

1998 Annual Report

St. Gregory the Illuminator
Armenian Church

Parish Assembly-February 21, 1999

6700 West Diversey - Chicago, IL 60707
(PLEASE READ THIS REPORT PRIOR TO ATTENDING THE ASSEMBLY)

ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR ARMENIAN CHURCH

1998 Annual Report

February 21, 1999

Rev. Dn. Aren Jebejian - Deacon-in Charge

Through the grace and blessings of the Holy Spirit, I was assigned to the St. Gregory Parish by His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, on January 1, 1998. I begin this report with thanksgiving in my heart to our Creator for giving me the strength and fortitude to serve as an unworthy servant in his vineyard over the past year. I ask that the faithful continue to pray for me in my ministry.

At first glance many goals and priorities were set. Nothing can happen overnight and I have tried to keep a clear perspective on what the immediate needs are of the parish and what the long-term goals should be. I believe that growth needs to be a constant in ALL areas of the church life.

Overall, forward and positive progress has been made in both the spiritual, liturgical and communal aspects of our family of worshippers.

LITURGICAL/SPIRITUAL

The most important aspect of our family life has been the celebration of regular church services. We have had the celebration of Divine Liturgy at least once a month. Effort has been given to see that out-of-town visiting clergy can be used for other services such as sacraments, lectures etc...

A blessing to our community has been the ordination of John Paklaian to the Sub-diaconate. His training continues with classes every week. A small group of young men have come forward to serve on the altar, more formal training will take place in the near future with dates already set.

Over the past year the choir has seen great improvements. I am grateful to our director Mr. Sarkis Gircik and to Georgette Mrofcza who has returned as our church organist.

Special effort has been made to properly instruct the faithful during pre-baptismal/marital consultations. I have also made efforts to console those who have lost a family member. These are aspects of Pastoral Ministry which have been lacking in the community.

The following sacraments have taken place:

Weddings

- Diane Frankian & Robert Guveyian (May 9)
- Sharon Battle & Vatche Khatchadourian (September 13)
- Jennifer Wisiewski & Michael Nahabedian (December 20)

Baptisms

- Francesca Chiodo (May 16)

- George-Ann Michael (November 8)

Funerals

- Vartan Arkanian (February 18)
- Barkev Hitik (June 24)
- Azniv Frankian (September 28)

I am thankful to the following clergy who have celebrated Divine Liturgy over the past year:

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Very Rev. Fr. Mamigon Kiledgian
Very Rev. Fr. Khoren Hovanesian
Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan
Rev. Fr. Garen Gdanian
Rev. Fr. Haig Donigian
Rev. Fr. Vahram Hazarian
Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian

Efforts have been made to draw up guidelines for the parishioners regarding the sacraments. This booklet should be ready for publication in the near future.

Special programs took place during Great Lent which were designed to educate and enhance the spiritual growth of our community. The Diocesan Lenten Journal was distributed, Lenten Lecture Series at the Friday Lenten Dinners and a six-part lecture series took place in lieu of a sermon on Sunday mornings. I trust that these programs will continue with even greater success in 1999.

Bible study has also been established taking place every second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Attendance has been sporadic, however this important ministry will continue.

PARISH LIFE

I have attended and presided over meetings and programs of various church organizations to the best of my ability and as my schedule has allowed. I am especially thankful to the executive bodies of the various organizations for their successful programming throughout the year.

I am especially proud of the work and efforts which have been put towards the Christian education of our children and the re-opening of the Sunday School under the direction of Mrs. Diane Abezetian. Her efforts and dedication is to be commended and our parish is truly blessed to have such a dedicated staff and parents.

An area of parish life which seemed to be missing was the regular and often visitation of parishioners at home, at the workplace as well as the hospital. In keeping with our church tradition of home visitations, I have made efforts to bring these traditions back to use. I have also made numerous hospital visitations to the sick of our community bringing spiritual comfort, prayer as well as communion when requested. Priority has been given to the spiritual well-being of the parishioners. Numerous parishioners have sought-out spiritual direction and counseling. Attention of the spiritual well-being of our parishioners has been lacking, and priority is given to this aspect of my ministry.

DIOCESAN

I have attended the three diocesan sponsored conventions:

- Clergy Conference & Diocesan Assembly May 3-9 (NY)
- ACYOA Annual Assembly and Sports Weekend May 21-24 (Detroit)
- AACCA Choir Convention November 6-7 (Boston)

In addition as a member of the National Consultation for the Oriental Orthodox - Roman Catholic Dialogue, I attended the annual consultation on June 8-9 (NY).

As per the directive of the Diocesan Primate, I served as the Assistant Director of the St. Nersess Deacon's Training Program (June 25 - July 7) at the Seminary in New York.

MIDWEST REGIONAL

I have served the Midwest Region in various capacities, most noteworthy as the Co-Chair of the Midwest sponsored Diocesan Centennial Celebrations along with Midwest Regional Council Chairman, George Nahabedian.

The ongoing and fraternal relationship with the Midwest Clergy has produced some fruitful events for the region including ACYOA Jrs. Lock-ins, Women's Saint's Day (Hosted by St. Gregory), Martyr's Day Commemoration, Sunday School Teacher's Seminars, The Church Fathers' Seminars as well as a Relationship Seminar.

I also attended the Midwest Regional "HYE CAMP" as a member of the Religion Staff. This important ministry to our children has brought forth interest of our youth in the church.

These and other activities keep St. Gregory involved in regional efforts.

ECUMENICAL

Under the direction of our diocesan primate, efforts have been made to establish ties with our ecumenical brothers in the Chicago area which have barely ever existed.

Towards this end a filial relationship has been made with the religious leaders of Chicago. Three separate meetings have taken place with Francis Cardinal George. It is our hope that His Eminence can visit our community in the coming year. Close ties have also been established with our Greek Orthodox brothers, namely Metropolitan Iakovos and the Greek Archdiocese.

I also sit as a member of the Chicago Council of Religious Leaders representing our Primate.

As our ecumenical and civic ties improve and continue, our presence as the Armenian Church is better felt in such an important city as Chicago.

DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH

Along with all of our recent successes, I am also aware of areas which still need work or improvement. Areas such as the general organization of the office, ACYOA Jrs., Young Married Couples, Adult Language Armenian School as well as Altar Training. It is my hope that time and effort can be given to these aspects of our community life. A timetable has already been created for the quarterly publication of the Loosavorich. It is our hope that once a system can be established for the timely publication of our parish newsletter, the frequency can be increased.

Our Annual Armenian Fest serves as an opportunity to show the greater community at large who and what the Armenian people are. This event was the most successful ever and I look forward to having the 25th anniversary even more successful. I wish to thank the vibrant and young co-chairs for their professionalism in running this year's event. Without Craig Koresian and Michael Nahabedian, as well as the rest of the committee, this event would not have been as successful.

The formation of the St. Gregory 2001 Committee has offered some new and interesting perspectives on the worshipping community. The work continues and I trust that the fruits will continue.

PARISH COUNCIL

I am thankful to the 1998 Parish Council and their willingness to accept change, education and new ideas. Members of the parish council have regularly attended Sunday Services and this serves as an inspiration to me since I know of many communities where this is not the case. Their support and trust in me has allowed us to make our forward progress and growth.

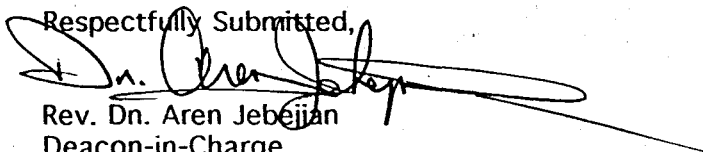
I am especially grateful to Parish Council Chairperson, Michelle Babikian, with whom I have had nearly daily telephone contact to update her on parish progress. In return I have appreciated her council regarding the direction of my ministry to this parish. Her dedication and faith in the Lord is a blessing to this community as she has faithfully served St. Gregory's.

I must thank the tireless and selfless work of our church's secretary, Violet Koressian. Her dedication to the Lord and the work of the church should serve as an example to all of us. Without her constant help and devotion my work would have been ten times more difficult. I pray the Lord continue to bless her and grant her good health.

As I have said many times before, we must remain faithful to the Lord and His work. If we remain faithful, He will continue to bless this community. I realize that everyone wants quick growth, however, Rome was not built in a day.

I wish to express to my flock, that I shall re-dedicate myself to taking care of the needs of this community in 1999. I make no promises, however I shall work as hard as possible to bring growth to this worshipping community and tend to its spiritual needs.

Respectfully Submitted,


Rev. Dn. Aren Jebéjian
Deacon-in-Charge

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

PARISH ASSEMBLY MEETING

FEBRUARY 21, 1999

Reverend Deacon Aren Jebejian and members of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church of Chicago,

The year 1998 was a great year for the worshipping community of St. Gregory! It began with great hope and promise with the assignment of Deacon Aren Jebejian as the Deacon-in-Charge of our parish. We have been blessed with the assignment of this strong and vibrant spiritual leader, who is such a vital part of the heart and soul of our parish.

We are happy to report that there were Church services each Sunday with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the average of once per month. We had a very active and vigorous schedule of activities through the year.

I became the Parish Council Chairperson for the second time and was fortunate to work and serve with a competent Parish Council, consisting of the following members:

Mrs. Zabelle Abezetian	Vice-Chairperson
Mr. Garrick Abezetian	Treasurer
Mr. Charles Babikian	Assistant Treasurer
Mr. Gregory Tootooian	Secretary
Mr. John Paklaian	
Mr. Harry Paloian	

The Parish Council held regular monthly meetings during 1998 and also took part in the picnic meetings which were held. There was also active participation in the Midwest Regional Council.

A mid-year Parish Assembly meeting was held on Sunday, October 25, 1998, subsequent to a vote from the February Parish Assembly. At that meeting, a Parish Council report was presented for the first part of the year.

We were delighted to welcome the Very Rev. Father Daniel Findikyan in November. On Friday evening, November 20th, Fr. Daniel spoke in depth on the meaning of the Divine Liturgy to a large number of people who attended his lecture. The next morning, Fr. Daniel conducted a workshop for the Nairi Choir, and on Sunday morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy.

Our annual Christmas Party was held on Saturday, December 5th, in the beautifully decorated Cultural Hall. Cocktails and dinner were followed by nationally acclaimed vocalist Jimmy Damon and his ensemble. All who attended were entertained with the wonderful music and joined in the singing of Christmas carols and dancing.

Continued ./.

The Parish Council has continued the suspension of the rental of the Cultural Hall. We are currently pursuing and exploring different, alternative ideas to the hall rentals.

Sunday School classes began on Sunday, September 13th, and with the commitment and enthusiasm of the Superintendent, teachers, parents and children, we see a bright future ahead for the Christian education of our children.

The youth activities are being organized by Deacon Aren and our young people hosted a Jr. ACYOA Lock-In on Friday, November 13th. We encourage the strengthening of the ACYOA and activities which focus on our young people.

Bible Study classes for adults continue on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month and are led by Deacon Aren.

There are many activities which are being planned for the coming year. We look forward to another great year ahead under the direction and guidance of Deacon Aren and the commitment and dedication of our members.

It is our hope that we will all work diligently and be vital to the life of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church.

The Parish Council wishes to extend its heartfelt thanks to Deacon Aren, all the visiting clergy, deacons, sub-deacons, altar servers, choir members, choir conductor and organist, Diocesan delegate, all the members of the Church Organizations, committees, Sunday School Superintendent and teachers, Loosavorich staff, our Church Secretary, Reserve Fund, Auditing Committee, Nominating Committee, Picnic Committee and all the volunteers who served on the various committees and all the faithful parishioners for their service to the Church.

I personally would like to thank Deacon Aren, the members of the Parish Council, our Church Secretary Ms Violet Koresian, and all others who have contributed to the parish in 1998.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank the Church organizations, committees and faithful members who have worked diligently throughout the years to keep our Church and community strong and healthy.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Babikian
Parish Council Chairperson

NAIRI CHOIR

1998 Year End Report

The Nairi Choir is an important cog in the Divine Liturgy at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church. The choir is directed by Sarkis Gircik and it is accompanied by its two organists, Georgette Mrofcza and Dorothy Koresian. Since the appointment of Deacon Aren Jebejian, the choir has had only two official meetings but a number of practices. Under his tutelage, the choir has learned the Morning Matins Service and it is now sung every Sunday. The morning service book was also put together by the choir. On a weekly basis, the choir varies from 9 to 14 members. The executive Body of the choir is:

Deacon Aren Jebejian	- President
George Nahabedian	- Chairman
Arnold Koresian	- Vice Chairman
Pauline Nahabedian	- Secretary
Helen Babikian	- Treasurer

Choir Activities:

- 1. Traveled to South Milwaukee, Wisconsin taking part in their Martyrs Day Commemoration**
- 2. Participated in the Centenary Ecumenical Service at St. Nicholas Albanian Church.**
- 3. The bookstore under the supervision of Michelle Babikian has somewhat successful.**
- 4. Choir Plate collection on the five major feast days help in subsidizing choir and its scholarship fund which is now in excess of \$3,900.00**
- 5. The choir has hosted workshops for the Midwest churches.**
- 6. In the past, the choir has prepared the parish assembly luncheons.**
- 7. Choir Workshop, November 21 with the leadership of Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan**

The Nairi Choir is continually looking for new members and we invite all men and women, young and old alike to assist the choir in serving the church.

The financial report is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

George Nahabedian

INCOME STATEMENT OF THE NAIRI CHOIR

ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR ARMENIAN CHURCH
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 1998

RECEIPTS

Book Sales - St. Gregory's Nairi Choir Bookstore	\$1896.00
Parish Assembly Luncheon Income/Donations	447.00
Choir Plate Collections	598.00

	\$2941.00

DISBURSEMENTS

Purchases of Books, Records, Tapes, Items for the Bookstore	\$2010.26
Parish Council year-end assessment for 1997	1467.42
Expenses for Parish Assembly Luncheons	99.58
Choir Robe Cleaning	80.00

	\$3657.26

INCOME STATEMENT OF THE NAIRI CHOIR

ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR ARMENIAN CHURCH
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 1998

Opening balance as on 1/1/98 (Including Scholarship Fund)	\$5048.66
Plus Total Receipts	<u>\$2941.00</u>
 Subtotal	 \$7989.66
Less Total Disbursements	- <u>3657.26</u>
 Balance:	 \$4332.40
 Less Scholarship Fund	 -3381.24
 Sub-total	 \$ 951.16
Parish Council Assessment for 1998	- 375.58
For the Nairi Choir Scholarship Fund	<u>- 375.58</u>
 Closing Balance as on 12/31/98	 \$ 200.00

As per the Association of Armenian Church Choirs of America (AACCA) Bye-Laws, the Nairi Choir is allowed to retain \$200.00 in their treasury at the end of the year. The Nairi Choir received the permission of the Parish Council to divide the amount exceeding this amount of \$200.00 equally between the Parish Council and the Nairi Choir Scholarship Fund.

Respectfully submitted,

George Nahabedian
Chairman

Helen Babikian
Treasurer

St. Gregory the Illuminator Sunday School

1998 Year End Report

Registration began September 13, 1998 for our newly "reopened" Sunday school. Sunday school group lessons began on September 20 with Bible readings and corresponding worksheets. The next two weeks were spent on learning the proper way to make the sign of the cross and also learning about prayer. The Lord's Prayer was reinforced along with discussion on forgiveness, praise, asking and thanksgiving. The students began a prayer wall where their weekly prayers are displayed.

September 26, the Department of Education and Youth from New York met at St. Gregory's for a Teacher's Training Workshop. Fourteen people from the Midwest area met for the day and covered curriculum materials for the Sunday school programs.

Sunday school was separated into five sections on October 25, 1998. Class lists and teachers were available for parents at a short mandatory parent meeting. Deacon Aren met with the parents and stressed the importance of commitment of both the parents and the children.

Sunday school staff is as follows:

Deacon Aren Jebejian	-	President
Diane Abezetian	-	Superintendent
Tilda Agajanian	-	Teacher
Aram Agajanian	-	Teacher
Seta Babikian	-	Teacher
Nancy Berberian	-	Teacher
Kenarr Chiodo	-	Teacher
Mary Kazarian	-	Teacher
Nicole Matthews	-	Teacher

One special event at the opening of our Sunday school in October was the Rededication Service. This service was performed in the church by Deacon Aren and the students, parents and congregation was asked to commit to the Christian upbringing of our students. It was quite special and reminded us all that we are partners in providing our children with a strong Christian education.

A new tradition began at St. Gregory's with the arrival of Deacon Aren and that is the Children's Sermon. Once a month Deacon began directing his sermon to the young members of our church, concentrating on prayer and its' importance in their lives. This is wonderful for the children as the kids love to have his full attention.

December began with a staff meeting with Deacon Aren and all teachers. The meeting was a holiday dinner in the small hall and was used to exchange ideas and discuss projects and enjoy each other's company.

The Christmas season for the students started off with many projects. First were the Toy, Clothing and Book Drive. Gently used toys and clothing were collected by Nancy Berberian and sent to an orphanage in Armenia. The gently used book drive was handled by Nicole Matthews and sent to the City of Chicago for their literacy program.

Holiday Stars was a program where students shared their gifts of time and energy as well as gifts from the heart and were rewarded for their efforts by adding a special star to the Christmas Tree in the small hall. This program encourages our students to continue to think of ways to help others each day.

Seta Babikian has been working with the students in leaning the Lord's Prayer in Armenian. With help from parents and family members at home, Seta is convinced they will be praying the Hayr Mer in no time.

The students participated in decorating the huge Christmas Tree in St. Vartan Cathedral in New York by making snowflakes and sending them for display. They enjoyed this project and received from New York a letter of thanks and a photo of their designs displayed on the tree.

Under the direction of Nicole Matthews, our 4th and 5th grade students went on a field trip to the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Nicole arranged for the tickets and the sponsorship by the ACYOA Central Council. The students were thrilled, as were the adult chaperones.

The students and staff of the Sunday school decided to put on a Christmas Pageant. The pageant consisted of recitations from all the children and Christmas Carols that the children were already familiar with. Practices were scheduled with a special practice on Wednesday December 30. Wednesday consisted of both practice and baking for holiday cookies. The pageant ran into a snag with the weather and needed to be rescheduled from January 5th to January 10th, but was wonderful just the same.

Students received study bibles from the Women's Guild for Christmas and they were truly thankful.

One special ongoing project is the Question Wall. The Questions Wall is outside of Deacon Aren's office and consists of questions we ask the students about church, Armenian history or bible readings. This will continue all year.

An awful lot has been accomplished in a short three months. I strongly feel that work needs to be done with parents on attendance to Sunday school for their children. Our teachers are here and attendance of students is not consistent. We will work out some strategy and this school will grow and thrive.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Abezetian
Superintendent

WOMEN'S GUILD REPORT
St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church
Chicago, Illinois

JANUARY 1998 TO OCTOBER, 1998

Chairperson	Margaret Sarkesian
Recording & Corresponding Secretary	Dolores Tootoian
Treasurer	Alice George
Assistant Treasurer	Pauline Nahabedian

ACTIVITIES:

- January 4, Dinner to welcome His Eminence, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and Rev. Dn. Aren Jebejian
- Armenian Christmas Luncheon
- Women Saints Day – Lenten Luncheon
- Preparations for Holy Week
- Palm Sunday Dinner
- Easter Mini Bake Sale
- Father's Day Brunch
- Pastry Table for Armenian Fest
- Sponsor of Child in Armenian
- Rummage Sale
- Baked Choerags for Hye Camp
- Fellowship Hour after Church Services
- Served refreshments following lecture on Divine Liturgy by Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan
- Pre-Holiday Bake Sale in November

With Rev. Deacon Aren Jebejian's leadership, we have had an exciting year of activities.

The Women's Guild donated 100 copies of *My Lenten Journal – A Spiritual Journey to Easter*. All parishioners who attended church services were given a copy of this book.

Women Saints Day was a huge success with well over 100 members from sister churches in Wisconsin and Illinois. Much credit is due to the hard working guild members who prepared Lenten dishes in the Armenian tradition.

With our small membership we somehow get BIG work done. Getting new members is an on-going problem but hopefully it will be different in 1999.

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At our September 20, 1998 meeting, we did not have an election of new officers but the following members volunteered their positions:

Co-Chairmen - Helen Babikian
 - Pauline Nahabedian
Corresponding Secretary - Rose Tootooian
Recording Secretary - Mary Battle
Treasurer - Alice George
Assistant Treasurer - Marge Sarkesian

The Women's Guild is presenting Parish Council with a check for \$3,158.00.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Sarkesian
Women's Guild Chairperson

MS/vk
February, 1999

ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR ARMENIAN CHURCH
6700 W. Diversey Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60635

SENIOR WOMEN'S GUILD AUXILIARY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1998

Our report will be short as our activities for 1998 were very limited. Our membership has sadly dwindled down to 6 semi-active members.

Activities for the year involved a Kufia Sale, making Choregs for Easter Eve fellowship and helping with the 24th Annual Armenian Fest.

Our contributions in 1998 are as follows:

- \$2,524.00 - 1997 contribution to St. Gregory.
- \$ 100.00 - for the purchase of a raffle ticket for the Annual Armenian Fest.
- \$ 50.00 - In Lieu of Flowers to St. Gregory for deceased member.

1998 was a very painful year for us, as well as the St. Gregory family, as we said goodbye to our wonderful member and friend Azniv Frankian. Azniv's hard work and passion for the church helped define the Ladies Guild at its best.

We are presenting a check for \$1,315.11 to the Parish Council as our 1998 contribution, leaving us a balance of \$874.00.

We thank everyone who helped us during the year 1998.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Arevian

Ann Arevian, Chairperson

k/
2/21/99

“St. Gregory 2001” Committee

At the 1997 Parish Assembly, Diratzoo had a plan. A 12 member committee -- to be called the “St. Gregory 2001” committee would be appointed. The task of this committee was to assess the anticipated needs of this community and make recommendations to a special parish assembly to be held in October 1998. Ten areas were identified by Deacon Aren. There were four committees formed. They were:

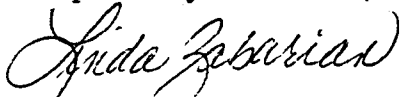
Christian Education
Office facilities
Kitchen facilities
Lay Leadership

In reality, instead of looking at future needs, each committee looked at more immediate needs and received support from the Parish Council.

The Parish Council funded the downstairs office for Deacon Aren, they rennovated the kitchen cabinets, counters and is planning the purchase of a new dishwasher, and with the Women’s Guild, is supporting the re-establishment of the Sunday School. The Lay Leadership committee has been formed and is being instructed by Diratzoo.

There are no significant future needs identified in any of these areas.

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Zakarian
Chairman