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Ann Arbor Armenian Community on Its Way to Having Own Church

By Aram Kalousdian
Exclusive to TAR Int'l

ANN ARBOR, MI - Efforts to organize a vibrant Armenian community in the Ann Arbor, Michigan area in recent years have taken hold, with the establishment of an Armenian church. There are 250 families in a three-county area, just west of Detroit.

"We are very, very cohesive. We have a very strong nucleus of people here," says John Sarkis Ohanian, Council Chairperson of the Ann Arbor Armenian Church.

"It turns out that we have a very high professional class that had been going to other churches, because they were the only ones around. We're trying to establish ourselves as a first choice. If we can get professional Armenians that are here, any Armenians, really, then we would have a very, very strong parish," Ohanian says. Most



A potluck picnic held at the home of Steve and Lisa Mangigian on July 21, 1996. Michael Ohanesian, Deacon-in-Charge of the Ann Arbor Armenian Church, is at left.

Ann Arbor-area Armenians are professionals—doctors, lawyers and engineers.

"The roots [of the Ann Ar-

bor-area Armenian community] are people that have been here, have gone to school here, or have some ties, past or present, to The University of Michigan," Ohanian continues. Previous to the establishment of the Ann Arbor Armenian Church, the area belonged to St. John's Church in South-

field, Michigan.

"Because of the strength of the people here, we pushed for our own identity. Our people would not go all of the way into Southfield, which is a 46-mile jaunt."

The church has been established as a mission parish, with the hopes that it will become a full-fledged parish soon, Michael Ohanesian, Deacon-in-Charge says.

"St. Sarkis and St. John's [both in the Detroit area] have their following, but between them [in southeastern Michigan] and the western part of the state, there is nothing," Ohanian said.

Church services are currently held at St. Clare's Episcopal Church/Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor, but there are plans to purchase a facility. A goal has been set to raise \$15,000 for the purchase of a modest facility. Approximately \$6,000 has been raised, according to Ohanian.

The church has its own newsletter, called **Groong**, which gives news of local Ar-

menian happenings, along with news concerning Armenians elsewhere. Lisa Mangigian is the editor.

Fund-raising events are under way and are scheduled for the near future. They include two vacation raffles and a New Year's Eve dance. A potluck picnic was held at the home of Steve and Lisa Mangigian on July 21, 1996. Steve Mangigian was one of the people who helped establish the Ann Arbor Armenian Church.

On February 25, 1996, over 50 members and friends of the Ann Arbor Armenian Church attended a performance of **Beast on the Moon** at the Purple Rose Theatre in Chelsea, Michigan, just west of Ann Arbor. **Beast on the Moon** is the story of two Armenian immigrants who are brought together in Milwaukee, Wisconsin during the 1920's. This was the first cultural event that was sponsored by the Ann Arbor Armenian Church.

Wisconsin Activist Visits the Democratic Convention

By Gail Gehlert