

THE ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH PARISH COUNCIL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR 1968

The Parish Council is pleased to report the completion of another successful year. Progress can be reported in all facets of our church activities, social, financial, and religious. A most productive year through the tireless efforts of your Parish Council, its working committees, the Church Organizations, and you our parishioners. A team effort and we can all take pride in the results.

The Parish Council was organized immediately after the 1968 Parish Assembly meeting. Individuals in the Parish Council were given responsibilities commensurate with their civilian backgrounds. Like the previous year, we endeavored to put the right man in the right place. Parish Council meetings were held on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month. During 1968 there were 25 regular meetings during which, at one time or another, every important subject effecting our church was discussed in detail. If action was required we took immediate steps to effectuate the situation.

The nature of the problem could be as diversified as any found in any business. Questions involving the need for Workman's Compensation Insurance for our maintenance man to preparing a budget of over \$80,000 to arranging for a visit to our church by His Holiness Vasken I (this was cancelled) - no job was too small or too big. We considered them all important.

The Parish Council has made every effort to support each of our Church Organizations. We were very interested in our Sunday School and Armenian School. We feel that our purpose as an entity is fulfilled and justified if we can accomplish two things - religious education of our congregation by our Pastor from the pulpit and by our teachers from the Sunday and Armenian School classrooms, and development of a spirit of cooperation in our congregation so that we can all share in this noble purpose.

The members of the Parish Council for 1968 were as follows:

Victor Arzoomanian	-	Chairman
Peter Daghlian	-	Vice-Chairman
Arthur Otchy	-	Secretary
Antranig Ouzoonian	-	Treasurer
Michael Avakian		
Jack Hajinlian		
Zaven Poosikian		Asst. Treasurer
John Seferian		
George Shahinian		

+ Zaven Halebjian + Ohon Melikian

The Working Committees were as follows:

Building and grounds	Ray Kreppel, John Melikian
	John Seferian
Co-ordinator of Church Activities	Arthur Otchy

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Memberships & Pledges	George Shahinian
Worship and Religious Activities	Jack Hajinlian
	John Seferian
Public Relations & Hospitality	Zaven Halejian
Legal & Constitutional & By-laws	Peter Daghlian
Ways & Means & Long Range Planning	Edward Bashian
Memorials	Stephen Ananian
Architectural	Antranig Ouzoonian
Liason Officers:	
Memorials	Antranig Ouzoonian
Women's Guild	Arthur Otchy
A. C. Y. O. A.	George Shahinian
Choir	Zaven Poosikian
Sunday School	Michael Avakian
Men's Club	John Seferian
Armenian School	Jack Hajinlian

How we fared this past year and what course we are attempting to chart is set forth below.

The Pastor's Report

a) 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. During the year we had five guest celebrants: Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, on the occasion of our third anniversary of the consecration of the church; Rev. Vartan Megherian of Holy Martyrs on February 18 for an exchange of clergy and choir; Very Rev. Zaven Arzooonian of Philadelphia on June 2, for exchange of clergy; and two during the pastor's summer vacation, Rev. Levon Arakelian and Rev. Ari Kehlayan. On June 9 our Parish worshipped at the newly consecrated Cathedral, the Pastor as the celebrant and our choir doing the singing. Rev. Arnak Kasparian celebrated Badarak at the Home in Emerson twice, first on Armenian Christmas Day and second on Maundy Thursday.

b) Sacramental Services. During the year 24 baptisms were performed (compared to 16 last year); 13 marriages were blessed (7 last year); and 7 funerals took place (9 last year). Each loss is painful, of course, but the loss of Harry Carnig Ananian (49) was the most painful. The others were Lillian Poosikian, Takoui Krikorian, Ahsabet Civan, Tooma Chopoorian, Hagop Norundzaian and Nevart Rose Tashjian.

c) Administrative. As ex-officio president of all Church organizations, Rev. Arnak Kasparian attended and presided over all the meetings. He directed and advised and, in many cases, he helped in implementing decisions. As yet, he is our only full time staff. He attended the Diocesan Assembly in New York with our delegates: Edward Bashian, Vahan Najarian, Nazar Nazarian, and Richard Turnamian. During Vehapar's visit Der Hayr and Yeretgin were in charge of organizing the New Jersey parishes to meet the Catholicos at the airport.

Parish Council Report for 1968 (cont'd.)

d) Teaching. Rev. Arnak Kasparian has started a fellowship of learning and discussion. The group presently meets at Goomrigian's home in Dumont, every Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. It consists of Bible study and discussion of the Faith of the Armenian Church. Everyone is welcome to this fellowship.

e) Publications. With the help of Yeretzgin Violet, he publishes the Bergen Beacon monthly and puts out the flyers for our various affairs. Our mailing list is 850. As a matter of fact, the entire Kasparian family is involved in folding, stapling, addressing and bundling materials for mailing. Even changing of addresses entails attention and work.

f) Services in our local community. St. Thomas is truly a part of the Tenafly Community in spite of the fact that its membership is drawn from a much wider area. Our church was host to the New Jersey State General Meeting of the United Church Women on October 25th; we had joint services with Tenafly churches during the Holy Week as well as on Christian Unity Sunday; we participate in "Living Room Dialogue," a National Council of Churches and Roman Catholic project. During our social affairs (bazaar, picnics, etc.) we have many local people attending. Fr. Arnak is on a regular schedule to open the City Council meeting with prayer (four times a year). He is a member of the Fort Lee Clergymen's Fellowship and president of the Tenafly Clergymen's Fellowship. This office has presented him with some opportunities, like representing the Tenafly churches on the Mayor's special committee or at local church banquets celebrating important events. He has conducted special services at the local Mary Fisher Home for retired professional women.

On many occasions Der Hayr has led various groups on tour of the church telling them about the Armenian Church in general and St. Thomas in particular.

The Pastor wishes to bring to your attention that an examination of this annual report reveals the obvious fact that each of the branches of our church organizations has been rather successful.

During the past year, to say the least, all church activities have been operated and run in a most harmonious manner with a minimum of the friction usually present as a natural part of the operations of a church.

This has been largely due to the type of leadership we have had. All the members and officers of the Parish Council have contributed to making this a successful year.

However, a very special tribute must be paid to the dynamic, intelligent, forceful and untiring efforts of our chairman, Col. Victor Arzoomanian who has shown tact, diplomacy, unsurpassed wit and humor and an understanding of the problems that confronted us during the past twelve months. Without his faithful and guiding leadership we would not have had such a successful year.

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Membership: This telltale barometer continues to forecast a rosy picture of the future of our church. Without a Membership Drive for new members, we are happy to announce that 21 new families joined St. Thomas Armenian Church. The total number of members as of December 31, 1968 is 201 families and 365 members. We intend to canvass all families who are not presently members of our Church but who are active in our Church organizations, who have availed themselves of our Church for Baptisms, marriages, etc., and those who have recently moved into our Armenian community. We expect outstanding results in this area for 1969.

B. Memorials: 1968 will be remembered as the year that the Memorial Committee had its impact felt more than any other time since the building of our Church. This was the year that our stained glass windows were installed. This beautiful effort was the net result of many many months of planning, designing, reviewing, discussing, visits to the studios and endless conferences by Steve Ananian and his energetic and very capable committee. The Parish Council extends its gratitude to the Memorial Committee on this crowning achievement.

In addition to the stained glass windows we hope to have installed in the very near future a beautiful baptismal font, a votive stand and the eternal lights. Other memorials are available for those who wish to have them made available for a loved one who has passed away. We highly recommend you see Steve Ananian or Vay Najarian for this purpose.

The Memorial Committee Report is attached as APPENDIX A.

C. Coordinator of Church Activities & Rental of Church Property. This Committee under the effective leadership of Arthur Otchy proved to be most helpful to the various Church organizations and our parishioners and friends. This committee was responsible for keeping the Church Calender of Events and to coordinate the rental of our church facilities. A Church Calender of Events is posted in the lobby of our Church Auditorium. This avoided conflict of dates among our Church organizations. There is never any doubt as to the availability of the church facilities for any occasion. By coordinating with Arthur Otchy our church organizations were able to plan the events months ahead without worrying about a conflict with another Church organization. Only one person was responsible for the rental of our church facilities - Arthur Otchy. This avoided misunderstanding as to the rental fee, cleanup, etc. We were most pleased with the results of this Committee and express our gratitude to Arthur Otchy.

D. Building and Grounds: This committee bears the brunt of constant demands for repairs, replacement and improvement of the Church, auditorium, heating and ventilation, kitchen, grounds, walks, parking lot, pastor's home, and other miscellaneous items. They are constantly on top of the many details in order to keep the Church and our grounds in a beautiful condition.

The major efforts of the Building Committee were the following:

1. The corrective action taken to prevent leakage in the church dome.
2. The heavy condensation during the winter months which fogged the windows.

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3. The clearing, leveling, seeding of approximately an acre of land.
4. Black topping the area around the church kitchen.
5. Installation of lights in our parking lot.
6. Keeping the grounds in an excellent condition.
7. Making required repairs in the parsonage including plumbing, painting, etc.
8. Keeping the Church in an excellent condition.

The tremendous efforts by the Building and Grounds Committee under the able leadership of Ohon Melikian and his very able assistant Ray Kreppel in keeping our Church facilities and our church grounds in a near perfect condition deserve the applause of our parishioners.

PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

The Parish Council sponsored four special social events during 1968:

1. The Third Anniversary Dinner on March 17, 1968. This event was a social and financial success. 271 adults and 107 youngsters attended. All our church organizations assisted in making it one of the most eventful happenings of the year. The principal speaker was our Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian.
2. The Blessing of the Grapes picnic on August 18, 1968.
3. The Annual Bazaar, under the leadership of Vay Najarian and Phyllis Donigian, December 7 & 8, from which our church netted over \$13,000. Another event that was successful because of the outstanding leadership and a cooperative committee consisting of members from all our Church organizations.
4. New Year's Eve Dinner-Dance. A social success under the energetic chairmanship of Andy Ouzooning and his equally capable assistant, Arthur Otchy.

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

CHOIR: The Choir under Mr. Edward Daghlian's guidance as Choir Director have shown a sustained interest in their very important function. What they lack in numbers they make up in devotion and enthusiasm. The Choir is always seeking new members. If you have the desire, Ed Daghlian will teach you the rest. See Appendix D.

ARMENIAN LANGUAGE SCHOOL: We are pleased with the progress being made by this most important organization. The School has 58 students on Saturday mornings, almost double last year's enrollment. The Armenian Language School has been authorized to hire professional teachers to teach our interested parishioners the Armenian language. This innovation has helped to bring the standard of the school to a higher level. The spirit of the teachers and the administrators is commendable. We know that 1969 will be a great year for the Armenian Language School. Our thanks to Queenie Tashjian and Rose Hachadoorian for guiding the activities of this school to its present high position.

The Armenian School Report is attached as Appendix H.

Parish Council Report for 1968 (cont'd.)

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Sunday School has grown to such a large number that the Parish Council devoted many hours of its time towards making plans for increasing the facilities of the Church to make room for the ever increasing number of students who wish to participate each Sunday. The present enrollment is 256.

We offer our congratulations to Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian, Superintendent of the Sunday School, her faculty of devoted teachers and her loyal administrators, for the outstanding program offered our children this past year.

The Parish Council authorized funds for better training aids such as the purchase of a audio-visual machine, and advance teaching methods which will considerably improve the level of teaching. The Sunday School Report is attached as Appendix I.

WOMEN'S GUILD

This past year the Women's Guild has been operating as an effective dominant force. The Executive Board with the cooperation of the Guild members held several highly successful events. We express our appreciation to Mrs. Dorothy Otchy, her Executive Board, and the Chairladies of the successful affairs sponsored by the Guild. A great job by a beautiful and talented group of women. We certainly appreciate their efforts. We may add that this was all accomplished because the Men did all the cooking this past year. The Women's Guild Report is attached as Appendix B.

MEN'S CLUB

We our our thanks to the Men's Club for a very energetic and prosperous year. Along with the Women's Guild they are the backbone of our Church. Throughout the year the Men's Club, consisting of intelligent, devoted, and enterprising men, contributed their time and efforts on such affairs as the Memorial Day Picnic, Fall Picnic, Halloween Dance, and joined with the Parish Council towards making the Annual Bazaar and New Year's Eve Dance a success. In addition to this, they helped out in the kitchen for Communion breakfasts, the Anniversary Dinner, and other affairs throughout the year.

A special commendation is reserved for Arman Ajamian of the Men's Club who chaired another successful Cadillac Car Raffle. This commendation is perennial for Arman has been doing this for over ten years. Each year a success!

The Report of the Men's Club is attached as Appendix C.

A. C. Y. O. A.

These youngsters have taken themselves seriously and insist on doing their share for St. Thomas. Through their many social events they have raised \$1,000 which they donated to the Memorial Fund for the purpose of having the room they occupy credited to the ACY OA as their memorial. Under the chairmanship of Miss Chris Chakmaking, they have a well organized program for the coming year. We are very proud of our

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youth for they are doing a professional job. We might be prejudiced but we think they are the best.

We deeply regret the unfortunate accident suffered by a former chairman of the ACYOA, Miss Debbie Halejian. Florain Halejian who has been a moving force behind this great organization applied her considerable powers of persuasion to her seriously injured daughter and by sheer will power, the prayers of the whole congregation, and the will of God, infused a will to live and brought Debbie back to us.

The ACYOA and the entire congregation is waiting and praying for the day when Debbie Halejian, a beautiful and brave girl, returns to St. Thomas.

The ACYOA Report is attached as Appendix F.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS:-

We are happy to state that our parishioners joined hands with all Armenians to participate in the Consecration of St. Vartan Cathedral by His Holiness Vasken I. We are proud of the financial contribution made by members of our parish toward this dream of a lifetime.

The Sevan Dance Group of St. Thomas Armenian Church has developed into an accomplished troop. Throughout the year they have performed in various churches in the Metropolitan area, Boston, Philadelphia, and are next going to perform in Town Hall, New York on February 23rd along with the AGBU Fold Dance Group and Choral Group. The girls and boys of this group work hard each week in developing new dances and practicing the old ones. Not an easy task, but they continue to work for perfection. We appreciate all the efforts of their director and choreographer, Ohan Armoudian. See Appendix G

The St. Thomas basketball teams have been active during the past year under the tutelage of Jack Tatarian and Dick Kabobjian. Our youth have learned to work with each other and what better sport than basketball which is a true team sport. Through basketball our boys have grown to know each other better, played together, and met with other boys of the surrounding Armenian communities. We look for a great future for our team and our youth. See Appendix E.

Many thanks to Mrs. Alice Parseghian for a well organized and most successful Christian Unity Sunday, observed on Jan. 19, 1969 at our church. We were host to all Tenafly churches and their parishioners. Over 600 persons attended and saw our facilities. Our thanks also to Mrs. Isabel Kratlian for undertaking the tremendous task of providing refreshments on that Sunday.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE:

Like any young Church we have growing pains. Our facilities cannot or will not be able to accommodate our needs in the very near future. We need more space for our Sunday School, we need a new addition to our building for storage, and we need a community center which can be used for many purposes like basketball for our youth, a swimming pool for our parishioners, a large auditorium for dinners,

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dances, stage plays, etc. With a positive approach we will succeed with our plans. Our Armenian community continues to grow in Bergen County. The need for the above facilities will increase as the time continues to pass.

We have in our parish the ingredients to accomplish the impossible. The past 15 years have proved that. Our dreams in the future will become fact with the continued help of our imaginative, courageous and energetic parishioners.

Recently two parishioners of St. Thomas donated \$25,000 worth of stock to the church. These wonderful parishioners wish to remain anonymous. We wish they would not for they deserve the acclamation of our congregation, but we shall comply with their wishes.

Plans are being formulated to have an Investment Committee looking into the feasibility of investing into profitable ventures for the benefit of St. Thomas. Only by wise investments can we succeed with our plans.

RECOGNITION:

The success of this past year was the team effort of our parishioners. We have given the chairman of committees and affairs their deserved credit through letters, personal acknowledgement, recognition at our various dinners, and in our Church paper the Beacon. We thank them all again for the great job they have performed. The workers in the background we might have missed because possibly we take them for granted. Without their contribution we could not have succeeded with the many great accomplishments this past year. We are most grateful to them.

Father Arnak Kasparian has earned the praises of our parishioners and the local community for his endeavors this past year. St. Thomas Armenian Church is looked upon most favorably by the residents of the local communities. We can thank Fr. Arnak for this great public relations job. His rapport with the local residents has made it possible for us to enjoy the wonderful relations we presently maintain. Our appreciation is in order for the spiritual lift he has given us through his Sunday services. We are also appreciative of the Deacons, the members of the Choir, and our organist, Miss Susan Shamamian, for making our Sunday mornings most pleasant.

In addition to being the Superintendent, Yeretzgin Violet has tripled up as our Secretary, Assistant Editor of the Beacon, and organized, cooked, cleaned up on many occasions during the year when a need existed and no chairlady was in sight. We cannot thank her enough for her many deeds in our behalf.

We all join in commending the members of the Parish Council who did an outstanding job in managing the church activities for 1968.

Parish Council Report for 1968 (cont'd.)

CONCLUSION:

The year 1968 proved to be a banner year for St. Thomas. We thank you and God for the success we enjoyed.

Our Diocese under the leadership of His Grace Archbishop Torkom Manoogian has given us the guidance we required this past year. St. Thomas appreciates their efforts. We have met our financial obligations to the Diocese and contributed by supporting their many affairs this past year. We feel it is our responsibility to do our share for our Diocese.

We are very optimistic about exceeding our goals for 1969. We ask for your continued wholehearted and generous support.

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This is our annual church business meeting and we mean business. It is God's business and also our business. Beyond meeting the budget and accomplishing successful social affairs, the main church business consists of certain acknowledgements and commitments. It is built on the acknowledgement that there is a God. He is the creator and sustainer of all. He is our Heavenly Father. He has created us in His own image. We are expected to possess characters and personality traits that are befitting godly people. We are meant to live forever, and our lives should be worthy of eternal existence. We are dealing with a serious product - life. We call upon all our members and friends to take their religion seriously. Let us attend services. Participate in activities regularly. Contribute generously towards the support of our concerns. Be a vital worker in God's business and let your children inherit from you the example of a living Gospel.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

Rev. Arnak Kasparian, President
Victor V. Arzoomanian, Chairman
Arthur Otchy, Secretary

Auditing Committee 1968

Arman Ajanian
Harry Chakmakian
Ray Kreppel