

# THE ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT

1974

PASTOR and PARISH COUNCIL

## THE PASTOR'S REPORT

WORSHIP SERVICES have been conducted every Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to noon, with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and a sermon. During the year, we had as guest celebrants: Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, on the occasion of our ninth anniversary of the consecration of the Church; we also had Rev. Artoon Sempadian on September 29, when our priest was visiting our Sunday School. Father Arnak Kasparian celebrated Badarak at the Home in Emerson twice, on the Armenian Christmas Day and on Maundy Thursday of Holy Week. He also visited on other scheduled occasions for services. During the year, with other clergy of Tenafly, our Pastor also visits and conducts services at the Mary Fisher Home for retired professionals and the Manor Nursing Home.

SACRAMENTAL SERVICES: During the year, 22 baptisms were performed (compared to 27 last year); 13 marriages were blessed (22 the previous year); 10 funerals took place (13 last year). We shall cherish the memory of Dolores Tashjian who was a member of our Parish.

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. He attended the Diocesan Assembly in New York, N. Y., May 1-5.

PUBLICATIONS: Fr. Arnak published the Bergen Beacon monthly and put out the flyers for our various affairs. Dikris Malool has been most helpful in assisting with typing, addressing, and various other office work whenever called upon. Our heartfelt thanks for her cheerful assistance. Special thanks to Rose Mekenian for editing, to Bedros and Iris Papazian for setting the type of the Beacon and of some special flyers and giving them their professional touch and to Anthony Ajemian for his invaluable help in printing. Our mailing list is approximately 960 addresses.

OTHER: We also thank Mrs. Lucy Chakmakian and her helpers from Avak Society who make sure that we have "mahs" every Sunday. We thank Mrs. Jamie Ohanian for being in charge of the Bookstore.

From April 1-4 Fr. Arnak, with the Primate and other Armenian clergymen, attended a retreat at Presbyterian Camp, Johnsonburg, N. Y.

Fr. Arnak was chairman of the committee which planned the various observances sponsored by our Diocese commemorating the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Nersess Shnorhali.

Fr. Arnak was reelected to a six-year term on the Board of Directors of St. Nersess Armenian Theological School. He is also a member of the Englewood Hospital Chaplains Committee.

St. Thomas hosted a luncheon of the greater New York-New Jersey Armenian Clergymen, and of the Tenafly Clergy Fellowship. We thank the members of the Women's Guild for their assistance.

On two occasions guest speakers during Church services were William S. Weismann (2/10/74) and Ned J. Parsekian (10/6/74).

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 organization has been very successful. During the past year, to say the least, all church activities have been operating and run in a most harmonious manner with a minimum of 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.

A very special tribute must be paid to the untiring efforts of our Chairman, George Mekenian, who has shown understanding of the problems that confronted us during the past twelve months, and with an exemplary zeal and dedication has worked for their solutions. Without his faithful and guiding leadership, we would not have had such a successful year. It is impossible at this time not to recognize and thank also the person behind the man, Rose Mekenian, who has rendered great service in many areas. I call her the "Wild Card" of our Parish. She is able to assume any position in our Parish life--and she makes you think that that is her specialty. She was a fantastic chairman of our Bazaar.

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THE PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

It is gratifying to report that during 1974 our St. Thomas Armenian Church kept moving in its pursuit of progress. We continued to inaugurate new programs and carry on established ones to serve both the spiritual and social needs of our Parishioners. We were able to bring to fruition a number of pending projects in the Parish. We met all of our financial obligations.

We are pleased with this progress because it was made possible through the combined efforts of our Parishioners, Church Organizations, Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian, and the Parish Council.

ELECTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS: Shortly after the Parish Assembly last year, the Parish Council was organized as follows:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>LIAISON</u>
George Mekenian	Chairman	Calendar	
* Masis Parseghian	Vice Chairman	Anniversary Dinner, Sign	ACSA
* Frank Avakian	Secretary	Membership & Pledges	Women's Guild
Nbubar Kazarian	Treasurer		Sunday School
* Leon Nigohosian	Asst. Sec'y.	Day School	
Paul Varbedian	Asst. Treas.	Rentals, Picnics	
* Edward Fehmian		Housekeeping & Supplies	Avak Society
* Ara Jilajian		Building & Equipment	Choir
Ara Martin			Armenian School
* Peter Mason		Worship & Rel.Svcs., Picnics	Men's Club
Albert Victoria		Building & Grounds	ACYOA
*(Concludes term on Council)			

A St. Thomas Directory of current Parish and Church Organization Officers and Standing Committees was sent to Parishioners in February and September.

MEETINGS: During the year the Parish Council met formally 25 times. Diocesan Delegates, Chairmen of our Church Organizations, and other guests were invited to meetings where appropriate. In addition, Councilmen met individually or in small committees with others on various matters. One of these was a meeting the Pastor and Parish Council Chairman held with Church Organization Chairmen to coordinate our Church Calendar for the year.

St. Thomas has been represented at the Regional New Jersey Parish Council Meetings called by the Primate. In addition, we have responded to all correspondence and requests from the Diocesan Office.

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY: The St. Thomas representatives at the Diocesan Assembly hosted by the St. Gregory Parish at the Cathedral Complex May 3-4 were our Pastor, Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian; Parish Council Chairman George Mekenian; Diocesan Delegates Arthur Azarik, Edward Bashian, Hagop Jebejian (Alternate for George Mekenian attending as P.C. Chairman), Susan Shamamian (Asadourian) (Alternate for Victor Arzoomanian who was out of town). George Mekenian was elected to the Diocesan Budget Committee.

Attending the various Church Organization Conferences held concurrently on May 4 were the following: Women's Guild - Shake Kapakjian and Elsie Nigohosian (Lily Ajemian was Conference Chairman); ACYOA - Robert Avakian, Ronald Chakmakian, and Carol Minassian; Armenian School - Sylva Der Stepanian (also a Conference leader), Olympia Jebejian, Queenie Tashjian, and Krikor Anoushian; Sunday School - Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian, Ruth Esperian, and Bunny Matteosian.

Father Arnak had served as Chairman of the Clergy Conference held for two days preceding the Diocesan Assembly.

MEMBERSHIP: Since our last Parish Assembly, several new families were added to our rolls. Membership now totals 238 families. Father Arnak makes a concerted effort to encourage new families to join our Parish. All Parishioners are urged to recruit new families personally or to bring Father Arnak's attention to these potential new members. We are pleased to report several young adults over 18 who are employed have become members in their own right, and we recommend that more young adults follow this example.

PLEDGES: The first quarter of 1974 was declared PLEDGE INCREASE QUARTER, to which there was some response. For the second year, the Pledge Program realized more than \$20,000, but fell short of our budgeted goal of \$30,000. (\$20,338) The Parish Council continues to feel that this program has great potential for growth. Our long-range goal should be to raise a significant portion of our operating expenses through pledges.

Martha Saraydarian performs an invaluable service by posting pledges and other contributions, and by sending out the quarterly reports. Frank Avakian Stoneson is in charge of membership and pledges.

BUILDINGS, GROUNDS, AND HOUSEKEEPING: 1974 saw considerable activity to maintain and enhance our building and grounds. Some of the major work included the following:

A sign bearing our Church name was erected. Lighting and landscaping will be added when weather permits. (The Nazar Nazarians are the donors); we were able to establish a regular schedule for care of the grounds; in addition to Memorial plantings, (the Fuhrmann Memorial Grove and the courtyard by the Garjians and Victorias) the Parish Council had two other areas landscaped; grouting and pointing of flagstone steps and of brickwork were done; we had a spring grounds clean-up in March; the fill deposited on our grounds was leveled; the footbridge was repaired; the Parsonage office was painted; dry rot under the floor of the family room at the Parsonage necessitated replacing a portion of the floor, and the sliding patio door in that room was repaired; church rest rooms were painted; interior doors, except in the Church itself, were varnished; movable partitions and baseboard heaters are being installed in two rooms to facilitate multiple use of these areas (costs from ACYOA donations); we have been looking into possible ways of increasing the efficiency of our heating system and resolving a condensation problem; storeroom supplies were adequately maintained throughout the year; and there were other miscellaneous maintenance projects completed.

This year we obtained our Certificate of Occupancy for the Church from the Borough of Tenafly after clearing up some technicalities.

Andy Ouzoonian has been of consistent help with architectural matters; Raymond Kreppel has continued to assist with the grounds; Nishan Ohanesian has done electrical work for us whenever needed, and John Seferian has aided with supply purchases. Our custodian, Michael Ghelberg, has done a great job. Throughout the year, various Councilmen, Parishioners, and friends have assisted with minor repairs and maintenance tasks around the Church, and we gratefully acknowledge their services.

Responsibility for exterior building and grounds maintenance has rested with Albert Victoria, interior building and equipment with Ara Jilajian, and housekeeping and supplies with Edward Fehmian. Masis Parseghian coordinated the efforts for our church name sign.

WORSHIP & RELIGIOUS SERVICES: We have continued the rotating system of formally scheduling two Councilmen in charge for each worship service. We are also appreciative of former Councilmen who come forward to assist when the need arises.

The size of our congregation in Church on Sundays has increased this past year, and this is a very happy and healthy sign, for worship is the most significant aspect of our church life.

At Father Arnak's recommendation, we experimented with a summer church schedule, beginning services during July and August at 9 30 a.m. We had a "Teaching Liturgy" on October 20, which was very well received.

Soon after our Parish Assembly last year, two St. Nersess Seminary students were assigned by the Primate to do some of their field work at

St. Thomas. Arthur Sabounjian and Michael Zeytoonian were with us on Sunday mornings to conduct Assembly for Sunday School, hold a class for prospective Deacons, and teach boys of appropriate age how to be altar servers--these boys thereafter serving at the altar on a rotating basis. The Seminarians were to continue at St. Thomas in the fall, but transportation problems developed, and they could not. This fall our Deacons continued the training of the altar servers.

We made arrangements in September for Rev. Fr. Artoon Sempadian, currently Executive Director of the Diocesan Endowment Fund, to be the celebrant of the Badarak at St. Thomas once a month, thereby releasing Fr. Arnak to be with the children of our Sunday School. However, complications in Father Artoon's schedule prevented his coming regularly, though he will continue to come when possible.

Also, last spring, the upper four grades in the Sunday School joined the Choir on Sundays on a rotating basis.

Vestments, sewn by Krikor Anoushian, were donated to the Church by the Malools for clergy use.

Ladies of the Avak Society, spearheaded by Lucy Chakmakian, make the Mahs for our services. Peter Mason handled altar flower requests.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS: Although nominally in charge of two major events in the past year, the Parish Council actively encouraged all Church Organizations in their activities.

The Parish Council had a Council Dedication and Recognition Day which was held on February 24.

The Ninth Anniversary Dinner was on March 24 with our Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, presiding. The recipient of the St. Thomas Award for 1974 was Raymond Kreppel. Chairman of the Anniversary Dinner was Masis Parseghian.

In late summer of 1974, the Parish Council appointed a special committee consisting of the seven recipients of the St. Thomas Award to plan our celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Consecration of our Church.

A Parish kufteh dinner was held on January 13, 1974 to celebrate the success of the 1973 Bazaar.

The 1974 Annual Bazaar was on December 7 & 8 and was chaired by Rose Mekenian. Close to \$13,000 net was realized from the Bazaar.

"Coffee and"....After church services we have had coffee while members of the congregation greeted one another in the lobby. The Women's Guild this fall took over the responsibility of serving the coffee. Jack Ekizian has been preparing it.

OTHER EVENTS: On Vartanantz Day, we arranged a bus to transport our Parishioners to the Cathedral Complex for the services and program. Buses were also arranged for our Parishioners to attend the Ecumenical Service at St. Patrick's Cathedral May 3 commemorating the 800th Anniversary of the death of St. Nersess Shnorhali. Our Parish has been

represented on the various Diocesan regional event committees.

St. Thomas was host to a Regional Conference of New York-New Jersey ACYOA Representatives and Youth Directors or Advisors on April 6.

BOOKSTORE The Bookstore sales have been quite gratifying. This endeavor is under the leadership of Jamie Ohanian assisted by Elizabeth Iskenderian, Margaret Minassian, and Elizabeth Sahagian.

DAY SCHOOL - AGBU The Parish Council corresponded with the AGBU regarding the question of a possible Day School at St. Thomas initiated by the AGBU last year. We obtained the requirements of the Borough of Tenafly pertaining to such schools and notified the AGBU of them. We subsequently received a letter from the AGBU that a Day School at St. Thomas did not seem feasible and would not be pursued at this time. Leon Nigohosian was the Councilman who handled the Day School matter for us.

PART-TIME SECRETARY Through the cooperative efforts of the following, we did not have to hire a secretary. Dikris Malool who soon after last year's Parish Assembly volunteered to come in once or twice a week to assist Der Hayr with office work and who has been of tremendous help whenever called upon with mimeographing, mailings, and other office work; the wives of Parish Councilmen who have done the secretarial work, which in some cases has been considerable, for their respective husbands; our Church Organizations and Committees which have handled much of their own secretarial work; Yeretzgin Violet, Mary Ann Saraydarian, and Martha Saraydarian who help when needed; and Der Hayr himself; plus a helping hand from other Parishioners who cheerfully joined in when there was work to be done. It should be mentioned that the use of the answering machine has been very beneficial, and of course the members of Der Hayr's family help answer the phone.

ARMENIAN CHURCHES SPORTS ASSOCIATION St. Thomas participated in the program of the Armenian Churches Sports Association. Our representative is Jack Tatarian. Last season's basketball coaches were Robert Avakian, Seniors, and Harry Chakmakian, Juniors. Our current season basketball coaches are Richard Doudoukjian, Seniors, and Dave Tookmanian, Juniors. Our track coaches were Richard Keurajian and Jack Ekizian.

MISCELLANEOUS MEMOS: The rental schedule was revised this year. Paul Varbedian is in charge of rentals.

Our insurance coverage was kept in line with today's rising values and cost of replacement.

Assisting the Parish Council in administering the Memorial Fund and Stewardship Program is Vay Najarian.

Peter Jamgochian helps take photos for publicity or our archives and has been arranging the displays in the wall case outside the Auditorium.

Interest was expressed to the Parish Council in starting a group for young marrieds and singles and such an organization is in the formative stages.

We encouraged attendance by our young people at the St. Nersess Summer Religious Study Conferences and paid half the tuition for one of them who attended the first Conference June 23-July 3 at St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, N. Y.

Three pictures were purchased from the Diocese, framed, and hung in our church vestibule. Two have been paid for by Parishioners--Ara Martins and Robert Odabashians.

The St. Thomas Chorus did not meet during 1974 as the Director, Raffi Sevadjian, moved to South Jersey.

The Auditors have been developing an inventory of our church equipment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: The following are recommendations which we feel should be a guide to the next Parish Council:

1. Continue to expand the Membership and Pledge Programs.
2. Encourage the enrollment of Diocesan Stewards.
3. Carry on the organization of a group for young marrieds & singles.
4. Pursue the expansion and reorganization of the kitchen which could include improved serving capability, new stove-oven, freezer, and awning for barbecue.
5. Continue to landscape the grounds.
6. Establish a building and grounds improvement fund, also equipments.
7. Institute a teacher-training program for the Sunday School.
8. Establish a committee to plan an energy conservation campaign.
9. Create a committee to do minor building maintenance.
10. Reinforce public address system.
11. Continue to improve operational procedures.

RECOGNITION: Church Organizations--The Parish Council gratefully acknowledges and thanks the many persons who have worked so diligently in our Church Organizations. St. Thomas depends on its various Church groups for support. We are happy to state that each of our Organizations has made substantial contributions both in services and in finances during the period of this report. We are grateful to all the groups. The reports of our Church Organizations are attached.

Individuals--Rather than express our thanks to a specific individual and run the risk of inadvertently omitting deserving names, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all of those who have given of themselves in the service of our Church. We are grateful, also, for the financial support of our Parishioners and friends. The personal sacrifices we each make constitutes the sustaining force for our Church.

CONCLUSION Through teamwork and dedication, your Parish Council achieved many goals. We made a special effort to keep Parishioners informed of plans, progress, hopes, and achievements through articles in the Beacon, letters, notices, and announcements. We were blessed throughout the year to have the encouragement and generous participation of our spouses. Our spirits were buoyed by the support of Parishioners, Father Arnak and Yeretzgin.

We look forward to the future with confidence and high expectation. The task as usual is challenging and requires the active participation of all Parishioners along with the Parish Council and Pastor. Together

we will continue to carry forward the work of God, through the Armenian Church, at St. Thomas.

George Mekenian  
Chairman

Frank Avakian Stoneson  
Secretary

Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian  
President

AUDITING COMMITTEE'S REPORT

The Auditing Committee has examined the Treasurers' Books and found them in good order.

Vahe Arkell  
Armen Asher  
Andrew Sahagian