

Diratsoo's Report

December 8, 1996 to December 7, 1997

As I begin my report it seems that the best way to do this is by asking a few questions.

What was the community like one and a half years ago?

What was the attendance of services?

What kind of participation was there in parish events?

Were there young people or young children in church?

Were there coffee hours?

Was there a sense of process?

It is important to reflect on where the community was, is now, and is heading. In the rest of my report I will discuss the projects that I have been involved with to promote parish growth in 1997. As you read the report think about what areas of parish life you can participate in to be a valued part of the growing community.

Liturgical & Sunday Duties

The main liturgical goal that I have set out for the parish concerning the worship services is that the congregation participates in the worship and understands the worship. In last year's report I indicated a goal of preparing a new Jashoo Service booklet. Beginning in February of 1997, the new Jashoo service booklet was ready for use and has significantly added to our worship experience. As well, whenever there are special services I always make an effort to prepare a booklet and an explanation for the unique festivity. Also on Sunday School Sundays I encourage the participation of the children and include a children's message for the day.

I think it is important to mention that on some

Sundays we do not have a "large congregation"; I prefer to emphasize that I refer fondly to these services as intimate worship experiences. It is important that we enjoy worship whether there are two of us present, or 200 present.

Also, I'm happy to add that the Sunday School Sundays are working out very well. At times it may be noisy in Church; nevertheless, we are in a process of growing and incorporating the children into worship and it will only get better.

Liturgical and Sunday Projects

We had a full liturgical experience over the past year and it is worthwhile to mention these significant accomplishments.

They are as follows:

Participation of the children in the Blessing of the Water service on Armenian Christmas

Organized the teenagers to sing Christmas Carol's for the elderly

St. Gregory's participation in the Southside Ecumenical Epiphany service

Conducted traditional Palm Sunday Services and three Holy Week services for the first time in many years.

Directed Sunday worship service at Riverfront Adult Home

Home visitations and prayers during the Christmas and Easter seasons

Grave visitations on Memorial Day

Sunday visit by The Very Rev. Father Vahan Hovhannessian and his altar servers

Lenten activity hosted by St. Gregory's for the Southside Ecumenical Council.

Dr. Socrates Boyajian, choir director visit on July 13

Parish pilgrimage was arranged to attend The Very Rev. Dr. Daniel's Findikyan's ordination, a special Divine Liturgy and banquet was planned to welcome home Father Daniel, which incorporated a visit by St. Nersess Seminary as well

Christmas Eve service on Dec. 24th

Programs

My main programming goal has been to plan a wide variety of Armenian cultural and educational programs for the parish. These activities have included Sunday School, Lectures, Choir Activities, Women's Guild, Ecumenical and Diocesan Activities, Visitations, and Day to Day Operations

Sunday School

Once a month we now have a Toddler Sunday School. This is a great source of joy for the parish to see the young children coming to church and learning about their faith and heritage. In order to get this project started the Sunday School room was prepared and curriculum materials attained. The parents regularly participate in the lessons and there is a take-home project for the children as well. The Sunday School has been possible due to the help of so many of you.

Also, the young couples had a very successful Barbecue over the summer and other activities are being planned.

Lectures

Lectures provide a wonderful occasion to promote the education of our faith and culture and invite guests to participate in our community. The lectures were as follows:

February 16, Doctor Nevart Yaghlian lectured on the origin of Armenia

March 16th, Professor Hovhaness Khosdeghian lectured on

the archaeology of Armenia

March 23rd, the Department of Religious Education visited for a parish program

April 20th, Aram Arkun, Assistant Director of the Zohrab Information Center lectured on the Armenian Genocide

June 1st, Professor Khosdeghian lectured on the forming of the Armenian nation

June 22, Fr. Garabed Kochakian lectured on Armenian architecture

October 5th, Nova Kerjilian lectured on her trip to Armenia.

Choir Activities

The choir is an important part of our worship at St. Gregory's. I assist our choir by preparing order of the day handouts and special service booklets for the feast days and have prepared practice cassettes for special hymns. The choir can benefit by increasing membership and learning new melodies for some of our traditional hymns.

Women's Guild

The Women's Guild is an essential part of our parish life. I have planned two retreats for them, helped with their annual Bake Sale and yearly functions. The Women's Guild can benefit from more members and needs volunteers to organize (to chair) activities.

Youth Activities

I focused on the teenagers in the parish by planning Christmas Caroling, a Java Joes dinner for teenagers, participated in a regional Youth Retreat in Niagara Falls, and have other events planned for 1998.

Ecumenical and Diocesan Activities

The Ecumenical and Diocesan activities are important to the parish because St. Gregory's of Binghamton becomes visible to the local and diocesan community. I have worked to make St. Gregory's a presence in the following ways:

Taught the Junior High class for the Vacation Bible School sponsored by the Southside Ecumenical Council (SSEC)

Actively participated in SSEC, Corresponding Secretary for SSEC, planned SSEC clergy breakfasts

Planned a book signing at Barnes & Nobles for the recently released book, "Black Dog of Fate," authored by Peter Balakian on August 23rd.

Lectured on the Armenian Church for the Men's Group of Christ Church

Balloon Making for First Night, Children's Miracle Network, St. John the Evangelist, and Halloween

Promoted Java Joe's Program

Counselor at St. Vartan Camp

Choir Central Council Member and Lecturer at Choir Assembly

Diocesan Assembly- Clergy conference secretary and delivered sermon at Diocesan Assembly.

Visitations

It is a goal of mine to visit parishioners in need and conduct regular visitations as often as I can. My visitations have included Hospital and Home visitations, which has involved meeting with doctors and hospital staff to facilitate care.

I will do more visits as we further delegate and involve others in the administrative work of the parish.

The Lifeline- Day to Day Operations

There are so many little and essential things that go into running a church smoothly. During the year I have:

Purchased supplies for the church

Deliver flowers to shut-ins on Easter

Fixed the organ

Do photocopying, mailing and correspondence

Entertain priests & parish guests

Submit Press Releases

Help organize the picnic and plan children's activities.

Very Important

These projects and activities listed above are points for rejoicing in the new life within the community of St. Gregory's. I believe very strongly that we, the community of St. Gregory's are moving forward in a positive direction. We are improving communication and increasing our care for one another. While this is true, it is essential to raise several concerns that I have as well.

The protocol of thank yous is an issue that needs clarification. Giving thank yous too often becomes a topic of debate and controversy. We need to strive to work for the community and be quick to forgive offenses and suffer wrongs with dignity.

We need to grow and accept that there is more than one way to solve a problem or organize a project. Most importantly we must define the process of how we will work together and respect those appointed to running a project.

I welcome discussion, input and feedback about my work. Sometimes my work is difficult because I mostly hear criticism and very little encouragement. I too am a human being and we are working on the same side of the fence.

Please, remember; if you want to offer criticism, measure your words at a ratio of 4 kind words to 1 critical word, maybe two critical words at the most.

All of this work is done with a major concern for salary.

In Conclusion- Our Challenge List

We accomplished a great deal in 1997, but we must look at 1997 and evaluate what went well and what when wrong and build upon this. We can accomplish much more. Several needs of the community are:

- Genocide Commemoration Committee
- Lecture Planner
- Visitation Committee
- Fundraising Committee
- Purchasing Person
- Press Release and Picture Person
- Parish History Project
- Refugee Family Contact Person
- Yearly Parish Trip Coordinator
- Cultural Program Coordinator
- Plan for Church dinners
- Sign-up for Coffee Hour and sponsoring a priest
- Ideas for parish events

We can do it!

Overall, I ask that you keep in mind that we are growing as a parish and striving to create a process where each person's ideas can be heard, valued, and implemented.

In Conclusion, I thank God for His never-ending love and I thank each of you, each committee, each organization and organization member, each effort, each hand lent to assist, each donor, each cook, each Sunday School member,

each choir member, each guild member, each parishioner and each council member for you each make this parish a better place.

Your support and help is appreciated and valued. Each of your efforts plus my efforts put together becomes our effort for the good of the parish.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Devejian". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent initial "G".

Rev. Dn. George Devejian, Diratsoo