



Համլէթ Մեհրաբեան
Պատասխանատու Սարկաւագ

Rev. Dn. Hamlet Mehrabian
Deacon-In-Charge

PASTORAL REPORT - 1998
Annual Parish Assembly - February 7, 1999

The church and the organizations under its auspices have been organized in the activities they undertook during the year '98. Church community leaders have acted responsibly and are tremendous assets to our parish church. I take this opportunity to thank all of you for supporting your parish church. Thank you.

1. PARISH ACTIVITIES

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

Religious Services

- 24 Divine Liturgies have been celebrated by nine competent clergymen of our Diocese. For 26 Sundays I performed Jashoo services. During Jashoo Services along with the Armenian and English sermons I have also delivered short messages to the Sunday school children at due times.
- Lenten Wednesday evening services.
- Memorial Day Grave Blessing Services for our deceased parishioners.
- Mathew Cannata was honored to be the Godfather of the Cross for his outstanding performance in church services, thus becoming a vital asset to our parish.
- The Elevation of the Cross Service *Խաչվերաց* was performed with a procession outside the church.

We thank the families and individuals who kindly hosted our visiting clergy for overnight stays and/or treated them with dinners and luncheons.

- We made sure that clear communication exists between all the organizations under the auspices of our church, that activities do not overlap, that church services and all other activities are in harmony with proper scheduling and that the coffee hour is served each Sunday.
- We have been blessed by your generosity in making donations to a number of causes. Meanwhile I would like to note that "Flower Donations" have decreased over the past year.

Sacraments / Services performed

Baptisms14
Burials2
Marriages4
Home Blessings11
Blessing Of Rings (Nshanduk).1

**Births, Baptisms, Marriages exceeded Burials in numbers.
Baptisms & Marriages of the '98 surpassed those in '97 in number.
This indicates the vital state of our parish.**

Visitations Hospitals in the area have been checked regularly for meeting the spiritual needs of our hospitalized parishioners. The area Nursing Homes and Rehabilitation Centers were visited when deemed necessary. Sick people were visited during the year. I have appreciated Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Semerjian's occasional company in visiting the sick.

57th Anniversary

- We had a successful 57th Anniversary Celebration in our church where special respect was paid to our four senior Deacons who were instrumental in securing the well being of our parish during the days of its establishment. Presiding Clergyman was the Diocesan Vicar General Very Rev. Fr. Krikor Maksoudian. Present were the pastor of the St. Stephen's Armenian Church Fr. Krikoris Keshishian of the Cilician Brotherhood, the mayor of New Britain, and CT State Representative John Geragosian.
- "Parishioner of the Year" award was given to Peter Bagdigian, Parish Council member, for his continued dedicated service to our parish.

Local Activities

- Contributions to the establishment of an orphanage in India.
- Contributions to the C.A.S.P.
- Establishment of ACYOA Jrs. New Britain Chapter Endowment Fund by Sarah Yagoobian.

- Ellis Island trip where some of our senior immigrants received certificates from His Holiness Karekin I
- Celebration of Fr. Arnak's 50th Anniversary of ordination which took place in our church.
- Folk Dance lessons by Yn. Patricia Buttero.
- Presentation of videotape on the Independence of Armenia in the auditorium in November.
- Madrigal Singers' Concert at the church in December, under auspices of the Women's Guild.
- Celebration of Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Semerjian's birthday at the church, during coffee hour.

Diocesan and Other Activities Attended

- May 17 I was invited to participate in the Badarak at Worcester honoring Vehapar's visit to the U.S.
- June 26 we had New England Region churches Badarak and Picnic at the Cathedral of Pines*.
- Annual Diocesan Clergy Retreat.
- Diocesan Assembly in New York City.
- Theological Symposium at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, NY.
- Regional clergy meeting at the New Britain General Hospital for pastoral visitations relations. Present were number of religious leaders from different churches in our area.
- 50th Anniversary Celebration of Frs. Arten, Arnak and Garen at the Diocese in NY.
- Armenia's president Robert Kocharian's speech in Manhattan, NY.
- Religious celebrations at St. George, St. Mark and St. Stephen parishes.

* *The regional churches Badarak and picnic was a most enjoyable event. I encourage you not to miss this great get together in the future.*

Tri-City Activities Six religious commemorations were conducted together with the parishes of St. Mark, Springfield and St. George, Hartford. Two of the services, Theophany on January 6 and Genocide Commemoration on April 24, were performed at our church. In all Tri-City activities our parish has shown the best attendance and preparedness.

Relations with the St. Stephen's Church

- We maintained good brotherly relationship with Fr. Krikoris Keshishian of the St. Stephen church. Fr. Krikoris and we have gladly invited each other to the Anniversary celebrations of both our churches where we both have been applauded for revitalizing relations between our parishes. We both were invited to deliver messages.
- I have attended St. Stephen's church and served together with Fr. Krikoris for funerals. In doing so I paid respect to those members of our church who were relatives of the deceased.

The above mentioned steps were taken with the knowledge of our Primate. I have closely communicated with His Eminence on those matters and took actions in agreement with our Parish Council.

For this year we are planning to organize cultural and educational activities with them. We do this in accordance with the Call of our Catholicos Karekin I in the spirit of gradual advance towards the unity of the two Dioceses in America and the two Catholicosates in the world. All upcoming events of such character will take place with the knowledge & approval of His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

Outreach

- Throughout the year one family, a member of our church, has continued monetarily helping two orphans in Armenia through myself. Their father was killed during the fights over Artsakh. I applaud the donors' generosity and care in this matter.
- One of our parishioners has made generous donations to two needy families from our church. The donor wishes to remain anonymous in the spirit of a true Christian way of offering, where acknowledgement is not sought. I thank the donor very much.
- One individual has donated turkeys to as many families as I found in need during the days of Thanksgiving. He did this in appreciation of what God has given him in his own life. His exemplary family wishes to remain anonymous in the spirit of a true Christian almsgiving; An example for all of us to follow. On behalf of the Armenian Church I thank all the donors and wish them God's blessings.

Sister Parish Program The Primate has announced the establishment of a Diocesan Sister Parish Program. Our Diocese strongly urges that each parish participate in it. I have encouraged this issue. Our Parish Council has decided to support this endeavor and contribute to the fight of our beloved Armenian Apostolic Church against overwhelming proselytizing activities that go on in Armenia by numerous religious cults. If actions not taken our church will be in serious danger in Armenia. The fact is that the Armenian Churches will not survive here if the source of it in the Motherland is vanquished.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. **Acolyte training** I have organized an AltarServers group. AltarServer training sessions were conducted every Thursday throughout the past year. Currently we have six altar-servers of whom three acolytes and one stole-bearer. Many group entertainment activities were enjoyed by the acolytes as well. We continue enjoying the dedicated service of our two senior altar-servers, Deacons Paul Abrahamian and Stephan DerMargosian. As promised in last year's report, during this past year the altar servers advanced to the level of incensing. Not many churches are blessed having double incensing performance like ours does. Two of our altar servers have advanced to the level of singing the Deacon's parts and reciting the psalms by heart. It is to be taken agreeably, however, that training the youth has its difficulties. For example, during services they sometimes take turns in responsibilities. That is because they have different capabilities and perform in the areas they are good at, at the given time. I have been very patient with them and am happy to see you doing the same.

I thank our altar servers for supporting me and their church. I extend my appreciation to their families.

- ◊ Altar server Michael Cannata attended the St. Nersess Deacons' Training Program in NY. He received an Honor Award.
- ◊ Altar server Dikran Tashjian ceased attending church based solely on his own personal convictions. His action does not undermine any conduct on our part and it is a personal approach & decision. He is welcome to return at his discretion.

1. **AltarServer Fund** I have established an "AltarServer Fund" to meet the means of maintaining such undertaking. As a result of this the altar servers have become self sufficient and avoided becoming a "burden" on the parish. Thanks to those among you who made generous donations to initiate this fund during the past year. *The Charter statement on the "AltarServer Organization" is attached.*

2. **Armenian Language Classes** The Armenian classes for young adult beginners, adult beginners and the adult advanced have been conducted regularly on Thursday evenings to this date. There are some 18 attendees in the three classes combined.

3. **Bible Study** As promised in my last year's report I started Bible Study sessions which take place on Thursdays. This open-discussion Bible Study is geared towards adults. You are welcome to attend. We currently have some 6 attendees.

4. **Lectures** I delivered:
- Hymns of the Armenian Church.
 - The Battle of St. Vartanants in the hymn of St. Nerses Shnorhali.
 - Short, informative lecture series during the Wed. Lenten services.

5. **Publications**

- Religious articles in the LOOYS for the enlightenment of our parishioners.
- Articles in the U.S. Armenian newspapers on our church and its activities in an effort to bring public exposure to our parish.
- Sunday Bulletin was prepared for each Sunday which provides timely community news and religious material fitting the feast of the day.
- Special Pamphlet was sent to the non-member parishioners encouraging them to become Dues-Paying Members of our church.

Sacramental Records I have made a special questionnaire to inquire information from families who have deceased members not recorded in our Book of Sacraments. Through this I have recovered five lost records. This process will be continued in attempt of total recovery of the church recordings.

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

Parish Council Our Parish Council held regular meetings on a monthly basis. All our meetings were very organized. Members have been very understanding, thus contributing the overall productive performance and friendly atmosphere. I take this opportunity to thank all our Parish Council members for their dedicated service.

Women's Guild The Women's Guild held meetings on a monthly basis. (God bless our Women's Guild. I don't know what the Armenian Churches would do without them.) The Chair Lady and all officers have been on top of their responsibilities. Meetings were carried out in a friendly atmosphere and organized fashion. We have very dedicated and hard working women. I thank all of them for their service to their church and kindness towards me.

A.C.Y.O.A. This organization undertook successful events under the direction of Gary Hovhanessian and Diana Colpitts, and the supervisors. Meetings took place on a regular basis. Detailed account will be given by the A.C.Y.O.A. at its proper time.

Choir Our choir is one of the best choirs in our Diocese which we owe to Adrienne Damian and her knowledge in church hymns and Feast Day regulations. We will have the Choir Report in its due time.

Sunday School Report is to follow later by the Superintendent.

Inventory A new cover was donated by one of our generous parishioners replacing the old cover of the Lord's Tomb during the Great Lent.

Parish State

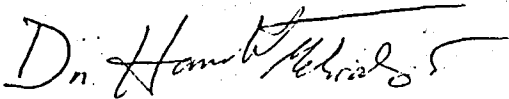
- During the year several new families have joined our church. We welcome them to our growing church family.
- Our church membership continues to grow.
- Given the size of our parish church attendance has been satisfactory throughout the entire year.

FUTURE PLANS

1. Work on bringing together people between ages of 20 and 45 through activities that will bring closer to their church.. People fitting this age group are not becoming sufficiently involved in their church communities. What I intend to do during this year is to try and increase attention in these areas.
2. Activities with our youth including travel to other Armenian Church Communities in neighboring states.
3. More impromptu parishioner visitations to mingle with & increase mutual association & appreciation of each other to strengthen their church ties.
4. Cultural and educational activities with the St. Stephen's parish of the Cilician Brotherhood.

I have enjoyed the kindness and cooperation of our parishioners all year long. I thank each one of you for making your church stronger. I am looking forward to working with you in this year for the betterment of our spiritual home, the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection.

Respectfully submitted,



Hamlet Mehrabian,
Deacon-In-Charge