

ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH  
Tenafly, N. J.

PASTOR'S REPORT FOR 1966

By the grace of God, we have completed a fruitful year. Our thanks go to the church auxiliary groups and special commendation goes to our Parish Council for their fine cooperation and work. Each group has submitted its report separately. I will report to you mainly about the sacramental and pastoral works of the past year.

Worship Services have been conducted every Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon, with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and a sermon. At this time I wish to recognize a few persons who bring their wholehearted participation to our Sunday Services: Mr. Edward Daghlian who was our choir director till last Palm Sunday; Miss Susan Shamamian, our organist; the altar servers, Subdeacon Armen Basmajian, stole bearers, Robert Varjan and Krikor Anoushian. Since last ~~Palm~~ Palm Sunday we acquired the services of Mr. Krikor Pidedjian as choir director. Our hope was to improve the singing and increase the membership of the choir through regular choir rehearsals. Unfortunately, this expectation has not been realized in spite of the untiring efforts, especially of Mr. George Gavejian. Attendance at rehearsals has been disheartening. Nevertheless, I take this opportunity to ~~thank~~ <sup>express</sup> personally on behalf of the parish, our appreciation for the devoted services of all the choir members, some of whom are very regular and come early.

During the year we were pleased to have His Grace, Bishop Elisha Simonian and Rev. Vertanes Papazian visit our parish. We were also honored at the first visit of the new primate, His Grace, Bishop Torkom Manoogian. On these occasions, Mr. Vahan Najarian made it his business to see that these special events were publicized in the Bergen Evening Record and other suburban newspapers.

Special Lenten Services were held every Wednesday evening during the Lenter period.

Sacramental Services - During the year 12 baptisms were performed, 4 confirmations were administered, 5 marriages were blessed, and 2 funerals took place. It is impossible for me to pass over these 2 funerals just as statistics. The first funeral was a very devoted and good member of our church, George Krikor Margossian, who was the victim of an auto accident and left behind his wife, Vivian, and his three children. The second funeral was another young person, 25 years of age, Thomas Ekizian.

Membership - In 1966 we had a total of 186 families in the pledge system against 167 families in the previous year. With all the work which Mr. Victor Arzoomanian put into the membership drive we were hoping to pass the 200 family mark this year. Nevertheless, slow but sure, our parish is growing in number and in fellowship.

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The Church Schools have been the backbone of this parish from the beginning. We are happy to report that the Sunday School enrollment has increased considerably this year, we have better facilities, and, also, we have been fortunate in recruiting the services of a number of new, capable and conscientious teachers for the higher classes. We appreciate the endeavors of all the Sunday School teachers who give so freely of their time and efforts. Since the superintendent will give a detailed report, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Superintendent, Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian, and Mr. Mark Chookazian, the coordinator with the Parish Council.

We also greatly appreciate the efforts of Mrs. Queenie Tashjian, the superintendent of the Armenian Language School, Mrs. Shake Torigian, a teacher, and Mr. Antranig Ouzonnian, coordinator with the Parish Council.

Recognition - It is not necessary to speak about the various church organizations as you will hear their reports. But, I cannot continue without thanking God for such devoted and capable chairmen that each organization has. Mrs. Margaret Peterson, the Women's Guild; Mr. Harry Chakmakian, Men's Club; Mr. Dickran Hazirjian, ACYOA. I am tempted to also mention a few other names realizing full well that this is a ticklish situation - one might forget some important name and then, how does one decide where to draw a line. Mrs. Andrew Shahinian with her programs and wonderful publicity has created a good image of our parish; Mrs. Floraine Halejian assisted by Mr. Mark Chookazian (coordinator with the Parish Council) is working closely with the ACYOA, not sparing any effort for its revitalization. We are indeed indebted to them. We have the inseparable twins - Mrs. Arax Varjan and Mrs. Sirarpie Dadaian who are always preparing delicious foods in the kitchen. Our appreciation also to Mr. Rupen Saddler who regularly checks, waters, prunes and cleans around the bushes and flowers on the church property. To Mr. Ray Kreppel for clearing the underbrush on the large part of our property facing E. Clinton Avenue, digging the trench for a new gas line, and clearing the parking lot when it snows. It is a blessing for our church to have another pair of gentlemen who do not need any official capacity in order to work. They always have the concern of the parish in their hearts. To Mr. Edward Bashian and Mr. Vay Najarian I give the title "Deputies of the Patron Saint of St. Thomas Armenian Church."

The Parish Council has completed today a successful year of service under the capable chairmanship of Mr. Richard Turnamian. Personally and on behalf of the congregation, I greatly appreciate all the efforts of those members of the Council whose term of office terminates - they are Richard Turnamian, Zaven Halejian, Mark Chookazian, John Froonjian, Jack Hajinlian and Victor Arzoomanian.

We thank God for these and all the other members of the church who worked, sacrificed and made it possible for this parish to serve the Armenian community of this area.

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Besides my parish duties, I would like to inform you of a few other obligations:

This year for the third time I have been elected to the Executive Board of the Bergen County Council of Churches which involves a meeting a month, usually on Sunday afternoons. Three times a year I open the City Council meeting of Tenafly with a prayer. I have visited and conducted a special service at the Mary Fisher Home of Tenafly which is an old age home for professional women. I am also the chaplain for the Home for the Armenian Aged in Emerson. We have established a tradition of celebrating the Armenian Christmas on January 6th and the Badarak of Maundy Thursday, in memory of the Last Supper, in the Chapel of the Home. I have participated in the Seminars of Doctors and Clergy sponsored by the Englewood Hospital.

On our Diocesan level, I have been serving on the Diocesan Council as its chairman. I have attended the ACYOA Annual Assembly in Providence, Rhode Island with our delegate Susan Shamamian over the Labor Day weekend. I was invited to Evanston, Illinois last summer to give a series of talks for the St. Nersess Theological School's summer program. We had two participants from our parish, Susan Shamamian and Danny Maroukian. I have participated in our annual Clergymen's Conference and the Diocesan Assembly which convened here in Tenafly in our church. I was very proud and very happy to hear all the compliments expressed by the delegates for the warm reception tendered them.

I want to bring to your attention the fact that our parish is in an exemplary position in our Diocese in coming out of its isolation and being an active member of the community in which we live. Our Women's Guild is a member of the United Church Women of Tenafly and as such, they participate in projects, meetings, and worship services with all the other churches. We have noticed that whenever ours is the host church attendance is always doubled.

For the second time our church participated in a Concert of Sacred Music at Temple Sinai with five other churches. We have two families from our parish, Mr. & Mrs. Edward Parseghian and Mr. & Mrs. John Saxenian, each participating separately in a "Living Room Dialogue" with members of the other churches in Tenafly.

On March 16th approximately 150 girl scouts, in four groups, visited our church in order to learn about the Armenian Church. In order to give them a taste of Armenian Church music, I had a record player on. On another occasion the Tenakill Chapter of the DeMoley came to learn about our Badarak. You may have noticed that whenever we have a picnic or a bazaar the local people take advantage and come also. Last Sunday I participated in a Christian Unity Service at Mt. Carmel Roman Catholic Church in Tenafly. On Good Friday we shall have a joint service in our church at noon in memory of the Crucifixion of our Lord, with the other churches of Tenafly.

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I want to conclude this report leaving you with one thought. We rejoice in all our accomplishments, but of all these accomplishments the most important one is the building up of our character, building up a home where the Christian values are the standards, the realization that God is the Lord who has entrusted us with everything we have and no matter what we do in life, it must be pleasing to His sight, and it must be considered an opportunity to praise Him in serving the needs of His people.

May the blessing of God Almighty rest upon us and upon all our work and worship done in His name. May He give us light to guide us, courage to support us, and love to unite us, now and forever more. Amen.

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

January 29, 1967