

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT - 1980  
St. James Armenian Church of Westchester  
February 8, 1981

Today, as we gather here to share reports of our activities throughout the year, our first expression should be one of thanksgiving to God for granting us the blessing of holding our Annual Parish Assembly in our own Church for the first time in about seven years. We bless God's holy name, thank everyone who made it all possible and greet you with a joy of fulfillment. We have been witnessing anew surge of interest and enthusiasm in the parish which has come even more alive and is indeed vibrating.

I present to you a quick glance on my pastoral activities of the year, in its various categories and dimensions, and I also present a few recommendations for further growth and realization of the true goals of our church and parish.

WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS: I have celebrated Holy Badarak, conducted other services, and given sermons every Sunday, Christmas Eve, Lenten period and Holy Week. Two Sundays I have served in the Churches in Toronto (September 21), and Waukegan, Illinois (November 2). We have had the following clergymen participate in worship services: Father Nersess Baboorian, (March 30), who fell asleep in Christ this summer, Bishop Guregh Kapikian of Jerusalem (June 22), Bishop Zgon Der Hagopian (August 17), Father Arten Ashjian (November 2), the Primate (June 7 and December 7), and Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan (December 14).

Attendance has increased since moving into our own church. This summer on four different Sundays we had 35 young people each time from different parishes attend worship service with us, in connection with their participation in the St. Nersess Study Seminars in New Rochelle.

This year we have had six baptisms, one wedding and no funeral in our church. I have otherwise participated in four other weddings and five funeral services in sister churches and at St. Vartan Cathedral.

As in the past, homeblessing ceremony has been offered upon invitation and graveblessing service has been conducted upon request. On various occasions I have attended worship services at our Cathedral and other churches.

PASTORAL AND EDUCATIONAL: I have helped in planning educational programs for various church organizations. Of special note have been the Martyrs' Day Observance and Armenian Culture Month Celebration, both events presented by our youth group, the Senior and Junior Chapters of the A.C.Y. O.A. We have tried to obtain the participation of distinguished lecturers and authors at these and other educational functions.

Our first educational venture in the new Parish House was a course in conversational Armenian and one on Armenian culture and religion. I am grateful to Karen Sirabian who took one of the two conversational classes. The other class and most of the ten lectures were given by me. We have also enjoyed guest lecturers in that course.

I have also been invited to give talks at an Episcopal church, and at the annual assembly of the Choir Association. In addition, I participated in a panel at the first convention of Armenian College students at Columbia University.

Our parish enjoyed a series of talks participated in by guest clergymen from sister churches given at our Lenten Family Dinner gatherings.

I have been engaged in an ongoing program of training for our altar servers, who have responded with admirable seriousness and earnestness.

Once again, I have been called upon to direct a seminar in liturgical music and deacons' training for St. Nersess Seminary, for ten days this summer. Some of our own young people have participated in this as well as the other educational seminars this summer.

It was a pleasure for me to help in the program of the "Couple of the Year" celebration, honoring Ed and Anita Essayan for their dedicated service to the parish.

As the reports of the Sunday School and Armenian School indicate, much progress is registered in both schools in terms of augmented teaching staff, student body, organizational and program quality.

One of my most pastoral duties has been visiting the homes and work places of many actual and prospective members. Where necessary I have tried to be an instrument of the Holy Spirit in bringing about healing and wholeness into the lives of individuals and families stricken by stress and conflict.

We have continued publishing monthly a parish bulletin with which we have kept the community informed about our activities and also offered instructions on the teachings of our church. "Hope" has a circulation of 450.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL: A good deal of my time was spent in the preparation of the two special events this year; one, the dedication of the church and consecration of the Vemkar on June 7, and the other, the consecration of the Altar and naming of the Church, on December 7. In connection with the latter, the preparation of the services, the banquet program and the booklet have been major projects, with countless hours spent in their planning. Much time was given to the planning and guiding in the preparation of our beautiful altar portrait, not to say anything about the preliminary work and study for possible stained glass windows in the church, a project still in the planning stage. It has been gratifying to seek and find so many donors who made memorial donations and gifts on the occasion of our blessing of the Church and the consecration of the altar.

As president of the Parish Council and all Church organizations I have attended all their executive committee meetings and membership gatherings throughout the year offering necessary assistance and guidance in their deliberations. I am happy to inform you that a rejuvenated enthusiasm prevails in all our groups. We welcome a new group, the Men's Club, among us, which we gave birth to in October with the intention of bringing together a group of men to serve the church in various ways and to enjoy social fellowship.

The House and Grounds Management Committee is another group which was created to offer their time and talent where necessary to see that our property is well maintained and used, under the capable chairmanship of Edward Essayan.

I have attended the annual assemblies of the Diocese in Washington, the A.C.Y.O.A. in Boston, and the Choirs in Racine, Wisconsin, representing our Church.

I am happy to have been instrumental in placing several articles and publicity materials in both the Armenian press and non-Armenian publications describing all significant activities of our Parish, thus giving our community wider recognition with Armenians as well as outsiders.

APPRECIATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: I ask God's blessings upon and express my appreciation to the members of my Parish Council, under the vigorous chairmanship of young Garo Bashian; my faithful altar servers, sub-deacon John Vakassian, Khoren Tutak, Hrant Gadrigian, the choir and its faithful and dedicated conductor sub-deacon Alfred Yeznaian; the Sunday School Staff (Diane Davidian, superintendent and teacher, Lillian Boyajian, Yeretzgin Dawn, Christina and Linda Derdiarian, Laura Shimshidian and Valerie Pisani); The Armenian School Staff (Aida Pisani, principal and teacher, Araxie Tepikian, Anahid Choukhachian, Margrit Chetinkaya, Alice Kalaydjian, Eliz Bas and Deanna Stepanian); the School Committee under the capable chairmanship of Anita Wolohojian and now Ara Ishkanian; the Women's Guild under the experienced chairmanship of Grace Bozian; the ACYOA Seniors and Juniors with their respective conscientious chairmen Harry Tavitian and Lily Davidian; the Avak Group, with Mrs. Aghavnie Sahagian as its caring chairperson, (also our "mas" maker); the Nominating and Auditing Committees; and a thankful appreciation to Elma Davidian our faithful and dedicated bookkeeper, and Aida Pisani our cheerful secretary.

Special recognition and thanks are due also to the committees and their chairmen of special fund-raising functions: Ara Shimshidian (pledges), Berge Derdiarian, (picnic), Robert Khadjehturian and Garo Bashian (Bazaar), John and Alyce Vakassian (White Plains Festival), Bernard Tepikian and John Vakassian (One World Festival), Mary Azarian and Grace Cassidy (Let's get away weekend), Berg Boghossian (Consecration Booklet Ads) and Malcolm Shadoian (New Year's Eve Party).

Our grateful acknowledgment to the chairman of the Building Committee, George Davidian, his number one assistant, master electrician Jerry Ksayan, all-around helper Norik Haroutounian, and to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Kalaydjian for donating a car for raffle and Mr. and Mrs. Simon Tutak for donating a vehicle for the Pastor's use. We want it to be known that we appreciate the help and service of everyone, regardless of the size of their toil or treasure, for God sees all and grants His blessings to all in His love and mercy.

One final point. Our dues-paying members' list includes some people whose participation in the life and growth of our parish is very minimal not to say nil. The mere payment of a nominal annual dues does not make a person a member in the full sense of the word if that is not accompanied by concerned involvement and active participation. While we welcome everyone to join, we also ask that everyone become active and truly contributing members in its moral sense more than just discharging a financial obligation. The barometer of a vital and vibrant parish is the number of its truly active and participating members. We urge the lukewarm members to intensify their share and support.

Let us all do our fair share not just financially helping the church meet its budget, but especially taking part in its religious, spiritual, educational and organizational activities and programs.

May God bless you all.

Fr. Karekin Kasparian, Pastor