



1ST QUARTER 2020

CHURCH BELL



ST. GEORGE ARMENIAN CHURCH
Hartford, CT

From the Pastor

St. Gregory of Narek



Any Armenian family is rich with memorable items of historical and cultural importance, items that were passed from generation to generation, objects that connect and remind us about our roots and heritage. Many of these artifacts and items are religious objects. But one among is very special and precious. It is also an item that we will come across and find in any Armenian house. It is an item that almost for a millennia became a part of Armenian identity and spirituality. For centuries it would be placed under the pillows of the sick because it had the power to heal any disease and reveal any pain, Armenian Church fathers would recognize it as an unparalleled divine gift to the Armenian nation and humanity, it would be integrated into the daily services and Divine Liturgy and become part of the daily liturgical experience and worship for the Armenian faithful. The majestic object of this spiritual adoration was the prayer book of St. Gregory of Narek titled “Book of Lamentations”.

Gregory was born in a family of a prominent clergyman, Khosrov of Andsev. At a young age he lost his mother and his father trusted his uncle

Anania of Narek with the upbringing and education of young Gregory. It was in the monastery of Narek which was founded and headed by his uncle Anania that Gregory would receive his education and it is where his spirituality would be molded and enriched. Gregory’s first known work is a commentary of Song of Songs which was a complex theme to start with. But it is later in his life and according to the tradition after receiving a vision of St. Mary that he would embrace the idea of writing his famous prayer book. His monumental work is composed of ninety five prayers, about ten thousand lines of mystical, meditative journey through the Bible into the heart of God.

Recently, Pope Francis named St. Gregory as a Doctor of the Church which is a prestigious and highly revered list of 36 Church Fathers who contributed significantly to the theology or doctrine of the church through their research, studies or writings. The immense contribution and spiritual depths revealed in the writings of St. Gregory was recognized and appreciated much before. Krikor Khlatetsi in the fourteenth century declared that the prayer book of St. Gregory is more beneficial and helpful than any other book found in a church. Matevos of Djughha went much further when he wrote that a single verse of Narek prayer book is more powerful and spiritually uplifting than the entire book of Psalms. And indeed, the moment we take the prayer book



CHURCH BELL

of Narek into our hands, the moment we start reading it we recognize that it is not an ordinary prayer book, it is a special and precious gateway leading us to heaven by opening the windows of our soul to the divine grace and presence. That is precisely the intent of St. Gregory in inspiring and leaving this wonderful spiritual gift for us. He used his wounds and vulnerability as means to connect to the pain of humanity and offer it to God for healing and mercy.

Here's a sample of Narek's writing from his famous prayer book, *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart*:

The voice of a sighing heart, its sobs and mournful cries,
I offer up to you, O Seer of Secrets,
placing the fruits of my wavering mind
as a savory sacrifice on the fire of my
grieving soul to be delivered to you in
the censer of my will.

Compassionate Lord, breathe in
this offering and look more favorably
on it than upon a more sumptuous
sacrifice offered with rich smoke.
Please find this simple string of words
acceptable. Do not turn in disdain.

May this unsolicited gift reach you,
this sacrifice of words from the
deep mystery-filled chamber of my
feelings, consumed in flames fueled by
whatever grace I may have within me.

As I pray, do not let these pleas annoy
you, Almighty, like the raised hands of

Jacob, whose irreverence was rebuked
by Isaiah, nor let them seem like the
impudence of Babylon criticized in the
72nd Psalm.

But let these words be acceptable
as were the fragrant offerings in the
tabernacle at Shiloh raised again by
David on his return from captivity
as the resting place for the ark of the
covenant, a symbol for the restoration
of my lost soul.

Prayerfully
Der Voski

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Special Message

to our Parish Family

We hope you and your families are remaining healthy and safe as we write to you. As we are well aware, we face extraordinary circumstances with the recent measures taken in response to the Covid-19 virus. In addition to the social restraints implemented, phrases such as, “uncertain times,” “unprecedented times,” “new normal,” and “social distancing,” are now included in our daily language. Yet even amongst these uncertainties, God and our faith remain constant in our lives.

The physical doors of our spiritual home must remain shuttered, yet we have transitioned the delivery of clerical ministry to a virtual setting. We encourage you to take part and view the messages and content that we are delivering through our virtual platforms. Please reach out to Der Voski or a member of the Parish Council in the event you are unable to access these inspirational messages.

And even with these measures, we are continuing to receive and pay the bills associated with the physical church operations. Just as we need to care and maintain our family homes, we also need to attend to the care of our spiritual home, St. George. We anticipate that the doors of our spiritual home will be closed through April, May, and possibly beyond—a first in the 67-year history of St. George. With this uncertainty, our major spring fundraising events have been cancelled or postponed and we no longer are collecting monies on Sundays. Our traditional revenue streams that support our monthly operating expenses of \$10,000 are almost nonexistent.

It is from this sense of concern that we are appealing to your sense of generosity. Now more than ever we need your help. The current financial constraints have led to the creation and purpose of this message. At this crucial time, we are asking you to consider donating any amount to our church that you would find to be personally and financially feasible. As we pursue other funding options, our contribution target is \$12,000. No amount is too small; we will accept any amount with heartfelt gratitude.

If you are able to make a donation at this time, we ask that you visit our website and donation page: <https://www.sgarmenianchurch.org/donations/donate/>

In the Comments section, please denote “Special Appeal” and know that your donation(s) will be applied to your 2020 Stewardship pledge.

There are a lot of unknowns at this time. We do not know when we will return to “normal” however that may be defined. We do know that we will return as a stronger parish family. With your thoughtful consideration, the doors of our beloved St. George will remain open. We eagerly look forward to that day when we will come together in faith, and worship together as one family.

With continued prayers for your health and safety,

Fr. Voski

Rev. Fr. Voski Galstyan
Pastor

Donna

Donna Bagdigian Woodard
Parish Council Chair

Parish Council

We were fortunate to experience the tasty creations of several of our St. George chefs for our holiday Christmas Dinner. We are thankful for the generosity of our sponsors Matthew Woodard (dinner, beverage), and Gene and Virginia Wasynczuk (dessert). With master chef Sarkis Zamgochian, the team prepared a scrumptious dinner of lamb or chicken, roasted potatoes, vegetable, salad, beverage and cookies for dessert. It was a wonderful St. George celebration.



The Stewardship testimonials continued during the first two months of the year. Please see the Stewardship

updates in this issue as written by Melanie Brown, Stewardship Chair.

On Sunday, March 1, we assembled to conduct the annual Parish Assembly. I wish to thank the Nominating Committee – Lorina Abalian, Michael DeCorleto, Richard Mardirosian, who took on the arduous task of reaching out to our members to serve the church in the capacities of Parish Council, Auditing Committee, and Nominating Committee. To that end, I am extending my heartfelt appreciation to outgoing Parish Council members, Ashot Margaryan, Boris, Seinyan, and treasurer, Matthew Woodard for their efforts over the past two years. Remaining members, Melanie Brown, Radmila Khamzina and Donna Woodard are pleased to welcome a returning member, Gene Wasynczuk, and new members, Karina Chogurian, Alex Niazyan, and Lilly Torosyan to the team. We look forward to an exciting year.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Der Hayr and the Parish Council have begun meeting frequently (virtual meetings) to address the potential health and safety concerns of our parish family and to address the parish's viability both spiritually

and financially. We are responding to a new calling for a virtual spiritual ministry, a ministry that promotes our social and spiritual connections, and maintains our sense of community. We have been charged with using avenues of communications which for many of us, are technologically new and may make us feel uncomfortable. Yet for those who seek spiritual nourishment, we invite you to access the resources to witness the creativity of our parish family. Der Voski is providing us with many opportunities to feed our spiritual hunger using Facebook Live, YouTube, weekly Zoom Bible study, and more. Please take some time to explore these avenues—and to discover the hidden talents of our Der Hayr, Yeretsgin, and our parishioners! We are dedicated to keeping our St.

George family connection strong.

Wishing you and your loved ones, continued spiritual, mental, and physical well-being.

Donna Woodard
Parish Council Chairperson



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Sacraments

January - March 2020

February

Memorial/Wake ***Our deepest sympathies to the families of our dearly departed.***

February Stanislav (Stas) Nikulin, son of Natalya Mnatsakanova and the late Yuriy Nikulin

Birth ***Congratulations and best wishes.***

March Camilla Voskanov, daughter of Daniel and Joanna Voskanov and granddaughter of Levon and Lola Voskanov

Women's Guild

The year 2020 as well as Armenian Christmas was celebrated on January 3rd at Indian Hill Country Club with our enthusiastic revelers present, enjoying fine food and fellowship well into the evening.

Poon Pargentan, which signifies the beginning of Great Lent was held on February 23rd. There were instrumental musical pieces, vocal selections, as well as Karate demonstrations, all of these talents displayed by our Sunday School youth. Following this, a larger group of students participated in fun games led by Yn. Margarita. The delicious entrees featuring a choice of leg of lamb or roasted chicken artfully prepared by Chef Sarkis and his kitchen staff were enjoyed by all. Our grateful appreciation to all, for a fun-filled, joyous afternoon.

Due to the health crisis sweeping the country the Lenten dinner scheduled for Sunday, March 22 was cancelled. However, plans will be formulated for a family dinner in the future. We wish to thank all our generous, thoughtful sponsors: Yelena and Alex Abalyan, Rose Arpiarian, Vincent, Lisa, and Adeline Byron, Rosanne and Mark Harutunian, Celia Johnson, John Kasparian, Artem and Lilya Mnatsakanov, Gevorg and Rosa Melkonyan, Valeriy and Nora Mouradov, Hasmig Nanagouljian, Alice Norsigian, Vadim Pogosiants, Al and

Barbara Zakarian, and Paul Zakarian & Family.

After this wondrous, spiritual period of Lent and Easter, we look forward to our annual Tag Sale and way down the line our church-wide Food Fest 2020. All our activities are supported by our generous, selfless members who donate their time and talents, as well as our dear friends who always rise to the challenge and support us. And we thank you...

We are thankful for our dear spiritual leader, Der Voski, for his guidance and support. We are thankful to God for His everlasting love.....

*Cynthia Messikian, Chairman
Women's Guild*

Visitations

If you or someone you know is ill or hospitalized and would like to be visited, please call Fr. Voski at 201-973-5831.

Church Bell

Advertise here for just \$25 per issue. Current special of 5 issues for \$100.

Sunday School

On February 23rd Poon Paregentan, the Day of Good Living was celebrated. Our St. George Sunday School students showcased their talents as they entertained the audience with instrumental music selections, singing and Karate demonstrations. The children also took part in games that were organized and led by Yn. Margarita – fun was had by all!

As we journey through the Lenten season and reflect on our blessings, the St. George Sunday School's efforts turn to projects and activities designed to benefit those who are less fortunate and working through difficult times. As a community outreach activity, Sunday School students, parents and staff made and delivered sandwiches to the South Park Inn Shelter in Hartford. The shelter provides its 120 residents with temporary housing, meals and support services.

The 2020 Diocesan-wide Sunday School Lenten Drive will benefit the FAR Initiative, Food for Families in Need. FAR soup kitchens in Nor Hajn and Byureghaven serve the Armenian communities north of Yerevan where the loss of industries has resulted in mass unemployment and poverty. Presently the kitchens serve one meal per day, but FAR's Food for Families initiative hopes to distribute packages directly to those in need. These packages will contain flour, sugar, oil, butter, canned food and much more which will help those

who are experiencing hardship in their lives. The Diocese has also chosen the Heifer Project: The Gift Ark. Heifer International's Gift Ark Project is inspired by the biblical event of the landing of the Ark (in Ararat) and gifts farm animals to those in need throughout the world. These gifts provide milk, eggs, honey, cheese and more with which families can be nourished in their daily lives. As in the past, the St. George Sunday School parents and staff will sponsor a Coffee Hour fundraiser to benefit these charities.

We thank you for your generosity and continued support of our St. George Sunday School activities and events.

Virginia & Cynthia, Sunday School Co-Superintendents



Students making sandwiches for South Park Inn shelter in Hartford

2020 Stewardship

Thank you to all our parishioners who have returned their 2020 Stewardship pledge cards. We are currently at a 40% return rate and need to get to 100% !!

Our Stewards have pledged a total of \$25,000 against our budget of \$40,000. We have reached 63% of our goal with 40% families participating. That means our goal is very attainable with everyone's participation!!

If you haven't responded yet, please do so as soon as possible. The return of the pledge card does not need to be accompanied with payment. Pledges may be paid throughout the year, however if you are able to pay a portion of your pledge now, it would greatly help our current financial situation. It is important now more than ever as the current pandemic environment has cancelled many income streams (eg Easter Yughakin, Celebrate West Hartford, dinners, weekly plate collection, etc.). Yet our expenses continue.

Also, a reminder, that membership is no longer based on dues, but on being a Steward - making a stewardship pledge. In order to participate in our annual parish assembly meeting, hold an elected or appointed office, etc, you must be a Steward!

Our grateful thanks to the following Stewards!!

Garen & Lorina Abalian, Anna Ambartsumova, Haig & Anita Arakelian, Clement Ashkian, Gary & Larisa Bagdasarian, Dina Bagdikian,

Melanie & Bill Brown, Vincent & Lisa Byron, Tigran, Karina & Christina Chogurian, Michael & Karen DeCorleto, Ashod & Hasmik DerAprahamian, Lillian Anoush Ferdinand, Alexander Galstyan, Helen George, Robert & Alicia Goshdighian, Mark & Rosanne Harutunian, JoAnn Hughes, Celia Johnson, John Kasparian, Ruth Kevorkian, Mari Kibritian, Wil & Lusine Lopez, Ira & Diane Mahakian, Richard Mardirosian, Ed & Cynthia Messikian, Christopher Moroz, Yn. Margarita Nahapetyan, Greg & Susan Norsigian, Boris Seinyan, Charles & Christine Shooshan, Jack Tashjian, Marine Sahakyan & Hovhanes Torosyan, Sonna VanKampen, Levon & Lola Voskanov, Gene & Virginia Wasynczuk, Paul & Sowgol Zakarian, Al & Barbara Zakarian, Angham Zakko.

Pledge cards may be accessed online at <https://www.sgarmenianchurch.org/stewardship-2020/> and may be submitted online or mailed to the church. Stewardship pledges may also be paid via credit card online.

Heartfelt stewardship testimonials from parishioners continued this year. Thank you to Richard Mardirosian, Lisa Byron, Michael DeCorleto, Mark Harutunian and Robert Mirzoian who shared their own personal reasons why the church is important to them and why they support our parish through stewardship.

Thank you for your support of our beloved St. George parish. Your support ensures the continuity of services and ministries as well as our

much needed spiritual nourishment.

Melanie Kevorkian Brown
2020 Pilot Stewardship Chair

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**Remember St. George
Armenian Church in your will.**

**Please consider a donation
toward the publication of
the Church Bell.**

Your donation will help defray the
cost of printing and postage.

Thank You...

...to Vincent & Lisa Byron for donating
the cost of the kitchen deep cleaning.

...to Gene & Virginia Wasynczuk for
donating the cost of the Parish House
1st floor carpet cleaning.

...to Chef Sarkis Zamgochian for
preparing the Armenian Christmas
dinner.

...to Robert Mirzoian for donating the
Fire Pit.

...to Richard Mardirosian for donating
and installing new window shades
throughout the Parish House.

...to Vincent Byron for donating a
commercial vacuum.

Sound System

Thank you to all the parishioners who
stepped forward very quickly to donate
toward our much needed sound system
at church. The equipment was ordered
and some already in use in broadcasting
the Sunday service. Our heartfelt
thanks to Richard Mardirosian for
his research and coordination of this
effort and to Garen Abalian and Robert

Mirzoian their efforts supporting the
installation. And finally our thanks
to our anonymous donor who agreed
to match donations with a \$1,500
donation!

Thanks to Anonymous, Garen &
Lorina Abalian, John Adamian, Stella
Agakhanova, Clement Ashegian, Bill
& Melanie Brown, Michael & Karen
DeCorleto, Bob & Andrea Karanian,
John Kasparian, Jack Krikorian, Ed &
Cynthia Messikian, Vera Mouradian,
Teresa Sahakyan, Charlie & Chris
Shooshan, Jack Tashjian, Marine,
Sahakyan & Hovhanes Torosyan,
Gene & Virginia Wasynczuk, Al &
Barbara Zakarian

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

Thank you to the following who
donated toward the Pastor's
Discretionary Fund: Emma
Avanesian, Haig & Anita Arakelian

*Interested in donating? Please note the
fund on your check or see Fr. Voski.*

Our Sincere Appreciation to all our Donors!!

JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 2020

Church Bell

Albert Kandarian

Altar Flowers

Edward & Cynthia Messikian

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Additional Christmas Yughakin

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Edward & Jane Garabedian

Victoria Kaprielian & Jonathan Luis

Jack Krikorian

Levon & Lola Voskanov

Gene & Virginia Wasynczuk

Ted Wu & Noyem Zeroogian Wu

*We apologize if we overlooked your donation.
Please let us know so a correction can be included in the next issue.*

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