

# AVEDIS ԱԻԵՏԻՍ

St. Hagop Armenian Church

The Good News | Fall 2021

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# TRANSFORMERS

*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,  
that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. (Jn 3:14)*

In mid-September (Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> this year) we celebrate the Feast of Exaltation, the joyous victory and celebration of the Cross. We tend to lose perspective on the significance of the cross. Sometimes the closer and more familiar something becomes, the more likely we are to overlook its power. The more we see the cross as a piece of jewelry, as body art, or as a liturgical prop, the less we remember its infamy as the instrument of death of the Savior of mankind and founder of our faith. So how is it then, that we can possibly exalt this horrific instrument of torture and death, every year around this time?

To help us enter into the mystery and power of the cross, I ask that you call to mind something else you may have seen one hundred times but probably not paid much attention to. The next time you are out for a walk or drive in your neighborhood, look up and notice those big gray cylinders-called transformers-that hang atop telephone poles every few hundred feet. The hidden forces behind what transformers do, will help us understand the hidden forces behind what the cross has done. These gray boxes transform dangerous and deadly levels of electricity coming from the power plant-hundreds of thousands of volts-and transform them into current safe and useable-110 volts. This transformed energy gives us light to work, preserves our food and makes the world run. This principle of the transformer is also the principle of the cross. There are dangerous and destructive forces of power in the world, but through the cross, it is transformed and changed into something essential to life.

The assigned reading for the Great Feast of the Cross, from the Gospel of John, uses a different metaphor, but the 'transformer' principle remains the same. The Gospel recalls when the people of Israel were wandering through the desert and had been bitten by snakes. Moses, inspired by God, tells the people to do something very strange: fashion a bronze snake, hang it on a tall pole and all those who gaze up upon it will be saved. To us, this may seem somewhat magical and pagan, but it is essentially a pre-scientific version of what we call a vaccination or inoculation. Give people just enough of a disease and they themselves can overcome it. The same poison or electrical current that in raw form will kill us, can be transformed by God into something that will save us. That is the mystery of the cross.

Jesus on the cross takes into himself the full voltage, the full poison of mankind's tragic history of war, violence and prejudice, but unlike anyone who has ever lived, he does not avenge his persecutors. He becomes the victim, but does not create victims in return. 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' (Lk 23:34) That's a big picture view of the cross, as transformer, as vaccination which transforms all the misplaced desires of mankind and turns them into self-giving love, the power by which we live, move and have our being.

This power of the cross is not to remain as theory or theology, however, it is to power the decisions and relationships of our daily lives. If someone has spoken unkindly or untruthfully about us, we can repay them with the same. But if we do, we miss our opportunity to transform their misplaced desire by the passion of the cross. Instead, if we resist paying back evil with evil, at that moment we forever and always transform a few volts of sinful energy into kingdom power, by means of the cross.

This kind of discipline is not easy. It is much easier to hang a cross on our wall, in our car, or over our chest, but not live that cross in our homes, at work and in our hearts. Yet in this season of the Exaltation, we are reminded that ritually lifting the cross on Sundays and daily lifting the cross within us, is the hidden secret that powers a life well lived. May we continue to work with God to exalt the cross within us, so that like transformers, we absorb and renounce the dark power of sin, transforming it by the light of His grace, now and always; amen.

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## PARISH COUNCIL REPORT by David Kazarian, Parish Council Chair

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The parish council has been very busy since the full reopening of the church after COVID restrictions and quarantine. After carefully weighing the pros and cons of opening the church we voted to reopen fully, albeit cautiously.

There have been many physical plant items that the council tackled during the last quarter of the year. Things like removing a dead palm tree and replacing it with a full grown tree, alterations to the pavilion, fixing of damaged flood lights and putting up new lights were completed. Some of you may recall recently it got very warm at church one Sunday. Much to our consternation we discovered one of the 3 air conditioners in the church was damaged to the point of needing a \$5,000 plus repair, which would put a new part in a 15 year old air conditioner.. We voted to replace the air conditioner for twice that cost, but that would give us a new unit with greater efficiency and hopefully better longevity. But that one unit wasn't the only problem. The second unit by the choir loft had problems too, but we fixed that one for a tenth of what the first one had cost us. Hopefully that repair will keep that unit running.

Chuck Begian's eagle eye noticed a crack in the wall at the church. Our friend Oscar Picon came and reviewed the situation and reported that the crack was just separation of the drywall and a paint job and a little spackle will solve that problem. While somethings can be seen other things need background knowledge to find a problem.

We're fortunate to have many talented musicians at our church. One of those people is on our council; Haig Yaghoobian. In addition to being an incredible musician he understands musical instruments. While practicing on our piano he found some minor problems that needed repair and we've authorized that repair. But without his knowledge that would not have happened and could have caused down stream problems (in my opinion). While I've detailed more physical plant repairs than most want to know, I feel it's important for everyone to understand that the parish council is working on things behind the scenes to keep our church in pristine condition. Oh, there are other items that will be occurring in the future, but we're making sure that our sanctuary and hall are kept in good physical condition.

We've had discussions about Sunday school. I personally feel that we need a strong Sunday school and we need our youth to attend. We have many opportunities to teach the youth but if they don't come those are opportunities lost. When you're at church, look around you. I don't know the average age of our parish family but I'd bet it's high. The youth are the future, and one could say, without our youth our church has no future. That's why I feel Sunday School is so important. So if you'd like to volunteer let us know. Even if you don't want to volunteer, do it! Join a team and bring some excitement to the Sunday School Program at our church! It's extremely important!

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## An Opportunity to Participate in the Ministry of St. Hagop as Lector

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### Lector Ministry

Readings from Holy Scripture, delivered in English by lay members of our congregation, comprise an important part of our Badarak worship service. If you have a calling to help spread the word of our Lord to your brethren, St. Hagop encourages you to consider this ministry. We are establishing a directory of lectors and welcome those who wish to participate in the divine liturgy through this ministry. For more information contact Michael Shahnasarian at [shahnasa@aol.com](mailto:shahnasa@aol.com).

# Folk Ensemble from Armenia Coming to St. Hagop!

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM**  
**SHAHNASARIAN HALL**



Please join us for an unforgettable evening of Armenian music and dance, welcoming these talented young Armenian artists to St. Hagop! Wine and cheese reception to follow 1-hour program. Bring a friend to introduce them to Armenian culture. Entry is free, donations recommended. RSVP by September 1<sup>st</sup> to Yn. Anna at [sargsanna2012@gmail.com](mailto:sargsanna2012@gmail.com) or 727-771-5269.

#### **Rotary Children's Fund (RCF)-International Cultural Exchange**

The RCF supports programs that improve good will between the people of America and other countries, developing a better understanding of cultures, music and traditions. Ensemble Dance Group from Yerevan, Armenia (Golden Gates) offers audiences of all ages an entertaining and educational glimpse into Armenia through music, song, and dance.



**RCF**  
CONNECTING  
THE  
WORLD





*SUNSET, SIPPING AND "SOLA"*

# *ST. HAGOP 14TH CONSECRATION ANNIVERSARY*

Let's celebrate St. Hagop! Watch the sunset, sip Armenian wine and taste food by 'Sola Bistro' owner Tigran Khachaturyan.

Admission free, donations welcome.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8TH 6:30-10PM**

**THE TIDES BEACH CLUB**

**16650 GULF BLVD.**

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*Sola*

*Bistro & Wine Bar*



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RSVP by Sept. 29 to Chrisanne at [officeesthagopfl.org](mailto:officeesthagopfl.org) or 727-545-0380

or Jean at [jshahnasare@aol.com](mailto:jshahnasare@aol.com)

## Benefit Concert Celebrating Beethoven's 250<sup>th</sup> on October 17<sup>th</sup> at 1PM



On October 17th, St. Hagop will present a Benefit Concert in celebration of Beethoven's 250th Birthday featuring accomplished recital pianist Haig Yaghoobian. The Program will feature Beethoven's piano works, including several Kleinigkeiten ("little things"), and his dynamic Sonata Pathétique (Op. 13, No. 8). And a very special guest Soprano, our own Suzanna Hovhannisian, will join Haig in performing Beethoven's Sechs Lieder, sacred songs based on a poem by Christian Gellert.

The concert will start after Badarak at 1pm in Shahnasarian Hall and will be followed by a champagne reception. Admission is \$10 at the door.

In concert with its mission to serve as the bedrock of Armenian Christian religion and culture in Southwest Florida, St. Hagop sponsors a wide range of events. These have included lectures by scholars of Armenian religion and history, music performances and dinner dances.



## SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

**St. Hagop Advent Dinner**

6:30pm at The Shahnasarian Hall

### Join your St. Hagop Family for The Annual Candlelight Advent Dinner

Following up on a wonderful dinner last year, this year will also be a short worship, testimonies from parishioners and potluck fellowship. Please look out for the sign-up sheet in early November, 2021

Don't forget to bring a friend and/or your neighbor too!  
Come and nourish your body and soul to enter into the Holiday Season!

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## Parish Council Member Haig Yaghoobian Offers ‘Corona Concerts’ in His Community

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Not content to let a little pandemic get in the way of enjoying and sharing good music, Haig and Lorraine Yaghoobian have been hosting mini “Corona Concerts” to entertain friends and residents of their community. It started last year, with restrictions then in place limiting attendance to ten people at a time, but has now expanded to an audience of fifty, at a recent performance.

Haig plays his Mason & Hamlin 7’ grand piano inside their newly-expanded Florida Room, overlooking a pond behind their home, with floor to ceiling windows

opened on two sides. They had a patio built, providing seating for twenty, with a sun-sail tarp overhead to provide shade for those guests, as well as others seated on the lawns. With such a big sound, neighbors from around the pond can hear clearly from their own homes, as well.

These informal concerts start with Haig giving a little background and history on the composers and their selections. After 30-45 minutes of music, Haig and Lorraine join the audience for drinks and conversation – and to enjoy Lorraine’s famous cookies.

Programs have featured works by Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Debussy, and Scriabin. Haig also includes a few popular “standards” at the end – including show tunes from the ‘40’s to ‘60’s that he’s arranged. And, he concludes every performance with a rendition of “Sweet Lorraine”.

Haig says, “Whatever talent I may have, is a gift from God. I consider it my Christian duty to cultivate and develop it, and to share it with others.” Haig serves on St. Hagop’s Parish Council. Haig’s recordings are freely available for listening and download at [www.haigyaghoobian.com](http://www.haigyaghoobian.com)

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## WOMEN’S GUILD UPDATE by Debbie Kamajian

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The Women’s guild will be reconvening for the first time since the pandemic on Sunday, September 5th during our coffee hour. Everyone is welcome to join us to discuss our service for the year ahead and enjoy each other’s’ fellowship!

Masks are required for UNVACCINATED individuals. We will also be collecting \$20.00 for a membership donation to the Women’s Guild Central Council again this year.

If anyone has any further questions you may contact Debra Kamajian at (727)735-1929. We look forward to seeing everyone together again soon!

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## Photos From The Demerjian Family Trip to Armenia, July 2021

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Alongside a wonderful vacation visiting family and friends in Armenia, Yn. Anna followed up with several families our church has supported since the 44-day war in Karabagh. Special thanks to Michael & Jean Shahnasarian, Ron & Debbie Milewski and all who have supported this mission. Enjoy select photos below.



Watching a master of carpet weaving



A refugee family whose husband was lost in war



Lighting candles in Sevan Church



Baptism in Yerevan



*Be sure to join us on Sunday, Sept. 26 from 12:30-1:00 pm for "Stories from Armenia" during coffee hour. In honor of Armenia's Independence Day (Sept 21), parishioners who travelled to Armenia this summer will share stories and photos.*



Baptism in Yerevan



Yerabloor National Cemetery



Yerabloor National Cemetery

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## Congratulations to Our 2021 Graduates:

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Name: Bella Mouradian

School: Osceola Fund. High School

Special Achievements: National Honors Society (as well as for Spanish & Social Studies), Key Club & Best Buddies. Osceola Girls Varsity Lacrosse. Merit and Scholar designation. Talented Twenty & Summa Cum Laude designations.

Future Plans: USF Tampa, majoring in Biomedical Sciences



Name: Janae Kamajian

School: USF Tampa

Special Achievements: Top 3 genocide essay contest and got hired in a top 11 tv market before graduating as an Associate producer for Bloom TV WFLA/WTTA News Channel 8.

Future Plans: Become a producer and news anchor in TV industry.



Name: Lily Madlyn Megerian

School: Academy of the Holy Names

Special Achievements: Graduated with honors. President-Tri-M Music Honor Society. Captain-Varsity Dance team. President-School Chorus. Member-National Honor Society, Latin Honor Society, Math Team, International Thespian Society and Theater Club. Participant in several mission trips.

Future Plans: Villanova University; majoring in Psychology.



Name: Tiana Serpekian

School: Riverview High School

Future Plans: Hillsborough Community College & USF Tampa, majoring in Accounting

**Michael A Sarafian, CFP®**

Financial Advisor at Lincoln Investment

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I am blessed and honored to be part of this Armenian Community. With the strength of God, it brings me great joy to serve in a new capacity and announce my services as a financial advisor at Lincoln Investment.

My educational background includes earning dual degrees in both Biomedical Sciences and Psychology from University of South Florida College of Arts and Sciences with Magna Cum Laude Honors. I am a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, so I am held to the highest standard for financial advisors reviewed by the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc.

My previous professional experience includes extensive training as a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley. Recently, I went independent and joined a team with 3 other partners. I am focused on helping you create a personalized financial plan, a "roadmap" that can help guide clients to reaching their short and long-term financial goals.

My areas of experience include investment planning, retirement planning, tax planning, education planning, estate planning, and insurance planning.

Do you have cash that is earning you very little and you are afraid of inflation?  
Are you 1099 self employed and looking to contribute more toward retirement?  
Did you switch employers recently and want to review your new 401(k) options?  
Are you looking to contribute towards your children or grandchildren education/college costs?  
Do you wish to transfer tax free wealth to your heirs?  
Is a Roth conversion right for you?

For a complimentary planning consultation, please feel free to contact me

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Tampa, FL 33607

Cell: 727-249-3942  
Office: 813-837-8600  
Fax: 813-200-8529

[msarafian@lincolninvestment.com](mailto:msarafian@lincolninvestment.com)

Inflation is the rise in the prices of goods and services, as happens when spending increases relative to the supply of goods on the market. None of the information in this document should be considered as tax advice. You should consult your tax professional for information concerning your individual situation. Advisory services offered through Capital Analysts or Lincoln Investment, Registered Investment Advisers. Securities offered through Lincoln Investment, Broker-Dealer, Member FINRA/SIPC. [www.lincolninvestment.com](http://www.lincolninvestment.com) 08/21



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**SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE- School Begins on September 12<sup>th</sup>—Join us Again!**

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Calling all parents of youth ages 5-12! The start of Sunday School is upon us-Sept 12<sup>th</sup>. We'll start where we left off pre-pandemic with great teachers, rotating classes and interactive lessons on church & culture. This semester we will have one large class for ages 5-12. We welcome older children as teaching assistants, and welcome toddlers to our church playroom. Sunday School starts at 11:00 sharp (room opens 10:45). After a 30-45 minute class, children will come to church for communion, worship & sermon.

**This Year's Teachers:**

Suzy Hovhanissian  
Linda Maslar  
Suzie Abadjian  
Surbuhi Zakaryan

**This Year's Organizers:**

Houri Kojian  
Yn. Anna Demerjian  
Fr. Hovnan Demerjian

Please contact us with any questions at [sundayschool@stthagopfl.org](mailto:sundayschool@stthagopfl.org) We look forward to seeing our beautiful children again and growing closer together as young families as we worship God!

# Pledge Stewardship-Reflections on 2021 and Preparations for a New Pledge Year

**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 2022 is:**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_, given ( ) weekly ( ) monthly ( ) quarterly ( ) annually

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

**I /we wish to support St. Hagop with time and talent in these areas:**

\_\_\_\_\_

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

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone/Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stewardship Pledge Card**

Please mail this pledge card to the church office, or bring to offering plate by Stewardship Sunday—November 28, 2021. No payment need accompany this form. We ask that 2022 pledge monies be paid by the end of the 2022 calendar year. Payments may be made online through the St. Hagop website.

May the Lord Remember All Your Offerings  
Յխաղ՛ Տէր զազգայնի Պատարագս Իս



## September 1, 2021

Dear St. Hagop Faithful,

This past year of pandemic has been a difficult year for us all, isolating us from those we love and creating health and financial concerns for many. Many churches in turn experienced financial hardship, especially those whose income relies on in person collections and yearly food festivals.

Our church, however, has been blessed with minor financial disruption, mainly because of our stewardship model and the prayerful ethos that it has engendered. At St. Hagop we give not based on our attendance, nor for recognition, nor as fee for service; but because it is who we are as Christians and Armenians. In the face of pandemic, our gratitude for God's gifts motivates us to share our blessings with our church and those in need.

This past difficult year, we are pleased to report that stewardship pledges were down only about 10% from the previous year. Thusfar for 2021, we have 99 pledges for a total of \$147,510. This is inspiring for such a difficult year, even moreso when taking into account the large sums of money we have all sent to Armenia, as a church and individually, to help those in their time of need.

With Fall approaching, we are planning ahead for our 2022 stewardship campaign. Pledge Sunday is November 28, 2021, and you will receive a letter and pledge card for 2021 in early-November.

As you prayerfully complete your pledge for 2021 and contemplate your 2022 stewardship, we join you in giving thanks to God for his many blessings, and the great blessing of this generous church community of which we are all a part. Truly God has multiplied the time, talent and treasure we have offered at St. Hagop, and we pray God continue to protect and prosper this His beloved Church.

In Faith,

Der Hovnan Demerjian  
Pastor, St. Hagop Armenian Church

Michael Shahnasarian, Ph.D.  
Stewardship Chairman

**Office Hours:** 9 am-5 pm Monday - Friday

**Worship Hours:** Sunday 10:30am – 12:30pm

**Sunday School Hours:** Sunday 11:00am – 12:30pm

**Fellowship Time in Shahnasarian Hall** – 12:30pm – 1:30pm

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The Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian

**Contributors**

Yn. Anna Demerjian, David Kazarian & Haig Yaghoobian

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. 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:

Next Issue	Submission
Winter 2022	December 15th

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 email the office at [office@stthagopfl.org](mailto:office@stthagopfl.org) 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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Vice-Chair – Karen Minassian  
[Karen@Homeserviceinteriors.com](mailto:Karen@Homeserviceinteriors.com)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**\*\*Divine Liturgy takes place from 10:30AM-12:30PM, Sunday School starts at 11:00AM, and fellowship takes place in Shahnasarian Hall from 12:30PM-1:30PM on all Sundays unless noted below.\*\***

<b>Sun. September 5<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Tue. September 7<sup>th</sup></b>	Folk Ensemble from Armenia to Perform in Shahnasarian Hall	6:30PM-8:00PM
<b>Sun. September 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy (Khachverats/Exaltation of Cross) 1 <sup>st</sup> Day of Sunday School Special Youth/Family Fellowship	10:30 AM 11:00 PM 12:30 PM
<b>Tue. September 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM
<b>Sun. September 19<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. September 26<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship 'Stories from Armenia' during coffee hour	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. October 3<sup>rd</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Fri. October 8<sup>th</sup></b>	14 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary 'Sunset, Sipping & Sola' Event at Tides Beach Club	6:30PM-10:00PM
<b>Sun. October 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Tue. October 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM
<b>Sun. October 17<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship Classical Musical Performance By Haig Yaghoobian & Friends	10:30AM-1:00PM 1:00 PM
<b>Sun. October 24<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. October 31<sup>st</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. November 7<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Tue. November 9<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM
<b>Sun. November 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. November 21<sup>st</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>November 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup></b>	Thanksgiving Days/ Office Closed	
<b>Sun. November 28<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship Stewardship Pledge Sunday	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Wed. December 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Advent Candlelight Dinner	6:30 PM
<b>Sun. December 5<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. December 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Tue. December 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM
<b>Wed. December 15<sup>th</sup></b>	Winter Avedis Newsletter Deadline	
<b>Sun. December 19<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Fri. December 24<sup>th</sup></b>	Christmas Eve Office Closed	
<b>Sun. December 26<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM

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)



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