

PASTOR'S REPORT--1985

The purpose for having a church and a priest is to worship God. Church policies, programs and activities are centered around this one basic fact.

The potentialities of the community is realized when there is a large attendance every week of the parishioners, seeking and receiving personal spiritual fulfillment. The church building becomes too small to contain her membership.

If this is not happening reflects inadequacies and deficiencies in the present mode of operation and calls for a serious reassessment and reevaluation of present policies, programs and activities. Courage is essential to be truthful in order to gain a commitment for a new beginning.

The assumption remains that the church is a place for worship and the priest serves to lead the service and fulfill the spiritual needs of the people. Everything else serves to support this one main premise. As such, the church's mission is directed to the present immediate needs first and to the future second.

The comment is often heard, "our children are our future". Second to a meaningful worship service is an educational program to prepare children to worship properly when they have reached adulthood. Those in this category are from the ages of 1-10.

Adolescents found in the ages of 11-15 have left childhood. Physically and mentally speaking they have outgrown childhood and therefore should be considered as an adult. Although not fully matured, but nevertheless an adult. To regard them otherwise is a disservice to them by prolonging the pains and agonies of adolescence and in depriving them of the blessings of mature adulthood.

Programs reflective of this, need to be devised to serve the adolescent at a time when their faith needs to be personalized corresponding to the period of their life when each is seeking a personal identity. The crises for adolescents is one of identity---Who and what am I?

At the age of 16, an individual is called to a full participation in the worship service together with the responsibilities of that privilege.

The church school programs therefore hold a second position of priorities geared to prepare a child to worship according to the precepts and faith of the church's belief. This is true for both the religious and language instructional sources. For them to be effective, the adult community has to be reflecting a living faith. Faith has to be alive amongst their elders as a tangible evidence of its truth for the young. The comment is often made, "forget us and concentrate on the children".. It doesn't work that way. If the adults want commitment from the youth they must reevaluate their personal commitment and contribution toward worship service.

All of our church organizations serve that one noble purpose, be it the Parish Council, the Ladies Guild, the Choir, the Religious and Language School, Youth Organizations, Dance Group, etc. All the policies, programs and activities have one goal--a meaningful worship service for members of the church community. If this is not happening changes are in order. This is the reason for having a church and a priest. Number one can not be replaced by number two or three on our list of priorities. When number one succeeds everything else succeeds. When number one fails or remains weak, so do all that follow it.

Another area of importance is the financial operation. It is only of secondary nature and not to be regarded as important as the community worship service. A healthy financial condition enhances the primary operation to function better. To be effectual, there is a need for a person knowledgeable in all areas concerning the expenses and revenue accruing incomes and also familiar with the community membership. A well organized campaign propagating the mission and goals of the local church needs to be devised and implemented on a personal basis, underlining the words organize and personal basis. Without a system, an organized plan, the resources remain latent but never developed. The only qualifications required for this position is a desire to try. Other churches ~~often are ready to assist~~ by sharing ~~the~~^{their} knowledge of their experiences. Imagine, non Armenians helping us to succeed, if we are willing to listen.

Another area of vital concern is maintenance. The problem is not solved by hiring a "clean-up" man. Again the need is for someone to serve as coordinator, an overseer to the maintenance of the church, facilities and grounds. All these areas always should appear in a presentable condition.

During the course of the year there were :

- (a) funerals-----4
- (b) baptisms-----6
- (c) weddings-----1--and 1 assist in a marriage ceremony at another church

The following is a summary of some of my activities during 1985:

1. presided over church organizational meetings and coordinated their activities
2. prepared the church calendar and saw to its implementation, deletions and adjustments when needed.
3. assisted in the publication and mailing of the Sevan Newsletter and other church circulars
4. did the necessary correspondence in Armenian as well as English
5. did some of the purchasing of office and church supplies and for needs in maintenance
6. handled monies received during the week and passed it along to the Treasurer with proper notations.
7. contacted the members of the Stewardship Program, deposited their donations and these recorded in Sevan.
8. ordered altar flowers when requested and took them to the sick
9. handled the responsibilities of the church library and assisted those writing school papers on Armenian faith and history.
10. made arrangements for grapes for the Blessing of Grapes on the Feast of St. Mary
11. participated in the joint Thanksgiving Day Service held by the West End churches
12. handled monies for the Cultural-Educational Fund, the Annie Garian Bickers Fund, Church Stewardship Program and the recently begun Nick and Elizabeth Baronian Cultural Fund.
13. made arrangement with Times Dispatch for an article and picture on 'water-blessing' ceremony.
14. announcements for special membership meetings
15. made arrangements with WRFK for the broadcasting of the Serkaian tape and that of Armenian music on April 24 and also the showing of the film, "The Forgotten Genocide" on Channel 23
16. composed a service held the night of April 23 on Martyrs' Day Eve
17. made arrangements with the newspaper for Surpazan's visit on Feb. 3rd
18. made arrangements with Fr. Chester C. Anderson for the St. Alban Angelican Catholic Church Congregation to use our church facilities during Lent

19. lectured to the above group on the Armenian Church and people
20. worked with the Virginia Museum on the Dr. Lucy Der Manuelian exhibit
21. attended the dinner in tribute to Gov. George Deukmenjian in Washington, D.C. and attended the services at the Washington National Cathedral
22. met with Dr. Stephen Colecchi of St. Bridget's Catholic Church with Ronnie Greene to gain ideas of organizing Youth Programs
23. prepared material and led Youth Group to Armenia for one month of study
24. offered the invocation and benediction prayer and also scriptural reading at the Douglas Freeman High School Baccalaureate services
25. worked with Sam Baronian, Jr. in obtaining the ~~parish~~^{manies} bequeathed our church in the ~~Manducos~~^{Martiros} Astourian will
26. taught boys the deacon's part
27. attended clergy conference in Washington D.C. with a group of clergy on revival and reform in our church
28. endeavored to make arrangements for Dr. Vazken Parseghian to lecture on Armenian Architecture at University of Richmond and/or to have George Mygrdichian Concert at V.C.U.
29. made arrangements for Susan Ounjian's dinner--lecture
30. attended Regional Meeting in Washington, D.C.
31. attended meetings in conjunction to the 200th Anniversary of the Religious Freedom Act begun in Virginia

→ Again, the purpose for having a church and a priest is to worship God. All other activity is incidental and secondary.

Rev. Arsen Barsamian