

Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



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ANNUAL PARISH REPORT

1975

This report includes summaries of the parish affiliated organizations, which will not be readrded separately.

I - Organization

1. The Pastor

Der Kevork Arakelian has been doing his job very well. He has presided over most of the meetings that have taken place in this parish. He has also participated in most of the activities of the parish and affiliated organizations. In addition, he has given from his time to local, non-Armenian, organizations and represented us at the Diocesan Assembly. Upon the request of our parish council he stopped going to Syracuse on his monthly visitations. This year his salary and other allowances were increased by over \$2500.00.

2. Elections

Following the elections of new parish council members at the Annual Parish Assembly on January 19, 1975, the parish council consisted of the following members who elected their officers as follows:

Dr. Nubar Astarjian - Chairman
Mr. Edward Serayderian - Recording Secretary
Dr. Aristakes Kachadourian - Corresponding Secretary
Dr. Vahe Garabedian - Treasurer
Mr. John Bogdasarian - Assistant Treasurer
Mrs. Anoush Dekmejian - Member
Mr. Nishan Ketchoyian - Member

The terms of office of the following members of the parish council have expired and are renewable.

Dr. Nubar Astarjian
Dr. Vahe Garabedian
Dr. Aristakes Kachadourian
Mr. Edward Seraydarian

3. Meetings

A - Parish Council Meetings -

During the past 12 months the parish council had 18 regular and special meetings. Attendance at these meetings was attended by the Primate.

B - Parish Assemblies - one

C - Regional meetings - one

4. Minutes

The parish council has records of almost all the meetings.

5. Correspondence

Communications have been kept with the Diocese, the Syracuse parish and various church organizations.

6. Committees

The following committees were appointed at the beginning of the year:

A - Altar Care Committee

B - Finance Committee

C - Building Maintenance Committee

D - Membership Recruitment Committee

E - Armenian School Committee

F - Publicity Committee

G - Annual Dance Committee

7. Liasons

Parish Council members were appointed as liasons between the parish council and the various church affiliated organizations in our parish.

8. Newsletter

During the year our Pastor decided to discontinue the publication of the newsletter.

9. Guidelines

Guidelines were established for the rental of the church hall.

II - Religious Functions

1. Badarak

Badarak was regularly celebrated every Sunday and for major church feasts with the exception of a few occasions when Der Kevork was away. These included special church services on major feast days and one educational Divine Liturgy. Attendance has somewhat increased at Badaraks.

2. Other Sacraments

A - Baptisms - 2

B - Matrimony - 4

C - Ordinations - 10 (order of clerk)

D - Consecrations - 1 (Baptismal Font)

3. Special Services

A - Blessing of veils - 5

B - Funerals - 3

4. Visiting Clergy - 2
5. Visitations

Der Kevork celebrated Badarak in sister parishes out of town on eleven occasions. He also served Armenian Matins at the House of The Good Sheperd in Binghamton and lectured at St. Patrick School in Binghamton.

6. Adult Education

There is an unfortunate lack of interest in this field. Der Kevork planned a series of lectures on this matter, on two different occasions, but due to the lack of participation, the plan was dropped.

III - Affiliated Organizations

1. Choir

The Primate ordained 10 Tbirs and blessed the veils of 5 females. Lack of members and poor attendance at rehearsals have been major problems. However, some improvement has also been sited during the year in the functions of the choir.

The choir director, Mr. Paul Kechoyian, represented the choir at the annual assembly of the Armenian church choirs in Springfield, Mass. Our choir-day plate collection of \$43.30 was forwarded to the association.

The choir director recommends a choir exchange between our Parish and the Syracuse Parish, rejuvenation of the youth choir, parish council participation in the choir and hosting of one of the Diocesan Choir Assemblies.

2. Sunday School

This school has greatly improved during the past year. There are four classes, totalling ³⁵ students and run by team teaching. ⁷ The school is governed by the Sunday School Superintendant, Mrs. Adriene Kachadourian. Several of the teachers this year were former graduates of this school. The school presented a Christmas program in December. other events are being discussed for the future.

3. Armenian School

This year again there was a 7-week program of accelerated learning, based on the integration of the Armenian language, history, dance and music. There were a total of 28 students and ⁷ teachers. New instructional aids were utalized. A similar session has been planned for this year. The Director of the Armenian School, Prof. Hirair Dekmejian, recommends the establishment of an additional classroom.

4. Women's Guild

The women's guild has 27 members, two of whom are new members. There were six membership meetings. The Guild has an executive committee chaired by Mrs.

Alice Bogdasarian. Mrs. Ruth Garabedian is the secretary and Mrs. Grace Baradet the treasurer. Two delegates were sent to the annual Guild Association in Boston, Mass. They were Mrs. Alice Bogdasarian and Mrs. Grace Baradet. The Guild presented the Parish Council a check for \$500.00 in 1975. \$125.00 was given as a scholarship. Other activities included - helping the church in its upkeep, maas for Badarak, flowers for the altar, care of linens, preparing food for different occassions and a raffle. An inventory of the kitchen was also done. The Guild hosted the Syracuse Guild on February 25, 1975.

The Women's Guild is suffering from lack of enthusiasm by its general membership and the paucity of new members. With all these drawbacks, a handful of women have been very active and of great value to the church. They are to be commended for their work.

On December 31, 1975 the Women's Guild treasury had \$1401.02. It is expected that they turn over \$1,000.00 to the parish council out of that amount this year.

5. Youth Group

This group has been very active and strong. They have 23 members. It is advised by a team of advisors consisting of Mrs. Marion Rejebian (director), Mrs. Alice Ketchoyian, Mrs. Grace Baradet and Mrs. Ruth Garabedian. The executive committee consists of Suzanne Ketchoyian (chairman), Mimi Janian (vice-chairman), Beth Garabedian (recording secretary), Ellen Hatounian (corresponding secretary) and Peter Fattal (treasurer).

The Youth Group hosted the Syracuse Youth Group and vice versa. The two groups together with the Troy Youth Group, had a joint retreat at Cazenovia, New York.

The Youth Group functions on four fronts - Social, fundraising, service and religeous activities. They have done remarkably well in all of them. They are to be commended for the help they give the parish at the parish dinners.

IV - Diocesan and Regional Activities

During the year close contact has been kept with the Primate, the Diocese and the various organizations affiliated with it. The following are the activities we were involved in:

1. The Primates Visit

The Primate visited our Parish on October 4-5, 1975. He met with the parish council and the various representatives of the church affiliated local organizations. He also presided over the regional meeting and performed

other functions listed elsewhere.

2. The Diocesan Assembly

Our Pastor, Der Kevork, participated in the Annual Clergy Conference that preceeded the Diocesan Assembly, as well as in the latter. The Parish Council chairman, Dr. Nubar Astarjian, and the parish deligate, Dr. Robert Bogdasarian, also participated in the Diocesan Assembly which was held in Boston on May 2-3, 1975.

The Diocesan headquarters has been reorganized. Several key personnel have been appointed. In addition to the routine administrative work, the Diocese has been active in several religeous and cultural programs - St. Nerses Seminary, Armenian Studies Program for the youth, Armenian Museum and Bookstore, cultural events and many other functions.

More than half of the Diocesan revenues are being raised by the Diocese, despite the fact that the parish assesments have gone up considerably. Our parish assesment went up from \$1080.00 to \$1350.00 annually. For 1976 further increments are expected. The stewardship program has been a help to the parishes in compensating for the assesments, dollar for dollar.

The Armenian Church Endowment Fund has been established. It will serve to support needs of our Diocese and its churches. The financial support of members of the various parishes is being sought.

The Diocesan budget for 1974 was \$358,000.00 and for 1975 \$431,000.00. The projected budget for 1976 was \$520,000.00.

Proposed amendments to the bylaws were properly treated.

A basic schedule for minimum clergy stipends was adopted. During the year our parish council studied this schedule and found that we are in compliance.

The question of unity with our separated brotheren was discussed again. Members of the committees from both sides have been meeting to ironout differences. The main stumbling block is whether to have co-operation between the two sides prior to complete unity, or vice versa.

3. Regional Conference

On October 4, 1975 a regional meeting was held at St. Gregory's hall in Binghamton. The participants were our parish and the Syracuse parish. The Primate was presiding. Mr. Crosby Goshgarian, the chairman of the Diocesan Council, chaired the meeting. Matters of mutal concern to the Diocese and the two parishes were discussd. It was a constructive meeting to all concerned.

4. Association of Armenian Church Choirs

See #III - 1

5. Council on Religious Education
Communications were periodically received from the C.R.E. and transmitted to the Sunday School.
6. A.C.Y.O.A.
A new A.C.Y.O.A. has been organized. We received an invitation to send delegates to the constituent assembly but we declined due to the lack of members of the appropriate age group.
7. Summer Studies Conference
Miss Patty Ketchoyian was the only participant in this study from Binghamton.

V - Social and Educational Functions

1. Monthly Dinners
This program has been limping due to the lack of support from some members of the parish. It is hoped that the parish assembly will voice an opinion to continue or stop these dinners.
2. Annual Picnic
This was held on June 29, 1975. It was successful. In 1976 the picnic is scheduled for September.
3. Annual Dance
This was held on September 13, 1975. Turnout was not as good as in previous years. Plans have been drawn for the 1976 dance, which will be in June. This is the best money raising program that can benefit the church, if more people would involve themselves to help make it a success.
4. Martyrs Day - 60th Anniversary
This was commemorated in conjunction with the entire Armenian Community in Binghamton in an appropriate manner.
5. Other Events Included
 - A - W.B.N.G. - TV program - about our church - 1-5-75.
 - B - Vartanantz program - after Badarak - 2-6-75.
 - C - W.B.N.G. - TV program - about our church 4-13-75.
 - D - Mother's Day program - 5-11-75.
 - E - Church School graduation services - 5-18-75.
 - F - Youth Group retreat - 5-31-75.
 - G - Thanksgiving food basket - 11-26-75.
 - H - New Year's Eve party - 12-31-75.

VI - Financial

1. Accounts
Our expenditures this year were \$27,587.06. This was \$1,423.75 over our income. On December 31, 1975 the various savings accounts and the checking account had a balance of \$23,128.29.

Our bookkeeping system has been based on the business type of accounting methods. This is good but it needs some modifications to give a better picture of our functioning.

Our savings accounts are not earmarked for any specific purpose. It is the duty of the parish assembly to earmark these accounts for specific purposes. The Parish Council should not be able to draw from these savings accounts without the approval of the Parish Assembly. In the future, a balance sheet and net worth picture should be established.

2. The Pledge System

This was instituted in 1973. That year it amounted to almost \$12,000.00. However, in 1975, approximately half of this amount was collected. A more aggressive drive is necessary because of the mounting expenditures that confront this parish. This system should be the backbone of our income in this parish.

3. The Stewardship Program

There were only four stewards this year. At the inception of this program we had thirteen stewards. This program decrease our assesments dollar for dollar.

4. Other Revenues

Many projects were studied but few were implanted. One of these was the rental of the church hall to outsiders. So far this has been ^{em}once.

5. Capital Asset Donations

- A. Marlite paneling for the bathrooms.
- B. Two Ganteghs.
- C. Cloth ~~printer~~.
- D. Wedding Goblet and Saucer.
- E. Light Fixtures.
- F. Baptismal Font.

VII - Fixed Assets

- 1. The church and church hall.
Clear of Mortgages and assesments.
- 2. Furniture and Fixtures.
- 3. One IBM stock .
- 4. Pastor's Car.

VIII. - Maintenance

- 1. Bathroom Remodeling.
- 2. Painting.
- 3. Public Safety.
- 4. Housekeeping - on hourly pay basis.
- 5. Misc. Maintenance.

IX - The Future of this Church

Der Kevork in his annual report rightfully says "Considering the fact that we did not exert ourselves in any real money-making projects, we fared rather well financially with only a small deficit. The thinking is still rather conservative when it comes to trying out new ideas for fund raising. There is still more talk than action."

This is characteristic of our parish. Starting from the Parish Council, to the various committees and down to the individual parishes. This parish has come a long way since its establishment fifty years ago. Things have changed our thinking somewhat but that somewhat is not adequate. This parish has been able to survive for fifty years or so without a priest because of the diligent and sacrificing work of our founders. It is true that if we had a priest all along things would have been different. On the other hand, we have to strive to salvage what is left. It's better late than never. If we choose this route, everyone of us has to give of himself or herself to help this parish to stand on its feet and also to become self sufficient.

As you will see from the accompanying budget for 1976, expenses will amount close to \$35,000. Thus there will be a deficit of \$4000 to \$5000 in it. This amount will increase if the anticipated revenues from the pledges, plate collections, donations, affairs and rentals, do not materialize as projected.

The most urgent matters that have to be done at the annual parish assembly and then carried out by the parish council are the following.

1. Reserve Fund

This should be earmarked for a specific project. Interest earned on these funds should be added to the funds and not included in the operating accounts. This would be a sound business investment not haphazardly function as has been done up to now.

2. Current Revenues

A. The pledge system should be strengthened. A systematic method for seeking and collecting pledges should be established.

B. The Annual Dance

Leadership is required to make this project more rewarding. Co-chairpersons for this year's dance are Mrs. Anoush Dekmejian and Mrs. Alice Ketcheyian. They need all the help they can get.

C. Stewardship Program

Again, this should be placed on a sound basis.

More stewards should be sought. Their pledges to this program should be implemented.

D. New Projects

This past year we studied the operations of *the game a* "Bingo". This would be a very profitable project. However, the plan has never been implemented because of the lack of support. It should be looked into again.

3. Membership Drive

In the past there was lack of enthusiasm for this project. However, this is an important matter for this church and it should be pursued actively in the future. We should get out of our parochial isolation into being a center for all Armenians in this community.

4. Remodeling of the Church and Hall

Some members have shown a desire to see the church and hall conform to modern times. It should be a decision of the parish assembly whether to go along with this or not.

5. Monthly Dinners

These are the best ways of bringing the parishioners together and increasing the attendance at church. The assembly should make a decision whether to continue these dinners or not.

6. Proposals for the Diocesan Assembly

This is the time to enact and send them.

7. Women's Guild

Ways and means should be sought to make this organization more enticing for those who are not members and for the members who do not participate in the work.

8. The Choir

This needs to be strengthened. More members are needed.

9. Bicentennial Celebrations

Plans are in progress to commemorate this with the South Side churches.

10. Semi-Annual Special Parish Assembly

In many communities this is a regular session. It is an ideal place for our delegates to the Diocesan Assembly to give this report to the parishioners. It is also a good time to review the financial position of the parish in midyear to take the necessary steps for the remainder of the year and forestall a deficit in the budget. The ideal time for this would be the month of July, after the annual dance.

11. Membership Register

This is required by the Diocese. We tried hard to have this completed this year but we could not. We hope that the next parish council could do this.

12. Balance Sheet

An inventory of the contents of the church and the



hall has been completed and priced. In order to have the financial position of the church known, the balance sheet system should be established.

13. Accounting Methods

See section VI - 1

14. Newsletter

Every parish has a newsletter. The Parish Assembly should decide whether to have one in our parish or not.

15. Affiliated Church Organization Accounts

Accounting to the bylaws, it is required that these be audited by the audit committee. The Parish Assembly should mandate the audit committee with this task.

X - Conclusion

In conclusion, I would say that our parish has come a long way. However, as our Armenian heritage has instilled in us the striving for the better, we can do more to improve. This will only be possible if every parish member takes it upon himself or herself to do just a little bit more for the church.

It has been a distinct honor for me to serve on the Parish Council for the last four years, the last three of which I spent as Parish Council Chairman. There are too many moments of frustration in this kind of work. As a result, it is extremely taxing for one man to carry on the same job year after year. Therefore, I wish to ask your understanding for my not wanting to be re-elected to the Parish Council this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Der Hair for presiding over our activities and carrying part of the burden on his shoulders, the rest of the Parish Council members for their respective work, the chairmen of the organizations affiliated with the parish and their co-workers for the strong support that they gave to this church, members of the various committees for the time and effort they spent in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them, our delegate to the Diocesan Assembly who took his position seriously and represented us at the assembly in a befitting manner and last but not least to all the members of this parish, affiliated organizations for supporting our church. May God bless you all and thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Nubar K. Astarjian
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Chairman, Parish Council