

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT - 1988

Presented on February 12, 1989

Thank God for another good year at Soorp Hagop Church.

Worship services were held regularly every Sunday, in addition to other traditional feasts, such as Christmas Eve, Armenian Christmas Day and the feast of Vartanank. Attendance at these services has increased. It was noteworthy that despite the unusually hot weather on summer Sundays, attendance was still at an all time high, which prompted the decision to install two large air conditioning units. We are looking forward to worshipping in comfort next summer.

This year we initiated a program which was intended to enhance family attendance on the second Sunday of the month, when we also encouraged the active participation of our Sunday School pupils in the Badarak, making that Sunday a special family worship day. Additional explanations on the meaning and mystery of the Badarak, given on Lenten Sundays and other occasions, have helped our faithful in better understanding and participation in the Liturgy. To this end, we designated the Sundays to various church organizations in order to encourage more regular attendance and participation.

We have conducted hokehankisd, home blessing and grave blessing ceremonies when requested. Just a reminder, that these traditional ceremonies have meaningful and beautiful spiritual messages, which all families should experience. They are part of the spiritual and liturgical practices of our church, which we must maintain.

This year, just like last year, with strange coincidence, we have had 8 baptisms, 5 weddings and 5 funerals in our church. I have also officiated at a few other wedding and funeral services in sister churches.

Educationally speaking, we have continued our quality programs, both of religious and cultural nature, organized in part by our Cultural Committee. For one semester we also held classes in Armenian language and culture. We continued publishing our parish monthly newsletter, the Hope, which imparts useful information and instruction about our church and people.

We have tried to foster the spiritual life of our parish on both personal and community levels. Spiritual retreats have been made available to our adult and young members as a means of nurture and cultivation.

Our church organizations have functioned at a fairly active pace, bringing their service and contribution to the growth of the community life, as well as themselves benefitting from educational, communal and spiritual experiences.

This year also, we have continued our involvement in inter-church and diocesan activities bringing our share as a parish in the implementation of programs intended as vehicles of growth religiously and educationally.

A look upon our building project shows stages through which we passed, our dream still not realized but feeling a bit closer to it. The idea of the project started four years ago. The first year was spent in the preliminaries of planning and looking for an architect. In the second year the architect presented plans at a very slow pace, which eventually resulted in our disengaging him from the project. The third year was spent in the search and discovery of our present architect, Tom Ashbahian, with whom we have had a very cordial and cooperative relationship. In the fourth year we were engaged in negotiations and meetings with the Harrison Town Board, our neighbors and the Purchase Environmental Preservation Association, a powerful town organization. We are now in the fifth year since the project started and we will be hearing news of new development from our Building Committee today. This Committee under the dedicated chairmanship of George Davidian and with the valuable cooperation of his colleagues, has worked tirelessly against many odds and obstacles.

While true reward for our labor comes from God even when we don't look for it, I know that the greatest satisfaction we all receive is in the very act of doing a good deed, a Christian duty. In this respect I express my appreciation and gratitude to all who have given their time, talent and treasure this year for the support and growth of our parish in many ways, as both chairpersons and members of various organizations and committees, the names and the deeds of which are included in the annual reports presented to you today.

Our parish is fortunate to have many qualified key people who continue their service to God and our church. Among them, our choirmaster Raffi Sevadjanian, has a unique role in the enhancement of our religious services with his competent conducting and beautiful voice. We can state without hesitation that we have the most capable lay musical conductor in our diocese as our choir director.

Over a year ago when we recruited Gale Perzigian as the church secretary, she consented only on a part time and temporary basis. She continues to be our capable secretary and she still refuses to be compensated for her service, which she offers both for her satisfaction and in memory of her beloved mother. We are indeed grateful to Gale.

This year ended with a tragedy in Armenian which affected both our personal and communal life in our homeland, and in the Diaspora. Our parish did its best to raise funds for the earthquake survivors. In processing the countless checks and receipts our most faithful and competent bookkeeper, Elmas Davidian found herself additionally busy and committed, besides the regular parish responsibilities. The parish is indebted to Elmas for her tireless efforts for which she too, refuses compensation. May God bless all who in various ways offered their help and gifts after the Earthquake. May the Lord grant strength and patience to all suffering survivors and rest the souls of the victims in His eternal peace and presence.

May God guide us to continue our giving for the reconstruction of our homeland. May God bless us all.

Fr. Karekin Kasparian
With prayers.
Fr. Karekin Kasparian
Pastor