's accomplishments were honored in 2000 when His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, acknowledging Christ's outstanding service to the Church and efforts in Ecclesiastical architecture, conferred this title to him, the first in contemporary history to hold this title.

Christ is not the first in his family, however, to hold the title Arkitekton, which means "master builder". With roots in Akrotiri and Halepa, Crete, Christ's maternal great-grandfather, George Kaloroumakis, was also an Arkitekton, and Christ's great-grandfather was an Arkitekton. The Kaloroumakis branch of Christ's family tree was involved in the development and building of three notable faith projects in Crete: The Monastery of Agia Triada in Halepa, Evangelismos Church in Halepa and the Cathedral of Hania in Old Town Hania near the limani.

Christ grew up in the community of St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Springfield MA where he was a member of the St. George Olympians Drum and Bugle Corp. His parents are the late George and Lula (Kaloroumakis) Kamages (Kamazes from the Poli) whose deep Orthodox traditions led him to consider a career in the priesthood. An apprenticeship with a Springfield architect, however, sparked his interest in building and introduced him to Byzantine style, revealing a way to combine faith and architecture. Receiving an MIT science fair award for Byzantine architecture, for his demonstration of how to place a round dome on a square base, confirmed his calling and launched his career and life-long devotion to design for the Orthodox faith throughout America.



Christ completed undergraduate work at the Boston Architectural Center and completed his Master's of Architecture studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo where he was an Assistant Professor in Design in the 1970s. He started at Cannon Design Inc. Grand Island NY and Boston MA and moved to San Francisco CA in the 1980s with The Ehrenkrantz Group, a firm that he later acquired and changed the name to EKONA Architecture and Planning, expanding his work from civic to church projects. The firm later become CJK Design Group, with over 100 faith & community projects completed throughout the U.S. and several in the works.





For many of his church projects, Christ also designs and commissions the iconography and furnishings, including artifacts for the altar, pulpit, throne, chanters' area and icon screen. He has worked with artisans from throughout Greece including wood carver Steve Kavroulakis of Hania, iconographer Dr. George Kordis, former professor of Iconography at the University of Athens, and most recently with traditional wood carver George Loukakis of Hania. Christ designed the icon screen and artifacts for the Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Washington DC and these items were fabricated and installed by Loukakis earlier this year. The Thyranoxia (Opening of the Doors) of the new church was celebrated on October 28, 2017.

Among Christ's many other projects are the recently completed Faith Heritage Center of the San Francisco Greek Orthodox Metropolis at St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center, as well as the Monastery of the Theotokos in Dunlap CA and the proposed St. Nicholas Orthodox Academy in Reno NV which includes a school, village and small church. Other finished projects include St Katherine in Elk Grove CA, St. Sophia in Valley Forge PA, Holy Trinity in Pittsburg PA, St. Barbara in Durham NC, Holy Trinity in Columbia SC, St. Catherine in Briantree MA, Holy Trinity in Carmel IN, and St. Katherine in Naples FL. He is currently in design phase with St. Sophia in Elgin IL, St. Spyridon in San Diego CA and St. Demetrios in Tucson AZ.



Acknowledging that the design and building of facilities dedicated to the glory of God is a sacred task, and that traditional sacred space is essential and vital to community life, Christ employs a unique, interactive approach to the design of sacred spaces for faith clients. His approach is centered on strategic planning and education of the community on the historical precedent and spiritual meaning of his designs. He has developed the Axios design, an expandable prototype for growing mission parishes, and the copyrighted Triad design, which uses Byzantine principles while optimizing seating capacity, sight lines and programmatic functions of an Orthodox Church. This synthesis of the practical and the spiritual creates a sacred space illuminated from within, upheld and magnified by traditional Orthodox iconography and sculpture, the intersection of heaven and earth.

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Christ and his wife Patricia live in San Rafael CA. They are founding members of the Pancretan Chapter of Marin and Sonoma Counties, of which Patricia is the current president. I first met the Kamages family in 1986 when Christ's position with The Ehrenkrantz Group brought them to the San Francisco Bay Area, settling in Marin County. Their then teenage children Peter and Keri were two of the first members of the Minoan Dancers which my husband Vasilis and I had just created. Through the Minoans and our local parish, we became close friends. Christ even designed a booth to sell souvlaki for one of the Minoans' first fundraisers, complete with columns akin to the Parthenon! Our friendship was sealed in 1990 when they baptized our first child, Achilleas, in Greece and a week later the four of us took him for his first communion at the Cathedral of Hania, one of the churches designed by Christ's forefathers. Patricia is also godmother to our daughter Elektra, who was baptized in the hospital the day she was born. The friendship between our families has deepened over the years, becoming one family, and culminated this past summer by spending time together in Crete again.

Of special note to members of PAA District 6, Christ designed the gravesite of His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony of Blessed Memory as well as the Monastery of the Holy Theotokos the Life Giving Spring in Dunlap CA. Having promised the Metropolitan before his death in 2004 that he would design his tomb (τάμπα or "free", as the Metropolitan stipulated), and after sketching some designs for him on a napkin, Christ worked with the late Bishop Anthimos of Olympos to design the gravesite to be harmonious with the monastery, with a Byzantine cross installed and a place for a candle and photograph. The sloped granite surface allows a visual of his episcopal seal and inscription. The Metropolitan's body was interred there in 2005 and District 6 members hold a memorial service for him there every October, at the conclusion of the annual district retreat.



Christ and Patricia have four grandchildren: Nikolas and Alexis Kamages and Eleni and Katia Antonis. Nikolas is an accomplished high school baseball player and Alexis, Eleni and Katia are continuing the family's Greek dance tradition as members of the Minoan Dancers.





Christ's many awards and publications include:

- Elevation in 2015 to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 2015, one of the highest honors the AIA can bestow upon a member, recognizing the architect's significant contributions to architecture and to society
- Recipient of 2014 ELIOS Award of Excellence; ELIOS Charitable Foundation is dedicated to preserving and promoting the spirit and ideals of Hellenic culture
- Conferred the title of Archon Arkitekton in 2000 by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
- Served as Chairman of the Board of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute (PAOI) for 12 years
- Past member of the Metropolis Council for the Metropolis of San Francisco
- Former member of the Archdiocesan Council
- Founding member of the ELIOS Society and the Pancretan Chapter of Marin and Sonoma Counties
- Author of Ecclesia, A Facilities and Artifacts Handbook, in collaboration with the late Rev. Leonidas Contos. Ecclesia is a guide for church communities to better understand the planning and design process.