

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

Two Rows

In this season of Lent, Jesus' face turned towards Jerusalem. In Luke chapter 9 we read: **"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him."** (Luke 9:51-52 ESV)

The Samaritans did not welcome Jesus into their village. Scripture says: **"... people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem."** (Luke 9:53 ESV) The Samaritans worshiped in their own holy place on Mt. Gerizim. They did not understand why Jesus had turned his face towards Jerusalem. If only they knew the importance of this journey to Jerusalem, to Calvary, to the cross.

When the Samaritans rejected Jesus, the disciples wanted to bring fire on their heads. Jesus rebuked them, saying, **"For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."**

Indeed, Jesus came to save people. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem has one aim: to offer salvation from sin to life, everlasting life. Coming back to the Samaritans, many of them turned to Jesus later after Jesus died and rose, we read in Acts 8. Amazing how the disciples continued the message of our Lord.

These days we are facing all kind of rejections and oppositions regarding our faith. The beheading of 21 Coptic Christians by ISIS shook me. I wondered about the commitment we have towards Jesus. Here is a poem written by the Bible Society of Egypt:

Two rows of men walked the shore of the sea,
On a day when the world's tears would run free,
One a row of assassins, who thought they did right,
The other of innocents, true sons of the light,
One holding knives in hands held high,
The other with hands empty, defenseless and tied,
One row of slits to conceal glaring dead eyes,
The other with living eyes raised to the skies,
One row stood steady, pallbearers of death,
The other knelt ready, welcoming heaven's breath,
One row spewed wretched, contemptible threats,
The other spread God-given peace and rest. *A Question... Who fears the other?*

(continued on page seven)



2015 Coming Events

Sunday, March 29
Palm Sunday

Thursday, April 2
Maundy Thursday

Sunday, April 5
Resurrection Sunday

Sunday, May 10
Mother's Day

Saturday, June 6
Annual Banquet

Sunday, June 14
Graduation Sunday

Sunday, June 21
Father's Day

July 13 - 17
Vacation Bible Camp

Sunday, August 23
Annual Picnic



Annual Christmas Banquet

Gyovne Minassian

Chances are, if you grew up in an Armenian household, Christmases were filled with loud relatives, too much food and a lopsided tree that your Uncle Melik tried to right with his sweater vest and several bread twists. Bringing back the nostalgia of Armenian Christmas traditions was the CACC Christmas banquet held on December 20, 2015 in San Francisco.

Greeting guests was the beautifully decorated foyer reflecting oriental rugs, copper ware, dinner table and décor reminiscent of a cozy Armenian home. Guests linked arms to pose for pictures among the well placed benches, chairs and tapestries while enjoying delicious hors d'oeuvres and punch. The hall resembled a home entry with sounds of greetings and warm wishes from arriving friends and guests.

Adding to the lovely atmosphere was the musical trio of Azad Balabanian, Jenny Balabanian and Hagop Nazarian delighting guests with Christmas songs on cello, flute and violin. The sweet music served was an interlude to the double doors leading to the Halajian Hall and further Christmas joy.

The Hall tables were decorated with apothecary jars filled with various holiday themed fillers. Glowing candles and scrumptious mezza plates added to the warm and inviting table setting.

On stage, Mr. Bryan Agbabian charmed and entertained the dinner guests as they filed in to find their seats with his energetic and festive piano playing.



The family-centered banquet was guided with the Master of Ceremony talents of Mr. Ari Nazarian and Ms. Roushig Kalebjian. Both the young adults spoke poignantly of the church's history and tradition & led the evening's program with grace and wit.

Tapping into the competitive game loving spirit of most Armenian gatherings, guests were treated to games to win prizes testing their ability to recognize and write down famous Armenian individuals which were flashed on an overhead screen. Guests also participated in trivia games.

A parody of Armenian traditions was presented on stage written and directed by Lara Palanjian and Taleen Nazarian. Several children were a part of the skit which provided a humorous and familiar rendition of traditions Armenians around the world held.

During dessert the double doors suddenly burst open and none other than Santa Claus rolled in, jauntily dancing and singing while the audience sang "Gaghant Baba". Santa fashionably wore a cap with his red suit and carried a heavy sack while he made his way to the stage. All the children in the audience were called up to speak or sing to Santa while he passed out burlap goody bags holding sweet treats and juicy tangerines.

The evening concluded with all guests participating in the singing of Christmas Carols led by Pastor Nerses Balabanian.

The Committee, headed by Lara Khoury, would like to thank the many generous sponsors and supporters for helping make another beautiful Christmas celebration.

"And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth"
Luke 1:14

Food Festival

Our hearts fill with gratitude as we look back to the months of preparation that led to a successful 33rd Food Festival on November 8th. We are first grateful to our Lord whose grace we enjoyed in every single step, then we are grateful for numerous people who volunteered every step of the way and finally we are grateful for the 800 people who came to taste our delicious food and enjoy the lovely, festive atmosphere.



If you happened to be someone who decided to come to the Food Festival this year, you would be greeted with a smile and welcoming words by a church member. The next thing was the gorgeous Armenian corner where you could sit down and be surrounded with items of antiquity! Next you would walk by and check out Christian literature, music and gift items beautifully displayed on one side and very attractive raffle items on the other.



Walking into the Halajian Hall, you would first experience the enticing aroma coming from the House of Coffee table. Approaching to the famous food buffet, you would first smell the shish kebab grilled by the Trex Men, then you would fill your plate with all the



Armenian delicacies such as pilaf, shish kebab, sou beoreg, yalanchi, etc... If you wished to take some food home, you would go pick up whatever you wanted from the Country Cupboard. Finally, you would definitely like to visit our Boutique Noel for some exquisite gift items and rugs.



As you looked for a place to sit and enjoy your dinner, you would definitely find some friends and you would sit

around the tables together enjoying each other's company. You would definitely have a lot of fun listening to music performed by the Calvary Jazz Ensemble and the Mars family band and watching the Hamazkayin Arax dance group perform Armenian dances. After having a delicious dinner and taking along bags of food, you would go to the parking lot having decided to come again next year and bring along a friend!



Out special thanks to all those who joyfully dedicated countless hours for the preparation of the food and organizing this wonderful event. THANK YOU.

Save the Date

**CACC Vacation Bible Camp
July 13 - 17, 2015**

Save the Date

**CACC 88th Annual Banquet
Saturday, June 6, 2015**

Journey of the Crane: Centennial Commemoration Concert

Tabeen Nazarian

“It is because our people have suffered that we play music with our souls.” My Armenian piano teacher, Rusana Sysoyev, told me this after she heard a piece we both felt I had finally mastered, and despite the three decades since, her words come to mind each time I am blessed to hear music played with the soul of an Armenian.

It is of no surprise, therefore, that a centennial concert to commemorate the memory of the Armenian Genocide would stir the emotions of everyone present. On January 31, 2015, Calvary Armenian Congregational Church (C.A.C.C.) hosted *Journey of the Crane*, the culmination of months of planning as part of the Bay Area’s calendar of events honoring the memory of the victims of the Genocide of 1915. Despite the solemn circumstances and the burden the families of survivors have endured since the tragedy that befell our people, the musicians showcased that evening was a testament to our tenacity and God’s grace that allows Armenians to thrive against the odds.



Bach’s *Polonaise*, *Minuet*, and *Badinerie* from his *Suite in B Minor* performed by flautist Alexandra Hawley and pianist Sevan Balabanian, was an appropriate opening for the evening that emphasized a serious theme, but was ornamental enough to give us hope for what is ahead in our journey. The next addition to the program was a local favorite who never fails to deliver with her experience in opera and her expressive voice. Helene Zindarsian, accompanied by pianist Tatev Amiryan and Alexandra, again emphasized a new beginning through a splendid presentation of Nerses Shnorhali’s *Nor Dzaghig* (New Flower) and Archbishop Zareh Aznavourian’s arrangement of *Aysor Nor Arev* (Today, a New Sun). The first is a *sharagan* masterpiece composed by 12th Century Catholicos Nerses Shnorhali, in celebration of the Resurrection; the latter is a 20th century arrangement. The somber medieval organ solo, performed by young and talented Chinar Merjanian was another tribute to rebirth. It is a glorious promise, especially to us as Armenians. It is a piece of great impact, with a message of hope: *That Christ is truly risen, from the dead we know; victorious King, Thy mercy show!*

Of course, it is the iconic image of the crane, Armenia’s endearing symbol, traveling far from home but always returning, which is a recurring theme in our history. Most of us are familiar with the symbolism and recognize Gomidas Vartabed’s soul-stirring *Groung*. On this particular evening, as presented by the dynamic Tatev and acclaimed musician Martin Ulikhanyan on clarinet, we experienced it with special significance as the two brilliantly paid tribute to the 19th century priest with their improvisations of this classic. Recognized not only as a priest, but also a poet, Gomidas’ words resonate in the shadow of the Genocide: “*No obstacle can stop me in my mission, the sacredness of which I am convinced with all my heart.*” It is this same conviction that enabled our parents and grandparents to persevere, and should be what drives us, today.

It was a blessed opportunity, not only to come together to celebrate victory and rebirth, but to do so with the creativity of a younger generation. It is they who carry on the richness of our culture and the essence of our identity. An example of this is the collaboration of one such couple. Exceptionally gifted, Martin is not only a clarinetist and master of many instruments he is also a talented composer who happens to be married to another composer, Satenik Hacobyan. Originally having composed it for voice, Satenik, transcribed one of 16th century Nahabed Kouchag’s poems for her husband to perform on clarinet. *Dagh* is just one of several dozen ancient pieces which could have died with its original creator, had Ottoman Turkey succeeded in its horrific goal.

Another masterpiece which could have been lost forever is *Karoun a* (It is spring). Tatev graced us with a powerful performance of this piece originally composed by Gomidas. She chose a moving arrangement by 20th century A. Andreassyan. Again, it was refreshing to see musicians of yesterday being honored by our youth as they not only carry on the *sharagan* to a new generation they are talented in their own right. Tatev showed this in her original and powerful presentation of *Ortus*, a piece she composed in 2013 and first performed in Yerevan, Armenia. Incidentally and fittingly, “*Ortus*” is a Latin word to describe, “*beginning*” or “*sunrise*,” and its root is related to the Armenian, “*artar*.” Tatev’s energy held the audience’s attention, and was a splendid assurance that the future holds promise of new music being created by today’s young generation.

She and Martin were then joined by energetic trumpet player, Jason Park, to present another variation on a composition by Gomidas. Their improvisation of *Haprapan*, was an entertaining choice which was followed by a mesmerizing solo by Mezzo Soloist, Seda Kizirian. Accompanied by Sevan, Seda’s exquisite performance of *Dzirani Dzar* (Apricot Tree) was spellbinding. Her powerful, yet graceful, voice had many of us closing our eyes to appreciate its full impact. In contrast to the previous piece, *Dzirani Dzar* is one that laments loss and suffering and prayerfully pleads for it to end.

(Continued on the next page)

Welcoming Babies

Calvary Church family was blessed with the following three beautiful babies born in 2014: Oliver Victor, son of Greg and Stacie Asdourian, Sebasian Sebu, son of Steve and Alin Gedikian and Layla Niery, daughter of Ari and Hoorig Manoukian. On Sunday January 4th the Church welcomed the



2014

babies as the families cut the cake during coffee hour. Each newborn received a Children's Bible, which was presented to them by Caroline Sagherian.

May God bless these families abundantly as they raise their children in His ways.

Vartanantz Commemoration

On February 12, 2015 Calvary Armenian Congregational Church hosted Vartanantz commemoration. Our guest speaker was Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian from Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church, Downey, CA. (from left to right) Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, Rev. Nerses Balabanian, Father Hovel Ohanyan, Bishop Abkar Hovakimian, Father Datev Harutyunian, Father Khoren Habeshian and Father Mesrob Ash.



A fitting finale to the evening was the ensemble of multi-generational voices of Calvary Choir and its delivery of Armen Smpadyan's *Hayasdan* (Armenia). Its message was not only in the exceptional choral arrangement and accompaniment by Pastor Nerses Balabanian and Sevan, but was made even more powerful through its soul-stirring lyrics,

May this spring be peaceful to you. May it bring your children lullabies. O my tortured homeland, enough roving. Stand up again and look ahead.

The addition of Seda's solo to this arrangement further emphasized our pride and how far we have come as a people. Sustaining the momentum of the piece, *Hayasdan* was followed by an equally empowering, *Giligia* (Cilicia). For Armenians, Cilicia is the cradle of civilization. It could also be said that it is where the soul of every Armenian was born and lies. As the chorus sang this particularly emotional piece, tears glistened in the many eyes of the appreciative audience, perhaps sharing the sorrow that is almost as raw as it was a century ago and affirming the words of Mrs. Sysoyev. As the crane returns home, for one moment in our busy lives, all returned to our homeland during this touching tribute. No matter where our individual journeys may lead us, we are tied to our motherland, where it all began, remaining connected to our brothers and sisters throughout Diaspora.

The evening came to a beautiful close with a moving version of the *Hayr Mer* (the Lord's Prayer), arranged by Reverend Armenag Missirian (Armiss), and giving our ultimate thanks to our Father who is the true source of our strength, our hope for the future, and in whose home we will spend eternity.

Refreshments following the concert were donated in loving memory of Puzant Shamlian, a survivor from Marash in Giligia.

Haigouhi Iskikian's Eulogy



June 15, 1925 - January 5, 2015

"...There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. 4:8

Haigouhi Iskikian, graced this world and lay to rest on January 5th, 2015. Her love and warmth has left us with a keener sense of our humanity.

Haigouhi was born in Nicosia, Cyprus, on June 15, 1925, to Haroutune and Serpouhi Jamgotchian. She graduated from the Armenian Evangelical College of Beirut, Lebanon in 1944. She then entered the Nursing School of the Danish Mission Hospital in Nebk, Syria, obtaining her nursing diploma in 1948.

In August 1948, Haigouhi joined the staff of the Christian Medical Center Hospital (CMC), in Beirut, as their first nurse-supervisor, with doctors Puzant Krikorian, Peter Manoogian, and Mr. Augustine Badeer.

After two years of service at C.M.C. Hospital, she married Joseph Iskikian on May 13, 1950. God blessed them with two beautiful children, Rhoda and John.

Due to political instability in Lebanon, the Iskikians immigrated to the U.S. on May 26, 1962. For 28 years, Haigouhi worked as a Registered Nurse at Mount Zion Hospital in San Francisco, in the Intensive Care Nursery. She was admired by the doctors and her co-workers.

Haigouhi was blessed with many talents. A faithful servant of God, she was active in her church community. She was a wonderful cook and loved to entertain her family and friends.

2000 was a tragic year for the family. Rhoda suffered a brain tumor and was laid to rest on March 28, 2001. After this great loss, Haigouhi developed numerous medical problems. Her devotion in the Lord gave her the spiritual comfort to carry on.

In 2013, Haigouhi was admitted to Lytton Garden Skilled Nursing Facility in Palo Alto where she stayed for over one year. Within a few months after returning home, she fractured her hip and was hospitalized at the Sequoia Hospital. On January 5, 2015, she went Home to be with the Lord.

Haigouhi is survived by her husband, Joseph, her son, John, with his spouse Kerry, her son-in-law Edgard, by her grandchildren, Christiana, her spouse and son: Daniel and Ezekiel, Maral, and Spencer, and by her sister Anahid, with her spouse John, and by other numerous relatives and friends.

Welcome New Members

On Sunday, February 22nd, 2015 Badveli and the congregation welcomed seven new members: (from left to right) Matthew Silverman, Lorig Tovmassian, Stephen Tovmassian, Aram Kushdilian, Jennifer Kushdilian, Alex Vartan and Alina Balabanian.



Manoushag Jamgotchian's Eulogy



January 1, 1924 - January 31, 2015

"...There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. 4:8

My aunt, Manoushag Jamgotchian, graced this world for 91 years and went home to be with the Lord on January 31st, 2015.

Manoushag was born in Larnaca, Cyprus, on Jan 1, 1924, to Haroutune and Serpouhi Jamgotchian. She was the first born of three daughters. In 1930, the Jamgotchian family moved to Beirut, Lebanon for a chance at a better life. A few months later, Haroutune relocated his family Aleppo, Syria, for a better position. Unfortunately, my aunt's father passed away a few years later. Serpouhi and her three daughters, who were all under the age of ten, consequently moved back to Beirut.

Manoushag received her elementary education at the School of Life in Beirut, Lebanon. Subsequently, she completed high school at the Armenian Evangelical City High School, also in Beirut.

With my aunt's love for fashion, she had an inner desire to become a dress maker. She learned and developed her skill sets for many years in Lebanon, until her immigration to the USA with her sister Anahid, in September of 1959, as a dress designer.

Though my aunt was not always in the best of health, she always had a smile on her face and she and her mother took excellent care of each other, living together for many years in the Sunset district of San Francisco. Manoushag never married and lived with Grandma Serpouhi, until her mother passed away in 1995 at the age of 96.

Her church was her second home. My aunt was a devoted Christian and a faithful member of San Francisco's Calvary Armenian Congregational Church, since 1959. She was engaged with the ladies' circle for many years and established close friendships through this group.

Even though she was reserved and shy, she was also quite inquisitive, and enjoyed challenges. As an example, my aunt, later in life, purchased and learned how to drive a car with the help of her family.

Besides being a great dress designer and quite social at her church, my aunt also enjoyed cooking for and hosting for her relatives and friends. Her Armenian gourmet dinner parties, especially during the holidays, will never be forgotten.

Many years later, after the passing of her mother, my aunt Manoushag developed further medical problems, where she could no longer live alone. With the help of family and dear friends, Manoushag was able to move to Ararat Home Skilled Nursing Facility, in Mission Hills, California.

Earlier last month, my aunt sustained a fall and fractured her hip. Despite surgery and returning to Ararat Home, she was unable to recover her health, and on January 31st, 2015, she lay to rest, no longer suffering.

Manoushag is survived by her sister Anahid Kerkezian and her husband John, their sons Art and Michael Kerkezian and their families; her brother-in-law, Joseph Iskikian and his son John Iskikian and his family, Maral and Edgard Habib, Christiana Whallon and her family, along with many dear friends.

Rest in Peace, sweet Auntie Violet.

(continued from page one)

The row in orange, watching paradise open?
Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?

Two rows and many other rows in our lives. In which row are you walking? How costly is it to be in the row where Christ wants us to be?

Jesus' face is set towards Jerusalem. I will follow him. I will not deny him.

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@cacc-sf.org. Please check our website for current ministry information: <http://www.cacc-sf.org>

Church News

BIRTH

We congratulate Steve and Alin Gedikian for their newborn son, Sebastian Sebu Gedikian, born on Monday, October 27, 2014. Congratulations also to the grandparents.

We congratulate Armen and Jasmine Berjikly for their newborn daughter, Evelyn Sophie Berjikly, born on Monday, February 2, 2015. Congratulations also to the grandparents.



CONDOLENCES

Mrs. Grace Marie Izmirian who passed away on Monday, November 10, 2014. Our condolences and prayers to the Izmirian and Sarafian families.

Mrs. Haigouhi Isikikian who passed away on Monday, January 5, 2015. Our condolences and prayers to the Isikikian, Habib, Whallon and Kerkejian families.

Ms. Manoushag Jamgotchian who passed away on Saturday, January 31, 2015. Our condolences and prayers to the Kerkejian and Isikikian families.

UPCOMING COMMUNION SERVICES

Thursday, April 2, 2015
Sunday, June 7, 2015



Ministry Opportunities

For information please call the church office: (415) 586-2000

Children's Sunday School, Junior High and High School Youth Groups: San Francisco, every Sunday.

Young Adult Bible Study: Every Wednesday at 7:30 pm.

Dessert and Bible Study: San Francisco, every first and third Monday of the month at 7:00 pm.

Women's Coffee Time with God: Palo Alto, bimonthly on Thursdays at 10:30 am.

Coffee Time with God: San Francisco, every second Monday of the month at 12:30 pm.

South Bay Bible Study: Every second Saturday of the month at 7:00 pm.

HomeBuilders for Young Couples & Families: South Bay & Peninsula, periodically on Sundays at CACC, 1:00 - 3:00 pm.

Church-wide Prayer Meeting: San Francisco, every first Sunday of the month at 12:45 pm.