



ARMENIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA  
WESTERN DIOCESE



Fulfilling  
our  
LORD'S  
great  
Commission

*"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations."*

Matthew 28:19

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 13.5 million (13.5% of the population).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people, and the Government has set out a strategy for the 21st century in the White Paper on *Ageing Better: The Government's Strategy for Older People* (Department of Health 1999). This strategy is based on the following principles:

• Older people should be able to live independently and actively in their own homes.

• Older people should be able to live in their own communities, and be able to participate in the life of their communities.

• Older people should be able to live in a safe and secure environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a healthy and well environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-served environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-governed environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-protected environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-maintained environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-kept environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-looked after environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-cared for environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-attended environment.

• Older people should be able to live in a well-served environment.

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• Older people should be able to live in a well-served environment.



ARMENIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA  
WESTERN DIOCESE

*His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate*

# THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## FULFILLING OUR LORD'S GREAT COMMISSION

*“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations.”*

Matthew 28:19

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## PRIMATE'S MESSAGE

Beloved Faithful,

Christian initiation and its attendant rite of baptism is an open invitation extended to each and every member of the Armenian Apostolic Church to become a disciple of Christ the Lord and partake in the sacred mission of the church. (Matt. 28:19-20).

The Stewardship Program of the Western Diocese fulfills the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by supporting clergy preparation and establishment of mission parishes.

We thank God for caring individuals, (clergymen, benefactors, and donors) who have understood the importance of this God-pleasing mission and have stood by it with their loyal support throughout the years.

As you turn the pages of this booklet and get acquainted with the outstanding accomplishments of the Stewardship Program, hear and heed the call of Christ like the fishermen of Galilee. Do not hesitate to become a steward of the church and a true disciple of Christ. Remember the miraculous catch of fish and the calling of Simon Peter, when after numerous attempts, Peter got thousands of fish with the help of Jesus and was in total fear? But, lo and behold, Jesus did not leave his disciple alone in his fears.

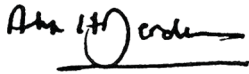
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Rather, He empowered him by saying, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men for life.”

Nothing is too big or too small for God. Only believe and trust and He will make you an instrument of goodness, a vessel of the Holy Spirit, a faithful steward, and a fearless disciple.

Prayerfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abp. Hovnan Derderian", written over a horizontal line.

Abp. Hovnan Derderian, Primate  
Western Diocese of the Armenian Church  
of North America

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## ԱՌԱՋՆՈՐԴ ՍՐԲԱՉԱՆ ՀՕՐ ՊԱՏԳԱՄԸ

Միրելի՛ քարեպաշտ հայորդի,

Մկրտութեան սուրբ ասագանէն ծնունդ առած Հայց. Առաքելական Եկեղեցւոյ իւրաքանչիւր անդամ հրաւեր ունի ի վերուստ աշակերտելու Քրիստոսին եւ դառնալու եկեղեցւոյ սրբազան առաքելութեան գործակից անդամ (*Մատթ.28: 19-20*):

Առաջնորդարանիս «Խնամակալութեան Ծրագիր»-ը, որ կը հովանաւորէ քահանայից պատրաստութեան ծրագիրը եւ կ'օժանդակէ նորաստեղծ ծուխերը, բառիս ամենէն իսկական իմաստով հետեւողն եւ իրագործողն է Քրիստոսի մեծագոյն պատգամին:

Փառք կու տանք Աստուծոյ այս ծրագրի բոլոր նուիրեալներու՝ եկեղեցականներու, քարերարներու եւ նուիրատուներու համար, որոնք հաւատալով առաքելութեան յաջողութեան, հաւատարմօրէն նեցուկ կանգնեցին «Խնամակալութեան Մարմնին»:

Միրելի՛ ընթերցող, դուն ալ, երբ թերթես էջերն այս գրքոյկին եւ ծանօթանաս «Խնամակալութեան Ծրագրի» կատարած հսկայական աշխատանքներուն եւ ձեռքբերումներուն, անսա՛ Աստուծոյ խօսքին՝ ինչպէս Գալիլիոյ ձկնորս-

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ները: Մի՛ վարանիր ըլլալ ինամակալ եւ աշակերտ Քրիստոսի: Կը հիշե՞ս, թէ ինչպէս Պետրոսը տատամսուեցաւ, երբ Տիրոջ օգնութեամբ հարիւրաւոր ձուկ որսաց: Բայց Յիսուս զինք միայնակ չթողուց իր վարանումի պահուն, այլ ըսաւ. «Մի՛ վախնար. ես քեզի մարդոց որսորդ պիտի դարձնեմ»:

Անկարելի բան մը չկայ Աստուծոյ համար: Միայն հաւատայ եւ վստահիր, եւ Ինք քեզի պիտի դարձնէ բարեգործութեան գործիք, Ս. Հոգիի շնորհաց ազնիւ անօթ, հաւատարիմ տնտես եւ աներկիւղ առաքեալ:

Աղօթարար,  
*Յովնան Արք.*  
Յովնան Արք. Տէրտէրեան  
Առաջնորդ  
Հիւսիսային Ամերիկայի  
Արեւմտեան Թեմի

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## WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

Stewardship entails taking care of a master's affairs. In Biblical terms, our Master is Jesus Christ and we are the Stewards of all that He has given us – which is everything we have! Stewardship entails putting our treasures, time, and talents to work to accomplish the purpose Christ has for each one of us, and His broader purpose of ensuring the Gospel is preached to all. This begins with an understanding that our time (the days we are alive on this earth), our talents (we all have unique talents freely given to us by God), and our treasures (resulting from the opportunities the Lord has presented to us) belong to our Lord, and we are only caretakers. Accordingly, these gifts from God should be used to advance His program and not ours. They should be used to nurture and grow the family of believers whom we call His Church.

God has instructed that “*each shall bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you*”.

[Deuteronomy 16:17]

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## WHAT DOES STEWARDSHIP MEAN TO YOU?

Ultimately, as stewards of everything God has given us, we must each participate in the Christian walk to grow closer to God with each day. We must ensure that His will and His purposes are fulfilled. We are to be witnesses and builders of His Church. We can help build heavenly treasures while we are on earth by living a life that is full of love, caring, compassion and in accord with Apostle Paul's admonition "Christ in you, Hope of Glory". [Colossians 1:27]

## WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?

The mission of the Stewardship Program is to educate and train young clergy candidates who will, in time, become spiritual leaders of our communities and minister to the next generation of Armenians – our children and grand- children. These young candidates will be educated in local seminaries and trained in churches throughout the Diocese. They will be pastors of our churches and responsible for conducting Divine Liturgy worship services, administering sacraments, and teaching the Word of God through sermons and Bible studies.

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In addition to our goal of educating and training enough new clergy to support our parishioners' needs, we are also mandated to support our newly-established mission parishes. This is critical that these new parishes require financial assistance in order to become fully functioning and self-sufficient. This financial assistance will be limited in terms of duration and will be based upon demonstrated need.

Lastly, the survival of our church in the Western United States over the long run depends on our ability to keep Armenian youth engaged with our church. Our youth are being barraged by a culture that not only assails our Christian beliefs but that also diminishes our unique cultural identity. In order to support vibrant youth programs, we will require a significant amount of both financial resources as well as the talents of youth-oriented personnel.

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## ԻՆՉ Է ԽՆԱՄԱԿԱԼՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ

«Խնամակալութիւն»ը Տիրոջ տնտեսութեան հոգատարումն է: Քրիստոնէական ընկալմամբ՝ Տէրը Յիսուս Քրիստոսն է, իսկ մենք՝ տնտեսներն ու հոգատարողներն Աստուծոյ ստեղծագործութեան: Ուրեմն, բարի տնտես ըլլալ կը նշանակէ ներդնել նիւթական, հոգեւոր, մտաւոր կարողութիւններ եւ ժամանակ՝ Աստուծոյ մարդկութեան փրկութեան ծրագրի իրագործումին համար: Քրիստոնէան, անշուշտ, պարտի գիտակցիլ, որ ինք տէրը չէ ո՛չ ժամանակին, ո՛չ ալ այն կարողութեանց, որոնցով օժտուած է: Ամէն բանի տէրն ինք Աստուած է, իսկ մենք՝ միայն անոր տնտեսութեան հոգատարողները: Չեղեւարար, մեր ողջ ունեցուածքը պարտինք ներդնել եկեղեցւոյ հոգեւոր ընտանիքի բարգաւաճման համար:

*«Իւրաքանչիւրը ձեռքին պարգեւին չափ թող բերէ՝ Տիրոջ քու Աստուծոյդ քեզի տուած օրինութեան համեմատ» (Բ Օրինաց 16:17):*

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## ԻՆՉ Է ԽՆԱՄԱԿԱԼՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ ՔԵԶԻ ՀԱՄԱՐ ԱՆՁՆԱՊԵՍ

Որպես Քրիստոնեայ եւ տնտես Աստուծոյ անդաստանին, վերջ ի վերջոյ, պարտականութիւն մը ունինք մեր ապրած կեանքով Աստուծոյ մերձենալու՝ վստահ ըլլալով, որ Տիրոջ կամքին եւ ծրագրին կը հետեւինք: Նաեւ, մեր հաւատքը պիտի վկայենք եւ կառուցողները ըլլանք Աստուծոյ Ս. Տաճարին: Եթէ մեր երկրային կեանքն ապրինք սիրով, հոգատարութեամբ եւ գորովագթութեամբ, երկնային մեծ հարստութիւն դիզած պիտի ըլլանք՝ *«մեր մեջ Քրիստոս դարձնելով փառքի յոյսը»* (Կողոս. 1:27):

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# Ի՞ՆՉ Է ԽՆԱՄԱԿԱԼՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԾՐԱԳՐԻՆ ԱՌԱՔԵԼՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ

Խնամակալութեան Ծրագրի առաքելութիւնն է պատրաստել, կրթել եւ հասցնել եկեղեցականներու նոր սերունդ մը, որոնք պիտի դառնան մեր վաղուան հոգեւոր առաջնորդները եւ հովիւները նոր սերունդին: Քահանայական թեկնածուները, որոնք ընդգրկուած են այս ծրագրին մէջ, կը շարունակեն իրենց աստուածաբանական բարձրագոյն ուսումը տեղւոյն նշանաւոր համալսարաններէն ներս, ինչպէս նաեւ՝ հովուական փորձառութիւն ձեռք կը ձգեն թեմիս ծուխերէն ներս պաշտօններ ստանձնելով:

Տարիներու պատրաստութենէ եւ ձեռնադրութենէ ետք, անոնք պիտի դառնան մեր եկեղեցիներու հոգեւոր հովիւները, մատուցեն Ս. Պատարագ, կատարեն եկեղեցոյ խորհուրդները, եւ անշուշտ, քարոզեն Աստուծոյ խօսքը:

Այս կարեւոր եւ աստուածահաճոյ պարտականութեան առնիթեր, Խնամակալութեան Ծրագիրը պարտաւորութիւն կը զգայ սատարելու նորահաստատ ծուխերը, որոնք տնտեսական աջակցութեան կարիք ունին մանաւանդ՝ կազմաւորման առաջին տարիներուն:

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Վերջապես, մեր եկեղեցւոյ գոյատեւումը Միացեալ Նահանգաց Արեւմտեան Ափին ուղղակիօրէն պայմանաւորուած է երիտասարդութեան եկեղեցւոյ կեանքէն ներս ներգրաւուածութեամբ: Դժբախտաբար, յռօրէն բարքերը հեռու կը պահեն մեր երիտասարդները հոգեւոր քարոյական արժէքներէն, ինչպէս նաեւ՝ մշակութային ինքնութենէն: Որպէսզի օգնենք մեր նոր սերունդին եւ խթանենք երիտասարդական ծրագրերը, պէտք ունինք ձեր նիւթական աջակցութեան եւ մասնագիտական կարողութիւններուն:

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## HOW IS THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM ORGANIZED?

The Western Diocese Stewardship Program was designed to ensure maximum participation of all who feel God calling them to support our goals. Our mandate has always been to stay true to God's command as was given in Deuteronomy 16:15. In other words, all should feel comfortable with whatever amount of resources they can commit towards supporting the program.

The program was designed with two broad categories of giving:

1. Sustaining annual donations
2. One-time substantial donation.

For the category of annual giving, we have four sub-categories:

1. Steward of Faith: \$100 annual sustaining donation
  2. Stewards of Hope: \$250 annual sustaining donation
  3. Steward of Love: \$500 annual sustaining donation
  4. Steward of Light: \$1,000 annual sustaining donation
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For the category of one-time donations, we also have four sub-categories:

1. Life Steward: \$10,000
2. Benefactor Steward: \$25,000
3. Avak (Senior) Benefactor Steward: \$50,000
4. Grand Benefactor Steward: \$100,000

The Life, Benefactor, Avak Benefactor, and Grand Benefactor Stewards' names are engraved on appropriate and attractive bronze plaques and are displayed on the west wall of the Galleria of the Diocesan Complex. These one-time donations may be made in memory of loved ones or in honor of persons.

We value every contribution made to the Stewardship Program and appreciate our Stewards. They have been with us as partners over the last decade. In fact, the Stewardship Program's success critically depends on the donations of our Stewards and we are very grateful to have received their confidence.

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## WHAT HAS THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHED TO DATE?

Over the last decade the Stewardship Program has educated several qualified clergy candidates. Several new priests have been ordained by the Diocesan Primate, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian. Additionally, several other ordained priests have joined the ranks of the Western Diocese Clergy, for whom the Stewardship Program has provided transitional support.

Currently, the program's major emphasis is to help these newly ordained and assigned clergy to ensure that the mission parishes to which they have been assigned will be successful. This is a challenge, primarily because in many cases there is not a core group of Armenians in sufficient numbers to ensure that mission parishes will be able to stand on their own. However, progress is being made and the expectation is to witness many of these parishes becoming self-supporting within the next few years.

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## WHO ARE OUR CURRENT BENEFICIARIES?



### *Dn. Garen Hamamjian*

My name is Garen Hamamjian. I was born April 8, 1997 in Los Angeles California. Having attended Armenian school my entire life and being raised in an Armenian family, the Armenian Apostolic Church was never something unfamiliar to me. Between occasional feast day visits with my family and field trips to the church with my school, that was largely the extent of my connection with the faith. It wasn't until the summer of 2007 where the course of my and my family's lives were changed. It was that summer where I had first visited the homeland with my family. We were all excited to embark on this spiritual and cultural journey together by sight-seeing and visiting many... many churches. After I had already lost count on how many churches we had visited, we were on our way to see another somewhere around the Lori province. Our tour guide had a sleepless night and apparently was barely keeping his eyes open while driving. At this point, I was exhausted and sleeping in the back seat when I felt us hit something like a very large bump on the road. I heard a scream and woke up seeing the car almost flipped over in a 20-foot ditch off the side of the road. I went unconscious once more. I woke up seeing my father opening the car door. At this point everyone had safely made it out of the car and I was the last one stuck between two seats. My father, along with a few Loretsi men carried me out of the car and placed me

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by my mom. Miraculously we all made it out alive and immediately realized the miracle God had performed that day. After our vacation was over, it was my mother who inspired all of us with her renewed devotion to God. Looking up to my mom, my faith grew stronger throughout the years until high school where I experienced my second life changing experience.

I am embarrassed to admit I was not a good student in high school, my teachers had tried everything to have me pay attention in classes and do my homework and it was to no avail. I was about 16 years old, I had no skills and no motivation. School was just about playing basketball with my friends at lunch. In the midst of all the indifference, I had a sudden unpredictable curiosity with the Bible as I was at an age where I began to question my faith. For some reason that I can't explain today, I opened the Bible and began reading, and it changed my life. Christ's teachings of love beautifully written in the Gospel made me want to live a life like Christ. It taught me that if we truly love one another, there is no room for pain, no room for anger and only a door to peace is opened for us and those around us. It is through love that mankind together can make heaven on earth. It all made sense with everything I had experienced in my life, and it had my undivided attention. Coincidentally, it was around this time that my cousin, Dn. Nareg Kasian, who had been serving at St. Leon Cathedral, had asked me to come serve on the altar. Once again, for some reason that I can't explain today I agreed to serve, which was practically unbelievable as I was an extremely shy kid at the time. Now, my cousin was very smart, he told me to begin serving during holy week, where I would be at church almost every day throughout the week until easter. So, I had a weeklong crash course about the Armenian church with him and Rev. Fr Khajag Shahbazian as my first teachers among many. I fell in love with the church. The beauty of our liturgy, the poetry of our hymns, the

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mysteriously captivating energy of the church ceased my whole being. After feeling the calling to love and serve both God and his children through the inspiration of the Bible, I needed to find where I would do it. It was clear to me, there was no other place I could serve except the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Fast forward a few months, I all of a suddenly had an ineffable craving to learn. My interests for History, literature, Philosophy, music, the Armenian language, among other things quickly increased. I was a completely different person. I was accepted in UCLA for my undergraduate and distinctly remember sitting in the Powell library during orientation, staring at the beautiful ceiling realizing where I had started in high school and where I have ended up. I began tearing up knowing that it was God guiding me away from a life of indifference to a life of fulfillment and service. I graduated from UCLA with a bachelors in middle eastern Studies focusing on Armenian language and literature and the Abrahamic religions looking forward for what was coming next. With the Blessing of Abp. Hovnan Derderian, and through a series of fatherly Spiritual guidance sessions with him, I felt ready to take the next step in my calling, which would be continuing my education at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in Armonk, New York. I began my studies at St. Nersess Seminary in the fall of 2020 and it has been one of the best decisions I have made my life. Studying there for the past 2 years under the spiritual guidance and deanship of Rev. Fr. Mardiros Chevian has been a true blessing through which I continue to grow in both my spiritual life and my knowledge of the Armenian Church. I will graduate in the spring of 2024 receiving my Masters of Divinity degree from St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

As I look back at my life from the moment, I felt the calling to the Priesthood until today, I realize that it is not I who chose the church but it was

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the church who chose me and her call to me is getting stronger day by day. I have yet so much to learn on this long journey, I only pray that God continues to guide me on the path to serve him, his people, and the Church.



### *Dn. Zareh Mirzayan*

I was born and raised in Glendale, California. My family is from Iran, my grandparents immigrated to America and my parents were raised here. I grew up agnostic or atheist, and also not caring about my Armenian background. This began to change when I was about 16, when I began to search for a greater meaning to life. I began exploring different philosophies and religions, as well as developing a greater interest and pride in my Armenian heritage. By the time I was 18, I was studying Philosophy at college and was a proud, nationalistic Armenian. As a consequence of my nationalist convictions, I was certain that the proper religion for me was the “Native religion of the Armenian people”. At this time, I was convinced that the native religion of the Armenians was our millenia-lost Pagan religion. Christianity, to me, was a foreign import that did nothing other than weaken us as a people. This began to change when I visited Armenia with my family. I had no high hopes for this trip, as I had no familial or personal connections with the modern nation of Armenia. I simply saw it as a trip to an unfortunate post-Soviet country. When we landed in Yerevan, my grandmother began to kiss the ground and weep. I was

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perplexed. I chalked it up to the sentimentality that often accompanies old age. In those following few weeks, I would have a profound transformation. As we toured the country, setting foot in ancient and abandoned monasteries, descending into the pit where St. Gregory was imprisoned, seeing the imposing slopes of Mount Ararat, I felt something different. This feeling can hardly be put into words, but if I had to choose a word to capture it, it would have to be awe. I was utterly in awe of the ancient mountains, the ancient monasteries, that watch solemnly over the passing centuries. I finally understood where all the poetry about Hayrenik and Mount Ararat come from. Along with this feeling of awe was a sublime sense of holiness; the holiness blew with the wind, it rested in the rocks, it crunched below our footsteps, it refreshed in the morning dew, and shone in the sunshine. I could feel the presence of something that is more-than-this-world, something I had been longing and searching for years. By the end of the trip, as the time came to leave, I was the one weeping and kissing the ground. As a result of this trip I had a stunning revelation: The native faith of the Armenians is not one that is lost in the fog of early history, without prayers, without texts, and without form. The true faith of the Armenians is nothing other than the Apostolic faith, still alive, still breathing, still evolving. Despite all the persecution and invasions and the comings and goings of the historical cycle, it has stood the test of time. It is fundamentally inseparable from the Armenian people. As the time came to return to America, I could not bear to let go of this spiritual feeling, and I resolved to go to any lengths to hold on to it. The only place in this country that could match that feeling of standing at Noravank would have to be Patarag. Upon my return, I began to attend church every Sunday, slowly learning about Christianity through participating in the service, following along with the pew-book and projector. Almost prophetically, the

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words inscribed above the altar of the church I was attending at this time were, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Being a student of Philosophy, I was oriented toward seeking the Truth above all else. In that lovely sanctuary, I finally learned Truth’s name: Jesus Christ. Having never been a Christian, when I heard the priest cry out the words “Take, eat, this is my Body”, I was convinced that what was taking place in that arcane ritual was not just real, it was more than real. It was a participation in the realest reality, a simultaneous joining of myself to my ancestors and to God. I had finally discovered what I was looking for. When Covid hit, I stopped going to church. It was a time of anxiety and confusion for the whole world, and I was thoroughly caught up in it. At a time when I should have been running to church as a refuge from the craziness of the world, I did the exact opposite and occupied myself with every possible worldly distraction. When I moved to Berkeley for university, I felt very off-center, as it was my first time really living away from home. An idea popped into my head to attend church that coming Sunday. I searched on my phone, and there was an Armenian church hardly 15 minutes away! Attending Patarag that day was almost as impactful on my life as the first time. I felt a thousand emotions and thought a thousand thoughts, but it felt like I was finally home. After the service, the priest approached me, and I was struck by his humility. It showed in his eyes and in his voice that he deeply cared and loved what he did. I chatted with him, and for some reason I asked what education he went through to become a priest. He told me about the seminary in Jerusalem, and a little bit about his own calling to the priesthood. Some time in the next few weeks, I had a random thought: “I should become a priest.” I prayed about that thought, and it slowly became an all-consuming conviction. I consulted with my parents and other people who I respect, asking them what they thought of this crazy idea I had. To

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my surprise, every person I asked responded very positively and encouraged me. I talked to that same Ter Hayr about this calling, and he told me the next steps I needed to take to pursue it. It was at this time that I learned about St. Nersess, and I knew I would be heading there. I have just finished my first semester at St. Nersess, it has so far been a challenging and extremely fulfilling endeavor. I have learned more in a few months than I thought was ever possible. For any weakness and shortcomings I have, God provides me the strength to make it through to the next day. My relationship with Him has deepened tremendously. I am excited for this step in my education and personal growth. I would also like to express my gratitude for everybody who made this possible, I am always thankful for your help.



### *Dn. Arin Parsanian*

I was born in Iran. My family and I lived a hard life and struggled to make ends meet but never complained about our living situation since we knew there were other people who have more difficulties in their life than us. Since I was a kid, my goal was to get educated and make a better life for myself and my family. I was born in a Christian family. I have learned about Christianity since I was a child. As I grew up, my view of Christianity changed. I started to study the Bible every day. With my mom and priest's help, I learned a lot about Christianity. I learned that Christianity is not only about going to church every Sunday. It's about following and obeying the living Lord by sacrificing our own desires and ambitions and

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replacing them with those of Christ in our everyday life. I started to be active in the church and became an acolyte. At 16 years old, I decided to become a priest. My parents didn't want me to struggle the way they did. They wanted me to have a better life. So, they convinced me to move to the United States, since there weren't that many opportunities, or a good living situations in Iran for minorities like me. When I arrived in the United States in 2008, I had to learn the language and work to support myself. It was during a depression and finding a job was really hard. The United States has changed my personality. I became a person that I never thought I would be. Money was everything for me like many other people who live in the United States. I started to move away from Christianity and live a life the way I wanted, not the way GOD wanted. I stopped thinking about being a priest and I also stopped going to church. In 2011, I decided to join the United States Navy to serve and pay my debt to the country that gave me opportunities to grow and gave me refuge. My goal was to retire from the military. But in all those years, something inside me was still trying to direct me to the light and walk me away from the darkness. In 2015, I decided to leave the military and continue my education. I chose math and statistics as my major. I graduated from California State University Northridge. I wanted to be an actuary because they make a lot of money. Making a lot of money has become the first priority. I did not consider the more valuable things in life, but let this material world define my personality. My mother is like an angel that God descended from the sky. After leaving the military, she convinced me to start going back to the church and try to live a spiritual life. It took me a while to find myself and recognize my real purpose on this planet. When the pandemic started, I decided that I had to become a priest and follow my conscience. I want to preach the gospel and help people to find the meaning of life. I want to bring Armenian

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people away from the path which many think will give joy. However, many don't understand that the joy we think we have is actually sorrow and brings us a lot of pain. For someone to help others spiritually, that person needs to repent himself and be spiritually so strong and wise that he will be able to help others.

Armenian Christians believe in Jesus but we follow Satan, the reason is because people haven't read the bible and don't understand the meaning of each scripture. We all claim God exists and we think that is enough and that is how we will be saved. Satan does believe in God as well, so what is the difference between us and him? Teaching people about these differences is what will make them start walking on the right path. I decided to become a priest to first educate myself and bring myself to the right path before I start directing others. We live in a world where escaping evil is somehow impossible except by a lot of praying, fasting, and cutting our ties with this materialistic world. There are some places that prepare people physically and mentally, and St. Nersess is one of these places. St. Nersess can help me grow physically and mentally to help people to reach not their financial goal but their true meaning of life's purpose and bring peace and ease their life.

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# WHO ARE OUR PREVIOUS BENEFICIARIES AND WHERE ARE THEY SERVING NOW? STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM GRADUATES

Rev. Fr. Avedis Abovian  
Holy Apostles Armenian Apostolic Church, Tujunga

Rev. Fr. Serovpe Alanjian  
St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, Costa Mesa

Rev. Fr. Mesrop Ash  
St. John Armenian Apostolic Church, San Francisco

Rev. Fr. Yessai Bedros  
St. Paul Armenian Apostolic Church, Fresno

Rev. Fr. Nerses Hayrapetyan

Rev. Fr. Mashdots Keshishian  
St. Kevork Armenian Apostolic Church, Portland

Rev. Fr. Yerima Khatchatryan  
Visiting Pastor, Ararat Home

Rev. Fr. Yeghishe Ksachikyan  
St. James Armenian Apostolic Church, Sacramento

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Rev. Fr. Hovel Ohanyan  
Gevorgian Theological Seminary - Etchmiadzin

Rev. Fr. Zaven Markosyan  
St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, Santa Clarita

Rev. Fr. Zacharia Saribekyan  
St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church, Scottsdale

Rev. Fr. Khajag Shahbazyan  
St. Leon Armenian Cathedral, Burbank

Rev. Fr. Haroutioun Tachejian  
St. James Armenian Church, Los Angeles

Rev. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan  
St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church, Oakland

Very Rev. Fr. Sasoon Zumrookhdian  
St. Geragos Armenian Apostolic Church, Las Vegas

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## WHICH PARISHES ARE BEING SUPPORTED?

In 2023, the Stewardship Program is supporting the following parishes by providing financial relief towards the compensation of their assigned pastors:

*St. Geragos Armenian Apostolic Church, Las Vegas*

*Holy Resurrection Armenian Apostolic Church, Seattle*

*Holy Apostles Armenian Apostolic Church, Tujunga*

*Armenian Apostolic Church of Ventura County*

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## WHAT DO I GET IF I BECOME A STEWARD OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE?

The greatest satisfaction you will receive is knowing that you have contributed to a program whose aim is to ensure that our faith is sustained and that our culture and identity are preserved. Being a Christian in today's secular society is not easy; being an Armenian Christian is even harder. As a steward, you join a fellowship committed to building a strong and responsive church which grows deeper in Christ to further His mission. Together we must do our utmost to ensure that our Church and heritage survive and thrive in the long run.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

**BECOME A STEWARD.** Simply fill out the enclosed form and mail it to the Diocese. Make generosity one of your core values. Whether you decide to make a monthly gift, an annual gift, or a planned gift, your generosity has a tremendous impact on the lives of those we touch in our parishes and our communities through the mission of the Stewardship Program. Alternatively, you can talk to any Stewardship Committee Member, all of whom are happy to help, to discuss ways that you can contribute.

May the Lord bless you and your families!

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## THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

The members of the Stewardship Committee are believers in the mission of Christian Stewardship. They each put their God given talents, treasures and time to nurture and advance Christ's program.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate and President  
Derik Ghookasian, Chairman  
Silva Katchiguiian, Vice-Chairlady  
Michael Missakian, Treasurer  
Aida Askejian, Secretary  
Pamela Abaci  
Carmen Antonian  
Rev. Fr. Mesrop Ash  
Mary Boghossian  
Dn. Dr. Barlow DerMugerdechian  
Alex Esibov  
Rev. Fr. Yegihishe Ksachikyan  
Ramela Serobyan  
Aida Setian  
Rev. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan  
Rev. Fr. Sasoon Zumrookhdian

We are all called to live abundant lives of service and giving that reflect God's generosity and abundance.

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# MY STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Stewardship Category Desired (Please check one):

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward of Faith         | \$100     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward of Hope          | \$250     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward of Love          | \$500     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward of the Light     | \$1,000   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward of the Cross     | \$10,000  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor Steward       | \$25,000  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avak Benefactor Steward  | \$50,000  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grand Benefactor Steward | \$100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Amount             | \$        |

*Donations of \$10,000 or over can be paid over five (5) years.  
Please make your check payable to Western Diocese Stewardship Fund.*

My donation is for (please check one):

- Stewardship Operational Fund
- Clergy Education Endowment\*
- 50% Operational/50% Endowment\*

\*Establishment of Endowment Fund requires a minimum donation of \$1,000

For payment via credit card, please visit:

<https://wdacna.breezechms.com/give/online>

\*Select Give to Stewardship in the dropdown menu



Contributions are tax deductible under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.



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“Every man shall give as he is able,  
according to the blessing of the LORD  
your God which He has given you.”

Deuteronomy 16:17





Fulfilling our Lord's great Commission

**WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

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PRINTED BY DIOCESAN PRESS 2018

