

THE ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT

1975

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 Sion Manoogian, on the occasion of our tenth anniversary of the consecration of the Church; we also had Rev. Artoon Sempadian on Feb. 16 when our priest was out of town. 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, 27 baptisms were performed (compared to 22 last year); 9 marriages were blessed (13 the previous year); 12 funerals took place (10 last year). We shall cherish the memory of Alice Turnamian and Isabel Saddler who were members of our Parish.

ADMINISTRATIVE: As ex-officio president of all church organizations, Rev. 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 Boston, Mass., April 30-May 2.

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 Mary Ann Saraydarian 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.

Fr. Arnak attended a retreat at the Episcopal Retreat House in Peekskill, N. Y. March 17-19. The Retreat Master was Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan. Participants were from the Diocese of the Armenian Church, Prelacy of the Armenian Church (Antelias), and Armenian Protestant ministers. Armenian Catholic clergy were invited but were unable to attend due to ill health.

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.

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 efforts of our Chairman, Arthur Otchy. Without his faithful and guiding leadership, we would not have had such a successful year. Arthur also assumed the chairmanship of our Christmas Bazaar, which was such a successful affair.

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THE PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

Through the cooperative efforts of every member of the Parish Council, 1975 saw the completion of several of the recommendations made by the previous council and approved by the assembly, broke new ground in inaugurating new programs and continued to pursue the spiritual and social needs of our parishioners. We are happy to announce that St. Thomas continues to meet its financial obligations and is in a fairly solvent condition.

ELECTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS At the first meeting following the election of the new Parish Council, the Council was organized as follows:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>LIAISON</u>
Arthur A. Otchy	Chairman	Calendar	
Frank Avakian-Stoneson	Vice Chairman		Women's Guild
*Paul Varbedian	Treasurer	Rentals	
**Armenag Iskenderian	Secretary		Book Store
Michel Izmirly	Asst. Treasurer		Avak Society
*Hagop Kasparian	Asst. Secretary	Membership & Pledges	Armenian School
Peter Mason		Worship & Rel. Services	Men's Club
*Noubar Kazarian		Bldg. & Equip.	Sunday School
*Ara Martin		Picnics	Choir
Leon Nigohosian		Picnics	ACYOA & COUPLES CLUB
*Albert Victoria (*Moved & Resigned) (*Concludes term on Council)		Bldg. & Grounds	ACSA

A St. Thomas Directory of Current Parish & Church Organization officers and Standing Committees was sent to the Parishioners in September.

MEETINGS: During the year, the Parish Council met formally 23 times. On several occasions, chairmen of our Church organizations, Diocesan Delegates, and certain individuals were invited to address the Council. The Council, when requested, made itself available to certain

organizations that wished to present its problem directly to the Parish Council. On October 28, 1975 your Parish Council met at a Regional Meeting at St. Leon's Armenian Church where St. Thomas made up the largest delegation. Diocesan Delegates were also present.

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY: On May 2 and 3, 1975 the 73rd Annual Assembly of the Diocese of the Armenian Church was held at the Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge, Mass., attended by our Pastor, Fr. Arnak Kasparian; Parish Council Chairman Arthur A. Otchy, Diocesan Delegates Arthur Azarik, Edward Bashian, Victor Arzoomanian and George Mekenian. Attending the various Church Organization Conferences held concurrently were the following: Women's Guild-Rose Mekenian, Dorothy Otchy; Armenian School-Sylvader Stepanian; Sunday School-Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian.

We were proud to find that our own George Mekenian was elected to the Diocesan Council for a four year term.

MEMBERSHIP: Realizing the desirability of increasing our membership, retaining the old and reactivating those members that have been so important a part of St. Thomas in the past, and co-incidentally increasing our pledge contribution, the Membership and Pledge Committee head Hagop Kasparian, made an in depth study of our parishioners and developed various categories representing the active, semi-active, and inactive and their geographical distribution. A plan was developed to conduct local intimate meetings in each area and determine the cause for the apparent disenchantment of certain members, and correct whatever deficiencies we might be guilty of. The response by the Parishioners was not encouraging, far too few were willing to attend a meeting. A further effort by direct telephone communication was more fruitful and some 67 delinquent members were contacted with various responses. 18 of these definitely will continue and pay their membership dues and be active members of the parish; 49 said they would not. We started the year with 261 members, lost 5, in addition to the 49 mentioned, gained 19 new families with a net membership of 226 pledges.

JUNIOR CHOIR: A Junior Choir was instituted in September for our youth with rehearsals each Sunday from 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. Dorothy Otchy and Rose Mekenian have been teaching the Badarak to four to thirteen children each Sunday. Ara Martin, Armen Basmajian, & Armine Donelian will also participate in the instructions. Jean Azarik is serving as accompanist, with Arlene Hajinlian, substitute.

PLEDGES: Martha Saraydarian and Dikris Malool have contributed to keep the pledges and special donations properly tabulated and credited. Hagop Kasparian devised a new index card system which, when the information becomes available, will contain a record of each family and their children, ages, a little background as well as pledge records. We believe the amount of pledges per family could be increased with a little effort on our part.

MEMORIALS: This year an electronic page indicator was donated by Ira and Queenie Tashjian, two side altar crosses were donated by Michel Izmirly and Rev. Arnak Kasparian and family, and a processional cross was donated by Raymond Malool and family. Michael Furhmann has been contributing toward the landscaping of the Helen Furhmann Grove. A pair of elegant turquoise and gold ceramic candleholders for use on the Bema

in front of the Main Altar were created and donated by Mrs. Siroon Mangurian. The octagonal bases on which the candleholders rest were made and donated by Archie Minassian.

WORSHIP & RELIGIOUS SERVICE: With knowledge gained by lengthy service in the church all of our Parish Council members have been functioning with certainty and precision.

Our congregation has been augmented with recent arrivals from Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and elsewhere. We welcome our fellow Armenians from abroad.

ASSISTANTS AT THE ALTAR: Father Kasparian was assisted this past year by Deacons Krikor Anoushian and Hagop Restemian, Sub-Deacon Armen Basmajian, and Altar Servers Hovsep Nokhudian, John Malool, and Nishan Apoyan from Australia.

Ladies of the Avak Society, with Lucy Chakmakian usually in charge, made "mahs" for our Sunday services.

BUILDING, GROUNDS and HOUSEKEEPING: Each year as the Church grows older, certain signs of weaknesses have manifested themselves. Of particular concern is the apparent excess moisture that is being deposited on the beams and ceilings and structural members of the Church. This has caused some rot and decay. Albert Victoria, who is in charge of the building and grounds, has spent many hours with experts reviewing the situation and will soon come up with a recommendation. We have found it necessary to silicone a large area of the external brick surfaces. The ceiling work in conjunction with the folding doors was completed during the past year. There was continuous on-going maintenance of the Church grounds. Certain designs for landscaping were submitted for certain areas around the Church. The underpinnings on the bridge were totally re-constructed. Parts of the driveway and parking lot were repaved and stones were installed along the drive instead of curbing, which alone saved a considerable sum of money. The landscape area was extended. We acknowledge the great contribution of Raymond Kreppel in this area.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS: The Tenth Anniversary Dinner on April 13, 1975 was easily the outstanding social function of the year. The Dinner Committee, chaired by Edward Bashian, consisted of the seven recipients of the St. Thomas Award and the affair was a sparkling success. Our honored guest was Archbishop Sion Manoogian, our featured soloist was Lili Chookasian, and our Church Choir, led by Edward Daghlian, performed at the Banquet. A total of \$15,000.00 was raised for the cake sale. A special anniversary booklet prepared by Susan Asadourian was distributed to the congregation.

The Parish Council participated in the One World Festival on September 13 and 14 at the Diocese.

The 1975 Annual Bazaar on Dec. 6 and 7 was conducted by the Parish Council and coordinated by its chairman, Arthur A. Otchy. Over \$14,500 was realized from the Bazaar.

The Women's Guild, with Jack Ekizian preparing the coffee, has continued to serve refreshments in the lobby after Church Services.

OTHER EVENTS: A busload of Parishioners and many others in private cars traveled to the Diocese to participate in the 60th Anniversary Commemoration in Memory of the Armenian Martyrs on April 23. The candlelight solemn procession marched by the thousands from the Diocese to St. Patrick's Cathedral where a commemorative service was held. Our parish was represented on the various Diocesan Committees.

BOOKSTORE: The Bookstore continues to expand its selection and has been a ready reference source for those that are interested in Armenian history and culture. The Bookstore is in the capable hands of Jamie Ohanian, ably assisted by Elizabeth Hekimian. A new index system was formulated by Armenag Iskenderian, Parish Council liaison, which has been of help in keeping records.

SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE: Dikris Malool has volunteered to donate and has donated 6 hours a week to the parish secretarial duties. Her duties include sending out all the mailing, handling of Pastor's correspondence, sending out miscellaneous letters, and doing general office work.

Mary Ann Saraydarian has been editing the Beacon, Iris and Peter Papazian have been setting the type for the Beacon, and Anthony Ajemian has been helping in the production of the Beacon.

COUPLES CLUB: The plan to form a Couples Club crystallized this past year and rapidly gained momentum to such a degree that the Club was able to sponsor a New Year's Eve Dance. There are presently 25 couples who meet monthly. Rosette and Gerard Berberian, Joyce and Richard Chilingarian were instrumental in perpetrating the initial stages of the organization. A Steering Committee is working on the by-laws and intends to have an election of officers in February.

BUILDING, EQUIPMENT & GROUNDS IMPROVEMENT FUND: Pursuant to the mandate of the 1975 Parish Assembly, a charter to implement the Building, Equipment and Grounds Improvement Fund was formulated to submit to the 1976 Assembly for approval. The purpose of the charter is to authorize a Committee to act as trustees and managers of the Fund, to serve as a repository for reserve funds not required for the annual operational costs, to serve as a repository of special donations, and to serve as a source of revenue for the construction of new facilities, capital improvements and replacement of capital improvements to existant grounds and equipment. Members of this ad hoc committee are Father Kasparian, Noubar Kazarian, Leon Nigohosian, Arthur Azarik, Victor Arzoomanian, Edward Bashian, George Mekenian, Rupen Saddler, Vay Najarian, Andrew Ouzoonian, and Ara Jilajian. See proposed charter annexed.

ARMENIAN CHURCH SPORTS ASSOCIATION: Richard Doudoukjian and Robert Avakian are coaches with help from Harry Chakmakian. There are approximately 25 youngsters from our parish participating in this program.

MISCELLANEOUS MEMOS: Rentals continue surprisingly to be a significant source of income. Paul Varbedian has been managing the rentals and doing an excellent job.

Our photographer Peter Jamgochian has graciously made his talents available for purposes of keeping the Beacon and the wall display case posted on our latest goings on.

A non-member visitor, George Philibosian, noticed the poor quality of our sound system in the auditorium and offered to have his sound man repair and replace whatever was necessary to improve the system. His offer was accepted and we have enjoyed the benefit of his generous donation.

A heater was installed in the lobby of the auditorium. Electrical outlets were installed on the outside of the auditorium to facilitate outside use and outside loudspeakers were installed and connected with our main tuner so that reception would be indoors and outdoors simultaneously should we so desire.

A new automatic barbeque machine was ordered. Delivery will be in the Spring.

A regional teachers meeting for Sunday School teachers was well attended by St. Thomas and much valuable information was gathered.

A pancake breakfast, chaired by Vickie Ganan, and cultural hour was held immediately after Church on October 19, and was a great success.

A farewell coffee hour was held to bid good-bye to our longtime members Rose and George Paloian.

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

1. Appoint a professional Church School Superintendent.
2. Expand the kitchen facilities in size and scope.
3. Repair and replace structural deficiencies in roof, rafters, beams, overhang, and heat units.
4. Institute a study for the expansion of the auditorium.
5. Seek methods to provide for the training of our Sunday School teachers.
6. Initiate a permanent long term membership expansion and membership retention and pledge program.
7. Inventory of church properties.

RECOGNITION: The Parish Council acknowledges that without the support and contribution of the Church organizations and individual Parishioners, St. Thomas could not possibly move ahead, but in fact would be sliding backwards. Some years the contribution of one organization is far greater than another's and other years it's the other way around. So long as each individual and each organization gives its best efforts under the circumstances, that is all that can be expected, and that is all that will be needed. The Parish Council

gratefully thanks all of those persons that have given so generously of their time. The spirit of giving and sharing has never been as prolific, and has resulted in a warm feeling of friendliness and cooperation and a determination to continue the work of the Parish and continue on the path set out by our forebearers.

The problems before us are minor and can easily be met and overcome with the continued spirit demonstrated by this Parish, its Parish Council and its Pastor. Together, we can continue to carry forward the work of God through the Armenian Church of St. Thomas.

Arthur A. Otchy
Chairman

Hagop Kasparian :
Secretary

Rev. Arnak Kasparian
President

AUDITING COMMITTEE'S REPORT

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

Vahe Arkell
Antranig Ouzoonian
Masis Parseghian