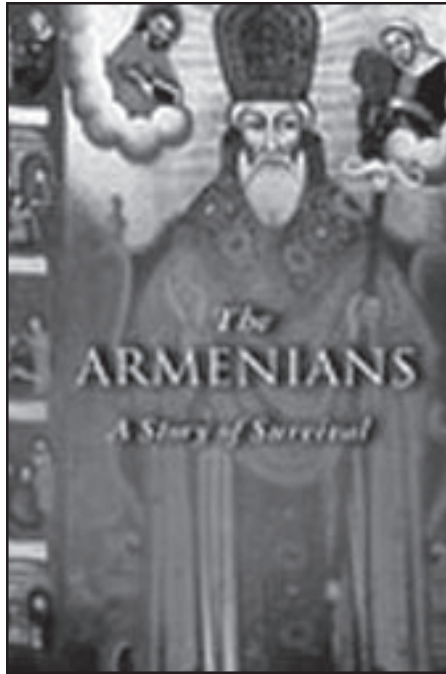


KCET Airs 'Armenian: A Story Of Survival' On April 24

Armenians: A Story of Survival, a film by Emmy-Award winning producer Andrew Goldberg, airs Thursday, April 24 (8:00-9:00 p.m.) on KCET. Filmed in 12 countries, the documentary explores the Armenian people's struggle from their humble beginnings to their near elimination and beyond.

Narrated by Academy Award winner Olympia Dukakis, Armenians: A Story of Survival includes interviews with scholars and writers, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wisel, Dr. Robert J. Lifton, author of *The Nazi Doctors*, and Peter Balakin, author of *Black Dog of Fate*. This program also includes interviews with the Head of the Armenian Church and the President of Armenia.

Broadcast as part of Armenian Remembrance Month, Armenians: A Story of Survival follows the journey of the Armenian people starting from their beginnings near the Middle East, where they were identified only by their different language, and continues with Armenia's conversion to Christianity in 301 A.D. The documentary also explores some of the countless wars Armenians have fought to defend their faith, Armenia's domination by numerous



empires and the near-elimination of its people during the first Genocide of the 20th century. Also profiled are the birth of the Armenian nation, which achieved its independence from the Soviet Union and became a member of the United Nations in the early 1990s; the Armenian Diaspora; Armenia's war with neighboring Azerbaijan; and the future of the country and its people.

Fresno

Armenian Minister From Turkey To Keynote Genocide Month Gathering

An Armenian pastor whose ministry is based in the Republic of Turkey will speak at the oldest Armenian Church in the State of California.

Reverend Krikor Aghabaloghlu will keynote the Spring 2008 Dinner of the First Armenian Presbyterian Church Men's Fellowship.

The dinner event, honoring the faith and sacrifices of the Armenian Martyrs of 1915, will take place on Tuesday evening, April 29, 2008, at the church campus, 430 South First Street at Huntington Boulevard in Fresno.

The evening will begin with ethnic appetizers at 6:30 p.m. and continue with a barbecue steak and chicken dinner at 7 p.m. The event is open to the public and reservations, at \$10 per person, may be made by calling George Karkazian at (559) 434-9009.

The keynote speaker was born in 1957 in Arapkir, Turkey near the confluence of the Eastern and Western branches of the Euphrates Rivers. After receiving his early education in his native city and Malatya Province, Aghabaloghlu matriculated at the University of Istanbul, a state institution dating to A.D. 1453. He majored in the history of Turkey as an undergraduate and received a Bachelors of Education Degree in 1979.

Some years later, Aghabaloghlu completed graduate work at the Bitinia Bible School of Istanbul. In September 1999, the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East granted him a license to preach and perform the Sacraments at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Gedik Pasha, Kumkapi, Istanbul. Three years later he was ordained a Minister of the Word and Sacraments and continues

to serve as pastor of the Gedik Pasha congregation. He is married to the former Maria Semerji and they have two children.

Founded in 1850, the Gedik Pasha church is one of the oldest Armenian Evangelical houses of worship in the Republic of Turkey and was the home church of the late Hrant Dink, founding editor of the influential *Agos Weekly* newspaper.

In 2005, the Turkish national television channel, Flash TV, invited Aghabaloghlu to participate in a five-hour live talk show on the topic of the Armenian Genocide. The young pastor had once been jailed for challenging the confiscation of church property by the authorities. Shocking his broadcast hosts, he told viewers there was no doubt genocide had occurred and that citizens of Anatolia knew the truth about the subject. He insisted that a member of the clergy has the obligation to tell the truth and he refused to allow himself to be silenced.

The host congregation in Fresno has its roots in the Ottoman Empire of 19th Century Turkey. On July 25, 1897, 40 immigrants from Marsovan, a town in the Central Black Sea region, chartered the First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno. The boyhood church of authors William Saroyan and A.I. Bezzerides, FAPC today has a multigenerational congregation drawn from the Old and New Worlds.

The Fresno congregation is marking its 110th Anniversary Year with the theme, "Becoming the Church." FAPC is a member congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America.

Meridian School 26th Anniversary Banquet Celebration

AMAA Vice President Peter Kougasian, Esq. Keynote Speaker New High School Project Highlighted

By Joyce Abdulian

The Universal Sheraton Hotel Roof Garden was, on March 2, 2008, the celebration site of the 26th anniversary of the Charlotte and Elise Merdianian Armenian Evangelical School. Peter Kougasian, an Assistant District Attorney of New York City was Keynote speaker. He spoke about the importance of an Armenian Evangelical education such as the one offered at Merdianian. He shared how his ancestor's Armenian Evangelical faith and education continues to influence him.

Mr. Kougasian, works in the office of Robert Morgenthau—grandson of Henry Morgenthau, the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during World War I. He relayed a warm message from Mr. Morgenthau. He shared how the Morgenthau family are fierce partisans of the Armenian people in the world today stating "Armenian blood flows through their veins and whenever there is an Armenian cause, they can always be counted on to try to bring a sense of justice."

The evening began with the honoring of Armenian history and language teacher Ashkhen Ispendjian. Board of Directors Chairman, Dr. Hrair Atikian honored Mrs. Ispendjian for her 25 years of devoted service to the students and school. She came to Merdianian after serving in Lebanon as a teacher and principal for 20 years. Here, she not only taught Armenian language and history, but prepared textbooks for these courses when no such books existed. Mrs. Ispendjian expressed her appreciation for the honor and confessed she "lied" to her students claiming no knowledge of English in order to encourage their use and understanding of Armenian.

Former students honored her. Duduk player Armen Kvryan, performed a musical piece and Greg Martayan, stated, "Merdianian is not just a school feeding into college prep schools. Merdianian is the prep school for life."

Also honored were individuals who have served 15 years or more on the Board of Directors. The late Mrs. Alice Haig was highlighted as the "First chairperson and moving force

behind the school from its inception 27 years ago." Accepting her award posthumously was her husband, Dr. Vahe Pierre Haig. The other honorees were: Zaven Khanjian, Koko Balian, Samir Ekmekji, Hrach Sarkis, and Dr. Nazareth Darakjian,

Dr. Steve Aharonian, AMAA President, encouraged the gathering to continue their financial support for the growth of the school—pledging AMAA's support by raising 10% of the cost. A conditional-use permit for the new expansion has been granted as of this printing, adding 13,100 square feet on the same school site for a high school. The projected cost is about \$7 million. The student population will have the capacity to increase from 260 to 650.

Principal Hovsep Inejikian stressed the importance of a high school by stating; "When the students leave us at the end of middle school, they are still teenagers. They are not fully committed to their Armenian Christian heritage."

Master of ceremonies Dr. Nazareth Darakjian stated how the school started with, "a few visionaries and with a lot of faith and hope." Miss Elise Merdianian made the school possible by donating her entire estate to the AMAA.

An architectural drawing of the proposed new high school was proudly exhibited by the building committee consisting of Samir Ekmekji, Dr. Hrair Atikian, Hrach Sarkis, and Hrair Mouradian. Evening co-chairpersons Helga Sarkis and Seta Nalbandian, along with their committee, were encouraged by the enthusiasm shared by the evenings large crowd and some impromptu donations. The Lark Musical Societies Women's Acappella Chorus provided the musical portion of the evening under the direction of Maestro Vatsche Barsoumian.

From the humble beginning in 1982 with only 13 students and no campus of their own, Merdianian has developed into this unique Armenian Evangelical School shaping the lives of hundreds of students as they envelop their Armenian Christian heritage coupled with a first class education. Elise Merdianian's dream was realized beyond her expectations.

Armenia: Picking up the Pieces

Continued from page 3

as usual will not be possible until serious steps are taken to reconcile the Armenian polity as well as to address the root causes of the current instability.

If the government does not take credible steps to implement the measures recommended above and if arrests of opposition members continue:

- the EU and U.S. should sus-

pend foreign aid;

- the Council of Europe should consider suspending Armenia's membership; and

- the U.S., EU and EU member states should consider, especially if there is more violence, initiating a diplomatic embargo on visits by President Sarkisian and senior officials of the security services.

Yerevan/Tbilisi/Brussels,
8 April 2008

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