

AVEDIS ԱԻԵՏԻՍ

St. Hagop Armenian Church

The Good News | Summer 2026

IN THIS ISSUE:

Pastor's Desk

2026 Parish Council

PC Chair Report

Upcoming Events

Photos from
Winter & Spring

Taste of Armenia
Post-Event Report

Mission Armenia
Updates

Directory Opt-In
Last Chance

Directory
Advertisements

2026 Stewardship

Issue Information

Calendar



THE END OF EASTER

Pastor's Desk: The End of Easter

As you read this, the Easter season is nearing its end. Thursday May 14th marks the Feast of the Ascension, when 40 days after Easter, Jesus takes permanent leave of his students and rises up in reunion with his Heavenly Father. The Ascension (Hambardzoom) is a major feast with major significance to Armenian Christians, yet somehow it has lost much of its prominence in our day. The first reason for this is logistical. The Ascension happened forty days after Easter Sunday, which always falls on a Thursday. Most of our churches have trouble gathering people for workday divine liturgies, and so our memory of the Ascension fades. However, the problem is more than logistical; it is cultural and theological too. Modern skeptics see the ascension as another hard to believe magic trick of God, written by gullible or manipulative authors. Even believers misinterpret the Ascension with a too literal 'Elevator Christianity.' We-the living-are on floor one. When we die, the good go up to heaven and the bad...well they go down. Neither view captures the profound truths the Ascension is trying to tell us, namely that Christ leaves the world to give space and time for us to rise up in his stead and grow into our ultimate calling.

We can start to recover the meaning of Ascension, by restoring its place as the final inseparable piece of Easter, Christ's Glorious Resurrection. The Ascension explains what we mean and don't mean by Resurrection. You would be right to think our belief is crystal clear that Jesus was the only man who died and rose again. But it depends on what you mean y rise. According to our Scriptures, before Jesus, Lazarus died and rose again as did Jairus' little daughter. For that matter, it's not uncommon for people to die and rise again today. In fact, that's the main premise of a whole genre of books like '90 Minutes in Heaven,' and 'Embraced by the Light.' Many people die (at least clinically) and come back to tell of it (and make a little money doing so!).

Ah, but that is not what happened with Jesus. Jesus' Resurrection was not resuscitation. He didn't die and come back to live out his natural life, before eventually dying again. Jesus' death was intentional, it had a purpose, and that purpose was to raise up all things, to Ascend to the Father and lead us to the same. Jesus' Resurrection, the Gospels make 100% clear, was a permanent change in the nature of reality, a new dimension in human experience. The black curtain of sin and death which befell humanity, which constricts and corrupts our growth, has been broken though by Jesus, ushering in new possibilities, new life. Succinctly put, the Ascension guards us from seeing Jesus' Resurrection as any less than it is. It was no medical miracle, no metaphor and no magic trick; but rather a glimpse for God's people of the final leg of our long journey with Him. As with everything Jesus did, it is an example we are to follow. His ascension makes possible our ascension, being lifted up by seeking the true, beautiful and good in this world, and finally ascending to dwell with God in a glorious new way.

The Ascension also helps us broaden the focus of Christ's Easter Resurrection from one tribe of God's chosen people, to all the children of God dwelling on his Earth. All the happenings of the Gospels are narrowly zoomed in on the smallest outpost of a tiny tribe of people and their interactions with Jesus. But with his Ascension, this narrow focus on a chosen few zooms out to encompass the entire world. If you've used google maps, it's like viewing your little neighborhood and suddenly zooming out to see the entire world. The Gospel of Luke tells it this way. The disciples-faces turned to the sky-see Jesus raising his hand in blessing as he ascends. As he is lifted up, Jesus' blessing broadens, widening in scope from the disciples, to Jerusalem, to Armenia, to Africa and eventually, to all the corners of the earth!

And the Ascension not only broadened the scope of Jesus' ministry in space, but also in time, to future generations. When Jesus left his disciples and the world in such a grand way, he provided maximum space and time for the children of men to grow into our calling as Christians. We often cite the upcoming feast of Pentecost as the birthday of the church, but that birth was conceived nine days prior with the Ascension. For as the disciples began looking up to follow their Risen Lord's path, they stopped looking down at their limitations. They stopped looking down at each other and began looking up together-picking up where Jesus left off-and handing down that mission to future generations.

May we, in turn, pick up where the disciples left off on that day of Ascension- looking upward to gaze on the mystery of God's coming kingdom-the true end of Easter. May we lift our minds to see that Jesus' death and rising was no mere scientific anomaly, but the final step in God's plan to reform all reality. May we expand our vision to serve not only our family and tribe, but all of God's children. And may we pursue our highest calling to be witnesses to the Ascension of our Lord in lifting up our hearts, minds and deeds to his example of all that is good and true; now and always, amen.

Meet Our 2026 Parish Council



We are deeply grateful to our 2026 Parish Council who meet monthly and serve daily to lead our church (from left to right, back to front): Stepan Aghekyan (vice-treasurer), Chuck Begian (treasurer), David Kazarian (chairman), Sason Demirjian (co-sexton), Sargis Knyazyan (vice-secretary), Bobby Maslar (co-sexton), John Arsenault (member), Suzanna Hovhannisian (secretary), Fr. Hovnan Demerjian (pastor) & Raelene Pullen (vice-chair). May God continue to guide & bless the servant-leaders of St. Hagop Armenian Church!

Livestream St. Hagop Worship Services, Sermons & Special Events

www.youtube.com/c/SthagopflOrg www.facebook.com/St.Hagop www.sthagopfl.org/podcast/

Parish Council Chair's Message by David Kazarian

It's just a dog!

Some years ago, Michelle who used to clean our office and St. Hagop, came to work crying. I asked her what the problem was and she said her dog died. She was devastated. My response was not very sensitive, I said "It's just a dog, you can get another one from the dog pound for not a lot of money." At the time, I didn't have a dog, but after having 2 dogs I now understand. I understand something that only a person that has dogs can understand, it's not just a dog, it's a member of the family.

What does this have to do with the parish council update? Well, our dog Kufta passed away 1 day after Cousin Lillian passed. During Cousin Lil's last days, members of the church and parish council came to visit Cousin Lil. Some brought gifts and some drink, but all brought comfort for Lil and me. It made me realize more acutely than ever before that members of St. Hagop Armenian Church are truly family! Fr. Hovnan dropped everything he was doing to come visit Cousin Lil the week before she died. He had been there before, but the last time he visited he came because I told him Cousin Lil wanted to speak to him. When she told me she wanted to see Fr. Hovnan, knowing the end was near, I called him and told him she was asking for him. Death was imminent and I thought she needed spiritual guidance in her last days. Or perhaps forgiveness, I wasn't sure, but I was sure she needed to see Fr. Hovnan. When he arrived, I said to Lil "Lil, you said you wanted to tell Fr. Hovnan something, what did you want to tell him?" She turned and I could see she was in pain, because every time she moved there was pain, she looked him in the eye and said, "I'm going to hell". I can't tell you what I felt when she said that. Fr. Hovnan told her she wasn't. He told her about a convicted criminal that was on the cross next to Christ, and how Christ forgave that individual (Lk 23:32-43). I have to tell you Fr. Hovnan's words sent me to the Bible and I was reminded about the 2 criminals that were with Jesus, and how soldiers mocked Jesus. And how one criminal said "we are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve, but this man (Jesus) has done nothing wrong." Then he said "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." He forgave the criminal.

That was the message Fr. Hovnan gave to my cousin as she was in her last days. I think he got through to her. After that visit (and subsequent visits) from members of our church, cousin Lil was comforted. She asked about Kufta, we brought her (our dog) to see Lil. My sadness after Lil died was intensified when Kufta died the very next day. In the old days I would have said "it's only a dog," but that week we lost two members of our family. Quite frankly when Cousin Lil died it was a blessing, she was in constant pain, couldn't get out of a hospital bed, didn't eat, and had to be treated like an infant child, being washed and taken care of by staff at the assisted living. As I said previously, a great deal of comfort came to me thanks to members of our parish council and church. Fr. Hovnan's words were extremely comforting. Watching my cousin in her final days and seeing our church family come visit made me realize the true nature of our church family. Caring, wonderful people that felt not only my cousin's pain, but my pain too. In her last days there was a change in Cousin Lil. The anger she felt because of the unfairness of 4 of her family members death due to cancer subsided. She started thinking about the people she came into contact with while in Florida. The anger turned to kind thoughts.

One other event triggered those kind thoughts. While Fr. Hovnan, Anna, Nora and Narek were visiting I told her it was Armenian Christmas, and she said she wanted a Christmas tree. Very shortly thereafter a tree appeared (thanks to Fr. Hovnan's family) and it was decorated with hearts created by Nora. Cousin Lil's eyesight was diminished thanks to glaucoma, but she saw the tree and the hearts. That had a profound effect on her. More than I could have imagined.

So in my reporting about what goes on in the parish council over the past few months, I should tell you about the types of activities, occurred over the last months, which I'll only say your parish council is hard at working making sure this church functions well, has programs for our youth and elderly. Today (many days before this report was published) I came into the church hall to get my checkbook from my briefcase that I placed in the office. Our wonderful sound system had my hearing aids connected to the microphones in the church, facilitated by the parish council. While writing my check for my weekly donation multitasking, I was listening to Fr. Hovnan's sermon. Andy Anusbigian once said to me "when I listen to Fr. Hovnan's sermon it's like he's talking to me." Today while listening I was interrupted by a business phone call, that I couldn't ignore. I didn't hear the rest of the message but the beginning was profound. He was speaking about members of the church, and it was almost as though he knew what I was thinking. It was as though he was speaking to me!

As I sit here in the church hall, watching members of the Women's Guild hard at work in the kitchen I am realizing how blessed I am to be a member of this church family. I'm surrounded by caring wonderful people who care about each other. People who drop what they are doing to come and comfort a parishioner who is in her last days, comforting her cousin and caring about everyone.

Upcoming Events

St. Hagop's Got Talent-Mother's Day, Sunday May 10th!



We are calling on all the talent of our St. Hagop community! As we come together to celebrate our Mothers what could be more beautiful than honoring them through music, art & creativity? Whether you sing, play an instrument, dance, recite poetry, or have another special talent, we'd love for you to share it with our community. This is a joyful and welcoming event, come share your gifts with one another. If you're interested, please email Suzanna at GotDreamHome@gmail.com with your name and a brief description of your performance. We can't wait to see the wonderful talent of our St. Hagop family!

Seniors Fellowship-Thursday May 21st

Thanks to all who participated in our last Seniors fellowship! The last Seniors fellowship before our Summer hiatus is Thursday, May 21st at noon. Do join us and please contact event chair Sargis Knyazyan sknyazyan@gmail.com if you would like the fellowship to continue in the Fall season and/or if you would like to volunteer to continue to make this outreach ministry possible.



Discipleship Opportunities for Youth

St. Hagop Campership Applications



St. Hagop will offer 50% tuition scholarships to participants of Diocesan camp programs (St. Vartan, Hye Camps & St. Nersess) who regularly attend worship/Sunday School at St. Hagop and whose families are stewards. If you fit these criteria, visit our website www.sthagopfl.org/st-hagop-campership-application to find campership applications and more information on each program. Contact Fr. Hovnan with any questions.

Armenian Church Summer Camps/Conferences



Each year hundreds of young Armenians come together at St. Vartan Camp in NY, Hye Camp in IL and St. Nersess Conferences in NY. All programs allow youth to gather with Armenians from across the nation, grow in their faith & culture and have fun. Check out www.stnersess.edu and www.diocesansummercamps.org for camp and conference times and more information.

Diocesan Scholarship Applications

Applications for Diocesan scholarships are now available online. Application deadline for 2026-27 academic year is May 8th. Each year the Diocese awards college scholarships to promising youth. The Diocese seeks students who are active in local parishes and leadership roles in their communities (recommendation required by pastor). For application, visit www.armenianchurch.us/scholarships, contact person: Maria at (212) 686-0710 ext. 136 or mariab@armeniandiocese.org.



Photos from a Busy & Blessed Spring Season at St. Hagop!



Clockwise from top left:

Sunday School class, Taste of Armenia prep crew, Taste of Armenia crowd, Women's Guild bake sale, Women's Guild luncheon, Lenten clergy retreat meal, Lenten clergy retreat worship, Taste of Armenia grill crew

Photos from an Active Spring Season at St. Hagop!

Clockwise from top left:

Youth arts photography module, 'Kiss of Peace' in Worship 101, Easter Eve candlelight prayer, Good Friday burial tomb, Easter fellowship table, Easter egg hunt, Easter worship, Washing of the Feet service



Taste of Armenia Post-Event Report

Dear Taste of Armenia Sponsors, Volunteers and Members of the St. Hagop Church Family,

From the start, we knew, without a doubt, the FIRST ANNUAL TASTE OF ARMENIA TAMPA BAY would be a wonderful celebration of our Armenian Culture on the beautiful grounds of our beloved St. Hagop Armenian Church. We expected the food to be delicious and the spirit of fellowship to permeate. We expected it to be a day of great FUN. But who could have imagined we would welcome more than 800 people on a cold, windy, and rainy day? Beyond the members of our own St. Hagop Community, we welcomed Armenians, some of whom had never been to St. Hagop before, non-Armenians who were excited to celebrate the culture of friends and neighbors, and even people who had never heard of Armenia before, wondering about the sounds of our music and the taste of our food. We imagined! We visualized! We planned! And with God’s help, we did it!!! By all accounts the day was an incredible success!



Rewind. In August 2025, by chance, Scott brought me to a Parish Council Meeting. Der Hovnan and the Parish Council insisted he sit in and be present in the meeting. While the wants and wishes of many for us to do an annual “Picnic” or “Festival” had been in the air, it was that night, with us all together, that we formally discussed the concept, and Scott and I volunteered to “found” the event and take responsibility to chair it for its first 3 years. We believe 3 years is enough time to give it structure and nutrients, to build quality and consistency, and then to pass it, stable and strong, into the next set of capable hands.

While there is never a “perfect time” to schedule an annual festival like this, it was determined we couldn’t have it during Great Lent, we didn’t want it to be inside hurricane season. We preferred to stay out of times of year when the heat would be prohibitive. The date quickly narrowed to the 3rd Sunday in January. Between Armenian Christmas and Gasparilla. Ensuring all of us who work would have some reprieve as the Monday after would always be Martin Luther King, Jr. day.

Our mission and purpose were clear:

To bring people together in celebration of our Armenian Culture at St. Hagop Armenian Church

Having an event of this size and scale would not be possible without some liability to the Church. The cost of consumables, groceries and ingredients, along with the one-time costs to purchase small wares, establish our branding, marketing and creative, mailers, street signage, banners, flags, linens, etc. It was determined the liability to the Church could be as much as \$20k in our first year. The Parish Council unanimously accepted this and voted for us to move forward.

Appeal for Sponsorship

It was never our intention the event would be net negative, not even in its first year. We set a 3-year plan to build the event, managing our expenditures and strategically purchasing items needed, each year.

We knew we needed sponsors to help diminish the liability to the Church. We hoped it would be a sense of pride and that people who love St. Hagop would share in the excitement and sponsor. On September 27, we sent 120 letters to donors of St. Hagop Armenian Church, Church vendors, and local businesses. As we were dropping the letters at the Post Office, Chrisanne Jensen messaged to ask what she should do when sponsors came in. Our first ever sponsors for Taste of Armenia Tampa Bay, were John and Sue Arsenault.

Presenting Sponsor \$7,500	Michael & Jean Shahnasarian
Entertainment Sponsor \$5,000 (cash and 6 round-trip plane tickets)	David & Nancy Kazarian
Family Sponsor \$1,000	John & Sue Arsenault
Family Sponsor \$1,000	Robert & Victoria Kaprelian
Family Sponsor \$1,000	Harout Keshishian
Family Sponsor \$1,000	Scott & Raelene Ohanesian Pullen
Cash gifts to the Event \$600	Tony and Kathy Melikian Bramhall
Supporting Sponsor \$500	Alysia & Greg Ekizian
Supporting Sponsor \$500	Tom Garabedian
Supporting Sponsor \$500	James & Lusine Roesch
Supporting Sponsor \$500	Minuteman Press - Tom Sook
Contributing Sponsor \$250	Eileen Barsamian
Contributing Sponsor \$250	Pauline Gilgan
Contributing Sponsor \$250	Sarafian Wealth Management LLC

They sponsored before even being asked. Michael and Jean Shahnasarian came forward with love and support as our Presenting Sponsor. From that foundation we got our start.

Overall, we were grateful to have 14 sponsors who donated more than \$17,350.00!! We want to especially thank Robert and Victoria Kaprelian, our Kavor and Kavorkin for all their love and support along the way, and for being a Family Sponsor. The only thing better would have been to have them with us, in Florida, for the event. Next year!

Special thanks to Der Hovnan for his spiritual guidance managing our presence online and continually updating the sponsor names on the website (in addition to ALL website work) and to BOTH Der Hovnan and Yn. Anna for creating the beautiful program and recognizing our sponsors and volunteers.



Appeal for Volunteers

The strength of our Parish and the heartbeat of Taste of Armenia were the hearts and hands of our more than 60 volunteers. Some of whom worked for days and others just for a few hours. EVERYONE worked very hard! All with love and enthusiasm for our Church and Culture. Volunteer Surveys were sent through the mail, completed electronically through a QR Code, or through the Church Website, as well as filled out in person during Fellowship Hour. What a talented Group we have! *I am not surprised!* The last question on the survey asked everyone *what they wished* for the event. I am pleased to report: Everyone's wishes came true!

Saturday Set-up and Prep

We wanted to make things as easy as possible for the Church Team. We did not know the talent we had coming to help like an army in the days before. Much of the production Scott and I did ourselves. We made 22 pounds of string cheese, 30 quarts of hummus, 9 quarts of apricot vinaigrette, and many gallons of marinades for the beef, chicken, and lamb. Oh. . . I forgot the pilaf. I made 40 pounds of rice into pilaf in advance. Scott trimmed weighed and cubed 147 pounds of chicken breasts and 128 pounds of top sirloin.

An ALL-STAR Team came out to work and set-up on Saturday. Working diligently and in harmony, with smiles, in song, while tapping toes, and telling stories. It was the work of this work that set us up for success on Sunday.

Special thanks to . . . Rita & Ara Keshishian, Lucy & Arman Calikyan, Sue and John Arsenault, Marisol & Kevork Demirjian, Alysia & Greg Ekizian, Melissa & Jason Sluka, Linda Maslar, Bobby Maslar, Anna Halalyan & Mark Assad, Tanya Sarafian, Teresa Haidarian, Henry Mullins, Shawnt Ohanian, Andre Trapizonian, Sason Demirjian, Chuck and Lisa Begian (and Lisa's Mom), Stepan Aghekyan, and David Kazarian.

I can't think of any process or work product in which Yn. Anna and Der Hovnan Demirjian were not included, and of course, Narek and Nora. In fact, it was Der. Hovnan who led us in song and Armenian Celebration on Saturday.

Pastries baking in the ovens, vegetables washed, cut and stored. The team worked as though all had been doing this for several years! Scott and I were touched with everyone's willingness to do whatever was needed. No job was too big or too small. All in, our kitchen team shished 350 beef kebabs, 350 chicken and prepped 200 lamb luleh kebabs.

The Congeniality Award in the kitchen on both Saturday and Sunday goes to Marisol and Kevork Demirjian who danced and sang for two days spreading joy and fun. Kevork did not rest. No sooner did a pan or spoon go to the sink, he had it washed and ready to serve the crew again!

Our menu for the day included Beef, Chicken and Luleh Kebab Plates with Pilaf and Salad, Lahmajoon, Armenian String Cheese and Pita, Hummus and Veggie Plate with Pita Points, Tabbouleh Salad (made and donated by Kristina Rice), and Side Plates of Pilaf and Garden Salad with Apricot Vinaigrette

We were BLESSED to have GREAT hands and HARD WORKERS in our Kitchen!

THE DAY – Logistics and Set-up

Perhaps the feeling and tone set for the day were best described by Rose Kalajian in her event feedback. **“The morning blessing and prayer truly set a positive and motivating tone for the day to come. It was such a wonderful initiative! I genuinely appreciate that you took the time to gather us for this meaningful moment of devotion, allowing us to pause, reflect, and embrace the day with renewed spirit and purpose. Fr. Hovnan’s remarks fostered a sense of community and hope, which seemed to deeply resonate with all the volunteers present.”**

The Decision to Move Indoors

At 9:00am, after seeing the temperature would continue to drop and the wind pick-up as the day went on, Scott, Der Hovnan, and I made the decision to abandon all our plans to utilize the outdoors and move everything inside. It had to be done.

Signage

A team of 5 was supposed to dispatch at 7:00am on Sunday and post all yard signs, banners, and flags. As it turned out, only faithful Bobby Maslar and Shawnt Ohanian followed through. Those signs contributed in significant ways to our traffic. Drawing from the other large churches just a few blocks away from St. Hagop. This was important work. We spent just under \$5K on reusable signage including our band/welcome and grill tents, our banners, parking and entrance flags, and yard signs.

Kitchen, Food Offering, and the Masters of the Grills



And there we were . . . from 11:45am until 3:30pm . . . with a line of people out the door and around the building weathering the cold and wind and rain. Nobody from the line of servers or the prep line was able to take a break. We were inundated with positive comments about the food. People came to me in the kitchen and stopped me in the hallway and went back to see the men at the grills, commenting . . . “This is the best string cheese I have ever had!” and “This is the best Kebab I have had since I was in Armenia!” and “This pilaf was the most delicious, better than my grandmothers!”

Special appreciation for our Masters of the Grill, Scott Pullen, Greg Ekizian, John Arsenault, and Kevork Demirjian. And for Kristina Rice for maintaining excellent communication between the grills and the kitchen. And, for somehow, managing to have every possible thing we could need in her work truck!

We incurred about \$5,000 in one-time costs for smallwares and kitchen goods needed to prep and serve the masses. Our food table took in just over \$10,400 in revenue. We did approximately \$2,000/hour and shut down at 5:00pm. Our food cost was at 48%. As busy as we were, we could have served another 200 people. We had prepared food for 1,100. Next year!

My favorite moments of the day were watching Mother and Daughter Zovinar and Nadia Anac working together. Rose Kalajian working to keep the pita bread coming from the flat top hot and fresh. Seeing the magic of Kristina Rice move through the kitchen as only she can keeping everything moving. My pilaf ladies Hasmig Demirjian and Sue Arsenault. Marisol Demerjian’s sparkling eyes. Working with Maro to finalize the raffle tickets before the drawing. Laughing with Tanya Sarafian and Sophia Kugearas when we realized the line did not end! Seeing our dear friends from Chicago Annie and David Galovich who pledged to fly in and help as soon as we announced the event – and did! (It was Annie who purchased and donated our Commemorative Event Cups.) Making new friends. Watching everyone enjoy the music. Seeing Jean Shahnasarian all dressed in her traditional costume and swiping credit cards left and right with Annie and Cheryn Mitchell.

I appreciated our friends from Waz Here Coffee bringing Armenia Avenue to the Taste of Armenia and keeping us caffeinated and providing coffee for all to enjoy with their pastries.

The Pastry Table

Our dedicated Women’s Guild baked for the weeks leading up to the Taste of Armenia. The items offered for sale were, Cheese Boereg, Choreg Loaf, Date Menenas, Gata (Large), Katah (Individual), Khadayif, Khourabyia, Lahmajoon, Pyramid Mosaic, and Pakhlava. The table did \$3,282.00 in sales and incurred expenses of \$1515.48 for a 47% food cost.

The Women's Guild would like to recognize the following talented hands for baking in celebration of our culture to feed the multitudes at our first ever Taste of Armenia Tampa Bay!

Louise Yardumian, Karen Minassian, Azadig Tashian, Ano Serpekian, Maro Shaldjian, Hasmig Demerjian, Anna Halulyan, Cristina Buduryan, Rose Kaladjian, Debra Kamajian, Janae Kamajian, Susanna Knyazyan, Rita Keshishian and Lucy Calikyan

Live Music

We knew a live band would be important and believed it was a non-negotiable despite the hard cost of more than \$9K after hotels and travel. We went to David and Nancy Kazarian for help and support to fund a live 6-piece band. Classic David . . . "Tell me what I can do to help . . . What do you need?" He quickly wrote a check to hire the band and then used his airline miles to fly them in.

We reached out to several bands at the suggestion of many Parishioners. Ultimately, we brought in the Hye Vibes from Chicago. They have played hundreds of festivals. We knew they put on a good show, and we could count on them. They had even played at our wedding!

DJ Mark Keshishian volunteered his time and was the liaison between the band and the vendors helping us to get the necessary equipment and set-up. He also played that day, providing us a nice mix of traditional and modern music.

While the weather kept us from dancing until late in the day as the crowd thinned and we could remove some tables from Shahnasarian Hall, the music was excellent and we received unlimited compliments. We made the right choice.

Security

In an abundance of caution, we hired two Pinellas Park uniformed Police Officers to be present at the event. They were wonderful and excited to be with us. Thank God, there was no emergency. There were no injuries or disruptions except from the weather. We were very Blessed. Yn. Anna commented, "Not even one band-aid was needed."

Parking

Understanding that if people couldn't park, they would drive away, Bobby Maslar took this role seriously as he oversaw parking. He was a true HERO of the day. Working and planning in advance to think through and maximize parking and the use of the grounds.

Greeters

Despite not having a Welcome Tent and needing to quickly adapt, Stephan Aghekyan and his band of merry greeters worked to ensure every person was properly greeted at the door and made to feel welcome. As guests in our home.

And then there was Arman!

Arman Calikyan was one of our heroes of the weekend! Without his mastery over the breaking down of boxes and managing the trash, I don't know what we would have done. He never tired. He never sat. He was in continuous motion; laser focused on his tasks on Saturday and Sunday.

The BIG Raffle

We started selling raffle tickets one month before the event. It wasn't enough time. Our prize structure was based on the sale of 200 tickets at \$100 each. We would collect \$20,000 and payout 5 cash prizes for a total of \$9,750.



David Kazarian showed leadership by enlisting the help of the Parish Council and assigning 10 tickets to each member. Some of these tickets were returned to the Church Office a few days before the event, many the day of the event. It was impossible to catch up.

Of the \$20,000 possible, \$13,200 was collected. 138 ticket stubs were in the raffle drum.

Of the tickets that were assigned, Maro Shaldjian single-handedly was responsible for almost 20% of ALL tickets sold! Please join me in celebrating Maro!! We have asked her to Chair the Raffle Initiative next year. She is as excellent in her accounting as she is in her ability to sell. Our BIG RAFFLE winners were as follows:

19.53%	Maro Shaldjian
18.75%	Welcome/Reception and Bar
14.06%	Church Office and Online
13.28%	Raelene Pullen
10.16%	David Kazarian
5.47%	Sason Demirjian
3.91%	Bake Table
3.91%	Stepan Aghekyan
3.13%	Pierre Abajian
3.13%	Sarkis Kniazyan
2.34%	Mark Assad
1.56%	Scott Pullen
0.78%	Chuck Begian

1st Prize	Eddie Kapreilian	#109	1	\$5,000.00
2nd Prize	Greg Tootoolian	#180	1	\$2,500.00
3rd Prize	Sam Kapreilian	#110	1	\$1,000.00
4th Prize	Krikor Kassarjian	#135	1	\$750.00
5th Prize	Bertha Sedokian	#107	1	\$500.00

The Cultural Center and Display

Our Yn. Anna Demerjian led this important initiative. We wanted to be sure all visitors would be immersed in our culture and learn something about Armenia. The Narthex had never looked better! Response to this was excellent. It added a whole new level.

Der Hovnan's Ambassador Team

Der Hovnan established a team of Ambassadors and guided two Church Tours that were well attended. Dozens of people completed the information card he created and circulated that day and there were dozens more personal interactions between Fr. Hovnan, committee members and new folks who not only got a Taste of Armenia but a taste of the blessing of St. Hagop!



Vernissage Bazaar

The Vernissage Bazaar was headed by Lusine Sahakian. We had planned for 10 spots for “booths” in the Pavilion. With the weather’s unkindness, only 6 of the 10 Vendors actually paid the \$50 fee and set-up shop. We were so very busy that the vendors reported doing incredible business.

The Bar

Grace Austin quickly “voluntold” her newlywed Hubby, Evan Carpenter, that they would be running the bar! They did a phenomenal job! It wasn’t easy. They learned about all the hoops necessary to obtain a liquor license to sell Armenian Wines and Beer to help complete the “Taste of Armenia.” They ran all over town buying up every Armenian Beer they could find. The bar set-up was spectacular. The bar was our greatest profit center by percentage for the day at 43%. We are grateful Grace and Austin have already volunteered to take on this responsibility for our 2nd Annual Taste of Armenia!

Social Media & Marketing

We were fortunate to have Yn. Anna and Tanya Tutcher #TANYA IN SARASOTA giving us a life and presence online and through Social Media. Several times a day, I was forwarded a post asking; “What do you think?” or “Do you approve?”

All news and community pages for which we applied to have our event listed, did so. Our Socials were phenomenal. All were pleased with how our event was perceived and its energy. Positive comments scrolled for days after the event. We spent just over \$1,700 on mailers and postage, door knockers and limited life collaterals, like event posters and food/pricing posters. We spent just under \$1,000 on the social media Photo Opp cut-out board that can easily be used next year.

The Final Inventory, Clean-Up, and Results.

Our total top line revenue for Year 1 Taste of Armenia Tampa Bay was \$54,157.58. Our total expenses were \$42,576.77. Realizing a net profit of \$11,580.81.

Because of the work of Rita Keshishian, Lucy Calikyan, Yn. Anna Demerjian, Maro Shaldjian, Linda Maslar, Anna Halulyan, Bobby Maslar & Sarkis Knyazyan, the Pantry, Kitchen, Board Room, Narthex and Storage areas in the Choir Loft have never looked cleaner and more organized. We are grateful to them for showing leadership and helping us prepare for next year.

I cannot begin to quantify the number of hours Scott and I spent imagining, documenting, and working toward a successful result. Strategically what we would introduce year one, year two, and year three. In truth, there were a few days, when we were so busy with our jobs, and life, and dealing with a series of unfortunate things happening in our house that we looked at one another and said, *“What were we thinking?!!”* And each time we came to this point, someone would call, text, or email and say something sweet and kind about our work and energy for the project. These communications renewed our strength. We felt the prayers of so many in our community carrying us over the finish line!

With gratitude . . .

To the wonderful people listed below who dedicated more than 500 hours on Saturday and Sunday preparing and producing the first ever Taste of Armenia Tampa Bay:

Stepan Aghekyan, Nadia Anac, Zovinar Anac, John Arsenault, Susan Arsenault, Lana Artunian, Mark Assad, Grace Austin, Chuck Begian, Lisa Begian, Arman Callikyan, Lucy Callikyan, Evan Carpenter, Fr. Hovnan Demerjian, Yn. Anna Demerjian, Hasmig Demerjian, Kevork Demirjian, Marisol Demirjian, Patty Demirjian, Sason Demirjian, Araxi Dulgeroff, Alysia Ekizian, Greg Ekizian, Diane Flores, Annie Galovic, David Galovich, Teresa Haidarian, Anna Halyalyan, Suzanna Hovhanissian, Chrisanne Jensen, Rose Kalajian, Debbie Kamajian, David Kazarian, Ara Keshishian, Mark Keshishian, Rita Keshishian, Sarkis Knyazyan, Suzanna Knyazyan, Sophia Kugeares, Astkhik Manukian, Bobby Maslar, Linda Maslar, Cheryn Mitchell, Henry Mullen, Bejan Nouri, Rebekah Nouri, Mirella Ovanesian, Kristina Rice, Lusine Sahakyan, Tanya Sarafian, Jean Shahnasarian, Michael Shahnasarian, Maro Shaldjian, Paul Sheherbitskii, Jason Sluka, Melissa Sluka, Andrei Trapizonian, Tanya Tutcher, Nazley Wilson, Louise Yardumian.

In the months since the event, we have been overwhelmed by everyone sharing kind words and gratitude for our efforts. Overall, what made this event a success and provided our ability to make possible welcoming at least 800 people to Taste of Armenia, was the more than 500 cumulative hours gifted by the talented and hard-working volunteers mentioned in this report. Because of this team and their love for this mission, we know that our SECOND ANNUAL TASTE OF ARMENIA TAMPA BAY (**Sunday, January 17, 2027**) will only improve and continue to grow into all we have imagined for our Tampa Bay Community! With this energized St. Hagop Family . . . How can it not?!

Submitted with our love and debt of gratitude,

Scott & Raelene Ohanesian Pullen

Co-Chairs of the First Ever Annual Taste of Armenia Tampa Bay, Hosted by St. Hagop Armenian Church



Mission Armenia Updates

Words of gratitude follow from St. Hagop's recent 'Mission Armenia' Projects; Fund for Armenian Relief, Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief, the Medpacks Project and St. Sarkis Church of Stepanavan. Our support makes a difference in the lives of many and we're committed to supporting more worthy projects.

-Yn. Anna and the Mission Armenia Team

THANK YOU FROM FAR



FAR

Dignity • Trust • Service

March 25, 2026

Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian
St. Hagop Armenian Church
7020 90th Ave.
Pinellas Park, FL 33782-4538

Dear Fr. Hovnan,

I would like to thank you for your generous contribution of \$1,000.00 dated 02/22/2026. Supporters like you are essential for FAR to carry out its mission of helping to create a stronger Armenia. We simply cannot do our work without you.

Through your contribution, you are empowering Armenians to create a better future for themselves and their nation.

We are sincerely grateful for your support, and we hope you will consider supporting us again in the future. We would be delighted if you would like to follow the progress of our projects on our website at www.farusa.org, our blog, and on Facebook and Twitter and see your donation at work!

You may also check your gift details below:

Date: 02/22/2026
Amount: \$1,000.00
Designation: Ayo!
Appeal: Ayo! Therapy Rooms

Your donation has been processed by the Fund for Armenian Relief, a New York State registered 501(c)3 charitable organization, and your gift is fully tax deductible. In accordance with IRS regulations, this letter also verifies that you received no goods or services as a result of this gift. This letter serves as a receipt for your donation.

Once again, thank you so much.

Bree Carriglio
Bree Carriglio
FAR Executive Director
Marketing and Development

FAR | 630 Second Avenue New York, NY 10016 | (212) 889-5150 | far@farusa.org | www.farusa.org

THANK YOU FROM SOAR



Throughout the past year, the St. Hagop Armenian Church Mission Armenia Program with the support of the dedicated Parish Council members generously supported the Tampa Bay Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) chapter initiatives and its many meaningful projects. Your generosity, compassion, and unwavering commitment have made a true difference—none of this would be possible without you.

We are deeply grateful to each and every one of you. Your kindness, time, and dedication continue to inspire and uplift.

Your kindness truly makes the world a better place.

Suzanna Hovhannisian - Tampa Bay SOAR Chapter President

THANK YOU FROM THE MEDPACKS PROJECT



With the support of Mission Armenia, the Medpacks Project successfully delivered 15 Medpacks, 20 tourniquets, 4 GPS radios, and 2 tablets to a military base in Armenia.

The team received an official certificate of appreciation from the base commander, along with heartfelt gratitude for their continued support which we help make possible.

-Gevorg M. and Shant O.

THANK YOU FROM ST. SARGIS IN STEPANAVAN

St. Sargis Armenian Church of Stepanavan is grateful to the Mission Armenia Project of St. Hagop for supporting its first of its kind series of Christian education and fellowship events open to the church community during the Advent Season (photo below).

The project was designed to foster spiritual growth, community engagement, and support for local families in need, and was a huge success. We are deeply grateful for helping us not only host weekly events with spiritual messages from Fr. Mambre, but also special luncheons and fellowships, during which gifts and pantry items were distributed to families in need. May God bless you and your efforts (photo adjacent).

With love and prayers,

Fr. Mambre and Yn. Anahit



St. Hagop Printed Directory-Last Chance to Opt In



As we make plans to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our church's consecration in 2027, we realized it's been 20 years since our last parish directory!

The world has gone digital since then, but many feel a tangible print directory helps keep our community connected. Respecting the privacy of your information, we only include those who have opted in to our directory. We have reached out by email, post and social media **and so far have over 210 opt ins!**

If you would like to be included, please contact Fr. Hovnan by any means (including adjacent QR code) to opt in and confirm your information on record. We plan to go to print in late Summer. **The next edition of our directory is planned for 2030, so don't miss out-opt in now before it's too late!**

2026 Stewardship Pledge Updated on April 21st 2026



So far we have been blessed with **106** pledges totaling **\$212,775** for 2026! 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 2026, it is not too late! **Thank you for your support and commitment to St. Hagop! Those who have submitted a pledge by 04/21/26 are identified below.**

Stepan & Naria Aghekyan, George & Joan Agnacion, Vaagn Andikyan, Karen Anjoorian, Andrew & Theresa Anusbigian, John & Susan Arsenault, Vicky & Pauline Atamian Gilgan, Naira Avagyan Mangasar, Andranik and Elena Avakian, Bagrad & Tatiana Badalyan, Levon & Kristina Fandunyan Bagdasarov, Alice Bedrosian, Charles & Lisa Begian, Michael Boucher, Evan & Grace Austin Carpenter, Richard & Haykuhi Poghosyan-Clough, Robert & Janet Davidian, Fr. Hovnan & Yn. Anna Demerjian, Kenneth & Karen Demerjian, Jean-Jacques & Hasmig Demerjian, Raffi & Tanya Demerjian, Kevoork & Marisol Demirjian, Sason & Patricia Demirjian, Armand & Rebecca Dikranian, Jack & Tiffany Dikranian, Fred Dikranian, Robert & Lori Dorian, Leilani Doty, Dave & Maral Duckworth Hayes, Araxi Dulgeroff, Art & Adrienne Ekizian, Gregory & Alysia Ekizi-an, John & Victoria Franks, Martha-Anne Garabedian, Gregory & Gina Hagopian, Teresa Haidarian, Berge & Tamar Hajian, Joseph & Pamela Hajinian Brinker, Jean & Irene Hakim, Suzanna Hovhannisian, Gregory & Stephanie Hovsepian, Robina Hovsepian, David & Darwin Jamgochian, Robert & Regina Kurdoghlian Jones, Richard & Christina Kachadurian, Dr. George & Debra Kamajian, Edward Kapreilian, Sam Kapreilian, Ashot & Jemma Karapetyan, Sergei & Irene Kardashian, Harry & Beverly Karim, David & Nancy Kazarian, Edmond & Anita Keshishian, Harout & Sarah Keshishian, Hannelore Keshishian, Missak & Zevart Keshishian, Sargis & Susanna Knyazyan, Diana Kotchounian, Chris & Taleen Krikorian, Sophia Manoulian Kugeares, Linda Light, Chau Luong, Ann Mahdessian, Bobby Maslar, Richard & Linda Maslar, Susan Mclarnon, Jeff & Araksya Mekenyan Sprecher, Tim & Adrienne Vartanian Milewski, Karen Minassian, Johnny & Michelle Mouradian, Victoria Mouradian, Joseph & Angela Nakashian, Bejan & Rebekah Nouri, Mirella Ovanessian, Gregory & Christine Parseghian, Gregory & Stefanie Parseghian, Pehlivanian Family Foundation, Paula & Louis Pelosi, Arsen & Varduhi Sahakyan, Alex Saharian, Michael Saharian, Stephen Saharian, Lusine Sahakyan, Tanya Sarafian, Leon & Sharon Sarkisian, Chuck & Kathy Sarkisian, Chris & Carol Sassouni, Yates & Alexis Sayers, Stepan & Seta Serpekian, Michael & Jean Shahnasarian, John & Kelly Shamsey, Robert & Christina Shamsey, James & Leana Stevens, Ken & Katharine Talanian, Freij & Azadik Tashian, Andrei Trapizonian, Grygorii Trapizonian, Ida Varadian, Denise & Matthieu van Veen, Carolyn & Terry Waidley, Nazley Wilson, James & Cathy Wilson, Haig Yaghoobian, Dr. Haig & Louise Yardumian, Maurice & Marina Youakim, Armen & Srбуhi Zakaryan

St. Hagop Contact Directory-Soliciting Advertisements

There has been much interest in placing advertisements in our new church directory. Please review the advertising options, pricing, and submission guidelines below. **Deadline to submit ad and payment is June 1st!** Thank you for your interest and supporting our directory!

ADVERTISEMENT SIZES & RATES

Premium Placements

- Inside Front Cover L or R Sides (4"x 7") - **\$750**
- Inside Back Cover L or R Sides (4"x 7") - **\$750**

Standard Advertisement Sizes

- Full Page (4"x 7") - **\$300**
- Half Page (4"x 3.5") - **\$200**
- Business Card (3.5"x 2") - **\$100**

WHO MAY ADVERTISE

Advertisements may be accepted from:

- Parishioner & local businesses
- Parishioners & families with congratulatory or commemorative messages

HOW TO SUBMIT

To reserve advertising space, please send your digital advertisement text and/or image to info@stthagopfl.org, noting desired ad size and provide your contact information.

PAYMENT INFORMATION



- Enter link or scan QR code to pay online www.stthagopfl.org/product/directory-ads/
- Send check payable to St. Hagop Church memo: 'directory' to 7020 90th Ave N, Pinellas Park, FL 33782

FILE & DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

Preferred submission formats:

- High resolution JPEGs or PNGs (PDFs will lose some quality when made into image)
- Word document for text-only ads with layout, email fine for simple text
- Note: Church is not responsible for poor print quality due to low-resolution images

DEADLINE

- All ads & payments must be received by **June 1st**
- Premium ads limited, 1st come 1st serve. If sold out, other options/refunds will be provided



Our next edition is planned for print in 2030, don't miss your chance!

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

Contact Information

7020 90th Ave. North
Pinellas Park, FL 33782
P: 727-545-0380
E-mail: office@sthagopfl.org
www.sthagopfl.org

Newsletter Team:

Editor

The Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian

Contributors

David Kazarian, Raelene Ohanesian Pullen, Teresa Haidarian, Suzanna Hovhannisian & Yn. Anna Demerjian

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 in 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
Fall 2026	August 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.

Advertisements

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@sthagopfl.org if you are interested. Make checks payable to St. Hagop Armenian Church.

Rates for one year of ads (4 issues) are:

- \$250 for standard size business card (3.5"x2")
- \$500 for a half page (7"x4")
- \$1000 for a full page (7"x10")

Ads will not run/renew until payment and digital file received

PARISH COUNCIL

President

Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian
727-545-0380
fr.hovnan@sthagopfl.org

Chair

David Kazarian
813-264-9310
david@InfuserveAmerica.com

Vice-Chair

Raelene Ohanesian Pullen
563-505-0534
raelene.pullen@gmail.com

Treasurer

Chuck Begian
813-739-9293
chuckbegian@gmail.com

Vice-Treasurer

Stepan Aghekyan
727-919-0899
StepanAghekyan@gmail.com

Secretary

Suzanna Hovhannisian
727-871-5348
gotdreamhome@gmail.com

Vice-Secretary

Sargis Knyazyan
707-342-2600
sknyazyan@gmail.com

Sexton (buildings & grounds)

Bobby Maslar
727-481-0021
rjmas726@tampabay.rr.com

Co-Sexton (buildings & grounds)

Sason Demirjian
516-551-2074
sasoni@yahoo.com

Member at Large

John Arsenault
508-254-3066
johnbhco@aol.com

ORGANIZATIONS

Sunday School
SundaySchool@sthagopfl.org

Women's Guild
Co-Chair – Lucy Calikyan
lucyclivr@gmail.com

Co-Chair – Rita Keshishian
rita_keshishian@hotmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

****Divine Liturgy takes place every Sunday from 10:30-12:30. Sunday School takes place every Sunday September-May from at 11am. Fellowship in Shahnasarian Hall to follow immediately after service**

Sun. May 3rd	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. May 10th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School St. Hagop Talent Show & Special Mother's Day Fellowship	10:30AM-12:30PM 12:30 PM-2:00PM
Tue. May 12th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Sun. May 17th	Divine Liturgy/Sunday School/Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Thurs. May 21st	Seniors Fellowship	12:00PM-2:00PM
Sun. May 24th	Divine Liturgy (Pentecost)/ Sunday School/Fellowship Last Day of Sunday School	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. May 31st	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. June 7th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Tue. June 9th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Sun. June 14th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. June 21st	Divine Liturgy & Special Father's Day Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. June 28th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship Guest Clergy Leads Worship (Fr. Hovnan Away)	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. July 5th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship Guest Clergy Leads Worship (Fr. Hovnan Away)	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. July 12th	Divine Liturgy (Vardavar/Transfiguration) Special Water Games for Kids & Fellowship Guest Clergy Leads Worship (Fr. Hovnan Away)	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. July 19th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. July 26th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. August 2nd	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. August 9th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Tue. August 11th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Sat. August 15th	Avedis Newsletter Submission Deadline	
Sun. August 16th	Divine Liturgy (Asdvadzadzeen/Assumption of Mary) Blessing of Grapes & Special Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. August 23rd	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. August 30th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM
Sun. September 6th	Divine Liturgy & Fellowship Registration/1 st Day of Sunday School	10:30AM-1:30PM 11:00 AM-12:00
Sun. September 8th	Parish Council Meeting	6:00 PM-8:00 PM
Sun. September 13th	Divine Liturgy (Khachverats/Exaltation of Cross)/Sunday School Blessing of the World & Special Fellowship	10:30AM-1:30PM



St. Hagop Armenian Church

7020 90th Avenue North
Pinellas Park, Florida 33782
727-545-0380

info@sthagopfl.org

www.sthagopfl.org