

# ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

## PARISH REPORTS - 2024

February 16, 2025



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St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church

4125 Fessenden St. NW, Washington, DC 20016 202.363.1923 / [www.stmaryaac.org](http://www.stmaryaac.org)

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

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February 1, 2025

## INVITATION LETTER TO THE PARISH ASSEMBLY – 2025

Dear Dues Paying Member,

Our Annual Parish Assembly this year will be held on Sunday, February 16, 2025, at 12:00 pm, with an alternate date of February 23, 2025, 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 16, 2025

### 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 2024 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 - 2024 Expenses
11. Pastor's MOU
12. Review and Adoption of the 2025 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 16, 2025:

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](mailto: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 2025. All dues must have been paid by December 31<sup>st</sup> in order to be eligible to vote.

5. If you have delinquent dues for 2024, to restore your voting membership privilege, you must submit your dues both for the years 2023 and 2024. 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  
Lucy Murad

[msk@cis.org](mailto:msk@cis.org) – (202) 288-4560  
[iamzaven@gmail.com](mailto:iamzaven@gmail.com) – (240) 595-8182  
[lucyomurad@yahoo.com](mailto:lucyomurad@yahoo.com) – (703) 517-6249

**St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church**  
**2025 Standing Committee List**

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

Shahnur Bostan (2024)\* -- elected 2023  
Jack Guiragossian (2024)\* -- elected 2021, 2023  
Svetlana Hovhanissyan (2024)\* -- elected 2023  
Sean McClure (2025)\* -- elected 2022, 2024  
Rick Nishanian (2025) -- elected 2020, 2022, 2024  
Catherine Sahakian (2024)\* -- elected 2021, 2023  
Artur Sivaslian (2025)\* -- elected 2024  
Onnik Sivaslian (2025)\* -- elected 2022, 2024  
Shoghig Sahakian (2025) -- elected 2020, 2022, 2024

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

Zaven Kalayjian (2023) -- elected 2023, 2024  
Mark Krikorian (2023) -- elected 2023, 2024  
Lucy Murad (2024)\* -- elected 2024

**Auditing Committee (3 year term)**

Greg Manougian (2024)\*  
Vladimir Shekoyan (2025)  
Anna Seferian (2026)

**Diocesan Delegates (4 year term)**

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

**Investment Committee (3 year term)**

David Sayian (2026)  
Sarine Zenian (2024)\*  
Michael Sahakian (2025)

**WED Scholarship Committee (5 year term)**

Zaven Kalayjian (2024)\*  
Anna Seferian (2025)  
Eric Ashbahian (2026)  
Mark Krikorian (2027)  
Bagrat Bayburtian (2028)

**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**  
**2025 Preliminary DRAFT Ballot**

**Chairperson of the Day (circle 1 name)**

Hratch Semerjian  
XXX

**Secretary of the Day (circle 1 name)**

Beverly Sivaslian  
XXX

**Parish Council** (circle 4 names)

Shahnur Bostan  
Garbis Chubukian  
Jack Guiragossian  
Sveta Hovhanissian  
Alex Madajian  
XXX

**Diocesan Delegates (4 year term, limit 3 consecutive terms)** (circle 3 names)

Zaven Kalayjian  
Mark Krikorian  
Alex Madajian  
Onnik Sivaslian  
Patrisha Yeghissian  
Sarine Zenian

**Nominating Committee** (circle 3 names)

Becky Bagdasarian  
Arda Hebert  
Talar Keshishian  
Lucy Murad  
XXX

**Auditing Committee** (circle 1 name)

Robert George  
Armine Khachatryan

**Investment Committee** (circle 1 name)

Vardan Vardanian  
Sarine Zenian

**WED Scholarship Committee** (circle 1 name)

Dale Turza  
Ivan Zhivkov

## Candidates Biographies

- **Alex Madajian:** Shortly after joining the St. Mary community, Madajian participated as a member of the choir. He also brought back the ACYOA Sr. chapter to our parish in his first year of attendance. After leading ACYOA for a year, he decided to travel to Armenia for 6 months through the Birthright program, volunteering and attending Badarak services in over a dozen parishes. Shortly after his return, he began serving on the altar in training to become an Acolyte, with the long-term goal of becoming a Deacon. Professionally, he has worked as a lobbyist for a nonprofit and a Congressional staffer for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In his spare time, he studies the Armenian language, enjoys reading over 60 books per year, and encouraging friends to grow in their Christian faith.
- **Vardan Vardanyan:** I have been with this church since at least 1991, with a few absences due to job related moves. I am a retired Special Agent/Criminal Investigator, currently working on various business projects and consulting on topics related to my professional background. My education includes a BS degree in Business Administration and a MA in International Security Affairs.
- **Ivan Zhivkov:** his wife Vardine and daughter Elina, are members of St. Mary's Church and community since June 2023. Prior, Ivan's family were active members of Soorp Filipos Church in Tashkent. Ivan works as a Consular Officer in the US Department of State, and is excited to take a more active role in the community.
- **Armine Khachatryan:** born in Armenia, graduate of Yerevan State Economics University and Conservatory after Komitas. Started work at the WB in 2002 and since 2007 in IMF in 2007 where she is currently Senior Economist working on wide range of policy and research topics.
- **Arda Herbert:** moved from Connecticut to DC few years ago for career purposes. She is settled in Manassas VA. Got her masters from Connecticut state University. Arda is an active member at the Women's Guild ...she likes to volunteer at workshops and at the kitchen rice pilaf cooking time.

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, Washington DC February 18, 2024

### Opening:

The Parish Assembly started at 12:31 PM. **Der Hovsep Karapetyan** opened the meeting with a prayer.

### Verification of Quorum:

The Nominating Committee verified the presence of 62 dues-paying members; therefore, a quorum was confirmed.

### Election of Chairman and Secretary of the Day:

**Mark Krikorian** presented the ballot for the officers of the day. Nominations from the floor were sought. No new nominations were put forth for the chairman or the secretary of the day.

The ballots were distributed for voting.

**Mark Krikorian** announced the winners. The chairperson of the day was **Avedis Seferian**, and the secretary of the day was **Beverly Sivaslian**.

**Avedis Seferian** addressed the assembly. He spoke to the Assembly about the idea of peace and how it is only possible when communities gather together, debate, and engage in respectful discourse. He expressed how grateful he was for our participation in this process.

### Adoption of Agenda:



**Raffi Karahisar** asked if we could have printed copies of the booklet sent to parishioners' homes since electronic copies are not conducive to taking notes. It was decided that the booklet would continue to be sent out electronically, but parishioners could either request that a hard copy be sent to them or pick one up from church on the Sunday before the next Parish Assembly.

**Zaven Kalayjian** pointed out that Old Business was not included in the agenda, but it was decided that Old Business would be discussed before New Business.

**Jack Bournazian** made a motion to adopt the agenda, as it was presented. The motion was seconded by **Zaven Kalayjian** and passed unanimously.

#### **Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 Parish Assembly:**

Comments or corrections to the 2023 Parish Assembly Minutes were requested.

**Sean McClure** moved to adopt the minutes. **Aline Guiragossian** seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

#### **Nominating Committee Report and Floor Nominations:**

**Mark Krikorian** reviewed the ballot.

The names of the nine candidates running for Parish Council were read. Additional nominations were sought. **Onnik Sivaslian** was nominated from the floor, and he accepted the nomination. His name was added to the ballot. Five seats will be voted for. Each of the Parish Council candidates who were present at the meeting were invited to speak in support of their nomination.

The five candidates for the Nominating Committee were read. Additional nominations were sought, but 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, but 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, but 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 of the fact that the parish had a number of difficulties, but also a number of triumphs. He gave thanks to God for all of our blessings. He shared that we celebrated 65 Badarak, had 26 baptisms, 11 weddings, and 160 requiem services. As a community, we have a social media presence and reach 2,600 people via our Facebook page and YouTube channel. He expressed his appreciation for all of the tireless efforts of our church organizations and our Parish Council. He acknowledged that this year was a difficult one with the loss of Artsakh, but that we should seek solace in the Lord and in the connection with our community. He then asked for questions. **Hratch Semerjian** asked if there was any plan for the Primate to visit our parish. **Der Hayr** shared that the Primate should be visiting us in December for the Anniversary of the church. At that time, he will also ordain our altar servers to the rank of deacon.

#### **Parish Council Report:**

**Shoghig Sahakyan** shared that the Parish Council led many activities but noted that volunteers are needed to assist with church activities. She also encouraged people to donate money or ask for donations to the church in honor of birthdays and anniversaries. She thanked the Parish Council members for their hard work and encouraged the new generation to get involved.

#### **Vote on the Ballot:**

The Nominating Committee distributed the ballots. **Avedis** thanked the Nominating Committee (**Zaven Kalayjian**, **Becky Bagdasarian**, and **Mark Krikorian**) for their work. They then retired to count the votes. **Raffi Karahisar** was asked to stand in as a member of the Auditing Committee for the verification of the ballots.

#### **Operating Fund Report:**

**Jack Guiragossian** presented the Operating Fund Report and stated that it was a challenging year. Unbudgeted funds

were spent to repair HVAC issues. The speakers and the lighting in the sanctuary were updated. Additionally, last year was a 53-week year, so payroll was a little over the normal budget due to that. Jack mentioned that it was a record year for the two food festival profits. There were no questions regarding the Operating Fund Report. **Mark Krikorian** moved to accept the Operating Fund Report. The motion was seconded by **Hratch Semerjian** and passed unanimously.

#### **Pastor's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):**

**Jack Guiragossian** shared that during the last Parish Assembly, Sean McClure made a motion to simplify the MOU, and he worked with Jack to make that happen this year. **Hratch Semerjian** pointed out that the line items don't add up properly with the new way of presenting the MOU. He suggested that all additional stipend compensation should be placed in the "Additional Parish Stipend" line item so that the numbers will add up to the correct total in the future. Jack said that he would be able to do that for future documents.

**Alex Madajian** asked about the information shared under the Vacation section. It states that the ACYOA will pay for lodging and expenses for the clergy to attend the ACYOA Assembly. He was not aware of this policy and wanted it to be removed from this report since he would rather use ACYOA funds to allow their own members to attend the conference. Jack explained that this has been included for many years, and the ACYOA has never been called upon to pay for these expenses. However, this is the reason that each of the parish organizations are asked to contribute to the operating budget, and this is where reimbursement for clergy travel comes from. Alex brought up a motion to strike the last sentence from the last paragraph in subsection B of the MOU. Discussion followed, debating the need to include this sentence. The following motion was put forth: The Parish shall provide allowances for lodging and expenses for attendance at Parish Council-approved events. **Hratch Semerjian** moved to accept the motion, and **Aline Guiragossian** seconded it. There was one opposition vote, and the motion passed. It was then noted that Subsection A, Item 5 should read that the Car Allowance for 2024 (instead of 2025) is based on 20,000 miles annually.

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

#### **2024 Budget**

The floor was opened for questions/comments on the 2024 Budget. **Jack Guiragossian** explained that the budget is higher than in the past (above the usual \$300,000 range) due mainly to line item 3 in the Expense Account Category. This is higher than normal because we are budgeting for the repainting of the sanctuary over the upcoming year if everything goes well. **Dean Shahinian** asked for some clarification about what would be repainted in the sanctuary. Jack clarified that it would just be a refurbishment. **Hratch Semerjian** asked if we would be getting the traditional Armenian writing added over the altar. Der Hayr stated that we would like to get cut-out letters for that rather than have it painted. He said that this would be something that they would discuss in a future Parish Council meeting. Jack said that since we will have to rent scaffolding to complete the painting of the sanctuary, it would be a good time to add the writing.

**Catherine Kapikian** asked for further clarification about how the interest from the endowment fund would be used. Jack reiterated the plan that the interest (once the fund is built up to the \$6M mark) would then take the pressure off the food festivals to pay the operating costs of the church. This way, food festivals can be about sharing our traditions instead of being a money-making endeavor. At this point, the endowment fund is at \$190,000, so we need to continue to build that up. Jack also shared that collectively, we received 13% interest on our investments this year. **Lucy Murad** asked for an explanation about Long Term Assets, and Jack provided this explanation. There was a short discussion about the 63-acre plot of land in New Jersey that was gifted to the church, and Jack shared that we are renting it out to hunters as this was seen as the best use of that forested land. A stipulation of the gift of this land is that we must hold onto it for two years. The rental to the hunters allows the Parish Council to look at all their options over that two-year period and decide what is best.

**Hratch Semerjian** made a motion to accept the 2024 Budget. It was seconded by **Harry Derderian** and passed unanimously.

#### **Other Treasury Reports (Restricted Funds and ACEF):**

**Zaven Kalayjian** asked for clarification on the Youth Education Fund. Jack explained that \$13,200 gets funneled through us by the Raymond Davis Templar Foundation to help support nine low-income student's Christian education in Jerusalem. He also explained where the other money went for that line item. The question was also asked about who the contact was for the Saghmosavank's sister parish, and Der Hayr shared that the distribution is usually made through the Aragatsodn Diocese.

**Sarine Zenian** moved to approve the Other Treasury Reports. **Rick Nishanian** seconded, and the reports were unanimously approved. Avedis thanked Jack for all of his work on these reports.

#### **Organizational Reports:**

**Nadya Chubukian** raised the question of why the Gift Shop Income Report was put together in a way where various organizational events were listed under income and also under expenses. **Shoghig Sahakian** explained that this is the way the accounting has been done since these organizations utilize the Gift Store Square account to collect money. It is then disbursed to the various organizations afterward. Nadya then asked if there could be a better accounting of the things that were sold in the gift shop. For instance, she would like to have it broken down into different categories such as Sunday Sales, Sales During the Spring Food Festival, Sales During a Women's Guild Event, etc. Sarine Zenian then asked for a breakdown of what was sold in the bookstore and how much the parish made from the sale of each category type (books, gifts, alcohol). **Jack Guiragossian** weighed in that this could not be accomplished with the current volunteer man-hours. He stated that we could set things up to account for the sale of different items but that it would take a while to set it up at the beginning and that many people stop by the gift shop to donate things to be sold and keeping up with that inventory would take time as well. **Sean McClure** shared that while it isn't legally required to have the inventory and sales tracking, it is something that we should do. He also stated that it is very important to separate the income/budget statements from any inventory statements. **Onnik Sivaslian** stated that it is important to have an accurate inventory in case we need to ask for insurance money for the items. Shoghig stated that they have receipts from the purchase of the items to be sold, and that should be enough for the insurance company. Additionally, she said that the income and expense totals should be enough information to report on the sales in the gift store. A lively discussion then ensued about the need to keep better records of what is sold in the bookstore as well as whether we, as a parish, should be selling hard alcohol in our gift shop. It was suggested that this is a question that should be studied by a task force and should be voted on by the members at a future Parish Assembly. **Artur Sivaslian** shared that checks and balances should be applied to every church organization. This was one of the things that the Auditing Committee commented on this year when reviewing the financial reports. There is a need to apply more standard financial practices to the church organizations – not just in the gift store – that would apply to everybody. **Sean** shared that he is working on creating financial best-practices to apply to non-profit organizations that everyone in our church organizations will be trained to use. **Avedis** emphasized that all people involved in these organizations are volunteers, and we appreciate their efforts. However, we should apply those best-practices nevertheless. **Sarine** asked whether the Diocese has particular rules as to whether hard liquor can be sold in church gift shops and also suggested that the church as a whole should be able to discuss and vote on whether hard liquor (as opposed to wine and beer) should be sold in our gift shop. Der Hayr said that he is not aware of any guidelines on what can or can't be sold in a church gift store. **Mark Krikorian** supported the fact that it is a major policy decision as to whether to sell spirits, and it is an issue that should be voted on – either through a future Parish Assembly or through the Parish Council. **Zaven Kalayjian** supported Mark's assertion but strongly urged that the Parish Assembly should be the forum to decide on an issue such as this. **Avedis** suggested that the newly elected Parish Council should take up the question first and decide whether to bring it to a vote in front of next year's Parish Assembly. **Hratch Semerjian** made a motion that the new Parish Council should look into 1) the legality of allowing the gift shop to sell liquor and 2) the religious/moral appropriateness of selling liquor in a church gift shop and make a recommendation to the next Parish Assembly. **Avedis** tabled this discussion until we reach New Business. **Becky Bagdasarian** shared that Nadya Sivaslian's name was left off of the 2023 School Report. She wanted it acknowledged that Nadya taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade religion during the 2022-2023 school year.

**Avedis** then asked for a motion to accept the Organizational Reports, which was made by **Hratch Semerjian** and seconded by **Sarine Zenian**. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Diocesan Delegates' Report:**

**Zaven Kalayjian** came forward to report back about two issues that were brought forth to the Diocese from our last Parish Assembly. He said that there were some presentations about the restructuring of the Christian Education department. **Yeretzgn Jennifer** had expressed concerns last year about succession planning and the output of Christian religious education materials. They said that they are getting things in order in that department. There is now an online Youth and Family Ministry page with materials for various ages. **Dean Shahinian** asked if there would be a full-time person in charge of Christian Religious Education. Zaven said that he would ask. He also said that he would be meeting with both the Parish Council and arrange to have a meeting for the whole parish a month before the Diocesan Assembly. Zaven also spoke about the proposal our Parish Assembly put forth last year regarding insuring the Gorky Art Collection. Since 1991, the insurance question has been up in the air. While there was a lot of discussion

around this issue, the Diocesan Assembly kicked the question back to the Diocesan Council to look into the insurability and the amount to insure the art. Our delegates will bring up this question again at the next meeting to ask for follow-up on this issue.

**Alex Madajian** asked for further information on the Social and Racial Justice/Good Samaritan Ministry. Zaven stated that very little information was shared about this program. He will follow up at the next meeting by asking for additional information. Additional information was also sought about the Growing in Faith Initiative. Der Hayr believes that this is a new initiative, so there is not a lot of information to share about it at this point. **Hratch Semerjian** asked why Zaven attended the Diocesan Assembly when he was not elected to the position. It was shared that **Eric Ashbahian** resigned due to family obligations, and Zaven was the elected alternate who replaced him. **Sean McClure** shared that he spoke last year about the new Stewardship program, and he asked if there was any update to that plan. Zaven shared that a packet was supposed to be shared with parishes, but that has not yet been produced. Der Hayr shared that other parishes that used a stewardship plan had issues with how to implement the new plan and how to count the voting membership of the parish fairly. The Stewardship Committee on the Diocesan level is trying to work through and resolve all of the various issues so that they can give us concrete direction. **Avedis** noted that Der Hayr was voted to the Diocesan Council this year. **Sarine Zenian** shared a little more information about the Social and Racial Justice/Good Samaritan Ministry, which included the names of the two individuals who are in charge of this program, but it is just in its beginning stages.

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

#### **Audit Committee:**

**Artur Sivaslian** stated that the treasurer reports from the various organizations all were acceptable, with some suggestions for improvements. As discussed earlier, Sean will be developing more structured checks and balances for all organizations in the parish.

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

#### **Investment Committee:**

**Mike Sahakian** shared the progress of the investment funds. The portfolio earned about a 13% return since it was a strong year for stocks. He encouraged future donations to the endowment fund.

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

#### **Announcement of Election Results:**

The results of the election were announced by **Mark Krikorian** of the Nominating Committee. 57 ballots were counted during the election.

The candidates elected to the Parish Council are **Sean McClure**, **Rick Nishanian**, **Artur Sivaslian**, **Onnik Sivaslian**, and **Harout Tchekrekjdjian**. The alternate is **Shoghig Sahakian**.

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

The candidate elected to the Auditing Committee is **Anna Seferian**. The alternate is **Vladimir Shekoyan**. However, Vladimir will be on the committee since the current member, **Artur Sivaslian**, will have to resign in order to take his place on the Parish Council.

The candidate elected to the Investment Committee is **David Sayian**. The alternate is **John Assadourian**.

The candidate elected to the WED Scholarship Committee is **Bagrat Bayburtian**. The alternate is **Dale Turza**.

#### **Old/New Business:**

##### **First New Business:**

**Hratch Semerjian** made a motion earlier that the new Parish Council should look into 1) the legality of allowing the gift shop to sell alcohol/hard liquor and 2) the religious/moral appropriateness of selling alcohol/hard liquor in a church gift shop within 60 days of them assuming their new offices and make a recommendation to the next Parish Assembly. A quorum call was made and it was determined that there were not enough members present to be able to vote on and pass motions. Therefore, anything from this point on in the proceedings would just be instructional recommendations.

to the Parish Council rather than motions that were voted on. **Mark Krikorian** seconded the motion (recommendation). The recommendation passed with five objections.

### **First Old Business:**

**Zaven Kalayjian** asked the Parish Council to update the Assembly on the status of the TV monitor in the small hallway. He explained that last year, a proposal was put forward that did not pass, but the Parish Council would commit to forming a committee to work on getting the TV monitor up and running. **Shoghig Sahakian** shared that a new monitor was purchased since the previous one was older and did not have the proper capabilities that we needed (it was determined that a SMART TV was needed). That new monitor was installed, but it now needs to be set up. She mentioned that **Anna Seferian** volunteered to be on the committee, so the next step would be for her to get committee members together and set up the new monitor. She also shared that anything that will be shown on the monitor needs to be cleared by Der Hayr or the presiding priest. The idea would be to have the bulletin and any announcements shown on the monitor. Zaven shared that despite him bringing forth that proposal last year, he was not asked to be on the committee nor consulted about any part of the process. Based on this, he was concerned about how the church was operating and questioned whether or not we were actively encouraging others to share their time and talents for the glory and edification of the Church. At this point, individuals were identified as possible additions to this committee: Anna Seferian, Becky Bagdasarian, Greg Kumkumian, Greg Manoukian, with the addition of Zaven Kalayjian. Der Hayr brought up that the TV monitor should be used to display photos and videos of events in the church. It could also be used to broadcast the Badarak to the people who stay in the small hall during services.

### **Second New Business:**

**Nadya Chubukian** asked about the status of church security. **Avedis** stated that there was some recent training with regard to health and safety. He reminded the Assembly about the contribution from parishioners last year of an AED device and several first aid kits. **Anna Seferian** said that they are looking into emergency training for the parish – not only on things like exit locations, but also what to do in the event of exigencies like an active shooter. She shared that there should be some training events this year, and she will be able to report on those initiatives next year.

**Dean Shahinian** then moved to adjourn the meeting. **Zaven Kalayjian** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:02 PM, and Der Hayr thanked Avedis Seferian for his leadership as Chairman of the Assembly. He also thanked Shoghig Sahakian for her leadership as the Parish Council Chairlady over the past several years. He also thanked John Assadourian, who is stepping down this year from the Parish Council. He then congratulated everyone who was elected this session. He ended the proceedings with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Der Hovsep Karapetyan  
Pastor

Beverly Sivaslian  
Secretary

Avedis Seferian  
Chairman

## **Clergy Report – 2024 Parish Assembly – February 16, 2025**

It is with a heart full of gratitude and joy that I present to you the Annual Parish Report for St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church. As we reflect on the past year, we are reminded of the unwavering faith, tireless dedication, and vibrant spirit that define our beloved parish community. Together, we have walked a journey of faith, fellowship, and cultural celebration, embracing both the cherished traditions of our Armenian heritage and the transformative power of God's grace.

The year 2024 holds a particularly special place in my heart, as we celebrated the 20th anniversary of my ordination into the Holy Priesthood on December 7th. This milestone, marked by a beautiful and heartfelt celebration with you, my beloved parish family, was a moment to reflect on two decades of ministry, growth,

and shared faith. I remain profoundly grateful for your support, prayers, and love as we continue to serve God together.

Throughout 2024, our church has been a sanctuary of worship, a center of learning, and a beacon of hope and service. From the sacred celebrations of our liturgical calendar to the lively gatherings of our community events, every moment has been a testament to the strength of our shared commitment to faith and love. We have prayed together, learned together, and grown together, ensuring that our church remains a spiritual home for all who enter its doors.

In these pages, you will find a record of the many milestones, events, and initiatives that have shaped our parish life over the past year. Each one is a reflection of your devotion, generosity, and active participation. Whether it was through leading our youth, enriching our worship, supporting those in need, or celebrating our heritage, every contribution has been a vital part of our shared journey.

As we look to the future, let us continue to embrace the call to “Be My Witnesses,” living as a testament to Christ’s love and grace in our lives. May the lessons and blessings of the past year inspire us to deepen our faith, expand our outreach, and strengthen the bonds that unite us as a parish family.

The following report is a detailed account of the milestones, initiatives, and events that have shaped our parish life in 2024.

### 1. Sacraments & Services – 2024

As the pastor of St. Mary Armenian Church, I remained committed to performing sacraments and services that support the spiritual and pastoral needs of our community. Throughout 2024, I celebrated **54 Badaraks**, fostering communal worship. Additionally, I participated in and conducted **42 ministry meetings**, ensuring the effective leadership and organization of our parish life. The sacramental life of our church was active, with **19 baptisms and confirmations, 3 engagements, and 7 weddings**. In times of sorrow, I provided pastoral care through **13 funerals and 131 requiem (Hokehankist) services**, offering prayers for the departed and comfort to their loved ones. Beyond the church walls, my pastoral outreach included **18 home blessings and 38 visitations**, providing spiritual support and guidance to our parishioners in their homes. Additionally, I conducted **34 pre-marital and baptismal counseling** sessions, preparing individuals and families for these sacred sacraments.

### 2. Celebrations, Liturgical Life and Worship

- **New Year’s Eve Celebration:** Participated in the joyous welcome of 2024 with the Armenian community at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel.
- **Feast of Nativity and Theophany (January 5-6):** Celebrated these significant feasts with Scriptural readings by Shnorhali School students, emphasizing the revelation and baptism of Christ.
- **Holy Week and Easter Sunday (March 24-31):** Led services for Palm Sunday, the Feast of the Resurrection, and the installation of ACYOA members. Delivered sermons and blessings for parishioners and children.
- **Lenten Services and Reflections (February-March):** Conducted six themed Lenten Services focused on "Be My Witnesses," incorporating prayers, meditations, and discussions.
- **Feast of Assumption of the Holy Mother of God (August 18):** Led the Divine Liturgy and Blessing of the Grapes, marking the name day of St. Mary Church.
- **Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 15):** Celebrated this major feast, including the Antastan Service, blessing the four corners of the world.
- **Blessing of Muron and Rededication of Holy Etchmiadzin (September – October) –** Journeyed to Armenia to participate in the historic events of Muron Blessings and Rededication of Holy Etchmiadzin
- **Feast of the Discovery of the Holy Cross (October 27):** Presided over services and led the Badarak, emphasizing the spiritual legacy of Queen Helena.

- **Traveled to NY to participate in the ordination Service of Dr. Jesse Arlen.**
- **Traveled to High Point for the dedication of the new Holy Archangel Church.**

### **3. Youth Engagement and Shnorhali School Programs**

- **Bible Readings by Shnorhali Students:** Guided students in exploring the spiritual meaning of Nativity and Theophany and Easter.
- **Participation in Badarak:** Facilitated student involvement in the Holy Communion service.
- **Palm Sunday Celebration (March 24):** Supported Shnorhali students in commemorating Jesus's entry into Jerusalem.
- **Acolyte Training Program (Ongoing):** Introduced new training for students, teaching the sacred traditions of the Armenian Church.
- **Kindergarten Activities (Various Dates):** Organized creative learning experiences fostering teamwork and faith in young learners.
- **Annual Talent Show (November 10):** Honored Saint Nerses Shnorhali by showcasing student performances celebrating Armenian heritage.
- **End-of-Year Recital and Graduation (June):** Celebrated the achievements of Shnorhali students in a year-end event featuring academic highlights and cultural performances.
- **Mother's Day and Father's Day Events (May 12, June 16):** Highlighted the importance of parenthood through student reflections during Badarak.
- **Lead our Shnorhali School Badarak Education (Ongoing) -** Every Sunday from 9:30 to 10am led Badarak Education Class, teaching students the reaches of our church and sharagans.
- **Camp Vartan (June) –** Provided transportation for children attending Camp Vartan and volunteered for one week, assisting with activities, teaching classes, and supporting campers.

### **4. ACYOA Juniors and Seniors Activities**

- **Bowling Fellowship (February 10):** Facilitated a social event for Juniors to build camaraderie.
- **Lenten Good Deed (March 10):** Supervised the preparation of sack lunches for the needy, partnering with Small Things Matter.
- **Annual Lock-In Retreat (April 19):** Led spiritual discussions and worship sessions for youth during the overnight event.
- **Sports Practices and Competitions (September-October):** Organized and coached weekly volleyball practices in preparation for the ACYOA Sports Weekend.
- **Toiletries Drive (November):** Supported Juniors in collecting supplies for local teens.
- **Christmas Party (December):** Joined ACYOA members in a festive celebration of faith and fellowship.

### **5. Community Building and Cultural Preservation**

- **Xash Meal (February 3):** Attended the record-breaking annual meal, fostering fellowship.
- **St. Sarkis Day Luncheon (February 10):** Participated in a joyous gathering of over 100 members.
- **Food Festivals (May, October):** Supported the Spring and Fall Food Festivals, showcasing Armenian cuisine and culture to thousands of attendees.
- **Festival Workshop:** Encouraged community participation in preparing traditional food and desserts.
- **Jingalov Hats Workshop and Sale (March 16-17):** Promoted cultural heritage through culinary traditions.
- **Christmas Market and Bake Sale (December 14):** Supported the community in celebrating the season with joy and tradition.

### **6. Charity and Outreach**

- **Artsakh Refugee Support (January):** Encouraged ACYOA Juniors to sell ornaments to raise funds for refugees.
- **Toy Collection for Cleft Lip/Palate Operations (April):** Coordinated the Lenten Good Deed project, collecting over 100 toys.

- **Prayer for Artsakh Captives (November 10):** Led a heartfelt service in solidarity with Armenian captives.
- **Fundraising for Ayo Program (November 17):** Supported efforts to raise over \$2,300 for the Fund for Armenian Relief.

### **7. Education and Intellectual Enrichment**

- **Lenten Retreat for ACYOA Members (March 9):** Organized discussions on Jesus's "I AM" statements, deepening understanding of His teachings.
- **Lectures and Presentations:**
  - Hosted Julia Hintlian on "Parallel Faiths and Fates" (October 27).
  - Welcomed Professor Zara Pogossian for a lecture on women in medieval Armenia (March 21).
  - Organized a presentation on the "Odes of Saint Nersess the Graceful" by Dr. Jesse Arlen (December 15).
  - Delivered a Lecture on the Armenian presence in the Holy Land to the graduate students of Virginia Tech University.
  - Participated in the Clergy Continual Education Mid Atlantic Region Workshop
  - Led Weekly Bible Studies, Healing Services, and Scriptural Meditations on Tuesdays

### **8. Leadership and Representation**

- **Diocesan Assembly (May 2-4):** Represented St. Mary Church and engaged in workshops, roundtable discussions, and elections.
- **Virtual Meeting with the Primate (October):** Discussed strategies for growth and engagement with parish leaders.
- **Diocesan Council Meetings** – Participated in Diocesan Council Meetings on a monthly basis
- **Was Elected on the Steering Committee of the Christian Churches Together Ecumenical organization**

### **9. Milestones and Recognitions**

- **Visit of Bishop Mesrop and Ordination Ceremony (December 8):** Witnessed the ordination of deacons and sub-deacons, strengthening the church's ministerial foundation.
- **20th Anniversary of my Ordination and St. Mary's 92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary:** Celebrated two decades of service as a priest alongside the parish.

### **Awards and Achievements:**

- **Received the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fellowship.**

In 2024, our parishioners, especially our youth, actively engaged in various enriching programs within our Diocese. Their participation in deacon's training, choir workshops, altar server initiatives, and summer camp programs has been 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 dedication to organizing numerous activities and events has been invaluable to our community. A special note of thanks goes to those who generously supported our fundraising efforts, including the yughakin, candlelight, and special needs donations, which have enabled us to maintain and grow our ministry.

We are deeply grateful to our Primate, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, for his ongoing guidance and support. I also express my deepest appreciation to Archbishop Vicken Aykazian for his exceptional leadership, wisdom, and contributions to our Parish and community, especially in his roles as Ecumenical Director and Legate of the Eastern Diocese. My heartfelt thanks to Yn. Anahit Kalayjian for her steadfast support and guidance during times of need. My deepest appreciation to my family and Yn. Jennifer, for their support and love.

Our dedicated Deacons and Altar Servants have continued to be pillars of strength within our church



community. We extend our profound gratitude to Dn. Vartkess Keshishian, Dn. Mark Krikorian, Dn. Jack Guiragossian, Dn. George Guiragossian, Dn. Garegin Vardanyan, Dn. Zaven Kalayjian, Dn. Edwin Tilimian, Sub Dn. Simon Kumkumian, Sub Dn. Sevan Topjian, Sub Dn. Armen Acik, and Sub. Dn. Armen Chubukian, Sub Dn. Andranik Seropian, Sub Dn. Hovsep Seferian, Sub. Dn. Andre Alexandrian, Sub Dn. Ruben Karapetyan, Sub Dn. Sevak Stepanian, and Sub Dn. Aleks Nazarian. Special recognition is due to Dn. Garegin Vardanyan for leading the Shnorhali School Badarak learning Sharagan sessions and to the Deacons' Ministry, guided by Dn. Mark Krikorian.

We also deeply appreciate the devotion of our "Mahs Bakers," as well as our talented Choir led by Mrs. Edita Kalayjian and Dr. Hratch Semerjian; and Narek Bell Chore under Maria Stepanyan. We thank our Ushers, led by Mrs. Anna Seferian, and our Parish Office staff, Mrs. Anie Armani, Mrs. Elvina Azaryan and Mrs. Anna Grigoryan. A special thanks to Mr. Raffi Sahakyan for his diligent management of our building and facilities.

I acknowledge with gratitude the tireless efforts of our Parish Council, Diocesan Delegates, Women's Guild, Gift Store committee, and the Religious Education staff. Special recognition goes to the Shnorhali School for its exceptional programs, the Ararat Avak Society, ACYOA Seniors and Juniors, the Investment Committee, and the invaluable support from the Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

As we reflect on this past year, we remember and honor the dedicated members of our community whom we have lost. Their contributions to our Parish will never be forgotten, and we pray for their souls to rest in peace.

As we close the year 2024, I pray that the coming year will bring peace, prosperity, and continued spiritual growth for our Parish and all our families. May God guide us as we continue to serve Him with faith, love, and unity.

Prayerfully,

Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, Pastor

### **Parish Council Report**

The past year was a period of growth, reflection and renewal. We worked together to strengthen our community and continue serving our parish. We are grateful for the continued dedication of the Parish Council (PC) members, the Auxiliary Organizations and Committees as well as the volunteers who have made this a year of prosperity.

In 2024 PC held a variety of events and hosted several fellowship hours. Key events were spring and fall Food & Cultural festivals, Annual Name Day of the church and Grape Blessing picnic. The year ended with the celebration of the church's 92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary honoring Der Hovsep for his 20<sup>th</sup> Ordination Anniversary. Christmas Market was an added event, which held in December featuring various vendors. A musical evening showcased Vahan Artsruni Duo with Nelly Manukyan. Guest speakers included Vasken Yacoubian, AGBU President of the Yerevan Office and Board Member Vasken provided an update on AGBU sponsored programs in Armenia and the Middle East. A screening of a documentary, The Cost of Water, was presented by the producers Vahe Ohanyan and Tehmine Yenokyan. Research and Book presentations held by Julia Hintlian and Jesse Arlen were also among the activities coordinated by the PC. A new initiative was introduced, Family Worship Day, inviting families with young children to worship the last Sunday of every month.

Our focus for the year was to engage the parishioners and cultivate a service centered environment. We will continue our efforts during the coming year and organize events to support this objective. Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners and the hard work of our volunteers throughout the year, PC successfully closed the operating budget with a positive balance.

While we have made significant progress, there are always challenges to face. However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth, and we look forward to working together as a parish family to address them.

As we move into the next year, we have several key goals and priorities set, which are fostering a culture of stewardship and service within our parish community and expanding our youth and young families' participation.

We are excited for the future and confident that under Der Hovsep's extraordinary leadership, we will continue to grow in faith, love, and service.

On behalf of the Parish Council, thank you for your commitment to our shared mission. May we continue to be a light in our community and serve as instruments of God's peace and love.

Respectfully yours,  
Shoghig M. Sahakyan  
Chair  
Parish Council

The ad hoc television committee was organized to increase the utilization of the small hall television. New content to acquaint newcomers with the church and its ministries was created and displayed during the church food festivals. Videos were also made to promote the food festivals. New software was utilized to schedule and play content, with an easy interface for adding weekly events. The next steps are to train office staff in the new software and create more specialized content. Thanks to the committee members Becky Bagdasarian, Zaven Kalayjian, Greg Kumkumian, Anna Seferian, and Kevork Tashjian.

### **2024 Diocesan Delegates Report**

The 122nd Diocesan Assembly of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) was on May 2 - 4, 2024, in Springfield, Massachusetts hosted by St. Mark Armenian Church. The theme of the assembly was "Be My Witnesses" (Acts 1:8). It was attended by delegates Onnik Sivaslian and Zaven Kalayjian. Sadly, Sarine Zenian could not attend due to being ill with Covid.

The Primate mentioned three important concerns for the Diocese:

- (a) The declining attendance and declining numbers overall for the Diocese and parishes. This is a crucial issue for our church but not a unique problem for the Armenian church alone. It hurts to see our sanctuaries empty.
- (b) The lack of volunteers and the difficulty of finding people to take up leadership positions in the church; and
- (c) Youth participation in the church. The need to build a strategy of making the church a relevant part of life for the younger generation and for their parents and families.

Eastern diocese has the following Ministries

- ARMENIAN HERITAGE LANGUAGE PROGRAM Deacon Hovhannes Khosdeghian.  
It provides resources to parishes along with consultations with schools and visitations to parishes. The Khrimian Lyceum Program will be relaunched.
- ACYOA JRS. AND ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION Dn. Adam Bullock spoke about the ACYOA Jrs. and Adult Christian Education.  
Mission Trip (15), Lenten Retreats (70) , General Assembly & Sports Weekend (268 packages), Armenia Service Program (6), National Fall Retreat (37)
- DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES Lerna Lacinian has been hired as the Camp ministries coordinator/administrator under the supervision of Jennifer Morris.
  - Hye Camp (116 Campers, 17 CITs and 40 staff 14 Parishes)
  - St. Vartan Camp ( 174 Campers, 39 CITs and 43 staff 34 Parishes)

- SACRED MUSIC MINISTRY Rev. Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan (St James – Evanston, IL)  
The Lectionary of the Armenian Church (training), Online School of Sharagans, Publications
- MULTI-MEDIA Mano Baghjajian (Diocese Multimedia Specialist)
- CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRY COUNCIL Yeretzgin Hasmik Ajamian (St. Sarkis – Dallas, TX)  
Raising Saints Guides for Students and Children, We Believe Sunday School Curriculum, Prayer Book for Young People, Vemkar Topical Series, Coloring and activity sheets, Two nursery rhyme style prayers
- DEVELOPMENT Laurie Onanian (Director of Development)
- COMMUNICATIONS Chris Zakian (Director of Communications, St. Mary – Livingston, NJ)
- ZOHRAB INFORMATION CENTER Dr. Jesse Arlen

Lily E. Jelalian Summer Internship Program, Public Events (20), Maintenance & Development of Library

## **UPDATE FROM THE LEGATE AND ECUMENICAL DIRECTOR**

Archbishop Aykazian (Diocesan Legate) thanked the Primate and the Diocesan Council for inviting young observers to the Assembly. He hopes that next year they will be voting members at the Assembly.

Vicken Srpazan is the Vice Moderator of the World Council of Churches. In that capacity he travels around the world and sees the suffering of human beings throughout the world. Vicken Srpazan along with other religious leaders work to assist refugees and improve the conditions in which they are suffering. Armenians may know of the problems with Artsakh but people around the world need to be informed and made aware of the daily tragedy and strife that our people are attempting to survive. Vicken Srpazan commented that there are Christian groups around the world that are supporting Armenia in words and deeds. Vicken Srpazan told the Assembly that Christians are the most persecuted people today.

## **Diocesan Council Actions and Highlights**

The Diocesan Council (DC) held 15 meetings in 2023 (5 in person, 10 by Zoom) as well as several Executive (Divan) meetings through the year.

The DC embarked on 2 major programs during 2023 including the 125th Anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Diocese in 1898 and the Cathedral renovation project.

The Primate appointed clergy for the Liturgical Committee who will review our sacraments and provide various translations that will be helpful to bring and keep our faithful in church. The Sacred Music Council will also be part of this committee.

DC started the task of inclusion in the Gorky Foundation's Catalogue Raisonné of the artist's work for the Diocese's 55 pieces of Gorky art collection as well as an update of the fair market value by Aileen Agopian.

Diocesan Fine arts appraisal was completed. The last appraisal was ~40 years ago.

Diocesan Camps sessions were held in person during summer of 2023.

The DC formed various working committees including GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) Implementation Committee, GIFT Evaluation Committee, Development/Fundraising Committee, Treasurer's Committee, Parish Council Chair Network Committee, Public Relations and Social Media Committee, Young Adults Committee.

The DC approved updated guidelines for minimum honorarium for visiting Primates, bishops, clergy, homilists and deacons.

As recognition for the valuable contribution of the clergy of the Diocese, the Clergy Retirement Program continued to be rolled out with 2023 as the first-year matching contributions were made. All parishes were participating except for 3.

The Primate's GIFT program (Growing in Faith Together) continued to be utilized to implement programs within the Diocese and parishes that include Worship, Education, Witness, Service and Common Life.

Treasurer proposed an algorithm to correct differences in clergy benefits based on regional CPI (Consumer Price Index). Will be presented to the Clergy Compensation Committee.

DC unanimously approved the Primate's request to amend bylaws to add a position on the parish council called "Ministries Liaison" to emphasize the importance of ministries work in the function of a PC. The bylaw revision has been submitted for consideration by the Diocesan Assembly. As a preliminary step, early in 2023, our Primate sent a letter to clergy and parish councils asking them to select such a person for this year.

Kavookjian Hall renovations including new lighting and sound system were accomplished by December 2023, expected to significantly increase hall rental income.

Total Diocese 2024 Budget is \$4,808,700 increased \$60,750 than last.

### **CONSTRUCTION UPDATE**

Richard Papalian reported that Phase I of the renovations should be substantially completed by the end of July. Phase I is the roof and dome work which for a variety of reasons was amended to include the façade restoration. They are approximately \$500,000.00 under budget. Phase I and Phase II were approved. The façade restoration, architectural lighting as well as other smaller items, with a cost of \$2.5 million, was added as Phase I(b) and will be completed by the end of November 2024.

- Phase I: Roof and dome repairs \$5,000,000
- Phase II: Mechanical improvements and completion of exterior façade restoration \$8,000,000
- Phase 3: Interior code, program and damage improvements \$11,000,000
- Phase 4: Plaza replacement and sidewalk repairs \$4,000,000

To complete the project is \$28 million dollars. The Fundraising campaign was launched last year with an anticipated renovation completion date in 2028.

### **2023 Dues to Stewardship Pilot Program Report**

2023 marked the end of the 4th year of the Dues to Stewardship Pilot Program. Dues to Stewardship program is not a replacement of membership but an addition.

For those parishes who are participating, the results continue to be good overall. Two new parishes, St. John The Baptist in Greenfield, WI and Holy Martyrs in Bayside, NY, joined the Pilot Program in 2023. One parish, St. Sarkis in Charlotte, NC, left the program while they deal with some internal issues.

- St. George, Hartford, CT
- St. Gregory of Narek, Cleveland, OH
- St. James, Richmond, VA
- Sts. Joachim & Anne, Palos Heights, IL
- St. John, Southfield, MI
- St. Sarkis, Charlotte, NC
- Sts. Vartanantz, Chelmsford, MA

Total dues paid members from all parishes (excluding Mission Parishes) has dropped lowest number (6,864 Adults and 216 Juniors) from previous years.

### **Update on matters related to the collection of the works of Arshile Gorky owned by the Diocese on deposit at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal**

Insurance: DC have obtained insurance coverage for the collection that offers coverage at all times: when the works are in storage, on exhibit or in transit. This coverage went into effect in March 2024 and will be reviewed and renewed annually. The amount of coverage is \$17.15 Million.

Market Value Appraisal: An up-to-date appraisal of the collection is underway, being conducted pro bono by an art market expert who is a member of the Diocesan community.

### **PROPOSALS**

- Proposal - the change in terminology from Chairman to Chairperson. Discussion erupted in the assembly about the linguistic choice with comments about gender neutrality.  
A motion to table the proposal until next year

- Proposal - to Allow Hybrid Participation in Diocesan Assemblies by St Mesrob – Racine WI.  
The vote on the proposal was not carried.

### **Some other matters relevant to St. Mary**

1. Our Parish asked about Sunday School resources – the Christian Education Ministry is releasing Sunday School materials. The Ministry also recommended Vem as a good resource for Christian Education.
  - a) The Delegation will give feedback from St. Mary's experience with these resources having used them for the Sunday School Curriculum.
2. Social Justice Committee: No update again this year due to business of Emily Terjimanian. No plans of what it will do in the future.
3. Regarding the Theme of "Witnessing for the Armenian Church": After the break-out discussions I considered two challenges facing our Church. I think any outreach or witnessing has to address these two challenges:
  - a) The First: Do we have a convincing case for Christianity among the other worldviews and philosophies in the world, such as scientism, materialism, modernism, critical theory, etc. Our Church must have a coherent *apologia* for all these ideologies.
  - b) The Second: Even if we convince someone to be a Christian, do we have a good case for them to be an *Armenian Christian*? Other Churches might be closer, have more resources, worship in English. The Armenian Church must have a good reason why Armenians should come to the Armenian Church.

123rd 2025 Diocesan Assembly will be hosted by Hye Pointe Armenian Church. Assembly will take place at the Hilton in Woburn, MA

The 124th Diocesan Assembly in 2026 as St. John of Greenfield, WI.

Respectfully Submitted by

Zaven Kalayjian, Ohannes Sivaslian, Sarine Zenian

### **Board Of Stewards Year Report - 2024**

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
- maintain the first aid kit and other necessities ready

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. 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 continued to be on safety and wellness. We now have fire safety blankets and fire extinguishers under the candle altar area to use in an fire emergency. The ushers are always ready to operate lift and elevator as needed to assist parishioners to access the sanctuary. We have fully stocked first aid kit available at our station as well as water and tissues.

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

Submitted by:  
Anna Seferian

### **2024 - Deacons' Ministry Report**

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word for “servant” or “waiter”, and we serve God and our church at the altar during Sunday Badarak and at other occasional services. In addition, 2024 was an eventful year, as we prepared for ordinations of several of our members. During a series of classes, both in-person and online, the Very Rev. Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian, the Diocesan Instructor of Sacred Music, led the candidates for ordination through the requirements for chanting and singing in the Badarak and the night and morning services. Separately, Der Hovsep instructed the boys in other requirements, such as the use of incense and assisting the celebrant with his vestments.

In the middle of the Badarak on Sunday, December 8, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan ordained Subdeacon Edwin Tilimian to the rank of deacon (sargavak), raising his stole from his left arm up to his left shoulder. In his new role, Deacon Edwin read the Gospel and presented the gifts (Veraperoom) to the celebrant during the Badarak. At the conclusion of the Badarak, the Primate ordained six acolytes to the rank of subdeacon (gisasargavak): Andre Alexandrian, Ruben Karapetyan, Aleksandr Nazaryan, Hovsep Seferian, Andrew “Ando” Seropian, and Sevak Stepanyan.

We congratulate these servants of God on their new roles.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Dn. Mark Krikorian

### **2024 - Saint Mary Choir Report**

Our choir numbers have grown with several new members joining; of ten it is quite crowded in the loft. Shnorhali School volunteers swell the number. Garegin Vardanyan often gives a powerful rendition of “Amen Hayr Soorp” during the distribution of the Eucharist.

The choir provided dinner for a Wednesday Lenten devotion. We extend our gratitude to Edita Dolunts-Kalayjian for directing us and spurring us to do our best. Hratch Semerjian, our past choir director, leads us in her absence and Garegin is our backup. Karine Muradyan is our very devoted organist. Mark Bettis and Kevork Tashjian provide access to the Bardarak by Zoom and give page numbers to the congregation. Zaven Kalayjian is our backup for Zoom and has led us on occasion.

Respectfully submitted  
Theodore Xakellis  
Choir Secretary

### **2024 - St. Mary Narek Bell Choir**

The Narek Bell Choir of St. Mary's Armenian Church was founded in the year 2000 under the guidance of Fr. Vertanes Kalayjian and Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan and was reactivated in April 2024 under the guidance of Fr.

Hovsep Karapetyan. The Choir is made up of ten motivated young musicians: Jackie Guiragossian, Bedros Guiragossian, Mason Williams, Davit Barseghyan, Edmund McClure-Simonyan, Vartan Karapetyan, Maria Baloyan, Nare Melik-Stepanyan, Aleks Nazaryan, and Sevak Stepanyan. The director of the choir is Maria Stepanyan.

Since the rebirth of the choir in April, the group has held weekly rehearsals after Badarak and has performed at two of St. Mary's Food Festivals, at the Anniversary of Soorp Khatch Armenian Church, and during the visit of the Primate, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan to St. Mary's. Furthermore, Maria Stepanyan applied for a grant from the Armenian Youth Center and was granted \$2,000 to use towards maintaining and growing the choir. These funds have been used to purchase performance gloves for the group and will be used to replace two handbells that are not functioning properly.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maria Stepanyan, Director

### **2024 - St. Mary Food Festivals Report**

The Parish Council sponsored two food festivals in 2024, following the usual pattern established since 2011:

- 1) The Spring Food Festival was held from May 17<sup>th</sup> through May 19<sup>th</sup>, consisting of three lunches (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), and two dinners (Friday and Saturday);
- 2) The Fall Food Festival was held from October 4<sup>th</sup> through October 6<sup>th</sup>, consisting of three lunches (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), and two dinners (Friday and Saturday) although preparations and sales commenced somewhat earlier in both cases, due to the "pre-Bazaar on-line orders" that have become the norm since the start of the pandemic.

**The net income for the Spring and Fall Festivals, described in more detail elsewhere in this report, amounted to \$52,197 and \$47,632 respectively, for a total of \$99,830 for the year, just short of 100K, an all-time record.**

Let us keep in mind that none of this would have been possible without the financial and physical support from our immediate and at-large community, the business sponsorships, the income from the vendors, the tremendous contributions from the Women's Guild, and the relentless labor of love from all our volunteers. Thank you again for your support, as the raised funds go long ways in meeting the operational needs of our church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Raffi Karahisar,  
Treasurer

### **2024 - ACYOA Seniors Report**

ACYOA Seniors embarked on their second official year stronger and more dynamic than ever. The group continued to convene, albeit strategically less frequently, to foster more effective meeting agendas and encourage greater participation. As a result, attendance became more diverse, with at least three new members regularly joining meetings and events.

A key focus of the chapter this year was maintaining a strong presence at both church-led events and community initiatives. ACYOA actively participated in and volunteered at several Seeds of Hope events, helping to raise funds for wounded soldiers from the most recent Artsakh war. Additionally, members contributed to various fundraisers organized by community partners. The chapter also convened for multiple St. Mary lectures and fellowship presentations as well as during the important deacon ordination events, helping to create the beautiful anniversary booklet. Furthermore, ACYOA's involvement in the annual food festival remained a highlight of the year, reinforcing its commitment to community engagement.

This year, ACYOA collaborated with the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Armenian Assembly of America, inviting their interns to join us for service at St. Mary. An informal networking and meet-

and-greet event was also organized, providing chapter members with an opportunity to connect with other young professionals in the D.C. area—an initiative that proved to be a great success.

Additionally, ACYOA continued its close partnership with AYO, raising over \$2,000 after church service to support key AYO projects including buying Christmas gifts for young Artsakh refugees. We look forward to strengthening this collaboration in the years ahead.

Looking forward, the chapter remains focused on recruiting new members and ensuring a seamless transition of executive leadership for 2025. Both the current and former chairpersons have been in regular discussions this past month to share best practices and support the incoming leadership team in building upon the progress made over the past two years.

ACYOA Senior elections are scheduled for February 9, 2025, and we are excited for what the upcoming year will bring!

Submitted by: Maxine Turner

## **2024 - ACYOA Juniors 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:

**Feb 4<sup>th</sup> – 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.

**Feb 10<sup>th</sup> – Bowling and Pizza Party** - The ACYOA Juniors had a wonderful time of fellowship at the Bowlero in Falls Church. The teens bowled, played arcade games, ate pizza, and made new friends. Some of the adult chaperons donned bowling shoes and took down a few pins as well!

**Mar 9<sup>th</sup> – ACYOA Sr and Jr Lenten retreat** - Some of the older ACYOA Juniors attended the Regional ACYOA Lenten Retreat, which was hosted by St Mary ACYOA Seniors.

**Mar 10<sup>th</sup> – 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 24<sup>th</sup> – Youth Sunday** – On Palm Sunday, the Senior and Junior ACYOA members, celebrated Youth Sunday. The newly elected officials and members of ACYOA were blessed by Der Hovsep Karapetyan during a special prayer service after Badarak. More than 60 parishioners gathered in the hall to share in a special coffee and hear about the ACYOA.

**Apr 7<sup>th</sup> – Meeting** – At the monthly meeting the students participated in a Bible Study and discussion, led by Becky Bagdasarian.

**Apr 19<sup>th</sup> – Lock-in Retreat** - The teens met at church to participate in the annual Juniors Lock-in Retreat. After eating dinner and playing games, the youth were led to a Bible study by Patricia Yeghissian. After a dessert break, Der Hovsep Karapetyan led them in an evening worship service and meditation in the sanctuary. Following several rousing games, the teens settled down and eventually, in the wee hours, went to sleep.

**May 5<sup>th</sup> – Meeting** – At the monthly meeting the students participated in a Bible Study and discussion lead by Der Hovsep Karapetyan. They also wrote thank you cards to parishioners who helped organized or hosted events for the teens during the year.

**May 31<sup>st</sup> – End of Year Party** - The teens held a pot luck dinner party, which was graciously hosted by the Seferian 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: Mikael Andreasyan, Seandor Emmerson, Gor Knyazyan, Mariam McClure, and Anna Sarkisian

**Sept – Sports Practice** – The teens met after church for volleyball and basketball practice, in preparation for the Sports Weekend event. Many thanks the coaches: Der Hovsep Karapetyan, Yn Jennifer Karapetyan, Greg Kumkumian, and Sara Arabian.

**Sep 15<sup>th</sup> – Meeting** – The Juniors gathered for pizza at their monthly meeting after badarak. Becky Bagdasarian led the students in a Bible study concerning the utilization of our gifts and skills for God and others.

**Oct 11-14 – Sports Weekend** - Over the Columbus Day weekend, more than 20 teens from St. Mary Junior ACYOA joined hundreds of young participants from across the Eastern Diocese at the ACYOA Juniors Fall Sports Weekend. Hosted by the ACYOA Juniors chapter of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church in Wynnewood, PA, this year's event, themed "Flying Hye," brought together over 200 teenagers from 15 Diocesan parishes for a memorable weekend of faith, fellowship, and friendly competition. Thanks to our coaches and chaperons for making this trip possible: Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, Yn. Jennifer Karapetyan, Sintia Petrosian, and Kareen Guiragossian.

**Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> - Meeting** - At their monthly membership meeting on November 3rd the ACYOA Juniors enjoyed pizza and fellowship, created posters to promote their "Toiletries for Teens" collection effort, participated in a spiritual discussion about reaching out to others in the name of Christ lead by Mania Missirian, and held officer elections. Congratulations to the new youth council officers, may God direct your steps and inspire you to serve others.

**Co-Chairs:** Taggie Gomstyan and Yeva Grigoryan

**Co-Vice Chairs:** Mariam Karapetyan and Rafayel Sargsyan

**Treasurer:** Tigran Gomstyan

**Secretary:** Alec Seferian

**At Large Member:** Sophia Sarkisian (focusing on service projects)

**Nov 17<sup>th</sup> – Fund For Armenian Relief Benefit Sale** - The ACYOA Seniors and Juniors successfully raised \$2,302 to support the Fund for Armenian Relief /Ayo programming by organizing a mini-Christmas market following the Badarak service on November 17. Sarah Stites, Ayo Program Director, was present to discuss the recent initiatives of the Fund for Armenian Relief and its crowdsourcing platform, Ayo.

**Nov – Toiletries For Teens** - The recent Toiletries for Teens drive, sponsored by the ACYOA Juniors, was an overwhelming success, with over 350 items generously donated by the community. The collected toiletries were distributed to underprivileged teenagers in the local metro area through the Food for Neighbors ( <https://www.foodforneighbors.org> ) organization, which operates snack and toiletry pantries within public schools.

**Dec 14 – Christmas Party** – The Juniors and their parents gathered at the Seferian family's home for a Christmas Party. The event started out with a potluck dinner. Following the meal, Der Hovsep delivered an inspiring message; then the teens then divided into teams to engage in some Christmas-themed games. Rather than exchanging gifts among themselves, the teens contributed toys for donation to underprivileged children through the local Toys for Tots initiative.

**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. Thanks to our 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](mailto:stmaryyouthdc@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
Rebecca Bagdasarian  
Youth Advisor

## **2024 - Ararat Avak Society Report**

In 2024, the Ararat Avak Society hosted a series of highly successful luncheons filled with warm hospitality, delicious homemade dishes, and a 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 Ghach Veratz luncheon serving their famed homemade buffet and desserts. Homemade baklava was donated to the Armenian Youth Center Golf Fore Kids Golf Tournament for the sixth year in a row.

The Ararat Avak Society sincerely appreciates and recognizes those who have supported the Society's mission throughout the year with their generous donations: Annie Totah, Malvina Brown, Nadia Carson, Anahid Ghazaryan, Doris George, Manoug and Talin Habibian, Kevork and Varti Marashlian, Nairi Pakoyan, Margie Satian, 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 preparations and events: Yn. Jennifer Karapetyan, Clara Andonian, Malvina Brown, Berk Cerkez, Alice Guida, Talin Habibian, Charlie Habibian, Vartan Karapetyan, Nadya Koseian, Caroline Matikyan, Natalie Matikyan, Shoghig Sahakyan, Andre Sahakian, Aram Sahakian, Nayiree Sarkissian, Ani Simsek, and 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 2025!

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 2024-2025 Academic Year**

### **WHO WE ARE**

Shnorhali School, part of St. Mary Church, is dedicated to nurturing a love for God, pride in the Armenian language, and a deep connection to our national identity and culture. Our mission is to teach Armenian language

and culture, helping students and families live authentic Armenian Christian lives and actively contribute to the community. The school offers two core curriculums: one focused on Christian Education and the other on Armenian Language and Culture, providing K-12 students with an excellent opportunity to explore their Armenian Christian heritage.

### **2024-2025 OVERVIEW:**

The 2024-2025 academic year at Shnorhali School began on August 27th, marking the start of another year of enriching education for the children of our Armenian community. The Principal and staff welcomed students with the Day of Knowledge and Education celebrations. As per tradition, the first day of school involved evaluating students' knowledge in Armenian language, history, and culture.

### **ACADEMICS:**

Shnorhali School's academic curriculum is specifically designed to meet the needs of our community, offering both Eastern and Western Armenian, Armenian History, and Religion for grades K-8. For grades 9-12, students take religion classes and can earn community service hours. The school uses a structured Armenian curriculum, ensuring each grade level masters specific materials before progressing. All students take a placement test to determine the best level for their education, with discussions held if the test results do not align with their public school grade.

Teachers develop weekly lesson plans and cultural segments to engage students with Armenian artists, composers, poets, heroes, and scientists. The academic year is divided into four quarters, with tests at the end of each quarter, followed by report cards and parent-teacher meetings. The school also offers a Junior Kindergarten class for 4-year-olds and a Conversational Armenian class for students who want to improve their spoken Armenian skills. In addition to Armenian Language and Culture, the school offers 30-minute rotating lessons on **History** and **Music**. Under the guidance of Mr. Haykaram Nahapetyan, students are learning about important events from Armenia's past, while Ms. Armine Khachatryan introduces them to Armenia's folk music, composers, and songwriters.

Shnorhali School also offers a **Patarag Education** program, designed to teach the structure and content of our Holy Liturgy. This program includes instruction from experts on the liturgy and the interpretations of key days and celebrations in the Armenian faith. Additionally, the school provides a **Conversational Armenian** class, offering students the opportunity to build fluency in the language while practicing verbal communication with a native Armenian speaker.

### **Shnorhali School Alumni Engagement**

Shnorhali School is proud of its active alumni and young volunteers who enhance the school's educational environment. Currently, 25 alumni volunteers contribute by assisting teachers, organizing events, and helping with activities. Shnorhali School is also a Certified Organization, allowing students and alumni to earn the prestigious Presidential Volunteer Service Award, recognizing their dedication to the school and community. This year, alumni introduced two exciting after-school clubs:

- **Armenian Culture and Fine Art Club:** Led by Kristina Khrimian, Yeva Grigoryan, and Taguhi Gomtsyan, this club offers students opportunities to explore Armenian culture through interactive activities, dances, songs, and presentations.
- **Chess Club:** Led by Aren and Arman Grigoryan, the Chess Club helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills while exploring strategies and tactics.

These clubs, alongside the dedicated volunteers, create a dynamic and engaging environment for students to learn and grow.

### **Little Stars Afterschool Program For Kindergarteners**

The Little Stars After-School Program, designed for kindergarten students, reinforces lessons learned throughout the day. Led by Knar Brutyan, the program offers educational games and activities that foster retention and enjoyment. This initiative supports the holistic development of our youngest learners.

### **TIME/PLACE:**

The bell schedules this year includes a special family tradition, where children can participate in the morning Padarag Education service in the sanctuary. The schedule is as follows:

- 9:30-9:55 Special Morning Padarag Education
- 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 conclude at noon.

The primary mission of Shnorhali School is to educate students in Armenian language, history, and culture, ensuring that they grow into informed, active members of our community who preserve and celebrate our heritage.

### **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
Sergey Hunanyan	Treasurer

#### **Padarag Education Coordinators and Educators**

Rev. Hovsep Karapetyan

Dn. Serop Krajekian

Garegin Vardanyan

### **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	Knarik Brutyan
Senior Kindergarten	Karine Isahakyan
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade level	Susanna Avakyan
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade level	Karine Yenoqyan
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade level	Erna Stepanyan
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade level	Tsovinar Manasyan

Grade	Teacher
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade level	Sona Avetisyan
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade level	Anahit Sargsyan
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade level	Alvard Semirjyan
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade level	Juletta Movsesyan
Conversational Armenian	Seda Baghdasaryan
Music Classes	Armine Khachatryan
History Classes	Haykaram Nahapetyan
“Stars” Kindergarten afterschool program	Knar Brutyan

### **Religious Education Program**

*(Prepared and submitted by Nicolette Blackwell)*

#### **Religious Education Curriculum**

Shnorhali School’s religious education program celebrates another successful year, showcasing its positive impact on the Parish community and the children it serves. By encouraging spiritual growth and instilling strong morals and biblical virtues like grace, humility, charity, respect, faith, and love, the program shapes students into well-rounded individuals. Its influence extends beyond the classroom, strengthening students' faith and connection to their cultural heritage.

Starting in the 2024-2025 academic year, the program adopted the diocese’s new *We Believe* curriculum, which enriches the educational experience by integrating faith and culture. Lessons include Armenian words of the week, a moral focus, weekly Bible verses, and teachings rooted in Biblical stories or Armenian Church traditions. This approach deepens students' faith and enhances their appreciation of their Armenian identity. Learn more about the *We Believe* curriculum here: [We Believe Curriculum](#).

#### **Religious Education Teachers**

The success of the religious education program reflects the dedication of our teachers, who empower students to embrace the Christian faith, the traditions of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and spiritual growth.

Grounded in Christ’s teachings and the principles of the Armenian Church, we collaborate with the Armenian Branch of Shnorhali School to educate children on the profound teachings and values of the Church. By guiding them to understand and live Christ’s teachings, we provide a meaningful foundation in faith while instilling appreciation for the Armenian Church’s rich heritage.

Grade	Teacher
First Grade	Nicolette Blackwell
Second Grade	Yn. Jennifer Karapetyan
Third Grade	Linet Khoranian
Fourth Grade	Nayiree Sarkisian
Fifth & Sixth Grade	Greg Kumkumian
Seventh & Eighth Grade	Becky Baghdasarian
High School	Zaven Kalayjian
Substitute Teachers	Sarah Arabian, Heggine Derderian, Bob George, Rob George, Yervand Khoranian, Mania Missirian, David Sayian, Patricia Yeghissian

## **Shnorhali School's Special Events**

### **Events From The First Half Of The 2024-2025 Academic Year**

**Day of Knowledge and Education** - On August 27th, St. Mary's Shnorhali Armenian School began the academic year with the Day of Knowledge and Education. Students took assessments in Armenian language, history, and culture, followed by a meet-and-greet for parents, students, and teachers. The day concluded with a Holy Patarag led by Father Hovsep, emphasizing the importance of religion, culture, and heritage in education.

**Back-to-School Fun Event** - On September 22nd, Shnorhali School hosted its Back-to-School Social, bringing together students, parents, and parishioners. The event featured arts, crafts, face painting, a trivia game on Armenian heritage, and a Kochari dance session led by the Armenian Art and Culture Club. Volunteers ensured a lively and memorable afternoon celebrating Armenian culture and community spirit.

**Spiritual Fall Party** - The 1st-3rd grade religion classes held a Spiritual Fall Party centered on 2 Timothy 1:7. Through crafts and discussions, students explored themes of love, power, and self-discipline, learning how faith can help them overcome challenges with kindness and courage.

**Talent Show** - On November 10th, Shnorhali School's annual Talent Show celebrated Saint Nerses Shnorhali through student performances in poetry, music, and dance. A presentation on Saint Nerses' life and cultural contributions opened the event. Highlights included a student art showcase, sports videos, and a traditional Armenian feast, all reflecting the community's deep connection to heritage.

**Acolyte Training Program** - Shnorhali School introduced an Acolyte Training Program led by Der Hovsep and deacons. Boys learn sacred traditions of the Armenian Church, including the role of an Acolyte, Church etiquette, and prayers, preparing them for active participation in Holy Padarak.

**Kindergarten Educational Program** - The school launched a monthly educational program for kindergarteners featuring hands-on activities like clay modeling, birdhouse building, music, and storytelling. These sessions enhance creativity, teamwork, and fine motor skills while deepening Armenian cultural connections.

**Patarag Visits** - Our students regularly participate in Holy Communion as part of their spiritual education. Monthly Patarag visits deepen their understanding of Christ's sacrifice and nurture their relationship with God, supporting their spiritual growth and strengthening their faith.

**Midday Readings** - Students took on the responsibility of reading from the Holy Scriptures during Patarag. Each Sunday, a student shared God's message with parishioners, creating a meaningful experience for both students and their proud families.

**Ordination of Deacons and Subdeacons** - Students attended a special Divine Liturgy presided over by His Grace Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, witnessing the ordination of deacons and subdeacons. Lina Avetisyan and Nare Melik-Stepanyan were honored for their contributions to the Choir and Handbell Ensemble, inspiring others with their dedication.

**St. Mary's 92nd and Der Hovsep's 20th Anniversary** - Shnorhali School joined parish celebrations for the 92nd anniversary of St. Mary Armenian Church and the 20th anniversary of Der Hovsep Karapetyan's ordination. Students presented Der Hovsep with a book of letters and drawings, expressing gratitude for his spiritual leadership.

**Christmas Tree Decoration** - On December 1st, Shnorhali students, parents, and volunteers gathered to decorate the Church's Christmas tree, marking the start of the Holy Christmas season. Adorned with crosses, angels, and a nativity scene, the tree symbolized faith, hope, and joy. This cherished tradition showcased the students' creativity and the community's unity, making it a memorable celebration of the holiday season.

**Christmas Celebrations** - On December 22nd, students celebrated Christmas with a joyful event that combined faith, culture, and holiday cheer. Highlights included a message from Father Hovsep, an interactive trivia game, festive crafts, and a visit from Santa Claus. Students embraced the holiday spirit by decorating cookies, writing letters to Santa, and creating reindeer food. The event blended fun and faith, deepening connections to Armenian traditions and strengthening community bonds.

### **Events from the Second Half of the 2023-2024 Academic Year**

Shnorhali School, in collaboration with its dedicated teachers, volunteers, and parents, hosted the following educational and cultural events, enriching our students' connection to their faith, heritage, and community:

**Eve of Theophany and Nativity** - On January 5, students gathered at St. Mary Armenian Church for the Nativity

and Theophany celebration. Guided by Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, students explored the dual significance of Christ's birth and baptism. They participated in Scripture readings and prayer, fostering a sense of unity and spiritual reflection.

**Christmas Handes** - On January 7, students performed a Christmas recital, explaining the meaning behind popular symbols of the season. Each class showcased their talents through songs and creative presentations, concluding with a heartfelt performance of "Silent Night" in English and Armenian. Fr. Hovsep offered closing reflections on the true meaning of Christmas.

**Boon Barekendan Celebration** - On February 11, students brought Barekendan traditions to life through Tumanyan tales, games, dances, and reenactments. They highlighted the holiday's themes of abundance, community, and preparation for Lent, blending cultural heritage with faith.

**Soorp Sarkis and Valentine's Day** - First and second graders celebrated with a lesson on Soorp Sarkis, a craft activity featuring John 3:16, and an introduction to Lent. Students received Lenten calendars to guide their spiritual journey at home.

**Lenten Good Deed Project** - With the help of ACYOA Junior, Eva Grigorian, Shnorhali School chose to support Operation Smile for their Lenten good deed project. Students, teachers, and parents collected toys for children undergoing cleft surgeries in developing countries. The initiative embodied the spirit of Lent through compassion and giving.

**Easter Eve Celebration** - On March 30, students learned about Easter symbols and traditions through teachings by Fr. Hovsep and Religious Education Coordinator Nicolette Blackwell. Activities included egg decorating and participation in the Holy Liturgy, instilling a deeper connection to the Resurrection's significance.

**Palm Sunday** - Students marked Jesus's entry into Jerusalem by participating in "The Blessing of the Youth" service and a palm procession. The celebration deepened their faith as they reflected on Holy Week's themes of love, humility, and redemption.

**Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide** - On April 21, students presented "Rising from Ashes as a Phoenix," honoring the 1915 Holy Martyrs and highlighting the resilience of Armenians worldwide. They celebrated luminaries like Charles Aznavour, Raymond Damadian, and Colonel George Juskalian, inspiring hope and pride in Armenian heritage.

**Mother's Day and Teachers Appreciation Week Celebrations** - On May 12th, St. Mary Shnorhali School students celebrated Mother's Day with Holy Badarak and Communion. Fr. Hovsep reflected on the importance of honoring three mothers: our biological mother, our Motherland, and our church. The students also celebrated Teachers' Appreciation Week, expressing gratitude to their teachers through flowers, gifts, and cards.

**Participating in Food Festival** - Shnorhali School students made a significant impact at the St. Mary Church Annual Spring Food Festival. They showcased Armenian heritage through traditional dances and songs, creating a vibrant atmosphere. The festival was enhanced by the students' enthusiasm and contributions, making it a memorable celebration of Armenian culture.

**Chess Tournament** - The Shnorhali School Chess Tournament brought together students to showcase their skills in strategic thinking and teamwork. The competition was an opportunity for students to demonstrate their intellectual abilities and sportsmanship, with winners honored during the end-of-year celebrations.

**End-of-Year Handes – A Tribute to Armenian Literary Heritage** - On June 2nd, students performed works by Armenian poets, including Hovhannes Tumanyan and Khenko Aper. The event featured preschoolers and 2nd–6th graders, with performances that included poems, fairy tales, and comedies. The celebration culminated with the 100th anniversary tribute to poet Paruyr Sevak and the imaginative graduation performance by 8th graders.

**Shnorhali School's Website and Facebook Account** - Shnorhali School's website (<https://www.stmaryaac.org/shnorhali-school>) and new Facebook account mark a new chapter in our commitment to transparent communication and community engagement. These platforms serve as hubs for parents, students, alumni, and the wider community to connect, with timely updates, event highlights, and important announcements. Our Facebook account offers an immersive experience, inviting the Shnorhali community to participate in the ongoing narrative of our school's vibrant life. Join us as we use social media to celebrate accomplishments and create an interactive space for all.

## **Grants And Donations**

**Individual Donations:** We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Ararat Stepanyan for his generous monetary

donation, which has been instrumental in supporting the execution of the school's special events. His contribution has ensured the seamless planning and success of culturally enriching activities, enhancing the overall educational experience at Shnorhali School. We are deeply grateful for Mr. Stepanyan's philanthropic spirit and his significant role in advancing the continued excellence of our institution.

Respectfully submitted,

Nunik Nishanian, Shnorhali School Principal

### **2024 - WED Fund Scholarship Committee 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 \$1,128,500 to 529 worthy candidates out of a total of 964 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 \$51,250.

For this scholarship cycle, the WED Education Scholarship Committee met on July 14, 2024 to review applications and select awardees. Twenty (20) applications were considered, and eighteen (13) 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"><li>• <b>Of the awards given</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Three (3) were for \$2,000</li><li>◦ Five (5) was for \$4,000</li><li>◦ Five (5) were for \$5,000</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Of the applicants:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Ten (10) were graduate students</li><li>◦ Ten (10) were undergraduates</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Of the awardees</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Five (5) were graduate students and eight (8) were undergraduates</li><li>◦ Fields of study included: Medicine, Marriage Counseling, Cybersecurity, Pre-Med, Osteopathology, Chemical Engineering, Screenwriting/Directing, and Economics.</li></ul></li></ul> |
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This year, the Scholarship Committee consisted of Tamar Sivaslian, Bagrat Bayburtyan, Eric Ashbahian, Mark Krikorian, and Zaven Kalayjian. The scholarship applications review was conducted via an on-line video conference.

The committee did not requested a Repose of the Soul (Hokehankist) service for Mr. William E. Docter this year.

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

### **2024 - Women's Guild Activity Report**



2024 was once again a very busy year for St. Mary's Women's Guild.

**January 27<sup>th</sup>:** We started the year on a healthy note by having a Zumba class given by our own Choir Director, Mrs. Edita Kalayjian. We appreciate very much Edita donating her time and a fun experience was had by all who participated. The Executive Committee hosted a brunch and we had a membership meeting and elections. Roxanne Paul was reelected for a second 2-year term to the Executive Committee. Janet Arabian's 2-year term was only half over, so she stayed on as well. Yn. Jennifer Karapetian and Ilda Bolat's 2-year terms were over, and they declined to run again. Rita Istepanian was elected to a 2-year term and Dee Rogers to a 1-year term. But, we were still short a person for our committee. Yn. Jennifer and Ilda both decided after the meeting that they would unofficially volunteer for another year on the Executive Committee to help the four already on the committee. Ani Derderian, Zivart Bolat and Yn. Anahid Kalayjian were elected to the Nominating Committee, with Patricia Yeghissian as an alternate. Lucy Murad was elected as a Delegate from our church to the Women's Guild Central Council assembly.

**February 24<sup>th</sup>:** We held a "Soorj and Paint" activity. Dee Rogers led a craft where we hand-painted a wine glass for ourselves and Rita Istepanian made delicious Armenian coffee. We have long heard members voice their wish that we include activities besides cooking, and the Zumba class and this activity were planned to answer that wish. Afterwards, we held a short membership meeting where Yeretsgin presented a tentative schedule of workshops for our upcoming food festival.

**February 28<sup>th</sup>:** The Women's Guild provided dinner for the Lenten Lecture Series. Members donated vegan food for the dinner at their own expense.

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>:** The Women's Guild hosted the Mid-Lenten Luncheon after Badarak in the church hall. Once again, members donated various vegan dishes. The response that day was overwhelming. We even ran out of chairs! A delicious meal was enjoyed by all.

**March 23, 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>:** The Executive Committee met to package up desserts donated by members for the Palm Sunday Bake Sale. The next day was the bake sale itself and any food left over was sold on Easter Sunday.

**April 6 – May 16:** Numerous workshops were held to make beureks, pakhlava, bourma, yalanchi, green beans, hommos and other delicacies for the Spring Food Festival.

**May 17-19:** The church's Spring Food Festival was held over these three days. Women's Guild members served food, made up packages for carryout and online orders, served at the dessert table and made Armenian coffee, working alongside all the other church members. It was once again a resounding success.

**June 1:** We had a luncheon at the Yard House Rio restaurant in Gaithersburg to celebrate another spring season and hold a short membership meeting.

**September 7-October 3:** Numerous workshops to prepare for the Fall Food Festival.

**October 4-6:** Fall Food Festival. Ditto from the spring festival.

**November 23 & 24:** The Executive Committee met to package up desserts donated by members for the Thanksgiving Bake Sale. The next day was the bake sale itself, after church.

**December 8:** The Women's Guild provided the appetizers for the lunch celebrating the Ordination of a Deacon and several Sub-Deacons.

All of our members are grateful to Yeretsgin Jennifer for her leadership, both organizationally and spiritually. Despite having a full-time job and many family responsibilities, she always rose to the occasion and had a kind word for all.

Respectfully submitted,  
Roxanne Nersesian Paul  
Secretary

### **2024 - St. Mary's Gift Shop Report**

St. Mary's Gift Shop (GS) was open every Sunday and during special events throughout the year. The committee (comprised of Raffi Sahakyan, Aline Guiragossian, Takuhi Hallajian and Shoghig Sahakyan) was blessed to have many dedicated parishioners providing their support. We would like to extend special thanks to Anna Seferian,

Nayiree Sarkisian, and Roxanne and Alexis Schweitzer for helping during many Sundays as well as during the events.

The GS committee was instrumental in raising funds during spring and fall Food and Cultural festivals. We would like to extend our utmost appreciation to all our volunteers, especially to Davit Givargiz, Yeva and Nelson. In addition, the White Elephant corner was successful as a result of the efforts of Malvina Brown and her team 3 times during 2024. We are grateful for the continued support of Alice, Ani, Clara, Maha, Malvina, Varteni, and Virginia.

The events that GS committee collaborated with the Parish Council were Vahan Arzruni concert in April, Blessing of the Grapes Annual picnic in August, and lastly St. Mary's 92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary honoring Der Hovsep on his 20 Year Anniversary of Ordination to Priesthood.

A special event was held in June to raise funds for a future renovation and expansion plan of the GS. The development of the plan is in its preliminary stage. A feasibility study will be conducted in early 2025 and based on findings, a proposal will be submitted to Parish Council for feedback.

The success of the GS continues to be the result of many parishioners who show their support through financial contributions and purchasing the goods available throughout the year.

We look forward to another fruitful and prosperous year in 2025.

Respectfully submitted:

Raffi Sahakyan

## **Auditing Committee Report For Fiscal Year 2024**

### **INTRODUCTION**

On behalf of the Auditing Committee, I am pleased to report our members addressed each organization's financial report and provided fair and reasonable audits.

Our three person committee was comprised of Anna Seferian (first year), Vladimir Shekoyan (alternate filling Artur Sivaslian's remaining 2 years), and myself, Gregory Manougian (final, third year).

### **PROCESS**

Starting in early calendar year 2025, the committee members exchanged ideas on the process, along with guidance from church treasurer, Jack Guiragossian, and Rebecca Bagdasarian. As the "retiring" member, I shared my approach to an audit and recommended format for assessing each organization. We also understood there was a range of complexity -- from the Church Operating Fund to WE Doctor Scholarship to Gift Shop and ACYOA Juniors.

The following church organizations' financial reports (14) were identified to be audited and were divided among the three auditors:

**Gregory Manougian** - Operating Fund, Restricted Fund, ACEF, WED, and Food Festivals

**Anna Seferian** – Avak Society, Investment (with Lazarian Fund), ACYOA Srs, Choir, Narek Bells

**Vladimir Shekoyan** – Gift Shop, ACYOA Jrs, Women's Guild, Shnorhali School

Each organization to receive a financial audit was expected to provide a summary income and expense report (to also be published in the parish council's annual report), banking transactions and statements, and other documentation that may support the report, i.e. receipts, proposals, correspondence).

Each of the above organizations were audited by the audit committee member assigned, shared with the other committee members, and reported back to the Church treasurer, the respective organization, and copied to the church secretary.

### **OBSERVATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Commendable financial reports were prepared by the parish council and food festival treasurers comprising complex reports. They were well-organized, easily cross-checked, and reflected sustained attention to detail for

the year.

Smaller, less complicated groups such as Narek Choir and Avak Society were held to minimum standards and all presented auditable records.

A Treasurer's Peer training session should be implemented to all the groups and their Treasurers. Ideally in person, it may be a virtual event to ensure full participation.

Such a training opportunity should occur early in each fiscal year as a "best practice", noting it is just as important for the youngest member organization as it is for the oldest.

If unable to present such a course at one time, it can be done for each organization as part of their regular member meetings, provided with examples of recordkeeping, expectations how members should support and sustain the process, and especially for the respective treasurer.

Such sharing would lead to increased confidence across the parish to indicate there is a necessary level of knowledge and skill being applied to the financial management and, ultimately, the parish's overall financial health.

We strongly advise including the church treasurer, other experienced treasurers and Auditing Committee members, as well. The parish assembly meeting to follow would then be reminded that such training took place.

### CONCLUSION

All of the audited records from the St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church organizations were shown to be complete, accurate and free of material misstatements.

Sincerely,

Auditing Committee

Gregory Manougian

Anna Seferian

Vladimir Shekoyan