

The Calvary Messenger

Գողգոթա Լրաբեր



Volume 45 / Number 2
2016

The Newsletter of the
Calvary Armenian Congregational Church of San Francisco
725 Brotherhood Way, San Francisco, CA 94132-2902 Office (415) 586-2000 / Fax (415) 333-1076
Website: www.calvaryarmenianchurch.org/ Office Email: cacc@calvaryarmenianchurch.org
Rev. Nerses Balabanian: nbalabanian@gmail.com

A View From Calvary *Rev. Nerses Balabanian* To Comfort and Strengthen You... *Pastor*

As I look back on my 2016 mission trip to Lebanon, I realize God sent me to “comfort and strengthen.” Paul loved the Thessalonians and he wanted to be with them. However, he couldn’t go himself because he was in jail in Athens. Therefore, he sent Timothy to exhort, comfort, and strengthen the Thessalonians in their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:2).



This is what Sevan and I wanted to do for the third year going back to Lebanon: to comfort and strengthen brothers and sisters in Christ.

Lebanon

Even though 25 years have passed since the end of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), the Lebanese people are still struggling in many areas. For the last two years, the dysfunctional government has been failing to elect a president. Unemployment, inflation, poverty, shortage of water, electricity rationing, waste and garbage disposal problems, air pollution, traffic, lack of city planning, and the influx of 1.8 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees are just a few of the issues people deal with on a daily basis. This is one side of the picture. On the other side, one can find new constructions, roads, bridges, new restaurants, and a vibrant life as if the above-mentioned problems do not exist.

The Armenian Community

Having served in Lebanon for 18 years, going back to our former churches was an important part of our mission trip. Both Sevan and I met with pastors and their families, school principals, teachers, social worker and youth workers and listened to them and prayed with them. In all these, I found people who did not lose hope in serving Christ and each other.

Churches are nourishing people spiritually, comforting and strengthening their faith. It was a pleasant experience to see the local Lebanese people worship together with the displaced Armenians from Syria. One of them provides a bus service to facilitate their attendance to church service and Bible studies. God’s love and grace is shared in worship services. Most churches have Vacation Bible School during summer. Many of them are preparing to receive

(Continued on page two)

2016 Coming Events

July 18 - 22

Vacation Bible Camp

Sunday, August 21

Annual Picnic

Sunday, September 18

Renewal Sunday

Saturday, November 12

Food Festival

Sunday, November 20

Thanksgiving Sunday

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Sunday

(continued from page one)

hundreds of children (and even one for teens) and run the program for 4-5 weeks with the help of many volunteers. Our Mission Committee supports these programs.

The Armenian Evangelical schools (five of them) besides serving the Lebanese Armenians, are serving the Syrian Armenian community as well. They welcome any Syrian student. They provide school tuition, books and uniforms. I witnessed joy in these children many of whom are high achievers even in Haigazian University.

Social centers are filled with people seeking help. For the third year, I have been witnessing their dedicated service to everyone who asks for help. Dental care, medical care, vaccination, counseling, housing, food portions, mattresses, tutoring, exercise classes, foreign languages, immigration orientation are among the numerous services they offer.



Syrian Refugee Camps

This is the fourth year that Lebanon has been hosting 1.8 million Syrian refugees. The border between Syria and Lebanon has been closed since they cannot take any more refugees. During our short stay, we visited two areas where refugees have found shelter: one in the Bekaa valley and another in Damour/Kfarchima. Most of the refugees are Sunni Muslims and some are Kurds. Their condition is extremely tragic. Some children cannot remember their hometown anymore. All they know is their 4 by 5 meter tent, their new home. Just think about the daily challenges that these people must endure to provide for their basic needs in these camps, like toilets, running water, garbage disposal, and so on...

Many churches and NGOs view these camps as an opportunity to serve. The mission field has come to their neighborhood. Instead of complaining about their presence, they are active in doing something good. Some friends of mine (through Triumphant Mercy and Generations with a Message) had the vision to open schools for the children who live in these camps. Last year, a school was being built, and the children were very excited about it. This year, we saw them in school with their backpacks filled with books and basic stationary! A little girl offered Sevan a flower (rare to find in the camp) as a gesture of gratitude toward the people who visit them and support them. Another little girl showed her the spelling test she had just taken. She had scored 100% and was so proud. There are so many kids that the school has been working double shifts. An old van is being used to bring other children from a nearby camp where there is no school.



In the Kfarchima school, the organization rented a Lebanese school building to be used in the afternoon. These kids are more fortunate than the others because they have classrooms, desks and a yard to play in. The children expressed how much love they experience at this school. They are extremely grateful. They learn Arabic, English, science and math. As we were visiting classrooms, we witnessed a chapel service time when one of the volunteer teachers was giving her life testimony and sharing how Christ changed her life.

Nor Yerk Ministry

In 1993, I formed an Armenian Christian band called Nor Yerk (New Song). "Sing a new song to the Lord," says the psalmist. Over the next 15 years, the band traveled the world, recorded eight CDs and published a hymnal for the youth. For the last decade, since I moved to the US, the band has not been active. This year was an opportunity

(continued on next page)

CACC Retreat

On March 12, 2016 the CACC Leadership group had a day retreat in Portola Valley. Our guest speaker was John Sagherian the Director of Youth for Christ in the Middle East and North Africa.

John's main points were:

- Knowing His Purpose for us in our ministry at CACC.
- Having the Passion to enjoy our service.
- Deciding and Prioritizing what is truly important.
- Pacing ourselves in this journey.
- While staying plugged into His Power, remaining in Christ, and being faithful to what God has called us to do.



Indeed this was a great time to hear God's voice, pray, reflect, brainstorm, evaluate, and have fellowship with each other.

(continued from page two)

to reunite with the former and new musicians and prepare a worship concert. The band members practiced for three days in KCHAG. The local Christian Endeavor youth movement and Bashde, Inc. (Armenian worship Internet radio) hosted and organized the event. For two nights the 750-seat hall was packed with people of all ages. The lyrics of the songs were projected on the wall. I was on stage sometimes singing or sharing a few words and I could see the faces of the people. Some were singing and worshipping, some were crying with tears of pain and joy, tears of remembering the past when they used to sing these songs back home in Syria.



A group of 19 young people came to attend this concert from Kessab, Syria. We made special arrangements with the Lebanese government to give them a 72-hour access to enter Lebanon. Some of these young people had not left the Kessab/Lattakia region these last four years. We were looking forward to seeing this group. They made it to Beirut safely and had a wonderful time. Each night I saw them sitting in one area and singing along with us. This was one of the highlights of my ministry.

Sevan and I came back blessed. I believe the rest of the Nor Yerk band feels the same way. The mission continues in Lebanon and Syria. We who live in the US cannot just stand here without doing anything. God gave me people like you who support these ministries. I thank God for your love and care for those people. We will continue praying for them and supporting them. We will continue remembering that the Kingdom of God does not have artificial borders. Christ called us to serve and I am obeying that call.



Celebrating our 90th Anniversary

CACC was proud to host its annual banquet celebrating the church's 90th anniversary on Saturday, May 14th, 2016.

The night began with a delightful social hour in the church foyer, where guests munched on a delicious assortment of hors d'oeuvres while catching up with friends old and new. Dinner was then served in Halajian Hall, where the crowd of 150 enjoyed a delectable three-course meal presented by Lusine Sargsyan and her catering company, Haute Cuisine. A generous donation of Inisoon Zinfandel from Manasseh Vineyards/Tripiano Cellers Winery and Clos Valmi, from Astorian Family Vineyard, Napa Valley was the perfect accompaniment to this excellent meal.

Fresh from his return, Badveli Nerses Balabanian relayed touching stories of his mission trip to Lebanon, tying in the various themes of the night: faith, music, and education. He was followed by operatic duo Due Voci (accompanied by Sevan Balabanian on

piano), who wowed the crowd with their moving renditions of Horovel, the traditional work song of Armenia, Groong by Komitas, Yeraz im Yergir Hayreni, the anthem of the army of the Republic of Armenia, and Be My Love by Mario Lanza.



The keynote speaker for the evening was Dr. Mary A. Papazian, the newly appointed President of San Jose State University (SJSU) in the heart of Silicon Valley. The title of her talk was, "The Power of Education: an Armenian-American Journey," and she surely did not disappoint. Dr. Papazian was able to outline with great clarity the role of education in the history of the Armenians, including the influence of American schools established by missionaries in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the 20th century, and the birth of Armenian Studies programs in the United States via endowed chair positions at a handful of universities in the decades following the Genocide. She relayed her own educational journey, starting at the Holy Martyrs Ferrahian Armenian High School in Encino, CA, where her mother was a teacher for many years, and then at UCLA, one of the few universities in the country with an Armenian Studies program, where she obtained her Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate degrees in English Literature. Her notable career in academia has given her the opportunity to promote Armenian identity in the communities she has served, and to work alongside her husband, Dr. Dennis Papazian, who is the founding director of the first-of-its-kind Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan. Dr. Papazian encouraged all those in attendance to continue their support of Armenian Studies programs around the world. We are confident that Dr. Papazian will be an excellent leader for the Bay Area Armenian community as she begins her tenure at SJSU, the largest supplier of talent to the nation's information and technology sectors, on July 1st, 2016.

(continued on next page)

(continued from page four)

The night was a rejuvenating experience in the joy of music, the power of faith, and the tremendous opportunities afforded by education in the story of the Armenian people. We hope all in attendance found the banquet to be inspiring, faith-affirming, and community-building. The banquet committee would like to thank those who were able to attend, as well as our distinguished performers and guest speaker for helping us celebrate the momentous occasion of CACC's 90th anniversary. Thank you all!



World Day of Prayer, 2016

This year it was the Calvary Armenian Church's turn to host the World Day of Prayer joint service. The Bay Area Armenian clergy and more than 120 women and men from all five Armenian churches participated in this prayer service on March 5. The program was prepared by the WDP Committee of Cuba under the theme "Receive Children, Receive Me."

The service included testimonies from the girls and women of Cuba that were read by representatives from the



participating churches. Each one of them walked into the church carrying a symbolic item from Cuba and placed it on the decorated table. Mrs. Searan Salibian-Kiledjian gave the message based on Mark 10:13-16 where Jesus blesses the children. There were songs, readings and prayers.

The Calvary ladies hosted a fabulous luncheon following the service. Everyone enjoyed the fellowship around the table and went home spiritually refreshed.



Father's Day, June 19 and 2016 Graduates

CACC 2016 Graduates



Ainsley Gedikian (Pre.K)



Amelie Gedikian (K)



Lydia Kalebjian (K)



Sevag Kalebjian (K)



Gillian Adrouny (Elem.)



Layla Ekmekji (Elem.)



Luke Guekguegian (Elem.)



Aaron Avanesian (M.Sch.)



Karina Bender (M.Sch.)



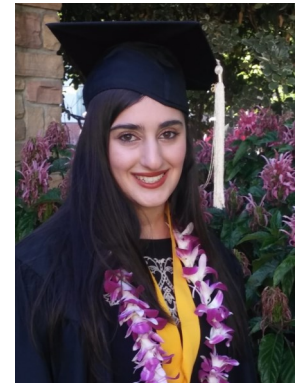
Armen Vehouni (M.Sch.)



Garen Vehouni (M.Sch.)



Rebecca Sagherian (AA)



Chinar Merjanian (BA)



Tali Missirlian (BA)



Tara Mullen-Boustiha (BA)



James Shamlian (BA)



Azad Balabanian (BS)

The Bösendorfer Finds a New Home

A beautiful Bosendorfer piano has found a new home at our church. This fine instrument belonged to Sally McNeese, a wonderful Christian woman who loved the Lord and served Him.

Sally McNeese was born in Lancaster, PA in 1953. She was adopted when she was 3 years old, and moved to Los Altos Hills, California when she was 9 years old. Her parents bought this piano for her. After graduating from college she worked at Apple Computer for several years before going to Multnomah School of the Bible. She became a missionary with Wycliffe Bible Translators in the Ivory Coast, Africa serving from 1991 to 2002. While home on leave, war broke out in Ivory Coast, and it was not safe for her to go back.

One of Sally's favorite things was to host hymn sings at her home, where people would take turns playing and suggesting their favorite hymn. Sally died November 6, 2013.

Sally's conservator, Mr. Stephen Vivien, and his wife, Varduhi, thought it was very fitting that this piano find its new home at Calvary where people love to sing hymns. We are very grateful for this precious gift and promise to keep singing and lifting up the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.



(CACC 2016 Graduates Continued)



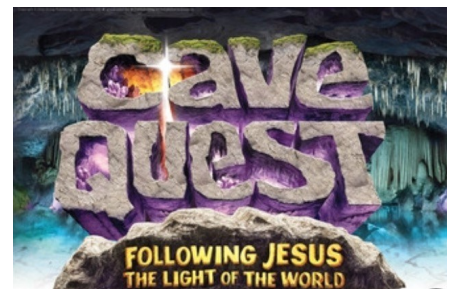
Spencer Iskikian (BS)



Hera Kisooyan (BS)



Michelle Sagherian (BS)



Vacation Bible Camp

July 18 - 22
10 am - 3 pm

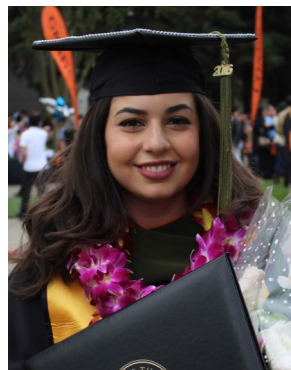
@ CACC
725 Brotherhood Way, SF
(415) 586-2000

\$50.00/child/week
included snacks,
crafts, T-shirt & lunch

For more information contact:
Rene Avanesian (415) 215-0936



Alina Bosnoyan (MA)



Jenny Balabanian (Dr. of Pharmacy)



Stephen Tovmassian
Prof. Engineer

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 Kirk and Nairi (Tashjian) Hourdajian for their newborn daughter, Lena Tamar Hourdajian, born on Sunday, April 3, 2016. Congratulations also to the grandparents.



We congratulate Armen and Tanya Ekmekji for their newborn boy, Aren Ekmekji, born Tuesday, February 9, 2016. Congratulations also to the grandparents.

CONDOLENCES

Mrs. Mona Ekmekji Kouyoumdjian (sister of Dikran Ekmekji) passed away on Tuesday, December 8, 2015 in Moutier, Switzerland. Our condolences and prayers to the Kouyoumdjian and Ekmekji families.

Mrs. Laura Ishkanian passed away on Wednesday, March 16, 2016. Our condolences and prayers to the Ishkanian families.

Mr. Vahe Touryan (brother of Arpi Haleblian) passed away on Sunday, March 20, 2016. Our condolences and prayers to the Touryan, Haleblian and Ajemian families.

Mrs. Dzovag Guldalian (sister of Henry Kalebjian) passed away on Thursday, April 28, 2016. Our condolences and prayers to the Guldalian and Kalebjian families.

Dr. Miralda Ekmekji Kassarian (cousin of Dikran Ekmekji) passed away Wednesday, May 25, 2016 in Beirut, Lebanon. Our condolences and prayers to the Kassarian and Ekmekji families.

CACC Annual Picnic

Sunday

August 21st

@



Huddart Park, Werder Shelter
1100 King's Mountain Road
Woodside

(650) 851-0326

Church Service & Picnic - 11:00 am

Kebob Lunch to Follow

\$17 Adult / \$7 (12 and under)

Parking fee per car - \$6

For more information,

Please call the church office at

(415) 586-2000

Reservations would be appreciated