

## THE ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH PARISH COUNCIL REPORT 1973

It is gratifying to report that during 1973 our St. Thomas Armenian Church continued its growth in many ways. New programs were added to existing ones to better serve both the spiritual and social needs of our parishioners. Several experiments to enhance our participation in the Divine Liturgy were tried and found to offer promise. We not only met our financial obligations, but found our reserves increased by year's end.

We are pleased with this continuing progress because it was made possible through the combined efforts of our Parishioners, Church Organizations, Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian, and the Parish Council.

Immediately after the Parish Assembly on February 4, 1973, the Parish Council was organized as follows:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>LIASON TO</u>	<u>COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN</u>
*George Hekonian	Chairman	Building Fund	Bazaar
*Zaven Poosikian	Vice Chairman	Men's Club	Anniversary Dinner
Leon Higohosian	Secretary	Sunday School	
*Houbar Hাজারian	Treasurer		
Frank Avakian-Stoneson	Asst. Sec'y.	Women's Guild	Membership
*Hagop Jebejian	Asst. Treasurer	Armenian School	Pledges
Edward Fohnian			Housekeeping & Supplies
Ara Jilajian		Avak Society	Equipment & Building
*Ara Martin		Choir & Chorus	Memorial Day Picnic
Peter Hason			Worship & Sacraments
Hasis Parseghian		ACYOA & ACSA	Grounds & Building

\* (Concludes term on Council)

In addition, the following assisted the council by taking on special responsibilities.

Arthur Otchy	Rentals
Vay Hাজারian	Memorials
Jack Bendian	Fall Picnic
Robert Avakian	Youth Director (appointed November, 1973)

### THE PASTOR'S REPORT

a) WORSHIP SERVICES have been conducted every Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to noon, with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and a sermon. During the year, we had as guest celebrants: Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, on the occasion of our eighth anniversary of the consecration of the church; we also have Rev. Ari Kehlayan on October 10, when our priest was visiting the Houston, Texas parish. Fr. Arnak Kasparian celebrated Badarak at the Home in Emerson twice, on the Armenian Christmas Day and on Maundy Thursday of Holy Week. He also visited on other scheduled occasions for services. During the year with other clergy of Tenafly, our Pastor also visits and conducts services at the Mary Fisher Home for retired professionals and the Manor Nursing Home.

b) SACRAMENTAL SERVICES. During the year, 27 baptisms were performed (compared to 23 last year); 22 marriages were blessed (16 the previous year); 13 funerals took place (11 last year. We shall cherish the memory of Diran Sarkisian, who was a member of our Parish.)

c) ADMINISTRATIVE. As ex-officio president of all church organizations, Rev. Arnak Kasparian attended and presided over all the meetings. He directed and advised and, in many cases, he helped in implementing decisions. He attended the Diocesan Assembly in Worcester, Mass., May 4-6 with our delegates.

a) Publications. With the help of Yeretsgin Violet, Fr. Arnak published the Bergen Beacon monthly and put out the flyers for our various affairs. Mrs. Martha Saraydarian, Mrs. Mary Ann Saraydarian, and Mrs. Dikris Malool have been most helpful in assisting with typing, addressing, and various other office work whenever called upon. Our heartfelt thanks for their cheerful assistance. Special thanks to Rose Hekkenian for editing, to Bedros and Iris Papazian for setting the type of the Beacon and of some special flyers and giving them their professional touch, and to Anthony Ajemian for his invaluable help in printing. Our mailing list is approximately 960 addresses.

April 1973 was the 25th anniversary of the ordination to priesthood for our Pastor. On March 25th he visited and celebrated Badarak at Holy Resurrection Church of New Britain, Conn., where he was ordained. On April 1, our parish also celebrated the event in conjunction with the Eighth Anniversary Celebration of the Consecration of the Church. On that occasion our parish published a book, "St. Thomas Armenian Church - Heritage, Achievements, Goals," with an inscription inside reading: "Dedicated to the 25th Anniversary of Rev. Father Arnak Kasparian's Ordination". The book was compiled and edited by Malcolm F. Topalian, the designs were by Michael Avedis, film work processing by Gregory and Richard Saraydarian, type composition by Bedros Papazian, the patron was Harry H. Bolson. Anthony Ajemian helped in many ways but always wanted to stay anonymous.

The Pastor humbly acknowledges and thanks all the expressions of love, friendship and good wishes on this occasion.

Father Arnak participated with other Diocesan priests and the Primate, in a retreat on April 2 and 3 at Greymore, N. Y.

This year several Armenian Seminary students visited our church and gave the Sunday messages; they were Valerie Goeckjian, Hagop Roustemian and Michael Chevian.

This year we initiated few experiments, which received the Primate's wholehearted approval; during the summer instead of a sermon, Der Hayr would present a religious topic and have the congregation discuss it. Also, each Sunday, one of the songs of the Badarak was mimeographed and distributed and the congregation had a chance to learn and sing it during the Badarak. This experiment was continued after the summer season with a modified format. Every Sunday, from 10-10:30, before the Sunday School time children were learning the songs of Badarak under the direction of Mrs. Armine Donelian, while parents had a session on religion.

Thanks to the generous donations of some of our parishioners, we have a set of 150 new Badarak books with music, translation and transliteration. We also thank Mrs. Lucy Chalmakian and her helpers, who make sure that we have "mahs" every Sunday. Another new service to the congregation is the bookstore. We thank Mrs. Jamie Ohanian who is in charge.

Our Pastor has been reelected as the President of the Tenaflly Clergy Fellowship. On many occasions Der Hayr has led various groups on tour of the church telling them about the Armenian Church and people in general and St. Thomas in particular.

The Pastor wishes to bring to your attention that an examination of this annual report reveals the obvious fact that each of the branches of our church organization has been very successful. During the past year, to say the least, all church activities have been operating and run in a most harmonious manner with a minimum of friction usually present as a natural part of the operations of a church. This has been largely due to the type of leadership we have had. All the members and officers of the Parish Council have contributed to making this a successful year.

A very special tribute must be paid to the untiring efforts of our Chairman, George Mekenian, who has shown understanding of the problems that confronted us during the past twelve months, and with an exemplary zeal and dedication has worked for their solutions. Without his faithful and guiding leadership, we would not have had such a successful year. It is impossible at this time not to recognize and thank also the person behind the man, Rose Mekenian, who has rendered great service in many areas, always trying hard to stay behind the scenes.

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MEETINGS: During the year the Parish Council met formally 24 times. Two of these meetings were with the Diocesan Delegates, and another was with the Primate and the Diocesan Religious Education Director. The Chairmen of all Church Organizations were invited to a meeting to discuss and develop coordination in scheduling events.

St. Thomas has been represented at the Regional New Jersey Parish Council Meetings called by the Primate. In addition, we have responded to all correspondence and requests from the Diocesan Office.

DIOCESAN DELEGATES: Appreciation is expressed to our outgoing Diocesan Delegates who have completed their current 4 year term. They are Victor Arzoomanian, Edward Bashian, Vahan Najarian, and Dick Tur-<sup>hazan</sup>namian. All of our Delegates attended and participated in the Diocesan <sup>Nazarian</sup> Assembly in Worcester, Mass. May 5-6, along with our Pastor, Father Arnak Kasparian, and our Parish Council Chairman, George Mekenian.. Attending the concurrent meetings of Church Organizations were the following: Sunday School - Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian; Armenian School - Miss Sylva der Stepanian; Mrs. Queenie Tashjian; Women's Guild - Mrs. Rose Mekenian, Mrs. Artemis Nazarian; ACYOA - Anita Keurajian, Seta Nazarian, Gregory Hourdajian, and Douglas Tashjian. Edward Bashian completed his term as Diocesan Council Treasurer this year.

MEMBERSHIP: Since our last Parish Assembly, several new families were added to our rolls while others who exhibited no interest whatsoever were dropped. Membership now totals 233 families. We thank Father Arnak for his concerted efforts to encourage new families to join our Parish. All Parishioners are urged to recruit new families personally or to bring Father Arnak's attention to these potential new members. We recommend that young adults over 18 who are employed become members in their own right.

PLEDGES: The Pledge Program realized a major gain when for the first time more than twenty thousand dollars was raised through pledges. A significant factor toward this improvement was the greater acceptance and understanding by Parishioners of the quarterly pledge and donation report. The Parish Council feels that this program has great potential for growth, and Frank Avakian-Stoneson is working in this area. The first quarter of 1974 has been declared as PLEDGE INCREASE QUARTER. Our long-range goal should be to raise the bulk of our operating expenses through pledges.

Mrs. Martha Saraydarian performs an invaluable service by posting pledges and other contributions in conjunction with Hagop Jobeajian, and by sending out the quarterly reports.

BUILDING AND FINANCE COMMITTEE: This Committee was organized in 1972 for the purpose of raising funds to meet our mortgage payments and if possible to reduce the principal indebtedness. The nucleus of the Committee was our Diocesan Delegates, with Edward Bashian serving as Chairman. Other members were as follows: Rupen Saddler - Vice Chairman, Malcolm Topalian - Secretary, George Shahinian - Treasurer, Dr. Vincent Inceccian - Asst. Treasurer, Stephen Ananian, Peter Daghljan, Michael Halobian, Albert Keusey, Raymond Kreppel, Apkari Omartian, Karl Tashjian, and George Mekenian - Ex Officio.

The Committee met 4 times in 1973 and on several other occasions representatives of the Committee and of the Parish Council met together.

Some plausible ideas were forthcoming from the Committee but it was experiencing some problems in mobilizing to implement the plans. In the meantime the Parish Council was reevaluating priorities for our Parish and felt it of primary importance to consider expanding our programs to better serve the current needs of our Parishioners and the operational requirements of our Church rather than pay off the mortgage more quickly at this time. The Building Committee concurred with this and so discontinued activity for the time being. The Parish Council reassumed responsibility for our mortgage payments.

BUILDINGS, GROUNDS, AND HOUSEKEEPING: 1973 saw considerable activity to maintain and enhance our building and grounds. Some of the major work included the following.

After consultation with Mr. E. Ludders (the Church's Architect); a roofing consultant; contractors; and the Architectural Committee, Andy Ouzoonian, Chairman; the Parish Council had a new roof installed over the lobby and two offices by a contractor. Other roof repairs were also made. The exterior stucco underside of the Church roof was patched and sealed with special paint by another contractor. He also renewed all exterior woodwork with either varnish paint or wood preservative.

Continuing depredations by wild animals at the garbage holding area prompted the Councilmen to build a stockade last spring. Since then it has been much easier to keep the grounds near the kitchen clean.

A "Cleanup Day" was organized and held in March 24. A crew spanning the range from Avak's to ACYOA energetically spruced up the grounds and cleaned storage areas for the building, etc. We recommend that this become an annual event.

A considerable number of truckloads of fill, donated by John Asadourian, have been dumped on or near the low, wet area at the southwest end of the property. Once the ground thaws, the earth will be leveled and graded. Raymond Kreppel has been helpful with the grounds.

Improved procedures and forms for inventorying and purchasing supplies were developed. Forms on which to bring the custodian's attention to needed work were also prepared. John Seferian has assisted on supply purchases.

Additional instructional information on use of equipment has been posted in the kitchen.

In June, our custodian, Mr. Thomalis Smalios was released. Thereafter, Mr. Jeff Barth and his wife Ruth performed this service until it was necessary for them to leave in November. Through the medium of newspaper ads and personal contacts, three candidates were interviewed, and Mr. Mike Ghelberg was retained in November. To date, we have been pleased with his attitude and performance. After experiencing many frustrations earlier in the year, it was most welcome to achieve a more normal custodial operation at year's end.

Throughout the year, various Councilmen, Parishioners, and friends have assisted with minor repairs and maintenance tasks around the church. Typical were the replacement of damaged ceiling tiles in the lobby, repair of the corridor lights and exit signs, and the painting of a room. We gratefully acknowledge their services.

Estimates have recently been obtained for varnishing all interior doors needing such work. It is anticipated that this will be done in February and March.



Ground water has been seeping into the underground heating duct at what seems to be in increasing rate. The sump pump installed last year has been effective in removing the water. However, it appears that the walls and floor of the duct must be waterproofed if undesirable and damaging condensation on cold surfaces, such as windows and roofs, during the winter is to be controlled.

Responsibility for exterior building and grounds maintenance has rested with Masis Parseghian, interior building and equipment with Ara Jilajian, and housekeeping and supplies with Edward Fehmian.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS: Although nominally in charge of two major events in the past year, the Parish Council actively encouraged all Church Organizations in their activities.

The Parish Council initiated a Council Dedication and Recognition Day, which was held on February 25. At the reception after services, photographs were taken of the Councils from 1964 to 1973 and of the Diocesan Delegates to bring our records up to date.

The Eighth Anniversary Dinner on April 1, 1973 was the occasion on which Father Arnak's 25 years of dedication and service as a clergyman were acknowledged in a joint celebration Anniversary Banquet. On this eventful occasion, special guests were invited by the Parish Council to participate in the program or be present as a tribute to Der Hayr. This was also the weekend of our Primate Archbishop Torkom Manoogian's visit to our Parish. The Chairman of the Anniversary Dinner was Zaven Poosikian, and he was ably assisted by his wife Elise.

The Annual Bazaar, December 1 and 2, was coordinated by the Parish Council with George and Rose Mekenian heading the activity. Their efforts were supported by many members of the Parish and by the Church Organizations. Close to \$12,000. net was realized from the Bazaar.

Coffee And. . . During the coldest winter months, we had coffee available after church services while members of the congregation greeted one another in the lobby.

St. Thomas participated in the Cathedral Bazaar May 19-20, at Kayookjian Auditorium on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Diocese. We prepared and donated Armenian delicacies to the Bazaar and also helped provide manpower for the booths. Mrs. Virginia Parseghian coordinated the St. Thomas food donations.

OTHER EVENTS: On Vartanantz Day, we arranged a bus to transport our parishioners to the Cathedral Complex for the services and program.

On Church Unity Sunday in January, we hosted the Ecumenical Service sponsored by the Tenafly Churches.

St. Thomas was the site of the 1973 Martyrs Day Commemoration on April 24, sponsored by the Armenian Martyrs Day Commemorative Committee of New Jersey.

WORSHIP SERVICES: We have continued the rotating system of formally scheduling two Councilmen in charge for each worship service, but we are happy to say that additional Councilmen have consistently been present. We are also appreciative of former Councilmen who come forward to assist when the need arises. Peter Mason arranged the schedule and handled altar flower requests.

The Parish Council along with the Pastor was interested in more participation by the congregation in the Divine Liturgy and cooperated with Fr. Arnak in promoting this and encouraged providing words and music on certain Feast Days. The latest effort is to obtain copies of THE DIVINE LITURGY published by our Diocese, which includes words and music of our service,



and place them at the pews. Donors are underwriting the cost of these books.

LITURGY MUSIC PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN: The Parish Council inaugurated a music program "course" for children in September to help teach them the Divine Liturgy and also to encourage potential choir members. Mrs. Armine Donelian was asked to lead the program with the assistance of Mrs. Rose Mekenian, Misses Jeanno Azarik, Roxanne Daghlilian, Carol Hajinlian, and Mrs. Ara Martin. The intention of the committee working with the children was to conduct the program for a suitable period of time to enable an evaluation and recommendations. The program was conducted from 10:00-10:30 a.m. Sunday mornings, until January of this year. The average attendance before the holidays was 30 per session. The committee has now submitted its recommendations for the future to the Parish Council.

BOOKSTORE: The Bookstore, established during 1973, has expanded its inventory of books, records, and specialty items. The volume of sales has been gratifying because it signifies that this material is being widely distributed. This effort is under the leadership of Mrs. Jamie Ohanian. Assisting have been Mrs. Elizabeth Iskenderian, Mrs. Margaret Minassian, and Mrs. Elizabeth Sahagian.

MISCELLANEOUS MEMOS: A committee is being organized under Treasurer Noubar Kazarian to mark and inventory our church equipment.

The Council has been studying the insurance coverage on the church and parsonage to ascertain the current adequacy of it in view of rising values.

During the year, various legal questions came before the Council. Parish Councilman Leon Nigohosian, an attorney, was most helpful with these matters.

A sign for St. Thomas was pursued further this year. It is hoped to have a sign erected in 1974.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: The following are recommendations which we feel should be a guide to the next Parish Council.

1. Continue to expand the Membership and Pledge Programs.
2. Hire a part-time Religious Education Director.
3. Hire a part-time secretary.
4. Continue work toward a "St. Thomas Armenian Church" sign outside the Church.
5. Investigate, and if feasible, hire a professional landscaping service.
6. Encourage the enrollment of Diocesan Stewards.
7. Continue to develop and improve operational procedures.

RECOGNITION: Church Organizations - The Parish Council gratefully acknowledges and thanks the many persons who have worked so diligently in our Church Organizations. St. Thomas depends on its various Church groups for support. We are happy to state that each of our Organizations has made substantial contributions both in services and in finances during the period of this report. We are grateful to all the groups. The reports of our Church Organizations are attached.

Individuals - Rather than express our thanks to specific individuals and run the risk of unintentionally omitting deserving names, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all of those who have given of themselves in the service of our Church. We are grateful, also, for the financial support of our Parishioners and friends. The personal sacrifices we each make constitutes the sustaining force for our Church.



CONCLUSION: Through teamwork and dedication, your Parish Council achieved many of its goals. We made a special effort to keep Parishioners informed of plans, progress, hopes, and achievements through articles in the Beacon, letters, notices, and announcements. We believe that has a positive effect in the Parish. We did the best we could with the help, money, and time available. We were blessed throughout the year to find our number often doubled to 22 because of the generous participation of our spouses. Our spirits were buoyed by the support of Parishioners and our Pastor.

We look forward to the future with confidence and great expectation. However, the task is enormous and requires the active participation of all Parishioners along with the Parish Council and Father Arnak. Together, with the help of God, we will succeed.

George Mekenian  
Chairman

Leon Nigohosian  
Secretary

Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian  
President

#### AUDITING COMMITTEE'S REPORT

The Auditing Committee has examined the Treasurers' Books and found them in good order.

Vahe Arkell  
Armen Asher  
Armenag Iskenderian