

## Armenian Evangelical Bethel church Ministry Report 2007

*“Bless my soul O Lord and forget not all ... His benefits” Psalm 103.2*

We thank God for all His blessings, for His great love and care, for His faithfulness and guidance, and for giving us many opportunities to serve Him. Here are some of the various events and activities held last year (2007) at our Christian education center.

### Calendar

January-	Christmas Worship Service 3 Jan Yerakhdik Christmas 6 Jan.
February-	Vartanants Day Celebration 15 Feb. Young Couples meeting 17 Feb. Leadership Training seminar for youth groups 25 Feb.
March-	World Day of Prayer 2 March Leadership training Seminar for Sunday School teachers 21 March
April-	Yerakhdik Easter 9 April Public Lecture 15 April Commemoration of the 92th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide
May-	Leadership Training seminar for youth groups 6 May Visit to Wales 10 May Celebration on “Mothers’ Day” 10 May
June-	Sunday School Commencement ceremony 17 June “Armis” Art School Recital 22 June Armenian Evangelical Bethel High school Commencement ceremony 30 June
July-	DVBS 2 July- 3 August
August-	Christian Muslim Dialogue 18 Aug. Meeting with the German Economic Cooperation and Development Minister Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul's ON 30 Aug.
September-	meeting with European Parliamentary delegation 13 Sept.
October-	Archbishop of Canterbury's visit 4 October
November-	Christmas Exhibition 24-29 November
December-	Christmas Banquet 23 Dec.

## CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE

Under the auspices of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, a worship service was held on Christmas Eve, Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, 2007, at the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church. More than 200 people attended the Service. The event was A unique and wonderful opportunity for families of the Armenian Evangelical Church to share the joy of Christmas, and to remind one another of God's great love for the world, and most of all for giving us the greatest of gifts, his own son. Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian started out the evening with a word of welcome and an uplifting prayer. We continued the evening with Mrs. Shoghagat Selimian on piano, Mr. Berj Sanosian on accordion, Miss Ranim Jabbour on flute and Mr. Hani Jabbour on Guitar moving our hearts to worship him while singing a number of the traditional Christmas songs. Rev. Harout Selimian then brought us once more back to that amazing moment in history when god became man. What an amazing event of bliss for us all! The service ended with Rev. Haroutune Selimian, President of the Armenian Evangelical Community, praying the blessing on the congregation. Following this time of worship we were happy to enjoy a time of fellowship at the Shirajian hall.



## YERAKHDIK CHRISTMAS

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 2007, the Armenian Evangelical Bethel church was not only filled with people but also of the heavenly sound of the angelic voices of 50 talented kids and juniors, accompanied by conductor and pianist Mrs. Shoghagat Apartian Selimian. God's Holy Spirit was there, as each Christmas carol made us all experience the uniqueness of that holy night so many years ago. The Rev. Haroutune Selimian welcomed the crowd and the guests coming from other denominations, and invited them to enjoy the most popular of our Christmas songs. At the end of the program Rev. Selimian expressed his gratitude to the educational council for making this program possible. He went on to say that just like the angels shared the good news of the new-born Jesus we in turn must do the same. Yes, let's share the message! The evening ended with the blessing prayer of Rev. Serop Mgrdichian.



## **VARTANANTS DAY CELEBRATION**

Another unprecedented event was the 1546<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vartanantz day celebration on 15 February, 2007. The Ceremony started with the welcoming words and slide show presentation of Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian. The public was also enriched by musical pieces performed, on piano by Mr. John Hatem and Jad Hatem, and A RECITATION of Armenian popular poems Miss Salpi Darakjian. During the celebration, the heads of the three Armenian Communities, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, President of The Armenian Evangelical Community, Archbishop Bedros Mreyetian, Head of the Armenian Catholic Church of Aleppo and Archbishop Shahan Sarkissian, head of the Armenian apostolic church of Aleppo, all spoke of St. Vartan's unyielding stand for Christianity, and the importance of this for the Armenian nation. The ceremony ended with the Lord's Prayer.



## **YOUNG COUPLES MEETING**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 2007, the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church's young couples Committee organized a special meeting for the church couples. The evening included a time of fellowship, renewal, prayer and worship. The meeting convened with the opening and welcoming words of the Church Pastor, Rev. Haroutune Selimian. After the worship, the pastor presented a lecture on the following subject: "moving towards our becoming people who stretch ourselves and reach out to others by extending a service of love to our community."



## **LEADERSHIP TRAINING SEMINAR FOR YOUTH GROUPS**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 2007, the Christian Endeavor Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches successfully organized a one-day leadership training seminar particularly designed for Youth Group leaders from the Armenian Evangelical churches. We were delighted to welcome twenty-five highly motivated young participants who were prepared to dig into the topic “disciples in action”, based on acts 1: 1-14 through the helpful guidance of Rev. Haroutune Selimian who gave an introduction by explaining the background and the main purpose behind the writing of this book. He emphasized the apostles’ unity and their commitment to the church. The evening ended with a prayer of thanksgiving by Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, Chair of the Christian Endeavor Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches.

## **WORLD DAY OF PRAYER**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, 2007, a very especial worship service was held for the Armenian Evangelical, Orthodox and Catholic Communities. More than two Hundred women gathered for worship, prayer, fellowship, as well as to share God’s joy, love, mercy, power and beauty with each other. The program started with a video presentation by the Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, who gave a brief information and announcement about the country of Paraguay. The program also included Scripture readings, spiritual songs and prayers. The keynote speaker for the day was Rev. Haroutune Selimian, the President of the Armenian Evangelical Community in Syria. The theme was based on two scripture passages “Genesis 18.1-15, Ephesians 4.1-16”, “united under the tent of god”. The service ended a prayer said by the rev. Haroutune Selimian. After the worship service the ladies experienced a time of warm fellowship on the campus of the church.



## **LEADERSHIP TRAINING SEMINAR FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS**

On the 21<sup>th</sup> of March a one-day leadership training seminar was convened by MR. Youil Tarabih, member of “Just for Kids” group, who belong to the Children's Ministry Foundation “Grains de Ble”, Beirut, Lebanon. Among the thirty participants were Sunday school teachers representing the Armenian, Arab and Syriac Evangelical Churches in Syria. The Following topics were treated extensively.

- Essential elements needed for effective and creative Bible lessons.
- Creativity as a way to connect with kids.

## YERAKHDIK EASTER

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, an Easter concert took place at the Armenian Evangelical Bethel church, where the “yerakhdik” children choir, made up of 50 children along with their director Mrs. Shoghagat Apartian-Selimian proclaimed our savior’s resurrection and shared the joy with a capacity crowd in our church. The program included 16 Easter songs. All the musical arrangements were made by the choir director; Mrs. Shoghagat Apartian-Selimian. The choir was backed up by the instrumentalists; Nanor Kekligian on flute, Hani Jabbour on guitar, Ranim Jabbour on flute, Hagop Jbrayil on trumpet, and Shoghagat Selimian on piano. Some solos were sung by Houry-Dora Apartian. At the end of the concert Rev. Haroutune Selimian thanked the audience for being there and sharing those inspirational moments with the church at large.



## PUBLIC LECTURE

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, the Armenian Evangelical Bethel church’s young couples committee organized a public lecture. A huge and a appreciative crowd was present from pastors to laymen, from doctors to politicians, writers, directors of schools, and people representing various cultural centers. Mr. Samuel Mncherian excitedly welcomed the audience and invited Rev. Haroutune Selimian to present the subject: “Education and its importance to the new generation”. Rev. Selimian started his lecture by giving the definition of the word “education”, and then he gave some original ideas about the purpose of educating our children, before going on to some practical aspects of education. The evening ended with some words of thanksgiving by Mr. Samuel Manchurian.



### **Commemoration of the 92<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide**

Under the auspices of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2007, a commemoration service was held dedicated to the 92<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The program included welcoming words by Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, a sermon presented by Rev. Serop Mgrditchian, and Armenian popular poems and songs recited and sung by the Armenian Evangelical Bethel school students, as well as a slide show of the genocide presented by Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian. After the worship, the public went to the martyr's monument that had been erected on the campus of the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church in 1993. Rev. Haroutune Selimian presented and explained every detail of the Architectural significance of the monument. The commemoration service ended with the blessing prayer of Rev. Haroutune Selimian.



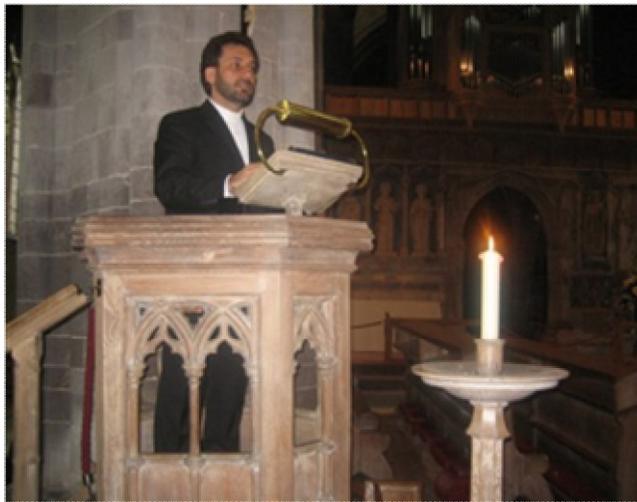
### **LEADERSHIP TRAINING SEMINAR FOR YOUTH GROUPS**

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 2007, the leadership training seminar concerning the interpretation of the Book "Disciples in Action" (Acts. 15-28) has continued WITH a second meeting, organized by the Christian Endeavor Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches. Twenty-five very active and motivated youth group leaders gathered on this day to study and discuss the second part of the book. The keynote speaker of the day was Rev. Haroutune Selimian. He commented on the last 14 chapters of the book, giving very clear, practical and helpful points to make note of, letting the youth realize how, when and why they serve the lord, they must take into consideration the faithful and obedient life mission of the disciples after the ascension of our lord Jesus Christ. The evening was ended with the thanksgiving words of Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, chair of the Christian Endeavor Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches, and with the Lord's Prayer.



### **REV. HAROUTUNE SELIMIAN'S VISIT TO WALES**

From 7-12 May, 2007, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, as the President of the Armenian Evangelical Community, paid an official visit to Wales, along with the newly established delegation of the Christian communities in Syria. The visit was very important and profitable. They met with the Wales church delegation as well as political personalities. A plenary session for the delegates was held to discuss the liberties provided for the church in Syria. During the meeting, the ambassador of the Syrian Arab republic made a speech. The meeting was followed by a formal dinner.



### **CELEBRATION ON MOTHERS' DAY**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, 2007, at the Armenian Evangelical Bethel church the ladies' council of the Armenian evangelical churches invited the ladies of the Armenian community to an excellent program and worship service, dedicated to our dear and much appreciated mothers. More than one hundred-and- fifty women attended the service, which included an artistic section; a duet was directed by Mrs. Suzan Apartian and performed by Miss Mary Tashjian and Mrs. Arda Basmajian. A medley of Armenian popular poems was recited by Mrs. Lousin Gourghigian. The keynote speaker at the worship service was Mrs. Betty Hatem. In her message, she made the audience aware that every woman is endowed with

divine gifts and can use them in her surroundings. The program ended with the Lord's Prayer.



### **Sunday School Commencement ceremony 17 June**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, 2007, the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church's Sunday school Commencement ceremony was held during the worship service. The program included testimonies of the graduates, musical pieces, performed by Noushig Toutounjian on Piano, Shant Toutounjian on Violin, and Meghri Toutounjian on Flute, AS WELL AS two dramas performed by the Sunday school children. The titles of the dramas were "The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant" Matthew 18. 21-35, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan" Luke 10:25-37. The Children's Choir directed by Mrs. Shoghagat Selimian sang a number of songs. The sermon of the day "The Salvation of Humanity" was delivered by Rev. Haroutune Selimian, which was based on 1 Corinthians 2.14. At the end of the ceremony, the graduates received Bibles as a gift. The Worship service ended with the blessing prayer of the church pastor.



### **'ARMISS' ART SCHOOL RECITAL**

Last year, on October 2006, under the patronage of the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church, in cooperation with the Armenian Evangelical Educational Council of Syria, the Armenian evangelical "Armiss" art school was established in Aleppo-Syria. The school was named "Armiss" and located in the Armenian evangelical

Bethel church campus. The main purpose of having such a center is to help our children to discover and develop their musical talents, and enhance their performance skills. The director of the school is Mrs. Shoghagat Apartian- Selimian along with highly qualified teaching staff. The art school includes two sections - conservatory and children choir. The Armenian evangelical "Armiss" art school presented its first annual recital, on Friday June 22, 2007, at the Armenian evangelical bethel church's Soghomonian hall. Rev. Haroutune Selimian warmly welcomed the capacity audience and invited the director of the school, Mrs. Shoghagat Selimian to give brief information about the school. During the recital thirty students displayed their talents and musical abilities to the audience by presenting musical pieces on piano, guitar and violin. At the end of the program Rev. Haroutune Selimian expressed the community's appreciation of the director and the teaching staff for their hard work in making this event a success. The recital made a tremendous impression on the audience with the successful performances, and it was certainly one of the major musical events of the year. We are grateful to the lord for yesterday's promises, today's strength and endurance and tomorrow's vision. May he remain in us and we; the Armenian evangelical church remain his faithful ambassadors of wisdom, knowledge and light in this world.



### **Armenian Evangelical Bethel School Commencement Ceremony**

The Commencement ceremony of the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Middle school class was held on June 30, 2007, in the school campus, in the presence of the president of the Armenian evangelical community, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, the Armenian consul to Aleppo H.E. Arthur Manaserian, in addition to a number of church ministers, clergy, as well as representatives of cultural centers and foundations, the educational council of the Armenian evangelical community, parents and, of course, fellow students. Following the Syrian and Armenian national anthems, Mrs. Betty Yepremian, the principle of the school, offered the

opening speech. The talented students presented a very beautiful program of songs, music, recitals of poems, drama and dances, which were dedicated to the memory of the most famous Armenian poet Avedik Isahagian. Parents and guests watched the program with admiration. The joy and satisfaction were evident on their faces. The valedictorians of the middle school graduating class Salam Mousa Oghli and John Shalashian addressed the guests in Armenian and in Arabic. The principle of the school, Mrs. Betty Yepremian, invited Rev. Haroutune Selimian, the president of the Armenian evangelical community to the podium to present the diplomas to the middle school graduates. The ceremony ended with a prayer and benediction said by Rev. Haroutune Selimian.



### **DVBS 2 July- 3 August**

During this month-long activity the Armenian evangelical Bethel Church and its Christian education center granted children from the age of 4 to 12 the possibility of experiencing God's love, joy, creativity, power, beauty, mercy and promises through the daily vacation Bible school. 9 well-trained and cooperative teachers together with 105 kids shared with each other some essential aspects of Christian life; Bible lessons and how to apply them in your life, crafts relating to the lessons taught, daily worship services in the mornings made the event a joyful and expressive celebration. On top of the Bible lessons the DVBS also offered practical lessons and quizzes in the Armenian and English languages and computer science, how to do short story telling and even how to recite. Sports, games and competitions were other activities. There were also much appreciated outings, which included visits to well-renowned factories and, not to forget, swimming pools. They could also enjoy the occasional visits of very interesting guests who enlightened them more with remarkable ways of using talents and knowledge to glorify the Lord. 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 attending the school as students and teachers.





### **Christian Muslim Dialogue**

Saturday, on 18 august, 2007, Rev. Haroutune Selimian met with the Norwegian church delegation at the Syria's grand mufti Ahmed Badr Eddin Hassoun's summer resort, in the presence of the heads of the Christian and Muslim religious communities. The consultation was mainly focused on the importance of dialogue between religions and cultures. The grand mufti greeted the Christian religious personalities and gave them the opportunity to express their heartfelt opinions. After that the delegation was directed toward the narthex for lunch. The general secretary of the Middle East council of churches, Mr. Saleh Gergos was also present in this meeting.



### **Meeting with German Economic Cooperation and Development Minister Heidmarie Wieczorek-Zeul**

Thursday, 30 August, 2007, Rev. Selimian received an initiation from the grand Mufti of Syria, Ahmad Badr Eddin Hassoun, to attend a meeting with the German Economic Cooperation and Development Minister, Mrs. Hiedemarie Wieczorek. The German delegation greeted the evangelical, orthodox and Catholic Church delegations, and consulted them on how to help to build and develop Syria by affirming their cooperation with all different communities. in this meeting Rev. Selimian presented a message on behalf of the Christian Communities.



### **The Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams' visit to Syria**

The British Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams (Spiritual leader of the Anglican Church) paid a visit to the Syrian Arab Republic President Bashar Al Asad, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, 2007. During the meeting they talked about Islam, the Middle East and terrorism. The Archbishop discussed with the President Al Asad about the situation of the Middle East and the role of Syria in the peace process. At the end of the meeting President Asad stressed the importance of making additional clarifications about the Islamic Values all over the world, by initiating meetings between different cultures and civilizations. The meeting was attended by Rev. Haroutune Selimian, president of the Armenian Evangelical churches in Syria, the Heads of the Christian Churches and Islamic Scholars. After the meeting a formal dinner was held at the “Mouhammed Caftaro Seminar Center.



### Meeting of Syria's Grand Mufti Ahmed Badr Eddin Hassoun with European parliamentary delegation

Meeting of Syria's Grand Mufti Ahmed Badr Eddin Hassoun with European parliamentary delegation headed by Mrs. Patrice Patri on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> of September, 2007, focused on the importance of dialogue between religions and spreading values of justice, equality and peace in the world. Dr. Hassoun underlined the need to educate generations and prepare them well to accept the other, stressing the importance of respecting the privacy of others since through this the society gains its richness. He pointed out that Syria, which had always been the cradle of civilizations and religions, is a good example of a state where people of several religions co-exist. The mufti called everyone to work together for the benefit of humanity and to respect a man regardless of his color, race and religion. For her part, Mrs. patri underscored that others have to learn from Syria regarding co-existence among the religions. Syria had always been an excellent example to the world when it comes to co-existence. She called for the convening of regular meetings attended by religious and spiritual leaders for cooperation to bring peace to the whole world. After that a debate was held between the mufti and members of the European parliamentary delegation on a number of humanitarian and religious themes. The meeting was attended by Rev. Haroutune Selimian, president of the Armenian protestant churches in Syria and Archbishop Youhanna Ibrahim, head of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Aleppo together with Islamic scholars.



### Christmas Exhibition 24-29 November

It has been a beautiful tradition for the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church to organize an exhibition every year just before the Christmas season, showing their talents to the public by preparing and offering to people original handicrafts, handmade Christmas artifacts, art works and great kinds of food, and who could be behind all this except our talented church ladies. This year the exhibition was inaugurated on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> of November, 2007. Pastors, representatives of the armenian cultural centers and foundations, directors of schools and a record number of guests attended the opening ceremony of this special and unique exhibition. The evening began with the welcoming words of Rev. Harotune Selimian and it was concluded by Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian's prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude to god for his abundant grace and love. During this six-day

exhibition the church families also had a great and blessed fellowship with each other.



### **Christmas Banquet 23 Dec.**

On Sunday noon, 23<sup>th</sup> of December, 2007, the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church experienced once again the Joy of Christmas with its families. The banquet was held at the Armenian Evangelical Bethel School's Poladian Hall. The program included welcoming words by Mr. Samuel Mncherian, Prayer and greeting words and a short message by Rev. Haroutune selimian, pastor of the Armenian evangelical bethel church. After lunch, the members of the church enjoyed a drama and choir presented by the Sunday school children, junior high and youth groups; vocal solos were presented by Shant Kerbabian, accompanied, on piano, by Mrs. Shoghagat Selimian. The banquet reached its climax when santa claus arrived at the hall and distributed gifts and Christmas joy packages to all children. At the end of the program, the pastor of the church expressed his gratitude to the families and also thanked all those who had served faithfully through their involvement in the activity, and finally the pastor thanked the ladies' auxiliary for making this activity possible.

We praise god for blessing us with the vision to serve our people in this region of the world. The above-mentioned events and activities are great occasions to thank god for his love and care. They are also an opportunity to review, renew and plan future activities, all in the name of our lord Jesus Christ. May the lord Jesus Christ always be glorified in the life of our church.