

# AVEDIS ԱԻԵՏԻՍ

7020 90<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Pinellas Park, Florida 33782

The Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian, Pastor



*"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.' And lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." (Matthew 2:1-11)*

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*by Father Hovnan Demerjian*

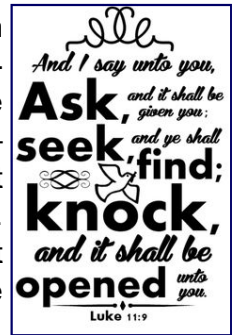
“If You Don’t Ask, the Answer is No”

Are you sometimes afraid to ask for things from others? I am; even at 42 years old. When I was younger, I was even more hesitant to ask people for things. Maybe some of you can relate to this. From asking a friendly guy or girl to dance in high school, to asking your boss for a raise; asking for things can definitely make us anxious. Why is that? Perhaps it is because, in order to ask for something, we have to make ourselves vulnerable. We show that we lack something. We set ourselves up for rejection if what we’re asking for is not granted. “Maybe she doesn’t like me as I like her,” or “maybe the boss doesn’t think I do as good a job as I do.”

Some of the most challenging and growth-filled experiences in my life have come when I was forced to risk rejection, put myself out there and ask for things. One example was a college class where our final assignment was to go out on the busy streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts and try to sign people up for the non-profit initiative we had worked on during the year. I dreaded bothering people, but even more I feared that my values and hard work would be rejected by people. Soon, however, I not only saw the risk of rejection but also the satisfaction when a stranger welcomed and supported the cause. A few years later, as a hospital chaplain, my dread returned whenever I was on call in the pediatric ward, going door to door to offer help. For me, the hardest part of the job was not being called to accompany people in often tragic times in their lives; it was asking people, unsolicited, if they would like to talk, or receive counsel or prayer.

Asking for things is especially difficult for some people, but I don’t think it is easy for anyone. Even the seasoned, salesperson who spends 10 hours a day on the phone asking for things and being rejected, even they are afraid to ask for some things. You see, it is relatively easy to ask people for unimportant things; i.e. “Would you like to purchase these state of the art solar panels?” But asking for important things, in which have your self is invested; this is hard; i.e. “Would you like to spend some time with me?” The more of us that is put out there in asking for something, the harder it is to ask.

Maybe this is the same reason why we have trouble properly asking things of God. Like anyone else in our lives—also with God—it is easier to ask for things that don’t have too much of us in it. “God, please help me with this test or this work presentation.” These are fine things to ask from God, but they don’t risk much, and therefore offer less reward. Jesus tells us in the Bible reading which precedes Advent, to not be afraid to risk more of ourselves in what we ask from God. “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”- Lk 11:9-10



Asking things of God is not a sales call; “God I’ll go to church more, will you secure this job for me? Great thanks.” Asking things of God is a whole-self and whole-life venture. That’s why Jesus says search, seek and knock at the door. This isn’t a three minute ask, but one that spans a lifetime. Asking things of God also risks the whole self, because God made you and I. God knows all of our thoughts in secret and knows the number of hairs on our heads. God literally sees through us, so it is no wonder that we can feel very vulnerable in seeking Him. But the risk of learning to be open and vulnerable before God is a risk worth taking, if we trust that God deeply loves us and that our best self is only possible in Him.

This Advent season, when we prepare the way for the Christmas arrival of our Lord, let us ask for and seek, that for which we were made. Let us never be afraid to confess our needs before the God who made us, and ask Him daily about His good intentions for us. For as we know, If You Don’t Ask, the Answer is No. If we do ask, the answer is given by Jesus; “For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened,” now and always; amen.

*by Michael Shahnasarian, Ph.D.*

This past year I had an opportunity to worship at a number of Armenian churches, both in Armenia and throughout the United States. My sojourns included assessments of exemplary church practices – namely, developing ideas to bring to St. Hagop to improve and enhance our Armenian Christian parish experiences.

With humility, my take-away observations on the essentials necessary to cultivate a loving, devoted congregation boil down to this: Placing our Lord above all, wholeheartedly submitting to Him, and basing all church decisions on how best to accomplish His will. Having subsumed these basic Christian tenets, a parish can prepare and implement its agenda: placing worship and related programming at the heart of its ministry, and sponsoring events that preserve and perpetuate our Armenian culture – including its language, foods, dance, music, arts, history, and traditions.

While hardly an epiphany, the statement above provides a beacon to guide our work at St. Hagop. Much of what we have undertaken - including our recently constructed church hall and enhancements to it – has been works in progress. They began with unwavering faith in God, and were attained through the vision and dedicated works of many selfless parishioners . . . literally for decades.

Attendance at weekly Badarak service continues to grow. Fr. Hovnan's recent Advent study programs deepened our insight and understanding of the true light of God's presence in Jesus Christ. We learned, studied, and reflected together in preparation for Christmas. Der Hovnan works tirelessly with our church leadership, youth, congregation at large, ecumenical community, and, of course, our Diocesan brethren in the spirit of 1 Thessalonians 5:18, In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Beyond weekly devotion, our faithful assemble at St. Hagop to celebrate and commemorate their most important life events: baptisms, weddings, funerals, and requiems, to name a few. We also turn to our church during our most important religious and secular holidays, as well as to reflect on special occasions, such as genocide commemorations. A growing number of parishioners and non-parishioners look to St. Hagop as their sanctuary for events of this sort.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges confronting an Armenian church is to maintain parishioners'

sense of connectedness to their faith and ethnicity - not only to God, but also to the broader Armenian and Christian communities at large. Our church hall programming committee, with strong support from our Women's Guild, continues to work toward this aim. Recent programs included a yalanchi tasting/competition, talent show, Armenian author lecture/book signing, Advent dinner, and New Year's Eve party, along with a sunset outing on the beach.

St. Hagop relies primarily on its parishioners to fund its operations; fund raising events and friends of the church provide the balance of its revenues. Our church is taking a leap of faith in converting from a dues membership system to a pledge system. Under our new system, we ask that parishioners allow prayer and their hearts to guide their giving. My heartfelt gratitude to those participating in this vital stewardship effort: at this time, approximately \$110,000 towards our approximately \$235,000 annual budget has been pledged.

What an amazing entity a church is! A church is not a business; yet, it is held accountable as one, both financially and operationally. A church does not manufacture products or offer services aimed to generate profits necessary to appease its shareholders; yet, it strives to nurture the souls of its diverse constituents, while doing as would please our Lord. A church has few resources apart from its congregation to provide funding and to undertake its massive agenda and expectations of those to whom it ministers; yet, devout volunteers come together without any expectations of recompense to offer their time, talents, and treasure necessary to bring to fruition our Lord's desires and commands.

Service on the parish council, the governing body of St. Hagop, is a responsibility and privilege its members undertake to facilitate realizing our overarching aim: Placing our Lord above all, wholeheartedly submitting to Him, and basing all church decisions on how best to accomplish His will. May God bless our parishioners, beyond the parish council, who give unconditionally and selflessly to fulfill this calling.

Orhnyal eh Der ee barkevus yoor. Blessed is the Lord in His gifts.

Michael Shahnasarian, Ph.D.  
Parish Council Chairman



**Our Sincere Gratitude for 7 Years of Managing the Avedis!**

On behalf of the entire St. Hagop Armenian Church community, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Carla Megerian for managing and editing the Avedis newsletter for the last seven years.

Carrying on the good work of Ruby Khatcherian, Carla's first issue was the Summer Newsletter of 2009. For every issue since then, she has volunteered hundreds of hours of her time in gathering information from our community and presenting it to our parishioners in a manner that is both informative and inspiring.

Carla hands over the editorial management of the Avedis newsletter to St. Hagop office assistant Kelli Pilsbury, who has produced this, her first issue. Fr. Hovnan remains the editor of the Avedis and looks forward to working with Kelli to continue to bring you all the Avedis (Good News) of our St. Hagop community.

**Shahnasarian Hall Updates**

Beautifications in our Shahnasarian Hall continued last quarter. Many thanks to the Hall Design Committee for their hard work with our enhancements.

From chandeliers to window shutters, signage and more...the hall has been a busy place. Most recently, the women's restroom was blessed with a sitting area.

Thank you to everyone involved for their donations of their time, talent and treasures. The Design Committee is still planning for other improvements and if you are interested in giving to this effort, please contact Chuck Sarkisian or any Parish Council member.



St. Hagop Armenian Church of Tampa/St. Pete has the great honor to host the 115th Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of Armenian Church of America (Eastern) in 2017.

The Diocesan Assembly will take place at Innisbrook Golf Resort in Palm Harbor, FL from May 4-7, 2017, and the annual clergy conference at the Bethany Center in Lutz, FL from May 1-3, 2017.

Our Diocesan Assembly Committee has designed this year's assembly so that our guests from around the Diocese, as well as our local community can come together for work, worship and fun as one Armenian Church Diocesan family. We will also be celebrating St. Hagop's 10th Anniversary as a consecrated parish!

More information to come from our Diocesan Assembly Committee, chaired by Stepan Serpekian. Contact us at [assembly@stthagopfl.org](mailto:assembly@stthagopfl.org) with any questions.

*submitted by Teresa Haidarian, Recording Secretary*



Did you know that our women's guild members wear many hats? Our ladies are active in the women's guild and serve in other areas of the church. You will find our members in the choir, on

the parish council and on various committees including like decorating committee and event planning committee. This takes enormous time, dedication to duty and service which each and every member does happily and earnestly.

Women's Guild has been very busy these past couple of months preparing for big events such as the 9th Anniversary celebration, bake sale and New Year's Eve party. The women even had a hand in helping with the inaugural Advent dinner. Lena and her crew have been in the kitchen all day on Saturdays for the past month preparing for the bake sale and will continue through December for the New Year's Eve celebration. In the past, women baked their goods for the Bake Sale at home and brought them into the church and many women still do bring in baked goods. But why go through all that trouble for New Year's Eve when we could hire a caterer to provide all the food and do all the cleanup? Lena would have nothing less than her old world recipes laid out on an all Armenian mezze table for guests to enjoy while seeing out the old year and welcoming in the New Year. She does her part to ensure that we have a real cultural hall.



On a smaller scale, women are in the kitchen preparing for coffee hour and cleaning the kitchen after every use. Peak in the kitchen as you get a snack after church as you socialize with your church family. You will see the same faithful members who have lovingly prepared your coffee and food for your enjoyment. Say a heartfelt thank you to our wonderful ladies who maintain a weekly vigil in our hall kitchen next time you are at coffee hour.



Old news...Bella is going strong with her ballet. She recently performed at the Palladium in downtown St. Petersburg. Another stellar performance by a smart, talented and beautiful young lady from St. Hagop Church.

Louise continues to spoil her granddaughter. If she is not at church playing the organ at Badarak, she jets to Taiwan with beautiful Kennedy Priscilla who just celebrated her first birthday!

*Want to be a part of the most active and loved group of women at St. Hagop?*

See Lena on any given Sunday to join the Women's Guild.



*Teresa Haidarian  
Recording Secretary*

We pray that you will submit a pledge card and join our church in its transition from a dues membership system to a pledge system. We are heartened by the responses received to date.

*Extra blank pledge cards are available in the Narthex, can be printed below or online. Please call the church office to request one to be mailed to you through the post office. Thank you!*

**PLEDGED STEWARDS for 2017 (as of December 18, 2016)**

George & Joan Agnacion, Andrew & Theresa Anusbigian, John & Susan Arsenault, Leon & Gloria Atayan, Michael Atayan, Grace Austin, George Avadikian, Bagrad Badalyan, Charles & Lisa Begian, Cornelia Biggers, Sonia Cure, Fr. Hovnan & Anna Demerjian, Araxi Dulgeroff, Art & Adrienne Ekizian, Victoria Franks, Harbig & Mary Garabedian, Bill & Kim Gernazian, Richard & Pauline Gilgan, Adrienne Guendjoian, Gregory Hagopian, Berge & Tamar Hajian, Janet Haydostian, Mary Haydostian, Nazdar Hermiz, Hayley Hovhanessian, Greg & Stephanie Hovsepian, Ed & Eileen Barsamian Jennings, Richard & Christina Kachadurian, Dr. George & Debra Kamajian, Seda & Irene Hakim Karamian, Harry & Hannelore Keshishian, Garbis & Mari Kesisoglu, Gregory & Nora Keuroghlian, Houri Kojian, Richard & Margaret Kratlian, Naomi Manoogian, Christine Martin, Dr. Hagop & Tobe Mashikian, Mallory Maslar, Richard & Linda Maslar, Aram & Carla Megerian, Vazken Melkisetian, Ida Merakyan, John Messerlian, Alice Miller, Vasken & Karen Minassian, Agop & Victoria Mouradian, Apkar & Florence Omartian, Sima Palakian, Bernard Przegendza, Ira & Annette Ross, Martha Samuelian, Michael Sarafian, Tanya Sarafian, Vahak & Elizabeth Sarkis, Charles & Eva Sarkisian, Avedis & Anahid Serpekian, Stepan & Seta Serpekian, Vicken & Courtney Serpekian, Edward & Margaret Shahnasarian, Michael & Jean Shahnasarian, Robert & Christina Shamsey, Daniel & Norma Takoushian, Ida Varadian, Charles Walker, James Wilson, Nazley Wilson, Dr. Haig & Louise Yardumian, Armen & Rose Zartarian, Armen & Rose Zartarian

**In prayerful consideration of my stewardship of God's resources and my commitment to St. Hagop's mission and programs:**

**My/Our Stewardship Pledge for 2017** is \$ \_\_\_\_\_, given

( ) weekly ( ) monthly ( ) quarterly ( ) annually

Yes, please issue me offering envelopes  No, offering envelopes will not be needed

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Name(s):	
Address:	
Phone/Email:	

Please mail this pledge card to the church office, or place in the offering plate by Stewardship Sunday—October 30, 2016. No payment need accompany this pledge form. We ask that 2017 pledge monies be paid by the end of the 2017 calendar year. Payments may be made online through the St. Hagop website. Once you submit this form, you will receive an account number and offering envelopes (if you choose).



May the Lord Remember All Your Offerings  
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**Stewardship Pledge Card**

*We continue to give thanks for the 126 individuals who paid their dues in 2016 and for your participation & active commitment to our church family!*

Please submit pledge card when you come to church on Sunday or mail to:

St. Hagop Armenian Church, 7020 90th Ave. N., Pinellas Park, FL 33782

*by Lexy Shahnasarian*



St. Hagop Sunday School has had a busy semester of learning and fun! We look forward to another great semester next year and hope your family will join us! Don't miss our Super Sundays!! They take place the 4th Sunday of every month and include Hye Baby, Sunday School and ACYOA Juniors.

Hye Baby will meet with Yn. Anna in the Sunday School room, and Sunday School and ACYOA Juniors will meet in the choir loft at 11:00am and sing in the choir and assist during the service.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact superintendent Lexy by email at: [sundayschool@stthagopfl.org](mailto:sundayschool@stthagopfl.org)



*Sunday School pictures from L to R: Gingerbread Contest, baking cookies, and studying for communion*

## GUEST SPEAKER , Feb. 13th

*Dr. Richard G. Hovannisian*



*Please join us here at St. Hagop for a Special Presentation on Monday evening, February 13th at 7:00pm with*

***Dr. Richard G. Hovannisian***

*Featured Speaker with Illustrated Presentation*

Professor Emeritus of Modern Armenian and Near Eastern History, UCLA, President's Fellow, Chapman University, Adjunct Professor of History, USC, and the Editor of Armenian Communities of the Northeastern Mediterranean Series

*This special appearance is in conjunction with the following speeches to be given at USF:*

**Richard Hovannisian**, sponsored by USF Libraries Holocaust and Genocide Studies Center, Tuesday February 14th at 3:00pm in the Grace Allen Room, 4th floor library.

and **Peter Balakian**, sponsored by the USF Humanities Institute, will speak at 6:00pm on Thursday Feb. 16th

WE NEED YOU AT THE

## ARMENIAN MARDI GRAS

“POON PAREGENTAN”

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2017

11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. - Shahnasarian Hall

Armenian Food-Music-Dancing, Armenian Collectibles, Children’s Activities, Tavloo, Armenian Coffee, Vendors, Church Tours, Raffle Prizes... & more

SIGN UP TO HELP make this an amazing event for our St. Hagop Family, and the Tampa Bay area!

*There are many ways you can help:*

- Volunteer to make food
- Volunteer to work a shift during the **ARMENIAN MARDI GRAS**
- Be a sponsor and/or get sponsors
- Come and enjoy the festivities – and tell your friends and bring them, too!

We are also looking for some beautiful **ARMENIAN COLLECTIBLES** to be displayed during the **ARMENIAN MARDI GRAS**. Want to share? Let us know!

For more information or to volunteer, contact Louise Yardumian at [lyardumian@icloud.com](mailto:lyardumian@icloud.com) (727-463-1688) or Kelli in the church office.

**We are proud Armenians ---**

**Let’s share our Heritage with the Community!**

**TOGETHER.....LET’S MAKE THIS A GREAT EVENT!!**



*Event and Fellowship Photos*

**- 9th Anniversary at the Tides-**



**-ADVENT DINNER-**



**Office Hours:** 9:00am-5:00pm  
Tuesday through Friday

**Worship Hours:** Sunday 10:30am

### Contact Information

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[www.stthagopfl.org](http://www.stthagopfl.org)

### Shahnasarian Hall Rentals

Email: [events@shahnasarianhall.com](mailto:events@shahnasarianhall.com)  
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### Newsletter:

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Kelli Pilsbury

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Avedis Newsletter is a publication of St. Hagop Armenian Church in Pinellas Park, Florida.

Submissions are welcomed and should be sent to the church office email. All text should be electronic format, preferably Word. Editorial board reserves the right to modify or reject any submissions. All material must be received no later than the published deadlines below:

Issue	Submission
April/May/June 2017	March 10th
July/August/September 2017	June 10th

It costs over \$1,100 to print and send each issue of Avedis. We would like to communicate as often as possible with our parishioners. Will you help defray some of the costs? Please send your check memo: Avedis Newsletter 1/2 issue (\$550); 1/4 issue (\$275) or other (\$) amount.

The *Avedis* is grateful to accept business ads, which help us, pay for our newsletter and help you reach your customers. Please notify the Church Office by phone or email if you are interested. Make checks payable to St. Hagop Armenian Church.

Rates are per issue:  
\$50 for a business card,  
\$150 for a half page and \$300 for a full page

### Parish Council

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*\*\*Divine Liturgy & fellowship take place every Sunday from 10:30-12:30 unless noted below*

Sun Jan. 1	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Thur Jan. 5	Divine Liturgy - Eve of Theophany (Jrakalooys) Badarak	6:30 PM
Sun Jan. 8	Divine Liturgy - Blessing of Waters (Theophany Observed)	10:30 AM
Sun Jan. 15	Divine Liturgy 2017 Diocesan Assembly Meeting	10:30 AM 12:30 PM
Thur Jan. 19	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM
Sun Jan. 22	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Thur Jan. 26	Shahnasarian Hall Bridal Show	6:00 to 9:00PM
Sun Jan. 29	Divine Liturgy Hye Baby Playgroup	10:30 AM 11:00 AM
Sun Feb. 5	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Sun Feb. 12	Divine Liturgy Annual Parish Assembly	10:30 AM 12:30 PM
Mon. Feb. 13	Dr. Hovannisian at St. Hagop	7:00 PM
Sun Feb. 19	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Sat Feb. 25	St. Hagop Armenian Mardi Gras and Bazaar	11:30 AM - 7:00 PM
Sun Feb. 26	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Mon Feb. 27	Great Lent begins	
Sun Mar. 5	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Sun Mar. 12	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Sat Mar. 13 and Sun Mar 14	ACYOA Jrs Retreat	4:00PM to 2:00 PM
Sun Mar. 19	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
Sun Mar. 26	Divine Liturgy Hye Baby Playgroup	10:30 AM 11:00 AM

*Please note that by canon law of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church,  
no Requiem Services may be held on the following major feast days of the church;  
Christmas, Palm Sunday/Easter, Pentecost, Transfiguration & Exaltation of the Cross*

**Save - the - Date Easter Services:**

- Sunday, April 9th . . . . . 10:30am Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy
- Thursday, April 13th . . . . . 7:00pm Washing of the Feet/Votniva Service
- 8:00pm Vigil/Khavaroom Service
- Friday, April 14th . . . . . 7:00pm Burial Service (Good Friday)
- Saturday, April 15th . . . . . 7:00pm Easter Eve/Jragalooys Divine Liturgy
- Sunday, April 16th . . . . . 10:30am Easter Divine Liturgy

**ST. HAGOP ARMENIAN CHURCH**  
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