

**PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**  
**FEB. 1, 1998**

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, our Diocese and the 1997 Parish Council, I welcome you to our church's 67th Annual Parish Assembly.

Only two weeks ago, I started my 15th year of service as the Pastor of our beloved Holy Ascension Armenian Community, which counts over 325 families now, some 25% more than it was upon my assignment and arrival here in January of 1984. This, although some moved from the parish and close to one hundred parishioners departed from this world, during my pastoral years.

1997 was one of the most successful and busiest years for our church. It was full of religious, spiritual, cultural, educational plus fun and fund raising social activities. As far as I know only one activity was canceled and the rest were attended well, in most cases in satisfactory numbers.

What were they?

In January, on Armenian Christmas Eve and Christmas day Badaraks close to 250 people passed through the doors of our church. We also had our Parish Assembly.

In February, we had a very successful Mardi-Gras (Poon Paregentan) dance, organized by our schools, with Mark Gavoor's live band (who played free) and we celebrated the Vartanantz Feast.

In March, we had a Michink dinner. Dr. Stephan Ariyan spoke on his "Armenia" experience. We had a Biblical or Spiritual Seminar. I invited Fr. Paul Nadim Tarazi, a

scholar and author and professor in Biblical Studies, who spoke to us one half day on a Saturday during Lent. This was done with the Council's approval.

Also, during Lent, (Feb. Mar.), every Wednesday night after the Peace and Rest Service, I gave the following lectures followed by a discussion or question and answer session.

- 1) "The Parish and the Priest of the next millennium in America."
- 2) "Why's of the Armenian Divine Liturgy and church customs."
- 3) "Understanding the Armenian Liturgy" Part I.
- 4) "Understanding the Armenian Liturgy" Part II.
- 5) "One nation under God & Nicene Creed."
- 6) "The importance of the true Christlike and Apostolic leadership in the Armenian Church and her organizations."

Also, in March, the Choir's Annual Dinner and Program took place.

In April, we authorized and made an agreement with Mr. Simjian, the owner of "Yervant Oriental Rug" of Branford, CT, to have a special rug sale using our church's name and the mailing list (at no cost to us). We would receive a percentage of the profits.

Also in April we commemorated the 82<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with a proper "Skahantes" memorial service and program and blessing of "Madagh," in front of the Martyrs' Khachkar monument.

Also, in April, we had Ayriyan's 'Kemancha Concert. More than 150 Parishioners and friends attended.

In May, we had the ACYOA'S Mother's Day brunch and another year-end dance by the schools, with Mark Gavor's band playing, again free of charge.

In June, we celebrated our church's 66<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a banquet presided by the Primate, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and a Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Primate. On that weekend, Maestro Khoren Meikhanedjian also visited us upon our invitation, had

rehearsals with the choir and conducted both in the banquet hall and church. During this banquet, in the presence of 175 parishioners and friends, we honored again worthy parishioners for their service, support or generosity to our church and 5 young college/university students were given "Holy Ascension" scholarships.

In August, we had our church picnic.

In September, we opened our Sunday and Armenian Schools with a proper ceremony and program done, outside, in front of the Armenian Alphabet monument. In each school close to 20 students were registered.

In September, I did not plan any activity with the council, because of the Women's Guild's fashion show. I understand that because of lack of interest and participation, they had to cancel. My appreciation to Maureen for organizing a tea gathering on Sept. 6 with our women. Her topic was Renewal, Restoration and Revitalization.

In October, The Misakian family gave a 40<sup>th</sup> day Hokejash in memory of Helen Misakian. I invited Genevieve Hale, of Watertown, MA for Holy Translator's Sunday, on the same day, to speak to us about her two-year experience in Armenia as an American Peace Corp English teacher.

We also had our Mt. Ararat Festival and Bazaar, an important social and fund-raising event.

In November, another very successful concert took place in our church. This time by The Rhode Island Armenian Chorale. Again, close to 150 parishioners and friends attended this high-quality cultural event. Also, in November we had a special Parish Assembly to discuss the expansion of our parking lot and I had a special meeting with our youth that was

attended by 40 young couples or singles.

In December, the Women's Guild held their annual assembly and the ACYOA Jrs. went Christmas Caroling, with me and their advisors.

In 1997, I performed 6 Baptisms, 2 Weddings, 4 Funerals in our church, and I participated/attended 7 funerals and 4 weddings outside of my church.

I celebrated 51 Badaraks of which 49 were on Sundays, with proper sermons and spiritual messages.

I spent two days a week with the secretary here in my office doing most of my administrative and pastoral paper work.

I published the "Ani" newsletter on a bimonthly basis and throughout the year I received many phone calls and appreciative notes - at times some of them were published. I thank the organizations for doing their part by sending in their reports. However, I still would like to have an editor, who has the ability and time to do what I am doing now - to make sure that the information gathered is correct and complete, and that the newsletter is published on time.

In 1997, countless phone calls, correspondence and visits kept me very busy, at times not knowing to which to give priority.

I not only attended meetings in my parish, but also in the region, at the Diocese, at St. Nersess, in New York and New Jersey. I lectured at St. Vartan Camp and St. Nersess Seminary, participated at the State Capitol in Hartford for the 82nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide commemorative event, attended Fr. Michael Buttero's funeral in New Britain and a special conference and lecture series on Yeghishe' Charentz, a great poet and

writer, at Columbia University. Besides all these, I attended most graduations, birthdays, anniversaries, parties, whenever they invited me or Yeretzgin and me, besides socializing with the family, I brought the blessings of our Holy Church to them.

I continued my by-weekly Adult Bible Study and Armenian language classes. I wish and hope more of you can benefit.

In 1997, we bought a new copying machine. I thank Harry & Heather Tarpinian (\$1,200) and the Women's Guild (\$500) for their monetary contribution to this much needed equipment.

Also, we bought a new scanner that will provide clearer pictures for publication in our "Ani" newsletter. Here, I thank Dr. & Mrs. Berdj Harabedian for donating the entire cost and Richard Kalfaian, Margaret Azarian and Edward Odjakhian for giving their time in looking for, purchasing, and installing the equipment.

Also, in 1997, our choir, from their funds, bought a new and much needed synthacizer for our use on Sundays during Badarak. Here, I also thank Gladys Jevarjian, Virginia Kalfaian and Eleanor Zysk for each donating \$100.00 toward the cost of the synthacizer. The instrument has a transposer, an important feature our organ was lacking. Since we purchased this, we are singing our Badarak lower and more comfortably. I am no longer hearing from anyone telling me, he or she cannot join the choir because we sing too high or on a higher note. I thank Richard and Virginia Kalfaian for their investigative work before the purchase.

The Women's Guild bought the display case. They are selling Armenian souvenirs, etc. displayed in the case. Thanks to Nazareth Azarian for installing it with plexi glass and the Women's Guild for paying for the cost.

**I am also happy to announce that in 1997, Archie and Lisa Misakian promised to buy new Badarak books (to be used in the church), in memory of Helen Misakian their wife and mother. And only recently, another parishioner, Salpi Tokatlian, expressed her wish to make a similar gift to our church in memory of her parents Arousiag & Yervant Barsoumian. We will get them sometime in April, when they are published.**

**A religious painting, depicting the vision of St. Gregory was donated by another family, Andrew Taraian and his sister Nicky Taraian, in memory of their son and nephew, Mark Taraian and in memory of their parents Sarkis & Marisa Taraian. The painting is almost ready and hopefully will be consecrated on March 14, '98, by the Primate, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, when he comes to preside at the Women's Saint's Day event.**

**Another religious painting, depicting the Baptism of King Drtad & Queen Ashkhen will be commissioned soon and hopefully will be ready for consecration sometime this year. Andrew Topalian will donate this painting in memory of his beloved mother Aghavni Topalian.**

**Both paintings are dedicated to the 1700th Anniversary of Christianization of Armenia and Armenians. And Sharyn D'Urso is donating the cost of a new hand cross to our church to be used by the present and future Pastors of our church in memory of her mother Aroxie Margossian D'Urso.**

**In 1997, together with the Parish Council, we decided to encourage the establishment of "Endowment Funds" by our parishioners and with our church here in Trumbull.**

**I am so happy to see that one of our faithful parishioners, Sara DerMegerdichian and her family, became the first to establish the "Kevork & Zarouhy Der Magrdichian"**

**endowment fund by an initial amount of \$5,000.00. Our church will use only the interest from this fund, if needed. I am sure others will follow her example. It is true that we said a minimum of \$5,000.00 was required to establish an endowment fund with us, but if someone wants to give a little less, I am sure the council will not object.**

**I thank also Elisa Griego & Paul Marottolo for promising to donate the construction and installation cost of a new front sign for our church, in memory of Aghavni Topalian. (Hopefully it will be done soon).**

**Thanks to Leo & Mary Krikorian for donating their Bazaar Raffle prize to our church, a CD/Cassette player.**

**I thank Mardy Azarian and his Telco One company for installing new speakers in the hall and servicing the unit when called upon.**

**Richard Khachian and his Ritar Ford company for servicing the parish car.**

**Richard Kalfaian for taking photographs of most of our events and donating them to our church.**

**In 1997, we sold the parish car for \$4,800 and leased a new Ford Taurus from Ritar Ford for two years.**

**Also, as of Sept. 1, 1997, the All-In-One Nursery School's rent was raised \$100.00 per month.**

**In June, we published our new parish phone directory.**

**In 1997, for the first time in the history of this church, 125 families pledged \$45,000.00 of which \$43,000.00 is paid. "One dollar a day" worked and it should continue to work, because that is the solution of our monetary problem. Each and every family should be in our**

**pledge system. The church belongs to all. Some parishioners, I remember, told me if we burn the mortgage, they won't pledge as much anymore. I did not believe them and I don't believe it now. I told them this then, and I tell you this now also.**

**In 1997, regarding fund-raising, we said what we did and did what we said. We did not have fund-raising projects as we did in the past other than those that we said we will continue to do (picnics, bazaars etc.).**

**In 1997, we spent close to \$15,000.00 for renovations on urgently needed projects such as drainage pipes around the church and replacing broken windows in the church, parish house gutters were replaced and painting was done near the back stairs.**

**No one was asked to give a penny for all these renovations.**

**In 1997, besides the Parish Council, we again had our Women's Guild, Armenian and Sunday schools, the Choir and ACYOA organizations doing their best to serve their church. Also, temporary committees, Land Committee, Kemancha Concert Committee, Rhode Island Armenian Chorale Concert Committee, Bazaar Committee etc. We also had the Pledge Committee whose names are published in the back of the Pledge brochure.**

**In 1997, our church was blessed with a new teen organist, John McGann, Jr. and a new choir conductor, Elisa Griego and a new Armenian Village dance teacher, Judy Gavoor.**

**I thank every one of our volunteers for serving Holy Ascension Community with faith and in love. We honored and thanked the 3 retiring choir conductors, Nazareth Azarian, Charles Balian and Virginia Kalfaian and the five Land Committee members, Nazareth Azarian, Nicky Taraian, Richard Khachian, Stephanie Roberge and Harry Tarpinian on two different Sundays in June.**



1. Special thanks to Stanley Zysk for maintenance work and delivering our mailings to the post office.
2. George Krikorian for planting flowers around the church.
3. "Ani" newsletter group, Hermine Azarian, Sonia Trapasso, Gladys Jevarjian and the late Helen Misakian.
4. All our altar boys.
5. Preparers of the Mahs, Sara Der Megerdichian, Karen Kaechelle, Eleanor Zysk.

Yes, we have not received our entire money from the land sale yet, and if we do, as it was decided last year by the assembly, it will be invested and only the interest will be used. Also in 1997, we ordered 8 new choir robes, all donated by our parishioners, whose names were published in the "Ani" at the time. And, 500 boxes of note cards depicting the Armenian Alphabet monument, were donated by the late David Usher and Gay Anderson. I thank them all including those who donated coffee hours.

If you noticed I did not mention the names of the officers of our organizations, Choir members, Deacons, organists, altar boys, teachers, Sunday and Armenian school principals, knowing well that you know all these active servants of God and our church. I thank each of them for their weekly service. (All the above, please stand up).

I also thank the church secretary, Margaret Azarian, for serving the church in that capacity for the last 6-7 years and for putting in all the extra hours, sometimes even helping me from her home also. We worked very well together.

I regret that as of April 1st, '98 she will resign and no longer be the church secretary. To finish this season, Heather Tarpinian, from the Parish Council, volunteered to help us with the secretarial work in April and May.

From September '98, Heather will be the paid church secretary, coming two days a week. You will be informed about the days and hours later.

**In 1997, from our church's needy fund we were able to adopt two orphans from Armenia through the Diocesan CASP program. Also, we helped an Armenian cancer patient in St. Petersburg, Russia and other local needy. I thank all those who contributed to our church's needy fund and pray that others will also do the same. Throughout the year I did not hesitate to remind the parishioners about our needy fund be it by announcing it or putting it in the "ANI." In 1997 our parish paid \$12,000.00 to the Diocese as our parish's assessment, Etchmiadzin looma, gave \$1,000.00 in scholarships and contributed toward our Town's Bicentennial celebration and the completion of the commemorative fountain. This monument is located near the Trumbull Library across from the Stop and Shop supermarket or shopping center.**

**On behalf of our church I wrote my message for the time capsule, buried under this monument, to be opened and read one hundred years from now. Also, even though our number is decreasing year after year, I and some choir members and parishioners again attended our Town's Thanksgiving Eve service.**

**I thank Richard and Maureen Najarian for making and donating sandwiches and taking them to the Blood Bank center in the name of our church.**

**Several times during the year, the Trumbull Interfaith Committee organizes this blood drive at different locations. We hope to have one in our church in 1998. Please remember, if you want us to do more charitable work, more people should contribute to our needy fund.**

**In November 1997, we had a special Parish Assembly to discuss one subject or project and to see whether you approve or disapprove. According to our Diocesan by-laws, the invitation with the agenda was sent to all the parishioners at least 2-3 weeks prior to the**

**assembly. What was the project.**

**It was about the leveling of some of our back land to have more parking space, as well as a playground for our children and teens, and a nicer picnic or other kinds of festival grounds.**

**We made it clear at that meeting that we were not asking for funds from the parish treasury, but only their approval of this project and to be able to publicize it in the “ANI” newsletter, and hopefully find benefactors.**

**The Assembly, after a lengthy discussion approved this project almost unanimously. I would like to make it clear that the leveling itself may cost only 4-6 thousand dollars. It is the installment of a proper lighting system, new tree, bush and lawn landscaping and the removal of the electrical pole that will cost almost as much.**

**But, thank God, we do not have to worry about the money part. At this time, I can give you only one good news: we neither will take a penny from the parish treasury nor have any fund raising project to pay for this project. God has taken care of us.**

**I am sure when it's done you all will be happy and you and the future generations will use it in good health and enjoy the playground with your children and grandchildren, much after Der Untzag is gone.**

**Remember, this is our property, this is the only property we have. We are here and we are here to stay. Why not utilize fully what we have? We already have invested over 6-700,000.00 dollars on this property. I thank the council and the Parish Assembly for giving me the opportunity to serve our people, in different ways, in better ways and in making our property more attractive to all also.**

**I know that some of you may say, shouldn't we repave the parking lot or renovate the parish house or other things around the church?**

**Fourteen years I am here and almost every year we have done renovations and repairs.**

**And speaking about the parking lot and the driveway, this has been in our minds for the past 4-5 years. We know that it's going to cost over \$50,000.00 if it's done right and with new and proper piping to divert the water.**

**In 1997, I with the knowledge and approval of the council wrote to the Lincy Foundation and requested \$70,000.00 for this project. The answer was unfortunately a negative one.**

**Also, we know that in the near future (2-3 years, things can change) such as sewer will be coming to our area.**

**Naturally, we don't want to do the repairing before the sewer comes. I hope that's understandable. And, third, if we ever want to utilize some our back land, this is the time to do it. This is the time to bring in the heavy machinery, so that when we do the repairing of the entire parking lot we will know what we have, which part we want to keep in grass and doing it all at once will cost less.**

**Your Pastor and Council know very well about the repairing of the parking lot, but neither have the money nor the benefactor or benefactors. And if we go back to fund-raising, again the "one dollar a day" pledge system will suffer and we will hear the same things - they promised us not to have fund-raising again, but they are asking again.**

- ▶ **What we can do, if it's your wish to do the parking lot, is publicize it in the "ANI" and look for benefactors.**
- ▶ **I look forward to a very exciting year, especially this being the centennial of our**

- Diocese and in May, again Karekin Catholicos will visit our Diocese.
- ▶ 1998 is a significant year in another way also. It is the 20th anniversary of my ordination into the Holy Order of Priesthood in the Armenian Church. I am here to serve you in the same way that I served you during the past 14 years.

I encourage you to benefit as much as you can from your church's religious and cultural activities, including weekly services.

I give thanks to God that I do not have major problems or difficulties in this Parish and I don't anticipate having any in the future.

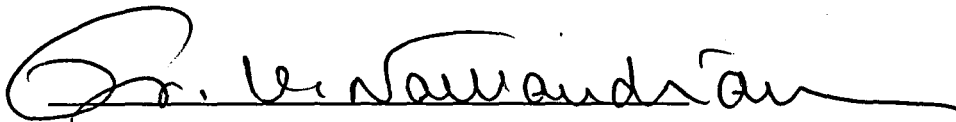
I thank each and every one of you for your support, generosity and service. You are the church.

Without you, there is no Armenian Church in Trumbull. Also, if you forget everything that I said today, please don't forget that no matter what I do, first of all I am a Priest.

In conclusion, I thank the 1997 Parish Council members namely:

Richard Najarian, Richard Kalfaian, Elsie Chaghatzbanian, Secretary, Sarkis Kalfayan, Heather Tarpinian, Vartan Tarpinian, Darwin Jamgochian, Treasurer (who is keeping excellent records), Maureen Najarian, wonderful Chairman, a very positive, supportive and hard-working person.

Remember God loves you, so do I.



**Fr. Untzag Nalbandian**  
Pastor