

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

PILGRIM PEOPLE
serving God
by serving others
JUNE 2023

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR NERSES BALABANIAN

I like Great Adventures, but what about Blessed Uncertainties?

The expression "Blessed uncertainties" comes from my mother, a woman of unwavering faith. She believed that uncertain times were blessings in disguise to bring us closer and closer to God.

During the civil war of Lebanon, we lived a time of full of surprises and uncertainties. We did not know if we could have a normal day, could go to school, or work, or have a peaceful night... all these uncertain situations.

Sevan was taking a course in at the American Universality of Beirut at the time. A visiting professor from the US asked during one of his lectures, "Where would you see yourselves in 10 years?" Sevan says everyone was confused and did not know how to answer this question. Why? The context of their life was so unpredictable; people were living day by day. They could not give an answer to the question.

I think about this question now. Where do you see yourself in 10 years from now? So many of our friends and family members just graduated. Where do they see themselves in 10 years?

This is a very good question. It is a question of planning, setting goals, and striving towards them.

The issue with our life now is that we have made so many plans and pursued so many goals that we have eliminated God from them.

How about the plans you have made, which were interrupted for some reason? Saul-Paul, an educated man, a Zealot, a devoted Hebrew, a Pharisee's Pharisee, an expert in the law, who was persecuting the Christians, got

Great Adventures and Blessed Uncertainties?



hit by the resurrected Christ. Saul had plans, and his plans were changed, drastically changed... Did you have such an experience in your life? You made a plan, but God had a different plan for you?

Saul-Paul was on his way to Damascus to capture the Christians. His plans suddenly changed when he met the resurrected Christ (Acts 9). He was knocked down to the ground and was blinded. He was humbled. He saw the risen Lord and had a conversation with him. He was commanded to go to Damascus, not to persecute the Christians, but to start a new path in his spiritual journey.

Saul is thinking, "God, what are you doing in my life? There are too many uncertainties. I am in the dark, I cannot see, but I will obey and go..." **"Great Adventures and Blessed Uncertainties."**

Saul obeys and goes to Damascus. He is in the house of a disciple called Judas. Saul remains in a state of blindness and doesn't eat or drink for three days. God sends a disciple called Ananias to go visit Saul. Ananias is well aware of Saul's reputation regarding the persecution of the Christians. He is not sure if this is a good idea. The answer of the Lord to Ananias:

"Ananias, go! You are preparing, discipling a man who is appointed to be the evangelist for the Gentile world, not only the ordinary people, but also to the kings and rulers of that world, as well as to people of Israel. Also, this is not going to be an easy task, he will suffer while doing this."

I don't know how Ananias obeyed and went to see Saul. Most likely he went to the directly to Judas' home on Straight Street home where Saul was staying and placed his hands over him. The result: sight to Saul's eyes, he was baptized (I assume by Ananias) and he finally started to eat. God gave him a **new vision, a new life, new physical strength**. Saul is a new man. And he started to share the Gospel message in Damascus. We know from the letter to the Galatians that Saul-Paul stayed three years between Damascus and deserts of Arabia. We read "**Saul grew more and more powerful.**" I think he grew in his faith day by day. Eventually, he was threatened and needed to escape. They disciples had to put him in a basket and lower him from the walls!

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PACC EVENTS OF 2023

Graduation
Elevation.....June 4

PACC Annual Meeting.....June 11

Summer Student Mission Trip to Houston, TX....June 10-19

Father's Day.....June 18

PACC CampingJuly 7-9

Vacation Bible School.....July 30-August 3

Rally (Renewal) Sunday..... September 10

Iron Man Games September 15-17

Harvest Banquet.. October 7

Thanksgiving Sunday November 19

Congregational Budget MeetingDecember 3

Christmas Worship Celebration.....December 24



Great Adventures

Continued from page 1

1. The God of Compassion, Mercy, Hanan, the gracious One, gives a second chance.

My friend Pastor Brian Morgan says: "Everyone gets a second chance because 'the Lord is gracious.'"

Think on these names – **Ananias, Saul** and **Judas**. All these names are people faced adventures and challenges. There were uncertainties. They surrendered to God's plan and continued their journey trusting HIM.

We see other people with those same names in the Bible. Unfortunately, in each case the name reminds us of some failure – Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit in search of prestige and was killed (Acts 5:1-11); Saul was a wicked king who controlled his people through murder and ended his life in suicide (1 Samuel); Judas betrayed our Lord and hung himself. (Matthew 27:5)

Don't you love our God, how gracious He is? Don't you love that God is compassionate and gives a second chance if we turn to Him and trust Him.

2. In our weaknesses, God does amazing work.

Saul-Paul felt humiliated when he escaped from Damascus. In a basket? But he also saw how God worked in his weakness.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Remember who Saul is, a highly educated man, a top, top person... God humbled Him. He is a smart man with high ambitions. But God needed something else.

What God needs is an empty jar of clay (2 Cor. 4:7) so He can fill it with HIS SPIRIT.

Kent Hughes has said about Saul: **"When God wants us to do an impossible task, God takes an impossible man and crushes him".**

You know God changed Saul's name to

Paul which means small, humble. But this does not mean we are nothing; in fact, because God is guiding us and empowering us. We are granted wisdom, power, vision, and love.

3. God has a plan for each of us.

This month is graduation month. We have so many young people graduating. I started my message asking, "Do you know where you will be in 10 years?" Let me answer it biblically: I don't know, but God does. I will plan with God's direction. I will remain in His will in the next challenge and the next step. God has a plan for each of us. God grants us great adventures and blessed uncertainties in His will.



Worship on the Lawn

On a Friday night, on May 19, we worshiped... on the lawn! Music was lead by Kevin, Sosse, Lisa, Amy (me), Caleb and Caleb's friend Solomon. We sang worship songs and prayed together in the courtyard. We also heard testimony from Elyse Jaramishian, who first envisioned the night.

As someone who often helps lead worship on Sunday mornings and has little ones to wrangle during Sunday service, sometimes it's difficult to truly focus on worshiping our God. Distractions come easy when amps are buzzing suspiciously, or race cars are zooming underneath pews. That is why nights like "Worship on the Lawn" are so needed. Outside of our normal routine, under the lights and trees, surrounded by the body of Christ in camp chairs, it's easier to remember the Lord. It was an added blessing to hear Elyse's testimony and how God is working in her life.

The vision is to continue worship nights like this throughout the year and to hear from a different person each time, how the Lord is working in their life. Be on the look out for the next worship night coming soon!

– Amy Bressette

MODERATOR'S REPORT

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust!'"

— Psalm 91:1-2 (NASB)

As I come to the end of my term as Moderator, these verses struck me because God has certainly blessed me – and Pilgrim Church – during the time of my service. How else can I explain how we thrived during and after all the turmoil caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the regulations and reactions to it?

God has provided for our church in numerous ways. He has certainly provided monetary support from both our parishioners and sometimes from unforeseen sources. We are also the beneficiaries of the generosity, vision and courage of those who came before us. God provided those people and moved them to act.

From my perspective, God has provided a wonderful, generous, hardworking and dedicated church council, boards, committees, church organizations and paid staff that made my job one of joy. I have been part of this church for almost 72 years, and I know that we could not always experience the peace and single-mindedness we now enjoy when we conduct church business. I thank God for how this changed.

So let us continue to enjoy the Lord and His church, and to appreciate all He does for us here at Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church.

— By Moderator John Eleazarian



GFLC's Open House Celebrates Its Programs

On May 7, the Goorabian Family Life Center Committee hosted an open house on the Alan Manoogian patio at the Family Life Center to reflect on the impact the facility has had over the years in the community through its sports programs and music venue. The open house was a time to share a meal with Pilgrim's church family and friends of the Family Life Center while enjoying the musical sounds of the Pilgrim Kef Time Band.

Many lives have been touched and transformed due to the programs offered at the Family Life Center. An inspirational testimony was provided by Ryan Ligtas who participated in a basketball ministry and now is serving as youth director at his local church, Holy Ground Family Fellowship.

Hagop Ohenessian shared briefly on behalf of the Homenetmen Sassoon Chapter their appreciation and collaboration between the Family Life Center and their basketball program. On a personal note, he spoke fondly of his early days arriving in Fresno and participating in the basketball league hosted by the Family Life Center. He was recruited by Hal Avakian to play basketball and engage with the youth group.

We are thankful for the tremendous generosity of Harry and Zabelle Goorabian and the many volunteers who have served over the years. The Family Life Center continues to be a unique and impactful ministry in our community.

— Cristel Tufenkjian

Prayer for Our Sister Church in Gyumri, Armenia

On May 19, 2023, members from Pilgrim Church met with members from the Evangelical Church in Gyumri, Armenia via Zoom. Rev. Aram Babajanyan, pastor of the Gyumri church, gave a devotion on the first church from the Book of Acts, with emphasis on the "members" of the church and their "service" to the church. He spoke of the history of the church and how Christ grew the church through the service of the people.

Badveli Aram stated that word came to the Apostles about a problem in the church regarding the daily distribution of food (which can be related to the social services of today).

The Apostles met with the congregation regarding the concern and invited them to suggest solutions.

The approach was pleasing to the people. They proposed seven (7) persons (deacons) to address the problem. Here we see the roots of congregational thinking. The first church shows us that everyone has a responsibility to the body of Christ. When problems arise, the whole community is invited to solve the problem. It is not enough to come for worship, listen and leave. We have all been called to serve. This is how God grew the first church and will grow the church

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTH

Nikos Bryan Yahnian – Born May 26, 2023
Mother: *Nina Geuvjehizian* Father: *Jordan Yahnian*
Grandmother: *Zepur Geuvjehizian*

Congratulations 2023 Graduates!

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
(Proverbs 3:4-5)

AMELIE BRESSETTE

Parents: Andrew & Amy Bressette
Graduating From: Ewing Elementary School Kindergarten
Going To: Ewing Elementary School



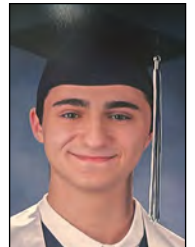
GEMMA NICOLE HANCER

Parents: Robert & Christa Hancer
Grandparents: Joe & Johnanna Soghomonian
Graduating From: Tenaya Middle School
Going To: Bullard High School



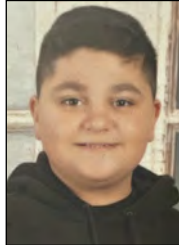
ERIC PETROSYAN

Parents: Artem & Anna Petrosyan
Graduating From: Bullard High School
Going To: Fresno City College
Major: Business



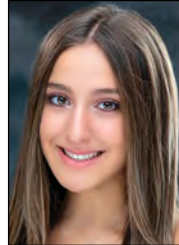
HAKOP J. PETROSYAN

Parents: Misak Petrosyan & Zara Momjian
Graduating From: Jackson Elementary
Going To: Tenaya Middle School



ALYSSA JIANNA HANCER

Parents: Robert & Christa Hancer
Grandparents: Joe & Johnanna Soghomonian
Graduating From: San Joaquin Memorial High School
Going To: California State University, Fresno
Major: Psychology



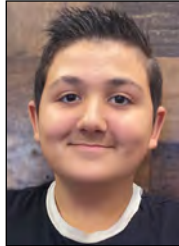
IZABELLA RUTLEDGE

Parents: Wayne & Rena Rutledge
Graduating From: Clovis North High School
Going To: SMU (Southern Methodist University)
Major: Finance & Applied Math



GOR AYRAPETYAN

Parents: Greg Ayrapetyan & Lusine Khrikyan
Graduating From: West Park Charter Academy, Elementary
Going To: West Park Charter Academy, Middle School



ALEN ISRAELYAN

Parents: Misak & Jemma Israelyan
Graduating From: Bullard High School
Going to: UC Davis
Major: Biochemistry



CARINA TOKATIAN

Parents: Aram & Lisa Tokatian
Graduating From: California State University, Fresno
Major: English Education B.A. with an emphasis in Rhetoric & Composition



RUZANNA PETROSYAN

Parents: Sedrak & Rhonda Petrosyan
Graduating From: Mccardle Elementary
Going To: Kastner Middle School



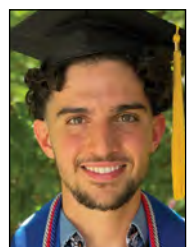
CALEB KASPER

Parents: Kevin & Krista Kasper
Graduations From: Sierra Academy
Going To: Ashland University



CHRISTIAN TUFENKJIAN

Parents: John & Cristel Tufenkjian
Graduating From: California State University, Fresno
Major: Bachelor of Science in Biology



CONNOR SULLIVAN

Parents: Kerry & Amanda Sullivan
Grandparents: Sandy & The late Hal Avakian
Graduating From: St. Mary Middle School, Walnut Creek, CA
Going To: De La Salle High School Concord, CA



Prayers for Gyumri

Continued from page 3

today. This is God's grace and mercy given to all.

Prayer Requests

- For those who remained in Artsakh. They have no gas or electricity.
- May 27-28: Spiritual Retreat for those serving the church
- June 2: New ministry – Thursday Night Worship Service

- June 16-July 7 – Multiple Ministries
 - o AMAA Medical Mission (to serve 450 people from the Gyumri church)
 - o Pastoral Ministry
 - o Vacation Bible School (VBS)
 - o Summer Camp
- June 22-24 – Women's Retreat

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 PACC CALENDAR OF EVENTS JUNE 2023						
Save the Date VBS July 30-August 3						
9:15 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship/Communion Graduation Sunday	10:00 am Dorcas Guild Executive Meeting, Library	6:30 pm Old/ New Trustees Members Overflow Room 6:30 pm Deacons, Fireside 6:30 pm CE Meeting, Library	7:00 am Men's Forum Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm High School Bible Study 7:30 pm College Bible Study	11:00 am Dorcas Guild Luncheon, Social Hall 7:00 pm Young Adult Bible Study	7:00 am TGIF, Fireside Room	
10:30 am Worship, Congregational Meeting			7:30-12:00 pm FUSD			
FATHER'S DAY 10:30 am Worship/Installing Officers	Pilgrim's Progress Articles Due			7:00 pm Young Adult Bible Study		6:00 pm Home Builders
10:30 am Worship	6:30 pm Old/ New Council Members Meeting, Overflow					

PILGRIM
Armenian
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

3673 North First Street
Fresno, California 93726-6870

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

In-person 10:30 am

Online at 10:30 am

On our website: pilgrimchurch.com

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**Prayer for
Student Mission
Trip**

**We would be
the light and love
of Christ to those whom
we serve**

Safe Travel

Wisdom for chaperones

**Spiritual Growth
of all attendees**



Let us go to Houston