

ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH
Tenafly, N. J.

PASTOR'S REPORT FOR 1965

The single and most important accomplishment of the year is the construction and the consecration of our new church, for which we give thanks to God and to those dedicated people who through their generous giving of time, efforts and money made the beautiful House of Worship a reality.

In the Consecration Book the chapter entitled "History of our Church" starts with the following paragraph:

"The Armenian Church of Bergen County (the St. Thomas Armenian Church) is the result of a deep inner dream that was in the hearts of a group of farsighted second-generation Armenians, whose burning desire it was to build a church for the ever-growing Armenian Community of Bergen County."

This dream came true and now our main task is to use our excellent facilities in good grace, to serve God and the spiritual needs of His people.

During 1965, 21 baptisms were performed, 6 confirmations were administered, 3 marriages were blessed and one funeral took place. Compared with the previous year, we had 9 more baptisms, 2 more weddings, and 4 less funerals. The visiting of the sick I consider as one of my most important duties, and I must again emphasize the importance of our parishioners notifying the clergy whenever a person is sick. I am also the chaplain for the Home of the Armenian Aged. I conduct services there occasionally. With the Women's Guild of our Church we have established a tradition of celebrating the Armenian Christmas on January 6th in the Chapel of the Home.

Since the consecration of the Church, services have been conducted every Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon, with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and a sermon. I want to recognize at this time a few persons who bring their whole-hearted participation to our Sunday Services. Mr. Edward Daghlian, our choir director; Miss Susan Shamamian, our organist; the Altar servers, subdeacons Armen Basmajian, stole bearers Robert Varjan and Krikor Anoushian. Personally, and on behalf of the Parish, I deeply appreciate the devoted and dependable services of these young people, which which we could not take for granted that every Sunday morning we shall have regular and disciplined worship services. Of course, we also appreciate all the choir members, some of whom are very regular and come early.

We thank those who made "Mas", particularly Mrs. Lucy Chakmakian, who is always ready to take care of our needs for Mas. We also thank Mr. Tish Basmajian who comes early every Sunday to clean the votive candle stands and keep an account of our Church attendance.

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During the year we were pleased to have the Vicar-General Hayr Yeghishe Gizirian and also Fr. Levon Arakelian of New York celebrate the Badarak in our Church, on July 4th and July 11th, respectively. The former Primate of our Diocese, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan preached twice in our church, on May 2nd and October 17th. Bishop Elisha Simonian also preached twice in our church, June 27 and Nov. Mr. Vahan Najarian, the Chairman of the Parish Council, made it his business to have these special events publicized in the Bergen Evening Record and other suburban newspapers.

Special Lenten Services were held every Wednesday evening during the Lenten season.

We appreciate the endeavors of all the Sunday School teachers who give so freely of their time and efforts, especially the Superintendent, Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian, the Secretary, Mrs. Isabel Krattian, and Mr. Mark Chookazkan, the coordinator with the Parish Council. We also appreciate the efforts of the parents and teachers of the Armenian Language School. The school meets every Saturday morning from 10:00 a.m. to noon. We could probably have more children and better results, but the school is faced with great and many difficulties. Mr. Nazar Nazarian has been wholeheartedly behind the Armenian School, as coordinator from the Parish Council.

Our Church publication, the Bergen Beacon, comes out monthly and consists of 8 pages. It is sent to 775 addresses which include 75 copies to members of the clergy of our Diocese and also names which are out of the limits of our parish. We greatly appreciate the help of Mr. Onnig Hourdajian who provides the paper and the printing. Our thanks to another parishioner who donates the offset plates; also to Mrs. Alice Basmajian who addresses the copies. Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian edits the paper and prepares the copies for the plates. The only expense for the Bergen Beacon is the postage, which amounts to about \$9.00 a month.

During the past year 6 new families have joined the membership of our church, which bring our total membership to 167 families, or to 318 individual voting members. In spite of the apprehension of some of us, this year no family has cancelled his membership and joined another church. Mr. Victor Arzoomanian of the Parish Council was in charge of the membership, but, unfortunately, because of job demands, we lost him for the greater part of the year. We hope next year he will double his efforts towards increasing the membership.

Our church does not have an office secretary, as yet, and you must realize how much incidental or regular work accumulates. For these secretarial services also I would like to thank Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian.

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The Parish Council is to be commended for fulfilling its duties with harmonious teamwork under the devoted chairmanship of Mr. Vahan Najarian. Mr. Najarian with his conscientious hard work created such an image for a Parish Council chairman that I am afraid we shall have some difficulty in persuading any Parish Council members to take on the chairmanship.

The great project of our Parish during the past year was the building and the consecration of our Church. Many committees and people were involved in the process, like the Booklet Committee, Banquet Committee, Cake donations committee, and others. I cannot start mentioning the names of persons who were involved, but we know that the planning and execution of the Consecration Services were well done and all went very orderly, the Banquet was a great success, the cake donations passed our expectations and the Consecration Book was the best so far published by any church in our Diocese. Two names stand out as representatives of the teams that shouldered the responsibility and the work - Mr. Edward Bashian, the general co-chairman of the Building Committee, headed with vigor and enthusiasm, and he coordinated the various aspects of the Building Project with corresponding sub-committees. The other person is Mr. Vahan Najarian who in his double role as a member of the Building Committee and as the Chairman of the Parish Council, brought his invaluable share of working right in the field. ---the project

We thank God for these and another dozen or more people who caught the vision of this parish and turned it into reality, of course, always with the Grace of God and the cooperation and generosity of you, the congregation.

We built this House of Worship for the Service of God and to serve people. To serve God in worship, we need a well trained choir and altar servers and a faithful and disciplined congregation to fill the pews. To serve the people we need more personnel to work as youth counselors, as education directors, as secretary. We have here a half a million dollar plant with one overall man. In order to expand and grow we need more people in the field.

Besides my parish duties I would like to present a few notes for your information:

This year for the second time I have been elected to the Executive Board of the Bergen County Council of Churches which involves one meeting a month, usually on Sunday afternoons. Three times a year I open the City Council meeting of Tenafly with a prayer. I was invited by the Board of Education of Tenafly to help in planning a series of lectures in the Adult Education program and also in discussing ways of incorporating some religious education in our public schools. I have participated in the Seminars of Doctors and Clergy sponsored by

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the Englewood Hospital. On our own Diocesan level, I have been serving on the Diocesan Council as its chairman. I have attended the ACYOA Annual Assembly in New York over the Labor Day weekend. The host chapter was the Holy Martyrs Church of Long Island. For their picnic they used our facilities and, needless to say, all the guests were pleased. I have participated in our annual Clergymen's Conference and the Diocesan Assembly which convened in W. Philadelphia church and during which time our delegates invited the 1966 assembly to take place in the St. Thomas church of Tenafly and the invitation was accepted. We must begin preparations and be ready for the May 1, 1966 weekend. This year the attendance will be at its peak since we have an election of Diocesan Bishop or Archdeacon.

I wish to conclude this report with the last paragraph of the Pastor's Message from our consecration book:

"Let this consecration be a commencement day for us. Let us rejoice for the realized accomplishments, and vow to work even harder to make this place a powerhouse to provide spiritual light for the people of our community, to help them to live as Christians and as worthy citizens of this great land."

Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian
Pastor - St. Thomas Armenian Church
Tenafly, New Jersey

January 23, 1965