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St. James Armenian Church

VERY REV. FR. OSHAGAN GULGULIAN
PASTOR

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PASTOR'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 1991

By the grace of God, once again, we were able to complete yet another productive, very difficult and successful year at St. James Armenian Church of Richmond, Virginia.

To the best of my knowledge and recollection, I hereby present my annual report to the members of the St. James Armenian Apostolic Church of Richmond, Virginia.

First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity and thank God for giving me strength and courage, with reasonably good health and motivation to bear witness to God's living word. bring God's healing ministry to the ill, the solace of the Holy spirit to the bereaved families, hope to the despaired, peace and comfort to the despondent and restless.

GENERAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Parish Council:- I would like to thank all Parish Council members especially to those who throughout the entire year made great sacrifices to attend the Parish Council meetings, organize successful activities and wisely appropriated the church funds for the glory of God and for the betterment of our church and community. My special thanks to Mr. Jack Tootelian, Chairman of the Parish Council and also upon the resignation of Mr. Tootelian, to Virginia Abernathy, acting Parish Council chairman who with great patience and wisdom were able to govern the Parish Council meetings, and along with their colleagues contributed to the success of our church.

Altar helpers:- My special thanks to Deacon Hovhannes Chadoyan, Sub-deacon Krikor Garbedian, who assisted me in performing all the holy sacraments of the Armenian Apostolic Church and in all the special services that we had in our church on special occasions and feast days throughout the entire year. Also to all the Altar boys specially to Christopher Thomas who served me at the Altar. I especially commend the spirit of harmony in which they served at the holy Altar of God.

Church Choir:- My special thanks to our Choir Director, Robert Thomas, who came every Sunday to conduct the church choir & to our new organist, Susa Nersesova. I highly commend their devotion to serve in the House of God.

Special thanks to all the church choir members who came to sing the Badarak at the beginning. I hope those choir members who can't quite make it to be in church from the beginning would make a special effort in this coming year to be in church on time. I am sure that Robert Thomas would appreciate their efforts to be present at the start of the services.

Also, special thanks to all those who were in charge of the Altar flowers and the preparation of the mass before Badarak.

Church Organizations:- My special thanks to all church organizations, namely, the Women's Guild, ACYOA, Sunday School, Armenian School and Choir for their input, cooperation and hard work. In reviewing their annual activities and financial reports, one can only congratulate them and admire their dedication to the church. May the good Lord bless you all and give you much strength and good health for the coming year.

Altar Beautification:- My special thanks to Lilly Thomas who took the duties and responsibilities of cleaning and preparing the new Altar clothes. My thanks to those who regularly washed and ironed the white robes that I wear for Badarak. We have now completed the project of sewing Altar cloths, Bible stand cover and Baptismal Font cover.

Secretarial:- My gratitude to Virginia Greene, my secretary who worked hard and long hours relentlessly handling all church publications, letters, periodicals and announcements and kept me aware of my appointments and my calendar.

Almost all educational programs held by the Women's Guild were done with my participation and through the church office.

SACRAMENTS

Badaraks:- During 1991, I was able to celebrate Divine Liturgy at least every Sunday of the year except on a few occasions when I was away or on duty.

Special Services:- During the past year, we did schedule church services during the Lenten Season and Special Feast Days. However, I am not happy to report that the attendance to these church services were very poor. I must remind you that as Armenians we have a different church calendar than other church denominations, therefore, in order to preserve our identity and learn more about our faith, church and heritage, we must keep the interest alive and make an extra effort to attend church services especially on these special days. We also celebrated the service of the Presentation of The Lord to the Temple .(Diarentarach).

I am optimistic that in the coming year we will improve in this area.

Baptisms:- During 1991, I have performed four (4) baptisms and Chrismation. One baptism in Washington, DC with Father Vertenes Kalayjian of St. Mary's Armenian Church.

Weddings:- During 1991, I performed three (3) weddings.

Funerals:- During 1991, I performed three (3) funeral services.

To my report is attached all the names of the above services.

MEETING AND INITIATIVES

Board Meetings:- For the records, I would like to state that during the past I presided over 11 Parish Council meetings, two emergency meetings, about (21) Women's Guild Executive and General Meetings, ACYOA meetings, Sunday & Armenian School meetings and 35th Anniversary Planning Committee meetings.

Home Visitation:- During the past year, I managed to make some home visitations, some repeated visitations and some first-time visitations, some at special occasions and family gatherings and sometimes just informal socializing. Most of my visitations were prearranged by the families that I visited. I would like to continue to keep it in that way. I would appreciate it if you would get in touch with me and make arrangements that would help me keep some order in my everyday schedule.

Home and Cemetery Blessings:- During the past Christmas and Easter I have blessed homes. I will be glad if you will let me know ahead of time if you want to bless your home and your loved ones graves.

Hospital Visitation:- Bringing God's healing ministry to the ill and to patients is one of my most cherished Pastoral duties. During last year I have done numerous hospital visitations. I love visiting the hospitals and talking to the patients as it gives me a sense of spiritual accomplishments. Therefore, I ask you to let me know as soon as possible if you hear of anyone who is in the hospital, so that I can be able to bring God's healing ministry to the sick.

ORGANIZING

With the purchase of a computer by the Women's Guild, we were fortunate enough to be able to produce proper flyers, the Sevan publications, letters and special bulletins such as Water Blessing Service, Lenten Services, etc. We are now able to print our own address labels and simplify keeping our mailing list up to date.

I continued to organize the Archives room and the work room area. Letters were sent to area youth for an ACYOA membership drive.

REGIONAL, DIOCESAN and ECUMENICAL FORUM

As the acting Pastor of St. James Armenian Apostolic Church of Richmond, Virginia, and member of the Eastern Diocesan Clergy, I was invited to participate in the Diocesan, Regional and Ecumenical programs, but I was not able to attend most of the Diocesan activities because of the distance to the NY area.

- 1 - Two children were brought from Armenia for heart surgery who both returned home. Both were successful surgeries however the second child, passed away because of an illness one and one half months later.

I met with Senator Robert Dole in Washington accompanied by Dr. Nancy Avakian and Arthur Halvajian, director of Medical Outreach for Armenians, N.J. and 3 year old Melineh and her grandmother, Susan. Also with us was Dr. Gary Lofland from MCV who performed the surgery.

I participated in Vartanantz celebration organized by the Knights of Vartan, Antranig Lodge of Richmond, Virginia.

- 2 - In April I went to Canada for my Immigration papers and successfully acquired them and at the same time was invited by the Diocese of Canada to celebrate Badarak in Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Toronto.

Also in April, I attended a Women's Guild Regional meeting in Wash. D.C. and I was one of the celebrants of the day.

- 3 - In May I attended the Diocesan Assembly held in Tenafly, NJ.

Also in May, I travelled to NY to meet with His Beatitude Karekin Kazanjian, Armenian Patriarch of Turkey.

I also attended an Ecumenical meeting with Rabbi Berman.

- 4 - In June, I attended the International Clergy Conference in NY which consisted of over 60 clergy in America and overseas.

Father Apraham Mgrtchian, president of MOMIC, a young artist's group in Armenia visited our church. We had a meeting with the Dean of the School of Art of VCU to organize an exchange program between VCU and Armenia.

- 5 - I lectured at Overbrook Presbyterian Church, the topic being Christian & Islam Relationship and also about Islamism.

- 6 - In August I performed services in Chicago on a mission program.

- 7 - I attended the AACCA meeting in Worcester, MA at which time I delivered the sermon during services.
- 8 - I attended the ACYOA Sports Weekend in Hartford, CT. at which time our local chapter won the Achievement Award.
- 9 - In Sept. I travelled to Philadelphia for the ordination of V.Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Melconian who was elevated to the rank of Dziarakoyan Vartabed. (Supreme Dr.)
- 10- Attended the welcome ceremony for His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian in New York at the Diocese and also attended the centennial anniversary in Worcester, MA , Church of Our Saviour which is the first Armenian Church in America.
- 11- With the approval and arrangements by His Grace Bishop Khajag Barsamian I travelled to Armenia in September as a group leader for a pilgrimage.
- 12- Attended and participated in CROP Walk planning Committee and during these meetings the Parish was also represented by Linda Sharigian.
- 13- In November I participated in the AACCA convention in Cleveland, Ohio and was one of the lecturers during one of the seminars.
- 14- I lectured at Crestwood Presbyterian Church on Christian & Islam Relationship and Islamism.
- 15- Participated in the joint Thanksgiving Day services held at Reveille United Methodist Church.
- 16- Celebrated St. James Day in December.

SPECIAL EVENTS

1. Preparing bulletins for special religious holidays.
2. During 1991, we had three guest celebrants, Bishop Papken Varjabedian of DC; Rev. Garen Gdanian of Troy, NY and V. Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Najarian, Vicar-General of Diocese.
3. Participated in the ACYOA Halloween Party with a large turnout.
4. Participated during the Thanksgiving ACYOA's appreciation Dinner Dance.

5. During the month of December, celebrated St. James Day which was dedicated to our Church's name day with a Madagh Day dinner having as our guest, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Armenian Church, V. Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Najarian.
6. Participated with Father Dombalis of the St. Helen & Constantine Greek Orthodox Cathedral in two television interviews regarding the Persian Gulf War.

Besides all my above mentioned activities and duties, at present I am attending Virginia Commonwealth University.

OTHER

I would like to add a few words and I do not like admitting this and the truth will hurt but we have to admit it and talk about it in order to cure it. During the past year, our Parish Council, even though, we tried to be successful we were very disorganized and some members were not interested or caring for the betterment of our church. Yes, we did have 11 meetings & some of these Parish Council members never showed up and also neglected to show up for the two emergency meetings. I could go on and on, but this much is enough. I would like to add that you were the witnesses to some of the members of the Council and you saw with your own eyes the lack of attendance and participation of some of the Parish Council members during church services and social events that were held. It was very noticeable that during the Kiss of Peace there was an absence of Parish Council members. The Kiss of Peace is one the many duties of this governing body as well as attending church services.

NEW INITIATIVES

I would like to continue this new year with the same and new activities. I have some special ideas for the children.

During this coming year I would like to prepare and print new religious books, which will be more handy and educational to the new generation. It will be in English/Armenian, Classical Armenian and translated.

To host the national ACYOA Archbishop Tournament in May.

Organize new educational events and inviting new speakers from out-of-town.

To start a Junior Choir.

To start an Exchange Clergy program with sister churches within our Diocese.

To purchase new organ for our church since our organ has outlived its use.

To build a new bookstore inside the existing building.

All these improvements and aims will come true and real only with your help and your cooperation. I ask God to give me health, wisdom and strength to make all my dreams a reality with His Blessings.

Thank you for listening to me and I am now ready to hear your questions and comments.

Prayerfully



V. Rev. Fr. Oshagan Gulgulian
Acting Pastor

1991 SACRAMENTS

BAPTISMS

Kristen Kelejian
John Chadoyan
John Hayden Baronian
Rachel Semerdjian

WEDDINGS

Alice & John LeVay, Jr.
Dorian & Steven Barsamian
Donna & Ed Walker

FUNERALS

Casper Tarjanian
Eva Ghazarian
Nevarte DerHovhannessian