

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**St. Leon Armenian Church Women's Guild Celebrates 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**By Donna Hortian**

St. Leon Armenian Church of Fair Lawn, NJ celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its Women's Guild on Sunday, September 23, 2018. In the sanctuary certificates and gifts were presented honoring the 21 ladies who have been continuous Women's Guild members for 45-69 years followed by a catered luncheon in Abajian Hall. Collectively these women served a total of 2,454 years! Beginning with the longest-serving member, the honorees are listed by name followed by their years of membership; those who transferred to St. Leon from another parish have a "T" after their years of service: Lucy Dabagian (69) also served as church organist for 25 years and was the first Women's Guild Central Council Chairman, Yn. Violet Kasparian (67-T), Emerald Noorigian (66), Edna Tungrian (66), Margaret Jerrahian (64), Grace Pinajian (64), Shakae Shahinian (62-T), Sonia Tashjian (62-T), Lillian Kasparian Chapian (56), Anne Kachigian (53), Arline Dadekian (51), Margaret Minassian (51-T), Anne Bchakjian (50), Rose Kirian (50), Berjuhi Varjabedian (50), Marian Kahaumjian (49-T), Ruth Bedevian (48), Seta Jessourian (48), Gloria Tomasian (48), Satenig Loughead (48), and Dikris Malool (45-T). A twenty-second member, Violet Voskian ( ), died shortly before the luncheon and was honored posthumously.

Attendees entered Abajian Hall to an audio-visual tribute to many Women's Guild members both past and present entitled "*Footprints in*

*the Heart*” prepared with love by Ruth Bedevian. The afternoon opened with the beautiful voices of Daniella Ashbahian and her young daughter Sophia singing the “Star Spangled Banner” and “Mer Hayrenik”. After a prayer by Fr. Diran, a toast by Parish Council Chairman Lorig Chorluyan and a welcome by Women’s Guild Chairlady Nancy Scicchitano guests enjoyed the mezze and luncheon. Mistress of Ceremonies Dawn Hourdajian kept the flow of the program going smoothly, interjecting heartfelt thoughts and humorous stories between the various speakers, which included Women’s Guild Central Council Chairman Charlotte Sevazlian. The highlight of the program was a Power-Point presentation “*Church-Loving Women thru 9 Decades*” created and edited by Ruth Bedevian and Lucy Chagachbanian. Narrated by Ruth Bedevian, it showcased the dedicated work of our Women’s Guild and many of its past members. The audience’s oohs, ahhs and applause could be heard during the presentation, especially when the faces of our dearly departed and sorely missed members appeared on the screen.

More than 250 parishioners and guests were in attendance, filling Abajian Hall with warmth and pride. An outstanding and creative commemorative booklet documented 90 years with a timeline and colorful photos of both Women’s Guild members and our beloved Church. A touching section highlighted memories contributed by individual members of the guild. A colorful laminated reproduction of the St. Sahag stained glass window in the sanctuary made a fitting and memorable addition as a bookmark and keepsake since the window was actually donated to St. Leon by the Ladies Aid Society in 1965 after the church moved from Paterson to Fair Lawn.

That afternoon, many left feeling thankful for the hard work and sacrifice of the pioneering women who blazed the trail to insure the continuity of the Armenian faith and culture in America. Nine decades later, we feel blessed to have a vibrant and dedicated group of women who continue on that journey today and hopefully for many years to come.