ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
PARISH REPORTS - 2025

February 22, 2026



St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church
4125 Fessenden St. NW, Washington, DC 20016202.363.1923 / www.stmaryaac.org

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ST. MARY ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH
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Rev. Father Hovsep Karapetyan, Pastor Տէր Յովսէփ Քհնյ. Կարապետեան, Հովիւ

February 1, 2026

INVITATION LETTER TO THE PARISH ASSEMBLY – 2026

Dear Dues Paying Member,

Our Annual Parish Assembly this year will be held on Sunday, February 22, 2026, at 12:00 pm, with an alternate date of March 1, 2026, 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 ChurchWashington, DC

February 22, 2026

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 2025 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 - 2025 Expenses
11. Pastor's MOU
12. Review and Adoption of the 2026 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 22, 2026:

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

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

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

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

4. Voting members! To be eligible to vote, please make sure you have paid your membership dues for the year 2025. All dues must have been paid by December 31st in order to be eligible to vote.

5. If you have delinquent dues for 2025, to restore your voting membership privilege, you must submit your dues both for the years 2024 and 2025. 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 membersto 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

Becky Baghdassarian	rebeccabagdasarian@yahoo.com – (571) 213-7035
Natalie Grigorian	ngrigorian@gmail.com- (202) 656-0089
Lucy Murad	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 (2026)* -- elected 2023, 2025
Garbis Chubukian (2026)* -- elected 2025
Jack Guiragossian (2026) -- elected 2021, 2023, 2025
Svetlana Hovhanissyan (2026)* -- elected 2023, 2025
Sean McClure (2025)* -- elected 2022, 2024
Rick Nishanian (2025) -- elected 2020, 2022, 2024
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)
Rebecca Bagdasarian (2025)* -- elected 2025
Natalie Grigorian (2025)* -- elected 2025
Lucy Murad (2025) -- elected 2024, 2025

Auditing Committee (3 year term)
Vladimir Shekoyan (2025)
Anna Seferian (2026)
Robert George (2027)

Diocesan Delegates (4 year term, limit 3 consecutive terms)
Zaven Kalayjian (2028)* -- elected 2025
Onnik Sivaslian (2028)* -- elected 2025
Sarine Zenian (2028)* -- elected 2025 (limited to 2 consecutive terms per article 51 in bylaws - one time situation)

Investment Committee (3 year term)
Michael Sahakian (2025)
David Sayian (2026)
Wright Sigmund (2027)

WED Scholarship Committee (5 year term)
Tamar Sivaslian (2025)
Eric Ashbahian (2026)
Mark Krikorian (2027)
Bagrat Bayburtian (2028)
Ivan Zhivkov (2029)

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
2026 Preliminary DRAFT Ballot

Chairperson of the Day (circle 1 name)
Avedis Seferian
Sarine Zenian

Secretary of the Day (circle 1 name)
Eric Ashbahian
Robert George

Parish Council (circle 5 names)
Gohar Grigorian
Zara Harutyunyan
Zaven Kalayjian
Armine Khachatryan
Sean McClure
Catherine Sahakian
Ted Xakellis
xxx

Nominating Committee (circle 3 names)
Talar Festekjian
Natalie Grigorian
Aline Guiragossian
Yn Jennifer Karapetyan
Diana Sargsyan

Auditing Committee (circle 1 name)
Edvik Alexandrian
Vladimir Shekoyan

Investment Committee (circle 1 name)
Michael Sahakian
xxx

WED Scholarship Committee (circle 1 name)
Raffi Karahisar
Dale Turza

Parish Council Candidate Biographies

Gohar Grigorian is a Program Analyst with the World Bank, working in the Environmental and Social Risk Management Unit in Washington, DC. In her current role, Gohar supports operational and analytical functions of the Unit and works as Social Development Specialist for development projects in Europe and Central Asia Region. Gohar holds Master's Degree in International Development with focus on International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University School of International Services, in Washington, D.C. Prior to moving to the United States, Gohar graduated from the Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, majoring in English and minoring in psychology.
Outside of work, Gohar enjoys spending time with family and friends, doing outdoor activities and volunteering.

Zara Harutyunyan Born in Armenia, graduate of Yerevan National Institute of Economy with a bachelor's degree in "World Economics" and American University of Armenia – MBA with major in Management. Started work at the UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) in Yerevan and later was offered a position of Grants/Compliance Manager at the Washington DC office to work on a Relief program for 2 years. Later worked at the NDI as Deputy Subgrant Manager.

Deacon Zaven Kalayjian has served the St. Mary parish for decades. A graduate of the Sunday and Armenian Schools, he has been teaching Sunday School for many years. He was a member of the ACYOA. He's served on the WED Education Fund Scholarship Committee and was a founding member. He is currently a Diocesan Delegate representing St. Mary at the annual Diocesan convention, and last year he was elected vice-chair of the convention. While living in Armenia, he was a Parish Council member at Sp. Katoghige Asdvadzadzin in Yerevan. He is one of the few people in the Armenian Church who has served as a parish leader in both the USA and in Armenia. His wife, Edita, is the choir director of the St. Mary choir, and three of his four boys are also part of the ACYOA and have attended Sunday School. He has a doctorate in electrical engineering and works in the defense industry.

Armine Khachatryan, born in Armenia, is a graduate of Yerevan State Economics University and Conservatory after Komitas. Her professional career started at the Central Bank of Armenia where she worked from 1995 to 2002, being one of the founders of the monetary policy department at the Central Bank. In 2002 she began working at the World Bank. Since 2007 she has been working at the International Monetary Fund, where she is currently Senior Economist working on a wide range of policy and research topics.

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

Dr. Catherine Palandjian Sahakian grew up in Scranton, Pa. She attended Marywood College majoring in Nutrition and Dietetics. She received her Bachelor of Science degree and worked in the Dietetic Field for 4 years as a Registered Dietitian in hospitals and long-term care facilities. During her work experience Catherine wanted to further her education in the medical field. While going back to school to be eligible for dental school, and working full time, she was accepted and graduated from the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery and completed a residency in advanced dental training at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pa. Currently she has her own dental practice in Bethesda, Md serving the needs of her patients in all ages. Growing up in areas where there weren't any Armenians or a church, she considers herself very fortunate to have met and married, and raising a family in the St. Mary Armenian community. She states, "Regardless of where an Armenian person lives, we will always be proud of our heritage, culture and

religion. The backbone of our faith is our church. Without a strong affinity to the church and to serve God, we will be lost. The foundations that we have help us to continue to foster our beliefs for our children, and for future generations. By electing me as a member of this parish council, I will be able to continue to ensure that our goals, and the future vitality of our church will always survive just like my grandparents survived during their challenges." I will be honored and humbled to be reelected to Parish Council. Thank you, Catherine P. Sahakian, DDS, RD

Ted Xakellis was born and raised in Washington D.C. His interests include foreign languages, Railroads, and music. After retiring from his position as a cataloguer at NASA Headquarters, he dedicated himself to singing in the St. Mary Church choir, performing archival work for the Finlandia Foundation, and organizing events for the Railroad Historical Society.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly
St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, Washington DC
February 16, 2025

Opening:

The Parish Assembly was started at 1:00 PM. **Der Hovsep Karapetyan** opened the meeting with a prayer.

Verification of Quorum:

Mark Krikorian, a member of the Nominating Committee, verified the presence of 53 dues-paying members, where 50 were required for a quorum. Therefore, a quorum was confirmed.

Election of Chairman and Secretary of the Day:

The ballot for the officers of the day was presented by **Mark Krikorian**. Nominations from the floor were sought. A second nominee was sought for the Chairman of the Day and Secretary of the Day. **Raffi Karahisar** was nominated for the Chairman of the Day. **Sarine Zenian** was nominated for Secretary of the Day. An open floor vote was conducted for these positions. **Hratch Semerjian** was named as the Chairman of the Day and **Beverly Sivaslian** was named as the Secretary of the Day.

Hratch Semerjian addressed the assembly. He reminded the Assembly that the Parish Report was emailed out to parishioners and copies were available last week at church. He reminded us that only dues-paying members are allowed to vote. He mentioned that the meeting was being recorded for accuracy purposes and that the recording would be deleted after the minutes were prepared.

Adoption of Agenda:

A proposal was put forth by **Zaven Kalaydjian** to add Old and New Business as line items to the agenda. The motion was passed with one nay vote and those items were added to the end of the agenda. The agenda was approved.

Approval of the Minutes of the 2024 Parish Assembly (pp. 8-14):

The 2024 Parish Assembly Minutes were reviewed. A motion to adopt the minutes was unanimously approved.

Nominating Committee Report and Floor Nominations:

Hratch Semerjian reviewed the ballot on page 7. **Zaven Kalaydjian** said that we need additional candidates for the Parish Council and the Nominating Committee positions. **Zara Harutunyan and Avak Yepremian** were nominated for Parish Council. **Natalie Grigorian Sigmund** was nominated for the Nominating Committee. **Patrisha Yeghissian** asked to be removed from the ballot for the Diocesan Delegate. **Wright Sigmund** was nominated for the Investment Committee. A motion was made to close the nominations. The motion passed unanimously.

Pastor's Report (pp. 14-18):

Der Hovsep Karapetyan presented the Pastor's Report. Der Hayr gave thanks to God for another successful

year. He spoke about Psalm 127:1, which has a very important message for us. It states, "unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor is in vain." He spoke about how we continue to build our church with our faith, service, and love. He spoke about this being an important year for him, with this being the 20th year anniversary of his ordination. He encouraged the community to come to worship together.

Hratch Semerjian congratulated Der Hayr on his 20th year anniversary of ordination. He also thanked **Yeretzgin Jennifer Karapetyan** for sharing him with us for all these years. The Anniversary Weekend was very special not only because of the attendance of our Primate, but also because of the ordination of new deacons and sub-deacons.

Parish Council Report (pp. 18-19):

Shoghig Sahakian thanked Der Hayr, Yeretzgin, and the members of the Parish Council. The year was focused on service and stewardship. She stated that we are moving away from the idea of church membership and toward the idea of stewardship. She highlighted that we have ten different auxiliary committees that brought in a total of $162,000 toward the operating budget. She encouraged the community to volunteer.

The Nominating Committee distributed the ballots. The ballots were collected from the dues-paying members, and then the Committee retired to count the votes.

Operating Fund Report (pp. 38-41):

Jack Guiragossian reviewed the Operating Fund Report. He stated that it was a fairly typical year with regard to ongoing expenses and highlighted that we went over the budget this year. The 92nd Anniversary celebration underestimated ticket sale projections but ultimately generated a profit thanks to donations.

Questions were sought about the Operating Fund Report. **Sarine Zenian** asked whether a Youth Minister salary is part of our budget. Jack shared that we do not have a Youth Minister. When we have one, then a line item a Youth Minister will be added.

A question was asked whether the Food Festival line item was the net proceeds from that event, and Jack shared that it was. Jack also explained how donations are factored into the budget. He also answered questions about the Building, Equipment, and Grounds Maintenance line item. He then answered questions about the reasons why our bazaar income has increased so much since 2022. He said that while we aren't necessarily selling more food, the prices have increased, additional vendors have signed up to attract more traffic to the festival, and donations were solicited over the past two years, which helped the bottom line.

Michael Sahakian commended the parish and Der Hayr for the additional revenue that was brought in. He reminded the Parish Council that we do still have access to the Endowment Fund in case that is ever needed. While we are trying to build that fund, it is there in case the church is feeling squeezed for finances. Jack shared that we don't like to touch that endowment so that it can grow.

A motion was put forth to accept the Operating Fund Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Pastor's MOU Report (p. 37):

Jack Guiragossian reviewed the Pastor's MOU . He pointed out that at the last assembly, it was requested that for privacy reasons, the MOU only include two categories on the report: Personnel Compensation and Personnel Benefits. He then fielded questions about the report.

A motion was put forth to accept Pastor's MOU. The motion passed unanimously.

2025 Budget (p. 38):

Jack Guiragossian explained how he comes up with the budget for next year by looking at the numbers from the past three years. The floor was open for questions/comments.

A motion was put forth to accept the 2025 Budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Treasury Reports (Restricted Funds and ACEF) (p. 39):

The floor was open for questions/comments. **Jack Guiragossian** explained why the Past Memorial Fund line item increased so much from last year to this year. He explained that the money comes from the "in lieu of flowers" donations at funerals, and he shared that the money gets transferred to the Investment Fund. A question was asked about the renovation of the small hall. Jack explained that we are looking to utilize the space in the small hall better and that money has been set aside for the eventual commencement of that project. He also addressed that if a project was to cost more than $50,000, then the Parish Assembly would have to vote on whether to pursue the project or not. It was pointed out that there has not been a discussion about how best to utilize that extra unused space in the small hall. The idea of using that space as a children's play area instead of as gift store space was floated. Additionally, a question was asked about the New Year's Eve Party Financial Summary. It was explained that due to a conflicting event, not as many people attended the New Year's Eve Party, so money was lost on that event.

A motion was put forth to accept the Other Treasury Reports. The motion passed unanimously.

Organizational Reports (pp. 22-36):

The floor was open for questions/comments for those organizations. There was a question about the membership of the ACYOA Juniors and Seniors. **Yeretzgin Jennifer** shared that there are about 30 juniors who show up regularly, with 50-60 on the mailing list. **Nicolette Blackwell** shared that the Seniors group has about 10-15 active members, with 40-50 people occasionally showing up. She then shared that people should contact her in order to have someone be added to the ACYOA Seniors mailing list and WhatsApp group. The group is open to people who are 18 to 30 years old. A question was posed as to how the ACYOA Seniors are reaching out to grow their membership. Nicolette shared that they are targeting and networking with many of the ANCA and Armenian Assembly interns and college students in the area. **Dean Shahinian** pointed out that ACYOA Seniors have been around at our church for more than just the past two years. Nicolette commented that it has been two years since the group was restarted.

Sarine Zenian congratulated Der Hayr on having such a robust deacon group and shared that we are the top church with that many deacons. **Hratch Semerjian** suggested that the photo of the deacons in our church (taken with the Primate) should be enlarged and displayed somewhere in the church.

Dean Shahinian thanked the Avak Society and mentioned that good food brings people together so that they can make new relationships and be at church when they might not otherwise attend.

Yeretzgin Jennifer thanked **Nunik Nishanian** for all of her hard work with the Shnorhali School. Nunik shared that there are about 90 students in the school, and they continue to grow. Classroom and meeting space is a concern due to this growth. She pointed out that there are no Western Armenian classes due to space and interest issues. The school is looking to update the classroom furniture next year, and they will be putting together some fundraisers to raise money toward that goal. An additional concern is the fact that the books used in the school are brought over from Armenia by parishioners who travel back from there, and transportation is a challenge. Questions were posed as to why there aren't any Western Armenian classes taught. Nunik pointed out that we used to have one single class of conversational Western Armenian that included all ages of students and repeated itself from one year to the next, but due to space considerations and interest level in the class, it was abandoned this year. **Sarine Zenian** lamented the fact that if she wants her son to learn Western Armenian, which she speaks at home, the only option is to go to Soorp Khatch. Yeretzgin pointed out that the Armenian teachers have developed their entirely own original Eastern

Armenian curriculum and there have been a lot of improvements like having a different teacher for each level of instruction. Nunik pointed out that you can't have the Eastern and Western Armenian taught in the same classroom, so choices have to be made. Yeretzgin said that if there were several families that wanted to have a Western Armenian kindergarten and were willing to assist, then maybe something could be worked out. **Kareen Guiragossian** stated that Shnorhali School used to teach just Western Armenian and that has since transitioned. She also said that putting all of the Western Armenian students of all ages into one classroom isn't a recipe for success. **Natalie Grigorian Sigmund** pointed out that parents can choose to send their children to learn Eastern Armenian even if they speak Western Armenian at home. Kids can pick up different dialects, and exposing them to the language is a good thing. **Svetlana Hovhanissyan** suggested that we form a committee to look into options for the school since it sounds like space considerations are one of the main limiting factors in what classes get offered at the school. Perhaps offering Saturday school or expanding the school structure to create more space might be options to pursue. Nunik pointed out that there have been many developments at the Shnorhali School that have made it a professional school. They are not only offering language classes but classes in culture, music, history, and the like. They are also doing work with the local school boards to get Armenian recognized as a world language in the school systems so that our school can cater to that education. **Artur Sivaslian** pointed out that while his daughter took the conversational Western Armenian class several times, she also benefitted from being involved in all other aspects of the church and the curriculum. He pointed out that we need to consider the future growth of the church and the school. We need to develop a strategy for future developments – be it new classrooms or more space or even a separate school building.

A motion was put forth to accept the Organizational Reports. The motion passed unanimously.

Diocesan Delegates Report (p. 19):

The floor was open for questions/comments. **Dean Shahinian** asked whether the Eastern Diocese is offering financial support to the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. He pointed out that the Western Diocese has four students in attendance, but that the Eastern Diocese hasn't sent any students and does not support the seminary monetarily. He wanted to know why they don't support the seminary. He also wants to ask our Diocesan Delegates to propose at the next Diocesan Assembly that the Diocese set aside money in its budget to support the seminary. **Onnik Sivaslian** didn't realize that no money was going to the seminary. He mentioned that some students were coming from overseas. Der Hayr mentioned that the Diocese doesn't provide seminarians; Parishes are the ones to provide students to the seminaries. He mentioned that we have to work with our young parishioners to encourage them to consider being clergy. Additionally, it is up to each family to have that discussion with their children. He shared that it helps when the seminarians come to visit each parish because they are a good model to show our youth that it is a viable path. Der Hayr also shared that each parish has a line item in their budget to provide funds to St. Nersess each year. He said that while the Diocese might not provide funds, each parish does support them. **Onnik** said that he will bring both of these issues up at the next meeting and report back.

A motion was put forth to accept the Diocesan Delegates Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Auditing Committee (p. 35):

The floor was open for questions/comments. **Greg Manougian** pointed out that part of the report (the income and expense statements) was not sent out with the electronic version of the booklet, but is included in the printed version. It was pointed out that the quality of financial reports has improved over the years, but training of new treasurers is still a good idea.

A motion was put forth to accept the Auditing Committee Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Investment Committee Report (p. 44):

The floor was open for questions/comments. **Sarine Zenian** thanked **David Sayian** and **Michael Sahakian**

since she was not able to do much with the Investment Committee this year.

A motion was put forth to accept the Investment Committee Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcement of Election Results:
The results of the election were announced by **Mark Krikorian** of the Nominating Committee.

The candidates elected to the Parish Council are **Shanhur Bostan, Garbis Chubukian, Jack Guiragossian, and Svetlana Hovhanissyan**. The alternate is **Alex Madajian**.

The candidates elected to the Nominating Committee are **Rebecca Bagdasarian, Lucy Murad, and Natalie Grigorian Wright**. The alternate is **Arda Herbert**.

The candidate elected to the Auditing Committee is **Robert George**. The alternate is **Armine Kachatryan**.

The candidates elected as Diocesan Delegates are **Zaven Kalayjian, Onnik Sivaslian, and Sarine Zenian**. The alternate is **Alex Madajian**.

The candidate elected to the Investment Committee is **Wright Sigmund**. The alternate is **Sarine Zenian**.

The candidate elected to the WED Scholarship Committee is **Ivan Zhivkov**. The alternate is **Dale Turza**.

Old/New Business:

First Old Business:
Zaven Kalayjian reminded us that at last year's assembly a motion was made (but not ratified because there wasn't a quorum present at that time) that the Parish Council would look into the legal and moral issues of selling alcohol in our gift store. He requested an update from the Parish Council on this matter. **Shoghig Sahakian** stated that they consulted with both Der Hayr and the Diocese to ask about the moral issue of selling alcohol. She said that the Diocese said that there wasn't anything illegal about selling alcohol in the gift shop. She mentioned that they did move the alcohol to a different location in the shop so that it isn't the first thing you see when you walk in there. A question was posed as to whether we need to charge tax on the alcohol sold and someone said that we didn't have to do that. **Sarine Zenian** asked for a breakdown of what is sold in the gift store; we were told that is not something that we track since volunteers run it. **Artur Sivaslian** pointed out that we do track things that we sell on the Square device during the Food Festival. He said that we should be tracking things in the gift store because it is not impossible to do. **Aline Guiragossian** pointed out that we are not running a commercial enterprise, so it shouldn't be expected that they track what is sold.

Hratch Semerjian took the opportunity to point out that the Diocese can weigh in on the morality of selling alcohol, but can't say whether it is legal in DC for a church to do so. Additional questions were posed about whether anyone had checked with the DC government or with our insurance company about the legality of selling alcohol. It was also pointed out that our church has put in an application to FEMA for a grant to improve our security. If we get that grant, there will be oversight from the Federal government into our finances, so we absolutely need to find out if we are legally selling the alcohol. **Der Hayr** mentioned that someone had looked into the issue, and it was determined that if you buy the alcohol and bring it home (don't drink it at the church), then it is legal. He does not know if there are any other legal considerations.

Zaven Kalayjian proposed that the Parish Council establish the legality of selling liquor in the gift store, assess its implications for the church's insurance policy, and report back at the next assembly meeting. The motion passed with six opposition votes.

Second Old Business:
Dean Shahinian brought up the Gorky art collection that were discussed during previous Parish Assembly meetings. **Hratch Semerjian** stated that the paintings have now been properly insured.

First New Business:
Michael Sahakian asked if there were any plans to sell the land in New Jersey that had been gifted to the church. **Shoghig Sahakian** said that the church has rented it out to hunters again this year and that the income pays for the taxes on the land.

Second New Business:
Arda Herbert mentioned the church's aging population and asked about the possibility of establishing an elderly house where older parishioners could live and socialize.

A motion was put forth for the Parish Council to establish a feasibility committee to investigate the possibility and implications of establishing an Armenian retirement house for our elderly population.

Discussion ensued about ideas for a retirement or group home. Ideas were floated about how we might establish a home or bring the elderly population together during the week for lunch or dinner and socialization at the church. It was suggested that younger people in our community could help drive to events like this.

Catherine Sahakian pointed out that this would be a huge financial and logistical endeavor that would be difficult for the church to put together. It would involve investors, purchasing a building, looking at codes and regulations, and finding nursing staff and someone to run the facility. In short, a huge undertaking that the church would be hard-pressed to put into place with our current finances.

Clara Andonian pointed out that the church had previously conducted a study on this issue. She suggested that before we put more time and effort into this, we put together a survey to see how many elderly members would even consider living in a retirement house like this. Years ago, the church did not pursue this idea because there wasn't enough interest from the parishioners.

Arda Herbert suggested purchasing an already established retirement home.

Dean Shahinian suggested that we amend the motion that the committee also identify options (transportation and other support) to care for and minister to the senior citizens so that they feel more like part of the community.

Catherine Sahakian suggested that we purchase a mobile unit and have a designated, paid driver to pick up the elderly for an adult daycare center here at church. Medicare and Medicaid do pay for this kind of service (some paperwork would be involved). Lunch and socialization would be provided.

A call for quorum was made, but since not enough members were left at the meeting, this motion was not passed. It became a suggestion to the Parish Council with a vote of support of the original motion from the members who were present. The vote of support passed unanimously.

Third New Business:
Zaven Kalayjian suggested that since many Federal workers are being displaced from their jobs, we as a community should help them find new jobs and provide support to them. **Anna Seferian** suggested that if your company is hiring, you could consider circulating the job opening amongst the Armenian community.

Fourth New Business:
Alex Madajian suggested that we shouldn't put the well-being of the entire Armenian community on the shoulders of the parish. He stated that the work of the church gets done by a small group of volunteers and to put more on their shoulders isn't appropriate. Alex encouraged us to develop personal relationships with each other to serve the needs of the parishioners.

Fifth New Business:
Dean Shahinian suggested that parishioners who want a paper copy of the Parish Assembly booklet should notify the office ahead of time so that one could be sent to them or printed off and specifically given to them. **Shoghig Sahakian** reminded us that this was stated in last year's minutes.

A motion to adjourn the Parish Assembly was made. The motion was unanimously passed at 3:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,





Der Hovsep Karapetyan	Beverly Sivaslian	Hratch Semerjian
Pastor	Secretary	Chairman

Clergy Report – 2025
Parish Assembly – February 22, 2026

It is with a heart full of gratitude, humility, and hope that I present to you the Annual Pastoral Report for the year 2025. As we look back on the life of our parish over the past year, we see clearly the hand of God at work among us; guiding, strengthening, and renewing our community through prayer, service, and shared witness.

The year 2025 was marked by deep spiritual engagement, vibrant communal life, and a renewed commitment to the mission of the Church. Together, we prayed through seasons of joy and sorrow, celebrated the sacred rhythms of our liturgical calendar, nurtured the faith of our children and youth, extended compassion to those in need, and strengthened the bonds that unite us as one parish family in Christ.

Throughout the year, St. Mary continued to be not only a place of worship, but a living community, where faith is taught, culture is cherished, service is offered, and the Gospel is lived. What follows is a pastoral overview of the major milestones, ministries, and initiatives that shaped our parish life in 2025. *(For a more detailed account of the year's events and activities, including Hokehankists, Funerals, Baptisms, and Weddings, please see the Annual Journal 2025.)*

1. Sacraments & Services – 2025

As pastor of St. Mary Armenian Church, I remained committed to the pastoral, sacramental, and spiritual care of our parish community throughout 2025. Over the course of the year, I celebrated **57 Divine Liturgies**

(Badaraks), sustaining the rhythm of communal worship and prayer. In addition, I participated in **53 ministry meetings**, supporting the leadership, organization, and ongoing life of the parish.

The sacramental life of our church continued to be active and life-giving. During the year, I officiated **26 baptisms**, **5 weddings**, and **3 engagements**, accompanying individuals and families at significant moments of faith and commitment. In times of sorrow, pastoral care was provided through **12 funerals** and **166 requiem (Hokehankist) services**, offering prayer, remembrance, and comfort to grieving families.

Beyond the church walls, pastoral ministry remained an essential part of parish life. I conducted **24 home blessings** and completed **33 pastoral visitations**, providing spiritual support, prayer, and personal presence to parishioners in their homes and places of need.

2. Celebrations, Liturgical Life, and Worship

The liturgical life of St. Mary remained the heart of our parish throughout 2025. From the weekly celebration of the Holy Badarak to the great feasts of the Church, our community gathered faithfully to pray, worship, and encounter Christ.

The Lenten season invited us into repentance, healing, and renewal through a series of Lenten Journey services and reflections, culminating in the sacred celebrations of Holy Week and the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection. Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Holy Friday, Jragalouits, and Easter Sunday were observed with reverence, beauty, and active participation by parishioners of all ages.

Major feast days—including Vartavar, the Feast of the Assumption and Name Day of St. Mary, Khatchverats (Exaltation of the Holy Cross), and the Blessing of the Pomegranate, were celebrated with devotion, catechesis, and fellowship, reaffirming the inseparable bond between Armenian Christian faith and tradition.

The parish also gathered in prayerful remembrance and witness on significant commemorative occasions, including the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide, Armenia's Independence Day, and moments of solidarity with Holy Etchmiadzin and the Armenian Church worldwide. In those moments, we were reminded that our faith is rooted in a living tradition, one that binds us to our ancestors, strengthens our people today, and connects us to the wider Church throughout the world.

3. Youth Engagement Shnorhali School Programs/ ACYOA Juniors and Seniors

Shnorhali School continued to serve as a cornerstone of faith formation, education, and cultural preservation. Throughout the year, students participated actively in the liturgical life of the Church, joining the parish for Badarak, feast days, and special services, and receiving regular instruction in the meaning of our worship and traditions.

The academic year was enriched by programs such as the Day of Knowledge, Back-to-School Social, Hantes and Graduation, Annual Talent Show honoring St. Nerses Shnorhali, and meaningful celebrations of Easter and Christmas. I am confident that these experiences helped shape our students not only academically but also spiritually and culturally. The mission of our school remains to strengthen our students' sense of identity and belonging within our Armenian Christian tradition. Students also engaged in service and outreach initiatives, including projects in support of Artsakh families, learning from an early age that faith is expressed through compassion and action.

Youth ministry remained vibrant and dynamic through the dedicated work of the ACYOA Juniors and Seniors. The Juniors participated in regular meetings, service projects, fellowship events, and athletic preparation, culminating in their participation in the ACYOA Juniors Fall Sports Weekend, where they represented St. Mary with pride and faith, earning the Volleyball Championship Trophy. The ACYOA Seniors continued their journey of fellowship, spiritual growth, and service through retreats, Bible studies, charitable fundraising, and community engagement. Both groups demonstrated leadership, generosity, and a strong sense of belonging to the Church.

4. Community Life and Cultural Preservation

Community life at St. Mary continued to flourish in 2025 through fellowship, hospitality, and a shared commitment to nurturing meaningful relationships. Each Sunday, following the Divine Liturgy, parishioners gathered for Fellowship Hour—a cherished time of conversation, connection, and mutual support. Generously hosted by parish families and organizations, these gatherings strengthened personal bonds and fostered a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which newcomers and longtime members alike felt at home.

Throughout the year, the parish also served as a vibrant center for Armenian cultural and educational expression. St. Mary hosted a wide range of events, including concerts, dance performances, and artistic workshops, welcoming talented artists and ensembles from Armenia and the diaspora offering opportunities for cultural exchange, deepened appreciation for our heritage, and affirmed the important role of the Church as a guardian and living witness of Armenian identity.

Our signature parish events once again stood at the heart of community life. The Spring and Fall Armenian Food Festivals, the Christmas Market, and the revived New Year's Eve Celebration drew parishioners, neighbors, and friends together in joyful fellowship. Through music, food, shared labor, and celebration, our goal remains to reflect the generosity and hospitality for which our community is known, while also strengthening our parish's connection with the wider community.

5. Charity, Outreach, and Service

In 2025, St. Mary Armenian Church remained firmly committed to living the Gospel through acts of service, generosity, and compassion. Throughout the year, parish organizations, youth groups, and individual parishioners responded to the needs of others both locally and abroad, bearing witness to Christ's love through concrete acts of care. Our outreach reflected the belief that faith is not only professed in prayer, but also revealed in service to those in need.

A particular focus of our charitable efforts remained the ongoing humanitarian crisis affecting the Armenian people, especially displaced families from Artsakh and those facing hardship in Armenia. Through youth-led initiatives, school-based service projects, and parish-wide fundraising efforts, St. Mary offered tangible support while fostering a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility within our community. These efforts also served as moments of education and awareness, especially for our younger parishioners, who learned that compassion is an essential expression of Christian discipleship.

At the local level, the parish continued its outreach through visits to senior living communities, offering prayer, sacred music, and personal presence to those who often experience isolation. Such visits reminded both visitors and residents that the Church's ministry extends beyond the walls of the sanctuary and that every stage of life remains sacred and worthy of care and attention.

Through all these efforts, St. Mary sought to promote dignity, compassion, and justice, responding to human need with humility and faith. Whether through prayer, generosity, or personal presence, our parish community continued to affirm that service is central to the life of the Church and an essential way we live out the Gospel in the world.

6. Education, Faith Formation, and Bible Study

Education and faith formation remained a vital and life-giving dimension of parish life throughout 2025. Adult faith formation opportunities were offered with the aim of deepening spiritual understanding, encouraging thoughtful reflection, and strengthening the connection between Scripture, worship, and daily Christian life.

Two major Bible Study series anchored this effort during the year. In the spring, parishioners gathered for a study on St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, reflecting on themes of joy, humility, perseverance, and life in Christ. During this year of the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed, we also offered an eight-week study dedicated to exploring the history, theology, and enduring significance of the Creed, deepening our understanding of the faith we proclaim each Sunday in the Badarak. In the fall, the parish embarked on a comprehensive nine-week study of the Gospel of John, which invited the participants to engage more deeply with the theological richness and spiritual vision of the Evangelist.

In addition to Bible Study, we hosted lectures, workshops, and retreats that enriched our community's intellectual and theological life, creating space for thoughtful conversation, deeper reflection, and the kind of honest questions that help faith mature.

7. Leadership, Representation, and Ecumenical Engagement

St. Mary Armenian Church remained actively engaged in the life of the Diocese through participation in the Diocesan Assembly, diocesan meetings, and virtual parish visitations with our Primate, helping us stay connected, informed, and united in serving the wider Church and Diocesan parishes.

Beyond the Diocese, the Armenian Church's voice was represented at national and international gatherings through participation in Christian Churches Together (CCT) and National Council of Churches (NCC) initiatives. In these settings, concerns such as religious freedom, Christian unity, and the struggles of persecuted and marginalized communities, especially Armenian Christians, were shared within the broader ecumenical dialogue. Through this continued involvement, we remained connected to the wider mission of our Church and engaged thoughtfully with the larger Christian community, bearing witness to our faith and history while affirming our responsibility to serve both the Church and society.

8. Stewardship, Service, and Gratitude

Throughout the year, careful attention was given also to the stewardship, care, and beautification of our church facilities. The Parish Council and I worked diligently to ensure that the House of God remains a place of dignity, reverence, and welcome, for worship, fellowship, and community life. From routine maintenance to thoughtful improvements, we embraced our shared responsibility to honor God through the sacred spaces entrusted to our care.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who faithfully serve our parish. I am deeply thankful for the leadership and collaboration of our Parish Council and Diocesan Delegates; the dedication of the Women's Guild, ACYOA leadership, and the administration and teachers of our Shnorhali School; and the steadfast service of our Deacons, Altar Servers, Choir members, Ushers, volunteers, and parish staff. Each contribution, whether seen or unseen, has strengthened our parish and made possible the vibrant spiritual, educational, and communal life we share.

We also pause in prayerful remembrance of those beloved members of our parish family who were called to their eternal rest during this past year. We give thanks for their lives, their faith, and their devotion to the Church. May the Lord grant rest to their souls, comfort to their families, and may their memory remain a blessing within our community.

As we give thanks for the year 2025, we do so with confidence that God continues to guide St. Mary Armenian Church with purpose and grace. May the blessings and lessons of this past year inspire us to deepen our faith, strengthen our unity, and renew our commitment to serve Christ and one another with love.

With prayerful gratitude,

Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan

Parish Council Report

Dear Parishioners and Members of St. Mary Church,

Throughout 2025 our parish continued to grow in faith and in service of our community. As chair of Parish Council (PC), I am deeply grateful for the dedication of PC members, all Auxiliary Organizations, Committees, and the plentiful volunteers who have made this year, yet another one filled with prosperity.

In 2025, PC held a variety of events and hosted several fellowship hours. Key events included our staple spring and fall Food & Cultural festivals, Annual Name Day of the church and Grape Blessing luncheon. We hosted 2 performances by ArmFolk dancers and musicians who were on a US tour in late summer. In

December, we celebrated the Church's 93rd Anniversary, honoring Dn. Mark Krikorian for his steadfast service. The Christmas Market this year was exceptionally successful, hosting 10 vendors, face-painting and pictures with Santa.

PC continued efforts to engage the parishioners and foster a service-centered environment. Thus, we organized various events to accomplish these objectives. As we press forward into 2026, we have an obligation to exercise: "Love One Another" command; Gospel of St. John 13:34-35, which also was the theme at 123rdDiocesan Assembly held in May 2025.

We look forward to the future filled with confidence, equipped with our God given talents. Thankfully, we are guided by Der Hovsep's extraordinary leadership, and so we will continue to grow in faith, love, and service to God first and community second.

As I complete my journey with the Parish Council, elected and served for the past 6 years and elected chairwoman of the Parish Council for the past 5 years, I am indebted to each and every individual who made my calling such a blessing and rewarding. Words alone cannot adequately express my gratitude. I extend heartfelt appreciation to the generosity of our parishioners and the hard work of all volunteers who answered the call to service without any hesitation. It is my prayer and hope to see the different initiatives I embarked on over the past 5 years continue and flourish. Initiatives that are close to my heart are: Family Worship Day held on the last Sunday of each month inviting families with younger children; St. Mary Garden Committee; Fellowship Hour Hospitality Committee; Altar Flowers providers; Mentoring and Career Day; Young Professionals Group; Cultural Programs during the Food Festivals; Silent Auction; and Christmas Market. I will continue to serve our church and community in other, different capacities.

I wish the Parish Council, all Auxiliary Organizations and Committees, and the greater Community continued prosperity.

Shoghig M. Sahakyan
Chairwoman
Parish Council

2025 Diocesan Delegates Report

The 123rd Diocesan Assembly of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) was held May 1 - 3, 2025, in Haverhill, Massachusetts hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church. The theme of the assembly was "Love one Another" (John 13:34). It was attended by delegates Ohannes Sivaslian, Sarine Zenian, and Zaven Kalayjian. According to a proposal presented at a previous Diocesan Assembly to encourage younger members of our parishes to become involved at the Parish and Diocesan levels, a Youth Observer attended alongside St. Mary's elected delegates. Alex Madajian was the Youth Observer from St. Mary.

The Bishop's message about "Love One Another" focused on witnessing our faith through love and service to each other, both inside and outside of the Church.

Reports

Diocesan Council Chair Richard Papelian reviewed Council activities from 2024, which included:

- Emphasis on relevance to the community and parishes, and efficiency in operations
- More and varied communications using technology (web and zoom calls with parish leaders, Vemkar lectures, Sacrament videos, Greeters ministry, Evangelization ministry [in development]).

- St. Mary had a Zoom meeting with our Diocesan Liaison Mona Karoghlanian, Primate Mesrob Surpazan, and Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian on December 18, 2025 to discuss outreach activities at St. Mary.

- Visitations by the Primate Mesrob Surpazan
- More involvement of Diocesan Ministries with parishes, including ministry liaisons (ours is Sean McClure), retreats, and ministry Zoom calls
- New Staff Hires: Executive Director, Comptroller, Multimedia producer, and Social Media manager.
- Staff needs (as of the May 2025): Youth Ministry Director, Marketing director, Ministries Director
- Gorky Collection: the collection of works in Lisbon at the Gulbenkian Museum was appraised ($29.5 million) and catalogued. Insurance was updated, though there were no details regarding the kind or amount of insurance.
- As always, the Council expressed concern regarding the 25-35 year old age group. They are trying to address this with local and Diocesan programs, such as Meetings on the Plaza (for NYC) and "Church Chat" – a guided worship with the Primate. They are trying to package and export these programs to the parishes.
- Financials: positive cash flow. Looking for ways to increase revenue to the Diocese (e.g. through all rentals).

Organization Reports

- St. Nersess Seminary:
  - 40% of its operating costs come from ACEF investments. Alex Madajian (St. Mary Youth Observer) asked if the Diocese funds St. Nersess Seminary. St. Nersess Dean Der Mardiros replied "chem kider."
  - Diocese has started a Vocations ministry to encourage people to go to Seminary. Der Krikor is the head of that ministry.
    - It was noted that there is a standing resolution regarding active participation of women in the Divine Liturgy.
  - A 7th building (priest/guest-house) is being constructed at the Armonk facility.
- Legate's report:
  - Archbishop Vicken Aykazian discussed ecumenical efforts to recognize the Armenian Genocide and the Karabagh. This is important to counter the lobbying efforts on the part of Turkey and Azerbaijan.
- Auditing Committee:
  - Although the final financial reports were not submitted yet, the committee examined draft reports.
  - The committee noted a tremendous increase in capacity at the Diocese

- Developing a whistle-blower and donor confidentiality policy
- Employee retention credit $256k yet to come in (from COVID)
- The Committee welcomed the work of Fr. Tavit and Dr. Arlen in cataloguing all the relics and artifacts at the Diocese.

Breakout Sessions were held to discuss specific topics, including:

- ACYOA activities and concerns.
  - While chapters report lower attendance, retreats are becoming more popular
- Children and Family Ministries:
  - "Living the Liturgy" – children/family participation in Badarak.
  - New Sunday School curriculum has been deployed, but there is much work to be done still.
- Armenian Language Ministry
  - Dn. Hovannes Khosdeghian has been hired to be the specialist responsible for the ministry.
- Communications ministry
  - VEMKAR and the weekly electronic newsletter have a new audience with the ArmenianChurch.us website. Old materials will also be archived there.
  - New videos have been created on numerous topics – for example The Holy Baptism, Getting Married in the Armenian Church, and Home Blessings.

Cathedral Renovation

- Phase 2 needs to be redefined to include new work that opened up during the course of Phase 1, including addressing structural and zoning issues.

Proposals

- NOT APPROVED: St. Gregory submitted an amendment to Bylaw 22 which would allow remote/virtual attendance of Parish Assemblies for those with extenuating circumstances.
- TABLED for one year: Proposal to allow Stewardship program to run in parallel with the current membership/dues system. The proposal was tabled in order to gather more data.
- WITHDRAWN: Proposal regarding the Stewardship program to alleviate concerns of abuse of said program.
- APPROVED: Put proposals and New Business earlier in the agenda (on Friday) for the Diocesan Assemblies.

New Business: None.
Old Business: None.

Respectfully submitted,
Zaven Kalayjian, Ohannes Sivaslian and Sarine Zenian

Board of Stewards Report

Board of Stewards was officially established in 1997, however the members of congregation have been serving as ushers since 1995 assisting in preparing the sanctuary for Sunday services and supporting parishioners and Parish Council members before, during, and after Badarak.

Ushers play an essential role in welcoming and assisting all who attend services. Their responsibilities include:

- Welcoming visitors and parishioners as they arrive, providing assistance before and during services, and answering questions from visitors
- Ensuring an adequate supply of candles, as well as masks, hand sanitizers, and other essential items at the church entrance
- Maintaining the entrance, candle area, and sanctuary in proper condition following services
- Keeping the signage table clean, organized, and up to date
- Maintaining a fully stocked first aid kit and other necessary supplies, as well as coloring paper and pencils for the children.

Ushers ensure that new visitors feel welcomed by encouraging them to share their contact information, answering questions, providing information about the church, and introducing them to other parishioners to help establish meaningful connections.

This year's continued focus was on safety and wellness. In addition to existing fire safety measures, including fire blankets and fire extinguishers, four members of the usher team successfully completed CPR and AED training and are now certified. The AED equipment was generously donated by parishioners.

On March 30, 2025 we have conducted a workshop for ushers and several members of the parish council on based on the training materials provided by Greeter Ministry manual provided by the Diocese. During the 90-minute training we reviewed the purpose, tasks, and responsibilities of this important ministry. The session provided an opportunity to discuss current challenges and opportunities, share best practices, and strengthen our commitment to welcoming parishioners and visitors with warmth and grace.

Throughout the year, ushers supported major services, including Christmas services, Holy Week, Easter, and New Year's Eve. Ushers are also present for other events such as weddings and funerals when requested. The usher team works closely with Parish Council members, sharing feedback and suggestions to improve the overall experience of parishioners during services.

Ushers are always available to operate the lift and elevator as needed to assist parishioners in accessing the hall. A fully stocked first aid kit, as well as water and tissues, is available at the usher station.

Focus for 2026 is to recognize upcoming 30th anniversary of official establishment of Board of Stewards of St. Mary Armenian Church. Special Program will be prepared and presented during the year.

We are grateful for our dedicated volunteers who serve as ushers: Sara Arabian, Garbis Chubukian, Marina Gagikian, Rouzanna Oganissian, Anna Seferian, Suzy Simonyan, and Patricia Yeghissian (listed alphabetically).

Anna V. Seferian

The Deacons' and Altar Servers' Ministry continued to be active and vibrant throughout 2025. We are truly blessed to have many dedicated young men who faithfully serve at the altar during Sunday Badarak and other liturgical services. Their reverence, commitment, and engagement greatly enrich the worship life of our parish.

Several of our deacons and altar servers participated in the St. Nersess Deacons' Training Program over the summer, further deepening their liturgical knowledge and formation. In addition, the Acolyte Training Program initiated last year continued to bear fruit. Following the 9-week training program led by Der Hovsep to prepare altar servers for ordination, the ministry has remained active and growing.

Currently, eight young men are actively participating in ongoing training, eagerly learning and preparing themselves for ordination when our Primate, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, visits our parish in May. Their dedication and enthusiasm are a source of great encouragement and hope for the future of our Church.

We give thanks to God for these devoted servants and pray that He continues to guide and strengthen them in their ministry at the holy altar.

Respectfully submitted,
Dn. Mark Krikorian

Church Choir Report

We often have a full choir loft on Sundays including many young talented singers. We are very grateful for the continued dedicated leadership of Edita Dolunts Kalyjian and Hratch Semerjian in her absence.

There are a few early risers who sing with the deacons at the morning service. The choir sang leaving the sanctuary after the bardarak and in the social hall on the evenings of January 5 and Holy Saturday.

There was a delightful choir gathering on Saturday December 15 where Hratch led us in the singing of traditional Armenian songs after a delicious potluck dinner.

Theodore Xakellis
Choir Secretary

St. Mary Narek Bell Choir

The Narek Bell Choir of St. Mary's Armenian Church was founded in 2000 under the guidance of Fr. Vertanes Kalayjian and Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, and was reactivated in April 2024 under the direction of Fr. Hovsep Karaptyan. In 2025, due to growing interest, the ensemble expanded into two groups: one for older members and one for younger musicians. Together, the groups comprise 12 dedicated young musicians: Jackie Guiragossian, Bedros Guiragossian, Mason Williams, Mane Melik-Stepanyan, Vartan Karapetyan, Davit Barseghyan, Maria Baloyan, Nare Melik-Stepanyan, Aleks Nazaryan, Ella Badalyan, Lina Avetisyan, and Sevak Stepanyan. The choir is directed by Maria Stepanyan. Throughout 2025, the group held weekly rehearsals following Badarak and performed at a local nursing home, St. Mary's Food Festivals, and the Anniversary Celebration of St. Mary's Church.

Respectfully submitted by Maria Stepanyan

St. Mary Food Festivals Report

The Parish Council sponsored two food festivals in 2025, following the usual pattern established during the last dozen plus years:

1) The Spring Food Festival was held from May 16th through May 18th, consisting of three lunches (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), and two dinners (Friday and Saturday);

2) The Fall Food Festival was held from October 3rd through October 5th, consisting also of three lunches (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), and two dinners (Friday and Saturday).

No significant attendance or daily sales records were broken at either festival. Nevertheless, we still had fairly good turnouts, and more significantly we were able to keep the expenses lower as usual. As a result, we had net combined proceeds of **$100,443.69** for the two food festivals, our best best showing for the last several years, in dollar figures. Of course, inflation has something to do with it too…

Several factors contributed to our success, as usual: The excellent publicity efforts (especially the banners across Wisconsin Avenue, the numerous signs, posters and mailings), the quality and diversity of the delicious food offered, the income from the vendors, and the generous donations. Let us keep in mind however, none of this would have been possible without the tremendous contributions from our volunteers, and the general support from the Armenian and the at-large community.

Thank you again, one and all, for your tremendous support, as the raised funds go long ways in meeting the operational needs of our church. For a more detailed description of the financials, please refer to the Festival Financial Reports appearing elsewhere in this report.

On a personal note, I decided a while ago this was going to be my last year as Treasurer of St Mary Food Festivals, and that it is time to pass the baton to somebody else. I feel honored to have held this position for the last eighteen years, succeeding in the footsteps of some distinguished volunteers before me. Thank you again for the confidence placed in me and the support I have received over the years.

Respectfully submitted,
Raffi Karahisar, Treasurer

2025 - ACYOA Seniors Report

We are grateful to conclude the third consecutive year of an active St. Mary ACYOA chapter following an eight-year period of dormancy. Once again, our chapter has served as a welcoming and meaningful space for young adults in the greater Washington, D.C. area to connect with one another and grow in their faith. The chapter continues to provide an important sense of community and a spiritual home for Armenian young adults arriving in the D.C. area.

In addition to maintaining strong involvement within the St. Mary parish, our chapter has remained actively engaged at the diocesan level. Nearly every Eastern Diocese ACYOA event included participation from at least one chapter member, including Sports Weekend, the ACYOA Assembly, St. Nerses Deacons' Training, the ACYOA Fall Retreat, and several smaller gatherings. Our chapter also provided Youth Observers for the Diocesan Assembly and for an ecumenical event in Philadelphia hosted by Christian Churches Together.

Locally, ACYOA members were involved in numerous parish events, including both Food Festivals, the Winter Pop-Up Market, Palm Sunday and Easter services, and the Vartavar celebration. We are also proud that many of our members serve and lead regularly in parish ministries, including the Shnorhali Sunday School, church choir, and altar service. In addition, the chapter hosted a bake sale to support AYO!'s Christmas Project and the She Can Project, raising nearly $600 in support of these important charitable initiatives.

Prayerfully, we look forward to continuing to strengthen the chapter and build a sustainable community

where Armenian young adults can support one another in faith and fellowship. We respectfully ask for continued support, as the vitality of the ACYOA chapter reflects the spiritual life of the young adults who will either settle in the D.C. area or carry their faith into Armenian communities elsewhere. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve and extend sincere thanks to Der Hovsep and the Parish Council for their continued guidance and support.

Respectfully submitted by Nicolette Blackwell

ACYOA JUNIORS 2025 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 2nd – Meeting - At the March Juniors meeting, the teens gathered in the office where they enjoyed pizza, fellowship, and a spiritual message about stewardship.
Feb 8th – Laser Tag - Our ACYOA Laser Tag Night was a great success, bringing together our youth for an evening of fun, fellowship, and friendly competition! Everyone had a blast playing laser tag, enjoying delicious pizza and arcade games, and sharing laughter throughout the night.
Mar 2nd – 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 sharing a spiritual message with the teens.
Mar 9th – Sack Lunches for Needy – The ACYOA Juniors youth group gathered in the kitchen to prepare sack lunches for those in need through the Small Things Matter non-profit organization. With the generous donations of supplies from our parish families, the youth successfully assembled 100 lunches. These meals were delivered to a low-income housing community for the elderly in Montgomery County. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the parents, teens, and particularly to Greg and Katie Kumkumian for their efforts in organizing this event.

Mar 19th – Wed Night Lenten Dinner – The ACYOA Juniors worked with the ACYOA Seniors to provide a vegan dinner for one of the Lenten programs.
Apr 6th – Meeting – At the monthly meeting the students participated in a short Bible Study about encouraging others. Then the students wrote out Easter cards which were sent to the Senior Citizens of the parish (Avaks), as an act of service and encouragement.
Apr 13th – Palm Sunday/Youth Sunday – On Palm Sunday, the Junior ACYOA members, celebrated Youth Sunday at a special Coffee hour, organized by the ACYOA Seniors. The newly elected officials and members of ACYOA were blessed by Der Hovsep Karapetyan during a special prayer service after Badarak.
May 4th – Meeting – At the monthly meeting the students participated in a Bible Study discussion and concerning the day's reading about the need to be born again from water and the spirit.
May 10th – End of Year Party - On May 10th, the Murad family graciously hosted an end-of-year party for the teens at their home in Vienna. The gathering featured a variety of activities, including soccer and volleyball, alongside delicious hotdogs and hamburgers prepared with love by Der Hovsep Karapetyan. The teens also honored the graduating High School seniors by writing messages in graduation cards and participating in the annual know-your-graduate game. The event culminated with a year end slide show. Congratulations to our ACYOA Junior High School graduates: Taggie Gomtsyan, Ani Grigoryan, Yeva Grigoryan, Anahit Harutyunyan, Gurgen Manukyan, Madeleine Movsessian, and Alek Tekeyan.
Jul 27th – Vardavar – The ACYOA Juniors, the Ushers, and Sunday School sponsored and participated in the annual water fight, following the Divine Liturgy.
Aug/Sept – Sports Practice – The teens met after church for volleyball and basketball practice, in preparation for the Sports Weekend event. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our practice coaches: Dr. Greg

Kumkumian, Sara Arabian, Ari Arzumanian, and Sevan Topjian. We are also grateful to the others who have helped with practices: Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, Haig Topjian, Menua Keshishian, and Ara Arabian. Their dedication and encouragement have been instrumental in preparing our Juniors for this exciting event.

Sept 14th – Bake Sale -The St. Mary teens held a successful bake sale to raise funds for the ACYOA Juniors Sports Weekend trip to New Jersey. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the teens and their parents who contributed baked goods, to our donors who purchased and donated towards this cause, and to Anna Seferian for her efforts in organizing the event.

Oct 10th-13th – Sports Weekend - Over the Columbus Day weekend, 28 teens from St. Mary ACYOA Junior youth group joined participants from across the Eastern Diocese at the ACYOA Juniors Fall Sports Weekend. Hosted by the ACYOA Juniors chapter of St. Leon Armenian Apostolic Church in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, this year's event, themed "Hye Rooted," brought together over 250 teenagers from 16 Diocesan parishes for a memorable weekend of faith, fellowship, and friendly competition. The St. Mary Juniors emerged victorious in the volleyball championship, bringing home the volleyball trophy! Additionally, we had students participating in individual sports such as ping pong, chess, and backgammon. Elizabeth "Lizzy" Aslanyan achieved second place in advanced backgammon, while Allen Arjona received a special award for good sportsmanship!

We would like to express our gratitude to the entire parish and Der Hovsep Karapetyan for their support of the teens, which made this trip possible. We extend a special thank you to our committed chaperones, Kareen Guiragossian, Sintia Petrosian, Avedis Seferian, and Suzy Simonyan. Additionally, we wish to acknowledge our organizers and coaches, Sara Arabian, Ari Arzumanian, Becky Bagdasarian, Greg Kumkumian, Sintia Petrosian, Sevan Topjian, and all the parents who contributed their assistance.

Oct 19th – Trophy Installation - Following badarak, during Coffee Hour, the ACYOA Juniors formally presented their volleyball championship trophy to Der Hovsep, expressing gratitude for his blessing, encouragement, and support of the parish youth. Der Hayr congratulated the group for representing St. Mary with excellence both on and off the court.

Nov 2nd – Meeting – The Juniors gathered for pizza at their monthly meeting after badarak. The teens participated in a Bible study concerning discipleship and how this can be facilitated via the ACYOA's Five Circles of the cross: Witness, Service, Fellowship, Education tied together with Worship.

Nov 8th - Armenian Art Workshop - St. Mary ACYOA members (Seniors and Junior) met in church hall where they explored Armenian art through an engaging interactive workshop, conducted by Fr. Garabed Kochakian. The session opened with a special prayer traditionally recited before painting Holy Icons, followed by a brief PowerPoint presentation that highlighted several uses for the Armenian letters and the importance of their sequence within the alphabet. It also touched upon the abbreviations, motifs, and colors that are characteristic of sacred icons. After the presentation, the group tried their hand at painting Armenian decorative letters. The young people took a lunch break where they had a time of Q and A with Der Garabed and enjoyed each other's company.

Dec 13th – Christmas Party – More than 30 St. Mary ACYOA Juniors, together with their parents, gathered in the church hall for a joyful Christmas celebration. The evening began with a festive potluck dinner. Following the meal, Der Hovsep led the teens in the Evening Prayer Service. His reflection focused on the seasons of Advent and Christmas, emphasizing the true meaning of the gift God has given us in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Afterwards, the teens divided into teams for the "Crazy Christmas Competition," a series of fun and engaging challenges that tested their observation skills, coordination, and teamwork. The teens also collected and donated toys for the benefit of Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., sharing the joy of the season with those in need.

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, and assisted the ushers with Palm Sunday preparations. Seventeen of our teens participated in

summer programs at St Vartan Camp, and St Nersess Seminary (teen choir training, deacon training, Sr. High Conference)

Thanks go out to Der Hovsep, Yn Jennifer, parent volunteers, parishioners who helped host and organize events, and to our parent treasurer Avedis Seferian. The ACYOA Juniors looks forward to continuing their programming in the upcoming year. To be included on the email list for the Juniors, please send your contact information to stMaryYouthDC@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Bagdasarian
Yn Jennifer Karapetyan
Youth Advisors

The Ararat Avak Society
2025 Report

In 2025, 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 began with an Armenian Christmas luncheon on January 6 and continued the following week with a commemorative luncheon in honor of Hrant Dink that included a slide show presentation; a Soorp Sarkis Luncheon took place in February that included a Q & A by Anna Seferian, a violin performance by Christine Kharazian, as well as a surprise singing performance by Vartkes Keshishian; and a Ghach Veratz luncheon took place in September. All luncheons and events served a homemade spread to include a variety of main dishes, sides and desserts. In October, homemade baklava was donated to the Armenian Youth Center Golf Fore Kids Golf Tournament for the seventh year in a row. The Ararat Avak Society also donated fresh, homemade baked goods for the ACYOA Juniors bake sale. The year ended with a special Christmas dinner at the Hallajian residence to honor with gratitude all the volunteers who assisted throughout the year.

The Ararat Avak Society sincerely appreciates and recognizes those who have supported the Society's mission throughout the year with their generous donations: Nadia Carson, Onnik Cecki (in memory of Arsaluys Cecki) Anahid Ghazaryan, Manoug and Talin Habibian, Arto and Takuhi Hallajian (in memory of Lucine Missirian), Jack and Siran Levonian, Kevork and Varti Marashlian, Lola Pickering (in memory of Clemence Yazmajian), Karine Sahakian, Raffi and Shoghig Sahakyan (in memory of Lucine Missirian), Margie Satian, David and Sue Sayan, Hratch Semerjian, Mari Shafakian (in memory of Mardiros Shafakian and in memory of Lucine Missirian), and Varoujan and Leeza Varoujanian.

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, Alice Guida, Talin Habibian, Charlie Habibian, Vartan Karapetyan, Caroline Matikyan, Natalie Matikyan, Shoghig Sahakyan, Nayiree Sarkissian, Anna Seferian, Sarkis Simonian, Ani Simsek, Kevork Tashjian, 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 2026 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 welcome 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. If you would like to contribute in any way in support of the Ararat Avak Society's mission, you 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. We thank the community for its continued support, and we look forward to seeing everyone in 2026!

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 2025-2026 Academic Year

WHO WE ARE

Shnorhali School, operating under the auspices of St. Mary Church, is dedicated to preserving and strengthening Armenian Christian identity through education. The school is committed to cultivating a love for God, pride in the Armenian language, and a deep connection to Armenian history, culture, and traditions.

Our mission is to teach Armenian language and culture while supporting students and families in living meaningful Armenian Christian lives and actively engaging with their community. Shnorhali School serves students from kindergarten through grade twelve and offers a structured educational experience rooted in faith, heritage, and continuity.

The school's academic program is built on two core curricular pillars: **Christian Education** and **Armenian Language and Culture**. Together, these programs provide students with a comprehensive opportunity to explore, understand, and sustain their Armenian Christian heritage in a thoughtful and age-appropriate manner.

2025-2026 OVERVIEW:

The 2025–2026 academic year at Shnorhali School commenced on August 24, marking the beginning of another year dedicated to meaningful learning and cultural engagement for the children of our Armenian community. Students were welcomed by the Principal and faculty during the traditional **Day of Knowledge and Education** celebration.

In keeping with longstanding tradition, the first day of school included an assessment of students' knowledge in Armenian language, history, and culture. These evaluations help guide instruction throughout the year and ensure that educational goals remain aligned with students' needs and proficiency levels.

ACADEMICS:

Shnorhali School's academic program is intentionally designed to meet the educational and cultural needs of our community. The curriculum emphasizes Armenian language, faith, and heritage while ensuring structured progression and age-appropriate learning for all students.
For grades K–8, the academic program includes Eastern Armenian, Armenian History, and Christian Education (Religion). Students in grades 9-12 continue their religious education and have opportunities to earn community service hours, reinforcing the importance of faith-based leadership and service within the

Armenian community.

The school follows a structured Armenian language curriculum, with clearly defined learning objectives for each grade level. Students are expected to master required material before advancing to the next level. All students complete a placement assessment to ensure appropriate placement; when assessment results differ from a student's public school grade, placement decisions are made collaboratively with families to best support student success.

Teachers prepare weekly lesson plans that integrate academic instruction with cultural components, allowing students to engage deeply with Armenian traditions, history, and values. The academic year is divided into four quarters, with assessments administered at the end of each quarter. Report cards and parent-teacher conferences follow, fostering open communication and shared responsibility for student progress.

Kindergarten Program

During the 2025-2026 academic year, Shnorhali School introduced a three-level Kindergarten structure designed to build a strong linguistic foundation before students begin first grade.

- **Sunshines (Foundational Level):** Designed for students ages 4+ with little or no prior Armenian knowledge. Instruction focuses on basic vocabulary and communication through poems, songs, and games. Exceptions may be made for younger students (ages 3.5+) who demonstrate prior Armenian exposure.

- **Explorers (Developing Level):** Students expand their vocabulary, strengthen comprehension skills, and begin forming basic sentence structures in Armenian.

- **Young Scholars (Senior Kindergarten Level):** Students prepare for first grade by learning the Armenian alphabet, developing early reading skills, and being introduced to basic grammar concepts.

This trilevel approach ensures that students enter first grade with confidence and are well prepared to master reading and writing skills effectively.

Enrichment and Specialized Instruction

In addition to Armenian Language and Culture, students participate in 30-minute rotating enrichment lessons in **History** and **Music**. Under the guidance of Mr. Haykaram Nahapetyan, students explore significant events in Armenian history, while Ms. Armine Khachatryan introduces students to Armenian folk music, composers, and songwriters, deepening their appreciation of Armenian artistic heritage.

Shnorhali School also offers a **Patarag Education Program**, which teaches students the structure, meaning, and spiritual significance of the Armenian Holy Liturgy. Instruction includes expert guidance on liturgical practices and the interpretation of major feast days and celebrations within the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Additionally, the school provides a **Conversational Armenian** course, giving students the opportunity to strengthen verbal fluency and confidence through guided practice with a native Armenian speaker.

Shnorhali School Alumni Engagement

Shnorhali School takes pride in its active alumni and young volunteers, whose contributions enrich the school's educational environment. Currently, 25 alumni support the school by assisting teachers, organizing events, and leading various activities. As a Certified Organization, Shnorhali School offers students and

alumni the opportunity to earn the prestigious Presidential Volunteer Service Award in recognition of their commitment to the school and community. This year, 11 volunteers were honored for their exceptional service, receiving the highest Gold Award along with a personal letter from the President of the United States.

Afterschool Clubs

To enrich our students' academic and creative lives, Shnorhali School offers a variety of afterschool clubs. This year, students had the opportunity to explore engaging activities designed to inspire learning, creativity, and personal growth.

- **Armenian Miniature Art and Birdletters:** Led by Suzan Davtyan, this club invites students to discover the beauty of Armenian miniature art and the traditional art of birdletters. Through hands-on projects, students explore intricate designs, patterns, and lettering, fostering artistic skills while connecting with Armenian cultural heritage.

- **Chess Club**: Led by Aren and Arman Grigoryan, the Chess Club builds critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic skills. At the end of the year, members compete in the annual chess tournament for recognition and awards, celebrating their growth and achievements.

- **Shnorhali Voices Spiritual Chorus:** The *Shnorhali Voices* Spiritual Chorus, led by **Armine Seropian,** guides students through Armenian sacred music, helping them understand the stories behind traditional hymns. Performances at events like Mother's Day and special field trips deepen students' connection to faith and heritage.

- **Acolyte Training Program: Growing in Faith and Service:** Led by our Pastor, **Ter Hovsep**, this program teaches students liturgical practices, altar service, and the meaning behind sacred rituals. Hands-on learning and field trips, including a visit to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, strengthen their spiritual growth and devotion.

Together, these clubs and programs provide students with opportunities to grow academically, creatively, and spiritually, fostering a well-rounded and enriching school experience.

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

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

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
Sunshine Kindergarten	Hranush Bentley
Little Explorers Kindergarten	Knarik Brutyan
Young Scholars Kindergarten	Armine Seropian
1st Grade level	Susanna Avakyan
2nd Grade level	Anahit Sargsyan
3rd Grade level	Erna Stepanyan
4th Grade level	Karine Yenokyan
5th Grade level	Sona Avetisyan
6th Grade level	Arpi Badalian
7th Grade level	Anahit Davtyan
8th Grade level	Juletta Movsesyan
Conversational Armenian	Seda Baghdasaryan
Music Classes	Armine Khachatryan
History Classes	Haykaram Nahapetyan

Religious Education Program
(Prepared and submitted by Nicolette Blackwell)

Rligious Education Curriculum

Shnorhali School's Religious Education program proudly marks another successful year, highlighting its

meaningful impact on both the Parish community and the students it serves. The program focuses on nurturing students' spiritual development while teaching essential moral and biblical values such as compassion, humility, generosity, respect, faith, and love. Through this foundation, students grow into thoughtful and well-rounded individuals. The lessons learned extend beyond the classroom, strengthening students' faith and deepening their connection to their Armenian cultural and religious heritage.

Beginning in the 2024–2025 school year, the program implemented the Diocese's new *We Believe* curriculum, further enhancing students' learning by weaving together faith and culture. Instruction includes Armenian vocabulary words, a weekly moral theme, Scripture verses, and lessons inspired by Biblical stories and Armenian Church traditions. This comprehensive approach encourages spiritual growth while fostering a stronger appreciation for Armenian identity. Additional information about the *We Believe* curriculum can be found here: *We Believe Curriculum*.

Looking Forward – Throughout this year, Shnorhali students have continued cherished traditions, including the Christmas tree decoration and Christmas celebration, and presented a beautiful Nativity performance. As the year continues, students look forward to commemorating Soorp Sargis, serving their community through the annual Lenten Good Deed Project, and joyfully celebrating the Easter season together as a faith community.

Religious Education Teachers

The continued success of the Religious Education program is made possible by the dedication and commitment of our teachers. Through their guidance, students are encouraged to grow in their Christian faith and develop a deeper understanding of the traditions of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Rooted in the teachings of Christ and the values of the Armenian Church, our educators work closely with the Armenian Branch of Shnorhali School to provide students with meaningful instruction in faith. By helping children learn how to apply Christ's teachings in their daily lives, teachers build a strong spiritual foundation while nurturing respect and appreciation for the rich history and traditions of the Armenian Church.

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, Heghine 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 2025-2026 Academic Year

Day of Knowledge and Education - On August 24, St. Mary's Shnorhali Armenian School officially opened the 2025–2026 academic year with the traditional **Day of Knowledge and Education**. Students completed assessments in Armenian language, history, and culture, followed by a meet-and-greet that brought together families, students, and faculty. The day concluded with a Holy Patarag, celebrated by Der Hovsep, highlighting the central role of faith, culture, and heritage in Armenian education.

Back-to-School Fun Event: On September 28, Shnorhali School hosted its annual **Back-to-School Social,** welcoming students, parents, parishioners, and volunteers. The event featured arts and crafts, face painting, an Armenian heritage trivia game, and a lively Kochari dance session led by the Armenian Art and Culture Club. The afternoon fostered community connection and celebrated Armenian traditions in a joyful and welcoming atmosphere.

Dancing with Our Roots: Shnorhali Students Meet Armenian Dance Ensemble
On September 14th, Shnorhali students had the unforgettable experience of connecting with their Armenian heritage through traditional dance. Visiting dancers from Armenia performed, and students and families joined in, learning steps and celebrating culture together. The event brought joy, pride, and a deeper connection to Armenian identity.

Talent Show: On November 16, Shnorhali School held its annual **Talent Show**, dedicated to honoring Saint Nerses Shnorhali. The program opened with a presentation on the saint's life and cultural legacy, followed by student performances in poetry, music, and dance. Additional highlights included an art showcase, student-created sports videos, and a traditional Armenian meal, all reflecting the community's deep connection to Armenian heritage.

Acolyte Training Program: During the fall semester, Shnorhali School launched an Acolyte Training Program under the leadership of Der Hovsep and the church deacons. Through this program, boys learn the sacred traditions of the Armenian Apostolic Church, including church etiquette, prayers, and the responsibilities of an acolyte, preparing them for meaningful participation in the Holy Patarag.

Kindergarten Educational Program: The school introduced a monthly educational enrichment program for kindergarten students, featuring hands-on activities such as clay modeling, birdhouse construction, music, and storytelling. These sessions promote creativity, teamwork, fine motor development, and early cultural awareness within a nurturing environment.

Patarag Visits: As part of their spiritual formation, our students regularly participate in Holy Communion. Through monthly Patarag visits, they grow in their understanding of Christ's sacrifice and deepen their relationship with God, supporting their spiritual maturity and strengthening their faith within the life of the Church.

Midday Readings: Students were given the responsibility of reading passages from the Holy Scriptures during Patarag services. Each Sunday, a student shared God's message with the parish, creating a meaningful spiritual experience for both the students and their families.

St. Mary's 93rd Anniversary: Shnorhali School proudly participated in the celebrations marking the 93rd anniversary of St. Mary Armenian Church. Under the guidance of our music teacher, Ms. Armine Khachatryan, students prepared and performed a selection of beautiful Armenian songs. Their heartfelt performance enriched the celebration and captivated the audience, reflecting both the students' dedication and the school's strong connection to Armenian faith, culture, and tradition.

Beads of Love: Shnorhali Kindergarten Students Support Artsakh - This Christmas season, Shnorhali School's kindergarten students showed that even the smallest hands can make a big impact. Through their project, *Beads of Love: Hands Together for Artsakh Kids*, they crafted handmade bracelets to support displaced children and families from Artsakh. Partnering with Amicus Youth, founded by Ani Nishanian, the students' efforts, along with community generosity, raised over $650 for the Anna Astvatsaturian Foundation's "Ser Artsakh" program, bringing hope, care, and comfort to those in need.

Christmas Tree Decoration: Shnorhali students, parents, and volunteers gathered to decorate the Church's Christmas tree, marking the beginning of the Holy Christmas season. Adorned with crosses, angels, and a

Nativity scene, the tree became a symbol of faith, hope, and joy. This cherished tradition reflected the students' creativity and the unity of our church community, making it a meaningful celebration of the season.

Christmas Celebrations: Students celebrated the Feast of the Nativity through a joyful gathering that brought together faith, culture, and the spirit of the season. The celebration included a meaningful message from Father Hovsep, an interactive trivia activity, festive crafts, and a special visit from Santa Claus. Students participated in holiday activities such as decorating cupcakes, writing letters to Santa, and preparing reindeer food.

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Events From The Second Half Of The 2024-2025 Academic Year

During the second half of the academic year, **Shnorhali School**, in collaboration with its dedicated teachers, volunteers, clergy, and families, organized a wide range of educational, spiritual, and cultural events. These experiences deepened students' connection to their faith, strengthened their understanding of Armenian heritage, and reinforced the strong sense of community that defines Shnorhali School.

Spiritual Fall Party: The 1st–3rd grade religion classes celebrated a Spiritual Fall Party based on 2 Timothy 1:7. Through creative activities and discussion, students learned about love, strength, and self-discipline, and how faith helps them approach challenges with courage and care.

Eve of Theophany and Nativity - Students gathered at St. Mary Armenian Church to commemorate the Eve of the Nativity and Theophany. Under the guidance of Father Hovsep Karapetyan, they reflected on the profound significance of both the birth and baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Scripture readings and prayer, students entered into a spirit of reverence and unity, deepening their understanding of the feast and their connection to the life of the Church.

Christmas Handes: Our Kindergarten class offered a beautiful opening performance of Armenian Christmas hymns, setting a reverent and joyful tone. Shnorhali students then led the audience back to Bethlehem, conveying the sacred significance of the night of our Lord Jesus Christ's birth through thoughtful acting and heartfelt singing.

Boon Barekendan Celebration: On March 2nd, students brought the joyful traditions of **Barekendan** to life through Tumanyan stories, games, dances, and reenactments. The celebration highlighted themes of abundance, community, and preparation for Lent, allowing students to experience Armenian cultural traditions in an engaging and meaningful way.

Soorp Sarkis and Valentine's Day: In observance of Soorp Sargis Day, the 1st–3rd grade classes took part in a presentation about the life and significance of Soorp Sargis and his role in the Armenian Church. Following the lesson, students enjoyed decorating Valentine-themed cookies.

Lenten Good Deed Project: During the Lenten season, Shnorhali students participated in a Good Deed Project supporting the restoration of our Mother Cathedral, St. Vartan, in New York. Through the collection of spare change, students learned the values of generosity and service while strengthening their connection to the Church. Together, our school community raised $655 in support of this important mission.

Easter Eve Celebration: Students explored the meaning of Easter symbols and sacred traditions through instruction from Father Hovsep and Religious Education Coordinator Nicolette Blackwell. The celebration included egg decorating and participation in the Holy Liturgy, helping students develop a deeper understanding of the significance of the Resurrection and its central place in our faith.

Palm Sunday - Students commemorated Palm Sunday by participating in *The Blessing of the Youth* service and a palm procession, remembering Christ's entry into Jerusalem. The celebration encouraged reflection on

the themes of Holy Week, including humility, love, and redemption.

Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide: On April 27, students presented a moving program titled "Aurora of Hope," honoring the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide. Combining documentary narrative with dramatic performance, the program began with a tribute to the Armenian people's ancient presence and cultural contributions in their historic homeland. Students then explored the role of international Christian figures, missionaries, clergy, and physicians, who, beginning in the 19th century, extended aid and solidarity to Armenians facing Ottoman repression. The performance served not only as a lesson in history, but also as a heartfelt expression of gratitude and remembrance, one carried forward by a new generation.

Mother's Day and Teachers Appreciation Week Celebrations: On May 11, students celebrated Mother's Day with participation in Holy Badarak and Holy Communion. Fr. Hovsep reflected on honoring three mothers: our biological mother, our Mother Church, and our Motherland. The week also included Teachers' Appreciation celebrations, during which students expressed gratitude through flowers, cards, and heartfelt gestures.

Participating in Food Festival: Shnorhali School students actively participated in St. Mary Church's Annual Spring Food Festival, presenting traditional Armenian dances and songs. Their enthusiasm and performances added vibrant energy to the event, making it a joyful celebration of Armenian culture and community.

Chess Tournament: The Shnorhali School Chess Tournament provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate strategic thinking, focus, and sportsmanship. Participants showcased their skills in a friendly competitive environment, with winners recognized during end-of-year celebrations.

"Shnorhali Voices" Spiritual Chorus: Singing Faith and Tradition: The "Shnorhali Voices" Spiritual Chorus gave students a meaningful experience in Armenian sacred music, learning both the melodies and the spiritual stories behind them. Their performances, including a special field trip and Mother's Day celebration, strengthened faith, celebrated tradition, and brought the school community together through song.

Field Trip Celebrating Faith, Service, and Achievement: Shnorhali School celebrated the completion of its Acolyte Training and *Shnorhali Voices* Spiritual Choir programs with a meaningful field trip to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Led by Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan and Mrs. Armine Seropian, students explored the Basilica's spiritual significance and sacred architecture. A highlight of the visit was the choir's reverent performance of *"Ter Voghormia,"* followed by a tour of the chapels representing Christian nations. The trip served as a proud milestone, honoring students' dedication and growth in faith and service.

End-of-Year Handes: Shnorhali School concluded the academic year with a meaningful End-of-Year Handes and Graduation Ceremony centered on the theme "Our Heritage, Our Faith." Students brought Armenian culture and spirituality to life through poetry, songs, and storytelling, honoring traditions passed down through generations. The event also recognized student achievements, Chess Tournament winners, dedicated volunteers, and participants of the Acolyte Training Program and *Shnorhali Voices* Spiritual Choir. The ceremony culminated in the graduation of two students, celebrated not only for their academic accomplishments but for their commitment to Armenian language, faith, and identity—marking a proud moment of continuity, gratitude, and hope for the future.

Shnorhali School's Website and Facebook Account: Shnorhali School's website (https://www.stmaryaac.org/shnorhali-school) and the 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.

Respectfully submitted,
Nunik Nishanian, Shnorhali School Principal

2025 - WED Fund Scholarship Committee Report

The William Ervant Docter (WED) Fund is administered by St. Mary Armenian Church to award scholarships to American citizens of Armenian origin studying at colleges in the United States or Canada. In 2025, 34 applications were considered by the WED Scholarship Committee, which awarded $45,000 in scholarships to 14 applicants, including $16,000 to graduate students and $29,000 to undergrads. The committee includes Eric Ashbahian, Bagrat Bayburtian, Tamar Sivaslian, Ivan G. Zhivkov, and Mark Krikorian.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Krikorian

Women's Guild 2025 Activity Report

2025 Women's Guild Executive Committee: Co-Chairs Beverly Sivaslian & Ani Derderian; Treasurer, Hrip Sivaslian; Assistant Treasurer, Nadya Koseian; Secretary, Roxanne Paul; Advisors, Maha Khouri & Rita Istepanian

2025 was an especially active guild for the St. Mary Women's Guild!
Jan. 4: We held our Christmas party mid-day in the church hall. First, a Christmas craft activity to make ornaments was led by Dee Rogers. Then, a delicious luncheon was catered by Nora's Kebab. A fun day was had by all.
Feb. 22: We had a membership meeting and a brunch hosted by the Executive Committee.
Mar. 12: Women's Guild members brought vegan dishes to provide the vespers dinner during the Lenten Lecture Series.
Mar. 15: A Saintly Women's Day service honoring Saint Gayane was held in the sanctuary followed by a sumptuous luncheon. Guest speaker Milena Oganessyan spoke to us about portrayals of Armenian women in visual arts through the ages.
Mar. 30: To mark the middle of the Lenten season, the Women's Guild members hosted a bountiful vegan dinner after Badarak in the church hall.
Apr. 5: A membership meeting was held to plan the Palm Sunday Bake Sale and the Spring Food Festival workshops. After the meeting, several members stayed to reorganize the kitchen. Labels were applied to drawers, cabinets and shelves to help everyone find kitchen supplies.
Apr. 7 & 11: Workshops were held to make baked goods in quantity for the Palm Sunday Bake Sale.
Apr. 13: Palm Sunday Bake Sale was held in church hall following Badarak.
Apr. 26-May14: Numerous workshops were held to make food for the Spring Food Festival.
May 16-18: The church held the Spring Food Festival—a coming together time for the whole church community to share our Armenian delicacies with the greater DC community.
May 31: We hosted a Hampartsoum luncheon after Badarak for the whole church community. During the luncheon, Dean Shahinian presented a $100,000 check from the estate of Levon Garabedian to the Women's Guild to be used for the church, but with the Women's Guild guiding how it is spent.
June 9: The Women's Guild presented a check for $6000 to the Parish Council from funds we had raised at our various events.
June: A luncheon was originally planned at the Artur and Beverly Sivaslian household, but was cancelled, because of the passing of our much-loved and dedicated member, Zivart Bolat.
Aug. 30-Oct.1: Numerous workshops were held to prepare food for the Fall Food Festival.

Oct. 3-5: The church hosted the Fall Food Festival. Once again, many Women's Guild members worked the ovens and volunteered at shifts on the food line, carryout and bake table.
Oct. 18: About a dozen Women's Guild members went on a fun outing to the Windridge Vineyards in Darnestown, MD to celebrate a successful season of food workshops and bazaar. Members brought a dish to share for lunch and purchased their own wine, if desired.
Dec. 6: Packaging workshop. Women's Guild members brought donations of baked goods for our Christmas Bake Sale the next day. Executive Committee members and friends packaged up and labeled all the donations.
Dec. 7: The Christmas Bake Sale was held after Badarak and before the Church Anniversary Dinner. The Women's Guild thanks church members who supported us by purchasing baked goods. Any baked goods left over were donated to the ACYOA for their bake sale the next week.
Dec. 13: A Christmas party was graciously hosted by Artur and Beverly Sivaslian in their home. Members brought a dish to share and a small gift for the grab bag. Santa Claus (Armen Sivaslian) distributed the gifts. This was a wonderful way for us to celebrate the joyous Christmas season.

Respectfully submitted,
Roxanne Nersesian Paul
Outgoing Secretary

St. Mary's Gift Shop Report 2025

It is about 15 years ago, the St. Mary Book Store transformed to its current Gift Shop (GS) bringing Armenian heritage presented in souvenirs and edible goods. GS committee comprised of Raffi Sahakyan, Aline Guiragossian, Takuhi Hallajian, Shoghig Sahakyan and Nayiree Sarkissian has been working tirelessly to bring items representing Armenian culture and heritage. The store was open throughout the year every Sunday, during special events and by appointment.

GS Committee was blessed to have many dedicated parishioners providing their support. We would like to extend special thanks to Anna Seferian and Malvina Brown for their unwavering help during most Sundays as well as during the events.

The GS committee was instrumental in raising funds during both Food and Cultural festivals as well as Christmas Market. The latter ended the year in a festive mode. We would also like to extend our utmost appreciation to all our volunteers who answered the call to service, especially to Alice Guida, Clara Andonian, Davit Givargis, Eva Daryan, Nelson & Ruben Garces, Kevork Tashjian, Maha Khoury, Malvina Brown, Marale Garabedian, Lucy Murad, Nairy Pakoyan, Nicolette Blackwell, Roxanne and Alexis Schweitzer, Catherine, Daivd, Elaina and Michael Sahakian, Sue Elian, Varteni Ossareh, Virginia Abbe, and Virginia Lichtman, ,

The accomplishments of the GS continue to be the result of many parishioners who show their support through item donations, financial contributions as well as purchasing the goods available throughout the year.

We look forward to another fruitful and prosperous year in 2026.

Respectfully submitted: Raffi Sahakyan

Auditing Committee Report
For Fiscal Year 2025

Auditing Committee is pleased to report our members addressed each organization's financial report and provided fair and reasonable audits. Our three person committee was comprised of Robbie George (first year), Vladimir Shekoyan (second year), and Anna Seferian (second year). The following church organizations' financial reports (14) were identified to be audited and were divided among the three auditors:

Anna Seferian –ACEF, WED, Food Festivals, Avak Society, Investment (with Lazarian Fund), ACYOA Srs, Choir, Narek Bells

Vladimir Shekoyan – Operating Fund, Restricted Fund, Gift Shop, ACYOA Jrs, Women's Guild, Shnorhali School

Robbie George – due to communication issues, Robbie did not audit any organizations this year.

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 treasurer 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.

The Auditing Committee recommends continuing an annual Treasurer Peer Training for all parish organizations and their treasurers, ideally held early in the fiscal year. The training may be offered in person or virtually to ensure full participation. It is especially important for first time treasurers. When a single session is not feasible, the training may be incorporated into individual organization meetings and should include clear expectations for recordkeeping, standard format for financial records and reports, member support, and the responsibilities of the treasurer. Participation by the church treasurer, experienced organization treasurers, and maybe members of the Auditing Committee is strongly encouraged.

Ongoing training strengthens confidence, consistency, and accountability in financial practices, contributing to the overall financial health of the parish.

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
Anna Seferian
Vladimir Shekoyan