

ANNUAL REPORT - 1974

This is the first, full year's report that I am presenting - the year 1974 has been busy, challenging and rewarding in many respects.

As the past year comes to a close and we proceed to 1975, and with the arrival of September 10th and 11th, 1975, I will have completed 25 years of service to the Armenian Church as an Ordained Priest in our Diocese, including the two years of service in this Holy Ascension Parish, first as a part-time pastor and eventually in a full time capacity.

During this period I have tried to relate myself to the spiritual needs, administrative chores, and educational programs of the church as closely as I could. This has been accomplished in part by officiating, preaching, lecturing, organizing, providing leadership, visiting, writing, printing, by hearing and absorbing the cries of need and by having an in-depth evaluation of every event and every situation.

My relationship with the Parishioners and Parish Council, as well as the various organizations and committees has been friendly and cordial, and I have made my services available whenever and wherever needed and requested. As a man of resource, I have shared my experience, knowledge and spiritual wealth with the young and old. In return, I have found that we have a wonderful Team Ministry in this church, among the laymen and lay-women, many of whom have made this little church an object of their love and concern and have stood by their pastor through thick and thin, supporting him in every respect. The cooperation of our faithful members and the public in general has been gratifying and encouraging.

As I prepare this Annual Report, my thoughts are focused and drawn to the former pastors, trustees, delegates, benefactors, Godfathers, deacons, choir members, Sunday School and Armenian School teachers, organization members from the Consecration of this Edifice on down to our beloved Sam Jevarjian, who toiled in the past, fought the great struggle of life and passed to their Eternal Rest in peace. We exist and enjoy what we have today because they existed and toiled before us. May their memories be blessed.

1. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP Soorp Badarak has been offered on 51 Sundays without interruption and sermons preached in Armenian and English. On various occasions special services were conducted according to calendar and requirements of our church.

At this time, I wish to thank each and every member of the choir, and their leader, Mrs. Keghan Stambolian, Deacon Vraij Yapujian, Hrand Arakelian and our Organist, Yeretzgin Grace Arakelian, who rendered their devoted services faithfully and without remuneration.

2. ALTAR COMMITTEE A one woman committee in the person of Mrs. Keghan Stambolian. She has assumed the responsibility of, and has been regularly washing and ironing the vestments and Altar linens. At this time, we wish to thank Mr. Amira Dinikian, Mr. Paul Jamgochian - the self-appointed caretakers of the church; to Mr. Edward Jevarjian for dry-cleaning the Choir Robes; to Mmes. Felice Avakian, Siranoush Demirjian and Verjin Jevarjian, for continuously providing us with the Sunday "Mas", with their combined efforts and personal expense.

3. RITUALS Three Baptized and Confirmed. Two married (one of them was performed jointly with a Roman Catholic Priest assisting at the Altar.) Seven funerals, 41 Requiem Services, 4 special, and 11 Memorial Day Blessing of the Graves. Also participated in 3 funeral services in Naugatuck, Union City and Philadelphia.

4. PASTORAL VISITATIONS These visitations are categorized as follows: a. Hospital (sick calls) b. Nursing Homes (sick and elderly) c. Shut-ins d. Home calls for counseling and family crisis e. Home calls to bereaved families f. Home calls for happy occasions g. Home Blessing h. Welcoming visits i. Family social visits j. Visits to other church groups and organizations k. Administrative and business calls. l. Fund raising visits m. Miscellaneous. Total visitations - 132.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES This includes office, clerical work, correspondence answering inquiries, management, Parish Council and church affiliated organizations, general and committee meetings, attendance at functions of said organizations, promotion and execution of cultural and educational programs (Vartanantz, April 24th, Cultural Month, Name Day, etc.), involvement and leadership in social concern projects, issuance of certificates, directives, execution of proposals and decisions of various bodies, and miscellaneous chores.

6. PUBLICATIONS AND CIRCULARS The monthly, bilingual bulletin "Voice" (previously Pari Loor) has been published and mailed to our parishioners, as well as throughout the country and abroad, numbering 650 addresses, with 32 pages, in each issue. The entire editing, art work, typing, ~~and work~~, and mailing is handled by the Pastor. This bulletin has brought us acclaim, and introduced our parish to the entire Diocese as a lively, progressive and up-coming community. We have received many, many letters of commendation and 21 letters asking us to add them to our mailing list. Unsolicited contributions, mostly from out-of-town donors, have made our "Voice" self-supporting.

34 occasional notices and special brochures with artistic rendering, advertising our various functions and affairs of the church, as well as "in lieu of flowers" lists, Christmas and Easter Yughakin donations have been edited, printed addressed and mailed, again by the pastor.

At our personal expense, we have mailed 355 Christmas, Wedding Anniversary, Get Well, Sympathy, Birthday, and miscellaneous cards during the year, on the appropriate dates and occasions.

The updating and correcting the addresses on our mailing list, and typing 650 new name plates, have been another time consuming project.

EDUCATIONAL Delivered 6 consecutive lectures during the Lenten season, following church services.

Addressed various functions, dinners, helped six students (4 non-Armenian) by providing source material and guidance in the field of Armenian History to prepare term papers/

Organizing the Library in the church office (with my personal books). 29 individuals took advantage of our library service.

At present the Armenian School and the Lecture Class is progressing full swing with the weekly participation of 42 students.

Our Sunday School's religious education program is carried out faithfully and successfully, despite the setbacks of physical inconveniences and interruptions by other affairs on various occasions.

7. ORGANIZATIONS Our church affiliated organizations functioned diligently, having on their list of events general meetings, committee meetings, luncheons, dinners, programs, etc. Your pastor availed himself and presided over all of these activities without fail.

As we embark on a New Year, we are faced with new and urgent situations, projects, undertakings, and first priority actions. I, as a concerned "Hoviv" humbly submit to your attention some of these priorities, which I am sure, through your intensified efforts, sacrifice and ardent support, may bring about a much desired, banner year for our church and community in every respect.

1. Our interest and concern as members of this parish (communicant or non-communicant) should not be limited to balancing budgets, raising funds, attending secular affairs, dinners, parties. Rather, our concern should be aimed at rekindling the Faith of our Fathers, preserving our heritage, orienting ourselves and our children in and with our Armenian spirit and culture. Your church^{in this instance} *attendance* is imperative.

2. It is of utmost importance that an expanding and progressing parish like ours, have a HOME, a NEW CHURCH, with an auditorium, choir rooms, gymnasium, and all that is necessary, with the purchase of acreage in a suburban area, and commence the construction in phases, step by step, according to a master plan. THIS IS AN URGENT NEED! I strongly recommend that we start a campaign with a KICK-OFF BANQUET, during this year.

3. To wage a healthy interest within the ranks of our youth. I recommend the appointment of a "Committee of Youth for the Youth," to organize and coordinate all activities of the young. I further recommend the appointment of a Youth Director, Choir Director, the forming of a Junior Choir, the training of Deacons and Acolytes, a Youth Cultural Committee, a "Hye Sports" committee, a Junior Parish Council.

4. At this time a Membership Drive is a fundamental necessity, to consolidate our parish with committed men and women. We know there is a great influx of new comers in our area. Therefore, I recommend a two category membership.

a. Communicant b. Auxiliary or Contributing members.
Communicant members will be comprised of voting, office taking, regularly church attending, baptised members of the church.

Auxiliary membership will include all Armenians, no matter what church or conviction they follow, who would affiliate themselves with the Holy Ascension Armenian Church of Southern Connecticut, and who would contribute to its maintenance, projects, and would like to attend and enjoy all the programs of the church.

The project of establishing a Parish Register will be the by product of this effort. I have already started this, and have registered 26 families.

5. According to our By Laws (article 31, par. G & I) It is the duty of the pastor and the Parish Council to establish, encourage supervise and give moral and financial support to the various

schools and cultural organizations of the parish. It is my recommendation that we establish an "Educational Committee" to organize, promote, supervise and manage all of our religious and secular educational schools, with the exception of Youth Cultural programs.

6. To implement the above mentioned recommendations, the Parish Council would need extra funds and a larger budget. I recommend that a "Stewardship Committee" be organized with five members and a few sub-committees, under their jurisdiction.

This Committee will replace and enlarge the existing "Pledge Committee" will endeavor to secure special contributions, establish project funds, and collect Membership Dues, etc.

Before closing my report, I wish to take a moment and thank all the Executive members of our organizations with their chairmen, who with the pastor shared the heavier part of responsibilities and anxieties. Valuable has been the devoted services of Dr. Berdj Harabedian and his Council, Mrs. Gladys Jevarjian and the hard-working ladies', Marty Azarian and his group, Mrs. Theresa Harabedian, as Superintendent of Sunday School and Pledge Committee Chairman, and the teachers, Mr. Edward Jevarjian and his Building Committee, Mr. James Kernicky, Marty Moomjian and the entire Bazaar helpers and donors, and you, the Congregation - May God bless the labors of your minds, hearts, and hands.

Now, we look forward to the year ahead with the anticipation that God has even greater blessings in store for us in 1975. Let us all continue to pray, worship, study, serve, love and sacrifice together, in His Name.

My dear Parishioners -

As I terminate this Annual Check-up, I proclaim that the year 1974 has been a great year in many ways. I confess that our slow but sure accomplishments are the direct results of your zealous, faithful support and conscientious convictions that our devotion and continuous service to the church should be commensurate with God's blessings and love for us.

As we continue to progress and confront challenges, let us renew our pledge and determination to struggle diligently for this noble and good cause, always remembering that a church is only as good as its congregation. We realize the task is hard, and the road uphill. Let us take heart "Zee Asdvadz Unt Mez Eh"

Let us be courageous, hopeful - let's be realistic and optimistic. Glorious prospects and great challenges are ahead - and we shall overcome. Remember, there is nothing that God, you, and us, together, cannot accomplish. Thank you.

Rev. Levon Arakelian
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Pastor

Jan. 26, 1975