

## Hakodate Orthodox Church

The Hakodate Orthodox Church first appeared in 1860 as a chapel in the city's Russian consulate. In 1861, the Russian Orthodox priest Ivan Dmitrievich Kasatkin (1836–1912), also known as Saint Nicholas of Japan, was dispatched from Russia to the chapel, and in 1868 the first three Japanese were baptized into the church. In 1872, Kasatkin moved to Tokyo and evangelized throughout Japan, later raising funds for the construction of the Holy Resurrection Cathedral (Nikorai-do) in Tokyo, the main cathedral of the Japanese Orthodox Church.

The current Hakodate Orthodox Church was constructed as a replacement for a wooden church that had burned down in 1907. It was completed in 1916 and is an iconic example of Russian Byzantine architecture, with brick and white-plaster walls, green copper roofs, and an octagonal bell tower. The six bells produce a distinctive sound that has been designated one of the 100 Soundscapes of Japan by the Ministry of the Environment.

The main feature of the church's interior is the elaborately carved iconostasis, a wooden wall of icons that surrounds a sacred entrance known as the royal doors. Above the doors are Russian icons of the feasts and the saints, as well as Jesus, the angel Gabriel, the Virgin Mary, Four Evangelists and the last Supper. Twelve paintings by Yamashita Rin (1857–1939), Japan's only female painter of Orthodox icons, also adorn the interior. The iconostasis and the church itself were designated Important Cultural Properties in 1983. The Hakodate Orthodox Church continues to draw worshippers and visitors from Japan and around the world.