By the time this issue of Sevan makes it to your home, I shall have already taken my responsibilities at the new parish of St. Gregory of White Plains, NY. This month of September is the time to turn the final page of the chapter of my pastoral ministry here at St. James.

As we finalize the publication of this final special edition of Sevan, I recall with a joyful heart and thanksgiving to our Lord, the various aspects of my exiting ministry of the parish with you.

It was a few days after the New Year of 2008 when Ruzanna and I, then Deacon Vahe, moved to Richmond, VA as I was to take upon the responsibilities of St. James as a deacon-in-charge. Soon, in a few weeks, on January 20th I was ordained by His Eminence, Archbishop Khajak Barsamian, to the Holy Order of Priesthood and became Der Mesrob. After being a deacon for nearly nine years, for me personally the priestly ordination was the beginning of a new era in my life which meant the beginning of new opportunities for ministering and witnessing to our faith at our Armenian community.

Our life in Richmond was made special by becoming not only reverend father and yeretzgin but also parents. In 2008 we welcomed our first child, Nareh, and in 2012 our son Sevak brought another joy to our family.

For the past seven years, driven by my love for the Lord, commitment to witnessing to His Gospel and serving His people through the Armenian Church, I worked together with the Parish Council and its various auxiliaries, to continue building up a community bonded in its Armenian traditions and united in Christian faith. We shared together the joys of Baptisms as children and adults became the members of our church; we cheered together celebrating the creation of new families in the sacrament
of Matrimony; we mourned together as we bid farewell to beloved members of our community. All these and the countless events bonded us as a family of believers in Christ.

We have also worked with the Norfolk Mission Parish by visiting, celebrating Divine Liturgy and sharing the community’s happy and sad occasions.

None of the many successful projects we promoted would have been possible without the support and active involvement of our parishioners and friends like you. It is with a grateful heart that I come to express my sincere thanks and gratitude in writing for all those who helped and supported us during this time and helped building up St. James and making it what it is today. I praise our Lord for all our leaders, parishioners and friends who supported my ministry here at St. James.

It takes more people than the priest to keep the church active and vibrant. Our parish is blessed to have so many faithful parishioners who continue to give generously their time, talent, and treasures for continued growth of our parish. While it would be difficult to mention each person who has contributed in some capacity to our parish’s continued growth and success, I wish to acknowledge and extend my thanks to all the organizations and committee members who led the various church organizations. I extend my deepest gratitude to the Parish Council members, Rob M. Norris, Leiza Bouroujian, Gregory Boyajian, Dale Baronian, Steven Barsamian, Sona Pomfret and Levon Bouroujian, former members Murad Kerneklian and Nubar Ozbalik, our senior Parish Council adviser John Baronian, for all their hard work, dedication, support and commitment to our Church, and for continuous involvement in various projects. We worked with our Parish Council diligently and harmoniously all these years.

My heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the executive committees of our auxiliaries (Women’s Guild, Armenian/Sunday School, Choir, Avaks, Cultural Committee, Virginia’s Armenian Network, Food Festival Committee, Armenian Education Center) and everyone who helped us create educational, social, and spiritual events. A special note of thanks goes to Roxie Kricorian, the church secretary, for helping me in maintaining the office business of our Church and her support team who always helped in mailings; Galina Vlasyants for helping me in keeping the sanctuary and the Holy Altar in ideal shape. You all remind me of the words of St. Paul, “I always give thanks to my God for you” (1 Cor. 1:4).

As I move on to my next assignment in the vineyard of the Lord, it is my prayer that St. James continues its fruitful journey on the path of the Lord in the Greater Richmond area with the constant support of all the community members. Rest assured you will remain in my prayers, and I hope we will remain in your prayers as well. No matter how far we may be from each other, know that I will be just a phone call away. We will continue being united in prayer and communion with the Lord.

I pray for God’s blessing upon each of you and your families. May God bless you.

Farewell!

Truly yours in Christ,
Rev. Fr. Mesrob Hovsepyan
On Sunday August 31st St. James Armenian Church in Richmond, VA hosted a reception for Fr. Mesrob Hovsepyan. We celebrated seven years of his spiritual leadership of our parish and community with a very good turnout of members.

As a Deacon, he visited Richmond with his wife for a couple of times and we quickly decided that we wanted to keep them here. Within a few weeks our church was fortunate to host his Priestly Ordination.

Der Mesrob quickly went to work organizing the office and the Sunday school while getting to know his parishioners. He has worked effectively with all the church organizations. Both he and Yn. Ruzanna focused on building the Sunday school attendance and started Armenian language classes for the children.

While performing all of the duties that come with being a priest, he constantly looked for ways to improve the building facilities and make them more comfortable to be in. The nursery was renovated and furnished with new carpet and furniture, becoming a comfortable room for mothers and their babies. He led a fundraising to have new energy efficient windows installed in the social halls, offices and Sunday School classrooms. Then he followed by getting the old carpet out of the Sunday School classrooms and replacing it with a new floor, which he put a lot of hard work in himself. In order to improve the air-conditioning situation of our kitchen and the Educational building, his next project was to have us raise funds for heat pump systems for both the kitchen and the Educational building. Not only is it very comfortable year round, but the new system has helped reduce some of our energy costs.

As Parish council chair, I have worked with Der Mesrob and respect his thoughts and opinions on both the religious and business sides of leading a church. His beliefs and his vision have benefited all of us and we are sorry that our church will be losing him. Our loss will be another parish’s gain and I know he will help them grow as he has us.

Respectfully,
Rob Norris

FAREWELL & BEST WISHES
Best Wishes from a Friend

Seven and a half years ago Der Hovsep left our St James Parish to become the pastor of St. Mary’s in Washington, DC. After waiting for a few months for a replacement, I received a telephone call from Primate Khajag Barsamian to inform our parish that he was appointing a young deacon who would be in charge of our parish. I had concerns for we were expecting an ordained priest. I said to Rob Norris, the parish council chairman, “Here we go again … having to teach someone how we do things in Richmond.”

When Deacon Vahe arrived I saw a fine looking young man, but I still had concerns. I was then introduced to an attractive young lady with a winning smile. After realizing that some day she would be our Yeretzgin, any doubts I had about the young deacon disappeared. Several months later Deacon Vahe was ordained and became Der Mesrob. We realized that he was a fast learner. He had a deep knowledge of ecclesiastical matters as well as the history of ancient and modern Armenia. We watched him grow and mature into an intelligent, interesting, caring, thoughtful, and dedicated priest. Der Mesrob, thank you for your leadership, guidance, and the many improvements you have made to our parish.

Congratulations on your appointment to a much larger and beautiful church in White Plains, NY. I wish you much success at your new parish and may our friendship with you, Yn. Ruzanna, and the children continue.

May God’s grace always shine on you and your family

John Baronian
Parish Council Senior Adviser
Armenian/Sunday School concluded another year with its end-of-the-year program on June 8. The teachers and students worked hard throughout the year to prepare for this day which has become the most important event for the school. There were recitals and songs in Armenian as well as short skits on the Ten Commandments performed by the students under the direction and leadership of Dorian Barsamian.

At the end of the program all of the teachers were recognized by the school superintendent, Noune Karapetian, for their devout work and dedication to St. James community, and each received a small gift as a token of appreciation.

In his remarks Der Mesrob thanked all the teachers and substitute teachers who worked together during the year harmoniously and with great commitment. Der Hayr also noted Noune Karapetian’s many years of involvement and leadership of the Armenian/Sunday School and her endeavors to keep the doors of the school open, even at the most difficult times for the community. Noune was awarded the Kachatur Abovyan award, which is granted by the Armenian Studies department of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church to educators with over ten years of service.

Armenian/Sunday School will reopen on September 28, with a new primary class for four year olds. Classes will start at 10:30. If you would like to register your child please contact the school superintendent or the church office.

R.K.

NOTE OF GRATITUDE FROM WOMEN’S GUILD

We wish Der Mesrob, Yn. Ruzanna, Nareh, and Sevak continued blessings and will keep them in our prayers as they begin the next chapter in their life together. The W.G. expresses its sincere and heartfelt gratitude for all Der Mesrob’s hard work, support, and encouragement. We will deeply miss Yn. Ruzanna’s loving and gentle spirit and her caring and dedicated work with our children. They both have been a blessing to our community.

W.G. Executive
On Sunday, April 27th, the Armenian Education Center (AEC) commemorated the 99th year since the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. During the requiem service, the names of the Richmond area family members who were victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide were read. After church, there was a light lunch followed by the viewing and discussion of the movie, Voyage to Amasia.

In addition to our requiem service and program at church, the Armenian Education Center sponsored several announcements on National Public Radio (NPR) throughout the day on April 23rd and April 24th to honor the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

The AEC committee mailed the annual essay scholarship question to each Virginia public and private high school in early January. The $1000 scholarship is open to Virginia students from ninth through twelfth grade. We view this as the most important activity and function of the AEC. Every year we hear from both students and teachers who express surprise that prior to doing the research for this essay, they knew little or nothing of this genocide. As we have said before, it is not the fault of the teachers; they, too, have not been taught when they were in high school or college. We firmly believe that when a student chooses to write this essay on the Armenian Genocide, not only are they exposed to this tragic period of history but so too are their families and teachers. This year the winners were: John Leahy, $1000 winner; Meagan Arnold, $250 Honorable Mention and Hershel Holiday, $250 Honorable Mention.

It was the AEC that petitioned the Virginia Board of Education in 2000 to insert the teaching of the Armenian Genocide into the World History II (1500 to the present) Standards of Learning. We prevailed in spite of staunch protests by the Turkish lobby. Every seven years in Virginia, all the Standards of Learning are reviewed; some things are added and some things deleted. The history standards are again up for review this year. We want to insure that the Armenian Genocide remains part of the World History curriculum.

Thank you to those who have financially supported our efforts to continue educating the students and teachers of Virginia through our scholarship. We encourage and welcome donations to St. James Armenian Education Center in order to continue this important mission. If you would like to help in this effort, please make checks payable to: AEC, St. James Armenian Church.

For those who are not familiar with the question, please find it below:

$1000.00 Armenian Genocide Scholarship Question, Spring 2014

In referring to the Armenian Genocide, Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (1913-16) stated in his memoirs, “I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared with the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915.” He also stated, "When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact." As we approach the 100th year commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and keeping Ambassador Morgenthau’s statements in mind, please discuss:

The Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 is an historical fact; however, the present day government of Turkey continues its denial that it happened. Use credible resources, including primary sources, showing that the Armenian Genocide occurred.

Anne Norris
Armenian Education Center
Calendar of Upcoming Events

- **September 28, Sunday** - First Day of Armenian/Sunday School. Farewell Badarak by Der Mesrob Hovsepian at the conclusion of his Pastorate at St. James.

- **October 9, Thursday** - AVAK Fall Harvest Luncheon, church hall, 12 noon.

- **October 19, Sunday** - Divine Liturgy: Guest celebrant Rev. Fr. Arshen Aivazian.

- **October 25, Saturday** - ARS Casino Night at the Wellesley Community Center on Lauderdale Road, benefiting the Armenian-Syrian Relief Fund and other ARS projects around the world.

- **November 6, Thursday** - AVAK BINGO Luncheon, church hall, 12 noon.


- **December 11, Thursday** - AVAK Christmas Luncheon, church hall, 12 noon.

- **December 14, Sunday** - Divine Liturgy: Guest celebrant Rev. Fr. Mambre Kouzouian.

For the complete list of the events, check the Calendar of Events on our website at www.stjamesva.org

Sevan Donations

We thank the donors who answered our call this month to help offset the costs of our newsletter. A total of $340 was received from the following:

- Ruben Avagyan
- Joseph & Irene Balbalian
- John Berberian
- Margaret Butler
- Harry Deloian
- Marion Doucette
- Harry & Mariam Eretzian
- Robert Garian
- Arsh & Shirley Kapigian
- Tony Keledjian
- Louise Karaian-Kimbley
- Pamela Little
- George Ovigian

We thank you for your generosity. Please feel free to send us also your comments and suggestions regarding our publication.

**PLEASE NOTE:** There is an expense of approximately $700 for publishing and mailing each issue of the SEVAN. Any contributions sent to defray part of this cost are greatly appreciated. Please use this form to send your donation for this purpose. Please feel free to send us also your comments and suggestions regarding our publication.

St. James Armenian Church
834 Pepper Avenue, Richmond, VA 23226

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**Parish Administrative Directory**

**WORSHIP HOURS**
- Sunday Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
- Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:30 a.m.

**PASTOR**
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**PASTORAL CARE: HOME AND HOSPITAL CLERGY VISITS**
The pastor is always available and would like to visit homebound and hospitalized parishioners. If you or someone you know is ill or hospitalized and would like to be visited, please call the church office at (804) 282-3818 or (804) 405-9399 (direct). Please note: when asked about religion at a hospital, patients should list themselves as “Armenian Orthodox” or “Armenian” not “other.”