

# AMIAA NEWS

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# Much to be Thankful For

Andrew Torigian



## AMAA NEWS

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31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652.

Tel. (201) 265-2607; Fax (201) 265-6015

E-Mail: [amaa@amaa.org](mailto:amaa@amaa.org);

Website: [www.amaa.org](http://www.amaa.org)

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address to: AMAA NEWS, 31 W. Century Rd.,  
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1600th Anniv. of Armenian Alphabet - Designed  
by Hagop Janbazian of Toronto, Canada

**"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." | Thessalonians 5:18**

**W**e here at the AMAA have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving season. Our annual meeting in Fresno, California was a success. We want to thank all of you that were able to participate. New Board members were elected for next year whose talents and strengths complement the talents and strengths of those already serving on the AMAA Board of Directors.

The Lord has also blessed us with a full complement in strong management personnel. Dikran Youmshakian has now been appointed Field Director. With over twenty years' experience in the AMAA, we believe Dikran's leadership in this critical function will cause AMAA to be more proactive and visible. He will be able to keep his hand on the pulse of the spiritual and physical needs of our constituents.

In addition, we were fortunate to hire Al DePaola, Jr. to fill the position of Operations Director. This new position will take on the responsibilities of the former Administrative Director position and also oversee the finances. Al is no stranger to the AMAA. For over ten years, he has been the assistant to our auditor, Michael Matossian, CPA. His strong operational and financial background will be a blessing to the support functions within the AMAA.

We also strengthened the operations in Armenia. We have filled the Controller's position there, adding stronger financial oversight. We have also filled the Quality Assurance Manager's position there, ensuring we deliver quality and effective services to all.

We are excited about what God is accomplishing here. With this new structure, we will quickly advance to be a much more powerful resource for the Lord to use for His Kingdom.

Yes, we do have much to be thankful for. God has been gracious to the AMAA because we at the AMAA endeavor to be a blessing to His kingdom.

As declared in Psalm 28:7, when we trust in Him with all our hearts, we are helped.

Psalm 117 expresses our sentiments best:

***"Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples.  
For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the  
LORD endures forever. Praise the Lord!"***

This Thanksgiving season when we are gathered together with loved ones, let us remember the bountiful blessings of our God and join with the psalmist in extolling our praises to Him.

# The Armenian Alphabet And The Evangelical Awakening

George R. Phillips, Esq.

For over 86 years the AMAA has served all Armenian people and today is ever expanding the outreach of Christ's love — as the missionary arm of our Armenian Evangelical churches. We look back with pride to the bond that has made us survivors — but leads us at the same time to ponder — what is our future — especially as Armenian Evangelicals. The theme of this year's annual meeting is to commemorate what occurred 1600 years ago and what brought about the Golden Age of Armenian culture and enlightenment. The driving motivation was not culture for culture's sake, but something much more relevant.

The initial reaction might be, what relevance does this 1600th anniversary of such creation have to do with us in the modern age, where we have literally a world of information at the click of the mouse on our computer? How can the creation of an alphabet 1600 years ago possibly have any impact on us today? History has demonstrated our survivability as a people. We have had the privilege to hold this year's annual meeting and enjoy the fellowship of two evangelical churches that epitomize the survival spirit, here in Fresno, the birth place of the first major presence of Armenians in California. The First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno formed in 1897 and the Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church in 1901, have for over 100 years played an important part in the success and growth of Armenian evangelicals in this country and are strong supporters of the AMAA.

Let us step back a brief time when in 1874 the first Armenian visited Fresno. He was so relieved to be free of oppression that he renamed himself *Normart* (new man). He settled here in Fresno in 1878 and others soon followed. The area reminded them of Armenia and provided the hope of new opportunities. Because the Armenian community was so small and contained both Apostolic and Evangelical Armenians, they wanted to worship but couldn't afford a church so they had joint religious services. The first such service was held on September 17, 1883 in the First Congregational Church of Fresno.

By 1892, they formed a society for immigrants, loosely translated as Hye Society, built a building — later renamed Library Society (the city didn't like the name), and by 1895, joint services ceased, each developing their independent churches, including the church entity in which we meet this evening. However, California must bow down to our Eastern brothers and sisters who established the first Armenian Church in the North American continent in 1881, which was the Armenian Congregational Church of the Martyrs in Worcester, Massachusetts. Interestingly, this was ten years before the first Armenian Apostolic Church was established in North America. What William Saroyan saw in Fresno growing up must have had an impact on him to write his famous words about the ability of Armenians to start again, after attempts to destroy them as a race, after oppression and genocide, to rebuild their lives with homes and churches wherever they were scattered, to again laugh, sing and pray and to again build a new Armenia. It is also interesting to note that William Saroyan's father moved from New Jersey to Fresno in 1905, owned a small vineyard, but had been educated as a Presbyterian minister. However, his father died very young and William's life of personal struggle, loss and his accomplishments led him to state in his 1961 book about himself: "I am an estranged man. I am not estranged from God, although I am a disbeliever in everything about God, excepting God indefinable, inside all and careless of all." A sad but eloquent statement about the meaninglessness of life without the belief in a God who wants to play a vital and enduring part in our lives.

Evangelical Armenians who were the first to establish Armenian churches in this country, need to connect with that early evangelical spirit of spreading the good news in the context of the present challenges.

What I have endeavored to provide so far is a picture of the Armenian voyage in the new world, but let us go back further to the initial enlightenment through the efforts of Saints Sahag and Mesrop Mashtotz. Their effort, between 395-405 was centered, by

divine guidance, to have a purer concept of religion and its practice — different than practices in the then Pagan temples given to explore the source of the power of a god or gods, a place for pleasure, like a social club. In contrast, Sahag and Mesrop wanted the people to know the truths of the Bible and live by them. Hence, the Armenian Bible, the first use of the alphabet and setting up of an educational network. The roots of this doctrine was evangelical in nature — to bring about a spiritual revolution. They were dreamers who turned their dreams into reality. Their goal was to establish a pattern of life to endure as part of establishing God's Kingdom on earth.

In 451, the ultimate test of their plan occurred, when Vartan knowing that the battle of Avarair would be lost, nevertheless sent the message to the Persians of absolute faith in Christ and declared that no conceivable power on earth could make them forsake their faith. Ultimately, they won freedom of worship for Armenians. This is a living faith which was implanted in the Armenian soul and I believe is the secret of our survival as a people. I have read about it many times, the turning of loss into spiritual victory but I was not able to grasp the reality of the enlightenment brought about until my recent trip to Armenia where I saw the archives of the ancient bibles at the *Madenataran* Library and archives in Yerevan - to see the devotion, dedication and love of Christ that the intricate detail and art screams out from each page of the Armenian Bible, impacting your soul. Also, visiting the monasteries and standing in the hand-wrought cathedrals carved out of solid rock testify to the depth of that enlightenment — the reality of a living God they felt and demonstrated.

Sahag and Mesrop conveyed the message of the gospel, amid a hostile world, and does it seem to be that in modern times we may be slipping back to looking at the church as a social and ethnic club and only incidentally a vehicle to worship God. Sahag and



Mesrop did not want to be tied to established Christian churches that had become institutionalized and political in nature. Slowly, it appears that traditions do become the focus, rather than the message, we hold on to the messenger — which is being an Armenian but lose the message of hope through Jesus Christ.

The beginnings of the Armenian Evangelical movement were started in the early 1800's among certain Armenian believers in Istanbul who through the light of that early faith, rediscovered its reality. The word was put in vernacular Armenian to be understood by the people who desired to live individual lives consistent with the word they understood. Eventually, it resulted in their excommunication and the formation of the Armenian Evangelical Church, which we are a part of today.

The Evangelicals have played an important part of bringing change in the entire Armenian Church by their emphasis on personal piety, education, and promoting Christian education and youth activities in church. The acculturation of Protestant Armenians has caused many to lose the vision of what the Evangelical movement was truly established for, to bring reform to all Armenian Christians back to focus their devotion on their root beliefs; and certainly not to proselytize. If the people have no vision, they will perish. The vision for our churches and the AMAA is to spread the good news among our people here and in Armenia. They are equally important. There is a mission field here and abroad. Our calling is not just to survive quietly and hope to raise funds for worthy causes but to be a vibrant vehicle through these causes to convey the good news of the Gospel which changes lives and brings forth blessings for His glory.

How can we, such a small group, revitalize ourselves to meet this challenge? We have in Southern California the largest concentration of Armenians outside of Armenia and, in particular, cities like Glendale. There are hundreds of thousands of unchurched Armenians who do not know the joy of being a believer. Do we desire to reach out to them? Do we have a burning desire that they hear the gospel in terms they can understand. Does it grieve you that this is not happening? In all these years the AEUNA, with the help of the AMAA, has

instituted efforts to evangelize. It has had limited success. We should examine ourselves and ask why? Do we dare consider outreach where the faith of our Armenian fathers can be exposed. With the vision of a few, and AMAA assistance in implementation, positive steps have been taken, such as the vision of Elise Merdinian to start an Armenian Christian School, the vision of John Sheen to fund the Sahag-Mesrop Armenian Christian School, and by individuals like Lucy Garjian, who set up a charitable trust for scholarships — and with many others, have assisted our seminarians and other Armenian students in California, to mention just a few. The AMAA has many devoted Christian people who have put their whole heart and soul to benefit our Armenian people. This outreach is also seen locally in the Sheen Chapel, a non-denominational chapel at Ararat Home, and the wonderful work of the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Center, and other outreach programs to the entire community.

We need more persons with vision and the ability to help make it happen here and abroad. For example, the Merdinian School has plans to expand its facility to add a high school, which could be named after a major benefactor. It is unbelievable but we do not have an evangelical high school. There is so much more that should be done to revive the original faith which enlightened our people. Frankly, I was feeling somewhat demoralized until I went on the recent trip to Armenia. I had the opportunity to see first-hand what the AMAA has been doing all these years. The AMAA's efforts to render help and uplift to Armenians in Armenia, and to assist to the Evangelical church in Armenia was gratifying. I saw in their eyes and actions of these new evangelicals renewed hope, zeal and joy that comes from the true illumination of the Gospel, despite their difficult conditions. This was perceived at a level beyond language but my wife Suzie's translation helped enormously. There are no evangelical church buildings in Yerevan, but we have growing churches, a seminary producing preachers and Christian workers, and souls serving and living Christian lives. The AMAA outreach on your behalf in helping schools, orphanages and in camps where the Gospel is presented by action and word is direct evidence it is possible. A growing church in Armenia re-

quires a growing evangelical church here at home. We must, as Armenian Americans, renew ourselves to share the blessings and resources received from this great country as we build an invigorated North American Armenian Evangelical Church steady in its original mission but adapted to the present complex issues involved; only addressable when the Holy Spirit moves us to work with our whole heart and mind, talent and resources to carry out God's calling. We need to develop new and innovative ways for effective outreach to the entire Armenian community. We have not even pursued evangelism using existing mediums. The embarrassing evidence is the lack of any regular radio ministry or television program in Armenian or English in Southern California.

We have talented clergy and layman who are up to the challenge — even a group of young articulate ministers who should be utilized. Unless the Holy Spirit of God moves in the lives of our people, our efforts will fall short. It is time for us to recognize our aging membership and consciously involve the next generation to assume positions of leadership as part of this revitalization of our Evangelical church organizations with the AMAA playing a pro-active role along with the Union which should be more vigorously supported and given power. We have talked about it long enough. The spirit of the new man (Normart) should not pass. Are we dreaming the impossible dream? Let us pray, seek God's will, and see what God can do for His glory through the AMAA and the evangelical churches it serves.

May God instill in us the same faith and zeal that Sahag and Mesrop demonstrated to live lives of faith and action, to bring about a rebirth of the light of the Gospel to all Armenians which produces individual lives befitting the first nation to adopt Christianity. If each of us individually, as evangelical churches, as a missionary association, and as a union, seek God, He can unleash His power if we turn once again our ear to hear what God is desperately hoping we will hear His small still voice, which will direct our way. Thank you. □

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*\* Delivered during AMAA's 86th Annual Meeting Banquet held in Fresno, on October 15, 2005*

# AMAA Celebrates the 1600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Alphabet

"It is important to note that nothing is said by the Armenian historians of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. concerning the Vorlage (the base text) from which the Armenian Old Testament was translated. Was it Hebrew, Masoretic Text? Was it one of the Greek versions – such as the Septuagint (LXX), the Hexaplaric text of Origen, or some other Greek version made by Jewish translators – such as Aguilu, Symmachus or Theodotion?"

These were the opening words of Rev. Dr. Manuel Jinbanchian, at the seminar organized by the AMAA on Friday, October 14, 2005 at the Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church in Fresno. The seminar was part of the AMAA 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting activities and was dedicated to the 1600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this landmark in Armenian history. The Seminar was attended by pastors of Armenian Evangelical Churches from the United States and abroad as well as delegates and friends from several states and the host city of Fresno.

"After the declaration of Christianity as the "State Religion" (301 C.E.) and despite the initial impact Christianity had within the land, the church could not stop the resurgence of old pagan rational religion. This was due to the language barrier. Unfortunately, Christianity was foreign to common people on the street, because the reading of scriptures and liturgy sang in the churches were unintelligible to them. The need, therefore, for translating the scriptures into the language of the people was urgent. To do so, they needed to have their own writing system. This happened in the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E."

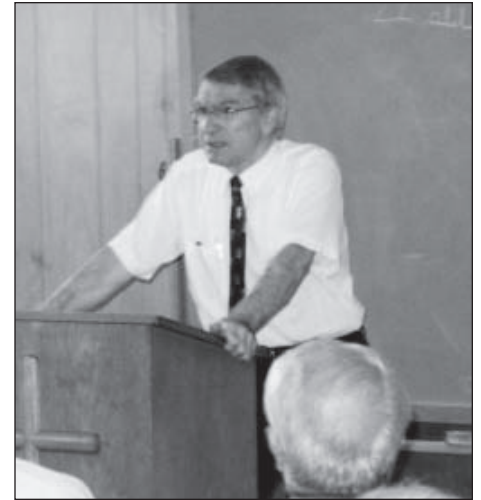
Rev. Jinbanchian spent two hours in a unique scholarly and people-friendly method speaking about the translation of the Bible into Armenian, mainly concentrating on the Old Testament and the book of Genesis. He used two sources: 1) the historians of the 5<sup>th</sup> century whom he quoted and 2) the text of the Armenian Bible itself. He made remarkable notes and presented specific and technical examples supporting his thesis. He proudly noted that Armenian

scholars of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century used modern translation techniques, such as translators use today.

Rev. Jinbanchian concluded his presentation stating with some degree of certainty that the Armenian Bible has two layers in its translation process: translation from Old Syriac and a radical revision on the basis of the Hexaplaric Manuscripts. He further stated that both Syriac and Greek base texts have been poured into the mould of Armenian language and culture producing a homogeneous text. Armenian translators were aware of the polysemy of words and knew how to pick up the component of meaning that suited best the given text, he added.

The lecture was very much appreciated, and gave insight on the complexity of the translation process, especially dealing with the Word of God. After the lecture, there was a lengthy question and answer period.

Rev. Jinbanchian is a graduate of the American University of Beirut (B.A.), Near East School Theology (B.D.); Pembroke College, Oxford University (B. Lit.) and Universite des Sciences Harmaine de



Shasbourg (Ph. D.). He currently resides in Montreal, Canada where he is professor of Septuagint at McGill University and Universite de Montreal. Rev. Jinbanchian currently is the coordinator of the translation/adaptation of the Ararat Version of the Eastern Armenian Bible sponsored by the AMAA and the Bible Society of Armenia.

To receive a complete copy of his lecture, please contact the AMAA Headquarters at: 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652, telephone number: 201-265-2607. □

## A GREAT EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

On the occasion of the baptism of their twin sons, Jack Gregory & Jason Michael, the parents, Arthur & Lisa Marounian, made a generous donation along with contributions in lieu of gifts from the invited guests to the AMAA's Orphan & Child Care Fund.

What a great example for all of us to follow!

The AMAA thanks the Marounian's for this wonderful gesture of love for the orphans and needy children of our homeland Armenia and prays for God's abundant blessing upon their family, especially the twins, Jack & Jason.

The grandparents of the twins, Silva & Krikor Marounian are faithful supporters of the AMAA's Orphan & Child Care Program.



**Jack Gregory & Jason Michael Marounian**

## Yerevan School #79 Named After Rev. Movses B. Janbazian

**"I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven"** (Acts 26:19). "In 301 A.D. our forebears made a covenant with Jesus Christ. If we fulfill our commitment to that covenant, then God will abundantly bless our small but precious nation, and He will make our nation a source of blessings not only to its sons and daughters, but also to its neighboring peoples and to all humanity. We believe that this is our nation's reason for being; this is our people's mission in the world; and this is the God-ordained destiny of our Haigaznian race. May God bless the Republic of Armenia and the children of our nation living in the Motherland and in the Diaspora, now and always. Amen." (Rev. Movses B. Janbazian, First Armenia-Diaspora Conference - September 1999)

September 25, 2005 was the fifth anniversary of the untimely death of Rev. Movses B. Janbazian, the Executive Director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), and the president of the Armenian Evangelical World Council. He was a member of the All Armenia Fund Board of Directors.

God works in mysterious ways. At the proper time God chooses the right people and grants them vision, courage and patience to act on such heavenly visions. We can certainly say that Rev. Movses B. Janbazian was such a visionary for Armenians and for the Armenian Evangelical Church.

Armenia for Rev. Janbazian was a sacred place and visiting the homeland was a pilgrimage. He served the interests of both our nation and the Lord enthusiastically and faithfully. He also had the wisdom and courage to stand firm in his beliefs and defended both his people and the principals of the Christian faith with no hesitation. Rev. Janbazian knew how to make friends with his sincere and caring approach towards all, including officials, clergy, colleagues, co-workers and people of all ages. He became an ambassador of the Armenian Evangelical Church throughout the world. He was truly a faithful servant.



**Janbazian School Principal Aram Sarkissian (right) leading the guests for the dedication ceremony.**

In appreciation of his lifelong services to our people and our homeland Armenia, and on this anniversary year, the authorities in Armenia decided to name Yerevan School #79 after Rev. Janbazian, namely "Movses Boghos Janbazian School No. 79 of Yerevan."

The dedication ceremony was held on September 26. Present were Ms. Hranoush Kharadian, the head of the RA Committee of Religious Affairs, Dr. Haroutiun Armenian, the President of American University of Armenia (AUA), Dr. Kenell Touryan, Vice President (AUA), Mr. Onnig Vartian, head of Yerevan Educational Ministry, Mrs. Louisa Janbazian (wife) from New Jersey, Mr. Hagop Janbazian (brother) from Toronto, Rev. René Leonian AMAA Representative in Armenia and many other guests including students, parents, teachers and reporters.

The day was a memorable occasion for the school as it coin-



**"Salt & Bread' Traditional Ceremony (l to r) Louisa Janbazian, Juliet & Hagop Janbazian.**



**Unveiling the new name Plaque of the school.**

*Cont'd on the next page...*

## Official Opening Ceremony of Baghdikian KG in Stepanakert

Since 2001, The AMAA's Hagop & Lydia Baghdikian Kindergarten of Stepanakert, Karabagh, has been sponsored by Vatche & Elbiz Baghdikian of Upper Saddle River, NJ. Over 50 children attend this Kindergarten.

The official opening ceremony of the KG was held in September 2005, in the presence of Vatche & Elbiz Baghdikian. The students, teachers, parents and the AMAA staff wel-

comed the couple with the traditional "Salt & Bread" ceremony.

Vatche & Elbiz Baghdikian, as well as friends who accompanied them, visited the newly renovated wing of



the building; met with the children and their teachers; and enjoyed an excellent program of songs, recitations and dances prepared by the students for this special occasion. The Baghdikians, with much emotion, thanked God for giving them the ability to share their resources with this KG and wished the students good health and much success in their lives. They viewed with much admiration the handiwork of the children and distributed special gifts to each student. □

***Ribbon Cutting Ceremony (l to r) Vatche & Elbiz Baghdikian with Rev. Rene Leonian (above), The Baghdikians with the students, teachers and parents of Baghdikian KG.***

*Cont'd on the previous page...*

ceded with its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The school with a student body of 420, just recently underwent major renovations, thanks to government support and the contributions of various donors including the AMAA. The guests were welcomed by the students with the traditional "salt and bread" ceremony.

The school principal, Mr. Aram Sarkissian, was excited as he introduced all the guests and recognized those who had contributed to the school.

Mr. Onnig Vartian presented the official decree of Yerevan Mayor Edward Zakharian, naming the school after Rev. Janbazian. He noted that in the past, they

would have hesitated to present this school to the public on such occasions, due to the poor physical conditions and the appearance of the school building prior to the renovations. Now, he stated, "everything is changed, and we are excited. There is nothing to be ashamed of, and I am sure the students graduating from this school named after a great man, following his example, will proudly contribute to the rehabilitation of our homeland."

Following Mr. Vartian's presentation, Mrs. Louisa Janbazian, accompanied by Hagop Janbazian and Rev. René Leonian officially unveiled the new name plaque of the school and thanked the school and the

city for honoring her late husband in such a unique and meaningful way. Following her were both Hagop Janbazian and Rev. René Leonian with words of appreciation.

The AMAA also supports various humanitarian projects in Karabagh. The Mardagert Kindergarten where 70 children attend, as of 2002, is sponsored by the AMAA. Authorities in Karabagh wanted to honor Rev. Janbazian in a similar manner renaming this Kindergarten after him.

A special ceremony of dedication took place and was attended by many guests including Mrs. Louisa Janbazian. Mrs. Janbazian thanked the school and the authorities for their gesture of love and honor. □

## Caring for Mothers and Children

"I am really touched, and both my husband and myself feel privileged to see my name on the Operating Unit of this hospital," said Mrs. Doreen Bilezikian while cutting the ribbon at Yerevan's Mother and Child Maternity Hospital. "Our sincere wish is that mothers and their children will henceforth receive excellent health care."

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), through the generous support of the Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Family Foundation, was able to renovate the Yerevan Maternity Hospital which is also known as the Markarian Hospital. During the first phase, the second and third floors of the hospital, mainly the Gynecological Section were totally renovated and were provided with modern hospital furniture. In 2005, the entire operating area was renovated. Both Mr. Charles and his wife Doreen were present at the opening ceremony which was held on September 26, 2005. The newly renovated unit with modern medical equipment will help provide the best care for mothers and their children.

On behalf of the hospital, Dr. Gevorgi Ogayev expressed their heartfelt appreciation for the generous contribution of the Bilezikian Family Foundation. "The hospital administration decided therefore to

name this new unit after Mrs. Doreen Bilezikian," he said.

In her response, Mrs. Bilezikian thanked the hospital for honoring her and added that the support for such worthy causes are an expression of their love and care towards humankind and, in this particular case, for our mothers.

On behalf of the AMAA, Rev. Rene Leonian expressed the heartfelt appreciation of the Association for the generous support of the donors whose aid during the last few years accomplished more than the complete renovation of the Margaryan Hospital.

The following day the Bilezikians visited Shoushi in Karabagh to participate in the opening ceremony of the AMAA Krikor Garabed Bilezikian Kindergarten named after their father.

The kindergarten which houses 50 students was totally renovated last year through the generous support of the Bilezikian Foundation. At one time, an absolutely unsafe building with no windows, doors, with falling bricks and leaking ceilings, the school is now totally refurbished and provides great education in a safe environment. Now, the children refuse to go home after school!



**Shoushi KG students and teachers with the Bilezikians.**



**Doreen & Charles Bilezikian at Shoushi KG.**

During the ceremony which was attended by most of the parents, the mayor of Shoushi expressed appreciation of Karabagh authorities for the generosity and thoughtfulness of both the donors and the Armenian Missionary Association of America. □



**The official ribbon cutting ceremony of Shoushi KG (l to r) Doreen & Charles Bilezikian, Rev. René Leonian and the Mayor of Shoushi.**



**The official ribbon cutting ceremony of Markarian Hospital.**



## Mission Trip to Armenia

### Rev. Apraham Chaparian

Our mission trip to Armenia was very successful. The first Sunday, July 17, 2005, our group (members of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Hollywood, CA) visited the Armenian Evangelical Church of Vanatzor. We worshipped together preaching and giving testimony. We also participated in the evening service.

During the week of July 18 to 22, we had Vacation Bible School at the House of Hope Church in a poor district of Yerevan. About 90 children attended. In the afternoon we visited disadvantaged families and assisted them with our prayers and financial aid.

During the following days we had a series of Evangelical Meetings at the AMAA Center on Nikol Douman Street in Yerevan. Many people, like in the previous gatherings, gave their lives to Jesus. It was good to see people praising and glorifying God. Our hearts were filled with joy and heavenly blessings. There was so much excitement and happiness that we could see in the eyes of people participating in this ministry. There was joy and happiness in our hearts too.

We thank God for the ministry of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) and we want to thank the leadership at the AMAA Yerevan office who helped make our mission trip a pleasant and memorable experience.

God placed in my heart a greater desire for prayer for the AMAA and for the ministries in Armenia. I did decide upon our return to make a special effort to raise at least \$10,000 to help construct a sanctuary for the Hope Church in Yerevan. At the moment over 100 people are parked in a small hall for worship with no adequate facilities.

What God put in my heart, God also energized me to fulfill our commitment. We did set a fundraising deadline of October 9, 2005 when AMAA representative, Rev. Rene Leonian, visited our church. His message was a blessing and our congregation was generous to surprise both me and the AMAA with a \$13,278.00 check presented to help construct the Hope Church in Yerevan.



*The Group at the AMAA Center in Yerevan.*



*The Group with VBS children at the House of Hope Church in Yerevan.*

Our hope is that many other Christian friends and churches will participate with their generous giving. This is a great investment in the Kingdom of God and for our homeland. It is also pleasing to our heavenly Father. Glory be to His name. ☐

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

**In order to more effectively serve you, the AMAA is in the process of gathering the e-mail addresses of its members and friends.**

**Please e-mail your e-mail address to [amaanews@amaa.org](mailto:amaanews@amaa.org)**

**Thank You!**

## Testimonial Banquet Honoring Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

**O**n September 25, 2005, the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit hosted a Testimonial Banquet honoring the newly retired minister, Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, who completed his 30 years of pastoral service to the church and 46 years overall. There was a highly festive atmosphere at the Marriott Ballroom in Troy, MI, as over 400 people came to honor Badveli Tootikian.

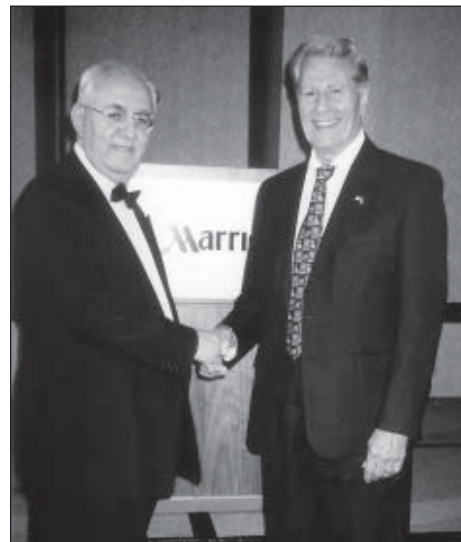
The festivities began with the American and Armenian National Anthems followed by the Invocation and Grace offered by Rev. Joseph Matossian, Minister to Armenian Evangelical Union of North America.

Throughout the Program brief testimonials were offered by distinguished repre-

sentatives of many churches and organizations, including the family members of Rev. Tootikian. The testimonials were punctuated by three separate, uplifting musical performances.

The final segment of the program featured the presentation of a special plaque as well as a Memory Book to Rev. Tootikian by the Testimonial chairpersons, Rodney Keteyan and Gayaneh Kachadourian on behalf of the church.

Lastly, Rev. Tootikian thanked everyone for sharing this special day with him and thanked God for blessing his life and for providing him with many opportunities to serve The Lord. He then led the guests in singing the Hayr Mer and closed the evening with a Benediction. □



*Andy Torigian, AMAA Executive Director (right) congratulating Rev. Vahan Tootikian.*

## AEUNA Eastern Region Pastors' Retreat

**W**ednesday September 28<sup>th</sup> – Friday September 29<sup>th</sup> was a very special time for Eastern Region pastors and their families. A retreat organized by the AEUNA brought all the pastors and their families together at the Ocean Grove Retreat Center, in Ocean Grove NJ, for a time of fellowship, renewal, prayer, worship and fun.

The retreat started on Wednesday night with fellowship where the participants after introducing themselves, shared their joys and concerns and prayed for one another.

On Thursday morning the pastors and their wives met for a time of prayer and worship where praises in Arabic, English and Armenian languages were sung.

Soon after the pastors met together and reported some of the highlights of their ministries and the hunger that their congregations have for the word of God. They also joined in an open conversation where they were able to give some constructive ideas for the AEUNA to implement especially as we approach the 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial Assembly in the year 2006.



The retreat was not only a success, but enjoyed and very much appreciated by all since it bonded the pastors and their families in a very special way.

The next Eastern Region Pastor's Retreat is scheduled for Wednesday April 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Montreal, Canada. □

## AMAA Field Director Visits the West Coast

During two weeks in October 2005, and in conjunction with AMAA's 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting held in Fresno, AMAA Field Director Dikran Youmshakian visited the West Coast. Accompanying him was AMAA Representative in Armenia, Rev. Rene Leonian. Many AMAA members and friends were visited both in Los Angeles and Fresno. This was a great opportunity to thank our supporters and update them on the progress of the missionary work. On Sunday, Oct. 16, Mr. Youmshakian participated in the Worship Service of the Armenian Evangelical Brethren Church of Los Angeles, while Rev. Leonian visited the Armenian Evangelical Church of Hollywood. At both churches AMAA Sunday was observed.

Field visits are of real importance and vital for the work carried on in the name of the Lord. Sharing ideas and concerns are healthy and are much appreciated. Creating awareness for the needs around the world is also important for the expansion of AMAA services. During the following months the AMAA Field Director will visit Armenian Evangelical Churches in North America and the mission field around the world.



*Dr. and Mrs. Norair and Martha Sarian of Los Angeles, CA, long-time supporters of the AMAA (above); Dikran Youmshakian with Mrs. Vartuhi Minassian. Mrs. Minassian faithfully supports many orphaned children in Armenia; and with Mr. George Daoudian of Fresno, CA. Mr. Daoudian is a generous supporter of the AMAA.*

## Evangelical Fellowship Chapel Sponsors Church in Armavir

The Evangelical Fellowship Chapel of Parsippany is one of many churches planted by the Fellowship Deaconry in Liberty Corner, NJ. It is a nondenominational Evangelical Christian Church committed to evangelism and missions. It is concerned with helping to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of individuals.

On Sunday, Sept. 18, 2005 the church invited AMAA Field Director Mr. Dikran Youmshakian to represent AMAA at their worship service. The hour was dedicated to the mission and service ministry of the AMAA. Mr. Youmshakian gave a message and updated the church with the activities of the AMAA around the world including Armenia. A video presentation on AMAA Orphan Child/Care Program in Armenia was the highlight of the day. The response of the congregation was overwhelming as many members came forward with their financial aid. The Church Missions Committee decided to sponsor the Armenian Evangelical Church of Armavir in Armenia establishing a sister church relationship. The church had already purchased and sent to Armavir a new communion set and currently the members are working on donating spews to the church. □



*The members of the Missions Committee left to right – Rev. Joseph Vigilante (pastor), Mr. Terry Frantz (elder), Mrs. Doris Hummel, (missions coordinator), Mr. John Fang, Mr. Steve Ladas with Dikran Youmshakian.*

# ԹԱՐԳՄԱՆԻԶՆԵՐՈՒ ՏՕՆԻՆ 1600-ԱՄԵԱԿԸ

Վեր. Յովհաննէս Ն. Գարնեան

**Ա**մեն տարի Հոկտեմբերի երկրորդ Շաբաթ օրը, հայ ժողովուրդը կը տօնէ Սուրբ Թարգմանիչ վարդապետներ՝ Մեսրոպի, Եղիշէի, Մովսէս Քերթռոյի, Դաւիթ Անյաղթ փիլիսոփայի, Գրիգոր Նարեկացիի եւ Ներսէս Շնորհալիի տօնը:

Սուրբերու այս պատուանդանին վրայ սակայն, տիրական դէմքն է Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց, որ եղաւ առանցքային այն անձը, որ զգաց Աստուածաշունչը թարգմանելու անհարժեշտութիւնը, հայ ժողովուրդին քրիստոնէական հաւատքը ամրապնդելու համար: Աւետարանչական խոյանք մը՝ ինքնին:

Քրիստոնէութիւնը Հայաստան մուտք գործած էր արդէն եւ, 301 թուականին, եղած՝ ազգային հաւատք: Սակայն հայրենիքը ինկած էր երկու հուժկու կայսրութիւններու իշխանութեան տակ՝ Բիզանդական եւ Պարսկական:

Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց, ծնած՝ 362-ին, Հայեկացի մէջ, «կիսագնուական» վարդանի որդին, կրթուած էր տեղական վանքերու մէջ եւ վարժ էր շրջանի լեզուներուն: 389-ին՝ ան հաստատուած էր մայրաքաղաք Վաղարշապատի մէջ եւ կը պաշտօնավարէր իբր արքունիքի քարտուղար: Եղած էր զինուոր եւ 394-ին, ձգած՝ այդ ասպարէզը եւ դարձած՝ վանական:

Տեղական իշխանութիւններու արտօնութեամբ, Մեսրոպ կը շրջէր եւ ավետարանչական աշխատանք կը կատարէր գաւառներու մէջ եւ կը հիմնէր եկեղեցիներ: Սակայն դժգոհ էր իր աշխատանքին արդիւնքէն: Աստուածաշունչը եւ եկեղեցական այլ գիրքերը յունարէն եւ ասորերէն էին եւ անմատչելի՝ ժողովուրդի զանգուածներուն: Մանաւանդ քաժնուած երկրին երկու մասերը իրարմէ օտարացած էին: «Տրտմութիւն է ինձի եւ անպակաս են իմ սրտիս ցաւերը եղբայրներուս եւ ազգակիցներուս համար», կը գրէ ան, Կորինթի վկայութեամբ:

Ուրեմն, Մեսրոպ յղացաւ Աստուածաշունչը հայացնելու գաղափարը եւ իր երազին մասնակից դարձուց օրուան Կաթողիկոս՝ Սահակ Պարթեւը, եւ ստացաւ անոր օրհնութիւնը: Մեսրոպ



անմինչապէս այցելեց հարեւան երկիրները եւ ուսումնասիրեց անոնց գիրքն ու գրականութիւնը եւ որոշեց որդեգրել յունարէնի ձախէն աջ գրելու սկզբունքը եւ ստեղծեց 36 գիրերու դրութիւնը, որ բաւարար էր արտաբերելու հայ լեզուի հնչիւնները:

Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց ստեղծեց նաեւ գրաւոր բանաստեղծութեան առաջին չափերն ու յանգերու տարրերը, հետեւելով Գրիգոր Նարեկացիի, Ստեփանոս Սիւնեցիի, Ներսէս Շնորհալիի բանաստեղծութիւններուն:

Բաժնուած հայրենիքի տարածքին տեղական բարբառներու համադրումը ուրիշ հարց մըն էր, որ լուծուեցաւ արարատեան բարբառի ընկալումով, եւ թարգմանական աշխատանքը ստացաւ իր թափը, ձեռներեց աշակերտներու գործակցութեամբ:

Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց թարգմանական գործին միացուց ավետարանչական տեսիլք եւ այցելեց ոչ միայն հայկական տարածքի քաղաքները, այլեւ հարեւան երկիրները: Ան ստեղծեց նաեւ վրացերէն լեզուի գիրերը:

Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց ավետարանիչ էր, ունէր Յիսուսի աշակերտներուն համապատասխան կորով: «Անոր հասարակական հայեացքներուն մէջ կարելոր էր ժողովուրդը մայրենի լեզուով լուսաւորելու, հայութիւնն ու հայրենիքը քրիստոնէական եկեղեցիի եւ Հայոց լեզուի ու հայ մատենագրութեան միջոցով միաւորելու, ժողովուրդին ազգային ինքնութիւնը պահպանելու գաղափարները», կը գրէ Ռ. Իշխանեան՝ հայրենի գիտնականը:

Մեսրոպ Մաշտոցի ավետարանչական վաւերական վաստակին համար, մենք այսօր պատմաւորներին անոր իմաստութիւն պարգեւող ամենակալ Աստուծոյ փառք տալ եւ ջանալ հաւատարիմ ըլլալ թանկագին հրիտակին: □

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**Sirvart Marganian**

Sirvart Marganian was born August 6, 1913 in Kershekir, Turkey, the only child of Arsen and Gulenia Apkarian. Twice the Turkish government separated her father from the family. During his absence, Sirvart and her mother survived deportations. Later they were saved through an opportunity to work in an orphanage. After six years of silent separation the family was reunited in the verdant Becca Valley of Lebanon.



Sirvart was educated to be a teacher at the British School for Girls and took courses at the Near East School of Theology. She married the late Reverend Mardiros Marganian in 1936. They were blessed with three children, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Education and service were stressed in the Marganian home. Vahe excelled as a chemistry professor, Anne as a registered dietician, and Hrag as a medical doctor.

As a “yeretzgin”, Sirvart spent 40 years ministering to parishioners in the Middle East (i.e.) Trad-Beirut, Tripoli, Kessab, Aleppo and Los Angeles. She played a vital role in her husband’s ministry –leading choirs, bible studies and writing Christian education articles. Her humble, Christ-like, service oriented presence was a blessing to many.

In her later years, Sirvart cared for her husband and others at the Ararat Home of Mission Hills, California. Even in failing health, Sirvart continued to be gracious, kind, hospi-

table and grateful. She read her Bible daily with deep contemplation.

Sirvart went home to be with the Lord on July 14, 2005. A memorial service was held at the Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church of Downey on August 28, 2005. Donations may be made to the Rev. and Mrs. Marganian Endowment Fund at the Armenian Missionary Association of America. □

**Rose Hadidian**

Rose Hadidian passed away peacefully on August 16, 2005, in Morgantown, WV. Born on Jan,15, 1915, she was the daughter of Armen and Miriam Tchakarian. Rose was left a young widow with a daughter when her husband Hagop Bakerjian passed away. She married Dr. Yervant Hadidian on July 23, 1952, and was his gracious and dedicated partner in his ministry. She was an active member of the Ladies’ Aide, taught Sunday School, and loved the Co-Wed Circle and the Armenian Women’s Benevolent Society.



Participating actively in church events, Rose was a warm hostess welcoming parishioners into the parsonage.

Dr. Hadidian retired in 1965, and the Hadidians moved to San Francisco, CA, in 1966, and a few years later to Los Gatos to be closer to the Hadidian family. After Dr. Hadidian’s death in 1977, Rose moved to Elkins, WV, to be with her daughter Dorothy and was an important part of her grandson’s

life as he grew up. There, she was active in the Elkins Community Presb.Church. Later she moved with the family to Morgantown, WV, where Dorothy is a professor at the West Virginia University School of Nursing. Rose continued her gracious hospitality, entertaining Dorothy’s college colleagues who loved her, enjoyed her spirit, her entertaining, and her handiwork.

At Rose’s request, donations may be made to the Dr. and Mrs. Yervant Hadidian Endowment Fund at the AMAA. □

**Sara Garo**

Sara Garo died on March 2, 2005 due to heart complications.

Sara always kept her life full and busy with family and friends, the Immanuel Armenian Cong'l Church, the Downey Art Museum and the Armenian Singles Group which she started in 1978. She valued her long-standing friendships, her family and Armenian background.

She was born in Ensenada, Mexico on Sept. 26, 1926 as her parents made their journey from Armenia to the US. She was the third child of the Mooshagian clan which included her sister Sada and brothers John, Art and Ray. They grew up in Norwalk, CA. Sara married Harry Garo in 1950. They had four daughters: Alicia, Lydia, Emily and Elizabeth.

Sara had a spirit and spark that was rarely exhausted and an engaging curiosity. She loved discussions and challenges. She was a generous listener and kind advisor. She was just as happy hosting a party or sing-a-long as being alone and reading.

Sara will be remembered by family and friends as a loving soul and woman with great warmth and kindness. □

**BOOK ORDER FORM**

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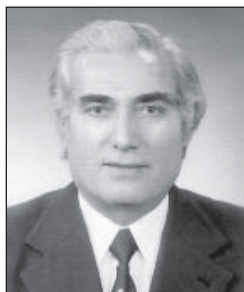
(Make checks payable to AMAA - Canada: Payable in U.S. dollar prices subject to change)

**REPRINTING OF ARMENIAN BIBLES**

On the Occasion of the 1600th Anniversary of the Armenian Alphabet, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) is reprinting the 2001 edition of the Western Armenian Bible (Old & New Testaments), in medium size (6 by 9). The bibles will be in hard and soft covers, as well as leather bound. They will be ready before the end of the year. To receive copies, please contact the AMAA Office.

## Rev. Zenas Ilanjan

Rev. Zenas Ilanjan was born in Kharput (Harput, Turkey) on May 9, 1922. He was the first-born of the five children of Armenak Ilanjan and Sara Der Ghazarian. At a very young age, he suffered the fate of survivor of the Armenian Genocide.



Rev. Ilanjan graduated from Aleppo College in 1941 and worked as the principal of the Armenian Evangelical School of Kessab, Syria. A year later, enrolled in the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut, Lebanon. In 1947, he graduated with highest distinction simultaneously from the AUB with a BA in philosophy and education, and from the NEST with a D.Th. In 1969, Rev. Ilanjan obtained Master of Arts Degree from the AUB in 16<sup>th</sup> Century English Literature.

Rev. Ilanjan was a distinguished leader, scholar, educator, and an artist. He served the various Armenian Evangelical churches, schools (including Haigazian College) as pastor, educator, writer, artist, librarian, administrator and a musicologist. He prepared and published an Armenian spiritual hymnal, *Hokevor Yerker Nor Serounti Hamar*. Frequently, Rev. Ilanjan secured scholarships for needy students. He set a good example, becoming a respected and beloved mentor.

Rev. Ilanjan joined the Haigazian College as registrar and an assistant professor, later becoming Director of Admissions and the Chairman of the Division of Languages and Literatures. In 1967, he became the Chairman of Administration.

On February 7, 1976, Rev. Ilanjan came to the US and became the pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York, where he was ordained by the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the AEUNA. After his retirement, he continued his ministry as interim pastor and preacher for a number of churches in the US and Canada.

Rev. Ilanjan, went to his heavenly home on Thursday, Sept. 1, 2005, in New York. He had lost his wife three years prior to his passing away. A funeral service was held on Sept. 10, 2005, at the Armenian Presb. Church of Paramus, NJ, followed by interment at the Oak Hill Cemetery. He is survived by his five children, eight grandchildren and his brother Gaus of Los Angeles, CA. □

## Archie Cherkezian

Archie cherkezian, was born on February 5, 1923, in New York and was the older of two children of the Armenian immigrant from Turkey, William Cherkezian, and his wife Perlanty Keyishian.



His father William had started working in the Oriental rug repair business soon after his arrival in the US in 1912. Later he had started his own business, which included importation and sales of rugs. Young Archie, from the age of nine, began his exposure to the different facets of the Oriental rug business. This background prepared him to become a top Oriental rug marketer even though he had prepared for a career in chemical engineering obtaining his degree from New York University in 1947.

Archie served on the board of Oriental Rug Importers Association in many capacities, twice serving as its president. He was the editor of the trade journal, *Oriental Rug Magazine*, for over 30 years. He used his marketing skills for the industry by organizing events that featured high-ranking politicians, such as then Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, and foreign dignitaries, such as the sister of then Shah of Iran, Shah Reza Pahlavi.

In 1949 Archie married Olga Safarian, and formed a family of four with their daughter, Nancy, and son Bill.

Archie was a very active man: In addition to his commitment to his profession, he was a

sitting master of Masonic Lodge during 1955-1967. He was also very active in his community, holding numerous positions in nearly all committees of his church, the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York. He also served the Armenian Missionary Association of America as a board member, as its treasurer (1971-1976), and as its president (1976-1978). Archie served also as the treasurer of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America from 1988 to 1992.

In February 1999, Archie and his wife Olga had moved to Scottsdale, AZ, where Archie continued his active life, playing basketball, tennis, and swimming. In August 2003 Archie lost his wife, an event that visibly affected him.

A man who understood the value of integrity; Archie has been quoted as saying: "Money cannot buy integrity," a credo to which he adhered throughout his life.

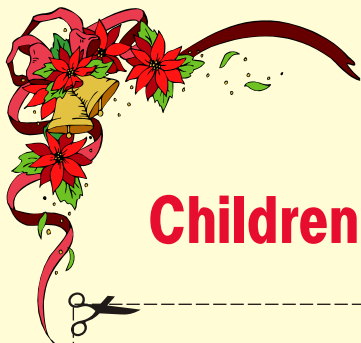
Archie passed away on Friday, July 15, 2005 in Scottsdale, AZ. His remains were put to rest on Saturday, August 6th during a private interment service. A memorial service was held at the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York. Representing AMAA at the service were the Executive Director Mr. Andy Torigian and Vice Presidents, John Cherkezian and Peter Kougasian. AMAA Administrative Director Dikran Youmshakian presented a testimonial on behalf of the AMAA.

Archie Cherkezian is survived by his daughter Nancy Cherkezian Sommers, his son Bill Cherkezian, and four grandchildren: Daniel Sommers, Rebecca Sommers, Michelle Cherkezian and Edward Cherkezian. □

**The AMAA Board of Directors and staff wish to extend their heartfelt condolences to the families of the following deceased friends whose names were submitted to us for publication in the AMAA News**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>* <b>Tilkian, Victoria</b><br/><i>Thousand Oaks, CA</i></p> <p>* <b>Sarkisian, Vartan</b><br/><i>Tenasly, NJ</i></p> <p>* <b>Kalajian, Gloria</b><br/><i>Hollywood, CA</i></p> <p>* <b>Nessikian, Ruhama "Rudy"</b><br/><i>MA</i></p> <p>* <b>Letherman, Leon</b><br/><i>Spring Valley, CA</i></p> <p>* <b>Polatoglu, Elise</b></p> | <p>* <b>Kapigian, Steven Vahe</b><br/><i>New York, NY</i></p> <p>* <b>Artinian, Lydia</b><br/><i>Fresno, CA</i></p> <p>* <b>Sevoian, Martin</b><br/><i>Amherst, MA</i></p> <p>* <b>Darmanian, Hamo</b><br/><i>Jamaica Estates, NY</i></p> <p>* <b>Chankalian, Flora</b><br/><i>Leonia, NJ</i></p> | <p>* <b>Shahinian, Andrew</b><br/><i>Oradell, NJ</i></p> <p>* <b>Asadorian, Rose</b><br/><i>PA</i></p> <p>* <b>Hagopian, Vasken</b><br/><i>Ann Arbor, MI</i></p> <p>* <b>Bilezikian, Zabelle</b><br/><i>Newtonville, MA</i></p> <p>* <b>Bogosian, Armine</b><br/><i>CA</i></p> <p>* <b>Nazarian, Lucy</b><br/><i>Watertown, MA</i></p> |
|--|---|--|

\* Memorials designated for AMAA



# Bring Christmas Joy to Children of Armenia, Karabagh & Georgia

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Enclosed please find \_\_\_\_\_ US dollars for \_\_\_\_\_ Armenian Children's Christmas Joy Packages.

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(Please make tax-deductible checks payable to AMAA, earmarked for Christmas Joy Packages)

**Each Christmas Joy Package costs \$ 10.00. Please sponsor as many packages as you can and mail your donations to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652.**

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