

The Calvary Messenger

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The Newsletter of the
Calvary Armenian Congregational Church of San Francisco
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A View From Calvary

Rev. Nerses Balabanian
Pastor

To God Be the Glory

Reflections from my Sabbatical
Lebanon, Greece, Canada, and Armenia

I arrived in Beirut late night on April 22nd. To be in Beirut on the eve of the Genocide Memorial Day was very special. That night more than 10, 000 Armenians marched peacefully in the streets of Beirut towards the city center to hold a vigil in the memory of the victims. I walked with them as we listened to the marching band

playing Armenian songs. I walked with them as the victims of a new “genocide”, namely the kessabtzis, mourned their loss of home and property. We arrived. We sang songs. We listened to speeches. We went home to meet next morning as the Armenian community gathered in churches to commemorate April 24, the Armenian Genocide Day. Based on a government resolution passed some years ago, all businesses, schools, and public places were closed to honor the victims and keep their memory.

As I prepared to preach that morning, I prayed in distress: “Lord, you give me words to speak. There is too much pain around me. Lord, speak through me.” The joint worship service attracted a big crowd. My topic was “The Stones Will Cry Out” based on Luke 19. People asked Jesus to keep his disciples silent. When our churches are taken from us and looted, we hear new vicious, sounds telling us to remain silent. Jesus challenged his audience and said that nothing would stop his message from being heard. If people stopped talking, the stones would cry out. Indeed, the stones of Kessab are crying out and declaring the message of our Lord Jesus Christ. There were tears in the eyes of the congregation. It was a difficult message to preach. We left the church with the Word of God giving us hope and the commitment to keep worshipping, praying, singing, living and one day rebuilding.

May 1st is Labor Day in Lebanon. We gathered with 45 couples and their children for a family retreat. I spoke in two sessions and led the worship.

(continued on page 11)

2014-2015 Coming Events

- Saturday, November 8**
Food Festival
- Sunday, November 23**
Thanksgiving
- Saturday, December 20**
Christmas Celebration
- Sunday, December 21**
Christmas Worship Service
- Sunday, January 4**
Armenian Christmas
- Sunday, January 31**
Benefit Concert for 100th
Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide
- Sunday, March 29**
Palm Sunday
- Thursday, April 2**
Maundy Thursday
- Sunday, April 5**
Resurrection Sunday

Another successful Musical Night at Calvary

Caroline Sagherian

Lovely melodies, inspiring hymns, and marvelous songs of praise to God filled the sanctuary of Calvary Armenian Congregational Church on Saturday, April 12, 2014 as the Lenten and Easter season's annual concert, *Musical Night at Calvary*, captivated its audience once again this year. People from all over the San Francisco Bay Area gathered to listen and be part of this God-honoring event, to hear exceptionally arranged pieces, commemorate the journey of Jesus to the cross, celebrate Christ's resurrection, and hopefully be encouraged in their faith.



Badveli Nerses Balabanian conducted the choir and the featured musicians while also serving as the evening's emcee. The vocalists consisted of the Calvary Church choir, with the participation of members of San Francisco's St. Gregory and St. John churches. Together, the singers and instrumentalists delivered a program of sacred choral compositions, traditional Armenian songs, Christian anthems, and time-honored spirituals. The concert resonated with melodies which delighted the audience and created a desire to cherish each moment of the experience at hand. Between tunes, Badveli Nerses offered historical context for the pieces, and sprinkled-in some personal stories to enrich the listener's understanding of the tunes, which provided an enhanced backdrop, enabling the audience to enjoy the music more thoroughly. Also, as the concert got started, in an effort to remember and bring attention to Christians struggling in situations of war, mistreatment, oppression and hardship throughout the Middle East, the concert was dedicated to all Christians who are being persecuted due to their faith or ethnicity.

The evening began with the appealing song, "Beautiful Savior," which was arranged to the tune of "Fairest Lord Jesus." We then got into the rhythm of the contemporary piece, "Walk by Faith," and the traditional spiritual, "Standin' in the Need of Prayer." Throughout the evening, we were also privileged to hear some stirring and dynamic Armenian pieces in the songs, "Hayasdan," "Abaran," "Groung Parov Tarnas," "Yerkir Arax," and the 13th century Armenian sharagan, "Sird Im Sasani." The program guided the audience through a journey of acknowledging God's power and authority in, "The Lord is a Mighty God." It then directed the listener to recognizing one's continual need for the help and comfort of the Holy Spirit with, "Just a Closer Walk [with Him]." This progression naturally brought us to a place of worship and gratitude toward God in the singing of the hymns, "We Gather Together" and "Count Your Blessings." And, finally, the evening's pilgrimage culminated in the celebratory reminder that, "He is Risen, Halleluiah," and "Christ the Lord is Risen Today," to provide a fitting ending to this program of impressive music.

We are thankful to all who worked behind the scenes to produce this inspiring *Musical Night* concert - including Armine Adrouny, who is our Director of Musical Ministry at CACC. We are also truly grateful for those who diligently practiced to perfect their craft for 8 months or more in preparation for this event, including piano accompanist, Sevan Balabanian; mezzo soprano, Seda Kizirian; trumpeter, Jason Park; clarinetist, Martin Ulikhanyan; and conductor/pianist/pastor, Rev. Nerses Balabanian. This concert brought joy and delight to all who heard it, and attained its goal of honoring and exalting God throughout. We praise Him for His provision and enabling. May He be glorified through it all.

87th Annual Banquet

Sherrie Paregian

The 87th Annual Banquet was a magical and nostalgic look back at history!

Guests were greeted in the foyer decorated with vintage, historic photos of Armenians in California and their original homeland. Lace tablecloths, an old radio, rustic tools and kerosene lamps added to the nostalgic décor as guests sat cozily conversing and enjoying pre-dinner hors d'oeuvres

Armen Berjikly did an extraordinary job as Master of Ceremonies, and started off the evening by introducing Ms. Sloan Adrouny and Ms. Rubina Karapetyan, who sang the National Anthems of America and Armenia, accompanied by Ara Kullukian. Our revered Nerses Balabanian gave the invocation and led us in prayer prior to our dinner, which was catered by Caravansary. We enjoyed a delicious dinner in our reception hall which was decorated in the theme of the evening, with



California poppies and hand made pencils, a writer's tool. Hagop Nazarian created a slide show that featured family heirloom photographs which brought back so many wonderful memories of the good old days. The room was filled with beautiful music, played by Azad and Sevan Balabanian. Our accomplished musical guest for the evening was Armen Sarkisian, who played my favorite Aram Khachaturian piece, "Toccatà". Over at the punch bowl, Nerses and I were discussing how moved we were by this passionate tango.



Our keynote speaker and award winning author, Mark Arax, told many stories about growing up Armenian in Fresno. Mark had us laughing as we all could relate to the stories that he told. You could just imagine your own family in these scenarios. My parents who grew up in Fresno during this time period really appreciated his

authentic style of representing Armenian life and culture.

I invited my family to attend this evening knowing they would enjoy hearing about the Armenian experience coming from an award winning Armenian author from the Central Valley. It turns out that my dad knew Mark's parents. As we left the banquet we stopped along the way to look at the photographs that were beautifully displayed on both sides of the entry.

Many thanks to our banquet committee, Yvonne (Chairperson) and Norayr Minassian, Hagop and Taleen Nazarian, Kevork and Sonia Plavjian, Sona Bekmezian, and all our generous sponsors for their kind donations of financial support which made our Annual Banquet such a successful event.



Vacation Bible Camp

Aileen Hartanian

Vacation Bible Camp was held from July 21st-July 26th. This year's theme was *Weird Animals: Where Jesus' Love is One-of-a-Kind*. More than 50 children had a wonderful time attending. In addition to the children of our church and the children from the Armenian community, we also saw new faces from Cornerstone Church in attendance.



Each morning, Martha Missirlian opened the day for the children. She shared a daily point and Bible verse with them, often adding a personal story to help them understand the message.

Next, she led Christian songs in both English and Armenian. The children had a great time singing along. Each morning, Martha and Aaron Avanesian also acted out a play. The children really enjoyed it and referred to Aaron as Dr. Paws throughout the entire week.

The daily points were:

- Even when you're left out, Jesus loves you.
- Even when you don't understand, Jesus loves you.
- Even when you're afraid, Jesus loves you.
- Even though you're different, Jesus loves you.
- Even though you do wrong, Jesus loves you.



After the opening, Caroline Sagherian, Vache Sevajian, Marge Damir and Diana Jones each led groups of children in a daily lesson. I got to sit in on some of these lessons and they were so impressive. The teachers used skits and illustrations that make their lessons even more interesting. The children got to ask questions before they watched a video that reinforced the day's message. Each of the five days also included arts and craft projects and games.

Sisters Salpi Dunlap and Alin Gedikian took on the big task of lunch preparation. Alin and Salpi also prepared a snack for the children that corresponded with the daily theme. Sevan Balabanian closed each day for us, summarizing what had been taught during the lesson. She encouraged the children to share God sightings—stories of how they see God working in their lives. Throughout the week, Rebecca Sagherian took pictures of all of the children and staff. Each day, the children got to see a video Rebecca made from those photos.



(Continued on next page)

Each year at VBC, a fundraiser is held. This year's fundraising was done for Syria. For weeks now, Syria has gone without water. Our children were shown pictures of how families in Aleppo go about collecting water. Miraculously, despite the war, VBS has proceeded in Aleppo. Each time the children of Calvary's VBC brought in a donation for the fund, the children got to put a blue balloon—symbolizing water—into a tank. Nearly \$100 was raised by the end of the week and the water tank was full.



Our church has amazing volunteers who put on VBC. I mentioned some of the wonderful teachers, and I'd also like to point out our director, Rene Avanesian. Rene carefully monitors the children's location, making sure they're safe and where they need to be. Rene also planned the many art projects and activities and shopped for the needed supplies. Our crew also consisted of more than thirty volunteers whom we cannot thank enough. They are:

Director: Rene Avanesian

Teachers: Sevan Balabanian, Marge Damir, Diana Jones, Martha Missirlian, Caroline Sagherian, Vache Sevajian

Crew leaders: Nayri Alajaji, Emily Alayan, Aaron Avanesian, Izek Avanaessian, Sofia Avanesian, Alexis Burke, Casimir Broussard, Rachel Jimenez, Donnie Jones, Rubina Karapetyan, Shant Kilijian, Michelle Sagherian, Rachel Sagherian, Rebecca Sagherian, Michelle Torchiyan, Gabe Damir.

Sound: Yerem Istanboulian, Vicken Sagherian

Critter Cafe Staff: Salpi Dunlap and Alin Gedikian

Lunch: Harout Aroyan, Nanor Sadakian, Rose and Mihran Saghatelian, Yvonne Minassian

Decoration: Sherry Arroyo, Serop Moroyan



Many of our VBC volunteers were teens. They were not only responsible but incredibly sweet with the kids. It was heartwarming to watch. The week was a very successful one: the children got a lot out of the messages and had a great time in the process. Praise God.



Annual Picnic

Matthew Silverman

On August 24th we held our annual CACC picnic at Junipero Serra Park. The weather was perfect, and the location gave us a great view of the entire bay. We started the picnic off with hymns selected by popular request, and after a great time singing we took a break to share some thoughts. I took a few minutes out to share some of the things God has done in my own life over the past twelve years in Los Angeles. I started with how I became a Christian at Camp Arev after being invited to church by my cousins, and shared some of the adventures God has brought me through as I completed my PhD at UCLA. I was encouraged afterward by the people who came up to me and told me how much they appreciated the stories I shared.



Vicken Sagherian also shared a few thoughts on waiting on God's timing. I was really encouraged by his own testimony of waiting for God's direction in his own life, and his commitment to serving God even though he didn't completely know where God was leading him. In the end, we can all be confident that God will bring us exactly where He wants us to be, regardless of the storms He leads us through.

After we shared some thoughts and sang a few more songs, we ended the service and enjoyed some delicious lunch together. Kebab, salad, pilaf, and all sorts of other

goodies. In all honesty, I ate so much that I couldn't eat dinner later that night. We then spent the rest of the afternoon relaxing and enjoying God's creation together. Some of us brought out some board games, others went out to enjoy open spaces, and a few others were content to just watch the planes take off from the airport. As my first major church event since getting back from LA, all I can say as I look back at it is "It's good to be home."



Considering our Options

Caroline Sagherian

Given the theme for our church this year - that each of us set our priorities rightly and correctly according to God's word - it occurred to me that this word, "priority," evokes a pretty impressive and commanding image. It knows its place, and asserts its authority accordingly. "Priority" wields influence knowing it holds power and precedence. It rightfully pulls rank, expecting to be placed higher than, prior to, and before the rest. "Priority" carries a privileged status that naturally wants to go first. It demands to be respected, given special attention, and always be preferred over competitors. "Priority" desires to step into the lead role, legitimately assuming the right to prevail over other things, no matter how important those alternatives may be. So, even when other noteworthy things attempt to compete with it, "priority" takes its deserved spot at the top, with honor.

You've surely noticed that another influential word (and presence) fits well into the descriptions of "priority" above, too. If we recognize God as being the ultimate priority - the one who really does hold power and authority, and actually does command chief authority - it's an easy matter to acknowledge His rule in our lives, and honor His command from Matthew 6:33a to, "...seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

It's a relatively straight-forward instruction we are given to seek (pursue and draw near to) God knowing He initially sought us and established a relationship with us first. We are only being asked to reciprocate, search out and attend to our relationship with God as our highest objective, goal, purpose, destination and privilege. The command is simply telling us to get our act together to rightly assign Him the priority He deserves above all else in our lives, and then to live our lives accordingly. He obviously thinks we can do it (with His help) - which is a major hurdle cleared.

As we strive to put "first thing first," I pray that our greatest desire will continue to be to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), and then make an effort to love one another, honing and helping one another to improve spiritually, "as iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17).

Personal Bible study, devotions and prayer time accomplish an important part of this command; but attending a *collective* or *group* Bible study or ministry with other believers will offer you that one additional element of Christian fellowship that is crucial to Christian living.

So, as we consider our options and order our priorities, we need to remember Who is waiting to be made the premier priority in our lives and to be placed at the top of our list. Toward that end, all of CACC's Group Bible Studies and other ministries listed are wonderful places to grow and have fellowship in Christ. All the studies have restarted, and will continue, God willing, through 2015. We hope to see you there!

SUNDAYS

Children's Ministries

Every Sunday from 11:00am - 12:15pm @ CACC
in the Sunday School Rooms
Contact: Alidz Nazarian

Church-Wide Prayer Meeting

1st Sunday of each month at 12:45pm @ CACC - Fireside Room
Contact: Armine Adrouny, Deacon

HomeBuilders Bible Study for Young Couples (and children)

Periodically on Sundays at CACC, 1:00pm - 3:00 pm
Topic: Chip Ingram's Living on the Edge series "House or Home Parenting"
Contact: Aileen Hartunian

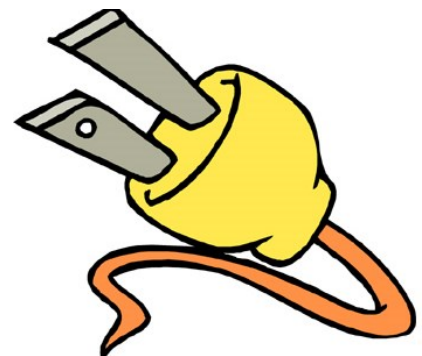
East Bay Bible Study

2nd & 4th Sunday of each month at 7:00pm @ Bosnoyan's
Location: 7979 Countess Court, Dublin
Contact: Nazo Bosnoyan

MONDAYS

Dessert and Bible Study

1st and 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00pm - 8:30pm @ CACC
Contact: Anahid Yeremian



PLUG IN

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Coffee Time with God in San Francisco

2nd Monday of each month at 12:30pm - 1:30pm @ CACC
in the Fireside Room

Contact: Rev. Nerses Balabanian

WEDNESDAYS

Young Adult Bible Study (ages 26 and up)

Every Wednesday at 7:30pm @ CACC

Contact: Ara Kullukian

THURSDAYS

Coffee Time with God in Palo Alto

Thursdays (twice a month) at 10:30am @ Sevan Balabanian's

Location: 938 Celia Drive, Palo Alto

Contact: Sevan Balabanian

FRIDAYS

South Bay Bible Study

2nd Friday of each month at 7:00pm @ Sagherian's

Location: 1201 Morningside Drive, Sunnyvale

Topics: The Final Judgment, The Second Coming, and then a new series.

Contact: Caroline Sagherian

SATURDAYS

Women's Bible Study & Fellowship

1st Saturday of each month at 5:00pm @ Sagherian's

Location: 1201 Morningside Drive, Sunnyvale

Contact: Nanor Balabanian

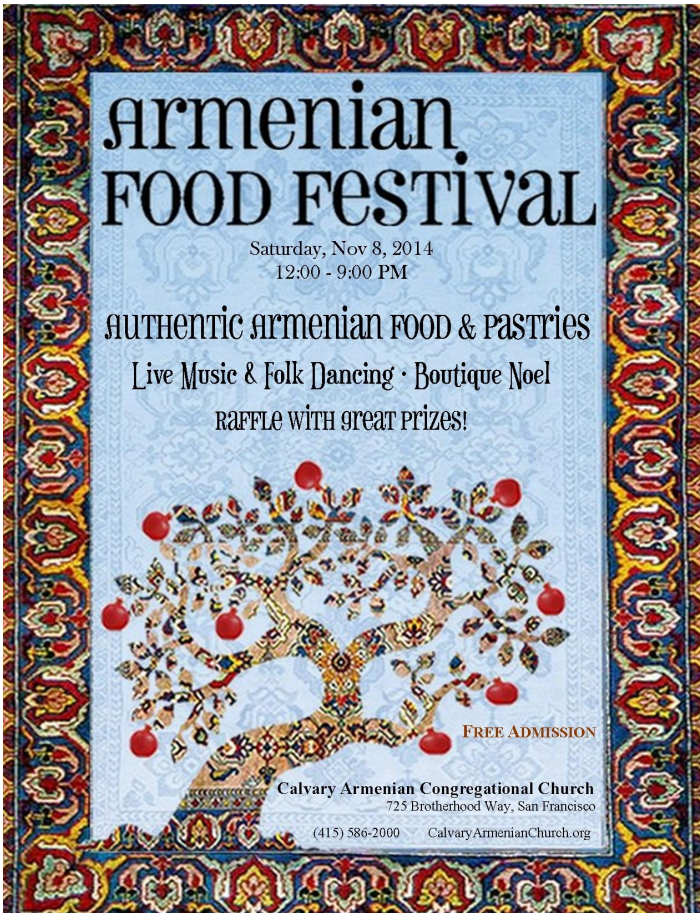
Thank You

Dear Calvary Family and Friends,

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude for your sincere expression of sympathy during this very difficult period of our lives. Your prayers, phone calls, cards, emails, facebook messages and visitations meant a great deal. We would also want to thank all those who donated to Calvary Armenian Congregational Church in San Francisco and to Nahadagats Church in Aleppo, in memory of our beloved Mom.

Sincerely,

*The family of
Mrs. Veharoush Nazarian*



Save the Date



**Christmas
Celebration
Saturday, December 20
at 6:30 pm**

Save the Date

**A Centennial Concert
Commemorating the
Armenian Genocide
Saturday, January 31st
7:00 pm @ CACC**



Vehanoush Nazarian's Biography



1920 - 2014

Vehanoush Berejiklian Nazarian was born on June 9, 1920 in Aintab, Turkey to Haroutune Berejiklian and Saliha Jebejian. She was the youngest, and last surviving, of four Berejiklian siblings, preceded in death by Yevnige Kounakjian, Alberta Yazejian and Hovhannes Berejiklian, also known as Chromo. She went to be with her Lord and Savior, in her home on June 13, 2014 in San Jose, California. She was 94.

Before Vehanoush was born, her family narrowly survived the genocide by finding a safe haven in Selimieh, a small town in Syria near Hama, where they stayed from 1915-1919. Along with the few other families who survived, they returned to their nest in Aintab thinking they could resume the life they'd known. In 1921 the Berejiklian family resettled in Aleppo, Syria, where her father worked in translation and her mother Saliha, became the director of an orphanage which served 1000 Armenian children left orphaned in the Genocide. She later served as a teacher at Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel School where Vehanoush also obtained her elementary education.

In 1933 Vehanoush's parents had to move to Beirut, Lebanon and in 1937 she graduated from the Armenian Evangelical College in Beirut. In 1940 Vehanoush obtained her nursing diploma from the American University of Beirut and became the head nurse in the pediatric department at A.U.B, where she worked from 1940-1950. During those years, she was also sent on missions as a public health nurse to Tel Aviv and also to Ainjar-Becaa Valley to help fight Malaria, which was endemic in that area.

In 1950, Vehanoush married Dr. Haroutune Nazarian, from Aleppo, Syria. So Vehanoush left her nursing career and returned to Aleppo, Syria where she became a devoted dentist's wife and mother to four children Perla, Alidz, Nora and Hagop.

While raising her kids, Vehanoush lived up to her name Veh (noble) and Anoush (sweet), her grandchildren coined her name Anoush medzmama. Vehanoush was a stay at home-mom, but she was very active in the community. She taught Health and Infant and Child Care in the Aleppo American College for Girls, She was very active in the Armenian Evangelical Martyrs church (Nahadagatz) Ladies' Circle, where she worked tirelessly for 30 years, also serving as its president. She was a founding member of United Armenian Evangelical Women in Aleppo, and had the vision to start yearly summer conferences just for the ladies in Kesab, Syria.

Vehanoush had a special tender heart for the elderly and for the poor, and she had served on the executive committee of the Armenian Seniors' Home of Aleppo ("Hye Dzeranotz) and on the committee of Howard Karageuzian Foundation's "Ananoun Parerar" the non-profit charitable organization, which supported the health and welfare of needy Armenian children from 1970-1991.

In 1989, the Nazarian family moved to San Jose, California, to join their children and their families in California. Vehanoush found friendship and spiritual support within her new church community at San Francisco's Calvary Armenian Congregational Church.

No one doubted Vehanoush's devotion to her faith. She wouldn't start her morning without reading her Bible, Guide Post, and the Daily Bread. In recent years, she once again, read the Bible from cover-to-cover.

Vehanoush never let a moment go to waste. When she wasn't reading, she was either cooking or knitting blankets for her children, grandchildren and great-granddaughter Talar. While her Father in Heaven has called our sweet Vehanoush home, the legacy she has left will forever be an inspiration to those whose lives were blessed through knowing her and her genuine smile. She left her influence on her daughter, Perla and son-in-law Mark Kotoyan, and their son Raffi; her daughter Alidz; her daughter Nora and son-in-law Rafi Balabanian, and their children, Aren and Jenny, and Aren's wife Alina (Melkonian) and their little Talar; and son Hagop, and daughter-in-law Taleen (Marashian), and their children, Ari, Alexa, and Aram.

When thinking of a Bible verse that best encompasses Vehanoush's life, the family all agrees that she truly lived out Galatians 5:22-23, which says, "But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Vehanoush lived out her faith until her very last breath. When talking about her faith she said "I felt so grateful that I had the Christian upbringing and surrounded by God's love and grace, which is manifested to me through my friends, and, of course, the church. God has always given me the opportunities to grow in my faith and come closer to Him." We are confident that Vehanoush is now living in eternal paradise with her Lord and Savior.

The family requests that donations be made in her memory to Calvary Armenian Congregational Church, San Francisco, and Nahadagats Armenian Evangelical (Martyrs) Church in Aleppo, Syria.

Robert M. Damir's Biography



1925 - 2014

Robert M. Damir (Bob) was born in Fresno, CA, December 22, 1925 to Mamprey and Esther Damir. He was the sixth son of Armenian parents who left their homes in Betlis and Erzerom in Western Armenia and came to America to escape the genocide.

Bob was raised in a large loving Armenian family. He attended the Fresno Pilgrim Church Sunday School as a young child until his family moved to Riverbank, a suburb of Modesto, where his father went into the fruit business. Not unlike many new immigrants, the Damirs spoke only Armenian at home. This was the time of the Great Depression, and Bob told stories of shelling walnuts and driving to San Francisco to sell them at the Crystal Palace Market, a San Francisco tradition of that time. Also there were good times of driving through the Damir orchard and picking peaches off the tree to eat, which were so delicious in comparison to the peaches of today, and summers

filled with work throwing large fruit boxes onto trucks.

While growing up in a small Central Valley town he became very active in his school and community. He became well known as a singer in the local Catholic Church and in his High School band. He was called the “Bobby Breen of the San Joaquin”. It didn’t take long for Bob to develop into an entrepreneur and business man. He started a photography business taking portraits. Then by age 17, he and his brother managed the family dry fruit processing plant in Merced.

After graduating from high school, Bob enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II, but the war was over before he could be deployed. His brother, Homer, was not so fortunate and was killed during the Normandy invasion. Bob completed his military duty by attending Naval Officers Training in the reserves.

After the war, Bob was off to Stanford Business School where he graduated in 1949 with an MBA. He then developed a spice business in San Francisco. While living there he met and married Margaret in 1957. They soon started their own family and were eventually blessed with three sons and two daughters. With a family to support, Bob made a decision to attend night classes at USF Law School while working as a real estate appraiser during the day. He graduated and passed the Bar Exam on the first try. Bob was an attorney at law for over 40 years, and a Bankruptcy Trustee for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for 8 years. Among his interesting career experiences, Bob was privileged to become William Saroyan’s Attorney. After William’s death, he and two other men took William Saroyan’s ashes to Soviet occupied Armenia for burial. This was in 1982, and the delegation received a hero’s welcome and celebration for William Saroyan.

Bob was a man of deep personal faith in Jesus Christ. He accomplished many great things, among them starting a Christian High School in San Francisco. He was the greatest husband, father, and grandfather. His children tell that he personified such traits as integrity, tenacity, brilliance, warmth and fun. He walked through every stage of their lives caring, teaching, reasoning, correcting, challenging and advising them. In his own words from his diary: “I want to grow in my faith, to do God’s will more and more as His servant, and to leave a legacy to my children and grandchildren that demonstrates the depth of my faith.”



The majority were from Lebanon and there were eight families who had fled the war in Syria. In addition to the usual problems that married couples deal with, these couples had to deal with loss of property, being uprooted, the fear of the unknown future and dangerous unsafe days.

In the afternoon, we were surprised by the visit of pastor Serop Megerdichian from Aleppo. He came with a mission and was staying in Beirut for a very short time. Suddenly all the families gathered around him to hear from him. They had missed their pastor and they wanted to hear the latest news from Syria. It was a very strange feeling. I was transferred back to

1915, when some pastors warned the people about the upcoming events. For example, Rev. Antreassian came from Zeytoun to Mousa Dagh informing how terrible the situation was over there. That led to the famous resistance and rescue of the people of Mousa Dagh.

Coming back to Badveli Serop, everyone was asking questions. The situation was tense; people were searching for answers. There were long pauses between his sentences. Someone suggested that I lead them in prayer. I was silent as well, asking God to speak to us. I laid my hand on Badveli Serop and cried out to God for wisdom, protection and guidance. Badveli Serop said the only thing he learned was to trust God and no one else. His face was tired. He was going back to Aleppo soon. We prayed, we hugged, and we kissed goodbye. I didn't know if I would see him again or not.



The days in Ainjar were pleasant. Going back to the town where Sevan and I served for almost a decade and had raised our kids was refreshing. The night services at the church were packed with people from all three denominations. During the day, I spent time at the school where I used to be the principal. It was very exciting to meet brothers such as the school principal and the new pastor, the new students, the new and old teachers and the coworkers of the Boarding School.

Back in Beirut the social center called Howard Karaghuesian Commemorative Corporation organized a day retreat for Syrian and Lebanese women. Two hundred and fifty women were driven up the mountains to KCHAG retreat center in eight buses. The place was packed. Sad and confused faces were looking towards me expecting words of hope. They did not know how long this war would last. For most of them this was the first trip in a very long time away from their crowded neighborhoods and apartments.

There was a lot to be done in Lebanon. One of my ministries was to encourage the local leaders who are working very hard. I tried to meet with them alone, support them in prayer and assist them through any means.



I thank God for giving me the opportunity to witness another special day for our community in Lebanon. On May 3rd, our retreat center KCHAG was reopened and rededicated. For more than 20 years, the beautiful campsite had been used and misused by various militia groups and armies. It was indeed a celebration.

You all know how much I love music. Well, my Lord who knows my heart, gave me a very unexpected gift during my stay in Lebanon. *Nor Yerik*, the Armenian



Christian band I had founded in 1993, held a reunion concert on the occasion of the opening and dedication of KCHAG. This was truly amazing because the members of my band are scattered in Lebanon, Switzerland and the US. It was a night of worship and joy.

My next trip was to Greece. My mission was to encourage pastor Vicken Cholakian, his family and the church. The financial crisis has been very hard for the country. The Armenian community is made up of the Greek-Armenians who have established themselves many years ago as well as new immigrants from Armenia. The church deals with many challenges, including financial and social. Preaching, teaching, singing, listening and

spending time with couples and youth was my ministry in Greece.

My next mission field was Toronto, Canada. God used me in that city to bring healing to the Armenian Evangelical Church of Toronto. I received a warm welcome. I was given the opportunity to visit many people in their homes, sometimes up to three families in a day. I served there for seven weeks preaching, teaching, and counseling. Last week I received a thank you card from one of the parishioners that summarized my messages to the church: “You challenged the church to live up to its true mission with an unwavering focus on Christ.”



One of my highlights was serving at the Vacation Bible School. The church had a wonderful group of volunteers who were ready to minister to the children but needed support and guidance. It happened that my church CACC was having the exact same VBS program on the exact same days. I would communicate with Sevan and share our experiences on a daily basis. That was very interesting. I had totally forgotten that I could minister to children. Their “charoog” smiles continued to nurture me.



During the month of July I had opportunity to organize a musical night in LA with the board members of

Bashde, Inc. Bashde LA 2014 was an event that attracted 1000 people and featured eight Armenian Christian singers and bands. In addition to having an evening of worship and celebration, our aim was to raise money for the Syrian Armenian community.

My last mission field was Armenia. It was in 2004 when I had last visited our homeland, Armenia. Sevan and I arrived there after a long flight from San Francisco to Yerevan via Dubai. The renovated Zvartnots Airport gave us a welcoming feeling. We were especially delighted to read all the signs and directions in Armenian and didn’t want to miss any of them!



It was amazing to be welcomed and picked up by my own family members who were gathered in Yerevan from several places to spend the summer.

My church had asked me to take a vacation while in Armenia. I guess I needed to learn to do that. Sevan and I enjoyed the city, the people, the streets of Yerevan, and of course the food.

Our first trip was to a remote village called Akhbradzor where our daughter Nanor and her friends go every year for their mission called the Hidden Road Initiative. She wanted us to accompany her for a last visit to Akhbradzor before her departure. It was a long and

difficult drive up the hills. The villagers welcomed us like celebrities. Their resources were very limited, yet their hearts were big. They opened their homes and wanted to honor us in every possible way. Being in Akhbradzor was important for us. We learned more about Nanor's and her team's impact on these children, and we left the village after a four-hour visit thanking God for all the young people who have a passion towards the village.

Our next trip was to Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR). I always wanted to visit this area, but I had never had the chance. We arrived after a long and exhausting road. It was pretty emotional to see the "Welcome to Artsakh" sign and the waving flag. The road was much better over there and there was a huge sign thanking the Armenia Fund for providing the finances for the road. It was a good thing to see a project achieved by all Armenians, regardless of denomination or political party.

NKR has a fragile peace. The two sides can restart the fight anytime. The week we arrived a ceasefire was announced on the borders. Eight Armenian soldiers had died in the previous week protecting the land. While driving on the road, we passed by a few dozen Armenian army trucks. Each time we came close by, we saw Armenian young soldiers heading to the front line. We were very emotional and asked for God's protection over these soldiers.

Staying in Shushi, the city on the rock liberated in 1992, was a powerful experience. We were the guests of our friend from Lebanon, Zakar Keshishian, known by the whole town as Baron Zakar. My friend is a musician who has dedicated his summers for the last 20 years to the children of Shushi. In the early 1990's, Zakar arrived in Shushi, which was in ruins then, brought together the children of martyred or missing soldiers, and formed the Varanda Children's Choir. We had heard about these children a lot and it was our delight to meet the new generation of the young singers and to be part of their rehearsal.

Visiting the Museum of Martyred Soldiers as well as the Museum of Missing Soldiers was a tough one. These buildings with filled with photos of men and women who had died or went missing while fighting for the liberation of their land. Besides photos, uniforms, musical instruments, boots and personal items were displayed. Tough to watch.

When we arrived at the Mamig Yev Babig monument in Stepanakert, we met a young woman sitting under an umbrella on the nearby bench making souvenirs to sell them. When she saw Baron Zakar, she jumped up, came and hugged him saying, "Baron Zakar, I was in your first choir 20 years ago. Thank you for being with us in our toughest days." And she gave him a souvenir. She had lost her





leg during the war by accidentally pulling the trigger of her father's gun. We were truly touched by her grateful heart and by Zakar's service.

During most trips we tried to stop by to visit historical churches and monasteries such as Datevi Vank, Kantsasar, or Noravank. Our forefathers had deep faith in Christ. Our forefathers built their churches in difficult locations to keep their faith away from the danger of the enemy. It was our joy to see that after 75 years of Communism Armenia is returning to seek God. Armenia is being re-baptized to the Christian faith. There is tremendous work to be done to spread the Gospel and teach the Christian faith to our brothers and sisters.

It was on our heart to visit CACC's sister church in Armavir. Pastor Garouj and his wife Marietta were happy to welcome us in the early morning before the Sunday morning service. We sat in the garden outside the church and shared our experiences. The pastor reminded me that he had met me with the *Nor Yerk* band in 2001. He said he thought to himself that one day they would start a new band similar to *Nor Yerk*. It seems our band had inspired him to seek good quality Armenian contemporary music. Indeed, we entered the small sanctuary packed with people and we heard some beautiful music. We saw the hymnal I had authored years ago being used, and even better, new instrumental arrangements were created. It was an amazing time of worship led by talented and dedicated people. One more time, God gave me a glimpse of how important it is to plant the seeds. For 14 years, I did not know that our band had made an impact on the people of Armavir. And today they continue praising our Lord Jesus Christ.

I was not planning on conducting any weddings or funerals in Armenia. Well, I was wrong. Because of the ongoing war in Syria, thousands fled and came to Armenia. I found many friends and relatives. One of them was Mrs. Asdghig Ashegian, our neighbor from Kessab. She knew me ever since I was a little boy. I saw her at the Yerevan Evangelical Church one Sunday, but unfortunately after a couple days, she had a heart attack and died. Her family asked me to conduct the funeral. Being there with her family was very important. We thanked God for her life and her ministry.

Destination weddings in Armenia have become popular for the Armenians in the Diaspora. Accidentally, we found out that our dear neighbor from Ainjar was getting married in Yerevan. She was our children's good friend. Our kids loved playing with her and her four sisters. We wanted to go to that wedding. What a surprise to see the family and renew our friendship! One more time God gave us an opportunity to look back at our relationship with our neighbors and the impact that had made on their life and ours.

The last highlight of my sabbatical was the Christian Endeavor (CE) Youth Camp. CE camps are very dear to my heart. I became a Christian and received my calling in a CE camp on the mountains of Kessab.

The wonderful group of around 100 participants came mostly from Lebanon. Some young people joined from the local church in Armenia. Also a pastor from Iran and several displaced Syrians who live in Lebanon or Armenia were with us.

The camp was held in the AMAA's own campsite in Hankavan called *Sheen Shoghig*. Unlike Yerevan, this beautiful area had a cool and breezy weather.

We were very impressed with the organization of the camp program starting with the daily quiet time all the way to the seminars, games and fun activities. The theme chosen for this camp was Priorities. We tried to motivate the young people to think about their life priorities, learn Biblical guidelines and put them into practice. The topics included the priorities related to time, money, thinking patterns and service. After each sermon, the counselors would lead the discussion in small groups.

On the last day, everyone was invited to dedicate their lives to Jesus and or to renew their commitments to Him. I do not know what happened in people's hearts, but I know that more than 20 people talked with me about their decisions and many gave their testimonies. That night I raised my hands, I saw the stars in the skies of Armenia and I shouted: "Thank you, Lord for bringing me here. Thank you, Lord."

At the end of the 4-month sabbatical, I would like to thank God for this amazing opportunity. I would like to express my gratitude to CACC for sending me with their blessing. And last, but not least, I would like to thank each and every person who took over church responsibilities during my absence. To God be the glory. Amen.

CACC 2014 Graduates



Arman Agbabian (Pre.K)



Benjamin Hartunian (Pre.K)



Brooke Hartunian (Pre.K)



Aleek Arslanian (K)



Sophie Barsoian (K)



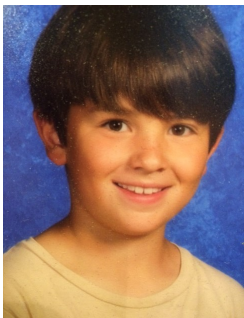
London Dunlap (K)



Leia Sevana Guekguezian (K)



Isabella Khoury (K)



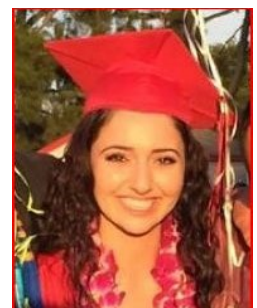
Michael Damir (Elem.)



Gabriel Damir (M.Sch.)



Rachel Sagherian (M.Sch.)



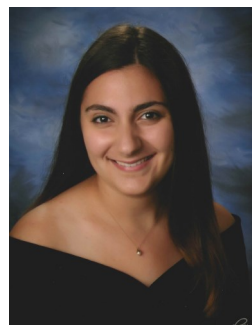
Maria Amirkhanian (H.Sch.)



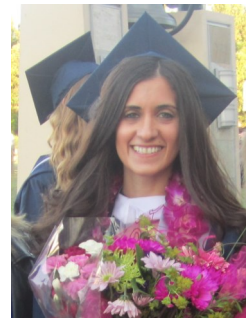
Izek Avanesian (H.Sch.)



Garen Getsoyan (H.Sch.)



Rebecca Sagherian (H.Sch.)



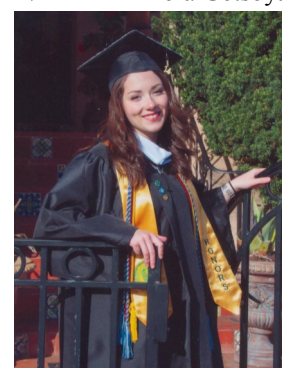
Hera Getsoyan (B.A.)



Narek Ghazaryan (B.A.)



Kohar Minassian (B.A.)



Sarah Pickett (B.A.)

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL

Or Current Resident



The Calvary Messenger is produced as a ministry update for our congregation and friends. Donations to offset printing and mailing costs are appreciated. Any comments, errors, omissions and/or newsworthy items may be addressed to the editors, care of the church office or sent via email to our box at cacc@calvaryarmenianchurch.org. Please check our website for current ministry information: <http://www.calvaryarmenianchurch.org>.

Church News

BIRTH

We congratulate Ari and Hoorig Manoukian for their newborn daughter, Layla Niery Manoukian, born on Wednesday, July 30th, 2014. Congratulations also to the grandparents.



We congratulate Gregory and Stacie Asdourian for their newborn son, Oliver Victor Asdourian, born on Sunday, August 31st, 2014. Congratulations also to the grandparents.

BAPTISM

Our congratulations to Noubar and Toukhig Arslanian on the baptism of their daughter, Aleni Nareh Arslanian on Sunday, September 21, 2014. Please pray for them.



UPCOMING COMMUNION SERVICES

Sunday, November 23, 2014
Sunday, January 4, 2015



WEDDING

We congratulate Armen and Arpi (Kalfayan) Beylerian, who were married on Saturday, April 5, 2014. Our congratulations also to the parents.



We congratulate Stephen and Lorig (Kalfayan) Tovmassian, who were married on July 5, 2014. Our congratulations also to the parents.

CONDOLENCES

Mr. Robert Damir passed away on Wednesday, April 23, 2014. Our condolences and prayers to the Damir Family.

Mrs. Vehanoush Nazarian passed away on Friday, June 13, 2014. Our condolences and prayers to the Nazarian, Balabanian and Kotoyan Families.

Mr. Sam Sarkissian (brother of Leda Getsoyan) passed away on Sunday, May 11, 2014. Our condolences and prayers to the Sarkissian, Getsoyan and Khoshafian families.