

ARMENIAN CHURCH OF BERGEN COUNTY
Tenafly, New Jersey

PASTOR'S REPORT FOR 1963

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

We started the year 1963 with 153 pledged families and ended with 170 pledges, an addition of 23 new families. We have the potential of doubling our membership.

During 1963, 25 baptisms were performed (against last year's 7); two marriages were blessed (against last year's one); and three funerals took place in our church (against last year's one).

The visiting of the sick is considered as one of my most important duties. I would emphasize to our parishioners the importance of notifying the clergy whenever a person is sick. I occasionally visit the Armenian Home of the Aged in Emerson and conduct prayer meetings. On the occasion of Thanksgiving, we visited the Home together with a Sunday School class and presented them with food baskets which our Sunday School children had donated. We must change this system of food baskets, since it is not a personal gift to the residents. In the future, we might plan for personal packages and we must make a personal effort to have the children and their parents visit the Home, since their greatest need is a personal visit and talk.

Church Services have been conducted every Sunday from 9:20 A.M. to 10:50 a.m. with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and a sermon. During the Lenten Season special services were held on Fridays from 7:30 to 8:15 p.m.

With the help of Mr. Tish Basmajian we have kept a church attendance record: For the period of Jan. 6 to May 5, the average attendance on Sunday was 155. For the period from Sept. 8th to Dec. 29th, the average was 80. The total yearly average, not including the summer months was 117. This average is during the time of the sermon. Peak attendance has been at Easter when it was 425; Palm Sunday, 365; and Theophany, 235.

Our appreciation is extended to the Choir and their director, Mr. Edward Daghlian; the devoted Altar Servers, Subdeacon Armen Basmajian and Stole Bearer Robert Varjan as well as to our faithful organist, Miss Carol Shabazian, who tenders her services whenever she is home from school. We also appreciate the services of Deacon Mgrdich Mooradian and Subdeacon Joseph Kalemkarian who come from New York to assist at the Altar. Deacon Mgrdich is in charge of the Senior Class of the Sunday School also. Lately we have secured the services of Mr. Bedros Norhad to be in charge of the Choir rehearsals, which takes place every Monday evening.

We appreciate the efforts of Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian, the Superintendent of our bursting 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, Mrs. Rose Khachadourian and Mrs. Queenie Tashjian, and the School Board headed by Mrs. Rose Poosikian.

The Women's Guild of our Church, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Ann Ajemian, as always has been working in various ways ~~atowards~~ the well being of their Parish. The A.C.Y.O.A. received a great boost of zeal and activities of not only receiving into its ranks the members of the Sunday School Seniors, but also the ever understanding and helpful Mrs. Florence Bogossian as their advisor. The Chairman of the ACYOA is Robert Varjan. The important task of reorganizing a new group of Sunday School Seniors has been taken over by Mrs. Ann Markarian, ~~as director.~~ *Mrs. Ann Tjanik and Mrs. May Chakmakian.*

Our Church publication, "The Bergen Beacon", comes out monthly and usually consists of 8 pages. It is sent to 738 addresses, which includes the clergy and churches of our Diocese and some addresses which are out of the limits of our parish. Thanks to the help of friends this publication does not cost our church anything. We greatly appreciate the help of Mr. Onnig Hourdajian who provides the paper and takes care of the printing and prepares new address plates for us. Our thanks also to Mr. & Mrs. Edward Davoudian for their preparation and donations of the plates; to Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian for editing and preparing the copies for the plates; and to our staff photographers, Don Donelian and George Margosian.

Besides my parish work I have participated in some work of which I want to keep you informed.

In the fall I participated in the Superintendents Conference of our Diocese held in the Holy Cross Church of New York. In December I took part in the Leadership Training Seminar of the ACYOA held in St. Gregory's Church of N. Y. Representing the Diocese of the Armenian Church, I was one of 8 delegates to the National Council of Churches Assembly in Philadelphia, which has 1500 delegates and convenes every three years.

On the invitation of Mr. Armen Bosossian I gave an illustrated talk to the Masonic Lodge of Teaneck, to make them appreciate better our Badarak, which they attended on the following Sunday. Locally, I am on a regular schedule to open our City Council meetings with a prayer, and lately I have been elected to the Board of the Council of Churches of Bergen County.

For the past year, the seven pastors of the Armenian Churches of the Greater New York - New Jersey Area meet on the first Wednesday of each month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This helps to create a good fellowship among the clergy and a more harmonious relationship and spirit of cooperation among the parishes. I also serve on the Diocesan Council as chairman.

The Parish Council is to be commended for fulfilling 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. Mr. Tish Basmajian must be commended for his exemplary work and devotion as usher, and his work in charge of the membership drive.

While people are about their duties we tend to take them for granted and we remember their work only when they are finishing their term of office. On this occasion on behalf of the entire Parish we thank and appreciate the wholehearted devotion and untiring efforts of those members of the Parish Council who are retiring from office, but not from work. Some of them have been on active duty from the start of this blessed venture of the Armenian Church of Bergen County. The retiring officers of the Parish Council are: Richard Turnamian, Steve Ananian, Jack Charshafian, James Melcon, and Peter Ajemian.

The great project of this Parish, of course, is the Building of the Church. We must feel fortunate and thankful for the devoted group which was organized by the Parish Council and which is known as the Church Project Committee under the general chairmanship of two hardworking, devoted and inspiring persons, Mr. Edward Bashian and Mr. Jack Charshafian.

Today we celebrated the memory of Vartan the Brave and prayed for the dead of our Nation who have lived and died for their Christian faith. We have made the Battle of Avarayr a national holy day because that single event crystalizes the traits of Armenian character, religion, culture and aspirations. It never ceases to be an eloquent voice for all generations.

We have here our own Battle of Avarayr, a battle for our holy traditions and our holy faith, a battle for our Christian home and identity as Armenians, against the great forces of - if not Persians - but against indifference and laxity; a battle against change of values from spiritual to material. One of the laws of nature is the survival of the fittest and the survival of the stronger. Our history of 3000 years has taught us that though we have been small in numbers compared to our neighboring great empires, today the names of many of them are mentioned only in textbooks or museums. We have survived because of our spiritual strength and moral character against all odds. No wonder our national holiday is the Battle of Avarayr, the battle of few against the forces of conformity and expediency. Other Christians wanted to help us against the Persians - but with strings attached. We fought alone. 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 for and pay for the construction of a Church and for its upkeep. No one else is going to 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 may 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. Father Arnak Kasparian
Pastor, Armenian Church of Bergen County
Tenafly, New Jersey

February 9, 1964