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# Hye Hokin

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**Hye Hokin**  
**Editor**  
*Danielle DerAsadourian*

**Hye Hokin Staff**  
*Arpi Paylan*  
*Armen Terjimanian*

**Contributors**  
*Greg Andonian*  
*Gregory Dalakian*  
*Lauren Demirjian*  
*Alex Derderian*  
*John Derderian*  
*John Flanagan*  
*Mark Giragosian*  
*Karinne' Hovnanian*  
*Ani Tovar*

**Photography**  
*Fr. Hovnan Demerjian*  
*Julie Hoplamazian*  
*Arda Paylan*  
*Arpi Paylan*

**Layout**  
*Armen Edgarian*

**Advisor**  
*Maria Derderian*

**ACYOA**  
**Executive Secretary**  
*Nancy Basmajian*

**Contact**  
*acyoa@armeniandiocese.org*  
*acyoacc@gmail.com*

**2008-2009 ACYOA**  
**Central Council**  
*Ani Tovar*  
*Sarine Zenian*  
*Alex Derderian*  
*Jennifer Tagarelis*  
*Talin Hitik*  
*Johnny Elchemmas*  
*Danielle DerAsadourian*

## Why Service Matters

Service takes on many forms. It can be as small as holding a door open for someone or as large as hosting a soup kitchen. Christ said in Matthew 25, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Service is the direct, tangible action that comes from the belief that the whole is greater greater than the sum of its parts, and especially than any one of its parts. When we serve, we do so because the people we serve are in need, and we are able to provide what they need. Whether it’s building a home, donating clothes, or holding a candle at the altar, we are providing something others need.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, St. Paul says, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in every one it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”



When we share our time, talents, and resources, and each time we do, we contribute to the whole, and we bring a little bit more justice to the world.

### Matthew 25:40b

*“And the king will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”*



# Holy Land Pilgrimage

*From June 1-10 of last year, 15 pilgrims participated in a trip sponsored by the ACYOA and the Diocesan Department of Youth and Education to the holy city of Jerusalem to visit the land in which Christ lived. What they experienced could have taken place nowhere else in the world. They relay those powerful accounts here.*



## Lauren Demirjian

**St. Gregory of Narek,  
Cleveland, OH**

To me, memorable moments happen when you least anticipate them. There were so many times throughout our pilgrimage that I will always remember and hold close to my heart, but the one that truly remains the most surprising and wonderful was during a visit to a church while walking the Via Dolorosa. We all stood close together and sang *Hayr Mer*, which made our group of 15 sound like a chamber choir with the incredible acoustics of the church. Then, Karinne Hovnanian, who has a beautiful voice, sang *Soorp Soorp*. This was a moment when I truly felt we were a family sharing something special, a moment when I felt we were all being touched by the Holy Spirit, and God knew we were reaching closer to our faith. I had not anticipated this, but I was overwhelmed with a sense of clarity and love. As I continued to reflect on this moment, it was hard to compose myself because I wanted to stay

with this group longer, but we had to continue the rest our journey in the Holy Land. As I'm sure there were many moments that touched one or all of us in some way, our first songs together were the most memorable for me.

## Karinne' Hovnanian

**Holy Trinity,  
Cheltenham, PA**

The winds sing a different song through the streets of Jerusalem. They are full of colorful aromas and dynamic harmonies that dance around the many services at the holy places. It is powerfully beautiful and breathtaking to be witnessing such spirit and life. For me, one of the most moving experiences we had was the night we spent at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We were blessed with the opportunity to be intimate with the Gospels as we breathed with Christ in His last moments and touched the very spot He was laid upon. One word cannot explain the magnitude of what came over me at that moment as we prayed by the stone on which His body was put to rest. And every other moment of the trip seemed to have built up to that moment when I touched that stone. God led us through the last days of His Son, and with the song of the winds, blew the Spirit

into us in a way that surpasses all verbal description. This trip defined words like 'inspired', 'enchanted', 'powerful', 'humility', and 'love' with feelings and emotions. I am truly thankful for this experience, to not only have met 14 other beautiful souls of our Armenian Church and all the people whose paths we crossed while in Jerusalem, but also to have had our God guide us through the streets and open our eyes and hearts to what He knew would deepen our understanding of Him and our faith. We are blessed, and we pray, I pray, that we may continue our journey here in our Diocese, and help other young spirits find the song of the angels that plays in our lives unconditionally and always, for it is such a beautiful song.

## Gregory Dalakian

**St. Mary, Livingston, NJ**

This pilgrimage to Jerusalem has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life. It's one thing to read the Bible and know the words and the stories, but seeing it actually come to life right before your eyes helps you make that connection that only a pilgrimage can provide. One experience on this trip that stood out most in my mind was one of our last nights there when we



spent the evening in the Holy Sepulchre from about 11:30pm-6am. During this time we read parts of the Gospels at the last places of Jesus' time on earth before His Resurrection. The first location was at the spot of the Crucifixion. It was at this point, after reading the words of Matthew 27:32-56, about the Crucifixion, and staring at the image of Christ on the Cross, that I felt closer to Christ than ever.

## **Greg Andonian**

**St. Gregory of Narek,  
Cleveland, OH**

It was the trip of a lifetime; I was so moved to be in the place where the Church began and pray in the same spots where the early Christians prayed, most of whom were martyred for their faith. This trip created an overwhelming awareness for me, about just how crucial and powerful the Armenian presence is in the Holy Land. Armenians who have not gone to Jerusalem, have no way of really understanding just how precious our presence is and how much Jerusalem has impacted the Armenian Church for well over 1700 years. I felt truly connected to my faith and my church, and to my Armenian ancestors from whom I am carrying on an unparalleled tradition.

## **John Flanagan**

**Holy Ascension,  
Trumbull, CT**

Upon making the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, everyone knew we were in for a myriad of memories to come of the trip. For me, entering the Palestinian territories for the first time made an impression on me. Be it Jericho, Nazareth, or Bethlehem, seeing a land as filled with relics of our faith's past yet so militarized kept me agape each time we made the trek there. Granted, as far as development goes, I did not think it any worse than the condition of Armenia; both lands have been under considerable strain, yet determination remains. Perhaps it is unusual that my most memorable experience on a pilgrimage has little to do with actual religion, but this was certainly my most profound experience in my adventure to the Holy Land.

## **Mark Giragosian**

**St. James, Watertown, MA**

Jerusalem was an experience that was very powerful for me. I truly felt something special inside me and grew immensely as a person. One of many highlights that stood out for me was the chance we had to spend a night at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Entering the church at midnight, we spent time in meditation, prayer and

reflection at different parts of the church. We sat at the Crucifixion site, prayed at the stone of unction and culminated our evening by celebrating *Badarak* at the Tomb of Christ. It was a very meaningful experience for me to stand at the site of the Resurrection, the site which is the center of our Christian faith and beliefs. Receiving communion at that site, really brought things together for me full circle. At the time, the experience was extremely powerful, so powerful I felt numb by the whole thing. It was only after returning home and reflecting on the experience that I was able to truly realize how special it was to me. As amazing as that night was, there are many many other highlights and memories I will never forget and always hold close to my heart. Jerusalem is a place we all need to visit and continue to support and pray for! I can't wait to return over and over again!

For information about upcoming pilgrimages, contact [acyoa@armeniandioocese.org](mailto:acyoa@armeniandioocese.org)



# From Those Who Serve

We posed two questions to several people who serve the church in different ways; here are their responses.



**REV. FR. HOVNAN DEMERJIAN**  
Pastor, St. Hagop, St. Petersburg, Fla.  
Founder, Armenia Volunteer Corps

**Q.** *How have you seen the impact of your service on others?*

**A.** Not very well, and only with the perspective of time. I am learning never to judge the impact of my service immediately. I have served people and gotten smiles and thanks, and served people and gotten misunderstanding and anger. But as time passes, seeds planted in service begin to grow. It is then that you may receive a surprise thank you card or good-will gesture from someone you thought was indifferent to your service.

And I think all service is like this. Parents suffer through the rebellion of their kids until they mature and appreciate everything they were given. Teachers suffer through the resistance of their students until they become thankful for what they learned. God suffers through the rebellion of us, His children, until we confess our sins and reconcile ourselves to Him.

So don't judge the impact of your service too soon. Keep on serving, the thank you card is in the mail!

**Q.** *How have you seen the impact of your service on yourself?*

**A.** The sacrifices of service—I still have some minor digestive problems from service overseas. My hair is getting gray. I have had some bad nights of sleep. Sometimes Yn. Anna and I don't have as much time with each other as we wish. I can no longer pursue my youthful dream of becoming a rock star.

**The benefits of service**—Just about everything good in my life originates from some kind of service. I found my faith when I began to participate in service projects at Boston College. I found my wife when I went to serve in the Peace Corps in Armenia. I am finding Christ and some of his dedicated followers as I serve as a priest in this Diocese.

So the benefits of service far outweigh the sacrifices, and I thank God most every day that I am a graying, sleep-deprived—and often unworthy—servant of Christ.

**Q.** *How have you seen the impact of your service on others?*

**A.** Serving other people is one reason why God put us on this earth. I tend to see an impact on the people I am serving more than anyone. They always seem so grateful that I am willing to spend my time serving them, rather than using my time for less productive things. I also see an impact on the people I am serving with. For instance, the ACYOA Juniors of my parish. They see that I enjoy serving others, which indirectly encourages them to help out and feel the same joy.

**Q.** *How have you seen the impact of your service on yourself?*

**A.** After completing any service project I am involved with, I feel a great connection with God, because I know that He is happy with the service I have done. I also feel great that I am able to serve others, who sometimes are less fortunate.



**ALEX OUZOUNIAN**  
ACYOA Chapter Chair  
St. Mesrob, Racine, Wisc.



**DN. JAMES KALUSTIAN**  
*Diocesan Council*  
*Holy Trinity, Cambridge, Mass.*

**Q.** *How have you seen the impact of your service on other people?*

**A.** That is a difficult question to answer. I am not sure what impact my service has. On one level, I try to be a good example to others who may be considering or should be considering service to our church and/or community. We are all busy people with competing demands on our time, but if we can

find the time to humbly serve (emphasis on humbly), I think we can be good role models to others and help them realize that it is possible to serve the church and keep balance in your life. Also, particularly when your service is with the elderly, the young or in Armenia the level of sincere appreciation expressed is quite significant. People are especially taken by the fact that you devote time to them or their needs – however small it may be. The irony is that the satisfaction you receive under these circumstances far outweighs the contribution.

**Q.** *How have you seen the impact of your service on yourself?*

**A.** I have always said and continue to believe that the reward is far greater than the sacrifice of time. I personally have gained so much out of my time with the church that whatever service I offer never seems like it is enough to repay the gains. I have also come to realize that it is important to remember what the mission of the church is and to stay focused on it. We can get so wrapped up in the workings / administration of the church (which is necessary) that it is important to remember that we are here to serve Jesus Christ and His people and not just the institution of the church. It also helps to continue to reinforce that service can take place in many forms and every bit helps. We all have different skills and passions and therefore can all serve in our own way.

# Get Involved!

Here are some creative ideas from ACYOA chapters around the Diocese. For more information on how to recreate these projects within your own chapter, contact the ACYOA members listed.

## Midnight Run

*St. Gregory the Enlightener, White Plains, N.Y.*  
Members of the St. Gregory ACYOA packed food items and goods into bags and distributed them to the homeless in New York City. Contact Lydia Kurkjian [lkurkjian@gmail.com](mailto:lkurkjian@gmail.com).

## Philadelphia Armenian Scholarship Program

*Sts. Sahag & Mesrob, Wynnwood, Pa;*  
*Holy Trinity, Cheltenham, Pa.*

ACYOA members raise money to provide full scholarships to two students applying to the newly-constructed Gitelik University in Yegheknazor. Contact Tory Torcomian, [toros19@gmail.com](mailto:toros19@gmail.com).

## Easter Basket Project

*St. James, Watertown, Mass.*

At Easter time, ACYOA and Sunday School members assemble baskets of candies, bunnies, and small toys to donate to a local food pantry. Contact Jennifer Tagarelis, [Jennifer.tagarelis@gmail.com](mailto:Jennifer.tagarelis@gmail.com).

## Christmas Caroling

*St. Mesrob, Racine, Wisc.*

ACYOA members gather on a Saturday around Christmas time to visit elderly parishioners who live in nursing homes, parishioners who have been sick and are unable to attend church on a regular basis and families that have recently lost a loved one. During the visitations, members sing Christmas songs in both English and Armenian, read Bible verses pertaining to the birth of Jesus, and celebrate that wonderful time of year with the hosts. Contact Alex Ouzounian, [gydzag337@yahoo.com](mailto:gydzag337@yahoo.com) or Danny Mantis, [dannymantis@gmail.com](mailto:dannymantis@gmail.com).

For information on these and more service projects, visit **[acyoa.org](http://acyoa.org)**.



# Armenia Service Program

“Our days were sad before you came”

*Reflection on the Camp Tzitzernak experience during the Armenia Service Program by Paul Vartan Sookiasian, 2007 ASP participant*

This was ASP’s first time at this camp, settled up in the mountains around Vanadzor. It had been a Soviet -run camp at one time but was closed down after independence; somehow the local Diocese managed to purchase and refurbish it. While at first it was hard to get used to, compared to American standards, we were amazed at what they were able to do with so few resources.

The surroundings were incredible, with mists often settling on the hills around us we were literally living in the clouds. There were definitely some hardships in adjusting, but if anyone questioned why they were there, all they had to do was consider a comment a little child made to us. He told us, “our days were sad before you came.”

I think this phrase is what ASP is all about, really. What better way to connect with your culture than see how our fellow Armenians live across the globe? Having a romanticized view of our homeland that we often develop here in the Diaspora is not productive; we need to know that it has not been easy for our compatriots, many of whom live in difficult conditions. There is no better way to learn this than to experience

it ourselves and try to make a difference like our group hopefully did with these children.

For more of Paul’s reflection and those of other ASP participants, visit [www.acyoa.org](http://www.acyoa.org).



## Camp Renovation

During their service at Camp Tzitzernak in the Gugarats Diocese in Vanadzor, 2007 ASP participants found the facilities, including their own accommodations, in need of repair and renovation. When they returned home, they made strong recommendations to the Central Council, which approached the Primate for guidance.

As a result, he directed that the 2008 Sunday school Lenten Drive benefit Camp Tzitzernak. Therefore, with the funds raised by the Sunday school students of our Diocese, and through the assistance of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), over \$17,000 in renovations took place to improve the facilities at the camp.

The impact of these renovations was not a service the ASP participants could have expected to make, but their voices made the renovations possible. The improvement of the camp facilities allows for greater sanitary conditions for campers and future ASP participants, as well as other visitors and volunteers at the camp.

## Romans 12:4-8

“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

# 2008 ACYOA Award Winners

## MAGGIE MERDJANIAN



*Maggie Merdjanian  
and Ani Tovar*

*Sts. Sahag & Mesrob,  
Wynnewood, Pa.*

### **The Gregory Arpajian Award**

Maggie Merdjanian has been involved in the ACYOA for the last 7 years. She served as treasurer in her local chapter in Wynnewood, Pa., and has been on various event committees in her local parish. Merdjanian also served on the 2008 Sports Weekend Committee;

she is a 2000 graduate of Villanova University in Philadelphia, Pa. and currently works as a management consultant for Hitachi Consulting. She is extremely honored to have been given such a prestigious award.

## KARINNE' HOVNIANIAN



*Talin Hitik and  
Karinne' Hovnalian*

*Holy Trinity,  
Cheltenham, Pa.*

### **The Sam Nersessian Award**

Karinne' is a recent graduate of George Washington University who is continuing her education at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pa. for a Masters degree in Music Therapy. She feels most blessed to be honored by the Sam Nersessian Award, and would like

to take a moment to pray for all who have touched her life and taught her how to harness her talents to serve our Lord and to serve each other. May we all feel the spirit of our God, and His presence in our lives, either in song, hugs, or otherwise!

## PAPKEN MEGERIAN



*Sts. Sahag & Mesrob,  
Wynnewood, Pa.*

### **The Rev. Fr. Haroutiun Dagley Award**

This year's recipient of the Rev. Fr. Haroutiun Dagley Award is Diocesan Council member Papken Megerian, a man who has continuously shown his unmatched commitment to the youth of our Church. On a local level, Megerian's dedication has shown through his willingness to always assist the youth in their endeavors. Over the years he has supported the ACYOA on a local and national level.

Megerian has devoted a great deal of his personal time to the ACYOA, attending numerous Central Council meetings to provide a unique perspective on important issues. He was also the driving force behind the 2008 ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend Fund Raising Initiatives. Without Megerian's tremendous support, the highly successful weekend would not have been possible.

## REV. FR. YEPREM KELEGIAN



*St. Mesrob, Racine, Wis.*

### **The V. Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian Award**

Fr. Yeprem Kelegian has been devoted to the youth of the Church throughout his ministry. Kelegian's high expectations and loving support motivate the ACYOA Juniors and Seniors of his parish, inspiring them to serve the community and the Church. Outside of his own parish community, Kelegian reaches out to other Armenian youth by orchestrating lock-ins and events with nearby parishes. Kelegian has also served as a staff member at both Hye Camp and St. Vartan Camp. His service to the youth of the Church is immeasurable and invaluable.

For more on these awards, including information about the individuals in whose memory these awards are given, visit [www.acyoa.org](http://www.acyoa.org).



## ACYOA

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

Abp. Khajag Barsamian, Primate

630 Second Avenue

New York, N.Y. 10016



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## Upcoming ACYOA Events

**May 21-22** – General Assembly, Dolce Palisades Conference Center, Palisades, N.Y.

**May 23-25** – Sports Weekend, Dolce Palisades Conference Center, Palisades, N.Y.

## Diocesan Service Opportunities

**4 Days 4 Life** – May 26-29, 2009

**Diocesan Internship Program** – June 14-August 8, 2009

**St. Vartan Camp** – June 24-August 8, 2009

**St. Nersess Summer Conferences** – June 9-August 19, 2009

**ACYOA Armenia Service Program** – June 21 - July 12, 2009

**Midwest Regional Hye Camp** – July 30-August 9, 2009

**NCC Ecumenical Work Week** – August 2-8, 2009

To sign up for any of these programs,  
contact [acyoa@armeniandiocese.org](mailto:acyoa@armeniandiocese.org) or  
call **212.293.1248**.

