



HYE HOKIN Հայ Հոգև

The Newsletter of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America

WINTER 2004

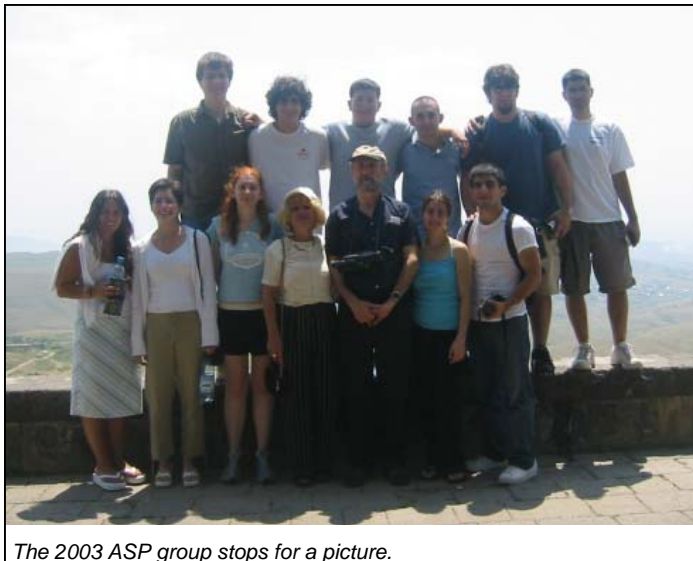
ARMENIA SERVICE PROGRAM 2004

Ages 18-28

JUNE 22-JULY 15 \$1980



The spectacular view of downtown Yerevan.



The 2003 ASP group stops for a picture.

Assist in running a summer camp for 80 village children in Yeghegnadzor

Participate in worship services and hands-on instruction in Armenian language, history, culture, and religion



Travel to historic religious and cultural sites throughout Armenia

"The ASP trip was incredible. I will always remember every wonderful day and every awesome person—all of whom will probably remain life-long friends."

-Marin Hoplamazian, ASP 2003 Participant from St. John Church of Southfield, MI

We have great news for those of you thinking about a trip to Armenia this summer! The ASP is definitely the way to go. You'll spend some time doing the tourist thing, of course; but then you'll also have an opportunity to serve for two weeks at a camp for needy kids. It's a truly unique way to see and *feel* Armenia. For more information about the trip (and about financial aid), go to our website or contact asp@acyoa.org.



ASP Participants and campers at Camp Siranoush.

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Photos courtesy of Armen Babikyan.

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CENTRAL COUNCIL NEWS

Do you know someone who would like to receive a copy of *Hye Hokin*?

E-mail newsletter@acyoa.org. Please provide recipient's name, age, mailing address, and e-mail address.



ACYOA Central Council

President
Archbishop Khajag Barsamian

Chairperson
Dn. Diran Jebajian

Vice Chairperson
Rita Akaraz

Recording Secretary
Tammy Bagdigian

Treasurer
Jennifer Morris

Chapter Relations Coordinator
Christopher Tashjian

Public Relations Coordinator
Maria Derderian

Programming Coordinator
Daron Bolat

ACYOA Executive Secretary
Nancy Basmajian

Leadership Conference

We are very excited about the upcoming Fifth Annual Young Adult Leadership Conference, taking place March 12-14 in Stony Point, NY. The theme of this year's conference is Witness. There is still time left to register! This is the perfect opportunity to meet new people from all different parishes, learn more about the Armenian Church, and witness your faith among your peers. To register, contact your pastor or Parish Council Chairperson. If you are away at college and not able to do so, contact Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian at 212.686.0710 or acyoa@armeniandiocese.org.

General Assembly

General Assembly and Sports Weekend are right around the corner! The 2004 General Assembly will be on Thursday and Friday, May 27 and 28, 2004. If you would like to attend the General Assembly to learn more about the ACYOA, e-mail acyoa@armeniandiocese.org. See page 5 for more info on Sports Weekend and traveling to Dallas.

Alternative Spring Break

College students: Don't have any plans for Spring Break? Consider participating in some local community service with other young adults from your area. Or, look into any of the 'alternative spring break' trips that are available through organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. Many local colleges and universities have their own programs as well.

Below are some links to help you:
www.alternativebreaks.org
www.habitat.org

HyeMail

HyeMail, our e-mail newsletter for college students, is sent out monthly. To subscribe, send your e-mail address (or those of your college friends) to cchye-mail@yahoo.com. You can also view each *HyeMail* at www.acyoa.org.

ASP Scholarships

The Central Council provides four \$250 scholarships for ACYOA members participating in the ASP trip. Participants interested in these scholarships are urged to submit their application for ASP as soon as possible. Visit www.acyoa.org for more ASP information.

Summer Employment/Service

The Diocesan camps are seeking qualified young adults to serve as staff at both Hye Camp (August 1-7) and St. Vartan Camp (June 26-July 10/July 10-24). Hye Camp is looking for dedicated volunteers for a variety of positions. St. Vartan Camp is offering salaries to qualified candidates. All staff must attend pre-camp training. For more information, and to request an application for either camp, please contact Youth Outreach at 617-876-2700 or dym@armeniandiocese.org.

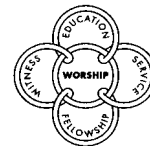
ATTENTION ACYOA ALUMNI

The 60th anniversary of the ACYOA is coming up! The ACYOA Central Council is creating an Alumni database, but we need your help!

Send your info to: newsletter@acyoa.org.

Please include the following info:

Name, Address, E-mail address, and the ACYOA chapter of which you were a member.



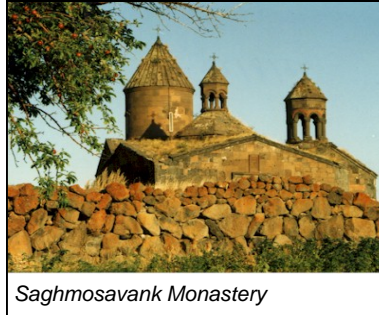
Have a question about youth programming? Interested in youth ministry training?

Contact Yn. Arpi Kouzouian, Coordinator of Youth Outreach

Department of Youth and Education
Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern)
145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA 02138
Phone: 617-876-2700 Fax: 617-876-2266
dym@armeniandiocese.org

Armenian Church Youth Organization of *ARMENIA* -submitted by Daron Bolat

While I was in Armenia this past summer, I had the chance to spend some time with some of the Church youth groups there. It was a very eye opening and inspiring experience. One of the groups, the Armenian Church Youth Movement of the Araratian Diocese ("Sharjoom" for short) is directed by Fr. Dajad Davidian. This group includes young people ranging in age from about 16 to 24. Fr. Dajad previously served as pastor of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. He has spent much of the year in Armenia organizing this group. The Sharjoom takes pilgrimages to churches throughout Armenia.



Saghmossavank Monastery

The day after I arrived, my friend Dr. Zaven Kalayjian, a former member of the St. Mary ACYOA who now works in Armenia and is involved in the Sharjoom, invited me on a pilgrimage. At about eight in the morning we walked over to Sakarov Square in Yerevan where several dozen young people had gathered. We piled into large buses and were off the northern Armenia, past the city of Alaverdi to Akhtala. Over the course of the day we visited four churches and monasteries. At each of them, Fr. Dajad asked one of the young people to speak about their spiritual growth. Each of the young people that spoke about their faith did so very eloquently. At one stop, the church was about a 15 minute walk up a path from the road. Several of the young people got up to the church before Fr. Dajad. Rather than just hang out or talk, they quietly walked into the church and began singing sharagans. I thought this was a very profound illustration of their faith. There is also a youth center that was created as part of the 1700th anniversary celebrations and has continued to operate since then.

Over the next few weeks I got to spend more time with the members of these groups. Everyone was very welcoming and accepting. While there, a meeting was set up between members of church youth groups from seven dioceses in Armenia, and several young people from our diocese who were in Armenia at the time. Saro Kalayjian, Zaven Kalayjian, Sevan Topjian, Jason

Demerjian, and I served as representatives. The purpose of the meeting was for each group to describe their situation, and look at ways to work together. It was very valuable for all of us who attended to get an idea of what church youth groups in Armenia were doing. We found that we had many more similarities than we had differences, and we were dealing with many of the same things. All of us were very impressed and inspired by the young people we met. Sevan Topjian said, "I am sincerely moved by the incredible examples of God in Armenia. Der Dajad and the youth movement have inspired my works here in America and their example continues to support the truth of God's presence in our lives. I am blessed to maintain friendships with brothers and sisters whom I met through this organization, and look forward to growing together, not only as faithful leaders in the Church, but of our Nation as well."

One Sunday morning, we again gathered at Sakarov Square and traveled by bus to Saghmossavank, which means "Monastery of Psalms." It is a beautiful monastery built only a few feet from the gorge of the Kasakh river. After we arrived, we broke up into small groups and went throughout the town, knocking on people's doors and inviting them to church for Badarak. Although few people actually came, everyone we visited was very welcoming in the true Armenian way, and many invited us inside for breakfast. More importantly, it was a very profound example of witnessing one's faith by knocking on a total stranger's door and inviting them to church.

When I went to Armenia and met with the church groups there, I thought I would be telling them all what it takes to have a successful group; about organization and administration. It was in fact quite the opposite. I gained much more from spending time with these young people than I could have possibly given. I learned what it means to truly witness one's faith and to be the body of Christ.



Now for the first time ever, those of you interested in extending your stay in Armenia beyond our program end date, there's a way to do so through *Depi Hayk*, the Birthright Armenia "add-on program" AND get your **roundtrip airfare reimbursed** at the same time. If you are attracted to the idea of doing community service work, experiencing life with an Armenian family, partaking in language instruction, attending seminars and workshops with experts to learn more about the country, and more, this could be for you. Just visit the organization's website at www.birthrightarmenia.org to learn more about their offerings, eligibility criteria and to download application materials.

What is *Depi Hayk*? Birthright Armenia is based on the principle that anyone with Armenian ties is born with the gift of an ancestral homeland. No matter what their country or origin, Armenians have a point of destination: the land of Hayk. *Hayk* is the traditional Armenian word for Armenia. It means land of the Armenians and refers to the Armenian highlands around Mt. Ararat. Through the centuries, the Armenian spirit has triumphed to preserve and cultivate its distinctive identity against overwhelming odds. It must be carried forward by every generation according to the times and circumstances in which it lives. That is why the name Birthright Armenia is expressed in the Armenian phrase, *Depi Hayk*, a return to Hayk, the source of our collective aspiration.

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CHAPTER CORNER



ARMENIAN CHURCH OF JACKSONVILLE, FL—The fourth and final Regional Conference was hosted by the mission parish of Jacksonville, FL on November 22nd, 2003. Twenty-two young adults attended the conference, led by Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian and Central Council Treasurer Jennifer Morris. The energy in the room was evident as members from Atlanta, Jacksonville, and as far as Baton Rouge discussed their Armenian Christian faith and heritage while planning future gatherings and new activities. "I'm so glad I came," said conference participant Vasken Kaltakdjian, a member of the parish council for the St. Garabed mission parish in Baton Rouge, LA. "As soon as I get our young adults together, I'm going to call the ACYOA Central Council for a visit. I learned a lot today." *Thank you to the Jacksonville community for being such gracious hosts!*

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH—CAMBRIDGE, MA

On Sunday, February 1st, as many New Englanders spent the day anxiously awaiting Super Bowl XXXVIII (Go Pats!!) and preparing for their evening festivities, the ACYOA Juniors and Seniors of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge, came together to participate in their Second Annual Souper Bowl for Caring. The mission of this program is to collect one dollar from each person attending church on Super Bowl Sunday and donate the collection to a local soup kitchen of choice. After church, with large soup pots in hand, the youth and young adults of the parish collected generous donations, amounting to over \$500, from the Holy Trinity parishioners. The money will be donated to Rosie's Place, a Boston homeless shelter for women and children. On Super Bowl Sunday, Holy Trinity, along with thousands of churches across the country, participated in this wonderful and meaningful event. Both the ACYOA Seniors and Juniors were very excited to be a part of a nationwide movement helping to make a difference in the homelessness problem facing our country today.

In addition to our Super Bowl Sunday fundraising event, the Cambridge ACYOA Seniors have begun making preparations for the Archbishop's Tournament that we will be proudly hosting in October of 2004. We continue to gather for our young adult based Bible Studies and look forward to the volleyball competition we will be facing Memorial Day weekend in Dallas, Texas!

-Submitted by Ani Bagdasarian, Holy Trinity ACYOA Seniors Chairperson

ST. MESROB CHURCH—RACINE, WI

Our chapter has been busy! On top of holding regular meetings, we helped plan and run our church's annual festival. We had two members travel to Armenia as part of the St. Mesrob (Racine, Wisconsin) and St. Sahag (St. Paul, MN) Habitat for Humanity team. While they did that, the rest of us stayed home and volunteered at a local Habitat project. We had eight members attend the midwest leadership conference. A group of us got together to watch and discuss the movie, "Ararat". We continue to volunteer at a local soup kitchen. As always, we went Christmas carolling to families who have recently lost someone and to shut-ins. Finally, we held our annual Christmas dinner. For more information, e-mail stmesrob@execpc.com.

Looking for an idea for an ACYOA Seniors gathering? Here are a few ideas submitted from other chapters:



- Organize a group outing to see "The Passion of the Christ." Invite your pastor, deacon, or youth director along, and meet afterwards to discuss your thoughts.
- Make ACYOA Day known in your parish! Gather for an hour or two during the week before Palm Sunday and make palm crosses. On Palm Sunday, greet parishioners as they enter your church and hand out your crosses. Seeing the youth active in the church is the best way to remind others of the spirit of Armenian Christian Youth.

To submit news and pictures from your chapter events, please e-mail: newsletter@acyoa.org.

FORTY DAYS: OBSERVING LENT



Many of you have probably heard, or even read, St. Gregory of Narek's Book of Lamentations. This very penitential work is arguably the richest piece of Armenian literature ever written, second in popularity only to the Bible among Armenian households. Dr. Tom Samuelian translated the work into English for the 1,000th anniversary of St. Gregory of Narek's death in 2003. He has generously put up a website that includes the entire text of the prayer book, and for the past two years he has put together a thematic schedule of readings for the Lenten period drawn from the prayer book and based on the commemoration of specific weeks during Lent. If you have never read St. Gregory of Narek's writings, take a look. Even in translation, his words are laden with profundity. It's no wonder he begins his prayer with "Speaking with God from the depths of my heart".

Below is the link for the Lenten reading schedule, which you may easily print out to follow along day by day:

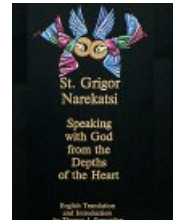
<http://www.stgregoryofnarek.am/lenten.php>

This following link has the entire text of the prayer book. To read any of the 93 prayers comprising this work, just click on the prayer number on the left of the screen:

<http://www.stgregoryofnarek.am/book.php>

May we all have a blessed Lent as we journey together to Christ's resurrection.

Thank you to Yervant Kutchukian for providing Hye Hokin with the links.



To order a copy of Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart, visit www.stvartanbookstore.com.

2004 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND NATIONAL SPORTS WEEKEND DALLAS, TEXAS

www.acyoadallas.com



The Dallas Sports Weekend Committee has arranged airline discounts with five major airline companies! Visit www.acyoadallas.com for promotional codes.

HOTEL INFO

Hilton Hotel located at Lincon Center
5410 LBJ Freeway
Dallas, Texas 75240
972-934-8400
Room rate: \$65/night
Mention ACYDA for special rate

**NEW FOR 2004!
CO-ED SOCCER**

Thursday, May 27

Welcome and Delegate Meeting at Hilton Hotel
Evening-Evening -Delegate Reception at Hilton Hotel Reflections

Friday, May 28

Delegate Meeting at Dallas Biblical Arts Center
Evening-Mixer at Al Amir

Saturday, May 29

Sports Competition and Philanthropy Events/Speakers
Evening-Dining and Dancing at Dallas World Aquarium

Sunday, May 30

Divine Liturgy, Alumni Luncheon, Sports Competition Finals
Evening-Dinner Dance at Hilton Hotel Ballroom

Monday, May 31

Farewell Picnic at St. Sarkis Armenian Church

INTERVIEW: MEET JASON DEMERJIAN, COLLEGE MINISTRY FACILITATOR

Recently, ACYDA Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian sat down for an interview with Jason Demerjian, the newly appointed College Ministry Facilitator for the Diocese.



Jason grew up in Massachusetts, a member of St. James in Watertown where he went to Sunday school and joined the ACYDA. He did his undergraduate work at Boston College then volunteered for two years in Armenia as a

member of the U.S. Peace Corps. He returned to the U.S. to get his degree from Harvard Divinity School then went right back to Armenia and founded the Armenian Volunteer Corps, an organization which he directed for three years and in which he currently serves as a board member. Last summer, he married his work partner at AVC, Anna Sargsyan, and they moved back to the U.S. to continue their service to the Armenian community.

Nancy: Wow, Harvard Divinity School! You could have done just about anything with a degree from Harvard, why the Armenian Church?

Jason: A great Christian thinker once said, "You should be in that place where your deepest gladness intersects with the world's deepest hunger." My deepest joy is in helping people explore their faith journey, and I feel that there is a deep hunger in the Armenian Church for faith. I want to "facilitate" that, especially for Armenian college students.

Nancy: Who had an impact on your own journey of faith?

Jason: I think my journey began back in Sunday school at St. James with the teachers and clergy that touched my life there: I especially remember Karen Dederyan's 9th grade class. She was one of the first people in the Armenian Church who got me to ask questions about my faith. Then, taking it one step further, there was my pastor, Fr. Dajad Davidian and the late Fr. Haroutiun Dagley. They were important people in my early spiritual development.

Nancy: Was there anyone else?

Jason: Well, there were the good Jesuit instructors at Boston College, of course. They showed me how faith can be arrived at logically, that you don't have to be crazy to be a believer. But, I think my high school friend Mary Kaye was the greatest influence on my growth as a Christian. She had a form of cancer that left her in a wheelchair and it was my job (along with another student) to carry her out of the building, and then back in, during fire drills. I was always struck by her competence and grace in

what must have been an embarrassing circumstance for her. Later we hooked up again at Boston College; she had had another recurrence of the cancer and was just finishing up with her treatments. We became close friends and reversed roles. At that time, I was going through a crisis of faith, of self-confidence and I was treating myself badly. In a way I was the one in the wheelchair and she was helping me. She had so much more to deal with than me, yet she had optimism, confidence and grace; I had none of those things. I finally learned her source of strength—a faith community, a local college ministry. I went to worship with her one day and met like-minded people, people who cared about others, who wanted to serve others, who wanted to give back, people who had the same strength as Mary Kaye. And when Mary Kaye died a year later, I felt that she left me something, she lived on through me. I still get strength from that. She motivated me to become a better person and a follower of Christ. She was the embodiment of a living lesson.

Nancy: What did you do in Armenia with the Peace Corps?

Jason: When I graduated from college, I wanted to serve, to give back; I was open to the whole world. So I volunteered with the Peace Corps and spent two years (1996-98) in Stepanavan in Armenia teaching English and doing some small business projects. I learned the language (I didn't know any Armenian before I got there), I learned about the people, the culture, the country. And I fell in love with all of it.

Nancy: So after your time with the Peace Corps, you came home and attended Harvard? Why?

Jason: I found myself wanting to deepen my knowledge and experience of faith so I applied to Harvard Divinity School. The faith I saw in Armenians was definitely a part of this inspiration. In Armenia, life comes in straighter doses. If your crop fails or you lose your job or you get sick, you do not have the protections of insurance, job security and the most advanced technologies. You are forced to struggle directly with the big questions of life and must rely on others to strengthen you. Many people lose their faith in such conditions, but others amaze you with the strength they found in God. It was sort of a continuation of the witness I had seen in Mary Kaye.

Nancy: How did the Armenian Volunteer Corps come about?

Jason: I decided to combine my Harvard education with my experiences in Armenia, and with the help of giants like Tom Samuelian and Tamar Hajian of Arlex, we created the AVC. They worked with me to get funding and put the whole thing together. I wanted other people to experience Armenia the way I did; if you're open, it can be an extraordinary religious and cultural experience. We started in 2000 with 6 volunteers; in 2003, we had 15. *(continued on next page)*

Nancy: I have to ask how you met Anna.

Jason (laughs): I didn't figure you for a romantic! We met in Stepanavan while I was in the Peace Corps. Actually, I met her father first; her family was very helpful to me while I was living there. They kind of adopted me and taught me basic things, like how to flush the toilet and where to go to buy things. Ana was like a little sister; she taught me Armenian, I taught her English. The whole family had a piece of my heart. It was difficult saying good-bye. Then when I returned in 2000 to build my AVC staff, I couldn't think of anyone better qualified to help us navigate the cross cultural waters than Anna. So I invited her to join our staff in Yerevan. The rest, as they say, is history. We shared a mission and fell in love working together.

Nancy: And finally, what do you hope to accomplish with the college ministry program?

Jason: Our mission, as I see it, is to support parish priests in opening the doors of the church to college students. The necessary first step in this is to present why faith could change students' lives if they open themselves to explore it. Once this is accomplished everything else will follow. Logistically, we have to find out where our college students are (geographically and spiritually) and with the help of parishioners and students facilitate regular points of contact with the Armenian Christian faith. This contact will take many forms; it may be through a visiting priest, a service project in Armenia, a discussion on faith or a function at the local church. With many different ways to get involved, I think we can come to more college students where they are at, but also not leave them there. Our faith has the power to transform, and we must share with college students how to unlock its hidden potential.

Contact Jason at jasond@armeniandiocese.org

ARMENIAN VOLUNTEER CORPS

What is the AVC? Since founded in 2000, the Armenian Volunteer Corps (AVC) has provided assistance to local Armenian organizations by bringing skilled Diasporan Armenian volunteers of all ages to Armenia for long-term development work.

How Does the AVC Program Work? The AVC has established and maintains a database of now ties with the over 75 organizations in Armenia that apply for volunteer assistance annually. Diasporan Armenians from around the world and of all ages are invited to apply to serve for 2 weeks to one year in Armenia in one or more of these orgs. After a thorough selection process, applicants begin to bridge the link between their home community and Armenia by fundraising for travel expenses. Once in Armenia, volunteers are trained in Eastern Armenian language, cultural adjustment and community development. After living with a host family for a month, volunteers begin their work in different regions of Armenia. Volunteers and staff meet together regularly to evaluate work, cooperate on projects, receive ongoing training and provide support for each other. During the year, Diasporan volunteers stay in contact with their home community, bridging Armenia and the Diaspora and pooling resources to help build Armenia.

Who is the AVC? AVC volunteers are men and women of full or partial Armenian heritage who have come to help build Armenia. AVC Volunteers have diverse professional and educational backgrounds. IT specialists, teachers, architects, PR and marketing specialists, bankers and artists have all shared their skills in Armenia as AVC volunteers. AVC Volunteers are culturally diverse, coming from Canada, England, Australia, U.S., etc. AVC Volunteers come to serve at all ages and stages of life; to date the age range of volunteers is 22 to 72 years old.

Visit www.armenianvolunteer.org to read about the experiences of past participants, learn more about the application process, your stay in Armenia, and read frequently asked questions.

ACYOA and St. Nersess Seminary Join Forces for College Conference

New Rochelle, NY—Sixteen college-age young adults gathered at St. Nersess Seminary over their winter break for the annual Christmas Conference. The theme of the conference was "Emmanuel: How God is Present in Our Lives." Participants engaged in daily worship, panel discussions on young-adult witness and the role of the church in the lives of college students, and enjoyed a trip to New York City.

The conference was the perfect way to relax and 'spiritually recharge', as one participant called it, in between hectic semesters full of classes, midterms, and career planning. Many of the participants will be back at St. Nersess this summer for the Post High School Conference. "The people I met here continue to change me for the better," said Haig Diloyan, a participant from Cambridge, MA. "It's wonderful to have found a place full of such great people." For more information on the upcoming St. Nersess Summer Conferences, visit



Conference participants during an icebreaker.

www.stnersess.edu or e-mail info@stnersess.edu.



Hye Hokin
Armenian Church Youth Organization of America
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH

12-14 Fifth Annual National Young Adult Leadership Conference—Stony Point, NY

APRIL

4 Palm Sunday (ACYOA Youth Day)

11 Easter Sunday

24 Armenian Martyrs Day



MAY

27-31 ACYOA General Assembly and National Sports Weekend—Dallas, TX

JUNE

17-20 St. Nersess Young Professionals' Weekend Conference—New Rochelle, NY

22 ASP leaves for Armenia

JULY

15 ASP arrives from Armenia

18 Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord

SUMMER 2004

ARMENIA

ARMENIA SERVICE PROGRAM (ASP)

AGES 18-28

June 22-July 15

Questions? E-mail asp@acyoa.org

St. Nersess Armenian Seminary 2004 Summer Conferences

June 17-20

Young Professionals' Weekend

June 24-July 3

Deacons' Training and Liturgical Music

August 13-20

Post High School

To download an application and see other conference dates, visit www.stnersess.edu