



# Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland

## THE PRIMATE'S ACTIVITIES ANNUAL STATEMENT

Thank you for attending the AGM of ACT UK. This year is exceptional as we are meeting online. Today I would like to share with you some general ideas. At the end of this report, you will find some highlights of activities, most of which have been shared and published in our weekly newsletters. It has been a tough year for ACT UK as we have not been able to do fundraising for various causes due to the onset of the pandemic and the war in Artsakh.

Jesus says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11). During the whole period of lock down it was a priority for me to be in touch with the whole community. I had to take the lead and provide guidance in a new situation and the midst of uncertainties. It has been challenging as the COVID-19 was a new and unknown disease. We did not know what would happen and where this would lead us. Thanks to God, the majority of the Armenian organisations came together and started to collaborate closely. We also worked very well with sister Churches. This included helping out those who were in need with food deliveries, telephone calls, constant video messages and pastoral counseling. Even though we know much about the COVID-19, vaccination is rolling out and the lockdown has been eased significantly, dealing with the COVID-19 remains a priority in our pastoral work specially to deal with mental and other problems that the Pandemic and lockdown has created for our members.

Online prayer services, lectures and discussions have become part of our lives. We have even had an online Summer Festival. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank Fr. Grigoris, Fr. Shnork and Fr. Nshan as well as all the deacons who helped me and have been doing great work during this period. Talking about online services, Bible studies and other presentations, I would also like to thank Tamara Stepan who regularly sends e-mails and helps to inform people about upcoming online events. We have been able to carry on the Church services uninterruptedly and broadcast it online especially from our Churches online. I also thank our parishes.

Our reality has become hybrid, and this will continue. However, we have been able to have also in person gatherings and events at Bishop's House adhering to COVID-19 rules. We are in search of a permanent center and we are negotiating with different entities. Meanwhile we are trying to use the Bishop's house as a center. When conditions allow, we have gatherings almost every Sunday afternoon and on other particular occasions. Thanks to our benefactors and supporters we have been able to obtain guitars, chess, backgammon, table tennis and create an atmosphere where youth and young adults will come together and spend time

together. Of course, we do not forget our seniors who sometimes join our events. This has become a place where people meet each other, make new friendships and many good ideas are being generated here. We also have the possibility to help students with accommodation for a short stay. We are resuming these activities, which also strengthens the feeling of community. We also continue searching for the place.

Our children's club continues to meet virtually. Hopefully they will start in person gatherings. Yeretskin Lusine Shahinyan has taken the lead of this club with some of the volunteers. Even though we were able to hold services in London, the Church services were interrupted in other parishes. Now we are resuming visiting other communities. Fr. Nshan is helping me with mission parish outreach programs serving the Birmingham community. Last year we visited Guildford and celebrated mass for the Armenian living in Surrey and Sussex at the Guildford Cathedral. We also have sent a questionnaire to the local Armenians to find out their spiritual needs and we are planning our local service at St. Mary's Church in Worplesdon on August 7th. There is an interest and hopefully we will be able to form a new mission parish.

The outbreak of war in Karabakh has affected us all. Since then, I have been in touch with Church leaders and members of various organisations as well as different newly formed Artsakh Heritage protections committees. We have been able to form an International Independent Group on Nagorno Karabakh as well. Apart from a series of online lectures, most of the work is not visible but there is a huge progress in increasing awareness and advocacy. We also participate in various programs of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin helping the refugees and internally displaced people, creating a physiotherapy center for wounded soldiers in Izmirlian hospital ( to treat 250 patients per annum) and PTSD projects (we will start training a small number of Army chaplains). We do this in collaboration with Barnabas International and our local Armenian volunteers. Here I would like to thank our embassy also for their support of this work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the trustees of the ACT UK, Mr Hovnan Hampatsoumian, Mrs Ayda Lundon, Mr Alan Simonian and Mr Viken Haladjian for all their hard work and time that they have dedicated to ACT UK. Thank you also to Dr Hratch Tchilingirian for all his support as an advisor and helping with organizing events at Arachnortaran.

At the Primate office we have a limited number of people. Mrs Hrachik Sarian has been helping me with almost all programs. Grace Sargsyan and a university student intern Angelika Ghazaryan have joined recently. Zorik Gasparian voluntarily is helping out with videography. I would like to thank the Ladies Committees who are volunteers helping out to do various projects, ASF team, our Youth, Parishes and last but not least our volunteers. My gratitude also goes to all the benefactors and supporters for their continued support. Finally thank you to all Armenian organizations here in UK for their support.

Please see below the list some of the activities. However, this does not include regular or weekly/monthly events such as attendance of weekly services, house blessings and regular meetings of the ACT UK trustees, the Armenian Summer Festival meetings, IIWG meetings, regular online meetings of the Youth, various trainings sessions, and particularly since May 2020, there has been series of online prayer services and Bible study on weekly basis. Work

at the Primate's office, various programs such as Armenian Book Club, Children's club, various workshops, and presentations.

## **YEAR 2020 ACTIVITIES**

### **January**

**16-24<sup>th</sup> Jan:** Organised and participated on in a Pilgrimage to Holy Land

**31<sup>st</sup> Jan:** Organised the screening of a film in honour of Mr Assadour Guzelian

**2<sup>nd</sup> Feb:** Presided over the celebration of Mr. Stepan Ovanessoff a prominent member of the community and a deacon of St. Sarkis Church as he was decorated with St. Sahag and St. Mesrob medal of the Armenian Church.

### **February**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Feb:** Christmas Delivery: Accompanied Youth to deliver Christmas baskets to elderly

**8<sup>th</sup> Feb:** Celebrated the Feast of St Sarkis at the Chapel of Pembroke College

**22<sup>nd</sup> Feb:** Celebrated Liturgy at Guildford Cathedral

### **March**

**9<sup>th</sup> Mar:** Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey: Attended the commonwealth with Her Majesty The Queen that led the congregation.

**20<sup>th</sup> Mar:** Celebrating the feast of St. Gregory's commitment to Khor Virab at St Sarkis Church

**25<sup>th</sup> Mar:** Bishop Hovakim attended an online meeting of the Bishops and Church leaders of Kensington and Chelsea discussing challenges that the Churches face during the COVID-19 and beyond.

### **April**

**5-11<sup>th</sup> Apr:** Presided over Holy Week Services at St Sarkis and St Yeghiche churches

**24<sup>th</sup> Apr:** Participated in Armenian Genocide Commemoration Virtual 'March',

### **May**

**8<sup>th</sup> May:** The Primate participated in zoom meetings with all the Bishops of the Armenian Church in Europe. They discussed pastoral questions relating to the mission of the Church especially during the Covid-19 crisis.

**9<sup>th</sup> May:** Participated in these zoom meetings with the Oriental Orthodox and Anglican Bishops in the UK to form short- and long-term plans for the future.

## **June**

**19<sup>th</sup> June:** Organised an online lecture titled: “Fake News and the Good news”, presented by Dr Hratch Tchilingirian

## **July**

**26<sup>th</sup> July:** Prayer for peace and solidarity following the Divine Liturgy, a special commemoration ceremony was held at St Yeghiche Church

## **August**

**16<sup>th</sup> Aug:** Organised a Garden party in Aid of Lebanon

## **September**

**13<sup>th</sup> Sep:** Celebrating the feast of cross and blessing traditional Armenian Matagh at Bishop’s House.

## **October**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Oct:** Celebrated Pan-Armenian Prayer for Peace in support of Artsakh and our Heroes at St. Sarkis Armenian Church

**25<sup>th</sup> Oct:** Presided over a remembrance prayer service for our soldiers and Martyrs at St Yeghiche Church

## **November**

**6<sup>th</sup> Nov:** A Call for Prayer and Fasting: For the Peace of our Homeland

**9-14<sup>th</sup> Nov:** Led a group of international journalists, diaspora Armenians, local clergy, and members of Tufenkian Foundation to Artsakh

**22<sup>nd</sup> Nov:** Memorial service held at St Yeghiche church

## **YEAR 2021**

### **January**

**8<sup>th</sup> Jan:** Organised online ASF fundraiser event  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GT3Affbt3cY>

### **February**

**26<sup>th</sup> Feb:** Presided over the lenten online service with the guest speak HG Bishop Christopher of Coventry celebrating the 33rd anniversary of Pogroms of Sumgait.

### **March**

**5<sup>th</sup> Mar:** Presided over the Lenten service with the guest speak The very Revd. Cor Episcopos Prof Dr Fr Patrick Sookhdeo.

### **April**

**9<sup>th</sup> Apr:** Organised a lecture titled: “Complete Erasure, Documenting the destruction of Nakhichevans Armenian past” led by Mr Simon Maghakyan

**14<sup>th</sup> Apr:** Organised a lecture by Dr Christina Maranci, titled: The medieval Armenian Monasteries and Churches in Artsakh

**23<sup>rd</sup> Apr:** Participated with other church leaders discussing the impact of Covid and beyond.

**24<sup>th</sup> Apr:** Attended and organised the Genocide Remembrance service at Coventry Cathedral

**25<sup>th</sup> Apr:** Attended the Genocide Remembrance Sunday at St Yeghiche church

### **May**

**12<sup>th</sup> May:** Organised a lecture titled: “Christianity in Karabakh”, Led by Dr Hratch Tchilingirian