

***** MISSION STATEMENT *****

Date : October 7, 1993
To : Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
From : Ann Arbor, MI Armenian Community Council

In the summer of 1992 several Ann Arbor area Armenians and other interested parties from the surrounding communities came together to share their common heritage. Their interest in meeting was primarily centered on their Christian faith. During these gatherings many issues and ideas were discussed in the context of Bible study and church history teachings.

After a few months and several meetings the discussion turned to the possibility of starting an Armenian Church in Ann Arbor. Several of the people present had participated in past attempts to have regular church services in this area and the conversation was optimistic. A few meetings later they agreed to appoint a council and to lay a foundation for this undertaking.

The council met with Fr. Paren Avedikian, then pastor of St. John's Church to which they all belonged, to discuss the endeavor and later communicated their desires to the Primate.

The members of the group have shared openly their motivations and concerns in starting a church. The primary concern is the distance one must travel from Ann Arbor to participate in church activities. A 1987 survey showed that 63% of the local Armenian families don't attend church regularly because of the long commute. Travel is especially difficult for the elderly and families with small children. From downtown Ann Arbor to St. John's in Southfield it is 45 miles.

Other ideals expressed in starting a church were: 1. The desire to see the Armenian Church expand. 2. Propagate the Gospel message and see the Lord worshiped among Armenians. 4. The building of strong caring relationships. 5. To provide an environment where parishoners can speak openly and personally about their Armenian Christian Faith and heritage.

Washtenaw County, inwhich Ann Arbor is located, has a population of 283,000 of which Ann Arbor constitutes 110,000 people. There are approximatly 150 Armenian families in the county and the nearby University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University add another 100 or more Armenian students to this area every fall.

The Ann Arbor council is concerned that the Armenian Church is not the center for cultural activities for Ann Arbor Armenians. Armenian students and residents are wandering into other denominations, religions and cults. Reaching out to all Armenians and providing an outlet for them to maintain their identity as Armenians should be a priority of the church.

The Ann Arbor Armenian Community would like to be under the auspices of the Armenian Apostolic Church of the Eastern Diocese of the United States helping the Church expand its reach first as a mission parish and progressing toward becoming a church with full status which is active within this Diocese.

A Catechumens liturgy is now being officiated two Sundays each month by deacons within the community at a small Catholic chapel in the northeast part of the city. A church building would eventually be located in Washtenaw County. From this center we would be able to reach out to people in the surrounding counties of Livingston, Lenawee, Jackson and Ingham.