

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

ST. GEORGE ARMENIAN CHURCH

HOUSTON, TEXAS

1979

The Armenian Apostolic Church of America is a successfully established an active up-to-date Church. For so many years, our Diocese has adopted disciplinary measures in asking each parish church locally in their respective areas, at least once a year, organize publicly with the presence of all their dues paying members, an Annual Parish Assembly according to the By-Laws of our Diocese, to appraise the results and the accounts of the parish's past year's activities and accomplishments and in case of error, to diagnosis and find the means in which to cure it for the benefit of the whole church and to make resolutions and commitments for the year ahead.

I personally have come to realize the importance of this Annual Parish Assembly, where once a year, I give to you, the accounts of my works which all of you have entrusted in me and leave the judgment to your own personal knowledge.

The year 1979 marked the 16th year of our parish's existence. From 1963 to this day, St. George Armenian Church has continued to grow and become the only organized and established Armenian Church and community within the Southwestern United States of our Diocese. The Parish Council, under the Chairmanship of Mr. James Boyajian, capably fulfilled their responsibilities in administrating this parish spiritually, morally and financially along with the parish priest. Presently, this has become a médium, however, in an active growing congregation like our own, the parish needs the renewed support and commitments of all our parishioners in order to confront this growth and remain a positive force within our community.

In September of 1977, I became the Pastor of St. George Armenian Church of Houston and with the conclusion of 1979, I have completed my second year.

EVERY SUNDAY WORSHIP

During the year 1979, I performed and celebrated worship services at St. Thomas High School Chapel every Sunday except on Sunday, May 6th when I was away attending to the Annual Diocesan Assembly in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, and on Sunday, July 1st and Sunday, July 8th when I was away with my family for my annual vacation.

Worship in our church is scheduled from 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.. Worship is comprised of Divine Liturgy (Soorp Badarak) and sermon. I have prepared and delivered 97 sermons during Divine Liturgy Services and/or other worshipping hours mostly in two languages.

I have paid great attention to my sermons as I believe, the people who come to participate to the Divine Liturgy Services no matter how few, deserve heart-lifting and spiritually rewarding words based on the faith and teaching of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The topic of my sermons vary all the time. Sometimes the topic dealt with everyday life experiences and its problems and ailments and I tried to bring comfort through the message of the Holy Scriptures. Other times, my topic was educational pertaining to certain books of the Holy Bible. On many occasions, the topic of my sermons has been on Saints and Church Fathers of the Armenian Church, I have even delivered sermons nationalistic in nature to underline the durability of our Christian Nation and rising the hope of building our Church for

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continuous existence. I have spoken about the current social issues and have explained and stated the position and the Doctrine of our church to that matter. During Lent, I have given sermons on the subject of the Armenian Church Creed and others pertaining to the Lenten period.

The Choir of our church is present to all church services, together with their Deacons, namely, Mr. Vrouyr Frankian and Mr. Stepan Nazarian. At this time, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to each and every choir member for their time and dedication and especially to Mr. James Boyajian and Mr. Stepan Nazarian who, in the past responsibly carried the directorship of the choir and now presently, Mr. Hovig Frankian for their devotion and presence. Although good, our Choir is not in excellent shape. We can always use new members and especially present members who seem to be staying away for some reason. Their attendance is vital to the production and intensity the choir achieves.

Although worship service in our church begins at 10:30 a.m. sharp, the large amount of our parishioners do not arrive until 11:15 a.m.. Even some arriving later, congregate around the coffee as if it is their first priority for coming to church is socializing and drinking coffee. We cannot sustain and existentiare our faith, national heritage and traditions by drinking coffee; but we can, by listening to the prayers, singing and believing the Word of God with our beloved language and witnessing the tradition of our Forefathers. Empty chairs in the church are distressing for everyone involved. We have enough people to fill the church every Sunday and not merely on special occasions. A living and vital church and community is identified by its continuous participation in all activities. What could we accomplish by building the most beautiful church and yet, not to visit and support it?

During 1979, we performed services and celebrated national feast days such as; the Eve of Armenian Church and the Eve of Easter, the feast of St. Vartanantz, sunrise service during the lenten period, the commemoration of our Martyr's of 1915, dedication service of our newly elected Parish Council Members, morning prayer service and Holy Communion in Memorial Park, the Blessing of Grapes and Antasdan on the open field of St. Thomas High School. We also observed an American Christmas Eve with the participation of the Choir, school faculty and students of our church school. Again this year, besides having requested requiem services, we has a special requiem service on November 18th on the occasion of the 16th Anniversary of our Church for all those faithfully departed who worked with great dedication and devotion for the establishment of our Church.

We are happy that more and more of our parishioners during Divine Liturgy Services do approach with awe to the altar to receive Holy Communion. The distribution of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and entering into communion with Christ is the climax of each Sunday's worship. One rooted custom which has become an obstacle for taking Holy Communion every Sunday has lead to a misinterpretation within our minds, that by receiving Holy Communion too often is not necessary and disrespectful towards Christ, This, like other explanations, are contrary to the Doctrine and Dogma of our Church. There is not a more inviting and desiring and spiritually uplifted state than to be in continuous communion with Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Again this year, many faithful parishioners and their families have decorated the Church altar with fresh flowers and candles Sunday after Sunday for different occasions. We have also prayed for those who are ill physically or mentally in

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hospitals or at home.

SACRAMENTS

During the year 1979, the number of sacraments performed at our church is as follows: four (4) baptisms, four (4) engagements, ten (10) weddings, one (1) 50th wedding anniversary service and no funerals. However, I have participated to funeral services on three (3) occasions where the deceased was from Armenian descent, but affiliated to another denomination church or in the case where the spouse is or was an Armenian. On thirteen (13) occasions, I have visited cemeteries and performed blessing of graves and requiem prayers.

VISITATIONS

Visiting my parish people is one of my important duties. I visit the hospitals where our parishioners are ill, I also visit nursing and old age homes, business establishments and the homes of my parishioners. Some of my visits are for counseling parishioners on certain occasions whether it be in happiness or sadness, lack of work, immigration problems, before weddings, before baptisms, before engagements, visits for comfort in death and blessing of homes. The total number of my visitations this year has been 173. On 29 other occasions, visitations were made in regards to my attendance to receptions and family gatherings.

MEETINGS

As Pastor, I attend all meetings in the parish. I preside over these meetings and assist my guidance. I also have had personal private meetings with many parishioners. The total number of meetings attended this past year has been 304. These include; the Parish Council, the Ladies Auxiliary, to all choir rehearsals, the P.T.A., the Sunday and Armenian School teachers, the Board of Trustees, to baptismal rehearsals, to wedding rehearsals, meetings with various committees assigned for specific cultural, spiritual and social functions, with the St. Thomas High School Dean prior to scheduling programs, with many lawyers, meetings with the immigration and naturalization offices, with employer executives to secure employment for parishioners, with the Pledge Committee Chairman, with the Building Committee Chairman, with the Architect of our building, Mr. Bill Wortham, with the artist for the prospective drawing of our building, with the Armenian Festival Committee, with Channel 13 T.V. personnel, with commercial and radio announcement personnel, with people prior to establishing their own business, with immigration and naturalization medical doctors and my presence in court as a character witness. I am very happy to report that in most instances, our meetings have ran quite smoothly and in a very orderly fashion within a cordial atmosphere. Except, for a few instances within the Parish Council and the Armenian Festival Committee meetings where a few members have responded openly with profanity towards others antagonizing a shameful situation. We do hope these few instances will not repeat themselves in the future.

CHURCH OFFICE

Presently, we do not have a permanent church location or a base for the church office. The Parish Rectory has served twofold, therefore, being a living quarter and also having to be used as a church office. This has made it very difficult for my family. There are not established office hours, since most of my time is spent away from the office, meeting with parishioners in their homes, or at a designated location. With my absence, disappointment has occurred with some people who call the

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church office to speak with me. Their concern is a valid definition for everyone who cares for the parish. I do sympathize to this situation and have already brought this matter to the immediate attention of the Parish Council.

My working hours are daily from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and at times even later depending on a given situation except, for Monday's which has been designated as my day off which I take only once in a while. In my office, I initiate and plan various activities concerning the life of the church. I communicate with parishioners by telephone and prepare all letters, cards, recommendation letters and announcements for church organizations. I spent time keeping up-to-date the church's Master File of names and addresses which entails the addition of all newcomers who have moved into the city. At the present time, we are very unfortunate in not having a church secretary to do some of the partial office work and the typing. For this reason, I have been implied to depend and impose unjustly upon my wife which is a definite hardship. You as a parish should take strong consideration towards hiring a part-time secretary to handle this situation.

My sincere appreciation goes to Mr. Yohannes Hekimian for allowing me the use of his business office and telephone to make some of my office calls which I have been in town.

NEWS BRIEFS

I am in full charge of the publication of the "NEWS BRIEFS" bulletin paper. I provide all the parish news and write this in English and Armenian. The typing is prepared by my wife, Christine as I have no other choice for assistance. Together, we prepare each issue with very primitive tools since the parish does not have any of the proper equipment for this purpose except for a church telephone. Each issue of the News Briefs costs \$70.00 to prepare and mail. Since many of the parishioners do not support this publication and since the parish cannot financially afford to wholly support it, we are forced to only send out each issue when the parish funds allow. For any errors in past publications, our apologies are extended, as they were not caused intentionally.

It has truly been a rewarding experience working with the teachers of our Armenian and Sunday School and the Board of Trustees. My appreciation and gratitude at this time is extended to Mrs. Shakeh Guzel, Superintendent and Mr. Haikaz Ohanian, Chairman of the P.T.A., for their dedication and devotion towards the school. Also, my thanks are extended to all the teachers who faithfully arrive regularly every Sunday prepared with new techniques in teaching our children the Armenian Language, Armenian History, dancing, singing and Christian Education. The only drawback our school has seen is the lack of parental support in bringing their children to the school continuously. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am happy to announce that in 1979, our school received a \$2,000 grant from the A.G.B.U. towards the training of our teachers and for better equipment for our students. We were also pleased and honored with the visit of Miss Silva DerStepanian, Director of the Armenian Language Lab, sent to us by our Diocese. Her visit brought a teacher training session providing us with newly added publications, methods and techniques for teaching the Armenian Language.

We are considered very fortunate in having a strong-willed and active organization such as the Ladies Auxiliary within our parish. Their members are of all ages and they voluntarily work together in the preparation of their fund-raising, social, cultural and religious natured functions. At this time, I wish to express my

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sincere appreciation to their Chairman, Mrs. Khatoon Ohanian along with her Executive Body for their continued support and strength and also to each member of the organization for their dedication and devoted work.

1979 marked the 16th Anniversary of the establishment of this parish which was organized in 1963 and on this occasion was remembered on Sunday, November 18th with a banquet and program. On that day, we honored Mr. Garabed Keramian, Mrs. Shakeh Berberian and Mrs. Armen Najarian for their unselfish dedication and support to our parish for its success over so many years.

CULTURAL EVENTS

This past year, we tried to pursue and present appealing cultural events to our parish. On February 11th, we displayed the fine art work of Miss Mary Melikian, on February 22nd our Choir and Parish Council organized and hosted St. Vartanantz Day along with a fund-raising for the Lebanon Relief Fund. Unfortunately, this particular function did not see much support or participation from our parishioners to financially aid the Lebanon Relief Fund. On April 22nd, the Parish Council organized the 164th Anniversary of the 1915 Martyr's Day Commemoration with a joint presentation on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Adom Yarjanian Siamonto who was martyred during the massacres. On April 29th, the Ladies Auxiliary hosted Mrs. Ermance Rejebian with a presentation and book review of her recent travels entitled, "CHINA TODAY" featuring the history, customs and art of the Chinese people. On June 1st, with the support and preparation of the whole parish, we appeared on Houston's local T.V. station, Channel 13's "GOOD MORNING HOUSTON" program to introduce and promote our 2nd Annual Armenian Festival to take place in Memorial Park. The publicity from this, enabled the Armenians an introduction to Houstonians, of our history and background. In September, the Parish Council organized an all day ethnic festival which took place in Westbury Square. We do hope that 1980 will show better results for participation of these cultural events, our wish is to increase the number of these events for the coming year.

I am happy to announce at this time, of a very generous donation our church has received from Mr. Winston Koomey of a parlor grand piano to be used in our new church hall especially for cultural events. This piano is presently being kept in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sooren Yeriazarian who graciously extended the space.

ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PARISH

As an officer of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America assigned as the spiritual pastor of the Armenians within Texas, I was involved in some activities which took place outside of the city of Houston. I have visited the Armenian community in Dallas, Texas and met with many families there. On May 9th, with Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate, participated to the Annual Assembly of the National Council of Churches of America in San Antonio, Texas. For this occasion, a gathering of the Armenian families there was organized. At that gathering, a branch was rooted with the establishment of the Armenian Apostolic Church of San Antonio. A Ladies Auxiliary and a Parish Council was selected by His Eminence. In October, with the occasion of an Engagement service, I visited Austin and met with many of the Armenian families there. In November, I visited Brookshire, Texas seeing Armenians who have been there for many years.

To pursue and strengthen my own personal knowledge, growth and education, I have attended clergy ministril seminars at St. Luke's Methodist Church downtown and

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have found this a rewarding experience towards my priesthood and daily work.

SOME THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS

We are all happy to see our parish growing from year to year. Many Armenian families are immigrating all the time into Houston from cities around the world to settle and start new lives. Many students who originally arrived in Houston only for a temporary length of time, have decided to remain permanently and they are now becoming the future generation of our parish in Houston. With the growth of people, our demands and problems have more than tripled and the obligations of the church has risen unforeseeably. In spite of these demands, our people are not compensating and fulfilling their shares and obligations towards the church to support it financially. This cannot continue. We cannot expect a church to be able to operate and answer to all our demands in that condition. There are only a handful of people who faithfully support this church financially. This church belongs to all of us, we must and should share the expense equally. All those who expect the church to help them should support the church so no one is left with empty hands.

Our church in Houston has become not only a place of worship, she has always responded to the needs of her people with undivided devotion. When you have asked for the church's assistance on time, we have promptly answered always on time. During the recent crisis in Iran, the church financially supported the presence of an immigration lawyer to render any and all assistance to those in need. Yet, with all the church's moral, spiritual and financial help, she has not asked for any compromises in return.

We are all Armenians and we are definitely proud of our church, culture, heritage and traditions. But, these are only good wishes, and in order to be worthy in working to keep these, we must make them living wishes. We can no longer be like any other community, we must come to realize that in America, in order to be able to continue to be proud Armenians, we have to work for it; we have to dedicate and sacrifice ourselves through money and personal effort in order to succeed.

A matter of concern which has come to my attention within our parish revolves around many of our members who are not of Armenian descent, but have married into Armenian families. First and most important, it should be our top priority to welcome each of them and try our very best to make them feel completely comfortable. They themselves have come willingly and we should not every make or attempt to show any chauvinistic attitudes towards these members. We should, on the other hand, do our utmost to encourage them to take part with us in working together for the Armenian Cause. We have absolutely no right whatsoever to state whether he or she is or is not an Armenian, just the opposite, with our encouragement and open welcomeness, will arouse them to state that he or she is an Armenian!!

PLEDGE COMMITTEE

In early 1979, a Pledge Committee was organized under the Chairmanship of Mr. Paul Caramanian. It was unanimously agreed at last year's Annual Assembly, that each member will pledge a minimum of \$104 per year in order to secure funds for financial assistance to the church. However, Mr. Paul Caramanian could not continue his Chairmanship and consequently the time element was lost and therefore, the Committee was delayed in their work. Presently, Mr. Krikor Derian, appointed by the Parish Council is the Pledge Committee Chairman and for the year 1979 has secured over \$3,600 in pledges.

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The year 1980 holds many major undertakings that our parish will attempt to succeed in accomplishing. During the weekend of March 21st, 22nd and 23rd, His Eminence, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate of our Diocese will visit our parish. On this occasion, we will hold a "KICK-OFF" fund-raising campaign for financial donations towards the building of our new Church. We would like to see everyone participate to this utmost important and probably the most important function in the history and life of our church. The Finance Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Garbis Eknoyan, was organized in making the appeal for donations towards the building of our church, has already received numerous donations which will be formally announced at this gathering to take place in March. Your heartfelt and devoted support will be greatly needed at this function for the future building of our new Church. The time has finally arrived for us to stop talking and start acting to show our intentions.

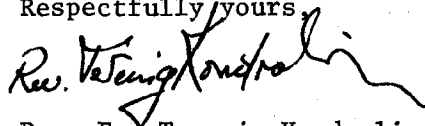
April 24, 1980 will mark the 65th Anniversary of the Armenian Martyr's of the 1915 Massacres. This weekend will be dedicated by the Parish Council to gracefully commemorate the honor of all Martyr's with a special function and spiritual service. This time each year, holds special value and remembrances for Armenians all around the world. Armenian communities everywhere will commemorate this 65th Anniversary as we shall here in Houston.

Following the "KICK-OFF" campaign for the fund-raising function in March, our parish hope to see the support she sincerely deserves and has waited so long for, become a reality. We hope to witness the actual construction of our new Church and Church Cultural Center begin in the late Spring of 1980. To see this happen will be proven by all of us in our strength and love for our Church and our Community and with God's help, this will be.

This year, my first priority will mostly be concentrated on the construction of our new Church buildings, I truly hope it will also be yours as well.

At the conclusion of my report, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to all the Parish Council Members, their Chairman, to all members of each organization and their Executive Bodies and especially to all of you, the parishioners of St. George Armenian Church for the cooperation shown for the success of another year in our parish.

Respectfully yours,



Rev. Fr. Terenig Kondralian,
Pastor

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1980

This is the fourth Annual Parish Assembly of our church. It is the time when we, all the caring members in good standing, assemble together to examine, to hear, to question, to criticize constructively and to appreciate the results and the accounts of activities and accomplishments of the past year. We, the Assembly of our church, are the legitimate authority, the governing body of our church and its community. What we collectively mark and appoint will be the policy of our church for the next year. For these reasons, each and every dues paying member must ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit and put his or her Christian conscience into work before taking steps in deciding what is good and beneficial and what is unhealthy and demeaning for our church.

For the past 17 centuries, since the year 301 A.D., our Mother Church with her orthodox and apostolic teachings based on the foundation of Christ, has been the most powerful, organized, longlasting christian national institution in the past and in the present history and life of our people. We call her Mother Church, because, like a Mother, she gave everything of herself to insure the ever-existence of Christ's faith amongst her children. This very church, our Mother Church, like other christian churches, who are in comparison much more enormous than ours, has her rules, regulations, canons, by-laws and a hierarchy instituted specially for all those who enter in her to become members. The discipline of our church, which is established by Christ and by our orthodox fathers, have practiced during the past centuries, and it is in practice until today. We, the present leaders of our church, are not about to bargain that discipline with individuals who are conscientiously tampering with the living character of our church. In the past, our church has witnessed arrogance in people such as these, who are here today, gone tomorrow, yet our church still grows strong and green for the future. Our Armenian Apostolic Church is a living church, a breathing church, a growing church, in spite of all the harassments, persecutions and tyrannies in the past. She is the living link between our past, present and of our future. We here in Houston, should make the utmost efforts to be sure no one hinders to discredit and undermine the discipline and unity of our Mother Church. Not only for the sake of our forefathers, but for our own sake and especially for our children. And, why not for all those who do not know hardly what they are doing in arrogance.

This gathering, this assembly, is very important for me personally. It is the time, when once a year, I give to you the accounts of my works which all of you have entrusted in me, and express my sincere thoughts, feelings and worries on certain issues which concerns the everyday life of our church

The year 1980 marked the 17th year of our Parish's existence. Since 1963, our church here in Houston has grown unceasingly and still more than before, families from other states and other countries are coming to join us and be part of our community. The Parish Council, my immediate colleagues, under the Chairmanship of Mr. James Boyajian, in spite of four elected resignees, carried out and fulfilled their responsibilities in administrating this parish spiritually, morally and financially.

In an active growing congregation like our own, the Parish Council needs the support and the firm commitments of all parishioners, in order to confront this growth and remain a positive force within our community.

In the year 1977, I became the first pastor of St. George Armenian Church of Houston, and with the conclusion of 1980, I have completed my fourth year.

EVERY SUNDAY WORSHIP

During the year 1980, every Sunday, I led and celebrated Soorp Badarak at St. Thomas High School Chapel except on Sunday, March 23rd, when our Diocesan Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian visited our parish and celebrated the Divine Liturgy Service and awarded Mr. Zaven Kirksharian and Mr. and Mrs. Boghos Hekimian for their devotion and dedication to our Church, and on Sunday, June 1st, when I was away attending to the Annual Diocesan Assembly in Washington, D.C.

Soorp Badarak in our church was scheduled from 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Since we did not have our permanent church, I had to prepare and set the church every Saturday evening and remove all prior preparations following Sunday's service. I have prepared and delivered 92 sermons during Badarak and for other worshipping hours in two languages.

CHOIR

The Choir of our church is present to all church services, together with the deacons of our church namely, Mr. Krikor Derian, Mr. Stepan Nazarian, Mr. Haikaz Gharakhanian and Mr. Antranig Mavoulian and Mr. Vrooyr Frankian, who served the altar graciously. At this time, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all the deacons and to each and every Choir member for their time and dedication and especially to Mr. Hovig Frankian, Choirmaster, for his devotion towards his responsibility. Although good, our Choir is not in excellent shape. There is a great need for more rehearsing and prompt attendance to every Sunday Worship. Their late arrivals disturbs all those who are taking part in the service. This error must be taken under serious consideration.

During 1980, we performed services and celebrated national feast days such as, Christmas Eve and Easter Eve of our Armenian Church, Commemoration of Sts. Vartanantz, Sunrise service during the Lenten period, the 65th Anniversary Commemoration of our Martyr's of 1915, Morning prayer service and Holy Communion in Memorial Park, the Blessing of Grapes and Antasdan on the open field of St. Thomas High School. We also observed the American Christmas Eve with the participation of the Choir and on the occasion of St. Stephen the first deacon and first martyr of the Christian Church, we honored all our deacons and choir members for their dedicated work.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to all faithful parishioners and families who have decorated the church altar with fresh flowers and candles Sunday after Sunday, for many worthy occasions. During Soorp Badaraks, we have prayed for those who were ill physically or mentally in hospitals or at home.

SACRAMENTS

During the year 1980, the number of sacraments offered at our church is as follows:

9 Baptisms, 7 Engagements, 8 Weddings, 1 (40th) Wedding Anniversary and 1 Burial Service for one of the early founders of our Church, Mr. Hrant Bardouni.

However, I have participated to funeral services on two occasions where the deceased was of Armenian decents, but affiliated with another church denomination. Several times I have visited cemeteries and offered Blessing of Graves and requiem prayers.

Most of our parishioners who requested the above sacraments notified the church much too late prior to their desired date. On each occasion, this made it very difficult for the church in making all preparations necessary and pre-planning towards each desired sacrament. This past summers, my family and myself forfeited our vacation in order to fulfill each offered sacrament. In the future, it will be required from all our parishioners to notify the church of each desired sacrament 6 to 8 weeks prior to the date in order that we may avoid any over-laps and cater to all arrangements such as counseling, time and date scheduleing. On one instance, a sacrament was required from the church only two days prior to the actual day desired. Do not let the church to be the last to know of your upcoming wedding, engagement or baptism, just the opposite, the church should actually be the first to be informed.

VISITATIONS

Visitng my parish people is one of my important duties. Every Tuesday I visit the hospitals where our parishioners are ill. I also visit Nursing and Old Age Homes, business establishments and homes of my parishioners. Some of my visits are for counseling on certain occasions whether it be in happiness or sadness, boredom or lack of work, immigration problems, before weddings, before baptisms, before engagements, visits to families where there has been a death and blessing of homes. The total number of my visitations for this past year has been 117. On 17 other occasions, visitations were made to receptions, family gatherings, and public appearances.

MEETINGS

As the Pastor and the President of the St. George Armenian Church, I attend and preside to all meetings within our parish. I also have had personal and confidential meetings with many parishioners. The total number of meetings attended this past year has been 338. These include; the Parish Council, The Ladies Auxiliary, to all Choir rehearsals and meetings, the PTA, the Sunday and Armenian School Teachers, the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, baptismal rehearsals, wedding rehearsals, meetings with various committees assigned for a specific cultural, religious and social functions, with the St. Thomas High School Dean prior to scheduling to programs, with many lawyers, meetings with the Immigration and Naturalization officers, with business executives to secure employment for young and old parishioners, with the Annual Pledge Committee

Chairman, with the Building Committee Chairman, with the Architect, Mr. Bill Wortham, with the Artist for the prospective drawing of our Church, Mr. Albert Jones, with the Fairdale Construction Company, Mr. Ron Davis, meetings with the Westheimer Clergy and Church Association, meetings with the Clergy of Eastern Orthodox Churches Organization, with the Armenian Festival Committee, with the Channel 13 T.V. personnel, Mr. Don Nelson, Mrs. Jan Glenn, Mr. James Masucci, with commerical radio announcements personnel, Mr. Alvin VanBlack and Mr. David Fowler, with Immigration and Naturalization Medical Doctors, and attended in legal courts as a character witness. I am very happy to report at this time, that the church was able to fulfill each request with nothing in return with no one being turned away. Our meetings, in most instances, have runned quite smoothly and in a very orderly fashion within a cordial atmosphere.

ORGANIZATIONS

We are considered very fortunate within our Parish in having a strong willed and active organization such as the Women's Guild. Their members are of all ages and they voluntarily work together in their preparations of their fund raising, social, cultural and religious natured functions. During the past year, this organization has gone through unnecessary turmoil. The anomosity amongst themselves and misunderstandings and gossips, have caused the resignation of some members. However, alot has been lost, but not yet failed. The organization is recruiting her old members and new members as well. At this time, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to their Chairman, Mrs. Khatoonig Ohanian along with her Executive Body for their continued support and strength for resisting the agony and the hard times and also to each member of the organization for their dedication and devoted work.

It has truly been a rewarding experience working with the teachers and the trustees of our Armenian and Sunday School. My appreciation and gratitude at this time is extended to Mr. Haigaz Ohanian, Superintendent and Mrs. Shake' Guzel, Chairman of the PTA for their dedication and devotion towards the school. Also my thanks are extended to all the teachers who come every Sunday without any monetary expectations. Because we do not have our own classroom facilities, our teachers should not feel the opportunity to arrive late. Promptness is a discipline that needs better practice. The parents of our students need security in knowing that their children are going to the school at the specified time and that the teacher will be there to greet each student. In the summer of 1980, we organized an Armenian Studies Vacation School spread out on a once a week basis for 8 weeks, where the children, mostly teenagers, came together to learn the Armenian language, history, songs and Christian Religious Education. This past year, we received a grant in the amount of \$2,500 from Mr. and Mrs. Anthony G. Masraff, to be utilized for the specific purpose of education offered through our church. With the agreement of the school officers and the Parish Council, we are planning to create an Armenian Language Endowment Fund to secure Armenian language and Christian Education classes within our parish. During the weekend of November 21st, 22nd and 23rd, we were pleased and honored with the visitation of Miss Sylvia DerStepanian, Director of the Armenian Language Lab sent to us from our Diocese. Her visit brought a teachers training session providing us with newly added publications, methods and techniques for

teaching the Armenian Language. She also taught an 8 hour 600 sentence Adult Armenian Language Crash program.

45% of our parish are young people over 18 years of age, married or single, American born and recent newcomers. There was an urgent need for a youth organization which would be socially, culturally and spiritually oriented. There was a need of an organization which could bring all of these young people into one, to give them a chance to meet, under the auspices of the church, to teach the history of our national heritage, awakening amongst them the national awareness and give them the opportunities to work together so that they may become the future leaders of our community. Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, which is the name of our organization, is an established group within the United States. It has been in existence for the past 40 years. More than 52 Armenian Churches spread throughout the Eastern Diocese of the United States have their own branches who followed their National Constitution. After a year of preparation and planning, on November 23, 1980, with the presence of Mr. James Magarian, National Youth Director of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America and Miss Nancy Basmajian, we officially established and organized this youth group here in Houston. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Chairmen of this organization, Mr. Johnny Jordan and Miss Ani Mavoulian, for their courageous responsibility. We would also like to thank each and every member of the organization hoping to work with them for many years to come. This Armenian Church Youth Organization of America will eventually become the focal point of our community with their youth activities.

PLEDGE COMMITTEE

This is one committee, which was the most productive during the past year of 1980. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. Krikor Derian, the Pledge Committee worked and accomplished the unexpected. They tripled the number of the contributors and the amount of the contributions in the form of pledges. The annual financial pledge is one of the most important assets to our church. Without financial help, we cannot accomplish our goals. Without these means, we would not have been able to have done what we did. It is by the contributions and the committee headed by Krikor Derian that these accomplishment were realized. The determination that I see in Krikor Derian is very exemplary, for everyone who has a responsibility to fulfill, should take notice from his work. He believed in what he did, he expressed his belief in his words and in his work. With this kind of approach, we can accomplish the impossible. It is not enough just to believe, it is not enough to devote, unless it is expressed through work. My sincere thanks and gratitude to Mr. Krikor Derian and his committee for all their time and efforts put forth.

BUILDING FUND

For the past 3 years, we have worked with Mr. Stephen Saxenian, who is the Chairman of the Building Committee. We have spent numerous hours with the architects and the construction company, trying to finalize all details. We have confronted many, many problems, but we have always solved them. The construction of our church has surely taken a long time, it has created uneasiness amongst our people who do not understand from

the construction work. However, all these delays ^{will have} its positive results after the completion of our church buildings. Our sincere thanks to Mr. Saxenian and to Mr. Garabed Keramian, for their devoted guidance in the treasury of the building fund. At this time, we would like to say thank you to Dr. Garbis Eknoyan for being Chairman of the Building Fund of whose efforts we have begun to receive the promised pledges which were pledged during the past year. However, the work of the building fund is just beginning. With the beginning of the construction of our church, we need a durable and a strong building fund committee to plan and carry out a building fund raising through our parish and nationwide. During the past year, I have done some fund raising within the State of Texas and in other states. We hope to see the results very soon.

CULTURAL EVENTS

This past year, we tried to present appealing cultural events to our parishioners. On Sunday, February 10th, our Choir and Parish Council organized and hosted Sts. Vartanantz Day. On Sunday, March 9th, Dr. Garo Garabedian, An Armenian Poet and author visited our parish and spoke about contemporary literature in America. On Sunday, April 26th, the Parish Council along with all organizations of our church, commemorated the 65th Anniversary of our Martyrs. On this occasion, we organized television programs. On Tuesday, March 22nd, we appeared on Channel 8 public station along with our Diocesan Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, accompanied with Mr. Boghos Hekimian and Mr. Julius Szentendrey where we discussed and informed the public about the Geneocide of our people. On Thursday, April 24th, we appeared on "Good Morning Houston" to discuss and inform the public about the Turkish Geneocide. On April 24th and 26th, the Case of the Forgotten Genocide Film was aired. On Sunday, June 15th with the support and preparation of the whole parish, we organized the Third Annual Armenian Festival in Memorial Park. On Thursday, June 12th, we appeared on Houston's local Channel 13 "Good Morning Houston's" program to introduce and promote our festival. The Armenian Festival is an occasion to introduce our history, our culture, our church to our Houstonian Brothers and Sisters. I would like to thank Mr. George Hekimian, Mr. Yohannes Hekimian and Mr. Peter Basralian as well each and every person who worked on that festival in sharing the success of that affair. On Sunday, October 19th, we had the opportunity to present an historical Armenian film Tavit Beg and Mekhitar Sparabed at the River Oaks Theater. On Sunday, November 30th, we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the birth of Gomidas Vartabed.

ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PARISH

As an officer of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, besides being the Pastor of our church, I have been assigned to organize and to take care of the spiritual needs of Armenians outside Houston within the State of Texas. During the past year, I have visited the Armenian Community in Dallas and met with many families there. We have organized a Parish Council and a Women's Guild of the Armenian Church in Dallas/Fortworth, Texas. I have visited several times with the company of our Archbishop to San Antonio, Texas. Presently, we have 3 centers of Armenian communities within Texas mainly Houston, San Antonio and Dallas/Fortworth. The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America forsees strong Armenian communities to be formed here in the near future. We as

an organized parish, must extend our helping hand to all the Armenians within the State of Texas.

CHURCH OFFICE

Presently we do not have a permanent church office location. The parish rectory has served twofold, being a living quarters and also having to be used as the church office. This has made it very difficult for me and for my family. The distance of the church office from the center of town, makes it almost impossible and impractical to ask from people to meet me there. For these reasons, I am obliged to come to town. Because of this, most of my time is spent away from the office, traveling by car to meet with parishioners in their homes or at a designated location. My working hours are daily from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and at times even later depending on a given situation. Monday's are designated to be my day off, in the year 1980, I have only taken five day's off. In my office, I initiate and plan various activities concerning the life of the church. I communicate with parishioners by telephone and prepare all letters, thank-you cards, recommendation letters and announcements for church organizations. I spend time keeping up-to-date the church's Master File of names and addresses which entails the addition of all newcomers, who have moved into the city. At the present time, we are very unfortunate in not having a church secretary to do some of the partial office work and the typing. For this reason, I have been implied to depend and impose unjustly upon my wife which is a definite hardship.

My sincere appreciation goes to Mr. Yohannes Hekimian for allowing our church the use of his business office and telephone to make some of my office calls when I have been in town for the past 3½ years.

NEWS BRIEFS

I am in full charge of the publication of the "NEWS BRIEFS" by-monthly bulletin paper. I provide all the parish news and write this in English and Armenian. The typing is prepared by my wife, Christine as I have no other choice for assistance. Together, we prepare each issue with very primitive tools since the parish does not have any of the proper equipment for this purpose except for a church telephone. Each issue of the News Briefs costs \$90.00 to prepare and mail. Since many of the parishioners do not support this publication and since the parish cannot financially afford to wholly support it, we are forced to only send out each issue when the parish funds allow. For any errors in past publications, our apologies are extended, as they were not caused intentionally.

SOME THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS

On January 11, 1981, we celebrated our last Divine Liturgy Service at St. Thomas High School Chapel. After using the facilities for 3½ years at St. Thomas High School, we were kindly asked to vacate the premises. The reason for this, because we had abused the facilities. It was not the money, but yet the rights that were given to us that were abused. We did not respect the time limits imposed upon us, the waste of energy that we caused, the cost of expense was enormous. The air conditioning repair that we caused on St. Thomas was \$40,000. This came about

during the hot months when the temperature exceeded 100, we could not keep up with keeping the permitted premises clean to their standards, and on one occasion, a window glass was broken caused by our carelessness. For the first two years, I personally took care of all cleaning of the premises, but could not for the last year. These few little things compounded over 3½ years is what caused us to lose St. Thomas. However, we left St. Thomas in a friendly atmosphere, and now another Roman Catholic Church gave us refuge. On Sunday, February 1st, we began our church services at St. Cyril of Alexandria Roman Catholic Church where we are assembled today. We are given these facilities to use, let us not abuse them once again.

This year, is our year, it is a time to unify all our forces, this is the year we will remember in years to come. This is the year for us to build, we are going to build, and we are going to begin to build in a few short weeks. Unless we do that collectively, unless we take part in all that is needed to be done in order to succeed in building our church, cultural center and school, we must do our share. We shall remember for many years to come, who took a share in helping and who did not. It is a privilege to be a participant in building a church. I believe our parish here in Houston has a history that is twofold, that, that will be written prior to our building of our church and that, that will be written after the church has been built. With our new attitude and church buildings, St. George Armenian Church will now become known as St. Kevork Armenian Church and along with this change, our address will also be 3211 Synott Road instead of the present 15119 Wellman Lane. One year ago, it was very bleak, the idea of building the entire complex of our church center, but with the recent contribution of the Sam Harrison residence in Tanglewood, our dreams will become a reality. Presently we have 85% of the funds of which to build, we are short only a mere 15%. No other community in the history of the Armenian Church had the same opportunity as we do have here in Houston. Can we complete that 15%? Can we try? I believe that we most certainly can. With every Armenian participating, we will build together. It should be realized that this is our home and it is going to be shared by everyone with no discrimination. Let us leave aside all our disagreements, animosities, personal conflicts, personal gains, gossips, political persuasions and pursue only one thing, let us make the motto for the year 1981:

"WE SHALL BUILD IN 81."

A matter of concern which has come to my attention within our parish revolves around many newcomers. I said in the beginning of my report, that there alot of families who are coming to make Houston their home. These families and individual persons need our social help, to find them homes to live in, information as to where to live, to find doctors, counseling for business, immigration counseling, job finding, food to eat, furniture to use, schools to go to and many other types of assistance. It is a full time job. It is not only the job of the clergyman, it would mean to leave aside all other works for the parish and pursue and help these newcomers. It needs a committee by itself, to dedicate specially in helping these people. We need a committee of social workers who are trained and are devoted in extending a helping hand to all those who come to Houston.

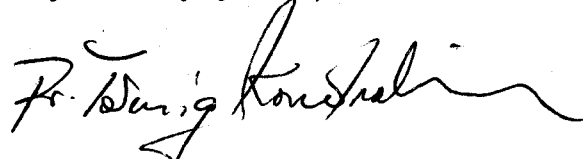
WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

A matter that I hardly mention at times, is the financial end of our

church. However, I feel that at this point in the upcoming building of the church, I must begin to talk. In the Fall of 1981, we will be able to begin to use our new church facilities. The group of people who have already made their contributions to the church in order that we may build will not always be there and they have already done what many others have not yet been able to, but we must look to other ways and avenues in order to secure financial assistance to maintain our church center. We should seriously consider in creating a designated committee that will look towards ways and means in securing funds and seek professional guidance by using our own facilities in generating income to help us maintain all of our buildings.

This year my first priority will mostly be concentrating on the construction of our new church buildings. I truly hope it will also be yours as well. At the conclusion of my report, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to all the Parish Council Members, their Chairman, to all members of each organization and their Executive Bodies and especially to all of you, the dues paying members in good standing and the assembly of St. Kevork Armenian Church for the cooperation shown for the success of another year in our parish.

Prayerfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Terenig Kondralian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Reverend Father Terenig Kondralian,
Pastor