

THE CATHEDRAL AT A GLANCE

OFFICIAL NAME:

The Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul

BUILD TIME:

83 years (1907–1990)

STYLE: **Gothic**

Great height, pointed arches, ribbed vaulted ceilings, boss stones, flying buttresses and natural light from large windows

Artwork in the building—wrought iron, stone, wood, glass and textiles—presents biblical stories, Christian values and American experiences.

150,000 tons OF INDIANA LIMESTONE

Built like a medieval church, one stone on top of another. Steel framing was used only to support the roof.

TWO SETS OF BELLS:

10 peal & 53 carillon

The only tower in North America to have both!

231 stained glass windows



THE CENTRAL TOWER:

301 feet tall & 676 feet
above sea level

The highest point in Washington, D.C.!

112 gargoyles

AND MORE THAN

1,200 stone
grotesques

The Cathedral was built entirely by donations and receives no operating support from the federal government or from any church denomination.



Welcome

No matter your faith or your reason for visiting, you have a place here at your National Cathedral! Each year, we open doors to hundreds of thousands of worshipers and visitors just like you. We invite you to find peace and inspiration, to listen to beautiful music and to experience the Cathedral's extraordinary art and architecture.

WHO WE ARE

Grounded in the reconciling love of Jesus Christ, Washington National Cathedral is a house of prayer for all people, conceived by our founders to serve as a great church for national purposes.

WHAT WE DO

This Cathedral holds a unique place at the intersection of sacred and civic life. As the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, we strive to serve God and our neighbors as agents of reconciliation; as a trusted voice of moral leadership; and as a sacred space where the country gathers during moments of national significance.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU

We are part of the Episcopal Church, which proclaims God's love for all people across 111 dioceses in 17 countries, including here in the Diocese of Washington. The Episcopal Church is a member of the global Anglican Communion, which traces its spiritual roots to the Church of England. Learn more at [episcopalchurch.org](https://www.episcopalchurch.org)



YOUR CATHEDRAL AT WORK

In a city of monuments and memorials, this Cathedral stands apart as a vibrant community of people called together to serve and renew the world around us. Our founders envisioned this Cathedral as a sacred space where the nation could gather in good times and in bad.

THIS CATHEDRAL IS ...

- A House of Prayer for All People that gathers 160,000 worshippers across 1,500 worship services each year
- A national treasure and architectural masterpiece that features the best of craftsmanship and the building arts
- The site of funerals for national leaders, including Presidents Eisenhower, Reagan, Ford and George H.W. Bush
- A dramatic venue for the arts, from concerts to films to dance and the visual arts
- A place that gathers people from all walks of life to build bridges of understanding across our differences

Learn about our work and how you can get involved at [cathedral.org](https://www.cathedral.org).

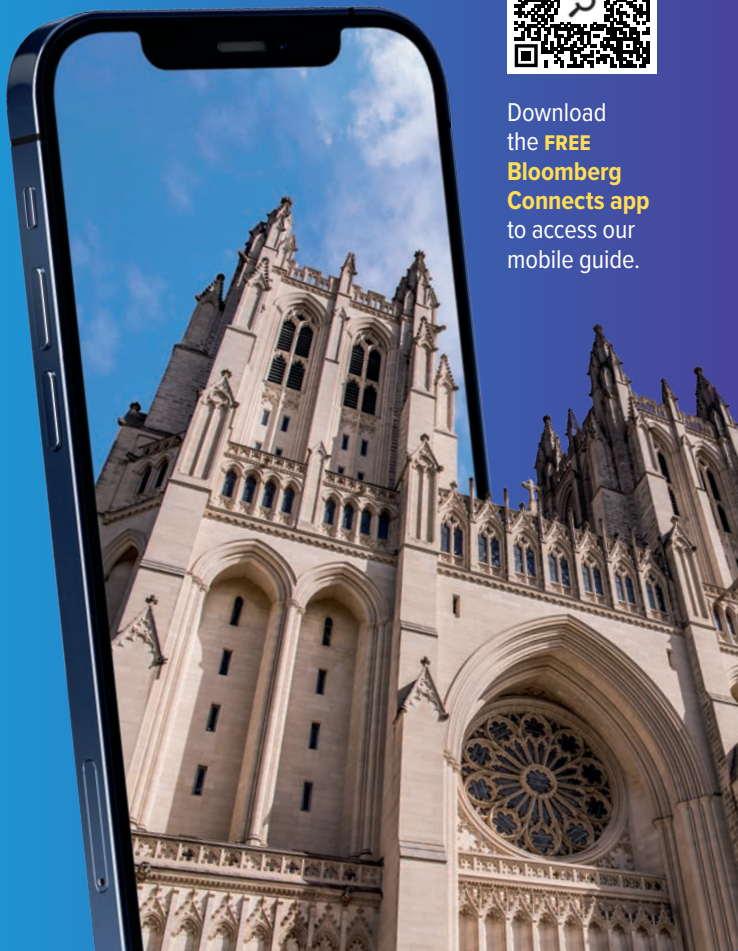


150,000 Tons of Limestone ... Now in The Palm of Your Hand

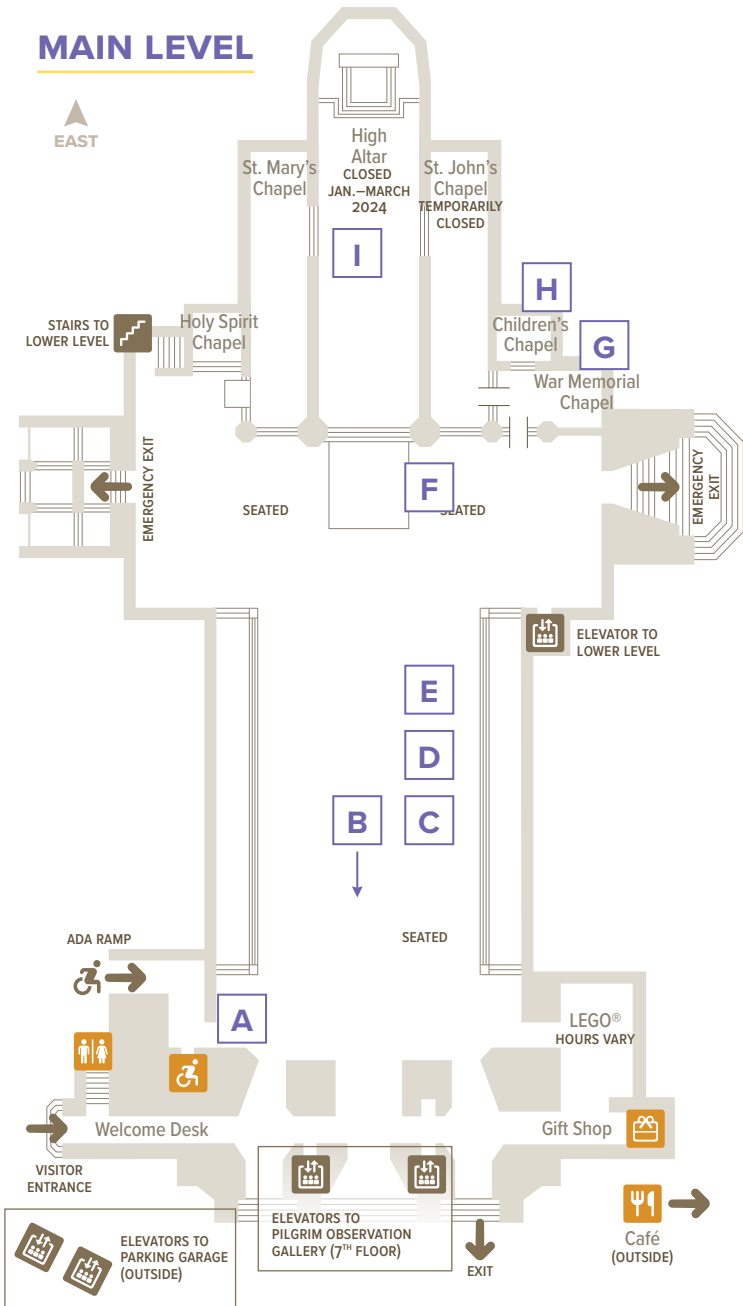
- Available in **40+** languages through Google Translate™
- **Meet the gargoyles** and go in-depth with **specialty tours**
- **Extend your visit** to the Cathedral from home



Download
the **FREE**
**Bloomberg
Connects** app
to access our
mobile guide.



MAIN LEVEL



PUBLIC RESTROOMS are down the stairs by the main entrance. Additional restrooms are on the lower level.



An **ALL-GENDER WHEELCHAIR-ACCESSIBLE RESTROOM** is on the main level by the entrance ramp. Another is on the lower level.



The **GIFT SHOP** on the main level is accessible.



INFORMATION is available inside the main entrance and at the west end of the nave, where audio or guided tours begin.

Main Level Highlights

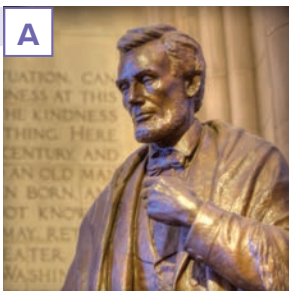
 indicates area is wheelchair accessible

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



A

The imagery in this bay, including the bronze statue by artist Walker Hancock, reflects the life of the nation's 16th president. Note the 34 "Lincoln" pennies embedded in the floor, one for each state when Lincoln was elected in 1860. The stone carving over the wooden doors is flanked by caps worn by Union and Confederate soldiers, with hands grasping an olive branch, and features a quote from Lincoln's second inaugural address: "With malice toward none."



CREATION ROSE WINDOW



B

Containing more than 10,000 pieces of glass, this window high above the main entrance was designed by artist Rowan LeCompte to present the moment of creation in Genesis. The window appears to change color throughout the day based on how the sun hits it, even changing by season as the angle of sunlight changes. An upclose view, available on some of our specialty tours, reveals the artist's signature, along with that of the window's fabricator and installer, Dieter Goldkuhle.

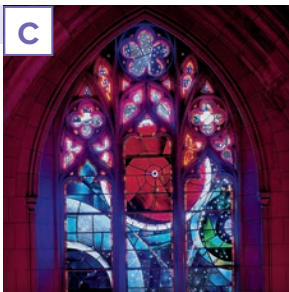


SPACE WINDOW



C

Designed by artist Rodney Winfield, the *Space Window* celebrates America's exploration of the cosmos. Can you see the black dot inside the large red circle? It contains a piece of moon rock brought back by the astronauts of Apollo 11 and given to the Cathedral by NASA. Along the bottom of the window you'll find a passage from the Book of Job: "Is not God in the height of heaven?"



PRESIDENT WILSON'S TOMB

This is the grave of Woodrow Wilson, the only president buried in Washington, D.C. Wilson remained in Washington after leaving office and enjoyed watching the Cathedral being built. Atop his tomb is a sword adorned with thistles, a symbol of his Scottish ancestry. The bay and tomb contain other symbols from his life. Like most presidents, Wilson was a complex figure with a mixed legacy.



NOW AND FOREVER WINDOWS

The Cathedral's newest windows were designed by renowned artist Kerry James Marshall and installed in 2023. They depict the ongoing and daily struggle for justice. In it, the figures' circular motion suggests this search is a continual one, best accomplished by collective effort and commitment. Rather than depict a specific moment in time, the windows begin and end with the quest for fairness—the bare minimum for all God's children—and show fairness and fair play lighting the path to justice. Beneath the windows carved stone tablets will be inscribed with an original poem by Elizabeth Alexander.



CANTERBURY PULPIT



The Cathedral's pulpit is made of stones from Canterbury Cathedral. It was carved in England and arrived on site more than 20 years before it was installed in 1929. Many prominent faith leaders have preached here, including author Brené Brown, Billy Graham, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., preached his final Sunday sermon here in 1968, just four days before his assassination. The intricate carvings depict historic figures who played a role in translating the Bible into English.



WAR MEMORIAL CHAPEL



G

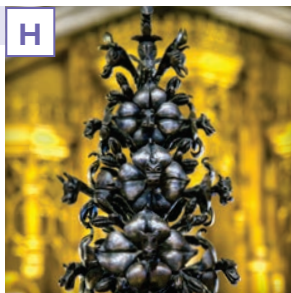


This chapel was dedicated in the wake of World War II to commemorate America's Armed Forces. The dramatic altarpiece evokes bayonets and cannon fire. The stained glass windows depict examples of sacrifice in service to others from biblical stories and American history.

The wall hanging depicts a “tree of life” with the seals of each state hanging in its branches, surrounded by the seals of the military branches and growing from a military cemetery. The cross at the back of the chapel was given to the Cathedral by military chaplains following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the Pentagon.

CHILDREN'S CHAPEL

H



Everything in this fanciful chapel is designed for a 6-year-old child. Look up at the ceiling—brought low so children can see—for an example of fan vaulting. This chapel contains some of the most breathtaking artistry in the building: Look closely at the wrought iron gates surrounding the chapel to find fanciful animals inside the circles, and find more animals peeking out of the flowers at the top of the gate.

GREAT CHOIR & HIGH ALTAR



I



Closed January–March 2024.

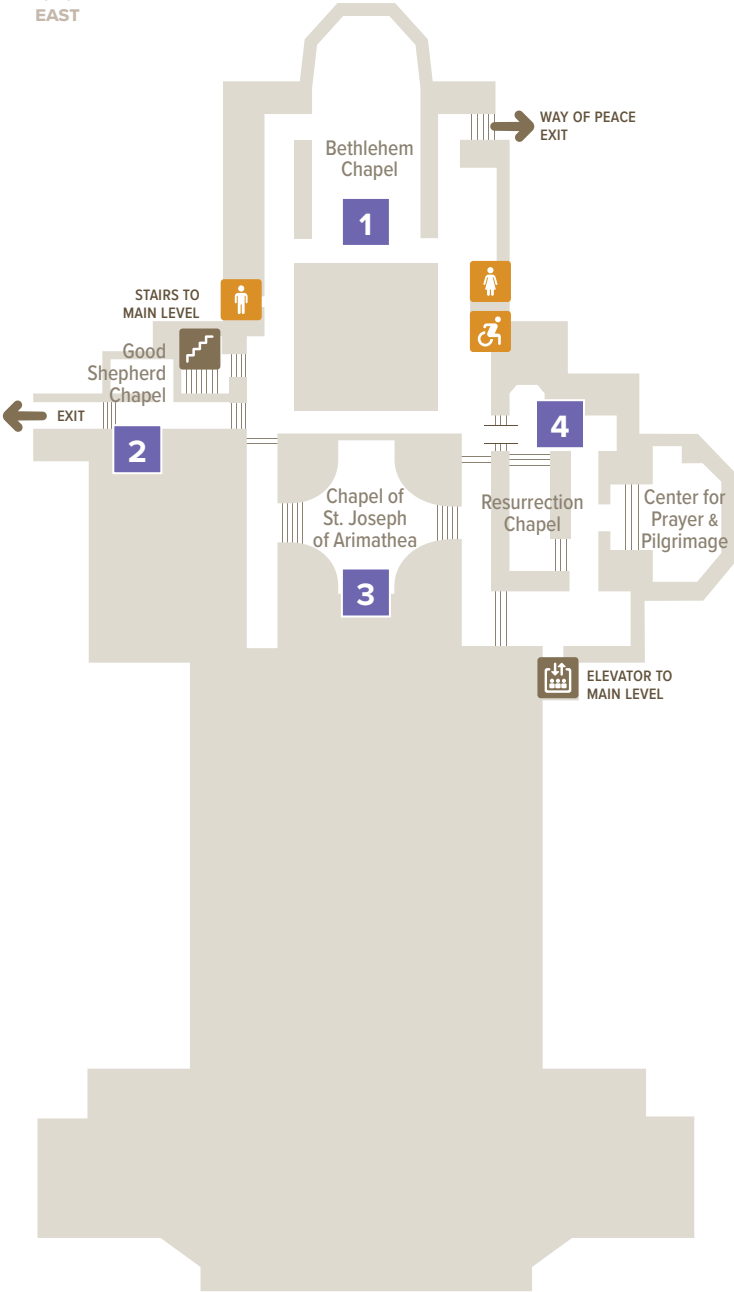
A multi-year renovation project is underway to repair and update the Cathedral's main pipe organ. Visit cathedral.org/organ for more information.

The Great Choir features carved wooden stalls for worshipers and service participants, including Cathedral choristers.

Nearly 460 feet from the entrance doors, the High Altar sits atop stones from Solomon's quarries outside Jerusalem. The intricately carved wall behind the altar, called a reredos, is carved of French limestone and depicts more than 100 individuals that exemplify the Christian faith throughout the centuries. The figure of Christ in Majesty at the center is carved of Texas limestone.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, PLEASE FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS OF CATHEDRAL STAFF, WHO WILL DIRECT YOU TO THE NEAREST EXIT.

LOWER LEVEL



on the Lower Level

The artwork of the lower level chapels traces the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus across different architectural styles preceding the Gothic styles seen on the main level. Visit these intimate chapels by going down the stairs near Holy Spirit Chapel or by the elevator across from Children's and War Memorial Chapels.

BETHLEHEM CHAPEL



1

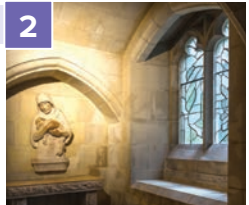
This chapel is the oldest part of the Cathedral, completed in 1912. The windows contain depictions of the genealogy and birth of Jesus. The Cathedral's Foundation Stone was set in 1907 under the altar. Look around for symbols associated with Christmas, when Christians celebrate Jesus' birth in the city of Bethlehem.



GOOD SHEPHERD CHAPEL

2

This small chapel is available for prayer and includes a stone sculpture by Walker Hancock of a shepherd holding a lamb, a reminder of God as protector.



CHAPEL OF ST. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

3

Featuring a prominent mural by Jan Henrik de Rosen, this chapel tells the story of Jesus' entombment following the crucifixion. The chapel also contains the entrance to the Cathedral's columbarium, where many find their final resting place.

The architecture is simpler, heavier and less ornamented than the main level, and a reminder that many Gothic churches were built on remains of older architectural styles.



RESURRECTION CHAPEL



4

This chapel features the only tile mosaics in the Cathedral, telling of the resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent appearances to his followers. Please maintain quiet in this space, as it is often used for prayer.



Further Explorations

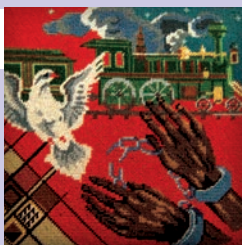
If you have additional time, we invite you to further explore our building and offerings. Find more of the stories we tell, join in some of the many other activities we offer or take a quiet moment for prayer or reflection.

A CLOSER LOOK: MORE STORIES ON THE MAIN LEVEL

AMERICAN HISTORY NEEDLEPOINT KNEELERS



Used for kneeling in prayer, these needlepoint kneelers recognize individuals whose lives contributed to American culture. The list of approximately 175 individuals was compiled in the mid-20th century with input from historians at the Smithsonian Institution, and includes authors, innovators, presidents, military leaders, reformers and others.



DAVID & GOLIATH TAPESTRIES

Over 400 years old, these Flemish tapestries tell the biblical story of David and Goliath. They were given to the Cathedral by Larz and Isabel Anderson, who also funded the building of St. Mary's Chapel where the tapestries hang.



A CLOSER LOOK: FOUND ON THE LOWER LEVEL

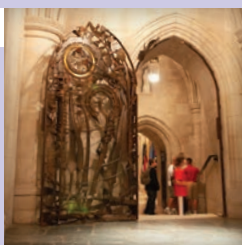
PAYING RESPECTS

Plaques in English and braille honor the lives of Helen Keller (1880–1968) and Matthew Shepard (1976–1998) who find their final resting place in the columbarium off St. Joseph's Chapel, along with nearly 200 other individuals with ties to the Cathedral.



GOOD SHEPHERD GATE

Installed near Good Shepherd Chapel, this is one of the more modern pieces of art in the building. Designed by artist Albert Paley of forged steel, it is inspired by Scripture about protection and life provided by the Good Shepherd.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

- **Light a Candle** 🕯️ (\$1 suggested donation)

Chapels on both levels offer stations for prayer and quiet spaces for reflection. All are welcome.

- **Attend a Service** 🕯️

Worship services often take place in the nave or in the lower level chapels. The full service schedule is at [cathedral.org/worship](https://www.cathedral.org/worship). Livestreams of services are available on YouTube. We invite you to join us!



OTHER PLACES AND RESOURCES

- **Cathedral Center for Prayer and Pilgrimage**
LOWER LEVEL 🕯️

The Center is accessed through Resurrection Chapel and is often available for interfaith prayer and meditation. Check [cathedral.org](https://www.cathedral.org) for its diverse programs in prayer, devotional practices and reflection.

- **Pilgrim Observation Gallery • 7TH FLOOR** 🕯️
(access via elevators near Cathedral main entrance)

The gallery provides some of the best views of the city of Washington, as well as the surrounding region.

- **LEGO® • MAIN LEVEL** 🕯️

Help us reach our goal of building the world's largest cathedral made of LEGO® bricks. **Hours vary; check at the Welcome Desk.**

- **Gift Shop • MAIN LEVEL** 🕯️

Offering a selection of Cathedral-themed gifts, souvenirs and books. **Check at the Welcome Desk for hours.**

PHOTO TIPS

We invite you to take photos throughout your visit, but we do not allow photography during services or of other visitors at prayer. Flash photography does not work well in the Cathedral's large interior.

Please share your photos on social media. Tag [@WNCathedral](#). We can't wait to see how you capture the Cathedral!

SHARE YOUR VISIT

Let friends and family know about your visit to the Cathedral, and stay in touch with future programming and activities.

   [@WNCathedral](#)

Learn more at [cathedral.org](#).

SHARE INSPIRATION AND WONDER

The Cathedral receives no funds for operations from the government or any national church body. From the



smallest candle to the biggest stone, everything around you is made possible by generous individuals like you. Please consider making a gift in support of our work today at [give2WNC.org](#) or by scanning this QR code.



PHOTOS CHRIS BUDNY • KEN COBB • ANDREW GOLDKUHLE
BRIAN KUTNER • DANIELLE E. THOMAS



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Exterior Highlights

Outside the Cathedral walls there's more to see! The Cathedral's grounds—called the Cathedral Close—cover 57 acres. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the landscape architect for the White House and the National Mall, designed much of the Cathedral grounds.

CREATION WEST FAÇADE

Around the three doors on the west front of the building are carvings depicting creation. Frederick Hart's *Ex Nihilo*, the creation of humanity out of nothing, is a masterpiece over the center doors. Adam emerges from the stone between the doors.

The *creation of day* is to the left, and *creation of night* to the right. Beneath day and night stand the Cathedral's patron saints (Peter and Paul) at their "creation" as followers of Jesus.



CAFÉ



Located in the Old Baptistry on South Road, Open City at the National Cathedral serves coffee, homemade pastries and desserts, sandwiches and other light fare.



BISHOP'S GARDEN

The garden is modeled on a medieval walled garden and features herb and rose beds. It offers an unparalleled view of the south side of the Cathedral, including the central tower. Open daily from dawn to dusk.

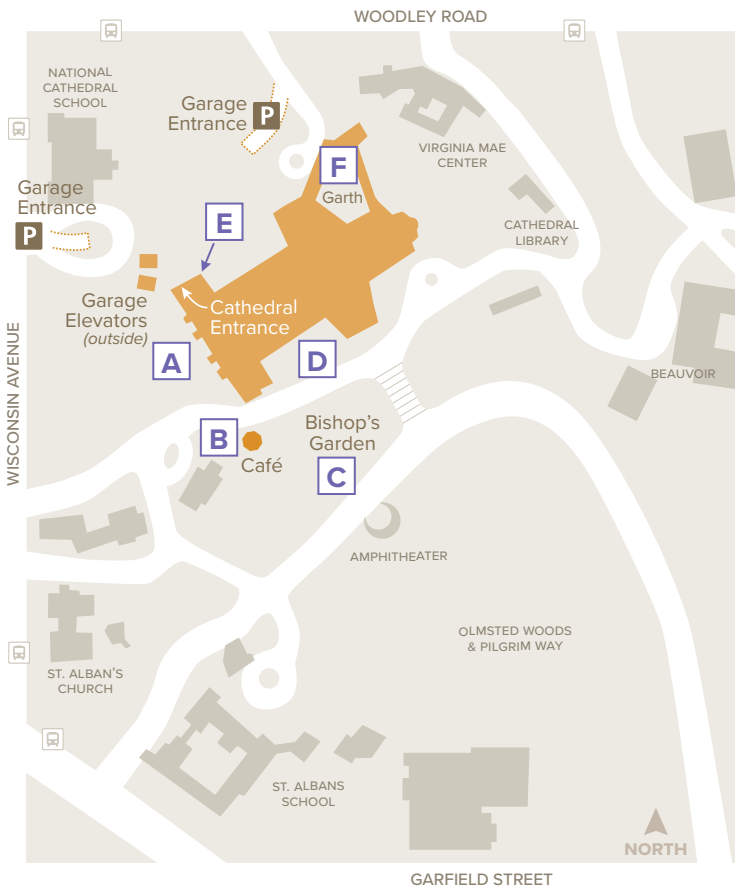


WHAT MAKES A GARGOYLE?



Gargoyles are not just decorative carvings. They function as drain spouts that direct rain and melted snow away from the building. The whimsical carvings on the building exterior that do not have drain-spouts are called grotesques. Look along the south side of the building for great views of these fanciful and functional carvings.





DARTH VADER



E

Installed in 1987, the carving of the *Star Wars* villain resulted from a children's contest to design four Cathedral carvings. To find Darth Vader on the building, follow the sidewalk past the Cathedral entrance (see map above) and look at the back side of the closest tower, near the top between the louvered windows.

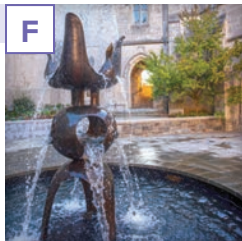


CATHEDRAL GARTH



F

The Cathedral Garth is a peaceful cloistered garden with a fountain and benches on the northeast side of the building. The grassy area is the All Souls Memorial Garden, dedicated to in-ground burial for cremated remains. Please keep to the paved paths in respect.



WELCOME TO YOUR

National Cathedral



WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL