

Groong

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1, JUNE 1994

It's Official: We're a Mission Parish

By Steven Mangigian,
Parish Council Chairman

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of *Groong*. This newsletter is a quarterly publication designed to inform the Ann Arbor Armenian Community and surrounding areas of various events and offer a glimpse at the general life of our community.

I am sure many of you are not aware of the recent addition of the Ann Arbor Armenian community as a Mission Parish to the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. I would like to give a brief history of the events that led up to this recent appointment and inform you of the direction we are now pursuing.

Roughly 18 months ago, a group of about 15 Ann Arbor Armenians began meeting. The purpose of our meetings was to share our common heritage with one another and to discuss issues we felt were relevant for our lives. As the meetings progressed, there seemed to be an interest in discussing the possibility of starting an Ann Arbor Armenian Church Parish. Since many of us were attending church services in Southfield and Dearborn on a regular basis, a common topic of dis-

cussion was the length of travel time to and from our respective parishes.

Before we knew it, the group appointed four individuals to represent them (John Merigian, John Kazanjian, Armen Asherian, and myself). As proper protocol dictates, we as a "council" approached St. John's Church in Southfield to ask their permission to begin regular morning services in Ann Arbor. Permission was granted and we have been holding services on the first and third Sundays of every month since then at a small chapel in Ann Arbor.

Since then, we have done the following:

- Organized an official parish council (with approval from the diocese).
- Developed a mailing list.
- Written a mission statement with specific goals.
- Created a service which incorporates both the English and Armenian languages.
- Applied for and received mission status.
- Developed and executed a Sunday School program for the children in the parish.

In January, we co-hosted the Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America with the Armenian Students' Cultural Association of the University of Michigan. We

also have applied for non-profit status and are waiting for the process to be completed. Another important development has been creating specific committees designed to maximize the skills of our parishioners for the purposes of advancing our life as a parish (see list of committees below).

This has been a long eighteen months. However, it's very clear that God's hand has been guiding us and leading us throughout the whole process. We have begun with one modest purpose: Worshipping with other Armenian Christians on a regular basis. You may be asking "Why start a Church to accomplish the purpose of just gathering together?" The answer is simple. We all believe the Church is the foundation for which we exist, both as Christians and Armenians. The Church is the link which joins each individual's heritage (both spiritual and cultural) with one another. To deny this truth denies our existence and hence our purpose for living.

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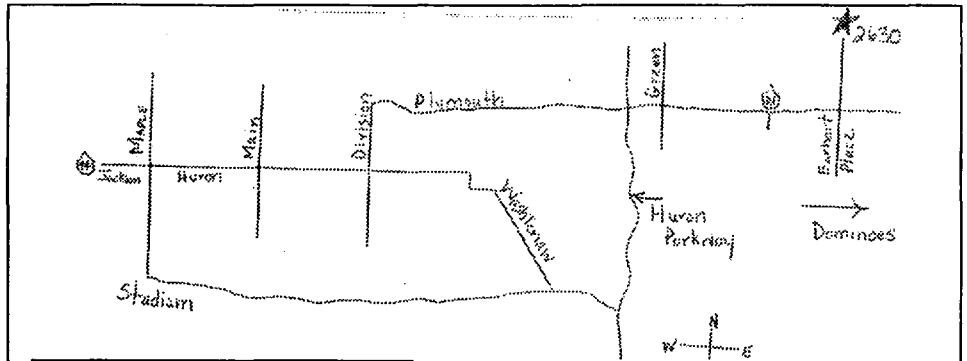
In conclusion, I invite you to join us. We are a small group right now but we are a committed and driven group. We will succeed in our endeavors, and we will strive to be a shining beacon for all Armenians, young and old, who are looking for the proper direction to complete their journey.

Christ's Church: The Body of Believers

By Deacon Michael Ohanesian

During the celebration of Պատարագ (Liturgy), we say the Nicene Creed or Հայտարարութիւն. After reciting all that we believe in including the Trinity, the Church is briefly defined. "We believe also in only one universal and apostolic holy Church." Two concepts come to mind when analyzing this short but highly important declaration: Who and what is the Church?

Let us take the word church and address the "who" portion. The Greek word for church is εκκλησια ("ekklesia") and the Armenian word is եկեղեցի ("ekeghetsi"). The literal meanings of both words is the assembly or coming together of those who are called. There is an agreement by all of us believers to come together by the calling or bidding of Jesus Christ. It is an invitation to be guests at the Lord's table to celebrate the "good life." In Matthew 16:18 Christ states it



Church Location: 2630 North Earhart Place

From the South: Take 23 North and exit at Plymouth Rd. Follow the exit ramp until it ends. Turn right and drive approximately 1/4 mile to N. Earhart Place. Turn left and follow the dirt road until it ends.

From the North: Take 23 South and exit at Plymouth Rd. Follow the exit ramp until it ends. Turn left and drive approximately 1/4 mile to N. Earhart Place. Turn left and follow the dirt road until it ends.

You may park at the end of the road and proceed to the small white chapel on the left. Services are held upstairs.

Church Calendar

Church Service at 10:00 a.m., Sunday, July 17, 1994, Sunday, August 7, 1994, Sunday, August 21, 1994, Sunday, September 11, 1994, and Sunday, September 18, 1994. In August we will be visited by a team from the St. Nersess Seminary.

straightforwardly, "I will build my Church." In the early centuries of Armenia, I envision small villages where Armenians came together before and after a work day in a small chapel at the center of the village. The purpose was to give thanks to God regardless of whether it was or was not a productive day. A celebration of God was the beginning and the end, the

first and the last, the alpha and the omega, the "U" and the "S" of the day. Unfortunately, today many Christians come to church only when times are very good or are very bad. There needs to be a consistent desire in every believer to worship God always. As we sing at the end of the Liturgy: "I will bless you, Lord, at all times, at all times your blessing shall be upon my lips" we need to live these words.

The Church is founded on Christ. The Church is holy because Christ is holy. It is His Church, the response to His calling, the obedience to His will. Perhaps, we often forget this truth and relate to the Church as "ours." It is not simply an organization that is self-serving for puffed-up egos. It is service not to self but to God, not to any denomination but to all believers, and not to one religious leader or group

Our Mission Statement: Excerpts of Ideals in Starting a Church

- The desire to see the Armenian Church grow.
- Propagate the Gospel message and see the Lord worshipped among Armenians.
- The building of strong, caring relationships.
- To provide an environment where parishioners can speak openly and personally about their Armenian Christian faith and heritage.

being dominant over any other. The Church is as the name implies a coming together of believers built on mutual trust and consideration through a love for Christ. All good things are possible and are accomplished by relying on God's perfect love. It is when we rely on ourselves to do God's work or serve Him for selfish reasons that things go awry.

Now let us turn to the "what" portion of the Church. When I say "I believe" what do I believe in? I believe in a oneness of spirit, a universality of Church, and apostolic succession of Christ's authority over me. Fancy words, but what do they mean to me?

The oneness comes from within the heart of the Church. It is the bond between Christ, the bridegroom and the Church, His bride. This oneness is expressed by our personal faith in Christ and by our corporate fellowship with other believers. Christ, and not domineering leaders, commands us to be bodies of believers. An ancient Christian Orthodox document, *Didache*, says: "It, (the Church) is scattered throughout the world." Sin and human passion cause division. Oneness will not come from us but from Christ. The closer we each come to God, the closer we can be with each other. As Father Alexander Schmemmann of the Orthodox Church of America puts it in his book, "Celebration of Faith" "... in Christ, people are able to find that oneness of faith, hope and love which nothing else in the world can give..."

The universality of the Church means that Christ's teaching and His love transcends location and time. Christ is ALL and for ALL. Christ is our portion that can make us whole and complete. Our responsibility is to reflect His fullness as best as we can. It is easy to fall into boring patterns rather than be a living Church. What often results is something a good friend of mine



Gina, Ani, and Marybeth Kazanjian and Nicholas Mangigian are some of our younger members of the church.

calls "churchianity". We refashion our Church life into something narrow and self-serving, something comfortable so that perhaps we are at peace with our friends and family yet not really at peace with Christ.

Last of all, we declare the apostolicity of our belief: faith in our Church fathers, the first apostles. They have a valuable Christian experience that we can share. The Greek word "apostolos" means simply one who is sent. The Church has always needed those believers who are willing to "go and make disciples." And, of course, even today we are called to speak of God's plan of salvation as revealed by Christ at the cross. In this sense, as Schmemmann states, "It (the Church) must always remain missionary, i.e. doing the work of Christ in the world."

What do I believe? I believe Christ Jesus, God incarnate, established His holy Church so that we sinners would know of salvation and celebrate Christ's victory over death for our sakes.

Lord, I stand before you a sinner. Nonetheless, because of my love for You I stand committed to Your will, and I believe in You. Create in me a heart of compassion that forever burns as the bush before Moses. I love you lord and I am open to Your will and to the calling of Your Church. Amen.

Catholics Returned To Yerevan

YEREVAN ("Yerkir" daily), 06/10/94—Presidential airplane delivered Catholicos of all Armenians Vazgen I to Yerevan from Paris on June 8 night. Catholicos was accompanied by the chairman of the presidential cabinet Shahen Karamanoukian and Ktrich Sardarian.

Representatives of St. Echmiadzin reported that the health condition of the Catholicos, who left for France to take medical tests, is satisfactory.

Azeri Attacks At The Armenian Borders

YEREVAN ("Azg", "Hayastani Hanrapetutyun" dailies), 06/10/94—The Azeri units continue attacking north-eastern borders of the Republic of Armenia.

According to the Defense Ministry press service, an Azeri armed unit commenced an offensive in the direction of Armenian positions in the Krasnoselsk district from 6 till 8pm on June 8. The Armenian forces retaliated and forced the enemy to retreat, leaving 30 corpses on the battlefield. The Armenian side has also suffered casualties.

The Armenian defense positions at the village of Vazashen in the Ijevan district have been shelled from the Ghazakh district of Azerbaijan from 7:20 till 11pm on the same evening. No casualties are reported. The Arme-

nian forces refrained from returning the fire.

Positions Still Being Shelled

STEPANAKERT ("Lragir", "Azg" dailies), 06/10/94—The RMK defense army headquarters report, the Azeri units shelled the Gharabagh defense positions at the villages of Shotlanli, Ikhchilar and Gyoulouja in the Aghdam district on June 9.

The enemy also shelled the Gharabagh positions at the villages of Talish, Seisoulan and Levonarka in the Martakert district, Karakhanbeyli in the Fizouli district, Gevorgavan in the Martouni district and Gioulistan in the Shahoumian district later in the afternoon. No casualties are reported. The Gharabagh side refrained from returning the fire.

The RMK military specialists believe, cease fire is violated by those units, controlled by the Azeri opposition parties.

The RMK is also worried by increasing anti-armenian propaganda in the Azeri media.

The RMK University Expects New Students

STEPANAKERT ("Lragir" daily), 06/11/94—The RMK State University will accept students for 32 different specialties this year.

Six of those, among them Psychology, Radiotechnics, Communications, and Wood Science are new to the University.

Parish Council

- *Chairman: Steven Mangigian*
- *Vice-Chairman: Armen Asherian*
- *Treasurer: Maro Telfeyan*
- *Secretary: John Kazanjian*
- *Advisor: Deacon Michael Ohanesian*
- *Advisor: John Ohanian*

Parish Committees Welcome Your Involvement

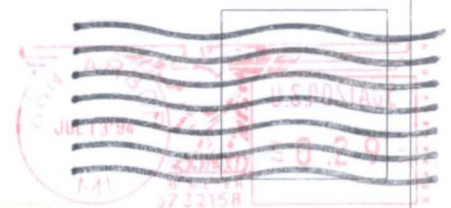
- **Building:** John Ohanian 761-7538
- **Education:** John Kazanjian 665-2664
- **Liturgical/Religious:** Deacon Michael Ohanesian 336-7836
- **Membership:** Currently vacant
- **Public Relations:** Lisa Mangigian 426-3404
- Those interested in participating in a committee to call and lend a hand. It takes a body of believers to keep the Church functioning not just a few hands and feet.

Groong

Lisa Mangigian, Editor

Contributions are welcome and may be sent to: Groong, c/o Ann Arbor Armenian Community, P.O. Box 130464, Ann Arbor, MI 48113

GROONG
P.O. BOX 130464
ANN ARBOR, MI 48113
DETROIT, MI 481
JUL 1994
ROTARY PROCESSING
TECHNOLOGY



His Eminence Archbishop
Khajag Barsamian, Primate
Diocese, Armenian Church of AM.
630 Second Ave.
New York, NY. 10016-4885

