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Torchbearer

ST. JOHN ARMENIAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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Torchbearer

V. Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian
Rev. Fr. Armash Bagdasarian
Anna Svirid Sarkisian, Editor
Vardan Sargsyan
Alice Argnian
Lisa Bahm
Ardis Gregory
Dr. Gary Zamanigian

Pastor & Editor-in-Chief
Assistant Pastor
Editor
Graphic Designer

Mission Statement

The mission of *Torchbearer* is to inform every Armenian about the Armenian Church and her spiritual mission. The *Torchbearer* is an extension of the mission of St. John Armenian Church. The *Torchbearer* will provide knowledge and information about the Armenian Apostolic and Orthodox Church, her history, theology, sacraments, services, hymns, mission, the understanding of the Bible and Holy Tradition.



Opening the Doors to Our Future!

St. John Armenian Church is opening its doors, to look to the past, consider the present and look to our future.



How do we feel about attending church as an Armenian Christian? Do we love it? Do we look forward to coming to church? Do we get delight from attending the Divine Liturgy, the *Badarak*? Is it the highlight of our week serving as a steward in church? Do we miss it when we cannot attend the *Badarak*?



St. John Armenian Church is reopening its doors and we will all see that when church is the way it is supposed to be, it is a place where people are happy to congregate. This is because it is at church that great things can always happen. Church is a place where people can find fellowship with other people. Church is a place where people can hear God speak to them through *Badarak*, hymns, prayers and sermons. Church is a place where God is revealed, where people are inspired and enlightened.

It is at church that we get a glance, a preview, and taste for the presence of Almighty God, the angels and saints. If we are looking forward to heaven, then we should also look forward to attending church, because church is the practice field for heaven.



As a priest in the Armenian Orthodox Church and by the grace of God, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God. Doorkeepers may not be important people; there are more honorable jobs in the world. However, the ultimate honor belongs to the person who opens the door that leads the community to have fellowship with Christ.

*“For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.” (Psalm 84:10)*



My fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, I am posing this question to you: Which doorkeeper would you rather be - the one in the house of our God, or the one living life elsewhere?

Father Armash



Opening the Doors to Our Future Ribbon Cutting & Reception



By Marilyn Boladian
Parish Council

After three years of the Renovation Committee’s regimented meeting schedule, planning, selecting, ordering and then supply chain challenges, January 2022 began with a BANG! A sledgehammer bang to kick-off St. John’s renovation! It culminated in a celebration on the 11th of September with a Ribbon Cutting ceremony and reception for our community to witness firsthand what all the months of construction had delivered. All who

walked through the building were impressed and excited with the end results of our renovation.

All who attended were treated to beautifully set mezza tables with a selection of appetizers, sweets and Armenian wines.

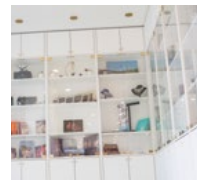
Thank you to the team of individuals who helped make our vision for a celebration a reality for the community to experience on a special day. Each gave of their time and talents in making this celebratory re-opening event a success!

Now it is time for all to enjoy the fruits of everyone’s labor

Promotion/Social Media/Video:
Andrew Boskovich and Vardan Sargsyan

Reception
Anahid Dilakian, Lianna Sargsyan, Arpine Tevosyan, Anna Tokmajyan and Paul Yousoufian

Photography
Lance Havelka - compliments of Howrani Studios



Kelly Raczkowski - McIntosh Poris Associates; Ann Marie Egjian - Renovation Committee; Laurie Hughet-Hiller - Principal, MPA; Howard Atesian – RC; Sara Sarkisian Bell – RC; Michael Poris - Principal, MPA; Annrae Anusbikian – RC; Karin Abel – MPA; Michael Kazarian - RC



Living the "HYE LIFE" St. John's Summer Daycamp

Another summer of wonderful activities at Daycamp directed by Lisa Margidgian and staffed by a host of adult and youth volunteers resulting in new friendships and experiences for participants. Many thanks to everyone who made this all possible!

Arts & Crafts • Cooking & Baking • Religious education • Field trips Christmas in July • Detroit Tiger game • Bowling • Friends, friends and more friends!

The Annual Church Picnic 2022

By Zaven Dadian
Contributor

The St. John Annual Church Picnic took place on Sunday, August 21 immediately following the Divine Liturgy. Due to uncertain weather, the food service and picnic were indoors while some families sat outside too! This year’s picnic was, once again, organized by the ACYOA Seniors under the chairmanship Zaven Dadian.

Dinners were a choice of pork, lamb luleh kebab, chicken and vegan din-

ners that included a Mediterranean salad, beverage and a delicious piece of tepsee beoreg! The ACYOA served over 350 dinners!! The Picnic also featured Armenian beers and wines offered by the Men’s Society; Women’s Guild Bake Sale chaired by Edith Baise and Alice Argnian; and our Parish Bookstore coordinated by Lucy Ardash and Anahid Dilakian!

Special thank you to all the volunteers who gave their time and talents to make the picnic a success!! Thank you to administrator Paul Andonian

for coordinating our cashier systems and Ron Ware and crew for their hard work. Thank you to Rose Mardigian, Laura Mardigian and Marilyn Dadian for making the tepsee beoreg and to Sara Andonian for baking them on Picnic day!! Thank you Alberta Godoshian for preparing the pilaf! Finally, a “Special Thank You” to Westborn Market for always donating all the produce for the picnic!



An ACYOA Summer!

By Armen Arslanian
Contributor

The ACYOA of St. John's had an enjoyable summer! On July 10, twenty ACYOA members along with V. Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian and Lisa Mardigian gathered for a fun evening at Top Golf! The group enjoyed appetizers and drinks while mastering their golf swing!!

On July 24, Vartivar Sunday, the ACYOA had a fun filled afternoon at the home of Michael and Jennifer Toumajian. The afternoon began with a home blessing by Fr. Aren followed by a delicious lunch! Fifteen ACYOA members enjoyed boating, kayaking and fishing on Lake Oakland in Waterford and yummie desserts all provided by the Toumajian family!! Thank you to Michael and Jennifer for opening their home for our youth to enjoy!!



Top Gold night



A Joy-filled Bazaar 2022

Lisa Mardigian
Bazaar Chair

St. John's Annual Bazaar took place the weekend of September 30 & October 1. This year's Bazaar included lamb, luleh, and chicken dinners, hot foods, baked goods, Country Store, Bookstore, \$100 Raffle, Fine Arts Exhibit, Snackshop, Hye Bar and vendors.

The Women's Guild and church volunteers, under the direction of Yerchanig Joy Callan provided large and small cheoreg, large and small katah, khalkha and sou beoreg along with donations of simit, khurabia, nazoog, khadayif, bourma and a selection of delicious desserts.

Other menu items prepared for sale were spinach and cheese tepsee beoregs coordinated by Sara Andonian; lah-majoon and kufteh provided by Gary Reizian; and kebabs which Harry Torigian and Paul Tootikian prepared for skewering. Our ACYOA, volunteers and Fr. Armash helped prepare the kebabs! Thank you to Alberta Godoshian who made the rice pilaf and Paul Yousoufian who made the bulgur pilaf. We appreciate our grillers, Brian Thomas, Matthew Mardigian and Alex Alexanian, who did a great job!

Ara Hachigian and family organized and operated the Country Store with all their specialty products including tourshi, jellies, basterma sandwiches, mezza platters, cheeses and more! Lucy Ardash and Anahit Dilakian organized the bookstore, in its beautiful new location. This year's raffle was co-chaired by Gary Melikian and Jimmy Stamboulian.

The Health Fair, organized by Greg and Edith Baise, took place on Saturday with a Mobile Health Unit in the church parking lot, Blood Drive in the Veteran's Building and vaccinations in the main building. The Petting Zoo was well received Saturday afternoon. Fr. Aren and Fr. Armash coordinated the church tours. Marilyn Dadian coordinated the Snackshop. Patrons enjoyed specialty drinks at the Hye Bar coordinated by Bob and Trish Magee while listening to entertainment featuring the Johnites Band on Friday evening and the Nigosian Band on Saturday evening!

Thank you to all of our St. John Armenian Church family and friends, that made our 2022 Bazaar a success. Without your continued support, this wonderful weekend of fellowship would not have been possible.





Kicking off Bazaar 2022



By Kim Najarian and Maral Mamassian
Event Chairs

This year's Bazaar Kickoff was a total hit! The event was a fund raiser supporting the St. John's Annual Bazaar but also an opportunity to showcase the new catering menu offered by our current award-winning chef, Steve Allen. Chef Allen was asked to elevate our culinary offerings and he delivered! People raved about the cuisine and the menu was the stand-out feature of a wonderful evening.

The night began at 6:00 pm when guests were greeted in the beautiful new lobby with an Armenian sparkling wine. As they stepped into the gorgeous new Grand Ballroom, the first gastronomical offerings were mouth-watering charcuterie boards, created and donated by Westborn Market and hors d'oeuvres served by our waitstaff in white gloves. A table with Armenian wines, donated by Storica Wines, was an added touch with Kevork DerKevorkian available to recommend the perfect wine for each guest's personal taste. The wines were available for purchase at the event and are also available through our catering manager, Paul Yousoufian. The evening was a strolling dinner allowing guests to mingle and reconnect with each other. Food stations set up throughout the Grand Ballroom included 'Farm to Table', Mediterranean, 'Seafood with a Twist' and 'American Old School'. The evening was complimented with Anoush Ellah sweet table, a premium Coffee Bar, a Wine Bar and full open bar. Chef Steve Allen generously donated his services for this event and provided a special touch by greeting guests while they dined on the myriad of food selections.

Traditional and contemporary Armenian music was the perfect backdrop with Ara Topouzian on *kanun* and Mark Gavoor playing *oud*. And the best way to memorialize the evening was the fun Boogie Booth donated by Maria Palaian, where guests could snap selfies and email or text the photo(s) to themselves or a friend. The Silent Auction offered something for everyone through the generous donations from parishioners and friends which helped the fundraising efforts of the evening. To round out the night, guests could preview artwork at the Fine Arts Exhibition in the St. Vartan room. The night was truly a feast for all five senses and a great success, which was all made possible by the support of our wonderful parishioners and staff!



2022 Fuller Building Project in Armenia

By Elise P. Papazian
Contributor

*Let us build a house where love can stay and all can safely live.
A home where sweet melodies are sung and lovely visions are relived.
Let us build a house where cherished cries and joyful laughter can be heard.
A home of faith, hopes of ancestors and prayers continued in His Word.*

Inspired by Marty Haugen (1950)

The 2022 Fuller Center for Housing group has returned safe and sound from Armenia! St. John Armenian Church and Women’s Guild member Jackie Melkonian El Chemmas led a fourteen people crew including two additional Guild members, Judy Nazarian Parks and Elise Priscilla Papazian.

In 2006, Jackie led her first Fuller Group to Armenia (with the exception of a two year world pandemic) and continues yearly, taking between 10-16 Armenian connected volunteers, primarily from the Michigan area. It has become a tradition for SJAC-WG to help encourage the building of a house and the donation of housewarm-



ing gifts, with the following year the current group of volunteers visiting the family and, with the assistance of a local priest, offering the home blessing. In 2019, team members had the generous support of SJAC-WG member Cathy Soutanian Atesian and husband, Howard.

This year, Jackie and her husband Faouzi helped raise money through the benefits of a luncheon hosted after SJAC services, with the assistance of several team members of past and present. SJAC-WG member Cathy Sarkisian Zwinck, and husband Ed, generously donated to the second house built including a refrigerator. SJAC-WG group gave generously towards this year’s first house built. This home is owned by Samvel, a serviceman, his wife and two young daughters. In addi-

tion, the 2022 team chipped in adding to monies raised by the El Chemmas’ to help buy the family a washer and stove.

As the team hugged good bye to both families and left their respective homes after a warm celebration ‘Armenian style’ with food, drinks and a multitude of gifts given...endearing emotions stirred in the hearts of everyone!

For me personally, I wished to represent the SJAC-WG, one of the special women’s groups of which my mom was a principal member and held dear in her heart. Also, equally important, I fulfilled the second of two promised trips to my dad: he wished me to visit Jerusalem (where he attended seminary) and Armenia. “My daughter, make it a point to go as soon as you’re able. Each special destination will forever change your life!” Amen indeed!

Getze Hye Joghovourt!



St. John Sanctuary and Manoogian Museum Tour

By Diane Ekizian
Contributor

The St. John Sanctuary and Museum Tour proceeded for another memorable day after a hiatus in 2021 due to COVID-19 concerns. Our beautiful facility, with recent renovations designed by McIntosh Poris Associates, greeted an eager group of visitors traveling from far and wide locations from Shelby Township to Ann Arbor to Dearborn and Greater Detroit locations, fulfilling the goal of an OUTREACH to share our unique Church with the Golden Dome.

Despite the unfortunate COVID-19 visit to Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Master of Armenian Art and Architecture, our scheduled speaker, we pursued our mission of the day. V. Rev. Fr. Aren

Jebejian stepped in to deliver an informative Sanctuary talk with Armenian religious history along with art and architectural notes provided by Fr. Garabed. The “Question and Answer” time offered interesting observations including a guest spotting something colorful that was labeled a “Reese’s candy” on the *bema*. It was explained that the precious morsel in a velvet bag was indeed a valuable aid for visiting clergy to administer when visiting parishioners offsite.

Dn. Rubik Mailian, Music Director of the Komitas Choir, accompanied by organist Arshaluys Gharibian, shared the translations and vocals of a few songs used in the Divine Liturgy during special holy days. Dn. Rubik’s magnificent voice is a gift that always captivates his audience.

Following the Sanctuary tour, the group gathered in the Hall where Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum Director, Lucy Ardash, informed them of the many antiquities they would see. While half the visitors moved on to the Museum, the remainder enjoyed a delightful travel video of Armenia. Later, the groups exchanged locations so everyone had quality time to enjoy the Museum, seeing the five models, including Heritage Collection Director Paulette Apkarian, Nyree Giragosian, Anoush Apkarian, Kevork Mardoyan, and Armen Oknayan wearing authentic costumes duplicating ancient clothing from different Armenian historical periods.

TOURS
CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

By now, the guests were contemplating an “Armenian inspired” luncheon and there was no delay meeting in the Cultural Hall for the delicious buffet, including our pastry delicacy, *bourma*. Rev. Fr. Armash Bagdasarian shared the blessing in Armenian and English and the guests enjoyed a bountiful meal. Master Chef Paul Yousoufian, Catering Manager, and his staff always offer kind and generous service.

We were privileged to have Laurie Hughet-Hiller, principal architect of McIntosh Poris Associates, attending the event. After our lunch, she graciously gave a brief response explaining how Armenian symbols and culture influenced the design of the new renovation. The project team had previously met with Fr. Aren and Fr. Garabed for a guided tour of the sanctuary and its symbolism, reviewed books from the SJAC library, borrowed books from Fr. Aren, and toured the museum to view the beautiful artifacts within. Input and collaboration from the clergy was key to the project.

“Enter into the Joy of Your Lord” – these words are written in Armenian over the doors to the Sanctuary from the lobby. The goal of the project from the start was to use the beauty and Armenian symbolism found in the Sanctuary as inspiration for the design of the rest of the complex. In the lobby, the design goal was to create a welcoming and grand space. The triangular shape is an architectural motif on the lobby entry canopy, cultural hall curtain wall, and the Sanctuary roof. The goal was to extend this theme to the lobby, and the continuous saw tooth ceiling element creates a glowing architectural ceiling that creates that sense of lightness.

Tied in with symbolism of the sanctuary – the elongated hexagon of the coffers appears on the face of the *Bema* at the Altar. The carpet pattern has a subtle hexagon geometry to it. Additionally, a version of the elongated hexagon pattern is repeated on the doors leading into the Cultural Hall.

Laurie must have done a thorough job because when she asked if there were any questions, the only earnest inquiry was, “What are those little red lights on the ceiling?” referring to the many tiny security lights centered in the impressive, decorative, large elongated hexagonal ceiling structures.

Many good comments followed the day of the Tours with requests for repeat events including evening and weekend options. The Tours Team effort made it an event offering education and appreciation of Armenian history and art with Armenian hospitality.

Special thanks to our diligent Tours team:

Fr. Aren Jebejian, Fr. Armash Bagdasarian, Lucy Ardash, Dn. Rubik Mailian, Arshaluys Gharibian, Paulette Apkarian, Paul Yousoufian and his attentive staff.

Building assistance: Paul Andonian, Anna Tokmajyan and Ron Ware.

Volunteers of the Day: Dolly Matoian, Rose Najarian, Karen Mangune, Yvonne Korkoian, Nancy Panaretos and Marilyn Sarkesian.



We Appreciate Our Women's Guild Members!

By Carol Cholmakjian

Women's Guild Chair

Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church is fortunate to have a group of members who, with hard work and dedication to our mission, make our events successful.

We had a beautiful day for our Palm Sunday Bake Sale. Outdoors, under a large tent, Chair Marilyn Dadian and her committee gathered early to price, package, and thoughtfully display the baked goods, which sold very well.

A week later Nyree Giragosian's committee congregated early on Easter Sunday to box up individual servings of *cheoreg*, *simit*, cheese, colored eggs, and candy. Easter Tea is one of our annual gifts to St. John's parishioners.

Last year we conducted a survey of our members and we learned many have questions about our health. Our advisors Dr. Linda Karibian and Sara Andonian invited Dr. Christine Matoian to speak at our May meeting. We had a full house as Dr. Matoian answered our questions in a clear and respectful manner. She even provided a list of Weight Watcher points for our favorite Armenian foods!

In June, eighty-five of us enjoyed each other's company, shared a delicious meal, and honored twenty-one members at our Membership Dinner. The evening was co-chaired by mother/daughter duo Belinda Kabodian and Shushan Ameriguian. Membership Chair Paulette Apkarian arranged and hosted the evening's program.

Later that month we celebrated *Hokehankist* for the souls of our departed members. After the service we held a tea for all to enjoy. This was a lovely event thanks to Paulette Apkarian.

In July Denise Boyagian was a sales dynamo at Armenia Fest in Royal Oak where we sold out of *cheoreg*, cook-



Palm Sunday Bake Sale committee: Carole Hovsepian, Nancy Banks, Maral Thomas, Michelle Samarian Ducato, Paulette Apkarian, Marilyn Dadian (event chair), Diana Mardigian, Nicole O'Donovan, and Mona Kurjian

books and aprons. Unable to use the church kitchen, we appreciate Yerchanig Joy Callan, Marianne Dardarian, Marilyn Sarkesian, Paulette Schmidt, and George Boyagian for making the *cheoreg* we sold.

For our Summer Outing, Marilyn Sarkesian planned a spiritually enriching visit of historic churches in Detroit. A luxury tour bus took forty-seven of us to four beautiful churches and a luncheon in Greektown. V. Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian and Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian led us in the *Hayr Mer* at our last stop – “old” St. John's on Oakman Boulevard where the original pews and chandeliers are still giving good service.

A little rain in August didn't keep St. John's parishioners from supporting the Annual Picnic and our bake sale. Co-chairs Alice Argnian and Edith Baise, plus the sixty members who donated to this event, contributed to the sell-out.

Along with the Men's Society and our clergy, Elise Papazian and Denise Boyagian participated in, and made *cheoreg* for visits to Manoogian Manor for Easter, Transfiguration of Our

Lord, and Assumption of the Holy Mother of God.

We posted three new videos in our Guild Gatherings series: “*Vospov Kufteh*” (the Godoshian family), “*Canning Tourshi*” (Patty Hachigian), and “*Mother and Daughter, Making Manti Together*” (Dawn & Diane Aginian). All can be accessed through our website: www.stjohnwomensguild.square.site



In front of “old” St. John's on Oakman Blvd (now Unity Mission Church)



Khunjook 2022 - A great success

Nyree Giragosian & Karen Kalajian
Women's Guild

The early morning sunshine gleamed against our iconic golden dome on Sunday, September 11, 2022, as St. John Armenian Church opened its newly renovated doors to welcome our families and church school children back to Sunday School. After a long summer recess, our church grounds were brimming with laughter, hugs, and excitement for a new school year. The children were all smiles, happy to

reunite with their old companions and looking forward to making new friendships with fellow parishioners who will undoubtedly mature into lifelong friends.

Under the direction of Paulette Apkarian, the Women's Guild launched a festive *Khunjook* after *Badarak*. Over 200 guests enjoyed an inflatable bouncy obstacle course equipped with a slide, a basketball shootout range, craft tents, a flashy photo booth with colorful props, a raffle with various themed baskets, and the popular Crispelli's

food truck serving freshly baked pizza and Bosco sticks. The aroma of freshly popped popcorn filled the air underneath the food tent laden with fresh fruits, vegetable plates, cookies, pretzels, and candy. Imagine all this entertainment set to the backdrop of the fabulous Nigosian Band playing Armenian dance music all afternoon! It was heartwarming to see the children and adults socializing, playing, and dancing, genuinely enjoying their afternoon together.



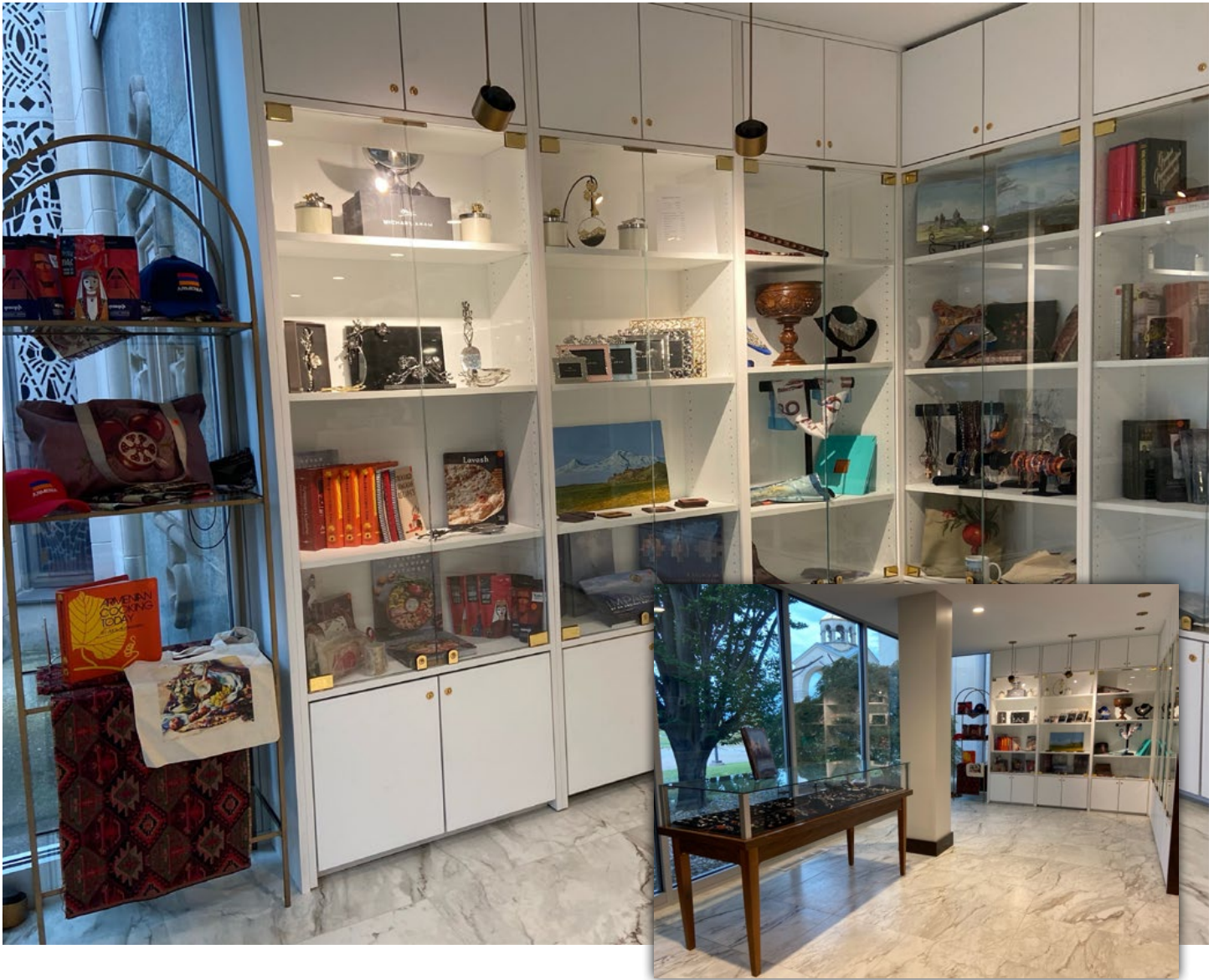
The *Khunjook* committee has worked together since the beginning of the year to ensure our families would enjoy this delightful day! Thank you Paulette, for your guidance and leadership, and thank you to the committee for your tireless dedication.

Our could not have been possible without the dozens of people who were so generous with their donations – your dedication to our Women’s Guild and St. John Armenian Church is greatly appreciated and will not be for-

gotten. We are fortunate to have such a supportive community that cherishes our youth and gives so freely and lovingly. Because of our donors’ generosity of time and donations, this event was enjoyed by all. We truly thank you again. We are already looking forward to next year. As one child proclaimed, “I love Sunday School!”

Khunjoonk Committee

Alexandra Apkarian, Paulette Apkarian, Renee Apkarian, Christine Atesian, Sara Sarkisian Bell, Marilyn Dadian, Michelle Samarian Ducato, Lauren Reizian-Gershonowicz, Nyree Giragosian, Kathy Hasse, Karen Kalajian, Dawn Karagosian, Lynne Kojamianian, Donna Lafian, Diana Mardigian, Jenni Morris, Nicole O’Donovan, Christine Sarafian, Maral Thomas, Kathy Torigian



The Bookstore and Gift Shop has a new home!

By Lucy Ardash
Manoogian Museum Director, Bookstore and Giftshop Coordinator

Our new, permanent and very attractive *Bookstore and Gift Shop* is now located in the corner of the Church lobby and stocks a wide range of titles on Armenian subjects.

Michael Aram products, Armenian crosses and jewelry along with a variety of many other items from Armenia are also on display.

Bookstore Hours

Monday – Friday **10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**
Sunday **Following Church Services**

Stop by and browse!

St. John Armenian Church Health Fair shares three areas of outreach at the Bazaar



By Greg Baise
Contributor

St John Armenian Church through a group effort including Edith Baise of the Women's Guild; Nurse Belinda Kabodian of the Women's Guild and Daughters of Vartan; and Greg Baise representing the Men's Society and Knights of Vartan proudly presented the 13th Annual Health Fair, in conjunction with the Annual Bazaar. Doing so again showed SJAC's commitment to being good shepherds for our own Armenian community, and also reaching out to the community that surrounds us.

The World Medical Relief hosted Wayne Health Mobile Unit as well. This self-contained mobile unit provides several health-related services including blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol and other vitals screenings in addition to providing things like COVID-19 boosters, free of charge to all who need them. Many St. John Armenian Church parishioners as well as folks from the surrounding community took advantage of this Program.

Southfield Mayor Ken Siver joined St. John Armenian Church in presenting a plaque to World Medical Relief. It is because of such innovative practices like these that brings health care services locally to those individuals who are the most hard to reach, and therefore the most vulnerable, that St. John Armenian church proudly and humbly presented a plaque to World Medical Relief in recognition of the value of their local programs.

In our Ararat room Flu shots and Covid Immunizations Clinic also proved a very big success. Pharmacist Hanadi Thomas, owner of Merriman Drugs, assisted by Wayne State University Student Pharmacists Ekaterina Pechenko, Alicia Atto and St. John's own Nubar Gambourian provided a total of 37 shots including 13 new Bi-Valent Covid Boosters for those who needed it. Furthermore there were several individuals who did not have insurance but Hanadi gave them their necessary injection as a donation to our church.

In the Veterans Building the annual Versiti Blood Drive received twelve donors. This has the potential of saving thirty-six lives.

Finally, we also would like to give special recognition to those doctors who, through their continued support of a "Healthy Armenian Community", made donations to the church in recognition of this effort.





Music Through The Decades

By Violet Cholakian
Contributor

Music of the Roaring '20s came alive on Sunday, September 18, 2022 at the St. John Cultural Hall. After a brief history of the St. John Music Ministry program, dating over twenty years to the present St. John Music Guild, the audience was guided through an exploration of a wide variety of works presented by the Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings. Four centuries of music, 1720, 1820, 1920, and 2020, were represented by solo performances of the DCWS musicians, many of whom perform with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Each soloist introduced their music with a brief description of the stylings in their performed piece.

Decade 1720 was represented by a violin solo by HaiXin Wu performing J.S. Bach's *Chaconne* from "Partita No. 2 in D minor", a suite of sonatas and partitas for unaccompanied violin. The stunning performance of Bach's masterpiece for violin by Wu was in his interpretation of the theme and variations which were played with emotion and precision.

The 1820 selection by Franz Schubert, *Trockne Blumen* from "Die schone Mullerin" (The Fair Maid of the Mill) was performed by flutist Amanda Blaikie and Zhihua Tang, piano. This is Schubert's only work written for flute and piano. The piece alternates between minor and major keys with a variety of tempo, rhythm, and instrumentation. The technical brilliance and versatility of each musician delighted the listeners.

At this point in the program, there was a switch in the decades.

2020 showcased a contemporary work, *Rhapsody for Trombone and Piano* by African-American composer, Bryan Raphael Nabors. Trombonist Kenneth Thompkins and pianist Zhihua Tang, performed this challenging work of high and low registers for the trombone. The selection had three sections - aggressive piano passages, contemplative trombone harmonies, and back to aggressive, showing the capabilities of both Thompkins and Tang.

Decade 1920 ended the concert with blues and jazz selections by Fats Waller, performed by Alvin Waddles, pianist, vocalist and composer. Waddles explained his Stride jazz style that arose from ragtime players as was demonstrated in the two selections, *Handful of Keys* and *Black and Blues*. His artistry at the piano, soulful voice, and improvisation of the music had the enthusiastic audience giving a standing ovation for an encore.

A delightful musical afternoon was presented by the St. John Music Guild. The mission of the Guild is to present a wide variety of genre/repertoire and this concert by the DCWS did just that. Thank you to the community who continues to support our endeavors.

STAY TUNED for the March 10, 2023 concert featuring the seven piece Naghash Ensemble from Armenia. Information to follow.

The Stewardship Program: An Overview!

By Sako Ghazarian
Parish Council

In 2019, our Diocese selected St. John Armenian Church as one of six parishes to participate in the pilot Stewardship program. We were returning to our Christian roots of giving from our heart versus a dues membership structure. As we approach the last quarter of 2022, we are inching towards completing our third full year of a very successful pilot program. The Stewardship Committee kicked off the pilot program by informing and educating our community of giving from your heart - no fixed amount.

The numbers tell the story of the success of the Stewardship Program. In 2019, the last year of the dues-paying format, there were 644 members of St. John. In the first year of the pilot program, steward membership increased to 690. Again in 2021 there was an increase to 701 and so far in 2022 there has been an increase of 27 new Stewards.

This change in direction not only increased the number of Stewards and the financial contributions, but changed many of our behaviors in donating earlier in the calendar year. This meant funding the daily operations of the church was more balanced during the course of a calendar year, instead of receiving dues towards year-end.

While appreciating this blessing and momentum, Parish Council would like to build upon our community's involvement by asking you to give of your time and talent as well. We have begun to build a database of individuals who have volunteered their time, talent and/or professional skills in various areas in supporting St. John Armenian Church and its needs as they arise. For over ten years we have had different individuals serving on the Investment Advisory Committee. They are a committee of financial advisors and lay people. More recently we formed the Renovation Committee, Legal Advisory Committee and due to the pandemic, the Armenian Medical Advisory Team was formed as a consulting and advisory group to guide our pastors and staff in how to best maneuver through the Covid-19 situation.

Each one of us has the time, talent and/or skills to contribute to our church or Armenian community! Please consider stepping forward to help and at the same time become involved. Click on the link below to complete the volunteer information form. Mark the areas you are interested in helping or leading. If you do not see something, please write it in. Let us know! www.forms.gle/C3NFRebrbyHDwpxJ6

St. John's Happy Hye Campers!

Lisa Mardigian
Youth Director

Our parish hosted two BBQ fundraisers this summer with the goal of underwriting the costs of the bus for HYE campers! Both barbeques were well attended and we were able to meet our goal!! Thank you to all who attended and all who contributed!! Thanks to your generosity, forty-eight campers and staff were able to travel to and from HYE camp at no cost!! Thank you to Rev. Fr. Armash Bagdasarian for blessing us when we departed St. John's and to V. Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian for his blessing for our return trip from HYE camp!



The St. John's Men's Society - An Update!



World Medical Relief volunteers

World Medical Relief's 2022 Gala at St. John's Chairman Greg Baise

Greg Baise has built a strong relationship with World Medical Relief (WMR) that has benefited not only their organization and our church, but also provided Armenia with medical supplies over the past few years. Once again World Medical Relief has supported our church by choosing St. John's for their in-person 2022 Gala. Greg, who sits on the board of WMR, solidified the booking, and his wife, Edith, volunteered to chair the event for WMR. We look to our parish to help support this worthy cause and attend this event November 19, 2022.

We appreciate what they do worldwide as well as what they have done for us, and we are honored to be among the volunteers that help them. From March through September our volunteers have worked at WMR four times with seven to fifteen people at each session. With the medical supplies that keep coming into the organization we need to build our volunteer base to fifteen people on a regular basis. If you can spare three hours once every other month, please join this great group of people! It's not hard work and very gratifying!

Motor City Mitten Mission gets a new chef! Chairman Harry Dulger

Harry Dulger has always helped lead the way by chairing the Motor City Mittens Mission Outreach project for the Men's Society. But now he has stepped up his game and is cooking the meals as well, so we can call him "Chef Harry" in the MCMM world.

We aren't forgetting Harry's team and steady volunteers Dan Cristiano, George Saboonjian, Greg and Edith Baise and their grandson Carter, Marvin Chacker, Michelle Margosian and Alice Arginian, as well as others who join in generously giving their time to make sure we do our part to help the homeless and needy. Since March we have prepared over 1200 meals for Motor City Mittens.

We would like to count on you as well for your support of this worthy cause. If you would like to help us, donation of \$300.00 will fund a meal that will serve families and individuals that may not have a meal that day. We will prepare 100-120 meals on your or your family's behalf.

Visiting Manoogian Manor

Chairman George Saboonjian

On Saturday April 23, 2022, V. Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian and Rev. Fr. Armash Bagdasarian held church services with Deacons George Boyagian and Onnig Boyajian at the Manoogian Manor. The Men's Society joined the Women's Guild and Choir each doing their part in celebrating being together. For the Men's Society, George Saboonjian asked Harry Kezelian III to play for the seniors. Harry brought Dikran Callan along and Vaughn Masropian from the choir joined in, and we had a small band performing. George brought in ice cream and pop for floats and Marvin Chacker took on serving dessert to everyone.



Father Armash, Father Aren, deacons Onnig, George and Yervant, Gary Melikian, Vaughn Masropian

On July 29 George Saboonjian, Dan Cristiano, Dn. George Boyagian again joined Father Armash at the Manoogian Manor, and our mission was to bring dessert, watermelon, and ice cream with all the toppings. We always get a warm welcome from the staff and residents.

After home blessing service and blessing of the grapes on August 20, we spent some time with the residents and handed out their requested treats: assorted nuts.

Easter Baskets for Armenian Families

Chairman George Saboonjian



George Saboonjian, John Yavruian, Richard Norsigian, Father Armash, Father Aren, and George Boyagian

George Saboonjian starts his planning for dinner Easter Baskets for Armenian families in January and, as usual, he wanted to step things up again this year. First, he received financial support from Edward Korkoian, which is a big help. Thank you Ed!

George wanted to do something for the kids. John Yavruian and Deacon

George Boyagian volunteered to take that task on together. They created fourteen Easter Baskets for the kids.

George priced, shopped and purchased food for the dinner baskets and we prepared them on Good Friday, filling two large boxes of food for each family. Deacon Richard Norsigian joined the team Friday afternoon to help deliver the baskets and wish the families a Happy Easter. Thanks to Fr. Aren, Fr. Armash, Anna Tokmajyan, and Sonia Kalfayan for their help in coordinating the families and thank you to all the volunteers that put this together.

A short visit with Artyom in Armenia

Chairman Michael Boucher

In the first part of May the Men's Society sent our second correspondence to Artyom and his mother since Artyom is only four years old. Michael Boucher and his grandchildren are starting art projects with Artyom. Michael believes this is one way to start to communicate with him due to his age. Artyom was excited to hear from us and the artwork we received came back quickly.

Artyom is the Men's Society's sponsored child through CASP and we like to stay in communication with him through letters and emails with the hopes as he grows up, we will be a part of his life, encouraging him and giving him moral support through his 18th birthday.



Artyom and Anna Tokmajyan

In the second week of July Anna Tokmajyan, our church secretary and Arman, her husband, went back home to Armenia to visit family and friends. We asked them to mail some items to Artyom from Armenia to conserve cost. Anna agreed but could not resist the opportunity to bring the gifts to Artyom and his family personally. Taking the four-hour drive Anna and Arman were welcomed into their home and Artyom was excited to get all the gifts. We have learned a great deal about Artyom and his family. We would like to thank Michael Boucher and George Saboonjian for lining up gifts, and a very special thank you to Anna and Arman for taking them to Artyom and his family. This is greatly appreciated.

Armenian Fest

On July 23, 2022, SJAC Men's Society had a table at Armenia Fest held at Royal Oak Farmers Market. We sold *bourma*, *pakhlava* and *khadayif* made by Men's Society members Michael Borborian, Daniel Cristiano, and George Saboonjian. Thanks to Michael Borborian, George Saboonjian, Greg and Edith Baise, Gary and Pat Hachigian and Christopher Korkoian for their excellent salesmanship in selling out our supply and raising over \$400 for the sponsorship of our CASP child. Many thanks to all that purchased from us at this festive event!

Guy's Morning Out - Our Breakfast Gathering *Chairman Mark Mamassian*

A change of pace for the guys was meeting at Downtown Charlie's, in Clawson, for breakfast Saturday, May 14. Every other month Mark organizes a time where the guys can get together to catch-up, meet new members and just relax. Our first morning venture was well received. We had a great breakfast and enjoyed a beautiful morning. Looking forward to our next work-free event!

Guy's Night Out - Backgammon Night

Chairs: Men's Society - Greg Baise and Women's Guild - Edith Baise

On Friday evening August 26 in our Veterans Building, a game night was held jointly by the SJAC Women's Guild and Men's Society. Tavloo (or backgammon) is a game that dates back thousands of years and is firmly embedded in the fabric of our Armenian culture. Card games were played as well. It was truly a successful event with eighteen people from both groups attending, with both our pastors, Fr. Aren and Fr. Armash, joining in the festivities. The object for this evening was simple: to play, have fun and to meet old and new friends. Pizza and other snacks were served. We are looking forward to making this a monthly outing.



Peter Argnian, Amy Krull, Father Armash, Karen Mangune, Alice Mekjian, Edith Baise and Gegory Baise



John Yavruian, Greg Movsesian, Rev. Fr. Armash Bagdasarian Deacon Armen Terjimanian, George Boyagian, Michael Boborian, Arsen Terjimanian, Greg Baise, George Saboonjian, Ara Belian

Men's Retreat 2022

Co-chairmen Ara Belian and Greg Movsesian

The SJAC Men's Society conducted its 2022 retreat on Saturday, June 4, on the topic of The Lord's Prayer. It was well attended by fifteen members, in addition to four clergy! We began the retreat by breaking bread together with a buffet lunch. Rev. Fr. Armash Bagdasarian introduced the concept of the five components of prayer: glorify God, show gratitude, be repentant, seek the intercession of our Saints, and supplication: What is it that we are praying for? Dn. Armen Terjimanian then presented a very comprehensive analysis and discussion of the Lord's Prayer. He showed how the Lord's Prayer appears in the scriptures written by St. Luke and St. Matthew, as well as the background biblical basis for how Jesus teaches us to pray. Dn. Armen referenced Catholicos Karekin Hovsepian, whose extensive writings over 100 years ago can be applied to our society today. The retreat included two dynamic interactive breakout sessions where participants debated pertinent Christian issues. For example, "What does repentance mean to us as Christians?" and "Name some temptations in our secular lives." The retreat concluded with a prayer in the sanctuary of St. John Armenian Church, where we sang *Hayr Mer* as a group. All participants received a Lord's Prayer Challenge Coin, which can be displayed on a desk or carried in a pocket, as a constant reminder of our devotion to God.

Men's Society Mans the Armenian Wine and Beer Bar at the 2021 Annual Picnic.

Chairman Steve Hagopian

For the second year, Sunday, August 21, 2021, a team of Men's Society members served Armenian beer and wine at the picnic giving our guests an opportunity to try great quality Armenian wines and beer as well as raise money for the picnic. We had great reviews on the wines and sold out of the beer! It is our hope that our parishioners continue to purchase Armenian wines helping the economy of Armenia. Our bartenders for the day were Dan Cristiano, George Saboonjian, Steve Hagopian, Robert Magee, Michael Borborian and Charles Semarjian.

On the Eight-pointed Star and the Theology of the Number 8

By Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian
Retired Pastor

The eight-pointed Armenian Star stands for Christ and His Divinity.

It is often called the Bethlehem Star symbolizing the world Jesus came to save.

Every year as part of the St. John's Annual Bazaar it has been a tradition to conduct a church tour for our community and friends. One of the mystifying aspects of our church's structure, footprint, and decorative adornments is the *eight-pointed star* that is highly visible. Its carved and painted design is virtually everywhere in view- on the face of the *Bema*, above the Virgin Mary's head where the nine doves appear, in a stained glass window on the doors to our holy sanctuary.

This eight-pointed star that we see profusely decorating our sanctuary is an important aspect of Armenian Church architectural adornment. The number 8 is significant in all of Orthodox Christian teaching because the number 8 connotes *time beyond, eternity, resurgence, and resurrection*.

From the earliest times, Armenian clergy, many of whom were artists and architects in addition to their ordained ministry, used the eight-pointed star particularly in painting and carving on stone in order to give a message of a world in the future time. The number 8 is symbolic. Even in our Armenian alphabet it as the eight letter Ռ* it signifies Christ's Resurrection and reflects the Kingdom of God and eternity.

In fact, this new age and new time to come is beyond the limits of this worldly time finds its expression most clearly in the liturgical worship of the Holy *Badarak*/ Divine Liturgy. Father Alexander Schmemmann, a Russian Orthodox theologian and priest, and one of my own teachers in seminary, writes in his well know book *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*:

"The Church belongs to the new aeon [age], to the Kingdom of the Messiah, which in relation to this world is the Kingdom of the age to come. In Christ's Resurrection, the Kingdom has entered this world and exists in the Church. In God it is the present, and eternal-the future; pointing to "the age to come" while also being in this present world. Christ has inaugurated the "age to come" in His Incarnation [becoming human] and through His Resurrection."



For the Church, the Lord's Day is not a substitute for the Jewish Sabbath but its Christian equivalent. Sunday is often referred to as the Eighth Day - the time connected to eternity. The Eighth Day is the day beyond the limits of the cycle outlined by the week and punctuated by the Sabbath – the eighth day becomes the first day of the New Aeon [Age]. That is why Sunday in the Armenian Christian tradition is called in Armenian *Miashapat* [day one] or *Giragi* -from the Greek *Kyriaki emera* the Lord's Day.

Thus, as we see the eight-pointed star on the facing of the *bema* of our altar, it tells us, we are in two places at the same time, here on earth and in the hereafter, heaven. As we come forth to receive Holy Communion, we are entering the time to come. This mystery occurs as Christ brings heaven to earth.

- Note, the eighth letter of the Armenian Alphabet is the letter called 'uht' - Ռ and follows the seventh letter 'eh' Է.
- Է means I am,
- Ռ signifies the Resurrection.
- Put them together and we have
I AM THE RESURRECTION.



Armenia's Independence Threatened

By Dr. Gary Zamanigian
Contributor

I have just returned home from one of many trips to Armenia. My journey began a few days after Azerbaijani forces launched an attack against Armenia's sovereign territory which resulted in the death of at least 135 Armenian soldiers. Never have I been to Armenia to see the entire population in mourning. Under normal circumstances, visitors when walking in the streets of Yerevan hear Armenian contemporary and folk music coming from all around, they see beautiful fountains here and there and cheerful people strolling leisurely in various directions who are enjoying conversation with one another. This time there was only silence in the streets; there were no joyful celebrations, no music of any genre to be heard, no fountains flowing, no laughter whatsoever.

As an Armenian living in the diaspora, I too grieved with the people of Armenia over the recent illegal attack by the enemy and I too could not help but feel immense sadness. For some reason, the last three lines of the poem "We are few but we are called Armenians" by Armenian poet, Paruyr Sevag, kept resonating in my mind:

"We are, we shall be, and we shall yet become many".

Despite despondency, it was apparent everywhere in Armenia that we Armenians are unequivocally known for our tenacity and that we are not willing to give up!

At present, without a major world power to safeguard Armenia, there is a genuine imminent danger of Armenia's independence being lost once again; therefore, we are at a critical juncture

in Armenian history. Every Armenian, whether in Armenia or in the diaspora, must set aside their differences, support the current government and we must mobilize every single one of our resources. As diasporan Armenians in the United States, we should make our voices heard to the Representatives of our Executive and Legislative Branches of government. This can be done through organizations already in place advocating for Armenia in Washington, DC.

Remembering the difficult challenges we Armenians have faced historically and knowing what is occurring before our eyes today, Armenia's independence, though tenuous, is worth defending. The country's sovereignty is sacrosanct to so many!

Links • Links • Links

We hope that you enjoyed exploring the links that were provided in the last issue of *The Torchbearer*. Our hope is that you will find interesting and thought provoking information in them. Below, you will find information on some of the sites that will be provided and spend some time investigating them on your own. We will be featuring links for Russian readers as well. If you have a site that you would like to share, please send the link to us for consideration. sjactorchbearer@gmail.com

Vemkar

“*Vemkar* is the Digital Ministry of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the online interface of the Diocese’s vision Building up the Body of Christ. The mission of the Eastern Diocese is to serve and support the faithful of the Armenian Church within and without, which includes providing educational resources not just for parishes, but for all the faithful of the Armenian Church to use for the edification of their faith and for the building up of the Body of Christ. *Vemkar* refers to a flat stone that is consecrated by the bishop embedded within the center of the altar, upon which the chalice or Gospel book rests during *Badarak*.”

www.vemkar.us

The Armenian Diocese – Eastern

www.armenianchurch.us

The Armenian Diocese – Western

www.wdacna.com

St. Nersess and The St. Nersess Theological Review

www.stnersess.edu

Orthodox Christian Studies Center – Fordham University

“Through lectures, scholarly publications, and student initiatives such as the Orthodox Christian Fellowship and the Orthodox Christian studies minor, we promote serious scholarship and lifelong learning. The center’s work paints a broad picture of Orthodoxy’s history, religious traditions, and geographical, geopolitical, and cultural reach.

Two pillars of the center’s scholarship are the Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies and the Public Orthodoxy online editorial forum, which is read worldwide. Our lively panels, conferences, and seminars—such as the Patterson Triannual Conference and our annual Orthodoxy in America lecture—place us at the center of New York City’s thriving intellectual community.”

Bishop Daniel Findikyan was a recent lecturer at the Center and our own Deacon Doctor Aram Sarkisian is a frequent contributor to the Public Orthodoxy forum. Find their contributions in the archives on the site.

www.bit.ly/3Sozy7h

See links on next page

Links • Links • Links



“Celebrating Early Christian Women at Prayer”

From the website “Public Orthodoxy”, an introduction by the author, V.K. McCarty, of her book, *From Their Lips – Voices of Early Christian Women*.

www.bit.ly/3rXu82u



“The Armenians and the Cross”

Vemkar’s weekly Tuesday evening series is available online. The theme of this Fall’s series is on the symbol of Armenian Christian faith – the Cross! Go to this link to register and then to watch the presentations online!

www.bit.ly/3rWDLhL



“The Miraculous Icons in the Armenian Church”

This article was posted to the *Vemkar* website August 30, 2022, by Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian. Fr. Garabed writes, “Wonderworking or miraculous icons have been a part of the Armenian Church’s history since the early first century.” Such phenomena are part of many Christian traditions and this article introduces us to the icons and crosses in the history of the Armenian Orthodox Church.

<https://bit.ly/3EM6IEP>



For our Russian readers:

“Since April 9, the liturgies of the Armenian Apostolic Church have been held in the church of Santa Maria in Campo in the center of Florence. The first divine service according to the Armenian rite was held on April 9 in the presence of His Grace Archbishop Khajag Barsamyan and the spiritual pastor of Armenians in Italy, Father Tirayr Hakobyan. The Liturgy was celebrated on an important day for the Armenian Church, the Saturday on the eve of Palm Sunday.”

www.bit.ly/3VtPWaf