

Ministry Report 2004

Calendar

January-	Yerakhdik Christmas Jan 4
March-	Liesbeth Van Hilten Group
April-	Yerakhdik Easter 11 April 18 April Kessab
May-	Armenian Evangelical Churches' Women's Seminary JFK 1-7 May YFC 15 May
July-	DVBS 5-29 July
August-	The Dibasar Exhibition
September-	The Sunday school training by Midhat Sabri
October-	Dr. Bruno Blaser's visit
December-	The Torossian school musical play

Yerakhdik Christmas 2004:

The Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church has shared the season's greetings, blessings and warmth with her crowd who was present on the eve of the 4th of January 2004, to share and rejoice with "Yerakhdik" choir directed by Mrs. Shoghagat Apartian-Selimian. The program was full of newly arranged and traditional Christmas songs, refreshed by the new arrangements and the accurate and pure voices of the very well-trained 12 members of the choir. The songs varied from soft and inspirational songs like, "once in royal David's city", "O Holy night", "White Christmas", to rhythmic, joyful and enthusiastic songs like, "Joy to the world", "We wish you a Merry Christmas", "God rest Ye". The guest musician who brought her beautiful share of melodic solos in most of the songs was Nanor Mikaelian on flute, and the vocal solos were presented by Houry-Dora Apartian.

The evening was initiated by Rev. Harotune's welcoming words, and was concluded by Pastor Vatche Ekmekjian's prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude to God for His abundant grace and love.



The Visit of Rev. Liesbeth Van Hilten:

It was by the leadership of Rev. Liesbeth Van Hilten that a group of 18 dedicated representatives from different Deutch Reformed churches were able to visit Syria during their tour of 13 equipped days; 15- 28 March, 2004. The group of believers was so full of the Holy Spirit, and they did share their love and joy and their personal and collective testimonies and history with every single believer they've met through their journey in both countries.



As for the Armenian Evangelical churches in Aleppo, it was with great pleasure that during the period of 20-23 March that the Dutch group with their very lively Pastor – tour guide (for she has already been to Syria for the planning reasons) could relatively meet the Armenian evangelical pastors, churches, schools, Christian education center and the congregation in general. In addition to the very enlightening and inspirational sermon that Rev. Liesbeth delivered on Sunday morning service at Bethel church and her message was derived from Exodus 6:1-7 and Luke 13:1-9. During the service the group has also presented some hymns in Dutch, and shared testimonies with the congregation there who were very delighted to meet their sisters and brothers in Christ. After the service, as it was already familiar to the local parish, one or two of the church members have refreshed the congregation and its honorable guests with some warm coffee and desserts while granting each person the chance to get together with each other, and have fellowship in the same or in different languages possible.



In the late afternoon, after the group could visit some touristic places in the old city of Aleppo, and after a very modest dinner and rest after Rev. Liesbeth's request, Mrs. Shoghagat Apartain-Selimian, Miss Houry Dora Apartian and Miss Nanor Mikaelian have brought a bouquet of Hymnals, jazz standards and Armenian folk and spiritual songs to the Dutch audience; very attentive grateful and astonished, to the trio of piano, voice and flute. The evening was followed by a fellowship time around a table of tea, and mutual feelings of thanksgiving and congratulations between the guests and the hosts.

The next day and the one after were two days of adventurous discoveries for the group, as they could continue their journey through the old, historic surroundings of Aleppo city, Souq, Mosques and museum, and also the road to St. Simeon, where the end of their journey was before returning to their hotel and packing for the trip back home. We were blessed to have this group from the Netherlands as much as they've claimed they were happy to meet us. May God continue their spiritual journey with them, from city to city as well as from heart to heart.

Easter 2004:

Aleppo, April 11 – Kessab, April 18:

Sunday 11th of April, the annual Easter concert has taken place at the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church, where the youth "Yerakhdik" choir, made of 12 young People along with their director Mrs. Shoghagat Apartian-Selimian has taken the opportunity to claim our Savior's resurrection and share it with the crowd who was filling the church's every corner. The evening started with some words of thanksgiving by the rev. Haroutune Selimian, who also reminded the audience of the importance of renewal of their souls in Jesus' newness and promises. The program was full of nice and familiar songs like "Sourp Asdvadz/Sharagan", "The old cross", "The victorious Lord", "Amazing Grace", etc... . All the musical arrangements were made by the choir director; Mrs. Shoghagat Apartian-Selimian.

The choir was supported with the presence of the instrumentalists; Nanor Mikaelian on flute, Nanor Jamakordzian on violin, George Jebejian on soprano sax, and Shoghagat A- Selimian on piano, there were also some solos sung by Houry-Dora Apartian. It was with originality, creativity, and smoothness that the repertoire was both prepared arranged and presented by each one of the members. The arch. Bedros Mreyetian, head of the Armenian Catholic church in Aleppo was present in the very content and warm-hearted audience, it was at the end of the concert that Rev. Haroutune Selimian thanked the audience for being there and sharing those inspirational moments with the church at large. The Choir could also become a blessing to the Armenian fellow believers in Kessab, on the 18th of April; it was the day they could perform and deliver the message of resurrection of our Lord to the congregation at the Armenian Evangelical Holy Trinity Church of Kessab. It was a very nourishing experience for the choir to make that exceptional trip back and forth in the same day, to claim God's glory to those who are ready to accept.



The Armenian Evangelical Churches' Women's Councils' Seminar:

Tuesday, 4th of May, 2004, The Armenian Evangelical Women's council was delighted to welcome a very special guest speaker from Beirut, Lebanon; Mrs. Vera Svadjian, who was very efficient, clear and helpful in training those dedicated women from all the Armenian evangelical churches, letting them realize how, when and why they were serving the Lord in their own ways, through the main subject "When you were asked to become a council member, why did you answer 'Yes' ", and the subject was supported by the apostle Paul's letters to the Corinthians; (2 Corinth. 8:2-5).

Mrs. Svadjian has precisely mentioned three basic details about the possibility and means of growing deeper in service and hard-work:

- 1- Always be present with spirit, truth and love.
- 2- Proceed in your responsibilities with punctuality.

- 3- Be trustworthy and responsible to the work given to you, and achieve it with loyalty and faithfully.

The participants have had the chance to come close to each other, share moments of discoveries together, get spiritual nourishment. The Training session has come to its end by a prayer of thanksgiving and worship.

"Just for Kids":

"Just for Kids" is called the group of gifted, faithful, committed and energetic young actors, who belong to the Children's Ministry Foundation "Grains de Ble" found in Beirut. The group has been touring in Syria during the week of 1ST – 7TH of May, 2004. They have visited several Armenian, Arabic and Syriac Evangelical schools, and gave the pleasure of telling about Jesus through their musical play called "The city of Joy" to kids from age of 3 to 13. The blessing and joy they brought to our children were soon reflected on the face of the teachers present with them in the hall of the Armenian Evangelical Bethel School. We thank the Bible Society in Aleppo for making it possible to join their plan to ours and for cooperation in order to bring some more of Jesus Christ's warmth into the hearts of our children in Syria.

The JFK, Shams, Marcell, Rami, Wisam, and their leader Ronnie, on their way back to Beirut will be visiting schools in Homs as well, by their van, full of all their equipment and tools needed for their plays and sketches. May God bless and fill them more and more with His spirit and strength.

The YFC youth Choir:

May 15th, 2004, was a special day for The Arm. Evang. Bethel church campus, due to the opportunity it had to welcome Lebanon's "Youth For Christ" director; Mr. John Sagherian and his group of 43 young talented singers, actors and instrumentalists, on a wooden hand made stage at the church campus summer restaurant area, where the choir and the musicians could have abundant space to present to the impatient audience a very clear and strong message through their expressive lyrics and choreography and very energetic music played by their live band (Rev. Nerses Balabanian on synthesizer, Elias Jabbour on keyboard, Rev. Nishan Bakkalian on Saxophone and flute, Shahan Kilaghabian on guitar, Cyril Joudieh on bass guitar, and Hrag Karageuzian on drums), The 14 inspirational songs were very interestingly interfered by 7 sketches focusing on the story of God's creation of man and his resemblance to its creator, and how the presence and role of Satan could ruin the relationship of God with His creation, but the mercy, faithfulness and love of the Lord and the divine plan could offer salvation and reconciliation to us as God's children, having been chosen by Him to follow Him, to live and work for Him, and to let Him work through our weaknesses by trusting Him completely, the message included verses from the Bible; taken from Mathews 11.28, Mathews 28.19-20 .



The concert started at 9 pm by the warm welcoming words of the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church Pastor and the president of the Arm. Evang. Community in Syria; Rev. Haroutune Selimian, who aimed at appreciating and congratulating the Choir and all the members of the YFC upon their hard-work and dedication in the Lord's field, and the efficiency of their service in touching many youngsters and teenagers' hearts and lives. He has also thanked the organizational committee which was made of several active members of every Arm. Evang. church in Aleppo, who did not spare any effort and sacrifice to work the project out successfully.

Although the weather was colder than the expected, and the concert was set to be outdoors, the present audience was captured by the performance and message and the atmosphere soon became warmer.

The whole group could stay in Aleppo and enjoy the Sunday morning service at Bethel church, where Mr. Sagherian has presented the sermon of the day.

We thank and praise our Lord and Savior for granting us the time, place and people to draw us nearer to Him and His kingdom.



The Armenian Bethel Church DVBS-"Amarnayine":

The Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church and its Christian Education Center could grant its children from the age of 4 to 14 the possibility of experiencing God's love, joy, creativity, power, beauty, mercy and promises through the Daily vacation Bible School which lasted four weeks, during which 7 well-trained and cooperative teachers, and 58 kids could share with each other essential facts about Christian life; Bible lessons and applications, relative crafts, worship services in the mornings claiming the Lord's blessings in joyful and expressive celebration, practical lessons and quizzes of Armenian and English languages and computer, short and serial story telling, sports, games and competitions, outings including visits to famous factories and also swimming pools, trips by train where parents could join their children as well. They could also enjoy the occasional visits of very pleasant guests who could enlighten them more with remarkable ways of using talents and knowledge to glorify the Lord.



Among the guests were two of The Near East Schools of Theology NEST students; Elias Jabbour and Ankiné Ouzounian, and also Mrs. Sona Kaprielian, a highly respected and famous artist and an active member of the Aleppo Armenian Hamazkaine union. Each could give something precious to educate and teach.

We thank God that during the whole period of the DVBS He was present with the children and kept them safe and sound in His mighty hands, and that the divine message of God's purpose for each child has reached and touched the hearts of those intending the school as students and teachers as well.



The "Dibasar" Exhibition:

The Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church's Soghomonian hall, for the first time in its history has proudly welcomed the expressive art and colorful paintings of the Armenian-Aleppine artist; Dibar Asadour Apartian, who has been practicing and evolving his God-given-talent and tool of expression in Paris for the last eight years, where He lives since 1997 with his wife and two children and runs a small art gallery and shares it occasionally with couple of fellow artists who deserve constant appreciation and space to expose .

At the opening night of the 12th of August 2004, a huge and valuable crowd was present to be the first to taste the fresh and deep meanings of those philosophically and especially theologically rich pieces of art.



The evening was very unique and decorated with its prestigious guests varying from pastors to laymen, from sculptures to painters, from doctors to politicians, writers, musicians, businessmen, directors of schools, presentations of cultural centers, but the very faithful and respectful presence of both the crew and director of TeleLiban and the general director of the Syrian channel could attract the curious audience and add some delight to the occasion. The artist and the Pastor of the Bethel church, who is also the president of the Armenian Evangelical Community in Syria, were both interviewed by those two; to be broadcast in the near future.

It was very obvious that Dibar's world was filled with Christian faith and dedication, Armenian spirit and history, Human's life, blessings and pain, life's just and unjust faces, a man's beginning and experiences, and especially God's divine, merciful, loyal, uniting and eternal presence almost through all the paintings, all of which can speak a lot about Dibar's character, background passion and love.

Hopes are high that the duration of the exhibition would be as successful and bright as the opening night, and that the Lord would use Dibar's inspirational and improvisational art to touch his peoples' hearts and souls, and He may fill the artists life with opportunities and reasons to praise and serve God's kingdom whole-heartedly.

Sunday school training by Brother Midhat Sabri:

The Armenian Bethel church campus has opened its doors to proudly welcome The Egyptian missionary; Brother Midhat Sabri, responsible of children's Service-scheme; "The King's Children "in Egypt, and a participant at several children's programs on SAT 7 (the TV channel), as well as an ever-available

Worker in many different camps and activities for which he is a well-known and a highly appreciated hard-working and talented person in the field of child-psychology and education.

This three-day seminary rolled during the last week of September, 2004, the 27th, 28th and 29th, from 5:00 till 8:00 pm of each day. And the discussion and work-shops were based on the following subjects:

1. How does God see children.
2. Our relationship with God as servants.
3. How to prepare lessons (lesson maps and guidelines)
4. Story-Telling.
5. Creativity as a way to connect with kids (means of clarification)
6. Understanding children (according to their age categories)
7. Using hymnals and worship songs at Sunday schools.
8. How to organize Sunday schools (program enrollment).

We are glad to find 40 Sunday school and daily school teachers present and attentive to every single day's training and work-shops. most of them were coming from The Arab Evangelical, Syriac Evangelical, and Armenian Evangelical schools and Sunday schools.

On the following day of the trainings, the 30th, Brother Midhat had also A special program to present to our children, and it was all about a 2-hour Drama, story-telling, games and friendly matches for the children of 3 different Sunday schools; the Arm. Evang. Bethel and Martyr's church, The Church of Christ and the Bethel school. Those were over a hundred kids. We are with no doubt very grateful to our Father in heaven for taking care Of our children and teachers and their spiritual growth by sending his faithful Servants and dedicated workers in time of need.

May God bless and strengthen brothers and sisters who similarly put all their love, time and spirit
Into the Lord's service.

Dr. & Mrs. Bruno Blaser's and Mr. Gottfried Spangenberg's visit:

The Armenian Evangelical family in Aleppo along with Rev. Haroutune and his family were blessed to welcome Dr Bruno Blazer and his wife accompanied by Mr. Gottfried Spangenberg; already familiar to the city of Aleppo and its' Armenian Evangelical Community for several years. The purpose of this visit was mainly a fellowship and discovery visit to the churches, schools, missionary centers, and medical service centers founded by foreign missionaries and organizations through the past, for the families of victims of genocides and civil wars and also needy children.

The missionary trio ahs arrived to Aleppo on the 25th of October, Monday late afternoon, to be welcomed with a dinner at Rev Haroutune Selimian's residence, followed by their very first visit to the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church, Pastor, wife and committee, a small visit to the church and another one to the Arm. Evang. Community office found in the same building. There, the guests began their journey of fellowship with the congregations on a personal level.



Their first station, on Tuesday morning was the Syriac Evangelical Church, School and campus, where they got to meet the Syriac pastor; Rev Youssef Ousta Jabbour, and could

Derive from the history of the church and school, told by the pastor, and could also personally visit the mentioned places.

Next, were two major visits in the same campus; Church of Christ campus, where they could visit the two medical and social centers; Howard Karageuzian and Jinishian, meeting the staff, employees and directors of each in their daily routine, but could also hear the very interesting histories of each and especially see the active projects and fruitful results in the present day through the presentations given by each director; Dr. Bedros Darakjian and Mrs. Ani Cholakian it was, now, the Armenian Evangelical Bethel church and School to present its guests to the campus, school building, classrooms, the new building with its Christian Education Center, church office and all the staff of each branch. The guests were given the chance to get together with the school principals; Mrs. Betty Nahhas where after a precise introduction to the history of the school, the pastor of the church, Who is also the spiritual supervisor and responsible for the school, helped them visit each corner of the campus and be introduced to every past, present and future scheme on schedule.

At noon, the group did rest and after lunch, for their afternoon until the evening, was so full of other visits to the city of Aleppo and its old Souq and ancient streets so highly appreciated by foreigners.

Wednesday morning, after breakfast at the Apartian resident the Dr. Blazer and company did descend to the Church of Christ missionary center founded by the Frenchman; Paul Berron and named after the first dedicated Austrian Missionary; Miss Hedwig Bull, at the campus, they had a meeting with the director and the church of “ Action Chretienne en Orient”; Rev. Bshara Moussa Oghli, also visited the dispensary and could follow their medical services brought by several doctors and nurses.

At 10:30 am, the group headed towards where they intended to meet with the newly assigned pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Martyr’s church; Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, who was waiting for them at his church office, and he also could enlighten the guests with some basic history of that church, and a glimpse of the present-day campus, which was and still is in renovation.



On the way to the next station, the guests wished they could pass by the Armenian Apostolic cemetery, where lied the famous German missionary; Miss Karen Jeppe, a dedicated personality who served Armenian needy people in Aleppo in the past. At the cemetery, Dr. Blazer, wife and Mr. Spangenberg could also have a short encounter with the Rev Shahan Sarkissian, who was there to prayerfully visit his late mother's grave.

About an hour and a half later, The Armenian Old people's home and the "Arevig" Center for the handicapped children, being on the same campus, welcomed the German group to meet with the principle of "Arevig"; Mrs. Lucine Shohmelian, in addition to her staff and assistants, also the present children who were on a task of making handcrafts for Mother's day. Then it was Dr. Manoug Manouguian's turn to present the guests to his committee, and staff, and being the president of the Old People's home, he gathered the members of the committee consisting of priests, pastors and laymen coming from the three Armenian denomination in Aleppo, and each could tell a story and add a testimony to the other's to build up the whole picture of this committees aims through the history within the Armenians, and of course what their needs, prayers and hopes were for the future.

The fellowship ended with some pictures with several aged people and a group picture with the present hosts.

At noon the journey of the German missionaries was concluded by a friendly gathering and lunch at the Selimian resident, where each of the guests poured out words of appreciation, gratitude, emotional and spiritual satisfaction and congratulations for every person involved in God's service of helping the needy and maintaining them.

Their next station was Ainjar, Lebanon, where they were supposed to bless and be blessed through God's daily wonders.

The Torossian School play from Beirut-" Houysi Dzare" (The Tree of Hope):

The Torossian secondary school of Beirut, owning a very well-trained and talented group of very young; teenage and first-grader actors and actresses, alongside with their school principal; Mrs. Seta Karageozian, and their very professional drama director; Mr. Robert Arakelian, has given the chance to the Armenian Evangelical church's and school's children and people and to many other societies and communities, to enjoy and remember of the Hovhanness Toumanian's " Kef enoghin kefe chi bagsir", from which the play ;" the tree of hope" has taken the adaptation. The play was decorated with its musical part, full of Armenian music and folk dances, arranged and choreographed by Rev. Nerses Balabanian and Mr. Harout Karadjian .

The Aleppine audience was not unfamiliar to this same group, who has been already twice to Aleppo in the past, and eventually they were able to keep the good impressions of the past still alive, through their very innocent yet efficient, joyful yet melancholic performance (twice in one day), and their liveliness on and off stage, during their two-days stay in Aleppo.

The message of the play was clearly and strongly approving with the theme, claiming about hope, inner joy through faith, success through patience, peace through honesty, and contentment through modesty and finally every single blessing through the Lord.

The whole team of 26 actors and actresses, joined by the very patiently and whole-heartedly working hands of Mrs. Nazig Kechejian and Mrs. Lena

Georgian, and the dress designer, stage designer, and faithful assistant Mr. Asbed Kendirdjian, also the make-up specialist Mrs. Jacqueline Ghazarian, light engineer Mr. Garo Torkomian, sound and music engineer Mr. Arek Karageuzian, have put al their efforts, heart and time to make the evening glitter with success, uniqueness and enthusiasm.

The audience has agreed with the appreciating encouraging and grateful words coming from the heart of both Mrs. Seta Karageuzian and, finally, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, who also blessed the evening and the present crowd, and wished them all God's guidance in their lives.

We praise our Lord for speaking to our hearts even through children's mouth and life.