

ARMENIAN CHURCH OF BERGEN COUNTY  
Tenafly, N. J.

PASTOR'S REPORT FOR 1962

Before giving my pastoral report, I would like to utilize this opportunity to say a few words to you on behalf of myself and my family. During the latter part of February 1962, we moved from Detroit to make our home among you. We had anticipated some difficulties of adjustment to the new surroundings and way of life, but, unfortunately, it went beyond our expectations, through some painful experiences. We want to express our appreciation to our Bergen County Parish in general and especially to some particular families who, with the warmth of their hearts made it easier for us.

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By the grace of God we have completed a fruitful year.

We started the year 1962 with 121 pledged families and ended with 153 pledges, an increase of 26%.

Church attendance, I understand, has improved. New families are moving into this area and one is constantly meeting new faces. In the beginning I thought that since I was new here I did not know everyone, but that our parishioners must all know each other. Later on I discovered that there are many among us who do not know each other. Instead of socializing only with our friends during the golden opportunity when the Sunday School is in session, we must make an effort to meet new people and make them feel at home.

Making somewhat of an educated guess, we may say that presently we have a potential of 350 families to join our parish, mostly within a radius of seven miles. In this figure we have tried not to include those who even though they live within our area, are active members of other Armenian parishes. A network of highways makes our church property accessible to most parishioners, and if the distance is measured in terms of minutes, it is a matter of approximately ten minutes between those who live far away and those who live in the neighborhood.

During 1962 seven baptisms were performed, one marriage was blessed and one funeral took place in our church. The visiting of the sick is considered as one of my most important duties. I would like to report and emphasize the importance of ~~of~~ our parishioners notifying the clergy whenever a person is sick. I occasionally visit the Armenian Home of the Aged in Emerson and conduct prayer meetings. On Easter and

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Christmas special arrangements were made to bring the guests of the Home to the Evening Services. On the occasion of Thanksgiving, I visited the Home together with a Sunday School class and presented them with food baskets which our Sunday School children had donated.

Church Services have been conducted every Sunday from 9:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and a sermon. Our appreciation is extended to the choir and their director, Mr. Edward Daghlian, the faithful organist, Miss Carol Shabazian, the devoted Altar Servers, Subdeacon Armen Basmajian, and Stole Bearer, Robert Varjan. We also appreciate the services of Deacon Mugrdich Mooradian and Subdeacon Joseph Kalemkarian who come from New York to assist and also to teach in the Sunday School. Our Choir is not yet organized as such. The Acting Choir Director, Mr. Edward Daghlian, is taking steps towards this end. There is another difficulty which has not as yet been solved and that is the fact that no choir practices are held.

We appreciate the efforts of Miss Dorothy Shahinian, the Superintendent of our growing Sunday School, who has given devotedly of her time to further the spiritual growth of our children. Our appreciation also to all the Sunday School teachers who give so freely of their time and efforts. We also appreciate the efforts of the Staff of the Armenian Language School and the School Board headed by Mrs. Ardemis Ananian.

Speaking about the teaching activities of our Church, we would like to mention here that a study group was started at my home to learn about the Socorp Badarak and basic tenents of our faith. If we could create more interest about these gatherings, many people would be benefited greatly. The schedule is Tuesday evenings from 8-10 p.m.

Our Church publication, The Bergen Beacon, comes out monthly, and usually consists of 8 pages. It is sent to 712 addresses, which includes the clergy and churches of our Diocese and some names which are out of the limits of our parish. We thank Mr. Edward Daghlian, the Editor, who also is in charge of mailing them out. We greatly appreciate the help of Mr. Onnig Hourdajian who provides the paper and takes care of the printing of the Bergen Beacon and prepares new plates of addresses for us. Our thanks also to Mr. John Bostonian and Mr. Edward Davoudian for their help in the preparation of the plates. Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian prepares the copies for the plates.

The Parish Council is to be commended for fulfilling the its duties with harmonious teamwork under the devoted chairmanship of Mr. Richard Turnamian. The Parish Council supervised through its coordinators the work of the subsidiary organizations.

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The ushers, Mr. William Shabazian and Mr. Tish Basmajian, also must be commended. They have always been in church on time and fulfilled their duties.

Last summer we had a Vacation School with 30 children registered. We thank Mrs. Gloria Meghrigian and Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian who were in charge of the school, and Mrs. Armine Donelian who was very helpful in the programs.

The great project of this Parish, of course, is the Building of the Church. We have organized a Church Building Committee of capable persons under the general chairmanship of Mr. Richard Turnamian. The Church Building is not a luxury item in our Parish life, it is a must if we want to grow. If you start feeling comfortable under our present conditions you will stall, and you will be betraying the great and noble vision of reassembling the children of the Armenian Church in a beautiful House of Worship, where they will raise their hands in praise of the God of our Fathers; where we shall worship the Holy Trinity with the songs and prayers of our forefathers, and where our children will be educated in Armenian ways and form Armenian homes for themselves.

Some people feel that the old enthusiasm and generosity we once had is now missing. I would like to make a parallelism. When you first thought of having a church in Bergen County, you fell in love with an idea and gave some very successful affairs, just like a young man who falls in love with a girl, takes her out, spends money freely. But later, after they get married, some of the old glamour is not there and money is not spent as freely. Now this couple is more mature, they have bills to pay, but in the long run they spend more - just as you are doing with your pledges, but it does not look as impressive. Now you are married to this Church, the projects, the responsibilities, the difficulties and the rewards are more real.

Armenians have learned to answer properly the challenge of various periods in our history. Today, in Bergen County, we are confronted with another challenge. Our people, the members of the Armenian Church of Bergen County, are going to work and pay for the construction of this project and for its upkeep. No one else is going to pay do it for us.

I pray that God may fill the minds and hearts of our congregation with the faith and grace of our forefathers, to be able to preserve our beloved Church and make its life brighter and more secure.

I ask your prayers that God give me His grace and guidance in the fulfillment of my duties and obligations during the ensuing year in the service and for the splendor of our Church and for the glory of God.

Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian  
Pastor, Armenian Church of Bergen County

February 3, 1963

Tenafly, N.J.