

AVEDIS

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St. Hagop Armenian Church

The Good News | Fall 2022

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The Greatest Law



Matthew 22:37,39

Pastor's Desk by Fr. Hovnan Demerjian – The Greatest Law

‘Can I, can I, can I?’ If you are a parent or spent time around kids, you have been through this phase with your children. It seems from our youngest days we are hardwired to seek and test the boundaries of what we can and can’t do; it’s how we learn and grow and also how we get into trouble. It also happens to be a fundamental question we have always asked as children of our Heavenly Father. Just add 610 more ‘can I’s’ to the three we started with, and you will have the 613 ‘can I’s’ asked and answered by God the Father for his children in the law of the Old Testament. That’s right, there are precisely 613 laws prescribed in the Old Testament, governing nearly every aspect of daily life. Can I eat this? Can I wear that? Can we sell this?

We tend to shrug off the Old Testament as ancient writings that we have superseded as modern Christians. If we do, we are dead wrong. The question of ‘can I’ was and always will be the central question of our human experience; that’s why it was the first question of Adam & Eve, having nothing to do with apples and everything to do with life. Can we have all this God? Can we defend it? Can we destroy it? Can we rule over it like gods? ‘Can I’ is the question which has always framed our blessing and our curse, giving shape to our society and highlighting its divisions. Two big and complex ‘can I’ questions were adjudicated by the US Supreme Court this summer, reigniting conversation and controversy that has gone on for years.

One set of questions were related to gun rights and controls. Can I use weapons of deadly force to defend myself? Can I use military weapons? What if I am just 18 years-old or mentally troubled? The other set of questions were around abortion rights and controls. Can I terminate my pregnancy at any time? What if I was raped or my baby has severe birth defects? What if I’m just not ready for a baby?

The question of ‘can I’ forms the fabric of our society and highlights its great divisions. It is a question we must continually ask and learn to discuss civilly. But in and of itself, this question does not provide adequate answers. If ‘can I’ is the only and highest question we ask, often fundamentalism follows close behind, be it from the left or from the right. Can we own guns? The liberal fundamentalist answer is ‘no, there must be an absolute legal ban on guns.’ Can we abort pregnancy? The conservative fundamentalist answer is ‘no, there must be an absolute legal ban on abortion.’ Yet, even a novice student of history knows that legal bans rarely solve problems. Alcoholism was out of control and ruining lives in mid-19th century America. The government made the sale and consumption of alcohol illegal, but the cure was worse than the disease. Alcoholism grew steadily worse under prohibition and gave rise to black markets and organized crime to boot.

But do you know what the most effective large-scale treatment of alcoholism has been? It was a movement by a guy named Bill who moved beyond the question of ‘can’ and ‘can’t’ with alcohol and started asking the question of ‘should.’ Step 1: I can’t control my alcoholism, but I should. Step 2: My ‘should’ is powerless in me, but it’s made powerful by God. And by God I should, I want to live differently; making amends for everyone I have hurt, becoming all I was called to be.

The question of should, when submitted to God, unlocks the impasse between can and can’t. Jesus summed it up in one of our frequently assigned readings. The fundamentalists of his time were judging Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. Jesus tells them, forget your ‘cans’ and ‘cant’s,’ what did God say to you in your scriptures? ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ (Mt 12:7) That is, I hate your elaborate laws, rules and judging of others, I want your hearts, open to me, to your neighbors, even to your enemies. Jesus’ foes then try to trap him in front of people with a gotcha question. ‘So Jesus, if these 613 can and can’t laws aren’t important; what is important? Jesus answers them, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...and love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Mt 22:37,39)

So then, following Jesus, let’s ask our can and can’t questions, but let’s put them in their proper place. Let’s put them in second place after the primary question of ‘should,’ for these are questions of the heart, between you and God. When we believe this, we get to the heart of any question in our lives. We get to the heart of issues like abortions and guns. And the heart of the matter, is that there should be as few of them both as possible, exponentially less than there are now. That’s what we should do, and deep down I think we know this. The evil one, however, uses his same old tricks to keeps us fighting and distracted; ‘hey who are you to tell me what I can and can’t do?’ This is a distraction. The direct questions are between God and me, God and you. What does my God, who hates legalism and loves mercy ask of me? How might the greater good of others limit my personal rights? Am I just fighting for my rights, or fighting for the health, safety and blessedness of others?

In short, let us first look in the mirror when judging our cans and cant’s and ask God’s mercy for all the ways we fall short. For then we might discover that sacred question of ‘should’ rising above ‘can’ and ‘can’t.’ This is the question which unlocks our full potential as humans and children of a God, whose greatest law is love and whose deepest desire is for mercy; amen.

Parish Council Report by Michael Shahnasarian, Ph.D.

Love, faith, and forgiveness - three of the most revered teachings from Holy scripture, and consonant Armenian Christian values we strive to integrate in our daily lives – provide both a touchstone for us to make decisions and guidance on how to lead our lives. Examples of St. Hagop parishioners embodying these virtues abound.

This past summer, three St. Hagop parishioners undertook mission trips in Armenia that exemplified boundless love. Dr. George Kamajian volunteered his physician skills – grounded in his dedication to relieving suffering and improving human welfare, and his commitment to address Armenian needs – in a medical mission he initiated in our homeland. And Yn Anna and Der Hovnan displayed their ongoing selflessness in their human service mission, ministering to children, the elderly, and victims of the Artsakh war.

The enduring faith of our Southwest Florida brethren – many who have passed and envisioned for over 50 years an Armenian church in our community before St. Hagop was established – led to the building and consecration of our beloved St. Hagop Armenian Church in 2007. Jack and Tiffany Dikranian exemplify an ongoing extension of this faith, serving as co-chairs of the 15th anniversary of our church's consecration (please plan to join us on Saturday October 15th for a wonderful dinner, fellowship, and dance to follow). Faith also undergirded St. Hagop's conversion from a dues to pledge system seven years ago and, after Labor Day, our church will begin its 2023 stewardship campaign. As you pray about your next year's pledge, we encourage you to also consider how you can lend your time and talent to further our parish's ministries.

Our faithful are reminded of forgiveness during our weekly Badarak service, including Jesus' sacrifice for the redemption of our sins and our humble participation in the most important activities we engage every week: stating our confession to God and praying for His absolution, and participating in Holy Communion. The extension of this forgiveness through asking for and granting our forgiveness of others rids us from the burden of carrying harmful, counterproductive enmity.

Of these three virtues – love, faith, and forgiveness – the latter has been the most challenging for me to apply in my ongoing attempt to become a better Armenian Christian, and oftentimes I must expend conscious effort to this end. This past week I made some progress, while attending a funeral of a professional associate and forgiving in my mind some unpleasantries between us and by asking forgiveness from a friend who rekindled a relationship I had neglected. These are modest efforts, reminding us of the expression that we *practice Christianity*: we are all a work in progress.

As we transition to a new season, I invite you to join me in making special efforts to extend love, faith, and forgiveness to those we encounter.

In closing, please continue to keep our Primate, the Very Reverend Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, in your prayers. Following a July auto accident he underwent multiple orthopedic surgeries, and he will have a long course of rehabilitation treatment ahead.

St. Hagop 15th Anniversary Dinner-Dance—Saturday, October 15th

More than a community of faithful, we at St. Hagop are like family. To celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the consecration of our beautiful Church, we invite you to this family-friendly dinner dance. Please bring your own family, no matter how big or small, reserve a table, invite your friends and loved ones, or even sponsor another family to attend. You can also be a sponsor of our event; no amount is too big or small. Simply call the church office at 727-545-0380 or visit our website www.sthagopfl.org for more information. We look forward to breaking bread together and celebrating this special occasion with you, our St. Hagop Family!



The poster features a dark background with a large, glowing '15th' in the center. A golden ring of light surrounds the number. In the top left corner, a yellow starburst contains the text 'Featuring DJ HAGZ'. Below the '15th', the text 'ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSECRATION OF ST. HAGOP ARMENIAN CHURCH' is written in white. Below this, 'DINNER-DANCE' is written in large, bold, white letters. Underneath, the event times are listed: 'DOORS OPEN 6:00 PM | DINNER 7:00 PM | DANCE 8:00 PM'. The date 'OCTOBER 15, 2022' is prominently displayed in large, bold, white letters. At the bottom, there are four columns of information: location (Shahnasarian Hall), ticket prices (\$50 for adults, \$25 for teens), silent auction details, and the church logo. A footer bar at the very bottom contains the website 'STHAGOPFL.ORG'.

Featuring
DJ HAGZ

15th

ANNIVERSARY
OF THE CONSECRATION OF
ST. HAGOP ARMENIAN CHURCH

DINNER-DANCE

DOORS OPEN 6:00 PM | DINNER 7:00 PM | DANCE 8:00 PM

OCTOBER 15, 2022

SHAHNASARIAN HALL 7020 90th Ave North Pinellas Park, FL 33782	PURCHASE TICKETS ONLINE AT STHAGOPFL.ORG	SILENT AUCTION DINNER BAR	
DANCE DIRECTORS Jack & Tiffany Dikranian (813) 924-0715	\$50 ADULTS \$25 TEENS AGES 6-12	HOTEL ROOM BLOCK RESERVED	

VISIT **STHAGOPFL.ORG** FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reflection on St. Hagop Outreach to Tsovaghyugh by Dr. George Kamajian

Dr. George's journal from his Armenia trip will appear in three parts in the Avedis newsletter
Dr. George & Yn. Anna will also reflect on their work in Armenia at fellowship Sunday, Sept 4th

"Barev Dzez"

I am Mgerdich. My father died in the first war of Artsakh's liberation. I swore I would die on his grave before giving up this land. We never heard of drones. The Azeris and their mercenaries came in waves. We stopped them the first two times. The third time I kept my word. I have no grave to weep over. Just look in the fields where the grass may grow greener and there you will find my comrades and me. Save your sons and daughters.

Background

I am 3rd generation...Armenian-American or American-Armenian. That dichotomy has always been a point of deliberation. My grandparents never saw Lake Sevan, or Yerevan, or Ararat or Artsakh or an independent Armenia but they dedicated every fiber of their being to anything and everything Armenian. This is my 3rd time in Armenia. The first time I came under the auspices of USAID grant after the 1988 earthquake. It was too little, too late. "Luys chee-ga, Kords chee-ga, Huys chee-ga" (there is no light, no work and no hope). The second time was in 2007 with a church group from St Hagop where we saw every church known to man and God. If the Armenians built as many forts as churches, we would have ruled the world. This trip was under the auspices of St Hagop and arranged through the contacts of Yeretskin Anna Demerjian. Dr. Armine Barkhudaryan's organization, Traveling Doctors of Armenia, was the principal trip coordinator.

Observations

Armenia

Yerevan, under the shadow of Ararat. One million people. Everything that any major city on earth has...subway system, skyscrapers, vibrant, artistic, expensive, traffic jams, pollution, ancient history, markets, sophisticated shopping, world renown brands, street vendors, Lata's, Rolls Royce's, Volga's, and more Mercedes per capita than anywhere else in the world (although most of them come here for resurrection). Every taxi driver has multiple graduate degrees and a story.

Armenians themselves are bright, hospitable beyond belief, especially to American standards. The people radiate hope even though they are on the verge of continuous annihilation. Their speech is a mix of Russian and Eastern Armenian. And everyone speaks Russian. For 70 years of Soviet rule the Russian language bonded all the republics together. Although independence came in 1992, it is only recently that Armenian is taught. Only within the last 10 years has Armenian been mandated on the medical records. Before, it was all Russian.

Young Russians, Germans, Czechs, and British are everywhere (especially after the post Ukraine invasion exodus) cycling, hiking, camping, and exploring Armenia. Yerevan has a population of over one million and now 10% are foreigners. Most have no



connection to Armenia but come anyway. Only the European girls have tattoos, not the Armenian. Everyone smokes. Most of the men wear sandals or flip-flops. Everyone has a cell phone. In fact, the first stop exiting in the airport is to get a SIM card and only then exchange your monies.

The country is awash in NGO's...non-government organizations...such as City of Smiles, the Red Cross, World Vision, USAID, AGBU, World Bank, ARS, ARF, Knights of Vartan and the Tufenkian Foundation, but scant evidence those funds have a sustaining impact. Those organizations often pay American level wages of \$2-3,000 a month to their staff when doctors in Armenia make \$500. A certain level of diverting funds or supplies is expected. After all, that was the old Soviet way of conducting business for 70 years. 1,000 rebars called for in constructing a building, but only 75% make it. The remainder never see the construction site. That mentality contributed to the spectacular destruction of Gyumri and Spitak in 1988's earthquake but the lesson seems to be lost. Armenia is awash in oligarchs permeating every aspect of government and religious hierarchy. There is a clear dichotomy... it is ok to steal from the diaspora with impunity but stealing from Armenia is frowned upon.

Much of their medical system has remained mired in Soviet era mentality despite years, untold funds, and human resources spent in attempting to uplift the quality of care. General medical care is free. Pharmacies dispense medication (except for narcotics) without prescriptions. Specialist, testing, and radiologic imaging are available but must be privately paid for. There is an anticipated and expected gratuity built into every level of health care service. The nurse that triages you to the gynecologist decides which specialist at her institution you get to see based on how that doctor rewards her. If you need to be admitted to a hospital your family must bring in your own food. That does not hold for the pediatric cancer hospital where NGO's (not the government) have provided catering services.

Select hospitals in Yerevan are the match in technology and skills as anywhere on the planet. But they only in the major cities and only to those who pay privately. Nurses are called "k'uyrig", sisters. They are given little latitude to do anything without direct physician supervision. High tech equipment and often low-tech equipment sit behind locked doors or glass cabinets collecting dust; often because the instructions may be in English, or the original trainee or recipient guards the property as their personal treasure, or the \$3000 EKG machine is out of \$2 EKG paper or the 25 cents light bulb on an otoscope has burnt out. I am on the verge of despair until I see the Robbie the Robot, a mobile interactive computer whose function is to make those children who are taken hostage by cancer smile. Someone is doing something right.

Nairi

CPR, invented in the 1960's is almost nonexistent in Armenia. Film producer Armen Grigoryan collapsed and died in a loaded courtroom on live TV in July 2022. The best assistance he received was a towel waved in front of his face. It was possibly an unnecessary death. No one knew CPR. There were no defibrillators in this public space. I joint a CPR training at the main pediatric cancer hospital in Yerevan. The instructor, Nairi, is an amazing nurse from Detroit. The American nurse had to get the Red Cross slides translated to Armenian from English. To do so, she had to have them translated into Russian first. But this course is not approved by the Red Cross in Armenia, so they make a decision to fire the Armenian Doctor, Armine, from their affiliations for joining this class. Maybe it is because we gave the course for free? Go figure.

Nairi has made this trip to Armenia to teach CPR multiple times. I ask her how she got involved. She tells me about coming to Armenia on a youth group trip in the 1990's. There she met her prospective husband Greg, from Chicago. Our reminiscing about mutual connections continues. She shows me a photo of a dozen laughing smiling faces of kids she met in Artsakh. "Although we are continents apart, we've always managed to keep in touch," she says. She points to one face in particular. "His name was Mgerdich. I had a bit of crush on him. He said he could never leave Artsakh and come to America. He promised his father that he would die on his father's grave before leaving Artsakh." She pauses. "I think he was killed in the last war." We move in mutual silence, to on unpacking the Zoll automatic defibrillator I brought from America as a gift to the hospital.

Lake Sevan

It is 3 am and a 2-hour ride from Yerevan to Lake Sevan, my hosts home. The roads are pitch black except for a smattering of vendors selling an unidentifiable orange concoction along with Chinese inflatables for playing on the lake. Leaving the geographic bowl of Yerevan, you enter a countryside that, in the daytime, is a mosaic of browns and yellows, rolling fields of Van Gogh wheat, patchworked like a quilt. Then you notice the wildflowers. A collage of red and blues and yellows along the roadside. At my Lake Sevan apartment there is a train that runs along the lake from the Sotk gold mine, just at the Azeri-Armenian border 20 miles away. It runs 3 times a day to the Ararat Gold Extraction Plant near Yerevan.

Tsovagyukh primary care clinic

The road off the highway leads up a hill to Tsovagyukh. It is a stark contrast to Yerevan. The village is peppered with homes that date back to at least 200 years. There is a 12th century church nearby. Various dwellings, mostly handmade, with gardens and grazing animals tethered to rusted-out shells of what once were cars or farm implements define the village. Dismantled and rusted car doors, roofs, and auto frames serve as fences between properties or to prevent the loss of an animal. Across the street from the clinic, only a couple of hundred yards away is mighty lake Sevan. Layers of abandoned soviet era structures claim the shorefront. Stone construction is ubiquitous. The sweet fragrance of cut grass and wildflowers is overwhelmed by the odor of cow manure. What I see are carefully stacked dried cow patties (used for fuel in the winter) in front of every home, in front of every store, alongside every wall, on top of every wall, on top of roofs. And on every patient.

They are proud of their recently renovated clinic. Sinks are sparse. Cold water is the only water. Exam rooms are on the second floor. The walls are covered in old Soviet health care posters and new one's warning of COVID. The uneven steps leading to the exam rooms are a cardiac stress test in themselves. If you can climb the stairs, you really can't be that sick. The nurses are called "k'uyrig" or sister. They beam with pride at their clinic. The Armenian hospitality comes out with coffee, sweets, fruit and brandy



(yes, brandy) in between patients. There are flies everywhere. Although it is 104 degrees Fahrenheit in Yerevan, it is a balmy 75 degrees by Lake Sevan. The head doctor, Viken, shakes my hand and is genuinely happy to see me. He assumes I know more than he does because I am from America. I have no medical license here but that is ok.

The patients line up. They've been waiting for hours. They come in wearing their best Soviet remnants, often patched or sewn, reeking of animal husbandry and blithely wallowing in their own personal effluents as they greet me with a "Barev dzez" (hello to you). I extend my hand and feel lucky that it is returned to me whole. Even the women have paws, thick with evidence of their hard farm work. I fight back the recurring mental picture of one specific Seinfeld episode. The men, especially veterans, have beards, and the women often have mustaches, thick uni-eyebrows, and rarely wear makeup. Blue eyes are common in both sexes. Everyone has a cellphone. Their first names are a hodgepodge of Armenian and Russian: Svetlana, Vartouhi, Mira, Armen, Vardan. Their smiles are a dentist's dream, with more gold in their teeth than Ft Knox.

Everyone is complaining of "sav", pain. Pain in the back, pain in the neck, pain down the arms, pain down the legs, headaches, stomach pains, a churning inside as they point to their heart. During my career as a physician, I have become an expert in trigger shots, a combination of Marcaine and steroids, given directly into their source of pain. During my weeks here I have administered over 500 shots. I know exactly because that is how many syringes I brought with me, and I ran out of syringes. While they are temporarily hostage to the American doctor, we use the opportunity to screen their blood pressure, sugar and cholesterol. Invariably the readings are all ridiculously high. Their glucose monitor are European standards, and I must remember to multiply by 18. Soon we are out of test strips. They are specific to our electronic monitor and are "consumables." The manufacturer makes money, not so much in the monitor but in the test strips. Who knows if that manufacturer is still even in business? Even if they are, supplies are 2 hours away in Yerevan.

I look at my supply of generic medication that I brought with me from the states. I hand carried almost 300 lbs of very specific medication and supplies at the clinic's request. Yes, I can rescue them for one or two months, but what happens after that? My associate and translator write down the names of the drugs we are supplying for future reference, but it is unlikely if not impossible for these people to obtain even if the local pharmacy can obtain them. There is a universal theme in every patient's medication compliance. They take a blood pressure pill or diabetic medication for only a few days. When I ask 'why', they generally reply that the medication worked, and they don't need it anymore. When I try to explain that these drugs must be taken forever, I receive a polite smile or a blank stare.

I can't wash my hands in between patients. There is no soap and no towels. The best I can do is use a hand sanitizer and that I brought myself from America and that is soon exhausted. The exam beds either have no covers or linens that are ancient. No one changes the covers of the exam beds in between patients. I do procedures without gloves because either they have none or they are not my size.

They can still see the primary doctor at the clinic for free; but the follow up prescriptions are not free. Everything is from Russia or China. Of course, in America, half our medications are from India and Israel, so who are we to throw the first stone? The CT scans, MRI's, and any technology including lab tests are not free. Invariably every patient I am seeing has been told they have disc problems in their back and are advised to have surgery. But the operations are \$5,000-\$10,000....a bargain at American prices but impossible in a country where even doctors make an average of \$500 a month.

Semyonovka village

It's day #2 and we are in Semyonovka village. It is small. Much smaller than Tsovagyukh. I have to step over a large puddle of fresh (an oxymoron for sure) cow manure to get into the clinic. My translator is AWOL. I have a clinic full of patients and my Armenian is limited to finding a bathroom and getting fed, and that is Western Armenian. I can barely get past the difference between parev and barev. The "k'uyrigs" stare helplessly at me as phone calls are being made to get me help. I come up with a plan. I gather all the nurses and doctors around. I don't speak Russian or Armenian and they don't speak English; but we all speak Arabic, I tell them. They look at me like I'm crazy. I take out a paper and pen and show them....1, 2, 3, 4 etc. are all Arabic numbers. They get it. In a few minutes I have them writing eight numbers on every patient: Height, weight, pulse, oxygen, temperature, blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure. A new translator comes in from Yerevan 2 hours away. He is a thoracic surgeon trained in Shanghai and now an entrepreneur. There was no money as a thoracic surgeon because he wasn't connected to the 'good old boy network'. I think about all the taxi drivers with their multiple degrees. We soon get down to business and all is well.

Photos from St. Hagop's Summer Mission Armenia Projects

Thanks to St. Hagop's "Mission Armenia" initiative and the support of our community, the Traveling Doctors of Armenia, headed by Dr. Armine Barkhudaryan, was able to treat hundreds of patients in remote villages in Armenia and Artsakh. The first medical trip took place in early June, in 4 villages of the vulnerable Shushi region of Artsakh. Then joined by our own Dr. Kamajian, they ventured into several other areas throughout Artsakh. During this time Dr. George treated patients and distributed medical supplies. Yn. Anna gave out stuffed animals at the pediatric cancer center in Yerevan, kindly donated by Dr. Bob Shamsey.





SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

St. Hagop Advent Dinner

6:30pm at The Shahnasarian Hall

Join Our 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 catered fellowship. Look out for the sign-up sheet in early November. Don't forget to bring a friend and/or your neighbor! Come and nourish your body and soul to enter into the Holiday Season!

TAVLOO TOURNAMENT

ALL PLAYERS/LEVELS WELCOME

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH 1PM



CONTACT SASON TO REGISTER & INFO
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SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE- School Begins on September 11th—Join us Again!



Calling all parents of youth ages 5-12! The start of Sunday School is upon us-Sept 11th. 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 & Organizers:

Suzie Abadjian

Yn. Anna Demerjian


Fr. Hovnan Demerjian

Suzy Hovhanissian

Linda Maslar

Surbuhi Zakaryan

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



**SAT. JANUARY 28TH
10AM-3PM**



THE ART OF ARMENIAN LETTERS PAINTING WORKSHOP

W/ FR. GARABED KOCHAKIAN

**\$35 FEE FOR SUPPLIES & LUNCH
REGISTER VIA PAYMENT TO CHURCH
REGISTER BY 01/23/23**

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727-463-1688**



GHAPAMA FELLOWSHIP
AND
SWEET CELEBRATION OF ABUNDANCE

NOVEMBER 6TH, SHAHNASARIAN HALL
FOLLOWING BADARAK



PLEASE JOIN US FOR
THIS ARMENIAN FAMILY CELEBRATION
“HEY JAN GHAPAMA”

Pledge Stewardship-Reflections on Last Year & Preparations for New Year Ahead

**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 2023 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:** ____/____/____

Please mail this pledge card to the church office, or bring to offering plate by Stewardship Sunday—November 27, 2022. No payment need accompany this form. We ask that 2023 pledge monies be paid by the end of the 2023 calendar year. Payments may be made online through the St. Hagop website.

May the Lord Remember All Your Offerings
Յիշատէ՛ք ձեր ամբողջ նուիրումը Դուք



Name(s):	
Phone/Email:	

**Stewardship
Pledge Card**

September 1, 2022

Dear St. Hagop Faithful,

There are some mundane things in life that get very tiring by repetition: like cleaning up the dishes after each meal or trimming back the bushes after each season. There are other things that seem to never get old no matter how many times you repeat them; like taking your family again to your favorite restaurant or repeating the prayers and hymns of Sunday Badarak. This second kind of repetition, because of the love and significance involved, somehow changes what is rote into ritual.

Because of the love and significance behind it, we look forward to this seventh season of pledge stewardship at St. Hagop as a sacred ritual which we repeat and do not grow tired. For each year over the past seven, we the faithful of St. Hagop have looked deeply into the blessings of our lives and offered them back to God, Church and those in need through our time, talent and treasure.

This past year again, we had innumerable faithful offering major gifts of their time and talent to lead our council and committees, volunteer for clean-up days, serve in the kitchen, maintain our buildings, teach our children, and minister to needs in Armenia.

Paralleling this generosity of time and talents, our parish again showed generosity in monetary offerings, with 93 parishioners/families giving a total of \$148,245 in 2022. Though we had six less pledges this year than last, the total amount given was nearly the same. We thank those who stepped up their giving this past year to keep us level.

With Fall approaching, we are planning for our 2023 stewardship campaign. Pledge Sunday is November 27, 2022, and you will receive a letter and pledge card for 2022 in early-November. As you prayerfully complete your pledge for 2022 and contemplate your 2023 stewardship, we hope you too will see the love and significance around this yearly ritual which returns gratitude to God for his many blessings, including the great blessing of this church community of which we are all a part.

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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Yn. Anna Demerjian, Michael Shahnasarian, Dr. George Kamajian, Ara Keshishian, Jean 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:

Next Issue	Submission
Winter 2023	December 15th

It costs over \$2,000 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 (\$1000); 1/4 issue (\$500) 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 us at info@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

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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

Sun. September 4th	Divine Liturgy/Fellowship Dr. George & Yn. Anna-Reflections on Armenia-during coffee hour	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. September 11th	Divine Liturgy (Khachverats/Exaltation of Cross) Blessing of the World & Special Fellowship Registration/1 st Day of Sunday School	10:30AM-1:30PM 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Tue. September 13th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Sun. September 18th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. September 25th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. October 2nd	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. October 9th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Tue. October 11th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Sat. October 15th	15 th Anniversary Dinner-Dance @ Shahnasarian Hall Doors Open: 6:00PM Dinner: 7:00PM Dance: 8:00PM	6:00 PM-11:00PM
Sun. October 16th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. October 23rd	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. October 30th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. November 6th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship Ghapama (Celebration of Abundance) and Tavloo Tournament	10:30AM-1:30PM
Tue. November 8th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Sun. November 13th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. November 20th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
November 24th-25th	Thanksgiving Days/ Office Closed	
Sun. November 27th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship Stewardship Pledge Sunday	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. December 4th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Wed. December 7th	Advent Candlelight Dinner	6:30 PM
Sun. December 11th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship Presentation by Dr. Jesse Arlen of Diocesan Zohrab Center	10:30AM-1:30PM
Tue. December 13th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Wed. December 15th	Winter Avedis Newsletter Deadline	
Sun. December 18th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. December 25th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. January 22nd	Divine Liturgy with Diocesan Primate Hayr Mesrop Parsamyan Special Fellowship with Our Primate in Shahnasarian Hall	10:30AM-2:00PM
Sat. January 28th	The Art of Armenian Letters Painting Workshop w/Fr. Garabed Kochakian	10:00AM-3:00PM

Please note that by, 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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