

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
PARISH REPORTS - 2023

February 18, 2024



**Celebrating the Past
Embracing the Future**

St. Mary, Washington, DC

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ST. MARY ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH
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Rev. Father Hovsep Karapetyan, Pastor

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February 1, 2024

INVITATION LETTER TO THE PARISH ASSEMBLY – 2024

Dear Dues Paying Member,

Our Annual Parish Assembly this year will be held on Sunday, February 18, 2024, at 12:00 pm, with an alternate date of February 25, 2024, at 12:00 pm. The meeting will take place at the church social hall. A light luncheon will be served prior to the meeting.

Enclosed, you will find the agenda of the meeting along with the names of all the people remaining in office after this assembly, as well as the slate of Nominees for the Assembly. The Annual Report with all the Organizations' reports, all of the budget reports, etc., are enclosed in this booklet. Please read it before attending the meeting.

If you are a fully pledged dues-paying member and are concerned about the future of our Church, it is essential for you to take part in this meeting held only once a year. Please make every effort to be present. The elections, the budget, and other items of business have much to do with the ministry and direction of our Church.

With prayers,

Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan,
Pastor

Mrs. Shoghig Sahakyan
Parish Council Chairlady

Annual Parish Assembly
St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church Washington, DC

February 18, 2024

AGENDA

1. Opening Prayer
2. Verification of Eligible Voters and Call for Quorum
3. Election of Chairman and Secretary of the Day
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Approval of the Minutes of the 2022 Parish Assembly
6. Nominating Committee Report and Floor Nominations
7. Pastor's Report
8. Parish Council Report
9. Vote on the Ballot
10. Operating Fund Report - 2022 Expenses
11. Pastor's MOU
12. Review and Adoption of the 2023 Budget
13. Other Treasury Report (Restricted Funds and ACEF)
14. Questions and Acceptance of Organizational Reports (a representative will be present to answer questions)
15. Diocesan Delegates' Report
16. Auditing Committee Report
17. Investment Committee Report
18. Announcements of Elections Results
19. New Business
20. Motion to Adjourn and Benediction

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

1. Church services on February 18, 2024:

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	Holy Badarak
12:00 Noon	Meeting

2. Please submit your proposals, resolutions, and bylaws amendments in writing prior to the Assembly, to be placed on the agenda of the meeting. Please contact Mrs. Shoghig Sahakyan (shoghig@gmail.com), Parish Council Chairlady. The proposals or the resolutions may be related to:

- a. The overall mission or the activities of the church;
- b. The specific issues concerning the auxiliary organizations' activities and their mission;
- c. The specific issues related to the Diocese.

3. You don't have to be a dues-paying/voting member to attend the Parish Assembly.

4. Voting members! To be eligible to vote, please make sure you have paid your membership dues for the year 2024. All dues must have been paid by December 31st in order to be eligible to vote.

5. If you have delinquent dues for 2023, to restore your voting membership privilege, you must submit your dues both for the years 2022 and 2023. The annual dues are \$250 per person, 18 and over, and \$100 for senior citizens and students.

6. For election, nominations can be made from the floor. Please secure the prior consent of the nominee. Please call one of the Nominating Committee members and volunteer or suggest your nomination.

The Nominating Committee would like to express their appreciation to everyone who has volunteered to put their names forward in service to our Church. It was their goal to find the most talented and dedicated members to volunteer so that the Ballot and upcoming Church Committees would reflect the diversity of our Parish.

Please feel free to contact a member of the Nominating Committee if you have any questions regarding the Ballot or Parish Assembly Election procedures.

The Nominating Committee

Mark Krikorian

Zaven Kalayjian

Becky Baghdasarian

msk@cis.org – (202) 288-4560

iamzaven@gmail.com – (240) 595-8182

rebeccabagdasarian@yahoo.com) - (571) 213 -7035

St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church

2023 Standing Committee List

Parish Council (2 year term, limit 3 consecutive terms)

John Asadoorian (2023)*	-- elected 2022
Shahnur Bostan (2024)*	-- elected 2023
Jack Guiragossian (2024)*	-- elected 2021, 2023
Svetlana Hovhannisyan (2024)*	-- elected 2023
Sean McClure (2023)*	-- elected 2022
Rick Nishanian (2023)*	-- elected 2020, 2022
Catherine Sahakian (2024)*	-- elected 2021, 2023
Shoghig Sahakyan (2023)*	-- elected 2020, 2022
Onnik Sivaslian (2023)*	-- elected 2022

Nominating Committee (1 year term, limit 2 consecutive terms)

Becky Bagdasarian (2022)	-- elected 2022, 2023
Zaven Kalayjian (2023)*	-- elected 2023
Mark Krikorian (2023)*	-- elected 2023

Auditing Committee (3 year term)

George Guiragossian (2023)
Greg Manougian (2024)
Artur Sivaslian (2025)

Diocesan Delegates (4 year term)

Zaven Kalayjian (2024)
Onnik Sivaslian (2024)
Sarine Zenian (2024)

Investment Committee (3 year term)

David Sayian (2023)
Sarine Zenian (2024)
Michael Sahakian (2025)

WED Scholarship Committee (5 year term)

Rebecca Bagdasarian (2023)
Zaven Kalayjian (2024)
Anna Seferian (2025)
Eric Ashbahian (2026)
Mark Krikorian (2027)

year is the last full year of the term (some terms continue into Feb due to election schedule), *
denotes may run again

St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church

2024 Preliminary DRAFT Ballot

Chairperson of the Day (circle 1 name)

Avedis Seferian

Onnik Sivaslian

Secretary of the Day (circle 1 name)

Beverly Sivaslian

XXX

Parish Council (circle 5 names)

Sean McClure

Rick Nishanian

Shoghig Sahakyan

Nayiree Sarkissian

Harout Tchekrekjdjian

Avag Permian

Theodore Xakalis

Artur Sivaslian

Onnik Sivaslian

Nominating Committee (circle 3 names)

Rosemary Arkoian

Ani Derderian

Zaven Kalayjian

Mark Krikorian

Lucy Murad

Auditing Committee (circle 1 name)

Anna Seferian

Vladimir Shekoyan

Investment Committee (circle 1 name)

John Asadoorian

David Sayian

WED Scholarship Committee (circle 1 name)

Bagrat Bayburtian

Dale Turza

Parish Council Candidate Biographies

Sean McClure

My name is Sean McClure. I have been on the Parish Council since 2022 and am seeking reelection. I have actively worked on a variety of projects from the food festival and outreach at the Church. I am looking forward to identifying new sources of revenue and new programs to bolster St Mary's budget and enhance the good works that our community can do both in Armenia and for Armenians in the Greater Washington D.C. metro area. My wife, Suzanna Simonyan, and I have been attending services at St. Mary's since 2005. We have 3 children: Mariam, Alfred and Edmund. My daughter is an active member of the ACYOA juniors, and my son Edmund is an acolyte on the altar. St Mary's is central to my family. The Church helps us connect to our Armenian roots and participate in the Christian faith which is the pillar of strength for the Armenian people. Engagement with St. Mary was my children's first experience with the Armenian church before they could travel to Armenia and go on pilgrimages to the various holy sites and churches. As our children grow, they comprehend the richness of our faith, the travails of the Armenian people and that they are part of much greater continuity. The Church and my faith have been the bedrock through which I try to live my life and have been a great support to me and my family during times of adversity.

Shoghig Sahakyan

Shoghig M. Sahakyan was born and raised in Damascus, Syria. She came to the U.S. as a student and lived in Ithaca, NY. for 2.5 years.

Shoghig and her late brother Yervant Missirian moved to the Washington metro area in 1985 and made St. Mary church their second home. She has been an active member of St. Mary's Parish since she settled in the DMV area. She served as Armenian language teacher for about 10 years from late 80's to late 90's.

Shoghig was elected to Parish Council (PC) in 2020 amidst COVID 19 challenges. She was elected for her second 2-year term in 2022 and has been the chair of PC for the past 3 years.

Nayiree Sarkissian

I have been attending St. Mary since childhood during which I went to Sunday School until I graduated at the age of 14. Presently, I teach religion to the 3rd/4th grade students - making it my second year in doing so. It makes the experience that much more special when you are blessed with the opportunity to teach in the very place you were once a student.

Harout Tchekrekjdjian

Born in Amman Jordan, raised in a family with decades of service to the local Armenian community, school and church.

Serving Sourp Thaddeus Armenian Apostolic church for many years during my youth, volunteering at Yuzbashian & Gulbenkian Armenian school, local Armenian social clubs and community events during my early adulthood, and one of the early contributors to the production of Sourp Thaddeus newsletter at the time (late 90s) which was distributed locally and internationally (founded by my father, Haigavet Tchekrekjdjian & Der Zakaria Saribekian).

Attending university in Nicosia Cyprus in pursuit of a degree in Business administration, I started an early career in hospitality management, only to quickly shift into the technology industry, where my interests were set. Since then, I have provided consulting services in the Computer Networking and Infrastructure industry for the past two decades, guiding businesses and organizations advance their technology operations into next generation solutions.

Relocating state side, I found my way to St. Mary Armenian church where I was greeted by a heartfelt welcoming community, of which I knew I had to take part. Since then I have established everlasting bonds, friends and family, and have been contributing in my capacity, especially during public events such as food festivals and bazaars.

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly
St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, Washington DC
February 19, 2023**

Opening:

The Parish Assembly started at 12:34pm. **Der Hovsep Karapetyan** opened the meeting with a prayer.

Verification of Quorum:

The Nominating Committee verified the presence of 50 dues-paying members, the amount required for a quorum. Therefore, a quorum was confirmed.

Election of Chairman and Secretary of the Day:

The ballot for the officers of the day was presented by **Rebecca Bagdasarian**. Nominations from the floor were sought. **Rebecca Bagdasarian** was nominated by **Onnik Sivaslian** for chairman of the day to be added to the ballot. No new nominations were put forth for secretary of the day.

The ballots were distributed for voting and **Raffi Karahisar** volunteered to help **George Guiragossian** with the Auditing Committee duties of validating the count.

Eric Ashbahian announced the winners. The chairperson of the day was **Avedis Seferian**. The secretary of the day was **Beverly Sivaslian**.

Avedis Seferian addressed the assembly. He spoke about the great strength of our community and commented on the increasing number of acolytes on our altar. He spoke about how the pandemic changed the way things are being done – one of which is recording the meeting for the purposes of note-taking. The recording will then be deleted after the minutes are produced. Avedis also mentioned that the Parish Assembly booklet was emailed to parishioners in advance, and since everyone had the chance to review it, we will save time by not reading out organization reports and only taking questions on the content. He then commented on how our Parish Assembly reflected Der Hayr's sermon from today on Matthew Chapter 6 in that it is connected to the Lenten actions of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Adoption of Agenda:

A motion was put forth by **Hratch Semerjian** to adopt the agenda as it was presented in the written materials sent to the parishioner's homes. The motion was seconded by **Mark Krikorian** and passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes of the 2022 Parish Assembly:

Comments or corrections to the 2022 Parish Assembly Minutes were requested.

Dean Shahinian stated that the requirement of a secret ballot referenced in the minutes was due to Bylaw 21 and should be noted as such.

Mark Krikorian moved to adopt the minutes. **Aline Guiragossian** seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Nominating Committee Report and Floor Nominations:

Eric Ashbahian (joined by **Hripsime Sivaslian** and **Rebecca Bagdasarian**) reviewed the ballot.

The five candidates running for Parish Council were read. One additional candidate needed to be nominated to round out the field. **Ted Xakellis** was nominated, and his name was added to the ballot. Four seats will be voted for.

The five candidates for the Nominating Committee were read. Additional nominations were sought. No additional nominations were put forth. Three seats will be voted for.

The two candidates for the Auditing Committee were read. Additional nominations were sought. No additional nominations were put forth. One seat will be voted for. The two candidates for the Investment Committee were read. Additional nominations were sought. No additional nominations were put forth. One seat will be voted for.

The two candidates for the WED Scholarship Committee were read. Additional nominations were sought. No additional nominations were put forth. One seat will be voted for.

The nominating committee retired to produce the ballots that would include the new nominations.

Pastor's Report:

Der Hovsep Karapetyan presented the Pastor's Report. He spoke about this being the first year where we had fully functioning events since the pandemic began. He commented on how much our parish youth are involved in a variety of spiritual and fellowship events. He mentioned that the Senior ACYOA group will be revived by **Alex Madajian**. He also said that it was a phenomenal year since we celebrated our church's 90th anniversary which was accompanied by the establishment of an endowment fund, which will hopefully grow in the future. He thanked the 90th Anniversary Organizing Committee for their fundraising and planning efforts. He then thanked outgoing Parish Council members **Artur Sivaslian** and **Bob George** for their years of service. He then expressed his appreciation to Parish Council Chair **Shoghig Sahakyan** and each Parish Council member for their service and dedication to our community.

Dean Shahinian had a question about the number of dues paying members in our community since the report stated that there were 1300 email addresses. **Jack Guiragossian** stated that there were 304 dues-paying members.

Dean also moved that we commend **Rebecca Bagdasarian** and **Yeretzgin Jennifer** for their work with the ACYOA Juniors.

Additionally, Dean wanted to know where the financial statements were from the 90th-anniversary celebration. Der Hayr shared that Jack would go over that later during his report.

Parish Council Report:

Shoghig Sahakyan thanked Der Hayr for his energetic leadership and also thanked the members of the Parish Council for their tireless work and the unity that they exhibit in their service to the community. She then thanked **Katie Kumkumian** for leading and contributing fresh, new ideas to the financial aspects of the planning committee for the fundraising for the 90th Anniversary Celebration. She then commented that the fundraising for the endowment is ongoing and that the Parish Council is appreciative of the community's generosity.

Dean Shahinian asked if we would be hiring a youth worker for ACYOA. Shoghig said that we had one many years ago but that we don't have a paid person now. Dean pointed out that there is a line item for a paid position for a youth coordinator in the current budget. This might be explored with Alex's new Senior ACYOA position.

Dean also asked if there was any thought about someone who could be paid to work with the parish's senior citizens or visit the sick of the parish. Shoghig thanked him for pointing this out and took the opportunity to thank **Anna Amirkhanyan** for starting the Prayer Ministry (a group of parishioners who take online prayer requests or ones that are put in the prayer box by the vestibule and pray on those requests). She then encouraged any other interested parishioners to get involved in this ministry. She also mentioned that Der Hayr is organizing appointments to visit the sick.

Dean then stated that there is a Deacons fellowship in the Diocese. He asked whether the roles of Deacons could be expanded to empower them to call/visit the sick and elderly. Shoghig said that this should be everyone's role in the parish. Der Hayr asked **Mark Krikorian** as a deacon representing our parish at the Diocesan Deacons Ministry, to comment on this. Mark stated that Deacons Fellowship meets once a month. Any deacon or sub-deacon can join, but there are 10-12 people who routinely attend. They plan on having a retreat at St. Nersess this upcoming summer. They have talked about assigning deacons to visit the sick and the elderly. They have also discussed ways in which to raise the profile of the deacons in our community. Additionally, the deacons are currently running a Zoom class for how to read Armenian. There are even participants from other parishes who are attending this as well.

Hratch Semerjian asked if a written report for the elevator feasibility study had been delivered. A discussion between **Rick Nishanian**, **Dean Shahinian**, and **Hratch Semerjian** ensued regarding the necessary submission of a written report to the Parish Assembly (per the motion passed in 2022) rather than only the details of the financials that were included in last year's minutes. Rick stated that he would provide a written report that would then be appended to this year's minutes.

It was suggested that the minutes reflect that the Parish Council considered the report given by Rick and **Shahnur Bostan** last year and concluded that the price of the elevator was outside of the church's reach and that a new elevator would not be installed at this time.

Greg Kumkumian asked how a handicapped person can get upstairs at this time. Shoghig mentioned that the outside elevator and the chair lift is currently used for that purpose.

Dean asked where the remotes for the chair lift are stored. Shoghig shared that several people have remotes for the chair lift. He suggested that they be stored in a common area and that the ushers know where they are stored.

Shoghig shared that **Dr. Greg Kumkumian** and **Dr. Ed Bodurian** donated a first aid kit that has a portable EKG, blood pressure gauge, and an AED. They will also provide the training for this. She thanked them for this initiative. The Parish Council will decide where to store it – maybe along the wall in the vestibule.

She also gave a word of acknowledgment to a set of parishioners (who might not want to be named) who donated and installed security cameras both inside and outside the church building.

Vote on the Ballot:

The Nominating Committee distributed the ballots and then retired to count the votes.

Operating Fund Report:

Jack Guiragossian presented the Operating Fund Report and stated that this was a good year, even with all the fundraising we had to do.

He went over the operation budget briefly. He mentioned that ordinarily, we would have had more surplus, however with the establishment of the endowment fund and with finishing up the kitchen renovation, the surplus was less. He also said that we have been carrying a lot of cash in the operating fund, so the Parish Council moved \$100,000 to the Investment Committee in June to be invested.

Dean Shahinian stated that there was a line item (#5) in the budget for funds to pay a bell choir director and a line item (#20) for funds to pay a youth minister. He asked if there were plans to revive these positions and use these funds to pay these personnel. Jack said that didn't need to budget for these positions this year because we have had parishioners donated funds toward the support of a youth minister position outside of the operating budget. Those funds are in a restricted account. We have not budgeted for a bell choir for the last 10 years. However, we keep that line item so that in the future we would budget for that.

Harry Derderian asked why the proposed budget for line 16 went down for 2023. Jack explained that it decreased since Yeretzgin was able to obtain health insurance for the family through her new job, so it was not necessary to cover that cost with church funds this year.

Hratch Semerjian made a motion to accept the OF Report. **Catherine Sahakian** seconded the motion. The report was accepted unanimously.

Pastor's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

The floor was opened for questions/comments on the Pastor's Memorandum of Understanding.

Jack Guiragossian shared that we put in for some inflation in the MOU for this year. He noted that the health insurance compensation amount is less than what we voted on last year.

Sean McClure suggested that Der Hayr's total compensation be reported in salary and non-salary buckets (similar to the Federal accounting standards) so that, for privacy reasons, we don't have go into the details of Der Hayr's stipends and allowances. **Harry Derderian** pointed out that we did this in the past, but there were transparency issues, so we moved to the current system. Jack shared that the technology has changed since that time and that this move would make creating the budget a little easier. He asked that the motion be put forward by the assembly.

Sean made a motion to adjust the MOU budget to match Federal accounting standards to go with the salary and non-salary buckets. The motion was seconded by **Dean Shahinian** and passed with nine votes opposed. Jack asked Sean to help him with the details on how to set up that budgeting system.

Mark Krikorian moved to accept the MOU. The motion was seconded by **Hratch Semerjian** and passed unanimously.

2023 Budget

The floor was opened for questions/comments on the 2023 Budget.

Jack Guiragossian explained that to make the new budget, he looks at the past 3-year averages (disregarding the covid years) to create the new budget and takes into account any outstanding items in the process. A balanced budget of \$362,000 was proposed. He stated that the difference between the Membership and Dues columns and the Income columns shows an \$88,000 deficit, and he is counting on parishioner pledges to close that gap.

Aline Guiragossian made a motion to accept the 2023 Budget. It was seconded by **Harry Derderian** and passed unanimously.

Other Treasury Reports (Restricted Funds and ACEF):

The floor was opened for questions/comments on the other Treasury Reports.

Jack Guiragossian shared that he didn't have a line item for the Endowment Fund, so he used Line 9 (the Past Memorial Funds) as a placeholder until those funds were transferred to the Investment Committee the next week.

Hratch Semerjian asked whether we got interest in our investments from the banks. Jack said that we haven't been, although we used to. This year we had about \$240,000 of the restricted funds in 6-month treasury strips (at 4.85%) and we should get interest from them in the future.

The Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF) invests all the Eastern Diocesan funds in the past; we have established memorial funds there. The principal from these funds is never touched. They give us 4.5% back based on the last 12 quarters' fund performance. We have about 332 funds there. For the most part, the returns from these funds support the operating budget.

Mike Sahakian asked whether we got paid on those funds in 2022 or 2023. Jack shared that the payment gets disbursed in March of every year, so the money detailed on this line item is what we got paid last March. The total value of our portion of this fund at the end of the year is \$2.1M. He noted that there is a \$157.7M total investment through all the diocesan parishes. He also shared that the Lazarian Fund has had a pretty normal year. The Investment Committee has control of these funds.

Jack reviewed the Kitchen Renovation Financial Summary and noted that there was \$95,000 raised toward the kitchen renovation, and the overall cost was just over \$93,000. He also discussed the 90th Anniversary Financial Summary and thanked **Katie Kumkumian** and the whole committee for their work on this project. The overall income with the event was \$150,000. As of December, the Endowment Fund stood at \$127,000 but funds are still coming in. The event cost \$27,300. The remaining balance was transferred to the Investment Committee. That was added as a line item to their report. At the bottom of that page is a summary of the number of donors at the various different levels and the number of complimentary tickets.

Harry Derderian asked about the WED fund principal amount. Jack shared that it is \$1.3 million.

Jack stated that it is difficult when fundraising is asked of parishioners since operating fund amounts tend to go down. When that happens, he needs to then go back to donors to ask for funds to cover operating expenses. He shared that the backup to fill this need are funds that come in from our internal organizations (Women's Guild, Avak Society, Gift Shop). The Parish Council makes the decision as to where money from our internal organizations goes – whether endowment or operating budget – and this year the money needed to go to the operating budget.

Mark Krikorian wondered whether the money will be drawn out of the 90th Anniversary Endowment fund. Jack said that the Parish Council makes those decisions, but they will probably not withdraw any of the funds. He said that the longer that we hold onto these funds, the quicker we will get to a target \$6 million Endowment Fund, the distributions from which could then support the operating expenses.

Dean Shahinian wanted Jack to go through the details of the Consolidated Financial Balance Sheet. Jack explained the line items on that sheet.

Mike Sahakian asked about the physical assets of the church. He wanted to know why it isn't in the budget. Jack shared that it isn't in the budget since it isn't a cash asset. However, he said that he can add that as an equity line.

Hratch Semerjian moved to approve the Other Treasury Reports. **Rick Nishanian** seconded and the reports were unanimously approved.

Hratch Semerjian suggested that the assembly thank Jack for his hard work and a standing ovation followed.

Organizational Reports:

Avedis Seferian stated that all of the comprehensive organizational reports reflect the health of our community with a resurgence of activity following the pandemic. The floor was opened for questions/comments for those organizations. **Raffi Karahisar** mentioned that the Spring and Fall Festival numbers were not correct in the booklet, and an updated sheet was provided to the assembly.

Avedis thanked all the organizational group leaders. He then asked for a motion to accept the Organizational Reports, which was made by **Lucy Murad** and seconded by **Mark Krikorian**. The motion passed unanimously.

Diocesan Delegates' Report:

The floor was opened for questions/comments on the Diocesan Delegates' Report.

Eric Ashbahian came forward to answer questions. He noted that with the Primate being newly elected, there were questions about where the Diocese is headed. These questions will be answered moving forward as the new Primate gets established.

Hratch Semerjian mentioned that the words "primate" and "bishop" were incorrectly used in parts of the report, and it will need to be amended. He also wanted to know how many deacons, sub-deacons, and acolytes there are in our parish. It was pointed out that the information for the Diocese is in the first major paragraph of the report and that our parish does report our numbers to the diocese for this accounting. It was noted that tubirs are acolytes that are serving on the altar.

A question was asked about how many priests had retired because this information would be needed for a more complete picture. Der Hayr thought that maybe there weren't any new retirees. Hratch stated that the Diocese should note how many in each of the categories had retired to provide a more complete picture of this in the future. He also commented on the large number of Zoom meetings and asked why these meetings were so spread out throughout the season and were not in person. Eric shared that the sessions were held on Zoom during the week, and many smaller sessions were held later in the evening in order to make it more convenient for people to participate and attend. He shared that in the future, the meetings should all be in person.

Hratch asked if there was any discussion of the Diocesan properties – whether they are going to sell these properties or not. **Eric** and **Onnik Sivaslian** said that this is still in the committee phase and that there was no new information.

Yeretzgin Jennifer Karapetyan asked if there was a report or a discussion about the status of the Christian Education department. Eric said that they had mentioned that they were going to combine different areas of this department, but there was nothing specific about the new hierarchy of the Christian Education department. Yeretzgin reminded us that there was a mass exodus and multiple resignations in the Christian Education department as well as in the ACYOA and that they are now seeking to fill these roles. She suggested that the Diocesan delegates ask them about it at their next meeting.

Greg Kumkumian asked whether there would be any updated religious books and materials from which to teach Religious Education in the future. Eric mentioned that he didn't have any specifics on this but that there was a focus on Vemkar and a reliance more on disseminating Christian Education information through that platform. He said that more materials are being added to Vemkar, and this will be the primary way to disseminate information.

Onnik said that everyone should send their email to the diocese to be recipients of their weekly informational emails.

Greg encouraged our Diocesan delegates to express our concern about the lack of new and modern Religious Education teaching materials at the next Diocesan Assembly.

Rebecca Bagdasarian mentioned that there is a job opening for a Director of Christian Education and one of the job responsibilities listed is reviewing and developing new teaching materials.

Lucy Murad asked whether our parish could purchase new books for the classroom. **Beverly Sivaslian** shared that we utilize the "We Believe" book series in our classrooms that are available on Vemkar, but that the books are not sufficient (our sixth graders have already finished the material in their book at the beginning of February). The additional bible study materials on Vemkar are not sufficient to supplement material for the younger grades. Lucy asked whether religious materials from other Christian denominations could be utilized. Beverly said that she would be uncomfortable introducing doctrine from other Christian denominations into our religion classrooms since there are a number of differences in doctrine between different Christian faiths.

Hratch Semerjian made a motion that the Diocesan delegates and the Parish Council should communicate to the diocese that we are extremely disappointed in a lack of succession planning in the Christian Education department of the Diocese and that our Sunday school is suffering from a lack of updated material and that this topic should be a topic of great concern for the diocesan operations and the future education of our children.

Dean Shahinian asked for a point of clarification. He wanted the motion to specify that we would be communicating with both the Diocesan council and the primate. The first sentence should now read: “The Diocesan delegates and the Parish Council should communicate to the Primate and Diocesan Council...”

Hratch accepted the proposed amendment to the motion and **Dean Shahinian** moved to vote on it. **Greg Kumkumian** seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Onnik and **Avedis** noted that this motion calls for immediate action by both the Diocesan delegates and the Parish Council.

Dean Shahinian stated that the Diocesan Council discussed the Gorky collection with respect to the amount of insurance needed, specifically the need to increase the amount of insurance. Dean wants to make sure that the pieces are insured for enough with the Gulbenkian Museum. **Eric** said that they did receive information that the current insurance is not sufficient and that preliminary discussions with the curator of the Armenian section of the Gulbenkian Museum are being held regarding the current coverage versus the appraised value. He mentioned that the discussions have been slow due to covid. He said that the Primate and the Diocesan Council will appoint a Gorky committee and will advise the Diocesan Assembly when the update is available. Dean offered the following proposal.

St. Mary Armenian Church, Washington, DC submits the following proposal to the 2023 Diocesan Assembly:

Background: The Diocese has received gifts of valuable artwork, including artwork created by Arshile Gorky and Ruben Nakian and bequeathed by Vartoosh Mooradian (the sister of Gorky) and from other artists. It had been determined that the artwork was not fully insured or protected.

Proposal: The Assembly directs the Diocesan Council to maintain insurance for the full value of the artwork it owns against potential theft, accidental breakage or damage, counterfeiting, political risk, fire, water damage, damage in shipping, and other harms. The insurance should be acquired from a financially sound insurer.

The Assembly asks the Council to inform delegates and parishioners when this coverage has been obtained.

“Artwork” includes paintings, drawings and other art objects given by Vartoosh Mooradian and others; art on display or stored in the Diocesan headquarters or on loan from the Diocese to other venues; and other art.

Rationale: Having insurance from a financially sound insurer would protect the value of the gifts of art it has received from potential harms. It would also demonstrate to the faithful that the Diocese takes its fiduciary role seriously. Failure to maintain insurance on valuable art and other artifacts could raise serious questions about the stewardship of the Diocese, might discourage potential donors from giving it things of value in the future, and could result in financial losses.

Mark Krikorian asked whether we want to pass this motion to instruct the Diocese to get insurance or should we leave the option open for them to sell the artwork instead of spending the money to insure it. We are assuming that they should hold onto this asset and spend an incredible amount of money to insure it. Dean pointed out that there is nothing in this motion that would prohibit them from selling the artwork instead of insuring it. However, as long as they own the artwork, it should be insured.

Hratch Semerjian moved for a vote on Dean’s proposal. **Mark Krikorian** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Anna Seferian then moved to accept the Diocesan Delegates’ report. **Hratch Semerjian** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Audit Committee:

The floor was opened for questions/comments on the Audit Committee report.

Onnik Sivaslian stated that the committee did a good job, but noted that the report for the Book Store doesn’t use the new format and should be more detailed and comprehensive. An updated version of that report was then distributed by Ani Armani.

Artur Sivaslian moved to accept the Audit Committee report. **Mark Krikorian** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Investment Committee:

The floor was opened for questions/comments on the Investment Committee Report.

Hratch Semerjian moved to accept the report and received a second from **Dean Shahinian**. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcement of Election Results:

The results of the election were announced by **Eric Ashbahian** of the Nominating Committee.

The candidates elected to the Parish Council are **Shanhur Bostan, Jack Guiragossian, Svetlana Hovhanissyan, and Catherine Sahakian**. The alternate is **Rosemary Arkoian**.

The candidates elected to the Nominating Committee are **Rebecca Bagdasarian, Zaven Kalayjian, and Mark Krikorian**. The alternate is **Ani Derderian**.

The candidate elected to the Auditing Committee is **Artur Sivaslian**. The alternate is **Ara Stepanyan**.

The candidate elected to the Investment Committee is **Michael Sahakian**. The alternate is **Harout Koseian**.

The candidate elected to the WED Scholarship Committee is **Mark Krikorian**. The alternate is **Manian Missirian**.

Old/New Business:

First New Business:

Dean Shahinian brought forward a proposal from **Zaven Kalayjian**. Shoghig read the proposal.

Whereas we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of the founding of St. Mary, and considering the important contributions of St. Mary's parishioners to the local, national, and international Armenian communities over the years, and with the expectation that an appreciation of past accomplishments will inspire our community to support and contribute to future successes, and understanding that the video screen in the small hall will be used to promote events and provide information to parishioners and visitors, I move that:

1. The Parish Council form a committee of interested volunteers that will develop a silent informational slide show comprising people and events of the past 90 years of St. Mary to be displayed on the video screen in the small hall;
2. The Parish Council solicit volunteers for the committee from a cross section of the St. Mary community, including senior members and youth interested in learning about and documenting our Church's history;
3. The slide show have Armenian and English text, video, and pictures that highlight important people, events, and contributions of the St. Mary parish throughout its 90 year history;
4. The first version of the informational slide show based on the video shown during the 90th Anniversary dinner be prepared for display in time for Easter Sunday of 2023.
5. The slide show be updated periodically with content collected by the committee and approved by the Parish Council.

There was discussion as to whether this proposal should be a motion since the Parish Council has already studied the matter and has committed to forming a committee. They have also identified four individuals to work on this project. It was, therefore, not put forth as a motion, since the spirit of the proposal has already been accepted.

Second New Business:

Artur Sivaslian said that the main hall and small hall both have a few leaks. Some remodeling and redesigning needs to be done in these areas. Basic foundational renovating needs to be studied and started, such as better technology to operate the elevator. He noted that this will probably be a multi-year project. The proposal is to look at the church spaces – including the floors – as well as the back elevator to see what renovations are needed.

Dean Shahinian stated that renovations depend on the long-term goals of the church. He said that this remains an important point to look at. He suggested that a report on these goals is warranted.

Shoghig Sahakian stated that these renovations are a more immediate short-term goal.

Greg Kumkumian asked for a report from the Parish Council to inform the parishioners of the long-term goals for the church.

Third New Business:

Shoghig Sahakian then invited **Sean McClure** to exhibit a presentation about the new direction that the Eastern Diocese is taking to transition parishes from paid membership dues to the idea of stewardship donations. She mentioned that this ties into the idea of long-term goals for the parish.

The Parish Assembly then viewed this presentation. Sean stated that the stewardship system is based on the three legs of Christian stewardship, which are time, talent, and treasure. Each parishioner is asked to give up their time, talent, and treasure freely from their hearts with no minimums fostering a more inclusive environment in the parish. When this new system is put in place, there will be no more solicitation of annual dues. A stewardship pledge would occur monthly through direct deposit or check. The additional privileges that came with paying membership dues will be extended through making an individual or family stewardship pledge. This is something that the Parish Council and Diocesan Assembly have been talking about for the past several years. It is a system that has been tried in other parishes, and we are looking into whether to implement it here in our parish. There are questions about how this would impact our allotment within the Diocesan Council occur as well as other questions. However, this is a change that might be coming up within the next two to five years. This presentation is just to make the assembly aware that this is on the horizon.

Fourth New Business:

Raffi Karahisar asked whether there was a bylaw that designated when the minutes of the Parish Assembly needed to be published. He was hoping for the minutes to be published sooner – in advance of next year’s assembly – so that parishioners would be aware of both what was discussed during the assembly and the agreed-upon actions that need to be taken over the course of the year.

Shoghig mentioned that the Diocese needs to approve the minutes before they are published. She asked whether Raffi was proposing that the draft version of the minutes be disseminated, and he confirmed this is what he would like.

It was agreed that the Secretary of the Day will produce the minutes, send them to Der Hayr and Avedis for review, and then the minutes will be emailed to parishioners. This dissemination will not be for approval (since that is done at the beginning of next year’s assembly).

Fifth New Business:

Anna Seferian asked if we could continue to use a hybrid version of this assembly in the future. She stated that there are members of our community who aren’t able to attend the Parish Assembly and having it available virtually would make for a more inclusive environment.

Rebecca Bagdasarian said that the Diocese needs to give approval for that (this is what had to happen in the past for us to be virtual during the pandemic) since part of the bylaws state that you need to have 50 people or one-quarter of the parish’s membership attend in person. She then stated that there would need to be more people as part of the nominating committee to moderate any proposed virtual sessions since conducting the meeting virtually takes a lot more work.

Jack Guiragossian thinks we should investigate this because virtual meetings are still happening in the Diocese. He said that the benefits of virtual meetings outweigh the costs. He said that an amendment could be passed to allow for this. He then agreed with Becky that the nominating committee should be expanded for this. He thought that once we crossed the bridge with virtual meetings we shouldn’t go back.

Sean McClure proposed that we add this to the stewardship committee to explore how we use this for outreach in preparation for next year’s meeting.

Anna stated that she felt that this was not a Nominating Committee job and that there should just be one person who organizes the technology and runs the hybrid meeting. She felt that the Nominating Committee has enough on their plate.

Jack Guiragossian said that we now have updated IT that would make it easier for us to implement virtual meetings. Anna and Jack also mentioned that Teams or Zoom could then record and transcribe the meeting to assist in producing the minutes.

Mark Krikorian strongly agreed, but noted that the downside, other than the extra work, is that people just might not come to church for the assembly, and we might not get a quorum. It was suggested by several people that if we do not have the meeting during Lent, that we could have drinks and fellowship after the meeting, and this might attract more people to attend the assembly in person.

Greg Kumkumian observed that in years past Parish Assemblies used to take 5 to 6 hours. He shared that he appreciated the shorter duration and the collegiality of our more recent meetings.

He then moved to adjourn the meeting. **Mark Krikorian** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 3:30pm and **Der Hayr** closed the proceedings with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Der Hovsep Karapetyan
Pastor

Beverly Sivaslian
Secretary

Avedis Seferian
Chairman

Clergy Report – 2023

Parish Assembly – February 18, 2024

In reflecting upon the year 2023 at St. Mary Church in Washington, DC, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude for the manifold ways in which God's guidance and glory have been manifest in our parish community. This sentiment is beautifully captured in the words of Isaiah 58:11: "The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."

The loss of Artsakh in 2023 brought with it a deep and shared sorrow, drawing us closer in our faith and reliance on God's strength. In these times of trial, we are comforted and guided by the promise in Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Our parish has engaged in a rich tapestry of activities throughout the year. Regular church functions, alongside new and unique events, have provided opportunities for spiritual growth and community building. Our church organizations have been a source of strength and vibrancy, reflecting the dynamic spirit of our faith community.

As we document our journey over the past year, we see a beautiful interplay of challenges and blessings, all under the loving providence of God. This annual report chronicles not just our activities but the spiritual journey we have embarked on together.

The St. Mary Armenian Church Annual Journal, to be distributed during the Parish Assembly, will offer a detailed account of our year's events and activities. This journal is a testament to our faith journey, the resilience of our community, and the unceasing grace of God that sustains us.

Below is a detailed report of all the activities and events of the year 2023.

SACRAMENTS & SERVICES - 2023		Number
<i>Sacraments and Services continue to be performed. The totals reflect Services performed in 2023.</i>		
Badaraks		65
Ministry Meetings		18
Baptisms/Conformations		26
Engagements		3
Weddings		11
Funerals		14
Requiems (Hokehankists)		160
Home Blessings		18
Visitations		38
Pre-Marital, Baptismal Counseling/Meetings		40
SOCIAL MEDIA/ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION		
Constant Contact: Church's main electronic communication platform. Over 152 electronic communications sent in 2023, including Weekly E-Bulletins, Monthly E-Newsletters, Funerals, and specialevent announcements. We now have 1472 active email addresses in our contacts with an average 50% open rate.		
Facebook: Our Page continues to be updated with events and announcements. It has been followed andliked by over 2,600 people.		
Instagram: Was added this year as one of the tools of the social media to promote St. Mary's events andactivities. So far we have 200 followers.		
YouTube Channel: Our Sunday Badarak and other events on YouTube and get average 95 views.		
SmugMug: www.stmaryaac.smugmug.com This is our Church's main portal for all our event pictures. This year we had a record high view of 125, 814, and contains event photos since 2007.		
Website: www.stmaryaac.org Our website has been updated and now is fully manageable by our church office staff.		

FEASTS & OUTREACH	
<i>Below is the list of spiritual activities and feasts celebrated as the focal point of our community life. Specialempphasis was made to increase opportunities for spiritual education and worship.</i>	
Eve and Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christcelebrated.	January 5
Feast of Nativity and Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ	January 6
St. Sarkis Day Celebration	February 11
Lenten Worship services and Spiritual discussions entitled "The Holy Sacraments of the Church and their meaning"	February/March/April
15th Anniversary of Hrant Dink Assassination was commemorated with aHokehankistprayer for his soul	January 23
Poon Parekedan Commemoration	February 12
Palm Sunday and Holy Week Celebration including: Washing of the FeetService, The Service commemorating the Betrayal and Passion of Our Lord, Holy Friday Service of Crucifixion and Entombment, Easter Eve Badarak, andCelebration of the Feast of Resurrection of Our Lord.	April 2- April 9

A solemn commemoration of April 24 took place at St. Mary Church on Sunday, April 23. The day began with the Holy Badarak, which was followed by a special service at the Katchkar on the Church plaza commemorating the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide who sacrificed their lives for their faith and homeland and concluded with a beautiful commemorative program prepared by St. Mary Shnorhali School.	April 23
Hampartsum/Ascension Day Celebration hosted by St. Mary Women's Guild	May 29

Special Prayer Celebrating the 125 Anniversary of the Armenian Diocese	July 2
The Feast of Transfiguration	July 16
The feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother-of-God was observed at St. Mary. Following the Badarak a special service of the Blessing of Grapes, Madagh took place. Later that afternoon the 3 rd Annual St. Mary Picnic was hosted by St. Mary Parish Council.	August 13
Prayers for Healing and Bible Study	September – December
The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated at St. Mary Armenian Church, with an Antasdan Service immediately following the Divine Liturgy.	September 17
A Prayer for the Republic of Armenia	September 21
Prayer for Artsakh	October 1
Special prayer for the Catholicos was offered at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy to mark the 23 rd anniversary of His Holiness, and to pray for his health and prosperity.	November 8
Third year anniversary of the 44-day war was marked with the commemoration of the mattered soldiers and freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives protecting the homeland during the 2020 Artsakh war.	November 15
Advent by Candlelight: An evening of Music and Generosity at St. Mary's	December 2
Celebration of St. Mary's 91 st Anniversary	December 11

CULTURAL EVENTS, EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES & CHARITYEVENTS

Cultural and educational activities remain an important part of our community life through which we celebrate our rich heritage and history.

Nativity Festive Luncheon hosted by Ararat Avak Society.	January 6
ACYOA Juniors fundraising for International Red Cross	January 30
Ararat Avak Society St. Sarkis Carry-out Luncheon	February 6
A Presentaiton on the Current State of Artsakh	January 22
Poon Paregentan event celebrated by Shnorhali School	February 12
Annual Parish Assembly	February 19
A visit to Wesley Thological Seminary	February 25
ACYOA Juniors Lenten Good Deed	February 26
Networking with DC Yong Armenians	March 5
ACYOA Juniors Lent Lock-in Retreat	March 17
Lenten Good Deeds by Shnorhali School Children	March 26
ACYOA Palm Sunday Banquet	April 2
Mothers Day and Teachers' Appreciation Week	May 14
Visit to Baltimore Armenian School	May 13
ACYOA Juniors End of the Year Party	May 12
Carden Celebration	May 12
Spring 2023 St. Mary Food Festival	May 19-21
Chess Tournament at Shnorhali School	May 28
Book Presentation	May 28
Year End Hantes and Graduation Ceremony at Shnorhali School	June 4
Father's Day Celebration at St. Mary	June 18
Project Kharpert 2022	July 20
A Special Journey to the Museum of the Bible	September 20
St. Mary's 75 th Food and Culture Event	October 6-7
St. Nerses Shnorhali's life and Legacy Celebrated at St. Mary	October 15
A Memorable visit by Garo Paylan	October 29
A Historical Visit of Baroness Cox to St. Mary Armenian Church	November 5
Ararat Avak Society Annual Thanksgiving Branch	November 11
Shnorhali School's Talant Show – Remembering St. Nersess Shnorhali	
The Lay of the Land: Armenian Monasteries in Their Local Landscapes- Presentation at St. Mary Church's by Whitney Kite	December 3
ACYOA Juniors Celebrate the Spirit of Christmas	December 9
St. Mary ACYOA Seniors' Fundraising Success for Artsakh Refugees	December 16
Shnorhali School Christmas Party	December 17
The Blessing of Pomegranates at St. Mary Church	December 31

In 2023, our young parishioners actively engaged in various programs initiated by our Diocese. Their participation in deacon's training, choir and altar servers' workshops, and summer camp was both inspiring and commendable.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed their time, effort, and resources to support our church this year. Your volunteerism and organization of numerous activities and events have been invaluable. A special note of thanks goes to those who responded generously to our fundraising endeavors, including the yughakin, candlelight, and special needs donations.

We are deeply grateful to our Primate, Bishop Mesrop Parsamian, for his ongoing guidance and support. I would also like to express special appreciation to Archbishop Vicken Aykazian for his exceptional leadership and assistance to our Parish and community, particularly in his roles as Ecumenical Director and Legate of the Eastern Diocese. Our sincere thanks to Yn. Anahit Kalayjian for her continued support and guidance in times of need.

Our dedicated Deacons and Altar Servants have been a pillar of strength: Dn. Vartkess Keshishian, Dn. Mark Krikorian, Dn. Jack Guiragossian, Dn. George Guiragossian, Dn. Garegin Vardanyan, Dn. Zaven Kalayjian, and Sub Dn. Simon Kumkumian, Sub Dn. Sevan Topjian, Sub Dn. Edwin Tilimian, Sub Dn. Armen Acik, and Sub. Dn. Armen Chubukian. We are grateful to Dn. Garegin Vardanyan for leading our Shnorhali School Badarak learning Sharagan sessions. A special note of appreciation to our Deacons' Ministry under Dn. Mark Krikorian, our devoted "Mahs Bakers" Lola Pickering, Gulbahar Ozkayan, and Takuhi Ozbenian, our Choir led by Mrs. Edita Kalayjian and Dr. Hratch Semerjian, our Ushers led by Mrs. Anna Seferian, and our Parish Office Administrator Mrs. Anie Armani and Elvina Azaryan. Our thanks also to Mr. Raffi Sahakyan, our building and facilities manager.

I acknowledge with gratitude the Parish Council, our Diocesan Delegates, the Women's Guild, and Gift Store committee members. Our thanks to the Ararat Avak Society, ACYOA Seniors, the WED Educational Fund Scholarship Committee, the Shnorhali School, and the Religious Education staff for their exceptional efforts. A special mention to our ACYOA Juniors and Seniors, and the invaluable support from the Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

As we close this year, let us remember and honor the dedicated members of our community whom we have lost. May their souls rest in peace. I pray that the coming year will be filled with success, peace, and prosperity for our Parish and all our families.

Prayerfully,
Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, Pastor

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

In the past year, the Parish Council (PC) experienced a blend of many blessings and challenges. The spiritual leadership of Der Hovsep and Yn. Jennifer was the driving force behind the PC. We were blessed to have dedicated council members, each contributing unique skills and devoting time to meet the needs of our church and community.

Our focus for the year was to engage the parishioners and cultivate a spiritual environment centered on worship and stewardship. We will continue our efforts during the coming year and organize various events to support this objective. Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners and the hard work put into hosting several events during the year, PC successfully closed the operating budget with a positive balance.

PC held numerous events, invited special guest-speakers and hosted hospitality tables throughout the year. We had a new initiative: street closure, thanks to the efforts of Shahnur Bostan, PC member, who suggested and

managed to get approval 3 times during Food Festivals and the Grape Blessing ceremony. During the Spring Food Festival, a Silent Auction was held. We extend our deep appreciation to Katie Kumkumian for joining PC members Catherine Palandjian-Sahakian and Shoghig Sahakyan for organizing and soliciting gifts for the auction. We are also grateful to Anahit Tevosyan and Ara Stepanyan for conducting sanctuary tours and enlightening the guests about our church's history and culture during our Food Festival.

The return of Annual Picnic took place on the Feast of the Assumption of The Holy Mother of God and the Name Day of our church. A special Grape Blessing ceremony was held outdoors on the side street of the church. Our thanks to Malvina Vartanian for donating beautifully packaged grapes.

Baroness Cox's visit to our Parish was made possible with the extraordinary work of His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aykazian. Serpazan Aykazian has been the beacon of inspiration, hope and shining light in what has been the few despondent years in our homeland and Artsakh. Baroness Cox shared her thoughts and gave the opportunity to our parishioners to converse with her after church services. Armenian Assembly of America offered a lavish luncheon in honor of Baroness Cox. We commend the hard work of the Assembly's leadership and would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to Bryan Ardouny and Mariam Khaloyan. A delightful moment for our members was Garo Paylan's surprise visit. Numerous presentations were organized throughout the year as well.

The church's cultural halls received a facelift, complete with a fresh coat of paint. Our utmost gratitude goes to Emma Hagopian for applying her artistic talents to enhance our halls.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I express our deepest appreciation and gratitude for the service and support provided by every auxiliary church organization and every parishioner. We welcomed new members and are thrilled to continue our journey with our long-standing members. We encourage everyone to reach out and express their desire to serve. There are ample ways each one of us can strengthen our church.

We eagerly anticipate another prosperous year, continuously working together for the betterment of our community.

Respectfully yours,

Shoghig M. Sahakyan
Chair
Parish Council

121ST DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY – HIGHLIGHTS

The 121st Diocesan Assembly was held May 4-7, 2023 in Dallas, TX and was hosted by Sp. Sarkis Church. The Primate Hayr Mesrop (now Bishop Mesrop) presided and Archbishop Vicken Aykazian attended. This was the first in-person assembly after the COVID pandemic. The quorum count was 132 delegates.

At the assembly, St. Mary was represented by Der Hovsep Karapetyan, Shoghig Sahakyan, and Zaven Kalayjian. Due to personal reasons, specifically a family matter and health concerns, delegates Ohannes Sivaslian and Sarin Zenian were unable to participate. Zaven Kalayjian stepped in as a substitute for Erick Ashbahian, representing St. Mary as a delegate. Going forward, it is crucial that we make a deliberate effort to guarantee full representation for St. Mary at future assemblies.

Highlights from the assembly:

Clergy and parish Council Chairs reports both mention declining attendance and difficulty in succession planning for PC and Church elders due to a lack of young people rising and taking charge of parish positions. (Regarding this, a motion was made in New Business - see below).

Diocesan Ministries

Der Hrach Sargsyan is the interim director of ministries.

Sunday School ministries are now in the hands of Yn. Hasmik Ajemian.

Jennifer Morris is handling Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

Vemkar weekly emails offer Sunday School and Youth ministry materials as well as Eastern and Western Armenian instruction.

Dn. Adam Bullock has been appointed as the head of Children's Education/ACYOA Juniors.

Armenian Language Ministry is headed by Fr. Norayr Kazazian

Little Saints is a ministry geared toward children from Baptism to age four. This program helps families connect with each other and develop relationships within the parish community before their children enter Sunday School. Included in this guidebook are twelve lesson plans for monthly Zoom meetings, along with a thematic craft for each lesson.

Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral

Fr. Davit Karamyan has been cutting costs on the internet and electricity and generating more income on Hall Rentals.

Overall Diocesan budget has been more responsible and organized (see Budget section below)

Der Hovsep (St Mary) was elected to the Diocesan Council as one of two clergy members.

Question for Primate:

White Plains: Advancement of Women in Church clergy positions (Deaconess)

Primate to advocate and discuss this issue with other Dioceses and present at the next Assembly.

Diocesan GIFT Plan: Giving in Faith Together

Diocesan program to help ministry and outreach is based on five circles of the cross.

Break-out discussion in groups of 8 people/table, two clergy, 6 lay, one facilitator, and one recorder.

Parishes asked to continue discussions about GIFT and send feedback to the Diocese.

Dues to Stewardship Pilot Program report:

Started 5 ½ years ago

On average, parishes that changed from dues to stewardship had increased donations (a 10% increase was recorded last year) and better time/talent participation.

Faith-based reasons: sharing in God's work, being accountable/responsible, opportunity for ministry

Successful in the Greek Diocese and other Churches, which have shown the benefits of the program.

Caveats:

People brought up the possibility of a hostile take-over by Dashnaktsutyun

The Diocese does not operate this way with its Parishes: requires dues based on membership. This assessment would also be reviewed if the Stewardship program was adopted by the Diocese.

Could dues and Stewardship work together?

According to the presenters and experience of other churches: No

Social and Racial Justice/Good Samaritan Ministry

Still establishing team and presence at the Diocese.

No programs have been created yet.

National Ecclesiastical Assembly/Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly:

No news of when the next NEA will convene.

Representatives will create a library of documents to be accessible by parishes.

Auditing Committee:

Appraisal of Gorky artwork is in progress, according to Melany Dadourian - ready in a matter of months.

Parish Assessments revenue has been declining. The Diocese has not addressed this issue (outside of the Stewardship program)

Passed a balanced budget for the first time in a long time.

Next Diocesan Assembly: 122nd Host Committee: Springfield, MA St. Mark, May 1-5, 2024.

Proposals:

Only one from St. Mary: Insurance of the Gorky art collection bequeathed to the Diocese.

The proposal was discussed, but not voted on.

It was referred to the Diocesan Council to investigate the details of insuring the artwork and “to maintain insurance with a reasonable deductible.”

New Business:

Motion: to approve Phases 1, 2, and 3 of the Cathedral renovation plan as discussed during the assembly by the renovation committee. APPROVED

Motion: to pilot a program for hybrid attendance (in-person and virtual) at Diocesan Assemblies: NOT APPROVED.

Motion: Suggestion for “shadow” delegates from parish youth to attend Diocesan Assemblies: APPROVED.

Comments:

The agenda should be shorter (have a “consent agenda”) and timed to allow for more discussion of important topics.

Submitted by:

Zaven Kalayjian, Ohannes Sivaslian, and Sarine Zenian

BOARD OF STEWARDS YEAR 2023 REPORT

Since 1995 Ushers have assisted in preparing the sanctuary for Sunday services, assisting parishioners and Parish Council members with various tasks before, during, and after Badarak. Ushers:

- welcome visitors and parishioners as they arrive at church and provide any assistance needed before and during services;
- keep adequate number of candles, as well as masks, hand sanitizers, and other essential items at the entrance to the church;
- ensure entrance, candle area and church are left in proper condition following the service;
- keep the signage table clean, organized and updated.

Ushers ensure that new visitors are welcomed in church, encourage them to provide their contact information, answer their questions and provide information about the church and introduce them to other parishioners to ensure establishing connections.

Ushers participated in the services during Easter, Holy Week, New Year’s Eve Service, as well as Armenian Christmas services. Ushers are also present at other events, such as weddings and funerals if requested.

This year ushers worked closely with the Shnorhali School students - on Sundays when students attend Badarak, two students serve as ushers during a part of the service. Ushers on duty guide them and explain responsibilities of the role and its importance. Ushers team members also work closely with Parish Council members and share suggestions and feedback on how to further improve experience of our parishioners during the services. For example, now we always have coloring pages and crayons to give to little children that come to service (if parents so desire).

The focus of this year was safety and wellness. Ushers obtained fire safety blankets and fire extinguishers to have around candle burning areas, got trained on how to operate lift and elevator and ensured that we always have first aid kit available at our station. Arrangements are made to be trained on how to use first aid equipment (such as EKG and AED) donated by our parishioners as well as emergency preparedness training.

We have a wonderful group of volunteers who serve as ushers - Sara Arabian, Garbis Chubukian, Arlin Diratsuyan, Rouzanna Oganissian, Anna Seferian, Patricia Yeghissian (listed alphabetically).

Submitted by:

Anna Seferian

2023 DEACONS' MINISTRY REPORT

The Deacons' ministry – including deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, and other altar servers – continues to assist Der Hayr during the badarak and other services, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Also, preparations are ongoing for the planned ordination of new deacons when the primate is scheduled to visit our parish in December of this year

Respectfully submitted by:

Dn. Mark Krikorian

2023 ST. MARY CHOIR REPORT

2023 brought a return to normalcy. We usually have eleven to thirteen singers on Sundays. Teens from the middle school class of the Shnorhali School volunteer in the choir. Another teen, Maria Stepanyan, attended the St. Nersess Junior Choir Workshop during the summer. The Shnorhali School attends part of the Bardarak.

The choir provided dinner for a Wednesday Lenten devotion.

Two choir members reached their eightieth birthdays and were remembered. There was a beautiful cake on Sunday July 9 at the coffee hour for Theodore Xakellis. There was a grand celebration on Saturday September 23 for Hratch Semerjian organized by our choir director Edita Dolunts-Kalayjian with lavish decorations, a cake provided by Onnik Mutaftian, recollections and music.

We again extend sincere thanks to Edita, to our organist Karine Muradyan and to Mark Bettis who provides access to the Badarak by Zoom. Zaven Kalayjian often helps with the Zoom broadcast as does Nayiree Sarkissian.

Respectfully submitted

Theodore Xakellis

Choir Secretary

2023 ST MARY FOOD FESTIVALS REPORT

The Parish Council sponsored two food festivals in 2023, following the usual pattern established since 2011: The Spring Food Festival was held from May 19th through May 21^h, consisting of three lunches (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), and two dinners (Friday and Saturday).

The Fall Food Festival was held from October 6th through October 8th, consisting of three lunches (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), and two dinners (Friday and Saturday).

The Spring and Fall Festival Financial figures, described in more detail elsewhere in this report, amounted to \$41,900 and \$56,230 respectively, resulting in a total of \$98,219 for the year, an absolute all-time record...

Several factors contributed to our success, as usual: The quality and diversity of the delicious food offered, the excellent publicity efforts (especially the banner across Wisconsin Avenue, the numerous signs, posters and mailings), the income from the vendors, the business sponsorships, and the generous donations from the community.

Let us keep in mind however, none of this would have been possible without the tremendous contributions from the Women's Guild and all our volunteers, veterans and rookies alike, and the general support from the Armenian and the at-large community.

Thank you, one and all, for your support, as the raised funds go long ways in meeting the operational needs of our church.

Respectfully submitted,

Raffi Karahisar,

Treasurer

ACYOA SENIORS 2023 REPORT

Even though this was our first year – and the chapter wasn’t even operational for the first three months of 2023 – it was impressive we were able to hold so many events. Our first event was hosted on Palm Sunday, recognized in the Armenian Apostolic Church as “ACYOA Youth Day.”

In May, a delegation went to Fair Lawn, New Jersey, to participate in both the ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend. This was our chapter’s debut for the Central Council and the rest of the Eastern Diocese and it was a great success. As part of the mission of ACYOA, a significant portion of our chapter’s activities were spent in service. Early in our chapter’s formation, one of our members, Matthew Girardi was diagnosed with cancer. Early on, during the critical months of his illness, the chapter organized a meal train so he wouldn’t need to use the energy to shop and cook for himself and could focus on recovering from treatment. This continued until the tragic events in September of 2023 with the violent seizure of the Armenian land of Artsakh. The chapter diverted its resources into organising relief efforts for the displaced Armeinans. Partnering with We Are AYO, the fundraising platform of the Fund For Armenian Relief (or FAR), St. Mary’s ACYOA chapter raised nearly \$4,000 through an event in December. Chapter members designed the event to appeal to non-Armenians to help raise awareness and sympathy for the Armenian struggle outside of the Armenian community.

In addition to service, the chapter also gave younger members of the Armenian community a reason to be more involved in their faith. Armenians from across Virginia to as far as Baltimore came together for meetings regularly. With greater ACYOA meeting participation came more frequent attendance during Badarak on Sunday. Additionally, since meetings are held on Tuesdays at the Church, more members were able to attend Tuesday’s healing services which always included a discussion on Christ’s healing miracles found in the Gospels.

It was an honor to receive such strong support from the community. The Seferian family opened their home to host a potluck in summer and countless members of the St. Mary community spread the word about the chapter. Additionally, the chapter received many independent financial contributions from encouraging members who wanted to see our success.

The chapter was also given a tour of the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., with the leadership of Father Hovsep. With all of these events, there also was regular fellowship offered for the young Armenians trying to grow in understanding of the beauty of their ancestor’s faith. The chapter is profoundly thankful for the leadership of the Parish Council and Father Hovsep, as well as the general laity who has fully supported the efforts of the chapter to glorify Christ and the mission of His Church.

With a new year comes new vision, new people, and new achievements. I envision regular activities every month engaging Armenian Youth across the greater DMV area. With enough growth over time, there could be three subdivisions of the chapter. One based in Virginia, one in Washington D.C., and one in Maryland. Each one meeting regularly with their own leadership, planning activities, and growing in faith. This would not be to replace the main executive council, but to supplement it. Rather than the only option being at the parish, local Armenian young adults would have the option to engage in ACYOA activities close by. Meeting weekly inaccessible locations, and holding monthly activities as a major chapter in the Eastern Diocese. It is the nature for young people in the D.C. area to not stay around forever. However, some people become exceptions. Prayerfully, all ACYOA members will take to heart the bonds of fellowship and the love for their Church’s community and continue to serve their local parish, be it in D.C. or wherever else God directs their path. ACYOA Sr. should serve as a step to train up the next generation of the Church. The next generation’s deacons, parish council members, priests, and of course, disciples sharing the Gospel with the entire world.

Submitted by
Alex Madajian

ACYOA JUNIORS 2023 REPORT

The ACYOA Juniors teen group had a productive and fun year as we continued on our mission to witness and reach out to the Armenian youth of the greater D.C. community. Here are the events that the Juniors held over the past year:

Jan 28th – Ice Skating - The ACYOA Juniors enjoyed an evening of skating, pizza and fellowship at the Fairfax Ice Arena. After an hour of ice skating the teens gathered in the party room for pizza, cupcakes, and riddles.

Feb 5th – Bake Sale for Artsakh - The ACYOA Juniors held a bake sale to raise money for Artsakh relief. The teens raised \$781 on the day of the event and a generous parishioner pledged to donate another \$1000 under the banner of the bake sale, bringing the total to \$1781! These funds went towards the cost of the goods in the containers sent by the International Red Cross.

Feb 26th – Sack Lunches for Needy - The ACYOA Juniors teen youth group gathered together after badarak on February 6th to assemble 100 sack lunches for needy people in local area. The lunches were distributed via the Small Things Matter non-profit organization. A special thanks to Greg and Katie Kumkumian for organizing the event.

Mar 5th – Meeting - At the March Juniors meeting, the teens gathered in the office where they enjoyed pizza and fellowship. Many thanks to Mania Missirian for attending the meeting and shared a spiritual message with the teens.

Mar 17th – Lenten Lock-in - Friday, March 17th, 15 teens met at church to participate in the annual Juniors Lent Lock-in Retreat. After eating dinner and playing games, the youth were led to a Bible study by Zaven Kalayjian. After a dessert break, Der Hovsep Karapetyan led them in an evening worship service and meditation in the sanctuary. Following several rousing games, including the annual game of hide and seek, the teens settled down and eventually, in the wee hours, went to sleep. Many thanks to Zaven, Der Hovsep, all who participated, and the parents who brought their teens.

Apr 2nd – Youth Sunday Luncheon – On Palm Sunday, the ACYOA Juniors sponsored the annual Youth Sunday luncheon, with support from the newly organized ACYOA Seniors. More than 60 parishioners gathered to share a meal, hear about the ACYOA, listen to some beautiful piano music by Andre Alexandrian, see a Juniors slide show prepared by Hovsep Seferian, and honor the recipient of the ACYOA Award for service to the youth, Yn Anahid Kalayjian. Mariam McClure served as the Mistress of Ceremonies, and the other youth speakers included Alex Madajian, Mariam Karapetyan, and Aren Avetisyan. Dr. Zaven Kalayjian gave a lovely tribute to his mother, and Yn Anahid exhorted us all to love others with our deeds, not just with our words. Many thanks to Der Hovsep, Yn Jennifer, the ACYOA Juniors, the ACYOA Seniors, and Juniors' moms for making this event a success. A special thanks go out to Jerman Hallajian, whose expertise in the kitchen was invaluable.

May 7th – Meeting – At the monthly meeting the students participated in a Bible Study and discussion concerning thankfulness. They wrote thank you cards to parishioners who helped organized or hosted events for the teens during the year.

May 12th – End of Year Party - The teens held a pot luck dinner party, which was graciously hosted by the Kalayjian family, at their home in Vienna. The teens honored the graduating High School seniors by writing messages in graduation cards and participating in the annual know-your-graduate game. The evening was a wonderful time for the teens and their parents to gather and share fellowship before the summer travel season. Congratulations to our ACYOA Juniors graduates: Armen Boghosian, Andre Alexandrian, Aren Avetisyan, Arman Harutyunyan, Sonya Sarkisian, Ruben Karapetyan, Hovsep Seferian, and Anna Shakhbazyan.

Oct 1st – Meeting – The Juniors gathered for pizza at their monthly meeting after badarak. Becky Bagdasarian led the students in a Bible study concerning the importance of building resilience by looking to God and other Christians for support in times of distress.

Oct 29th – Bake Sale for Artsakhsi Relief - The ACYOA Juniors held a bake sale on Sunday, October 29th, after badarak, which brought in \$650 for the Fund For Armenian Relief (FAR). FAR is helping the Armenians who have fled Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), resulting in widespread displacement, suffering, and a dire need for humanitarian aid. Many thanks to the parents, teens, and all the parishioners who made donations!

Nov 5th - Meeting - The ACYOA Juniors youth group met on Sunday, Nov 5th for their monthly meeting where they enjoyed some games, food, and fellowship. They discussed their upcoming event plans and participated in a Bible study led by Becky Bagdasarian. The teens elected new officers for the 2023-24 school year. Congratulations to all the new ACYOA Juniors officers.

Chairperson: Mariam McClure

Vice-Chairperson: Taggie Gomstyan

Secretary: Mariam Karapetyan

Treasurer: Yeva Grigoryan

Membership Advisor: Anahit Harutyunyan

Membership Advisor: Monika Mkrtchyan

Dec 3rd – Meeting – The Juniors gathered for a pizza at their monthly meeting after badarak. Many thanks to Patricia Yeghissian for attending the meeting and shared a spiritual message with the teens.

Dec 9th – Christmas Party - The ACYOA Juniors began their celebration of the Christmas season with a party, graciously hosted by Der Hayr and Yn Jennifer Karapetyan. The evening began with a meaningful reflection by Der Hayr on the true essence of Christmas, followed by a potluck dinner. The teens engaged in a game of Christmas charades and Santa's Revenge. Desserts included s'mores outside by the firepit. In addition to the fun and games the Juniors took time to remember others by bringing new unwrapped toys for the local Toys for Tots drive.

Christmas Ornaments for Artsakhsi Relief - During the Christmas season, the ACYOA Juniors sold Christmas ornaments made by the Shnorhali School recycle club in support of Artsakhtsi refugees. The ornaments were crafted from recycled materials with the assistance of teachers and club organizer teen Mariam McClure. The ornament sale yielded \$360, which was sent to the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) for their Artsakh Relief efforts. Thanks to the many parishioners who made donations, not only helping the refugees but also encouraging the children and youth to reach out and help others.

Other Activities – In addition to serving on the altar and singing in the choir, there are a number of Juniors who serve as teacher aides for the Shnorhali School. The juniors also volunteered at the Spring and Fall food festivals. Several of our students participated in summer programs at St Vartan Camp, and St Nersess Seminary (teen choir training, deacon training, Sr. High Conference)

Thanks go out to parishioners who helped host and organize events this year. We would like to thank Ara Boghosian, who has completed his service as the ACYOA Juniors, parent treasurer. Thanks to the new parent treasurer Avedis Seferian. The ACYOA Juniors looks forward to continuing their programming. To be included on the email list for the Juniors, please email your contact information to stmaryyouthdc@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Bagdasarian

Youth Advisor

ST. MARY ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH THE ARARAT AVAK SOCIETY 2023 REPORT

In 2023, the Ararat Avak Society hosted a series of highly successful luncheons filled with warm hospitality, delicious homemade dishes, and sense of community that created memorable experiences for all. The events reflected the spirit of togetherness and kindness that defines the church community. Along with the luncheons, the Ararat Avak Society continued their mission through donations.

The year started off with the Armenian Christmas luncheon and the Soorp Sarkis Luncheon. Both events served homemade entrees, sides, and desserts. They continued the year with a Father's Day Carry-Out, and in the Fall

they catered for the George Washington University Armenian Law Students' Association International Food & Culture Festival, as well as hosted an Armenian-Style Brunch. Donations were also made to the Armenian Youth Center Golf Fore Kids Golf Tournament for the sixth year in a row, and to Artsakh.

The Ararat Avak Society sincerely appreciates and recognizes those who have supported the Society's mission throughout the year with their generous donations: Malvina Brown, Nadia Carson, Kaya Firas, Anahid Ghazaryan, Doris George, Manoug and Talin Habibian, Kevork and Varti Marashlian, Nairi Pakoyan, Margie Satian, Mr. & Mrs. David Sayan, Karine Sahakian, Dean Shahinian.

Further, the Ararat Avak Society would like to acknowledge and express their gratitude to those who have notably dedicated their time in supporting and volunteering during events: Yn. Jennifer Karapetyan, Vartan Karapetyan, Clara Andonian, Ani Armani, Malvina Brown, Berk Cerkez, Arlin Diratsuyan, Alis Guida, Talin Habibian, Charlie Habibian, Shoghig Sahakyan, Andre Sahakian, Aram Sahakian, Nayiree Sarkissian, Ani Simsek, Tamara Vartanian,

The Ararat Avak Society thrives on the support of its members and St. Mary Armenian Church to continue to serve its senior citizen community with festive luncheons and cultural events. Such a mission could not be possible without the support and guidance of Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan and Yn. Jennifer Karapetyan. It is with their blessings that the Society can grow, serve, and maintain the solidarity that brings its members together. For that, we wish to extend to them our sincerest gratitude.

For the 2024 calendar year, the Ararat Avak Society plans to continue to provide exciting luncheons, host cultural events, and make donations to various Armenian outreach organizations to expand their mission. To do so, the Ararat Avak Society gladly offers volunteer opportunities to support its efforts. Volunteers are welcomed to assist in set-up and clean-up of Luncheons and other fundraising events. Volunteers are also needed to drive our attendees to and from events when needed. Furthermore, the Ararat Avak Society accepts luncheon sponsors throughout the year for those who wish to sponsor a luncheon to honor the memory of their loved ones. Those who wish to volunteer during events, shuttle our participants, sponsor a lunch, and/or donate in support of the Ararat Avak Society's mission are encouraged to contact the committee at 301.219.4041.

The Ararat Avak Society would like to remind everyone that all are welcome to our events. The Society thanks you for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you all in 2024!

Respectfully,

Mrs. Takuhi Hallajian, Mrs. Mari Shafakian, Mrs. Eva Shafakian, Mrs. Margie Satian, Mr. Raffi Sahakyan
Co-Chairpersons

The Ararat Avak Society of St. Mary

SHNORHALI SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

WHO WE ARE

The Shnorhali School is the primary educational organization within St. Mary, aimed at instilling and teaching the love of God, and pride in our Armenian language, national identity, and culture. The goal of the school is to teach the Armenian language and the basics of our culture to help our children and families live authentic Armenian Christian lives and become active members of our community. The school is comprised of two curriculums: one dedicated to Christian Education and the other to Armenian Language and Culture. This uniquely unified program provides school children from K-12 an excellent opportunity to learn about their Armenian Christian heritage.

2023-2024 OVERVIEW:

August 27th marked the beginning of the new academic year and St. Mary Church's Shnorhali School has once again opened its doors to the children in our Armenian community. The school's Principal and staff of the school heralded the beginning of the school year with the celebrations of Day of Knowledge and Education. Following the tradition, the school's Administration and staff commenced the first day of the academic year by testing and evaluating the student's knowledge of the Armenian language, history, and culture.

ACADEMICS:

The school's academic curriculum is created to serve the needs and demands of our community. School administration and teachers have painstakingly developed this specialized curriculum coupled with an individualized approach to gain the best learning experience and results for our children.

For grades K-8, the school offers both Eastern and Western Armenian, in addition to religion and Armenian History/Culture. For grades 9-12 the school offers a religion class and an opportunity to earn community service hours as a volunteer. Extra-curricular options are available and will be announced later.

The school utilizes a new structured Armenian curriculum, where each grade (K-8) covers set materials, which should be mastered before moving to the next level. The admission to the school is done with an Armenian placement test to find out the best educational level for the student. If a student's test placement does not match their public school grade, the principal will discuss options with the parents.

In addition to existing resources and textbooks, each week Armenian teachers develop individual lesson plans, history chapters to include important historical events, and cultural segments, to teach students about famous Armenian artists, composers, poets, heroes, and scientists. The academic year is partitioned into 4 quarters and at the end of each quarter, students are taking end-of-quarter tests. At the end of each quarter, the parents are provided with an academic report card and participate in the end-of-quarter parents' meetings.

The school also offers Patarag Education and a Junior Kindergarten class for 4-year-olds, who are potty trained. Currently, the school has 75 registered students.

Shnorhali School also offers a ***Conversational Armenian*** class, which provides interested students with the opportunity to develop fluency in the Armenian language and to practice verbal communication with a native Armenian speaker. This educational platform will serve all students who are new to the language and wish to learn to converse in Armenian and develop verbal skills.

In addition to the Armenian Language and Art, Culture, and Religion classes, the Shnorhali school offers 30-minute focused education lessons on **History and Music** (alternating each Sunday). With the support and guidance of our Armenian history specialist Mr. Haykaram Nahapetyan a 30-minute history class is held in all grade levels. It is crucial for our students to learn our rich Armenian history. Currently, students are learning about important events in the past, such as our Armenian kings in ancient times, in addition to discussing the establishment of our nation.

Music has played an enormous role in the history of Armenia and in the formation of the national identity, self-awareness, culture, and spiritual values. During Music class, under the leadership of Ms. Armine Khachatryan, the students learn about the wealth of our national folk music, our famous composers and songwriters. This work helps them develop and further enhance their musical taste and knowledge of our culture.

SHNORHALI SCHOOL ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT: Our esteemed graduates return to contribute their valuable insights, assisting in the education of the next generation with fresh ideas and innovative methods. This year, Shnorhali School alumni students proudly present three distinct clubs every Sunday. These engaging clubs, are meticulously designed and will be conducted during lunchtime and after school, not only to reflect the diverse interests of our alumni but also serve as a platform for them to impart fresh insights, innovative teaching methods, and a passion for intellectual growth..

THE RECYCLING CLUB led by our graduate Mariam McClure Simonyan offers fun educational activities about how recycling helps wildlife and specifically focuses on how recycling helps ocean life and benefits forest

conservation. Mariam meets with students once a month during the last 15 minutes of their lunch period to educate students with fun activities

THE ARMENIAN CULTURE AND FINE ART CLUB - Led by Kristina Khrimian, Yeva Grigoryan and Taguhi Gomtsyan, the Armenian Fine Art Club helps students to discover their identity by learning about their heritage through interactive presentations, dances, songs, history, and culture. The club meets after school and helps with event rehearsals as well.

CHESS CLUB - Armenia is one of the strongest chess nations in the world today, and as a small country, it has managed to produce one of the greatest numbers of chess grandmasters per capita in the world. Following our national tradition, Shnorhali School has planned and initiated a **Chess Club** for its students. Under the supervision and guidance of its Head Coaches **Aren** and **Arman Grigoryan** the Chess Club provides instructions to our children, helping them to explore and understand the beauty of chess and to help sharpen young curious minds. Aren and Arman focus on teaching students how to think critically and to learn and discover attack moves, sacrifices, traps, and many other chess tricks.

LITTLE STARS AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM FOR KINDERGARTENERS - Shnorhali School is pleased to introduce the Academic Enrichment Program for Kindergarten students, known as the **Little Stars After-School Program**. This initiative is specifically tailored for kindergarten students, providing them with a structured platform to reinforce the poems, songs, stories, and assignments they have acquired throughout the day. Under the guidance of our esteemed Shnorhali School Educator, Linet Khoranian, the program aims to not only enhance educational retention but also foster an environment of enjoyment through a diverse range of educational programs, games, and activities. We believe this initiative will contribute significantly to the holistic development of our young learners.

Educating our children in religion, Armenian language, Armenian history and culture and the desire to raise and educate a new generation of Armenian students that will help to preserve our heritage and culture, is the primary mission and priority of Shnorhali school.

TIME/PLACE:

The bell schedule was modified this year to accommodate a new family tradition, where the children have an opportunity to actively lead and participate in the special service in the sanctuary.

The bell schedule is as follows:

- **9:30-9:50** Special Morning Padarag Education in the sanctuary
- **10:00-11:00** Armenian Language Class
- **11:00- 12:00** Religion
- **12:00-12:30** Lunch
- **12:30-2:00** Armenian History/Culture and Language
- **2:00 – 3:00** After School Clubs: Armenian Miniature Art; Chess.

Senior Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten classes finish at noon.

ADMINISTRATION

The table below lists our administrative team by position.

Name	Position
Der Hovsep Karapetyan	Pastor

Nunik Nishanian	Shnorhali School Principal
Nicolette Blackwell	Religious Education Coordinator
Vladimir Shekoyan	Treasurer

ARMENIAN TEACHING STAFF

Maintaining the quality and stability of our teaching staff is of utmost importance. For the month of August, the school administration, teachers and interested parents planned numerous virtual and in-person meetings to discuss our students' educational requirements and develop a curriculum to best accommodate our needs. The school administration plans and implements frequent meetings with teachers for professional development, team building and academic planning purposes.

Grade	Teacher
Junior Kindergarten	Azniv Ayvazyan
Senior Kindergarten	Karine Isahakyan
1 st Grade level	Susanna Avakyan
2 nd Grade level	Karine Yenoqyan
3 rd Grade level	Erna Stepanyan
4 th Grade level	Tsovinar Manasyan
5 th Grade level	Sona Avetisyan
6 th Grade level	Anahit Sargsyan
7 th Grade level	Alvard Semirjyan
8 th Grade level	Juleta Movsesyan
Conversational Armenian	Arus Hakobyan
Music Classes	Armine Khachatryan
History Classes	Haykaram Nahapetyan
“Stars” Kindergarten afterschool program	Linet Khoranian

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

(Prepared and submitted by Nicolette Blackwell)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Shnorhali School's religious education program gratefully commemorates another exceptional year, marked by the unwavering dedication and hard work of our devoted teachers. Their steadfast commitment has enabled the children to embark on a journey of profound spiritual growth and fulfillment. The impact of the religious education program resonates across various dimensions of our Parish life, actively engaging and contributing in numerous meaningful ways. This celebration stands as a testament to our collective commitment to nurturing spiritual development within our community. We express our sincere appreciation to all individuals whose tireless

efforts have contributed to the success and enduring influence of the Religious Education program at Shnorhali School.

The Religious Program educators plan to initiate and sponsor a sock drive during Lent, dedicated to supporting homeless men in the DC area. Socks, being one of the most requested clothing items in homeless shelters, will be the focus of our initiative. To raise awareness, students will participate in decorating a bulletin board with paper socks that they have personally colored. All collected socks will be donated to the S.O.M.E non-profit organization (some.org), which actively assists needy individuals in the D.C. metropolitan area.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS

The educators within the Religious Education program consistently serve as guiding forces, facilitating the discovery and embodiment of authentic Christian lives for our children. Rooted in the teachings of Christ and the foundational principles of the Armenian Church, we steadfastly collaborate with the Armenian branch of Shnorhali School. Our joint commitment remains focused on the noble endeavor of educating the children within our community on the profound spiritual treasures inherent in our Church. Furthermore, we diligently guide them in assimilating the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, ensuring a comprehensive and impactful understanding of their Christian faith. This collective effort reflects our resolute dedication to nurturing the spiritual development of the next generation, instilling within them a deep appreciation for the rich heritage of our Church. We use the “We Believe” curriculum from the Diocese which can be accessed at www.vemkar.org.

Grade	Teacher
First Grade	Nicolette Blackwell
Second Grade	Linet Khoranian
Third/Fourth Grade	Nayiree Sarkissian
Fifth/Sixth Grade	Mike Sahakian & Greg Kumkumian
Seventh/Eighth Grade	Becky Baghdadsarian
High School	Zaven Kalayjian
Substitute Teachers	Yn. Jennifer Karapetyan, Yervand Khoranian, Heghine Derderian, Beverly Sivaslian, Mania Minassirian, Bob George, Patricia Yeghissian, Sarah Arabian

Padarag Education Coordinators and Educators

Rev. Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan

Dn. Garegin Vardanyan

Respectfully submitted,
Nunik Nishanian, Shnorhali School Principal

WED FUND SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE 2023 REPORT

The Willian Ervant Docter (WED) Education Fund was established at St. Mary Armenian Church in 1998 thanks to the generosity of the late parishioner William Docter. Over the years, the Fund has provided financial support to qualified Armenian Americans pursuing studies or training in the US or Canada. Since its inception, the fund has disbursed approximately \$1,077,500 to 516 worthy candidates out of a total of 944 applicants. Individual grants range from \$500 to \$5,000.

Each year, the total amount of scholarship moneys available is based on a percentage (usually 4.5%) of the total value of the WED assets, which are held under the management of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF). Of the total dividend amount, 20% is kept by St. Mary for administration of the application process. In 2023, the amount disbursed for scholarships was \$40,500.

For this scholarship cycle, the WED Education Scholarship Committee met on July 17, 2023 to review applications and select awardees. Twenty five (25) applications were considered, and eighteen (18) scholarships were given. Scholarships awardees were selected based on high academic promise, financial need, and involvement in the Armenian community.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Of the awards given<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Three (13) were for \$2,000◦ One (1) was for \$2,500◦ Four (4) were for \$3,000• Of the applicants:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Eleven (11) were graduate students◦ Fourteen (14) were undergraduates | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Of the awardees<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Ten (10) were graduate students and eight (8) were undergraduates◦ Fields of study included: Medicine, Marriage Counseling, Cybersecurity, Pre-Law, Music (violin), Osteopathology, and Economics. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

This year, the Scholarship Committee consisted of Tamar Sivaslian, Becky Bagdasarian, Eric Ashbahian, Mark Krikorian, and Zaven Kalayjian. The scholarship applications review was conducted via an on-line video conference.

The committee requested a Repose of the Soul (Hokehankist) service for Mr. William E. Docter on October 29, 2023.

The Committee was ably assisted by the WED Office Manager and St. Mary Secretaries, Ani Armani and Elvina Azaryan, and the St. Mary Treasurer, Mr. Jack Guiragossian.

A copy of the agreement between the St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church and the Trustees of the WED Education Fund and a copy of the Trust is available by request for any parishioner.

Respectfully submitted,
Dn. Zaven Kalayjian, Chairman

2023 WOMEN'S GUILD ACTIVITY REPORT

Our Women's Guild Executive Committee in 2023 consisted of Yn. Jennifer Karapetian (Chairlady), Ilda Bolat (Vice Chairlady), Janet Arabian (Treasurer), Roxanne Paul (Secretary) and Siran Demirji (Advisor).

This past year was a busy one for the St. Mary Women's Guild. We started and ended the year on high notes with special cultural/spiritual activities that were enjoyed by us and other members of our extended church community.

In February, we drove to nearby Wesley Theological Seminary to view member Cathy Kapikian's beautiful art interpretation of Da Vinci's Last Supper in the refectory (dining area) of the seminary. Cathy gave us an inspiring talk of how she created the large multi-colored panels while we enjoyed coffee and snacks provided by members. On March 1, WG members brought the dinner for one of our Lenten Lectures and then on the 12th, prepared the

Mid-Lenten Luncheon after church for the whole community. On March 18th, we had a brunch prepared by the Executive Committee and planned our workshops for the Spring Food Festival.

On April 2 and 9, we had the Palm Sunday and Easter bake sales after church. Then, in late April and through most of May, we held workshops on most Saturdays to prepare for the Spring Food Festival, held May 19-21.

In June, we had a couple of fun events. First, we had a luncheon at Yard House restaurant in Gaithersburg. A week later, we were invited by the Soorp Khatch Ladies Guild to join them to learn cupcake decorating. That was certainly a fun and delicious time of fellowship between our two women's organizations!

Starting in late August and up until our Fall Food Festival, we again held many workshops, especially on Saturdays, to prepare delicious Armenian delicacies. It was very heart-warming how many church members from other organizations joined us in these workshops! Many hands made for lighter workloads for all. The Food Festival was held October 6-8.

The Sunday before Thanksgiving, we held our Thanksgiving Bake Sale after church. We appreciate the support of the community during this and the Palm Sunday/Easter bake sales.

On Saturday, December 7, we held a beautiful Advent by Candlelight evening with inspiring speakers, excellent musical entertainment and delicious food. It was a memorable evening for all who attended.

In late December, we gave an \$8000 check, earned by the Women's Guild from our various activities and dues, to St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church.

Once again, we thank Yn. Jennifer for her excellent leadership of our Guild.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Nersesian Paul, WG Secretary

ST. MARY'S GIFT SHOP REPORT 2023

St. Mary's Gift Shop (GS) committee was blessed with numerous dedicated volunteers who supported its mission. The committee members were: Raffi Sahakyan, Aline Guiragossian, Takuhi Hallajian, Malvina Brown, Ani Armani and Shoghig Sahakyan. The GS was open every Sunday after church services and during all events held by various auxiliary organizations of the church.

The combined activities GS committee took part in:

- Parish Council - Biannual Food Festivals, St. Mary Day (Soorp Advadzadzin) 1st Annual Picnic, Church Anniversary Luncheon, Hospitality Table during special feast days and events
- Garden Reception in support of 90th Anniversary Endowment Fund
- Ararat Avak Society - St. Sarkis celebration, and Father's Day Lamb Shank Carry-Out
- ACYOA Sr. - Fund raising for Artsakh

The GS committee is indebted to the leadership of Der Hovsep and Yn. Jennifer for their continued support. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the collective efforts of all volunteers. We would like to acknowledge those whose generosity, hard work and service were instrumental throughout the year. Specifically, we appreciate Malvina Brown for making the White Elephant a corner where festival attendees found unique treasures. In addition, we thank Clara Andonian, Anna Seferian, Eva Daryan, Nayiree Sarkissian, Roxanne Kumkumian-Schweitzer, Davit Givargiz, Mark Bettis and Nelson Garces for their enthusiasm, welcoming spirit and promotion of GS items to festival attendees. A special Arstakh Fund Raiser took place during the Fall festival where the GS committee participated in the efforts and collected donations that were sent to FAR-AYO.

Moreover, our deepest gratitude is extended to Edward Aslanyan and his crew for supplying the food and drinks for the Garden Reception as well as St. Mary Day picnic.

The GS committee strives to bring Armenian goods, delicacies and artifacts to our community and parishioners. It is due their support the year ended financially strong to benefit our beloved church.

We look forward to what 2024 has in store for us.

Respectfully submitted: Raffi Sahakyan, Treasurer

AUDITING COMMITTEE REPORT FOR ST. MARY ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 2022

Memorandum to: St. Mary Armenian Church

Parish Council

Treasurer – Jack Guiragossian

From: Gregory Manougian

(one of three serving on the Audit Committee for CY2023 and includes George Guiragossian and Artur Sivaslian)

Date: 27 January 2024

Subject: Audit of Selected Accounts

a) ACEF

b) ACEP (New Year Eve)

c) Operating Account

d) Restricted Account

e) Bazaar

Overall Impression

Although advance preparation for auditing should include meeting with respective treasurers well ahead of the actual audit period. I did not do so but fortunately I was assigned accounts managed by Treasurers Jack Guiragossian and Raffi Karahisar and we have worked together previously. As in prior years, the PC treasurer also communicated with other organizations of the church to ensure their reports were ready for audit in advance of the next parish assembly, including time for auditors to review the record keeping, get answers to any questions before the report was completed, and time for the church secretary to publish the booklet.

Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF)

As the complex mechanics of the invested funds are done by the Diocese's Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF) and its investment team, there were limited additions to the principle in 2023 by St. Mary Armenian Church donors. The distributions to beneficiaries were reported as the highest in the history of the ACEF with St. Mary Armenian Church receiving its distribution of \$80K for its funds.

The treasurer's documents accurately reflect the changes during CY2023, through correspondence, distribution and balance of the individual funds, and those designated as Restricted Funds.

The ACEF accounting appears complete, accurate and free from material misstatement.

New Year's Eve Party Committee (ACEP)

Based on the provided records including bank statements, check drafts, invoices/bills, receipts check and electronic transactions, the ACEP financial records are satisfactory for their accuracy and completeness.

Note - It was observed that significant costs associated with the New Years Eve event, i.e. hotel and equipment rentals, were paid by a personal credit card and reimbursed by check from ACEP. It was not clear if a credit card could be made available by the church or assigned to ACEP as an entity, ostensibly a non-profit organization. Perhaps this can be addressed in advance of the next ACEP sponsored event and have charges and payments directly from the account vice as reimbursable.

The ACEP accounting appears complete, accurate and free from material misstatement.

St. Mary Operating Account

The operating account represents very dynamic part of the church's financials with significant cash flow on a weekly basis along with spikes during the year's religious holidays, key events, and anniversaries.

Record keeping was meticulous and consistent throughout the year with reconciliation each month for both cleared and uncleared transactions.

Based on the provided documentation, the Operating Fund accounting appears complete, accurate, and free from material misstatement.

St. Mary Restricted Account

The Restricted account serves as the primary repository for memorial contributions and contributions directed to such sub-accounts as maintenance, youth programs, and the Working Capital Fund (WCF). Much is held by the church for the specific causes, sent to ACEF or purchase of investment.

Based on the provided documentation, the Restricted Fund accounting appears complete, accurate, and free from material misstatement.

Bazaar Account

As in years past, the church conducted both Spring and Fall food festivals and they continue to be managed with applied lessons learned and constantly improved financial processing. These events require numerous ad hoc expenses for supplies and services, along with standard expenses for rentals, trash disposal, advertising, postage, and janitorial services.

The bazaar treasurer once again provided highly commendable and clear record keeping, despite the numerous forms of incoming receipts, electronic payments, and cash transactions handed to him.

Based on the provided documentation, including cross-checks with bank statements and questioning the treasurer, the bazaar accounting appears complete, accurate, and free from material misstatements.

Very respectfully submitted,
Gregory Manougian
26 September 2024