

PASTOR'S REPORT

By the grace of God, which has sustained your Pastor physically, spiritually, and emotionally, he has been able to meet most of the major exigencies, demands, and obligations placed upon his shoulder.

Celebrating Divine Liturgy, preaching the Word, administering the Sacraments, visiting the sick, the confined and the healthy, attending to and presiding over meetings, taking care of administrative duties, representing the church in numerous capacities, publishing, editing, printing, mailing, organizing and supervising affairs and guiding organizations are only the visible aspects of his life.

Counseling individuals which are disturbed, encouraging people who are shut-in, guiding souls in search of solace, truth and spiritual growth has been our top priority. Our heart has always been open to those who seek and call on us for help.

The agonies, storms, insults, accusations and insinuations have always been the invisible phase of our life - but we thank God for the endless strength He has given us, along with the understanding and patience of my wonderful family and sincere friends. Hence we are able to carry the burden and bring the church year to a successful close.

It has been a privilege to provide leadership and guidance to our ever-enlarging projects and programs, to dream and to plan for things which will come into being through the broadening highway into the future.

The year 1978 will long be remembered as the YEAR when this congregation made a great move to a marvelous and higher plateau of success. We have come a long way from 1930 to 1978 - a good year, a growing year for us the Armenian Church of the Holy Ascension.

1. Religious Services:-

During the past year, Divine Liturgy was celebrated every Sunday (except on one Sunday when there was a snow blizzard), and special services on Christmas and Easter weeks.

2. The sermon was preached in both languages, taking into consideration the majority in attendance (of youth or older generation.)

3. SACRAMENTS: -

Special attention has been given to the performance of Sacraments, with explanations in English being part of the routine, since these special occasions usually draw many non-Armenians, as either part of the family or as guests: 5 Christenings, 4 Weddings, 1 Engagement, and 5 Funerals took place in 1978.

4. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP:-

In 1978 our membership numbered 103. The number has been the same as in other years, since no special effort has been made to stimulate dues-paying members.

5. PLEDGE SYSTEM: -

By the efforts of one person - Yeretzgin Grace Arakelian - and the

and the cooperation of a responsive group of parishioners, this system has proven to be an overwhelming success, and one of the most fruitful programs ever attempted by this parish.

The huge sum of \$11,347.00 was realized through the participation of 115 individuals, and our budget for 1979 calls for an increase in this amount to \$15,000.

With the special, continued efforts of Yeretzgin Grace, and the cooperation of our Parish Council, and the still non-committed families, we are certain our mission will be accomplished.

6. PASTORAL VISITATIONS:-

Our priority has been to visit the sick in hospitals or in homes. We have paid repeated visits, without fail, whenever we've been notified or informed of such confinements. Including all other visitations, the number of such calls has totaled 196 - an increase of 11 visit over last year.

7. MEETINGS:-

Without fail or exception we have participated and presided over ALL of the meetings of our Parish Council, Building Committee, Women's Guild, and other committees and their sub-committees, providing them with leadership, counseling, and follow-ups in their respective programs or projects.

8. CHURCH PUBLICATIONS:-

Our church bulletin, "Voice" has been regularly published and mailed to more than 900 addresses, in our parish and throughout the entire Diocese, and to all influential persons throughout the United States, Canada, and abroad.

We cannot begin to record the amount of mail received, complimenting this publication, and expressing full accord with us on issues which plague the Armenian Church in general, expressing full appreciation for our boldness and efforts, aimed at making them conscious of our church problems, needed remedies and providing them with food for thought, as well as thanking us for keeping them informed and aware of our progress here at Holy Ascension.

The "Voice" has been edited, typed, translated, printed, assembled, and mailed by the Pastor, with the assistance of Yeretzgin Grace and their family. The accomplishment of this time-consuming and difficult task would not have been possible without them.

The "Voice" besides its moral, educational and informative values, has not only been self-supporting, but a source of revenue, provided by appreciative subscribers.

9. BULLETINS, PAMPHLETS:-

Special bulletins, reports and lists, to promote the work of our organizations have been separately prepared and mimeographed during the year. 68 pamphlets, totalling 2,720 sheets have been prepared and mailed out throughout 1978.

10. SUNDAY SCHOOL:-

The School began its 1977-78 academic year with a full program provided by the CRE, and with renewed zeal, high hopes and aspirations. Mr. Gary Hovhanesian was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Sunday School.

However, due to renovations, interruptions, etc., some activities were curtailed and the school suffered in membership as well as organization. However, again we are happy to report that things have returned to normal, and progressing favorably.

11. YOUTH GROUP:-

During 1978 we initiated the Youth Group. Marty Azarian and Hrand Arakelian provided guidance and attended their meetings and functions. Under the Chairmanship of Michael Malkasian, our Youth Group will grow and become an active part of our church. We are presently in search of a Youth Director, as well as a basket ball coach.

12. CULTURAL COMMITTEE: -

The Cultural Committee was initiated by Mr. Berch Khachadourian, with an appropriation of \$5,000, over a period of five years. Dr. Berdj Harabedian and Mr. Ralph Trapasso were appointed to work along with Mr. Khachadourian, and plan a series of lectures and cultural programs.

13. IN KEEPING WITH NATIONAL AFFAIRS of the Diocese, we have participated in the Diocesan Convention which took place in Detroit.

With a good representation from our parish, we attended the banquet, tendered in honor of Mr. Alex Manoogian, international President of the A.G.B.U.

And yet with another group of parishioners, we attended the Independence Celebration Banquet of Lebanon, which took place in Danbury, and deliberated on behalf of the Armenian community in Southern Connecticut.

14. FATHER OF THE YEAR:-

Mr. Michael Gopoiian was honored with a banquet on June 17th, and selected "Father of the Year-1978"

15. COFFEE HOUR:-

Every Sunday, following Divine Liturgy, a "Coffee and..." social hour was initiated (last February) and continued, except for Sundays designated for special affairs. To date it has been very successful and rewarding. Hosts are needed to continue this popular project.

16. With the unanimous decision of the Parish Council, Mr. Peter Kapusuzian was invited and offered the job of Superintendent of the entire church complex.

The past year terminated, leaving us as pastor and flock, striving to be faithful to the call of God, Church and Nation. Now, however we must move ahead to meet the needs and challenges which are clearly before us.

1. We need to learn the names and identities of the new people who are constantly moving into our area.
2. We need to be more hospitable to people who cannot make up their minds to join the "in crowd".
3. We need to understand and appreciate the Armenians who live in this community, and pave the way for their return to the church and employ their active participation in fellowship.
4. We need volunteers to become associated with our lay ministry.
5. We need more people to join our various organizations, and enhance our activities and undertakings.
6. We need dreamers...people of vision, to remind us that we are one world and one people, and keep reminding us that there are areas which need an investment of time, talent, and treasure.

As a family of worship, work, and sacrifice, we need to be aware of the great opportunities and responsibilities that "One for all and all for one" type brotherhood lays upon our shoulders. In want, during 1930, we were all together. Today, in affluency, let us not lose sight of the purposes for which this parish was established, and where her immigrant children gathered together, in the city of Bridgeport.

Being on the practical side of issues, I strongly recommend:

1. Establishment of an Endowment Fund. Ever-increasing expenses and decreasing stewardship, should alert us to think about the present and future welfare and perpetuation of our Holy Ascension. Our parishioners should make provisions - earmarked donations, for spiritual, cultural, educational, and social programs. And above all, they should consider the Endowment Fund in their wills.
2. As part of Christian stewardship, the Pledge System should be enlarged and participated by the entire community. The list of participants with their contributions has so far proven that it can be done! 30% participation should be increased to 75%, always bearing in mind that the standard of giving, as set by our Lord, is 10% of our earnings.
3. Formation of an "Armenian Heritage" Committee, to perpetuate our wonderful culture, history and other values, reaching out to our young people and planting in them the prestige and pride of being an Armenian. Opening an Armenian School should be part of this committee's obligation.
4. Establishing a community Library - with a special fund for the purchase of books published in English, dealing with Armenian history and culture.

At this time, I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to all the executives and members of our church-affiliated organizations and auxiliaries, deacons and altar servers, the organist, the choir members, church employees, the esteemed individuals who took upon themselves many important responsibilities and performed chores for the beautification and glorification of our church edifice.

Special thanks to our parishioners and friends, for their dedication, cooperation and assistance during this year of transition, rehabilitation and relocation. May God bless us all according to our deeds, endeavors, and sacrifices, Amen.

Rev. Levon Arakelian