

## PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Jan. 26, 1997

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and express my joy and gratitude to you for your continuous support and service.

One more year, we were able to meet the spiritual, cultural, educational and at times social needs of our congregation, especially to all those who made the effort to be with us, attend, benefit, participate, help, and be involved in our church's life.

Again and again I'll remind you all that, yes, it takes more than mere words, eating Armenian food in this church, to experience the reality of God's loving presence.

Every year and every day God calls us to give him real service and not lip service. I am very happy and encouraged to see that 1/3 of all our families do exactly that. Our job still remains to bring the others too. And for that, we need patience, hard work and prayer.

God revealed himself to us in the life, teachings and the ministry of Jesus Christ. Let us open our spiritual eyes and see all that our church fathers and ancestors saw in the past 1700 years in Christ.

The mission of the church is first to help you and me to find God and bring you and me closer to HIM.

In 1996, I fully and to the best of my ability and my time's availability, performed my religious and pastoral duties as it is mentioned in Article 42, ABCD, 43 and 48 of our Diocesan by-laws, which is to say:

- I celebrated 49 Badaraks, followed by a proper sermon.
- Sick visitations were made by me, whenever I was notified (many times more than once).
- Counseling or spiritual guidance was provided to those who needed it.
- I have presided over almost all the organizational and committee meetings.
- Family visitations and visitations to the elderly & shut-ins were continued.
- Two days a week, I have tried my best to be here in the church office to provide work for the secretary, doing most of the administrative and paper work of the parish.
- In 1996 I performed (0) wedding, (3) funerals and (5) baptisms in our church and I have participated in a wedding in Westchester, N.Y.

This year, again I attended out-of-parish activities such as regional clergy meetings, annual Diocesan clergy meetings, Diocesan Assembly, Trumbull Clergy meeting. I also lectured at St. Nersess

to the St. Nersess Seminary Conference participants on "Armenian Culture" and attended St. Nersess' opening day festivities and took a nice boat ride/tour of New York with the Primate and a dozen clergy, including Fr. Haigazoun, the Dean of the Seminary of Etchmiadzin.

- Again I participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Eve service, which is organized annually by the Trumbull Interfaith Committee.
- Attended the Choir Assembly and met the Jerusalem Patriarch on 3 different occasions.
- Attended His Holiness Karekin I and clergy meeting, liturgy and banquet in NYC and greeted him upon his arrival at Newark Airport, N.J.
- Accompanied our ACYOA group for Christmas caroling.

In 1996 we had a very busy calendar even though we cut a few activities such as our pre-bazaar dinners, Madagh dinner, mini-bazaar, Wednesday night Michink dinner etc. In addition to our annual activities, such as the bazaar, picnic and the Palm Sunday dinner, we had the following:

- 1- Visit of Khrimian Lyceum.
- 2- Scripture Seminar in March and ACYOA/AYF game night.
- 3- Spring Appreciation dance in April.
- 4- 65th anniv. Banquet with our Primate on May 18th.
  - \$50,000.00 mortgage was burned.
  - 6 boys were ordained Tbir.
  - Armenian Alphabet monument was unveiled and dedicated to the youth.
  - 3 families were honored, receiving Holy Ascension Awards.
  - 3 scholarships were given.
  - New "Tomb of Christ" was blessed by the Primate, a gift of the Zysk brothers and their families in honor of their parents, made by Elisa Griego.
- 5- Fashion show in September
- 6- Cultural event on Gomidas in October
- 7- Heather Tarpinian, Dn. Vrej, Marie & Ara Yapoujian spoke on their trips to Armenia.
- 8- Krikor & Antranig Chaghatzbanian spoke on their trip to Lebanon and Syria.
- 9- In '96, we continued to hold regular bible study and Armenian Language classes for adults. They are held every two weeks with close to a dozen adults benefitting. Both classes total 2-½ hours.
- 10- One of the points of light in our parish was the increased number of our young boys serving on our Holy Altar.
- 11- In 1996 we raised the following monies:
  - \$57,000.00 - mortgage
  - \$19,000.00 - monument
  - \$18,000.00 - pledgesfor a total of \$94,000.00. Almost all is paid.
- 12- In 1997, our goal is to raise \$50,000.00 in pledges, and not do any other major fund-raising (other than the Church anniversary banquet, picnic, and bazaar). I am happy to report to you that as of today 106 families have pledged close to

\$43,000.00. This will be the salvation of our money problems.

I am also happy to say that when many States, The Federal Government and the Diocese are running in the red, our Holy Ascension Parish has balanced her books for the past 13 years. And this is because of your understanding, co-operation, appreciation and generosity.

The worst days are behind us now, like when we had close to a \$200,000.00 mortgage and one of the former treasurers announcing to us at the parish council meeting that he had only enough money for two more weeks of church expenses. Yes, with God's blessing and your generosity, those days are gone and we are heading toward a pink dawn " *Կարմիր Արևոյն* " as we say in Armenian.

In 1996, in addition to our church organizations, we had the following committees as well:

- 1) Scripture Seminar Committee
- 2) Land Committee
- 3) Church Anniversary Committee
- 4) Monument Committee
- 5) Dance Committee
- 6) Fashion Show Committee
- 7) Cultural Committee
- 8) Investment Committee
- 9) Picnic Committee
- 10) Bazaar Committee
- 11) Ad-Book Committee
- 12) Pledge and Dues Committee

Each and every one of them did a wonderful job. It will be difficult for me to mention names.

My words of appreciation to our Armenian and Sunday School teachers, parents for doing their best to keep the doors open. I know it's not easy and that we are fighting against all difficulties. My appreciation to the Ladies Guild for all their help in coffee hours and dinners. To the choir, Deacons, Conductors, organists, acolytes and servers for their weekly service. Without their participation and "Liturgia" (service), we can't have liturgy. And of course, our Junior ACYOA teens, especially for visiting our shut-ins and nursing home residents during the Christmas season again, with their advisor, parents and parish council members.

Last year, I concluded my report by saying that may 1996 be, the 65th year of our parish, the brightest in every way in its history. I am sure, it turned out to be one of the best years in many-many ways. Our main problem, was the water problem, which hopefully we solved by putting drainage pipes around the church building at a cost of \$12,500.00 in Dec. '96.

As of today, I know that we will have the following activities in 1997:

- 1) Mardi-Gras kef night.
- 2) Scripture Seminar, by Fr. Paul Tarazi
- 3) Lenten Lecture following the Michink dinner, with Dr. Stephen Ariyan as speaker.
- 4) Palm Sunday Choir dinner and program.
- 5) Spring Kemanche Concert with Armenian and classical music.
- 6) 66th anniv. of our church, presided by our Primate. Divine Liturgy celebrated by our Primate as well. We will present "Holy Ascension" awards to the chosen parishioners again this year.
- 7) Picnic.
- 8) Bazaar.
- 9) A cultural event in October
- 10) "A visitation group" or "visitation groups" should be formed. Those who wish to assist, contact me.
- 11) Lenten lectures & discussions - open to all!

And I am sure the organizations may add some other activities. But, like every year, I try to offer my congregation a balanced menu of spiritual & cultural activities. Feel free to always give your suggestions too.

### SINGLES AND DOUBLES

In 1997 we will start a new group called - Singles and Doubles, mainly to gather our new generation under the roof of our church and give them the opportunity to know one another and plan activities that they are interested in.

### NEEDY FUND

I want to remind all of our parishioners and friends, that we still have a "Needy Fund" which is open to contributors and I assure you whatever is collected will be given to the needy either here or in Armenia.

Throughout the year I receive many requests for help from organizations such as; The

**Bridgeport Council of Churches, The Interfaith Hunger Services, The Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, The Armenian Assembly, Armenian Fund - USA, AGBU (for their programs in Armenia,) even from newly established mission parishes and our Diocese.**

**As a church and as the Church of Christ, who taught us to help our neighbors and especially those who are in need of our help, we must keep our “needy fund” but not with a zero balance. ( I open a bracket to express my appreciation to Hoki and Margaret for taking over \$11,000.00 to Armenia for Mission Armenia program).**

**Please, remember, your church can do only what you want her to do.**

**In 1996, we sent donations to the burned Black Churches, to the young Armenian pianist who was attacked in Central Park, N.Y. and our “Looma” to Etchmiadzin. But we failed to renew our assistance to the 15 orphans. I hope & pray that more attention is paid to the needy around us be it here or overseas. ( I do have some suggestions for the Parish Council in 1997. Rug sale proceeds to go to the needy fund).**

### **OUR PLEDGE SYSTEM**

**Every one of us should understand that eventually this will solve our money problem. Yes, we do not owe the bank a penny, but we have to run the church and pay the bills.**

**I am very happy to see that our people understood this pledge system and are responding very well. Every family should pledge to their church. Here, we are not talking about the students who may not work, or senior citizens who are struggling to keep their existence with their social-security income, or the few needy that we have. Those are the exceptions, the church should keep them in mind and assist them.**

**We are talking about those who can give that one-dollar-a-day, to make that committment. If we don't give to our church, who will give? We have over 300 families on our mailing list, and the pastor of this church serves all of them, this church is here for all. Giving is a leap of faith; by giving to God and His Church, we trust, God will provide. - A needy fund or a special plate collection are**

**not fund-raisers for our church.**

**Those who say I don't want to pledge or I don't believe in pledges, should tell us how should we keep our church's door open for our future generations.**

### **DUES PAID MEMBERS**

**I encourage our people to become dues-paid members in order to vote and run for office.**

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**Six days ago, I started my 14th year of service here as your Pastor. As I look back on my years here, I feel good that in those 13 years together we have accomplished much and in many ways we are better off than 13 years ago, even though much is left for us to do.**

**I know that there are many things we can still do. Most of the steps that I have taken with my council members during those 13 years have been supported by you and I am sure you will continue to do so in the future. Believe me, no event or activity is thrown or unveiled before you without much thought and behind the curtain work.**

**During the past 13 years, every penny the church has taken in has been spent very carefully. We not only have kept the doors of the church open, renovated the buildings, but also paid off the \$205,000.00 mortgage. And this because of your support. That's why, I don't understand it when some parishioners tell me that "we should be careful with the church's money" or we should start to save" etc.**

**I want to tell those who say that, we have been doing exactly that for the past 13 years. Also, for those who may think I say one thing and do another, I want to make it perfectly clear to all of you that I never say one thing and do something else. I do what I say and say what I do!**

### **THREE IMPORTANT DATES/EVENTS COMING UP**

- 1) In 1998, our Diocese will be 100 years old, established by Catholicos Mgrdich Khrimian in 1898.**
- 2) In the year 2000, Christians all over the world will celebrate the 2000th anniv. of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pilgrimages will be organized to the Holy City.**
- 3) In the year 2001, the Armenian Church will celebrate the 1700th anniv. of Armenian**

**Christianity. Pilgrimages will be organized to the Mother See, Armenia.**

**We, here in Trumbull should also organize events starting from now not only to celebrate these events in one day or with one event but over a period of time with different spiritual and cultural events.**

**Some plans are in my mind, but I am not ready to unveil them to you at this time.**

**In my Armenian report I said that this is your mother church. No matter how weak or sick your mother is you stay with her, by her and do your best for her. Similarly if you accept the fact that the Armenian church is your mother church, you must stay with, by her and do your best for her.**

**Do not hesitate to express your opinions and give your suggestions to your Pastor, Parish Council members or to the officers of the other organizations.**

**We will always have disagreements, misunderstandings and of course difficulties, the way we have in our own families.**

**But let us not get mad at our church, let us not leave, let us not stay away from her. But let us have the “Spiritual Maturity” to stay in the race and finish our race for the glory of God.**

**- One final note. Whenever you take a job, please do your best and do it on time. If you can't do it, tell me, I won't get upset, I'll hug you and I'll express my appreciation to you for being honest and sincere. I know that each one of you are going through different stages in your life. I am not here and the church is not here to hurt you but only to help you.**

**- One final advice. Be nice to your fellow parishioners. I have served 18 years in the Armenian Church as an ordained priest and passed through 3 parishes. I have noticed that those who are popular and well-liked by others are those who know how to talk to others, how to greet and how to appreciate others, how to smile to others, how to treat others and how to help others. It is proven over and over again, that those parishes that are growing are the parishes where the parishioners know how to treat one another.**

**LASTLY**

I thank the 9 parish council members for providing the leadership with the pastor in 1996.

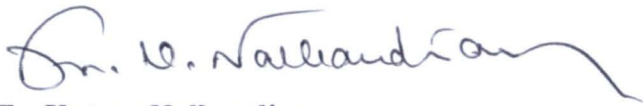
They are as follows:

- |    |                               |   |
|----|-------------------------------|---|
| 1- | Maureen Najarian, Chairman    | - It was a pleasure for me to work with her. Organized, hard-worker, Christ-centered and ready to learn - chairman. You can't teach if you don't learn. "Teaching is learning." |
| 2- | Darwin Jamgochian, Treasurer  |   |
| 3- | Heather Tarpinian, Secretary  |   |
| 4- | Richard Najarian, Co-Chairman |   |
| 5- | Sharyn D'Urso                 |   |
| 6- | Gary Donoian, Ass't Treasurer |   |
| 7- | Kim Kasparian                 |   |
| 8- | Richard Kalfaian              |   |
| 9- | Elsie Chaghatzbanian          |   |

May God bless you all and your loved ones. May 1997, the 66th year of our parish be the brightest in very way for our parish.

I conclude with the words of John the Evangelist written in chapter 13: 34

A new commandment I give to you,  
that you love one another,  
even as I have loved you,  
that you also love one another.



**Fr. Untzag Nalbandian**  
**Pastor**