

Something is Happening - There is a Hope

I want to be sincere and not make false statements that everything is okay in our Church. We know that it is not. Our main problem and concern is our declining numbers. Our membership is down to 55, while it was 89 when I came here twenty years ago. Even more concerning is attendance at our services, especially Sunday Soorp Badarak. On an average Sunday, we have between 10 and 15 people, whereas when I first arrived that number was closer to 35-40. Some people are understandably upset by this reality. Some even ask, “Why are we keeping this Church?”

Once I was asked whether I get discouraged on Sundays when I see so few people in church. I answered honestly that, of course, it would be better to have more people present, but from a clergyman’s and Holy Liturgy’s point of view, it does not change anything. I celebrate Soorp Badarak with the same inspiration whether there are many people in the Church or only a few. That is how it should be.

However, this is only one side of our Church’s current reality. Our Church is unique. Most likely, any other church in a similar situation would have already closed or would at least be on the path toward closing. Usually, this process begins with not having a permanent pastor. Once there is no pastor, people begin to look down on the Church, and more importantly, the Church loses its face and its center of gravity. A Church without a pastor is like a country without a president or an orchestra without a conductor. As a result, the process of closure accelerates. But this is not happening here, and that is what makes our Church unique.

There is a will and a strategic decision to continue until the very end, to try to improve and renew the Church. Whatever the reason for this approach, it is according to God’s will. I hope everyone understands this, whether they support keeping the Church doors open or not. This is happening because there is a mutual willingness – from both

the Board of Trustees and myself – to stay and try until the very end. You never know what can happen.

A few decades ago, our Prelacy's church in North Andover, Massachusetts, St. Gregory, was in a similar situation. Then something happened, and today that Church is thriving again. We know why: many people moved their homes from Boston to that area as housing prices in Boston rose significantly. Our community is not as close to Boston as North Andover is. However, there is already discussion – and partial approval – of a bullet train from Boston to Springfield. If and when that happens, it will most likely bring new people from Eastern Massachusetts. We know this will happen, as there is an official decision; the only question is when.

As I said, keeping the Church doors open is pleasing to God. By doing so, we show resilience and hope. That is why we are holding our Capital Campaign – something we are doing for the first time in the history of St. Gregory. Capital Campaign funds come from capable donors, but regular contributions are also important. They show that this Church matters to everyone, not just to a few, and they express the quiet will of the community.

My family and I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope that 2026 will bring hope and happiness to all of you.

Shnorhavor Nor Dari yev Soorp Dzenoont. Krisdos Dzenav yev Haydnetsav.

Pastor