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St. Hagop Armenian Church

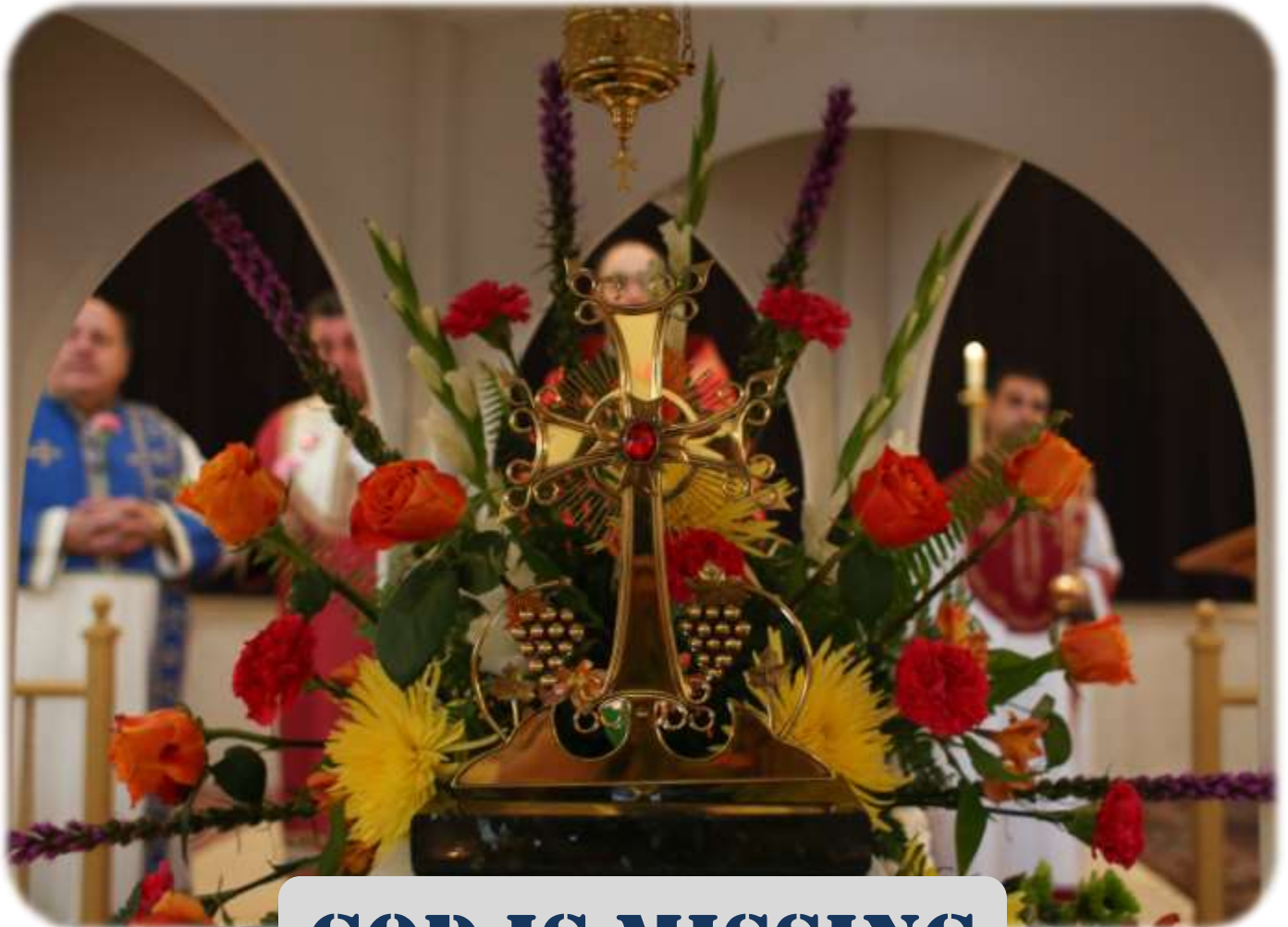
The Good News | Summer 2022

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**GOD IS MISSING**

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## Pastor's Desk by Father Hovnan Demerjian – God is Missing

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From time to time, I like to begin my reflections with a joke, and the Easter Season-which we are in until June 5th (Pentecost) is the perfect time to do so. It is actually a long-standing tradition in Eastern Orthodox churches for the priests to come prepared with a joke on Easter Sunday. This is not just to please the crowd, until everyone meets again next year. It also has theological significance. For on the first Easter morning nearly 2000 years ago, to everyone's surprise, it was God who had the last laugh; not the power hungry politicians or know it all religious leaders and certainly not the evil one. It is God who has the last word, and as with any joke, the end does not turn out as we'd expect.

So here's the joke. A couple has two mischievous little boys, ages 8 and 10. At their wits' end, the parents contact a clergyman who had successfully disciplined children in the past. The parents sent the eight-year-old to meet with him first. The clergyman sits the boy down and asks him sternly, "Do you know where God is, my son?" The boy makes no response, so the clergyman repeats the question in a sterner tone, "I said, where is God?" The boy is again too shocked to give answer, so the clergyman raises his voice even more, shakes his finger in his face, "WHERE IS GOD?" At that, the boy bolts from the room, runs home, and says to his brother; "We are in big trouble this time. God is missing, and they think we did it!"

God is missing and they think we did it. Jesus' disciples probably would not have found this funny, because it hit too close to home. They were surely terrified when news of the empty tomb reached them on Sunday morning; 'Jesus is missing and they'll think we did it.' After all, what else would the skeptical authorities think when they heard that Jesus' body was missing? In fact, in the Gospel of Matthew, that is just the story the Pharisees concoct to try and pin Jesus' disappearance on his followers. Matthew reports that they paid soldiers and others to lie and say that Jesus' disciples made off with his body. So Jesus gone missing would be no joke to his disciples, it would just compound the terror they had felt for days. The terror which led chief disciple Peter to deny ever knowing Jesus three times. The terror which kept all his disciples, excepting a few women, from even going near the cross or tomb. The terror which kept anyone at all from speaking about Jesus after his death. This man who worked miracles and healed 1000s, who loved others like no other, had no funeral and no eulogy, because to do so would come with the price of death.

In three days, however, some of his female followers would strike up the courage to look for Jesus and prepare his body for burial. When they arrived to the tomb, he was missing; but gradually their fear turned to courage, hope and action. As they shared the news with the disciples, their hearts changed. 'Jesus is missing, and they'll think we did it' became 'Jesus is missing and we'd better do something about it.' We better keep looking for him, he may still be around somewhere. We better stick together, and share notes about what Jesus said would happen after his death. We better find a way, even at risk of our own lives, to share the good news of our Jesus, who died, but appears to have risen again.

Not all that much has changed since that day; the story of Jesus' followers then is the story of us followers now. God is missing today, and we better do something about it. God may be missing for us personally. If we still can't see him, we better keep looking for him in our bibles, in this church, or in another church; finding out why so many have said Jesus has changed their lives forever. God certainly seems missing in our society; in its violence, injustice and immorality. For those of us who are committed to Jesus, we must strive to make him known not just by our words but how we live our lives; so that when people see us, they see him. God is missing among so many of our family and friends. If we have found Jesus and are trying to follow him, we must share with anyone who will listen what he has done for us.

God is missing, Jesus is missing and this just might be the greatest part of his Easter plan. Perhaps Jesus has gone missing, so that we will continue to take the initiative to seek him and find him. Perhaps Jesus is missing, because after teaching us how life is to be lived, he wants us to take his place. Perhaps Jesus was missing from his own funeral, along with all his friends, because we are supposed to eulogize the greatest, most beautiful person who ever lived.

Maybe this also why you will see the empty 'tomb' of Jesus in the front of our church- and any Armenian Church-for a full 50 days after Easter. It focuses our attention on Jesus' empty tomb, and the call to action it demands of his followers. Now is the time for us, like the disciples, to allow our fear, guilt and skepticism, to turn to courage, hope and love. Jesus is missing, but we are not in trouble. The ending is unexpected, but the joke isn't meant to be on us. So let's get on our way to seek him, find him and share him with others. Let's imitate a life that never repaid evil with evil but destroyed evil with love. Let's show our friends and neighbors, the whole world, that the death of Jesus Christ has over and again brought new life to our people and all who believe in Him; now and always and unto the ages of ages, amen.

Kristos Hareav I merelots. Orheal e harutyunn Kristosi.

Christ is Risen from the Dead. Blessed is the resurrection of Christ!

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## Parish Council Report by Michael Shahnasarian

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I am honored to return to serve as chairman of St. Hagop's parish council, a position David Kazarian deftly handled the past year. Committed Christians and servants of our Lord, your parish council members endeavor to safekeep and prudently manage church resources, perpetuate a rich Armenian Christian church and cultural community, and otherwise undertake work that pleases our Lord.

In the near term, regarding governance matters, your parish leadership is tending to the upcoming 120<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Assembly, an important annual event that binds our connection to our Armenian Christian faithful in the Eastern Diocese and beyond. A hybrid conference, it will occur virtually and in New York May 6 and 7, and its business will include the election of our Primate, which occurs every four years. Diocesan bylaws charge the Diocesan Council to empanel a slate of three candidates, ultimately with the approval and blessings of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. Accordingly, the candidates are:

- His Grace Bishop Daniel Findikyan
- Very Rev. Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian
- Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Parsamyan

Participating in the election on behalf of St. Hagop will be Der Hovnan as our parish priest, David Kazarian and Stepan Serpekian (elected parish delegates), and me, in the capacity of parish council chairman. If you have any input you would like to provide to this election or on other Diocesan matters, please contact one of us. Our job is to represent St. Hagop and to facilitate the fruition of our joint church, Diocesan, and broader Armenian Christian community values.

In terms of ongoing high-priority parish governance issues, St. Hagop will continue to meld Diocesan and parish objectives that relate to enlisting parishioners' involvement in our church's life. You likely recognize this has been a central theme of our stewardship outreach since our conversion from a dues to pledge membership system 6 years ago. If you have yet to read *Building Up the Body of Christ: The Treasure for the Armenian Church for Our People Today*, a book our Primate, Surpazan Daniel, recently authored, I encourage you to do so. Its thoughtful, retrospective and prospective discussions deliver an inspiring vision of how we can recapture and build on our Armenian Church's unrivaled, rich heritage for posterity.

Below is a passage from our Primate's book that I found particularly apropos in consideration of St. Hagop's parishioner involvement initiatives.

The complexities and challenges inherent in ministering to our people in these difficult times requires that every member of the Armenian church brings together his and her collective wisdom, gifts, experience, and faith to the mission that God has assigned to us. In so doing we come together, join our efforts, and brace each other and Christian commitment. No baptized member of the Armenian church may be excluded from the privilege of serving God in the church or caring for one another in the church and outside her walls. In our diocese we must inspire and equip every person to participate actively in the ministries of the Armenian church according to each one's gifts. Every member of the church must be a servant. Our Christian education and formation efforts must have as their final goal to train ministers and servants to do God's work in the Armenian church with love and compassion. The ministries are as varied as our dedication to God and our commitment to one another: teaching, mentoring, visiting, cooking, feeding, singing, cleaning, praying, painting, organizing, promoting stewardship, writing, serving, greeting, building relationships with outsiders, to name only a few. Mentoring must become the hallmark of our parishes and our diocese.

The recent paschal season and its affirmation of our Lord's eternal love of us – despite our sin and shortcomings – offers a natural time of reflection and spirit of renewal. Through His death He conquered death and won for us life everlasting. We invite you to continue to rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord, and we pray the spirit of the season will remain in your heart as you assess how you can and will commit to one or more of St. Hagop's ministries. Please refer to St. Hagop's web site for more information on the church's ministries and involvement opportunities or contact one of your parish council members.

The Bible tells us that what you give will be multiplied; I have personally found this true. Simply put, we need you, welcome your involvement, and, as disciples of our Lord, trust your participation in St. Hagop ministries will enrich you spiritually and personally beyond what you envision.

May our Lord be with you.

**WORLD- FAMOUS ARMENIAN MUSICIAN  
LEVON AMBARTSUMIAN**



**"A May Romance" Special Concert**  
**Sun., May 15, 1pm**  
**Shahnasarian Hall**  
**Joined by Shakhida Ambartsumian,**  
**Leo Chen and Haig Yaghoobian**



## **Acclaimed Musicians to Perform Benefit Concert on May 15th**

St. Hagop Armenian Church is delighted to welcome world-famous musician Levon Ambartsumian, who will perform in a very special benefit concert entitled "A May Romance", featuring dramatic works from some of the most beloved Romantic Period composers.

Levon, and his wife Shakhida who will accompany him on viola for a few works, are on the faculty of the Hugh Hodgson School of Music at the University of Georgia. They are vacationing in St. Petersburg, and are graciously sharing their time and talents in support of St. Hagop's continuing Cultural Series. The concert will also feature a special guest from Sarasota, sensational 10- year-old Leo Chen, who will play piano and violin.

Major works on the program include Robert Schumann's Three Romance for Violin and Piano, Op. 94, and Franz Schubert's Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano in A minor, D. 821, on which Levon will be accompanied by our own Haig Yaghoobian, parish council member, on piano. Armenian works, such as Krunk (Crane) by Komitas will also be part of the program.

The concert is being held in the Shahnasarian Hall immediately after Badarak, at 1pm, and will be followed by a champagne reception, to meet these outstanding artists.

Levon Ambartsumian's YouTube channel is: <https://youtube.com/channel/UC0gLtZ6xvGEHi7OrQtnHNJg>

Tickets are \$10 at the door.

We hope you will join us- and bring your friends- for this special occasion!

### Mission Armenia and Artsakh" Project

#### OVERVIEW:

Over many years, St. Hagop Armenian Church has had a mission to assist our ethnic kin in the building up of our Armenian homeland with an eye toward our mutual spiritual growth. We have endeavored to fulfill this mission by donating to programs through FAR, CASP, the All Armenia Fund, etc. St. Hagop has also tried to establish more personal mission ties with Armenia by taking pilgrimages there, and assisting trusted partners.

In the last two years, trying times in Armenia have exposed the need for a deeper and more effective partnership between Armenia and the Diaspora. Providentially, a donor came forward to St. Hagop to help fill this need, with gifts designated for aid to Artsakh and Armenia, and a preference for direct aid and faith-focused projects.

A 'Mission Armenia' committee was formed by the parish council to advise and oversee these projects. Committee members are: Yn. Anna Demerjian, Grace Austin, John Shamsey and Kelly Shamsey

#### STATEMENT OF INTENT:

To transition St. Hagop's support of Armenia and Artsakh from anonymous aid through well-established non-profits, to smaller projects with minimal overhead, direct beneficiary contact and potential for longer term partnerships. While these smaller projects are more labor intensive and require a specific skillset, all parties believe the committeemen to be worthwhile.

### A Sample of This Year's Projects

Donation to help displaced Artsakh refugees living in and around Armenia with essential needs. Partnership with Artsakh Relocation Fund.

Donation to help Gevorg M., an 11-year-old cancer patient from Gyumri, Armenia, with his bone cancer treatments. Partnership with City of Smile Foundation.

Donation to help train and place wounded warriors of Artsakh War in tech jobs and assist displaced women from Hadrut village in securing income through handcrafts. Partnership with Thrive Armenia Foundation

Donation to provide mobile medical services to displaced refugee women from Artsakh. Partnership with Dr. Armine Barkhudarian, leader of Traveling Doctors of Armenia.

### Dr. George's Medical Mission to Armenia



Dr George is going to Armenia this July to serve those in need in Tsovagyugh village (Lake Sevan) and Artsakh. Under the umbrella of St. Hagop's 'Mission Armenia,' Dr. George will join Dr. Armine Barkhudaryan, of 'Travelling Doctors of Armenia.' Besides treating patients, Dr. George will bring supplies, medication & equipment. If you would like to support this effort, send a donation to St. Hagop (memo: 'Medical Mission') by June 1st. Any amount is appreciated and will directly support vulnerable refugee and underserved populations in Armenia. We look forward to Dr. George's photos and report from the ground this summer!



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**Photos from a Joyous & Active Easter Season!**

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Pam Sunday



Holy Thursday-Votnlva



Good Friday-Taghoom



Easter Eve Candlelight Liturgy



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**Photos from a Joyous & Active Easter Season!**

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Easter Sunday Worship



Easter Egg Hunt



Genocide Martyrs Commemoration



'Silent Genocide' Author Talk

### Lector Ministry

English readings from Holy Scripture, delivered by lay members of our church, are an important part of our worship. If you feel called to this ministry please contact us. We are establishing a directory of lectors and welcome all to this ministry. For more information contact Michael Shahnasarian at [shahnasa@aol.com](mailto:shahnasa@aol.com).



### Greeter Ministry Involvement Opportunities



St. Hagop seeks volunteer greeters to serve once per month on an ongoing basis to greet our worshippers and participate in Badarak worship tasks such as spreading the kiss of peace and passing the collection plates. Please contact Rita Keshishian [Rita\\_Keshishian@hotmail.com](mailto:Rita_Keshishian@hotmail.com). If you have questions or for additional information about pursuing this ministry.

### La, La, La, La LA!!!

Our Church Choir is looking for voices, especially female voices! We have a very unusual situation. Most choirs have mostly women's voices and a male voice or two. OUR choir has lots of wonderful male voices and a few lovely female voices! Please feel free to join us! Contact Louise Yardumian [lyardumian@icloud.com](mailto:lyardumian@icloud.com) to make your voice heard! Thanks so much!!



### Flowers, Flowers, Beautiful Flowers!



The Flower Guild is starting up again, and we hope you will think of joining us! If you love flowers and want to learn how to arrange them and prepare bouquets for the altar, please contact Louise Yardumian to get your name on the list! We will have instructional classes and work with you to make simple, elegant arrangements for church – and home! Contact: [lyardumian@icloud.com](mailto:lyardumian@icloud.com).



## 2022 Stewardship Pledge Updated on 04/26/22

So far we have been blessed with **87** pledges totaling **\$144,095** for 2022! Our goal is for all to participate regardless of amount! We invite you to mail in your pledge card or make an online pledge for 2022, it is not too late!

**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:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ST. HAGOP**

**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  
Սրբազան Տէր զօրհանի Մտաւորութեան

**Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to St. Hagop! Those who have submitted a pledge by 04/26/22 are identified below.**

Richard & Diana Aginian, George & Joan Agnacion, John & Susan Arsenault, Bagrad & Tatiana Badalyan, Eileen Barsamian, Chuck & Lisa Begian, Krikor & Sossi Bogharian, Robert & Janet Davidian, Fr. Hovnan & Yn. Anna Demerjian, Ken & Karen Demerjian, Jean-Jacques & Hasmig Demerjian, Raffi & Tanya Demerjian, Paul & Primrose Demirdjian, Fred Dikranian, Robert & Lori Dorian, Leilani Doty, Araxi Dulgeroff, Ardavazt & Adrienne Ekizian, Greogry & Alysia Ekizian, John & Victoria Franks, Martha-Anne Garabedian, Adrienne Guendjoian, Richard & Pauline Gilgan, Teresa Haidarian, Berg & Tamar Hajian, Hayley Hovhanessian, Greg & Stephanie Hovsepien, Shirak and Johanna Hovsepien, Robina Hovsepien, Zvart Jambazian, Richard & Christina Kachadurian, George & Debra Kamajian, Edward Kapreilian, Samuel & Beatrice Kapreilian, Florence Kazanjian, David & Nancy Kazarian, Lilian Kazarian, Hannelore Keshishian, Harout Keshishian, Robert Koolakian, Margaret Kratlian, Sophia Manoulian Kugeares, Chau Long, Noubar & Ann Mahdessian, William & Christine Martin, Mallory Maslar, Richard & Linda Maslar, Vazken & Maggie Melkisetian, Vasken & Karen Minassian, Robert Mirak, Ida Merakyan, Agop & Victoria Mouradian, Julie Zvart Nilges, Bejan & Rebekah Nouri, Mirella Ovanesian, John & Joanne Pehlivanian, Scott & Raelene Pullen, James & Lusine Roesch, Chris & Nicholas Sagherian, Arsen & Varduhi Sahakyan, Alex & Carolyn Saharian, Stephen Saharian, John & Kathleen Samuelian, Martha Samuelian, Tanya Sarafian, Chuck & Kathy Sarkisian, Vahak & Elizabeth Sarkis, Leon & Sharon Sarkisian, Chris & Carol Sassouni, Yates & Lexy Sayers, Stepan & Seta Serpekiian, Jinev Shahinian, Stephen Shahinian, Lizzy Shahnasarian, Michael & Jean Shahnasarian, Norair & Maro Shaldjian, John & Kelly Shamsey, Robert & Christina Shamsey, Daniel & Norma Takoushian, Nevere Tavoukdjian, Tigran & Lucine Vartazarian, Tim & Adrienne Vartanian Milewski, Artin & Amy Vartoukian, James & Cathy Wilson, Haig Yaghoobian, Haig & Louise Yardumian, Maurice & Mary Youakim

**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, Haig Yaghoobian, Michael Shahnasarian

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:

Issue	Submission
Fall 2022	August 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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Women's Guild  
Chair – Debra Kamajian  
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Vice-Chair – Karen Minassian  
[Karen@Homeserviceinteriors.com](mailto:Karen@Homeserviceinteriors.com)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

***\*\*Divine Liturgy takes place every Sunday from 10:30-12:30 unless noted below.***

***Sunday School takes place every Sunday starting at 11am.***

***Fellowship in Shahnasarian Hall to follow immediately after service***

<b>Sun. May 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. May 8<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School Special Mother's Day Fellowship-Sunday School Performance	10:30 AM 12:30 PM
<b>Tue. May 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
<b>Sun. May 15<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship Benefit Concert-Featuring Levon Ambartsumian	10:30AM-1:30PM 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM
<b>Sun. May 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy/Last Day of Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. May 29<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. June 5<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy (Pentecost) & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. June 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Tues. June 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
<b>Sun. June 19<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy Special Father's Day Fellowship	10:30 AM 12:30 PM
<b>Sun. June 26<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. July 3<sup>rd</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. July 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Tue. July 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
<b>Sun. July 17<sup>th</sup></b>	No Divine Liturgy at St. Hagop (Fr. Hovnan Away)	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. July 24<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy (Transfiguration) & Fellowship Guest Celebrant Hayr Simeon Odabashian (Fr. Hovnan Away)	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. July 31<sup>st</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship Guest Celebrant Hayr Simeon Odabashian (Fr. Hovnan Away)	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. August 7<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Tue. August 9<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
<b>Sun. August 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy (Asdvadzadzeen/Assumption of Mary) Blessing of Grapes & Special Fellowship	10:30 AM 12:30 PM
<b>Sun. August 21<sup>st</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. August 28<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. September 4<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
<b>Sun. September 11<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy (Khachverats/Exaltation of Cross) Blessing of the World & Special Fellowship Registration/1 <sup>st</sup> Day of Sunday School	10:30AM-1:30PM 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
<b>Sun. September 13<sup>th</sup></b>	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM

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)





**St. Hagop Armenian Church**

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