



ST. THOMAS
ARMENIAN
CHURCH

1965-1990

ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION 1965-1990

REVEREND
ARNAK KASPARIAN
PASTOR

25th Anniversary Commemorative Committee

Peter Ajemian Chairman
Claudine Bogosian
Grace Hagopian
Paul Kahaumjian
Garbis Kirikian
Douglas Martaian
Rose Mekenian
Antranig Ouzoonian
Albert Papazian
Alyce Parseghian
Elise Poosikian
Rita Tchalikian
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Joanne Torigian
Virginia Victoria

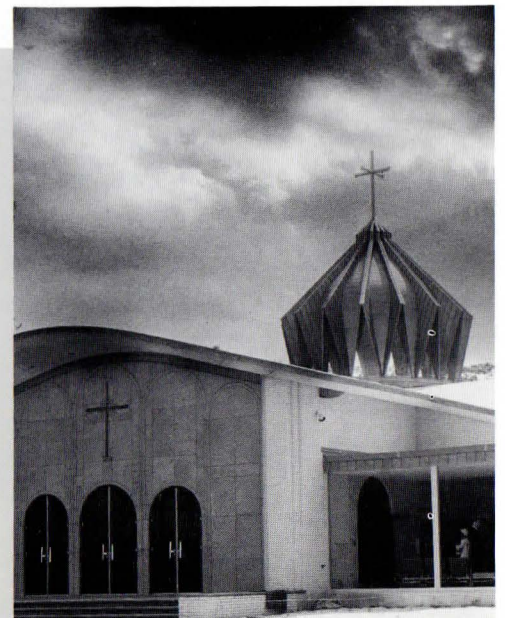
25th Anniversary Booklet Committee

Suzanne Daghlian
George Mekenian

Joseph Kalemkerian
John Vaniskhian

Assisted by:
Mindy Mukalian

Rose Mekenian
Robert Waldron





St. Thomas
Parish
Committee

Peter A. Martin
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Paul K. Martin
David A. Martin
George A. Martin
Rose A. Martin
Anthony A. Martin
Albert A. Martin
John A. Martin
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James A. Martin
Robert A. Martin
Thomas A. Martin

Foreword

It is not a simple task to attempt to capsulize the quarter century since the consecration of St. Thomas Armenian Church — indeed the 33 years since the start of the parish. So many people have labored and contributed toward our progress over the years and so much has happened that we can but give glimpses of our accomplishments.

The information in this Silver Anniversary Book has been compiled from the Consecration Book, the Tenth Anniversary Booklet, Annual Reports, and the BEACON. We have tried our best to be as accurate as possible. If there are any errors or omissions, they are purely unintentional. It should also be noted that we have not elaborated on items covered extensively in the Consecration Book or Tenth Anniversary Booklet.

Every person in the St. Thomas Family has played a part in bringing our church to the 1990's. With appreciation and gratitude for the achievements of one another, let us look to the future with hope and optimism and, with God's help, carry on the faith of our fathers.

A special thanks go to the photographers who shared pictures with us. George Margosian, Alyce Parseghian, Antranig Ouzoonian, Albert Papazian, Peter Jamgochian and Joseph Kalemkerian

We thank Susan Shamamian, editor of the Tenth Anniversary Booklet, for use of portions of the text.

With gratitude, we acknowledge the sponsorship of this Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Commemorative Booklet by Nazar and Artemis Nazarian.



His Holiness Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.



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DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA, 630 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016-4885 212 686-0710

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate

PRIMATE'S MESSAGE

With great joy, we extend our congratulations to the pastor, parish council and all the parishioners of St. Thomas Armenian Church on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the consecration of St. Thomas Church.

Indeed there is no greater joy than to witness each passing birthday that marks a community's journey from the small group of faithful that lay the cornerstone to the parish community celebrating its many years together. That journey has been filled with all the experiences that truly characterize an Armenian Christian community: cultural, social and educational achievements, countless Sundays of worship and other days of church feasts and celebrations, the pleasure of life within the parish family—whether in work, study, or simply in fellowship, even the occasional pain of misunderstanding, these are all part of sharing in any real and vital community.

And as with any anniversary, not only is this a time to celebrate the accomplishments of 25 years, it is also an ideal time to pause and take stock of where we are, where we should be and how we should reflect even more strongly the Kingdom of God as church and people. At this moment of extraordinary turmoil and tragedy in Armenia, we face a very great challenge in this task.

We have every confidence that the commitment, goodness and faith of the St. Thomas community will rise to that challenge.

God bless you all on this remarkable milestone, and may His Spirit continue to dwell in each and every faithful heart for many, many years to come.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian
Primate

January 1990



St. James Armenian Apostolic Church

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465 MOUNT AUBURN STREET • WATERTOWN, MASS. 02172

Dear Friends,

"Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."
I Timothy 4:12

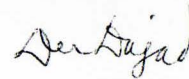
St. Thomas is both one of the younger parishes of the Diocese, as well as one of the more youthful. Its history is vibrant. It has established itself as an innovative, forward-looking parish. It is certainly one of the brightest and most imaginative of our parishes. St. Thomas has been a beacon for the Diocese.

St. Thomas has changed considerably since the days when we began in the Teaneck Women's Club. Through the years, you have grown physically, both in numbers and in your facilities. You have matured emotionally and spiritually as well, as you have sought to do Christ's work in Bergen County. You have made the Armenian Church a recognizable presence in your community.

At the same time, St. Thomas has left its mark on the Diocese. You are acknowledged as a creative and resourceful parish, a parish where the young and the experienced work together in harmony, where new ideas and opinions are welcomed and tried. You have been blessed with outstanding and faithful leadership throughout your history. You have fulfilled St. Paul's admonition and set an example for the Church by your faith, your love and your conduct.

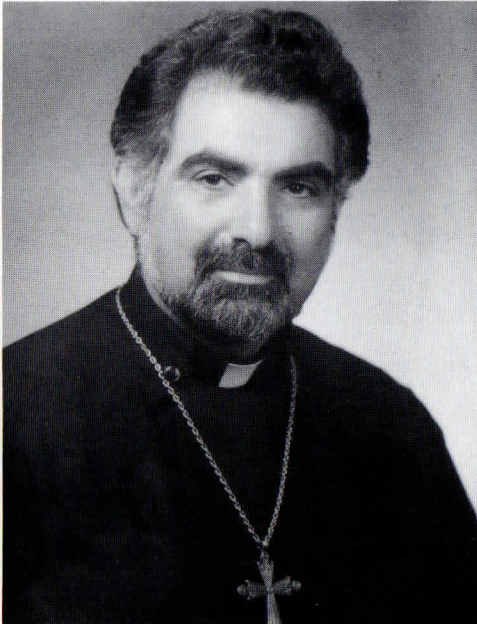
I congratulate you all on your 25th anniversary. I am very happy and proud to have been a part of St. Thomas from its earliest days, and wish you continued growth and service. St. Thomas will always have a special place in my heart. God bless you all.

With love,



Rev. Dajad Davidian

February 28, 1990



Dear St. Thomas Family,

St. Thomas, from its beginnings, has been comprised primarily of 2nd or 3rd generation American-born Armenians who left their urban areas and settled in suburban Bergen County, where they established this parish. And it was fitting that the first pastor of this indigenous Armenian American parish be the first American-born Armenian priest, Fr. Dajad Davidian.

There was a time when our primary concern was coming together and building an Armenian church community and facilities. Now that after 25 years we have a vibrant community and beautiful physical facilities, what do we do for an encore?

How can people, who have come from all over the world (Dikranagerd, Kharpert, Beirut, Istanbul, New York, Pennsylvania), who speak different languages, who hold different values, who may be doctors or photoengravers or merchants, who may have married an Armenian or a non-Armenian, who attended a Baptist or Congregational or Lutheran or Methodist Church or a particular Armenian parish in their childhood, come together and meld into a cohesive Armenian community? And how can all of these people come to know and share a common and genuine Armenian Orthodox parish life?

The only two answers I know are tolerance and adaptation. St. Paul urges us to practice tolerance when he invites us to live according to the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22) in our parish relationships. These fruits of the Holy Spirit will promote tolerance and love toward each other no matter where we come from or what our background is.

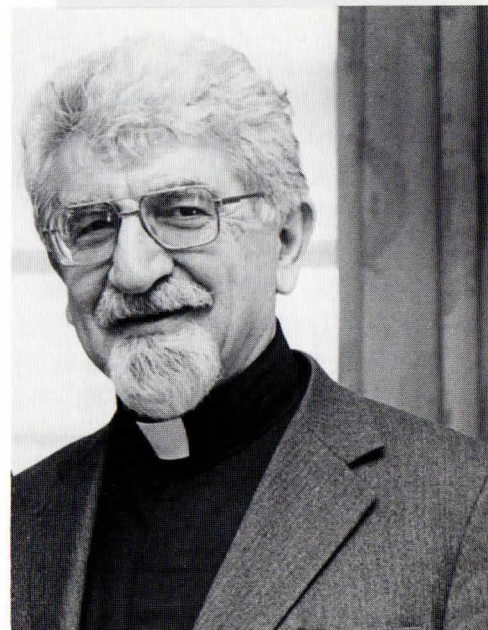
The second way to accomplish a cohesive Armenian community is to create new vessels of expression and worship and communication. Life imposes imperatives on us; adapt or perish. Our language of communication is English, 85% of our marriages are an Armenian with a non-Armenian, and we live in a transient society. Under these circumstances our chief concern should be to keep those who do not speak Armenian in the community and make the non-Armenian spouse feel a part of the community. Otherwise we will lose the whole family and our church community will disintegrate.

Adaptation may sound radical, but it is much less radical than closing our churches. Adaptation may mean not being afraid of the English language in our worship, or abbreviating our Badarak, or not requiring that we do things the way we always did them. It's a false assumption to believe that the Armenian Church has been an unchanging and rigid institution since the time of St. Gregory. The reason for our continued survival as a people through the centuries, has been our ability to adapt to the various situations in which we have found ourselves. The main issue is to survive as an Armenian Church community, the main issue is to be an organic part of the world-wide Armenian Church, whose Mother See is Holy Etchmiadzin, under the leadership of His Holiness Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

We pray for all those who helped our parish achieve this 25th anniversary milestone. May God lead us with the creative spirit of our forebears to keep alive our church community that we may reach our 50th anniversary.

Rev. Arnak Kasparian

Rev. Arnak Kasparian



Then And Now

For eight years following the organization of an Armenian community in northern New Jersey, the newly formed parish was called "The Armenian Church of Bergen County." Then in 1965 upon the construction of a new imposing church, it was consecrated by the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and named St. Thomas Armenian Church.

This then is the story of St. Thomas Armenian Church. It is not intended to serve as a detailed history, but only as a reminder of the events and people who have made the St. Thomas Church dear to our hearts these past 25 years.

We are now in our "young adulthood." Children who were baptized in our "new" church then, are now being married and having their own children christened in the same church where they received their first sacraments. We have developed into a St. Thomas Family.

Every history must start with an, "...In the beginning," and in order to start the St. Thomas story we must go back to the mid-1950s, when all the pieces to the mosaic began to come together.

The following is reprinted from the Consecration Book of 1965:

The seed was germinated by our own Haig Markarian of Bergen County who repeatedly carried the message: "The church is a must," to everyone he met and everywhere he went. By constant diligence and word-of-mouth campaigning, he eventually managed to gather his friends to join in an initial meeting. This group, consisting of Jack Charshafian, Haig Tashjian, Stephen Ananian, Richard Turnamian, Charles Shakarjian, and the late Albert Tfank, decided that Bergen County, which consisted of over 1,000 Armenian families, was in need of an Armenian Church. They formed a committee and



First Parish Assembly held February 8, 1959 after Sunday School at the Women's Club in Teaneck.

sent invitations to their friends to attend a dinner in April of 1957 at the Swiss Chalet in Ramsey, NJ, and to discuss the possibilities of an Armenian Church. Eighty couples attended. Jack Charshafian presided over the meeting and Haig Markarian explained his idea of building a church to continue Armenian heritage and culture in our children by keeping them together through a common purpose. Everyone was enthusiastic and filled out forms listing their names, addresses and their children's names and ages. A Mr. and Mrs. Club was formed with Vahan Najarian as chairman. The purpose of

the club was twofold, to encourage more Armenians to join and for the purpose of raising funds. A Board of Trustees was selected to organize a parish and to discuss a site for the church. The trustees were Jack Charshafian, Chairman; Armen Bogossian, Treasurer; Peter Daghljan, Secretary; Dr. Gerard Balakian, Anoush Pooisikian, Haig Tashjian, Malcolm Topalian, Richard Turnamian, Vahan Najarian, Stephen Ananian, and Haig Markarian.

...from St. Thomas Armenian Church by Margaret Peterson (1965)



Staff Seated: Fr. Arnak, Pastor. Standing: (L to R) Louise Kalemkerian, Pastoral Assistant; George Paseler, Custodian; Toni Barker, Office Manager.



Did you know that the Episcopal Church of Tenaflly has in one of its chapel windows a shield depicting the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin with Mount Ararat in the background?



Shortly following these events, this new group was assigned a young and magnetic Deacon-In-Charge, who in 1960 was ordained Reverend Father Dajad Davidian and became the first pastor of our parish. It was also during 1960 that His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, was visiting the Armenian communities in the United States, and we were most fortunate to have His Holiness bless, on July 24, the nearly eight acres of church grounds we had been able to acquire in Tenaflly in 1958 through the efforts of Charles Shakarjian.

By 1961, an attractive multi-purpose auditorium had been erected with Antranig Ouzoonian as Chairman of the Building Committee, and on January 29 of that year, a ribbon-cutting ceremony and "Antasdan" services signaled the formal opening.

After two years as our pastor, Father Dajad was reassigned by the Primate as an instructor at the newly founded St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. The Primate then appointed the Reverend Father Arnak Kasparian, who had

served as pastor of the St. John's parish in Detroit for eleven years, to assume the duties as pastor of the St. Thomas Church.

A beautiful parsonage was built in 1963 — an accomplishment for which we were greatly indebted to John Karanfilian, who donated his efforts as builder.

As our flock grew, the need to begin construction on the church became apparent. A Building Committee was organized in 1963, with Edward Bashian and Jack Charshafian serving as General Co-Chairmen. Though Jack Charshafian was unfortunately called away to head a business project in California, Mr. Bashian capably carried on as chairman of this huge undertaking with the assistance of the other members of the committee.

On Sunday, May 23, 1964, the Primate, Archbishop Sion Manoogian, blessed the cornerstone and foundations, with the participation of a number of clergy and the Godfathers of the 16 foundation stones.

Construction progressed rapidly, and we were able to observe our church taking form.

Finally, during the weekend of April 3-4, 1965, the dream was fully realized, when Archbishop Sion Manoogian consecrated St. Thomas Armenian Church. Haig Tashjian was the Godfather of the new church. A Consecration Banquet at the Tammy Brook Country Club in Cresskill, NJ, attended by more than 700 people, concluded the activities of that memorable period.

Thus, 75 years following the consecration of the first Armenian Church in the United States in Worcester, Mass., the St. Thomas Church was consecrated with the same pageantry of the ancient rituals of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church.

By 1979, the need for more classrooms and social space generated an effort to secure approval of a third stage of construction. However, a

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consensus did not develop until 1983, when a concept for expansion of the existing structure emerged from the various proposals. The Building Committee, chaired by Nazar Nazarian, commenced detailed planning with architect Edward Luders. At several fund-raising receptions, sufficient pledges were secured to permit finalization of plans and to contract for construction. Groundbreaking took place on Sunday, December 2, 1984, with Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan officiating, after a festive dinner the previous evening. Actual construction began in March of 1985. Who will forget the dust of breakthrough and construction while we tried to carry on with our regular activities. All this came to a glorious conclusion on March 22, 1986, with a Gala Expansion Banquet and ribbon-cutting celebration with the Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, presiding. Dedicated were the Rupen and Leon Saddler Hall, the Mekhjian Atrium, the Topjian Kitchen Wing, the Kirikian Armenian School, new classrooms, a youth room, and other auxiliary areas. The entire church complex was now air conditioned, a new heating system installed, the entrance foyer enlarged, and many other renovations effected.

Another innovation at St. Thomas was the appointment in September, 1987, of Louise Kalemkerian, a graduate of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, as Pastoral Assistant. She has worked closely with Der Arnak to expand the pastoral outreach of St. Thomas.

Ever since its inception, the St. Thomas parish has been noted for its enterprising nature and the variety of projects upon which it has embarked.

One of the highlights took place the year after the consecration of our church, when in May of 1966, the Annual Diocesan Assembly was held in our complex. In 1991, we will again host this annual assembly as the



Armenian Church enters its second century in the United States.

A number of our members have served on regional Diocesan event committees, capably representing St. Thomas.

Over the years, our parish has marked the significant anniversaries of Father Arnak's ordination to the priesthood with special observances. The most recent was the celebration of his 40th anniversary which was commemorated with a splendid banquet on October 8, 1988, and contributions were received for a

Father Arnak and Violet Kasparian Library in our complex, currently in the planning stages.

Our parish has been fortunate to have many dedicated families who through the years have planned and participated in numerous events.

Many of these events have been the activities of our organized groups, like the Women's Guild, the Men's Club, Avak Society, ACYOA Junior and Seniors, Choir, Armenian School, Sunday School, the Sevan Dance Group, and the Couples Club.

We have sponsored everything from



art auctions, fashion shows, rug sales, military bridge, concerts, bake sales, dinners and dances, to the St. Thomas Chorus, Instructed Divine Liturgy, Armenian history and culture lectures, adult language classes, Bible study groups, spiritual renewal programs, and much, much more.

Ecumenically, our pastor and parish have been involved in dialogue with the other religious institutions in Tenafly and neighboring communities. Women from our parish participate in the regional Church Women United activities. Each year our parish is

represented in a Good Friday vigil and walk with other Christian communities in Tenafly.

New endeavors have joined our traditional annual affairs such as the Palm Sunday Anniversary Dinner, December 24 Christmas Eve Services, the Memorial Day Picnic, the Bazaar, and the Cotillion.

The youngsters of our parish have participated in the Armenian Churches Sports Association with both girls' and boys' teams in basketball and track and field. For the last few years, our ACYOA Juniors have co-sponsored a Regional

Sports Weekend with the St. Leon ACYOA Juniors.

In times of disaster the St. Thomas community has raised funds for relief assistance. We responded to the victims of earthquakes and hurricanes in Mexico City, Ecuador, San Francisco, and South Carolina, and to the needs of those in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Lebanon. The devastating earthquake in Armenia in 1988 deeply affected us all. Local collections for earthquake relief were coordinated through our church office, and many contributions were received from parishioners as well as from residents and other religious institutions in our area. Countless members of our parish served as volunteers during the Armenian Earthquake Relief effort. Families from our community opened their homes to serve as hosts to the victims after their release from the hospitals.

We are cognizant of the less fortunate in this world and try to provide assistance whenever we can. We now have a Good Samaritan fund for helping those in need of immediate assistance. Beginning in 1989, with the cooperation of our church organizations, each month a meal is provided to a men's homeless shelter in Paterson. Food baskets and clothing are donated during the holiday season. Each October for several years, a group of youngsters and adults have participated in a ten-mile walk and have raised thousands of dollars through pledges to help the hungry.

At times, our enormous financial responsibilities have seemed overwhelming, but through the cooperative efforts and generosity of many, they have always been met. We owe appreciation not only to our leaders, but also to the many faithful parishioners and friends of St. Thomas, who have provided the support so essential to our existence. The parish is a blessing for which we are thankful.

Parish Council

Our first Parish Council set a lofty precedent back in 1958. Led by Jack Charshafian, their dynamic Chairman, they achieved levels of accomplishment in establishing the church that have been a constant inspiration to their successors.

Elected by the membership, Parish Council members are the lay administrators of our church. Aside from overseeing church operations and bearing the responsibility of seeing that all our financial obligations are met, our Parish Councils have brought to fruition many projects and programs.

We have witnessed the continual enhancement of our building complex and grounds, as well as increased efficiency in operations. The Parish Councils have fulfilled their duties faithfully. Furthermore, they have actively encouraged all church organizations in their endeavors.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to our Parish Council Chairmen. They must be commended for the tremendous amount of time and effort they have unselfishly devoted to our church.



Parish Council Members 1958 — Top Row (L to R) Haig Tashjian, Stephan Ananian, Vahan Najarian, Richard Turnamian, Anoosh Poosikian. Missing from the picture is Malcolm Topalian. Bottom Row — Gerard Balakian, M.D., Jack Charshafian, Armen Bogossian, Peter Daghlian, Haig Markarian.



Parish Council (L to R) Seated: John Derderian, Joanne Torigian, Fr. Arnak, Suzanne Daghlian, Richard Papazian. Standing: Paul Kahaumjian, Ara Pekmezian, Thomas Merjanian, Gregory Tenbekjian, Garabed Yazidjian, Ara Martaian, Joseph Kalemkerian

Parish Council Members

'60-'61	Anthony Ajemian	'71-'72	Edward Devejian	'63-'63
'62-'63, '82-'87	Peter Ajemian	'70	Richard Donigian	'85-'85
'70	Charles Amerkanian	'59-'60	Peter Doramajian	'77-'77
'57-'63*	Stephen Ananian	'78-'81	Charles Doudoukjian	
'88-'89	Alice Arzoomanian	'71-'74	Edward Fehmian	'79-'79
'59-'60, '64-'70, '78-'79	Victor Arzoomanian	'62-'63, '65-'66	John Froomjian	'73-'73
'67, '76-'77	John Asadourian	'66-'67	George Gavejian	'79-'79
'61-'62, '68-'69	Michael Avakian	'82-'87	Grace Hagopian	'83-'83
'73-'77, '81-'82	Frank Avakian-Stoneson	'63, '65-'66, '68-'71, '80-'81	Jack Hajinlian	
'81-'83	Ara Babigian	'64-'65	Michael Halebian	'71-'71
'57-'58*	Gerard Balakian	'59-'63, '65-'68	Zaven Halejian	'66-'67, '69-'69
'78-'81	Vahan Barsamian	'83	Joseph Hovsepian	'61-'61
'63	Tish Basmajian	'64-'65	Vincent Incecian	'79-'79
'84-'85	Karekian Bedrosian	'75	Armenag Iskenderian	'57-'57
'57-'58*	Armen Bogossian	'75-'76	Michel Izmirly	'72-'76, '88-present
'57-'64*	Jack Charshafian	'76-'82	Peter Jamgochian	'71-'71
'63, '65-'66	Mark Chookazian	'71-'73	Hagop Jebajian	'72-'72
'57-'58, '67-'68*	Peter Daghlian	'73-'74	Ara Jilajian	'59-'60, '62-'62
'90-present	Suzanne Daghlian	'85-present	Paul Kahaumjian	'67-'67
'78-'83, '87-'88	Samuel Demirjian	'87-present	Joseph Kalemkerian	'89-present
'90-present	John Derderian			



Saint Thomas Armenian Church

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REV. ARNAK KASPARIAN, PASTOR

EAST CLINTON AVE. AT HIGHWAY 9W, TENAFLY, NEW JERSEY • P. O. BOX 53, TENAFLY, NEW JERSEY • 07670

I am truly honored to be the Parish Council Chairman during St. Thomas' 25th Silver Anniversary.

During the past 15 years that I have been a member of the St. Thomas parish, I have seen its overall growth, along with its overall growing pains.

We now have the opulent Mekhjian Atrium and Saddler Hall, new classrooms, nursery and other amenities. Soon we will have the Father Arnak and Violet Kasparian Library and Cultural Center. We have added to our operating staff and are continuously refining our services to the parishioners.

Additionally, we have had the guidance of our Pastor, Father Arnak for these 25 years.

In this 25th Year, we can celebrate all that we have and give thanks to those parishioners who have made these things available to us through their generosity, their hard work, and the everpresent blessings of God.

Joanne Torigian
Parish Council Chairman

Parish Council Chairmen

Peter Ajemian	'82-'87
Stephen Ananian	'60
Victor Arzoomanian	'67-'70, '78-'79
Frank Avakian-Stoneson	'76-'77
Jack Charshafian	'57-'59
Peter Jamgochian	'80-'81
George Mekenian	'73-'74
Vahan Najarian	'64-'65, '71-'72
Arthur Otchy	'75
Edward Parseghian	'88
Joanne Torigian	'89-present
Richard Turnamian	'61-'63, '66



Joanne Torigian, Parish Council Chairman

rdj Kaloustyan	'57-'58, '64-'65, '72*	Vahan Najarian	'60-'61	Karnig Shahbazian
Karalian	'84-'86	Lucy Nakashian	'68-'71	George Shahinian
spas Kasparian	'61-'62, '65	Nazar Nazarian	'76-'77	Shakae Shahinian
gop Kasparian	'73-'78, '80-'81	Leon Nigohosian	'59-'60	Charles Shakarjian
oses Kazanjian	'66-'67	Apkar Omartian	'69-'70	Vincent Shamamian
ubar Kazarian	'67-'72, '75	Arthur Otchy	'65	Edward Stepanian
ald Kenderian	'66-'69	Antranig Ouzoonian	'61-'62	Martin Tarzian
rald Keosayian	'77-'82	Albert Papazian	'83-'84	Douglas Tashjian
chard Keurajian	'85-present	Richard Papazian	'57-'59*	Haig Tashjian
bert Keusey	'84-'89	Arax Parseghian	'78, '89-present	Gregory Tenbekjian
ymond Kreppel	'83-'88	Edward Parseghian	'57-'58	Malcolm Topalian
arles Malajian	'59-'60	George Parseghian	'87-present	Joanne Torigian
ginia Malajian	'73-'74	Masis Parseghian	'57-'63, '65-'66*	Richard Turnamian
ig Markarian	'77-'82	Virginia Parseghian	'74-'77	Paul Varbedian
a Martaian	'86-present	Ara Pekmezian	'69-'70	Paul Varjan
ter Mason	'81-'83	Paul Pinajian	'81	Haig Varjian
orge Mekenian	'57-'58*	Anoosh Poosikian	'74-'79	Albert Victoria
mes Melcon	'68-'73	Zaven Poosikian	'82-'87	Virginia Victoria
an Melikian	'69-'72	Andrew Sahagian	'88-present	Garabed Yazidjian
omas Merjanian	'64, '66-'68	John Seferian	'84	John Zakar

*In 1957, served on Board of Trustees

Diocesan Delegates

In compliance with the By-Laws of the Diocese of the Armenian Church, St. Thomas has elected delegates to represent the parish at the annual Diocesan Assembly, the "legislative body" of the Armenian Church in the U.S. The members of our church named here have served as our Diocesan Delegates. Their experience and dedication have uniquely qualified them for this important service.

Diocesan Delegates

Stephen Ananian '59-'60, '62-'65
 Victor Arzoomanian '69-present
 Arthur Azarik '74-'81
 Edward Bashian '65-'77
 Jack Charshafian '58, '61, '62-'66
 Michel Izmirly '82-'85
 Joseph Kalemkerian '80-'89
 Caspar Kasparian '78-'79
 Lillian Kasparian (Chapian) '82-'85
 George Mekenian '74-'81, '86-present
 James Melcon '61
 Vahan Najarian '65-'73
 Nazar Nazarian '62-'65, '67-'74
 Shakae Shahinian '90-present
 Charles Shakarjian '58
 Richard Turnamian '60, '66-'73

Father Arnak Kasparian has served on the Diocesan Council as its chairman. Edward Bashian and George Mekenian have served on the Diocesan Council and also the Diocesan Trustees.



Standing (L to R) Peter Ajemian, 25th Anniversary Chairman, Nazar Nazarian, 1984-87 Building Committee Chairman; Joanne Torigian, Parish Council Chairman; Edward Bashian, 1963-65 Building Committee Chairman; Antranig Ouzoonian, 1958-63 Building Committee Chairman. Seated, Fr. Arnak Kasparian

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees was established by the Parish Assembly in 1981 as custodian of the parish's reserve funds and as a source of revenue for the construction of major new facilities. The Trustees became the core of the Building Expansion Committee of 1983-86. Edward Bashian served as chairman from its inception to May 1989. Dr. Haroutune Mekhjian is the current chairman. The following have served as trustees from the year listed to present.

Edward Bashian 1981
 Haroutune Mekhjian 1981
 Vahan Najarian 1981
 Nazar Nazarian 1981
 Rupen Saddler 1981
 Antranig Shahinian 1981
 Haig Tashjian 1981

Michel Izmirly 1984
 George Mekenian 1984
 Peter Ajemian 1985
 Albert Victoria 1985
 Garbis Kirikian 1987
 Antranig Ouzoonian 1987
 Richard Turnamian 1987



1984-87 Enhancement and Expansion Committee (L to R) Seated: Edward Bashian, Fr. Arnak, Nazar Nazarian, Abp. Torikom Manoogian, Rupen Saddler, Peter Ajemian, Vahan Najarian. Standing: Antranig Ouzoonian, Albert Victoria, Moses Kazanjian, Ronald Kenderian, Michel Izmirly, George Mekenian, Dr. Haroutune Mekhjian, Richard Turnamian.

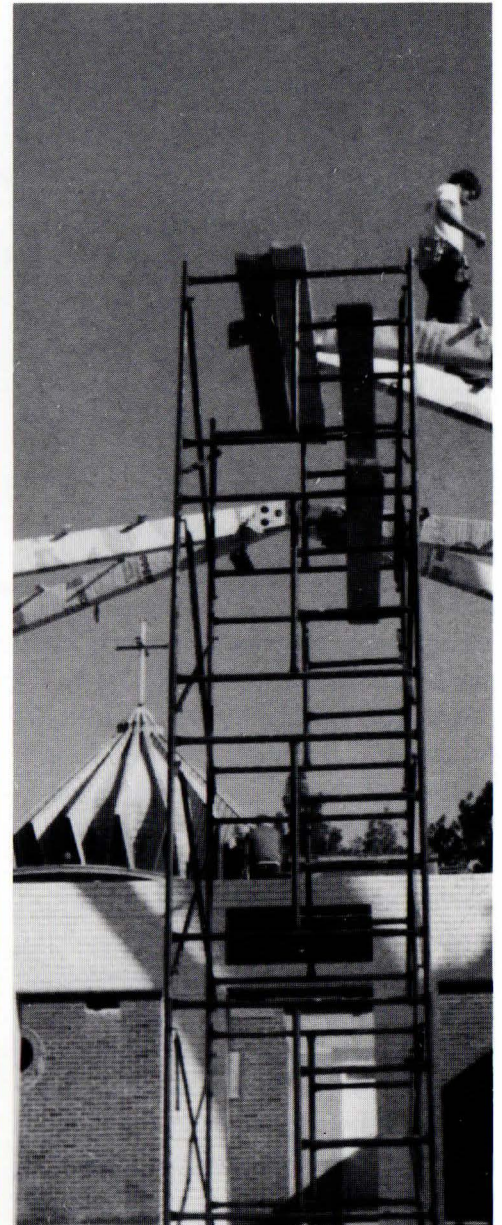
Building Committees

The parishioners of St. Thomas have available for their use physical facilities that meet their need for a place to hold religious, educational, and social activities. To fulfill this need, the parish has turned to three Building Committees. Each has responded with a fund raising, planning, and construction effort that has culminated in our current complex of sanctuary, social halls, meeting rooms, and classrooms.

After the acquisition of our property, their first mandate was to build a structure to house the embryonic, but rapidly growing parish. The second was to build a sanctuary to facilitate the worship of God and conduct the sacraments of the Armenian Church. The third mandate was to expand and enhance our parish activities with more and better classrooms, social space, and support facilities.

The Building Committees have had many participants during each period of active pursuit of these mandates. Invariably, there were two components of each committee: a fund-raising/financial group, and an architectural or technical group. It is not possible to enumerate all those who have participated, but key members are listed here.

All parishioners are deeply indebted to the Building Committees who labored untold hours to make our church complex a beautiful reality.



Phase I

Multi-Purpose Auditorium
and Parsonage, 1958-1963

Antranig Ouzoonian, Chairman
Stephen Ananian
Jack Charshafian
Peter Daghlian
Haig Markarian
Vahan Najarian
Apkar Omartian
Charles Shakarjian
Haig Tashjian
Richard Turnamian

The altar used for services held in the Social (now Saddler) Hall was built by John Froomjian. After the construction of our sanctuary, it was takēn to Houston, Texas for use by the new parish of that community.

Phase II

The Sanctuary, 1963-1965

Edward Bashian, Chairman
Stephen Ananian
Peter Daghlian
Jack Charshafian
Haig Markarian
Vahan Najarian
Apkar Omartian
Antranig Ouzoonian
Rupen Saddler
Charles Shakarjian
Haig Tashjian
Richard Turnamian
Edward Luders, Architect

Phase III

Enhancement and
Expansion, 1979-1987

Nazar Nazarian, Chairman
Vahan Najarian, Co-Chairman
Peter Ajemian
Edward Bashian
Michel Izmirly
Moses Kazanjian
Ronald Kenderian
George Mekenian
Haroutune Mekhjian
Antranig Ouzoonian
Rupen Saddler
Mary Ann Saraydarian
Richard Turnamian
Albert Victoria
Edward Luders, Architect
Gerald Keosayian, Technical Advisor

Church School and Religious Education

The Church School is the foundation upon which our parish was built when the initial organization took place, and it has been an indispensable part of the church ever since. Staffed by dedicated volunteer teachers, adults and Church School graduates, the Church School stands out as one of the exemplary schools of the Diocese.

Classes meet every Sunday morning. The WE BELIEVE series curriculum texts, produced by the Diocese in 1987, are in use in every class. These colorful new textbooks, written especially to convey the faith and teachings of the Armenian Church, are a vast improvement over the non-Armenian curricular materials previously in use.

The students are divided into 12 classes, Pre-Kindergarten to 10th grade, and enjoy individual classrooms, made possible by the expansion project of 1986. During the 11th grade, the students participate in a year of service to the parish, either as assistant teachers, choir members or altar servers. Graduation takes place at the end of 11th grade.

An integral part of the Church School program is attendance at Divine Liturgy every Sunday, for about 45 minutes, and regular reception of Holy Communion. Assembly programs are conducted on a fixed schedule by Yeretgin Violet. Students of the 8-11th grades participate in the reading of the Scriptures at Armenian Christmas Eve and Easter Eve services.

Through the years the Church School has been supported by active Parents' Committees, who have helped with social activities: the Christmas dinner, Easter communion breakfast, pot luck supper and graduation reception.

Service projects of the Church School include an annual visitation to



Church School Staff (L to R) Seated: Paula Guglielmo, Susan Yazidjian, Marlené Ross, Fr. Arnak, Louise Kalemkerian, Yeretgin Violet Kasparian, Susan Vaughan. Standing: Douglas Martaian, Ardis Waldron, Claudine Bogosian, Stephen Jarahian, Greg Tenbekjian, Brett Tenbekjian, Suzanne Daghlian, Laurie Christopher, Thomas Merjanian, Thomas Kasparian. Missing from picture: Denise Arzoomanian

the Emerson Home for the Aged, the purchase of Christmas gifts for needy families, "Trick or Treat" for UNICEF, and collection of non-perishable foodstuffs for the Center for Food Action.

The Church School students have participated in various educational programs and activities outside the classroom, including retreats, discussion groups, visitations to other churches, and the St. Nersess summer religious study programs.

Parish educational activities for adults have also taken place on a regular basis. Both day-time and evening Bible Studies, local "in-home" study groups, discussion groups about contemporary issues, Instructed

Liturgies, day-long programs, films and discussions, special parenting programs, as well as panels and lectures have been conducted. These programs have attracted both St. Thomas parishioners as well as friends from neighboring parishes.

The Nareg Prayer Group, organized in May, 1986, meets monthly to read Scripture and pray together for people and concerns brought to its attention.

Church School Superintendents

Artur Azarik '57-'60

Violet Ouzoonian '61

Dorothy Shahinian '61-'62

Yeretgin Violet Kasparian '63-'74

Oursa Daghavarian '75

Louise Kalemkerian '76-present



The Sunday School of 1970-'71 had an enrollment of 200 students.



Kirikian Armenian School Faculty and Executive Committee (L/R) Standing: Mari Zokian, Nazig Sheshetian, Maro Hajakian, Araksi Diratzouian, Mari Tashjian, Ruby Kherlopian, Sosi Salbashian, Sirvart Demirjian, Shnorig Bashian, Margarit Sinanian, Sona Aris. Seated: Seta Yavru, Mary Ann Saraydarian, Sam Demirjian, Ani Capan, Marion Babigian, Artemis Arslanian, Martha Saraydarian. Missing from photo: Queenie Tashjian, Berta Yigitkurt, Jenia Kazanjian.

Kirikian Armenian School

The Armenian language is an integral part of every Armenian Church, and since 1961 the St. Thomas Church has provided its youngsters with Saturday morning classes to teach the basics of the Armenian language and culture and to instill pride and knowledge of their heritage.

In 1986, as the result of a generous donation by Garbis and Alice Kirikian to our church during its expansion drive and their continued support of the Armenian School, the school was named the Kirikian Armenian School of St. Thomas Armenian Church. Our school has been fortunate to have assistance from benefactors over the years.

In addition to the language, the children learn Armenian songs and dances and perform on special occasions. Annually, the school sponsors an Armenian Christmas dinner and its year-end Hantess and Graduation. The school observes Armenian traditional celebrations, has holiday parties, and participates in various parish and Diocesan events. During the last four summers, the school has sponsored a two-week "Summer Wonderland" program. In 1989, the school published an Armenian cookbook, the initial printing of which was sold out.

An enthusiastic Mothers' Committee

supports the school's efforts with social and fund-raising activities. The Armenian School has consistently been financially self-sufficient in its operation.

A standing executive committee supervises the operation of Kirikian Armenian School. Its current members, who have served for a number of years, are Martha Saraydarian, Chairman; Artemis Arslanian, Marion Babigian, Ani Capan, Sam Demirjian, Mary Ann Saraydarian, and Seta Yavru-Sakuk.

A recent important innovation in our Armenian School was establishing separate classes in two of the grades — one for English-speaking students and another for bi-lingual students, which benefitted both groups. In addition to the regular curriculum, the English-speaking classes have concentrated conversation lessons as well.

Ani Capan has been the Director of the Kirikian Armenian School since 1986, ably assisted by a staff of 15 teachers. Sylva Der Stepanian, Director of the Diocesan Armenian Language Laboratory, was Director of our Armenian School from 1971-86. Previous directors include Hagop Kasparian, Rose Hatchadourian, and Queenie Tashjian.

Appreciation is due to all who have helped Kirikian Armenian School flourish!

CHOIR

Through the years many parishioners have participated as members of the St. Thomas Church Choir and have raised their voices in praising the Lord by singing the sacred hymns of the Armenian Church, and enhancing our worship services.

From 1960-62, Bedros Norehad served as our choirmaster, and was succeeded by our present faithful choirmaster, Edward Daghlian. Krikor Pidejian was interim choirmaster during the year 1966. Our church organist from 1960-63 was Carol Shabazian, and Susan Shamamian has served our parish as our organist with sincere devotion since then.

Over the years, many men have served as Deacons and Altar Servers. During the last decade St. Thomas has been fortunate to have many American-born young men serve at the altar.

At the present, Deacon Joseph Kalemkerian, Sub-Deacon Armen Basmajian and altar servers Levon Altiparmakian, Gregory Doudoukjian, and Stephen Mekenian form the nucleus of the altar staff which is augmented from time to time by former servers and visitors. For the past few years various seminarians from the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary have been assigned to serve in our parish.

The St. Thomas Church Choir joined the Armenian Church Choir Association of the Diocese in 1974 and is represented by its delegates at the Annual National Assembly. Officers have been elected since 1974 to coordinate the activities of the choir.



*Choir and Altar Servers
Edward Daghlian, Choirmaster*

Choir Chairmen

Armen Basmajian '74-'76

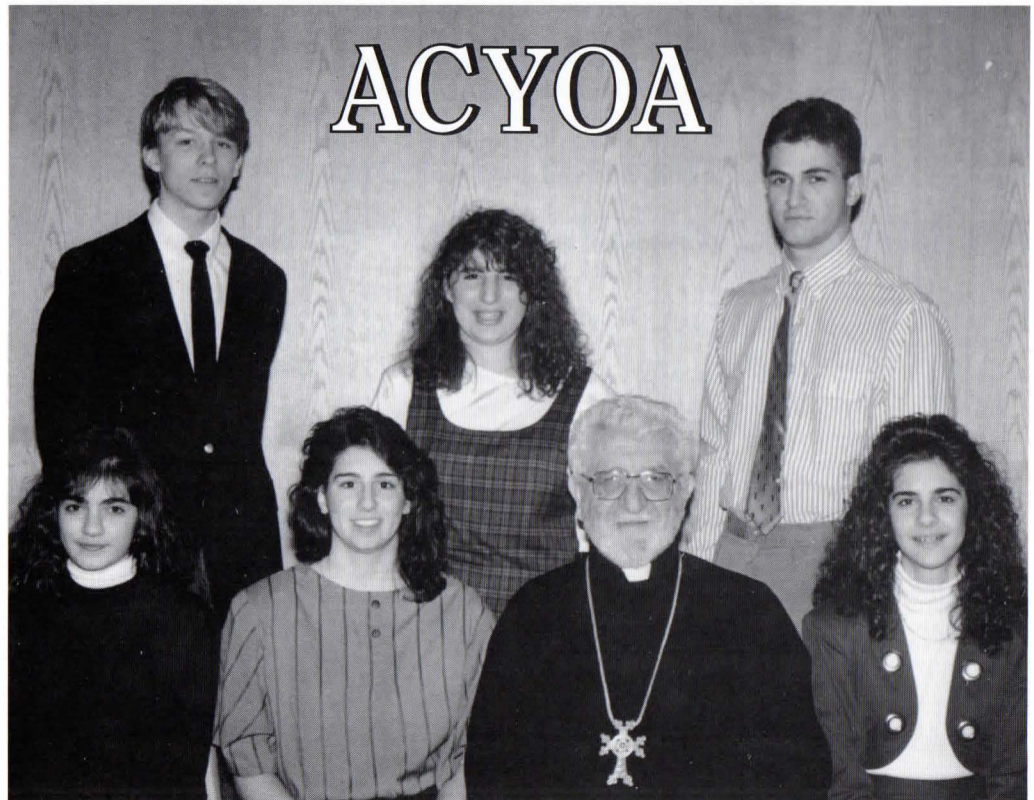
Susan Shamamian '77-'78

Mary Sanossian '79-'80, '83-'84

Ara Martaian '81-'82

Eileen Barsamian '85-'87

Gladys Fenarjian '88-present



ACYOA Juniors' Executive Committee (L to R) Seated: Maria Jebejian, Claudine Bogosian, Fr. Arnak, Ardis Kehiayan. Standing: Daniel Babigian, Sarah Kalemkerian, Eric Barsamian. Missing from picture: Maral Kazanjian.



The St. Thomas Chapter of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, the official youth organization of our Diocese, was chartered in 1959. The Chapter has had both Senior and Junior Groups. While the Juniors—our teenagers—have remained quite active throughout the years, the Seniors have not been as consistent, perhaps due in large

measure to the numbers of our young people who go away to college. For a few years recently, our Seniors were part of a Northern New Jersey ACYOA Chapter—four parishes together. In 1989, they reorganized into parish chapters once again, and our ACYOA Seniors are striving to generate increased involvement in the group by the youth of our church.

Both the Seniors and Juniors have had picnics, parties, progressive dinners, retreats, lectures, discussion sessions, theater and sports event outings, and sports activities themselves. They have participated in our Bazaar, caroled at the Emerson Home, and helped with projects for the Armenian earthquake victims. They have sponsored dances, variety shows, car washes and bake sales, as well as regional conferences.

The Juniors have traditionally led our American Christmas Eve Services, served at our Anniversary Dinners, and held a number of Mother's Day Dinners. Regional Sports Weekends have been an important part of their program, both attending and sponsoring them.

The Seniors have participated in National Assemblies and Sports Weekends, basketball and volleyball tournaments, regional dances, seminars, and other events and programs for their age group.

Many parents and other parishioners have served as advisors to our ACYOA Juniors over the years, providing guidance and support which has been vital to their success. The current advisor for a number of years has been Douglas Martaian, himself an ACYOA Senior, who has devoted considerable time and energy to assisting our youth.

ACYOA Junior Chairmen

Gary Bashian '60-'61
 George Tekirian '61-'62
 Agnes DerMateosian '62-'63
 Robert Varjan '63-'65
 Paul Bashian '65-'66
 Dikran Hazirjian '66-'67
 Debra Halejian '67-'68
 Christine Chakmakian '68-'69
 Barry Halejian '69-'71
 Richard Malajian '71-'72
 Douglas Tashjian '72-'73
 Ronald Chakmakian '73-'74
 Seta Nazarian '74-'75
 Christine Arzrouni '75-'76

Jean Asdoorian '76-'77
 Vanessa Ouzoonian '77-'78
 Pamela Parseghian '77-'78
 Michael Kasparian '78-'79
 Glenn Ermoian '79-'80
 Douglas Kademian '79-'80
 Stephen Mekenian '80-'81
 Leon Nigohosian '81-'82
 "Steering Committee" '82-'83
 Andrew Martaian '83-'84
 Andrea Ekizian '84-'85
 Tania Mekhjian '85-'86
 Donna Barsamian '86-'87
 Elizabeth Papazian '86-'87
 Gregory Amerkanian '87-'88
 Peter Babigian '87-'88

Serda Arslanyan '88-'89
 Claudine Bogosian '88-present

ACYOA Senior Chairmen

Harriet Jendian '59-'60
 Charles Markarian '60-'61
 Douglas Tashjian '82*
 Lori Aslanian '83*
 Lori Kalemkerian '84-'85*
 Lisa Ohanesian '86-'87*
 Aram Minnetian '88*
 Anne Toufayan '88*
 Stephen Mekenian '89
 Vartan Nazarian '90
 Margaret Vartanian '90
 *Senior ACYOA of Northern New Jersey

Women's Guild

Since its inception in 1957-58, our Women's Guild has been a dynamic force in the life of our parish. Originators of our Church Bazaar and Annual Cotillion & Ball, the Guild has sponsored countless events of varying kinds over the years to raise funds for St. Thomas, providing innovative, creative fund-raising ideas and faithfully serving our church.

The Guild values its fellowship activities as well. Business meetings are followed by enlightening and entertaining programs and get-togethers. The Membership Tea and Christmas Luncheon are annual highlights.

Social service is an integral part of the Guild program. They make regular visitations to the Emerson Home for the Aged, sponsor Blood Donor Days, encourage food for the needy, support a Jerusalem student, and stand ready to help when special needs arise.

Our Guild also participates in the Tenaffly Council of Church Women United.

Since the '70's, St. Thomas has been a part of regional and national Women's Guild activities. Our Guild has twice hosted Women Saints Day in this region.

Additionally, the Women's Guild has hosted receptions, luncheons, and dinners at St. Thomas whenever called upon, they make our Mahs, serve coffee after Liturgy, and provide refreshments for our church children at Halloween. They have traditionally been instrumental in preparing gourmet foods for our bazaars and picnics and assisting in many capacities.

The women who have served as Chairmen of our Women's Guild have exemplified dedication and devotion to our church. They and all those who have served on the executive boards and committees with them through the years deserve our heartfelt accolades.



Women's Guild Executive Committee (L to R) Seated: Alin Papazian, Adrienne Tenbekjian, Fr. Arnak, Alyce Parseghian. Standing: Margaret Varbedian, Betty Zoraian, Celia Martaian, Roxy Daghlian. Missing from picture: Shaké Mekhjian, Beverly Hajinlian.

Women's Guild Chairmen

Adrienne Tashjian '57-'59*

Arax Parseghian '59-'61

Floraine Halejian '61-'63

Ann Ajemian '63-'65

Victoria Ganan '65-'66

Margaret Peterson '66-'67

Dorothy Otchy '67-'69

Sonia Adams '69-'71

Virginia Parseghian '71-'73, '77-'79

Mary Chookazian '73-'75, '79-'81

Dikris Malool '75-'77

Lillian Kasparian (Chapian) '77-'79

Alicia Demirjian '79-'81

Violet Kasparian '81-'83, '84-'86

Rose Mekenian '83-'84

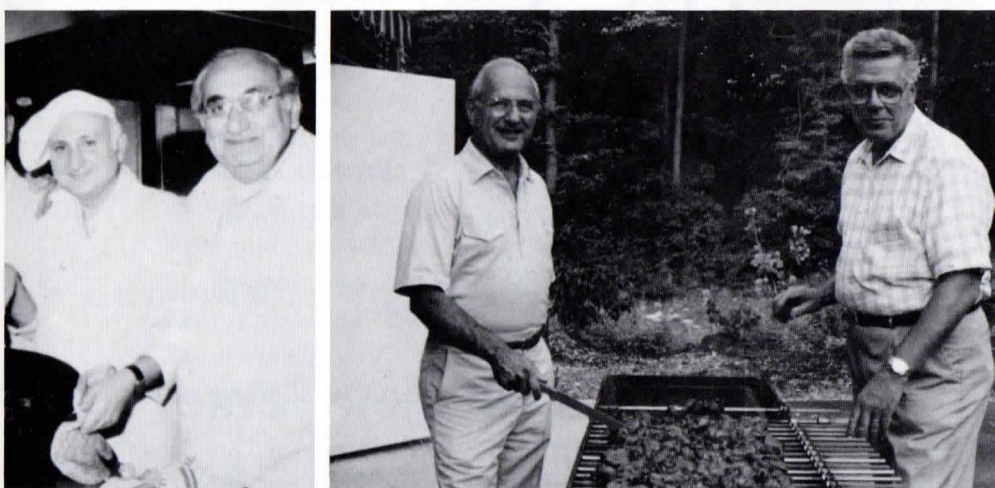
Mary Ann Saraydarian '86-'88

Pauline Pekmezian '86-'87

Roxy Daghlian '88-'89

Adrienne Tenbekjian '89-present

*1957-Women's Auxiliary



Some members of the Men's Club

Armenian Churches Sports Association

Sports activities at St. Thomas have involved many of our young people. Participation in the program of the ACSA has been led by a core of interested adults which in addition to those recorded in our Tenth Anniversary Booklet includes Charles Dou-doukjian, Jr., Henry Karamanoukian, Michael Kenajian, Paul Malool, Douglas Martaian, Douglas and Glen Tashjian; and since Mary Ann Saraydarian initiated our girls' basketball teams, the list includes Shake Ajemian, Susan Chagachbanian, James Conway, Alice Saraydarian, and Linda Tchalikian.

The Men's Club

The Men's Club is a vibrant organization in our parish, diligent in serving our church. They sponsor our church youth sports teams, actively participate in the Bazaar, head our Memorial Day picnic, and handle the Annual Car Raffle initiated by Arman Ajamian and carried on by Zaven Poosikian. Dances, fruit sales, and other projects also help them to raise funds.

Our Men's Club members are talented chefs with terrific teamwork ready to help prepare everything from Communion Breakfasts to Anniversary Banquet Dinners. Monthly dinner meetings with guest speakers are a regular feature of their program. Camaraderie is further promoted by trips to sports events, a Christmas Party, Super Bowl Party, picnics, and other events. They also have a bowling league.

Our commendations to the Chairmen of our Men's Club.

Men's Club Chairmen

Peter Doramajian '58
 Martin Tashjian '59-'60
 Harry Turnamian '62
 Ralph Goomrigian '64
 Harry Chakmakian '65-'66
 Richard Papazian '67-'68
 John Seferian '69-'70
 Masis Parseghian '71
 Charles Dadaian '72-'74
 Jack Ekizian '75
 Jack Bendian '78
 Gerald Keosayian '79
 Paul Kahaumjian '80-'83
 Ara Pekmezian '84-'85
 Paul Pinajian '86-'87
 Krikor Khorozian '88-present

Bergen Beacon

The Bergen Beacon keeps over 1,000 homes informed of happenings at St. Thomas. Editors and Coordinators who assisted Father Dajad and Father Arnak with our church publication over the years were Edward Daghlian, Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian, Rose Mekenian, and Mary Ann Saraydarian until these responsibilities were assumed by administrative personnel.

We owe our thanks to them and to Anthony Ajemian, John Bostonian, Edward Davoudian, Onnig Hourdajian, George Joannou, Armen Mesrobian, Andrew and George Shahinian, and Gregory and Richard Saraydarian for their generous contributions in production. Also to Iris and Pierre Papazian who provided years of typesetting to us. Photography has been by Peter Jamgochian, Albert Papazian, and Alyce Parseghian, our in-house professionals.

Bookstore Our bookstore was established in 1972 and operated originally by Jamie Ohanyan, then Sona Doudoukjian, followed by Arax Parseghian, and currently by Alin Papazian and Eva Yazidjian.

Couples Club In late 1975, a group called the Couples Club was organized to bring together young couples of the community. This organization provided a bridge for several years until its members joined other parish organizations. The chairmen during this period were: Susan Jarahian '75-'76, Virginia Karanfilian '77, Stephen Jarahian '78, Paul Kahaumjian '78, Paul Pinajian '79-'80.

Memorial Funds Our parish has established funds in memory of three dedicated and respected parishioners whose untimely deaths grieved us all.

Caspar M. Kasparian Memorial Fund, 1979 — for religious education experiences for our young people.

George Shahinian Memorial Fund, 1980 — for cultural opportunities.

Martin "Sonny" Tashjian Memorial Fund, 1981 — for support of athletic activities.

New Directions of New Jersey

In 1981, in response to a felt need, an Armenian Widowed and Divorced Support Group began which evolved into New Directions of New Jersey with programs and social activities for widowed, divorced, and single men and women.

Volunteer Secretaries Individuals such as Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian, Alice Basmajian, Martha and Mary Ann Saraydarian, and Dikris Malool cheerfully volunteered their time to execute secretarial duties for our church until we were able to have salaried office staff.



AVAKS' Executive Committee (L to R) Nish Ohanesian, Bertha Poosikian, Anooch Poosikian. Missing from picture: Betty Papazian, Sona Darakjian, Helen Avedissian.

Avak Society

The Avak Society was a welcome addition to our church. Geared to the retired and semi-retired men and women of the community, this enthusiastic group was organized by the Parish Council in 1972, with Tish Basmajian acting as interim chairman.

The Avaks meet once a week in the afternoon at our church. There is a fine fellowship and an activity for everyone — handicrafts, card-playing, tavloo. In addition to contributing their expert cooking skills for church functions such as the Bazaar, the Avaks maintain a busy schedule of socials and day trips.

Avak Society Chairmen	Aram Nalbandian '75-'78
Tish Basmajian '72	Anoosh Poosikian '79-'80, '84-'85, '89
Vahram Parsekian '73-'74	Nish Ohanesian '81-'83, '86-present

ST. THOMAS AWARD

In 1968, the Parish Council established an annual practice of recognizing an individual who has rendered particularly outstanding service to our parish. In 1977, the Parish Council delegated the responsibility of selecting the annual St. Thomas Award recipient to a committee of former recipients, chaired by Edward Bashian. The St. Thomas Award, in the form of a plaque from the Parish Council, has been presented to the following parishioners. Our bravos to them all!

Edward Bashian '68
 Vahan Najarian '69
 Arman Ajanian '70
 Victor Arzoomanian '71
 Antranig Ouzoonian '72
 Richard Turnamian '73
 Raymond Kreppel '74
 St. Thomas Founding Fathers '75
 George and Rose Mekenian '77 '76
 Zaven Poosikian '77
 Yeretzgin Violet Kasparian '78
 Arthur Azarik '78
 George Shahinian '79
 Edward Daghlian '80
 Antranig and Alice Shahinian '81
 Arthur and Dorothy Otchy '81
 Rupen Saddler '82
 Mary Ann and Martha Saraydarian '83
 Dikris Malool '84
 Nazar and Artemis Nazarian '85
 Dedication of Church Expansion '86
 Peter and Ann Ajemian '87
 Albert and Virginia Victoria '88
 Michel Izmirly '89



Thomas Doubter to Believer

So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he (Thomas) said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." John 20:25

Thomas was one of the 12 Apostles who followed Our Lord and learned from Him. Thomas is sometimes referred to as the twin and some people think that he might have been Thaddeus' twin brother. Like all the apostles, Thomas loved Jesus and

tried to do what Jesus wanted him to do. But just like us, he sometimes had trouble believing. When Jesus appeared to some of His Apostles after the Resurrection, Thomas was not with them and missed seeing Our Lord. When the others told him they had been with Jesus, Thomas said he would not believe it until he saw Jesus himself and touched Him. Shortly after, Jesus did appear again and told Thomas to come and touch Him. Jesus said to Thomas, "Stop your doubting, and believe!" Thomas said, "My Lord and

God." Thomas changed from a doubter to a believer.

After Pentecost the Apostles scattered to go on their different missions. Thomas, who was now very strong in his belief in Jesus, travelled to Persia and India, starting many Christian communities along the way. He was martyred in India but never again doubted Our Lord. From *Saints for Children From the Tradition of the Armenian Church* by Louise Kalemkerian and Barbara Hovsepian, 1983.

St. Thomas Armenian Church - Heritage, Achievements, Goals, compiled and edited by Malcolm Topalian in 1973 and dedicated to the 25th Anniversary of Fr. Arnak's Ordination to the Priesthood, closes with Vahan Tekeyan's poem "The Armenian Church," translated by Srpouhie A. Essefian. It seems fitting to close this booklet with that same inspirational poem.

The Armenian Church is the native home of my soul
Like a vast grotto it is simple and profound, dark and light —
With its hospitable courtyard, ample tribune, and hushed altar
Standing in the distance, as though it were a ship afloat ...

The Armenian Church I see with my eyes closed,
I breathe and hear it through the clouds of incense
Which rise towards the feet of the Infant Jesus
And through the fervent prayers against the walls ...

The Armenian Church is the mighty fortress of my forefathers' faith,
Raised by them from the earth stone by stone,
And brought down by them from heaven, one dewdrop and one cloud at a time
And in which they enfolded themselves peacefully and tenderly ...

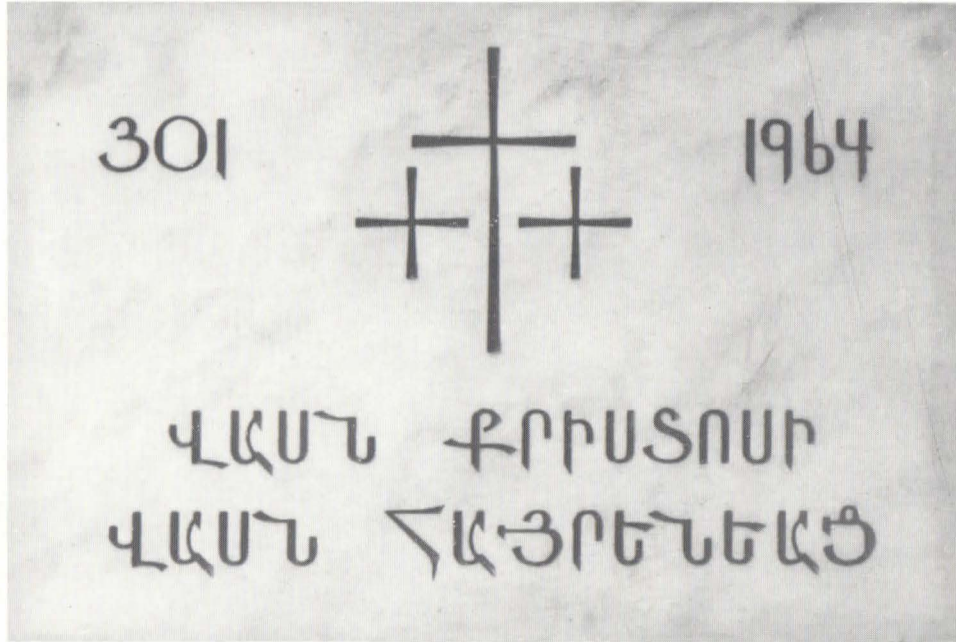
The Armenian Church is a great embroidered tapestry,
Behind which the Lord descends into the chalice, and
Before which all my people stand with bowed heads,
To commune with the past through the life-giving bread and wine ...

The Armenian Church is a peaceful haven across the turbulent seas,
It is fire and light in the cold of the night;
It is a shady forest in the scorching midday sun
Where lilies bloom by the River of Hymns ...

The Armenian Church beneath every stone in its floor
Holds a secret passage leading up to Heaven ...

The Armenian Church is the shining armor of the Armenian's soul and body
In it her crosses are as a dagger;
Her bells ring forth and her song is always Victory ...





The building of St. Thomas Armenian Church is a bold tribute to all the people who expended their energies into the creation of a magnificent edifice. Each brick contains a piece of our hearts. It is an exaltation of our faith and pride that goes with being born an Armenian. What heroic people our ancestors were to overcome all obstacles and steadfastly cling to their faith! How proud we are of our heritage! How profoundly happy that we are Christians! We thank God for making all this possible, and we pray that we will be worthy of His love. Our hearts

are filled with pride and "our cup runneth over," for we feel joy beyond our wildest hopes, because of a dream that came true.

The cornerstone is engraved, "For Christ and Country," and we cannot end this profile without praise and thanksgiving to our beloved America whose gracious providence opened her doors, stretched out her arms, and welcomed our long-suffering people into this glorious land where we could be free to live...free to love ...and free to worship.
...from St. Thomas Armenian Church
by Margaret Peterson (1965)