

MERGER COMMITTEE
REPORT TO THE PARISH ASSEMBLY
FEBRUARY 16, 1997

There has been a considerable amount of discussion amongst members of the several Armenian churches in the Merrimack Valley regarding a merger of the Apostolic churches (Haverhill, Lawrence) into one, new, consolidated and larger church.

In view of this, and with the urging and encouragement of Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, a merger committee was formed, consisting of members of the Haverhill and Lawrence Churches. The Committee has met on numerous occasions over the last several years with the purpose of carefully exploring the possibility of the merger. This report will serve to highlight the results of the Committee's work and planning.

We recognize that our church has always played a strong and vital role in local Armenian life. However, if we are to continue this role, a new and consolidated church must be considered, tailored to the needs of the several existing churches. The necessity for this has never been greater than it is today.

We must consider the future development of our many and varied activities, and we must consider future growth.

We have a choice: to struggle as separate small churches-barely surviving-or combine our membership and it's resources into a vibrant and progressive congregation. Further, we are certain that, once positive and constructive evidence is shown by the Merger Committee that plans are under way, and that suitable land has been found, there will emerge a new spirit of enthusiasm by members of all of the churches.

We feel that the Armenians of the Merrimack Valley are standing on an important threshold. What we plan and do now and in the next few years as a church will decisively shape the future of our existence. Make no mistake. Each one of you has a vital role in building that future.

Therefore, the question is asked:

WHY IS A MERGER AND RELOCATION
TO A NEW SITE NECESSARY?

- a) Declining membership (see attached).
- b) The Lawrence Church faces a rapidly changing local environment, including severe security problems.

c) The Haverhill Church is aging rapidly, with severe infrastructure problems certain to become greater and more expensive to deal with in the future, along with the ongoing costs to maintain.

d) A smaller congregation means revenues are declining as expenses are escalating.

CAN WE AFFORD A MERGER?

a) The churches have funds in reserve (\$300,000 estimated).

b) The sale of Church properties will yield substantial funds for projects (\$200,000 for the Lawrence Church est., and \$400,000 for the Haverhill Church est.).

c) We have the promise of funds from the sale of the Attitash Acres property (\$180,000 est.).

d) Fundraising and various untapped resources for revenues exist.

e) An expanded membership will increase operating revenues.

f) There are economic concerns with a limited number of active members; whereas a merger would consolidate and strengthen membership. This, combined with an aggressive drive for new members, will position us properly for the future.

To reiterate, we Armenian Christians of the Merrimack Valley are at an historic crossroads. Many important issues are being considered, including Unification. What we do over the next several years as individuals and families, as a church, and as a people, will dictate the type of future we will experience, near term and into the 21st century. It is the opinion of the Merger Committee that our opportunities for remaining strong will greatly increase with the combined churches working together. In fact, we believe that it is essential.

In the year 2001, we will celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the conversion to Christianity by the Armenian nation. With your help, we will enjoy that happy occasion knowing that our united, growing congregation faces a bright, successful future. We must strive give the upcoming generations of our people the same opportunities that our parents worked so hard to provide for us. This is our mission and our obligation.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,


Stephen C. Arthur

Chairperson, St. Gregory the Illuminator Merger Committee