

Year of Church and Home: One in Spirit

A Presentation for
Regional Conferences
Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church



Church and Home

- Two Primary Institutions that Shape our Identity as Armenian Christians
- To be effective, they need to work together



Oneness of Spirit

- Many meanings and manifestations
 - fostering a sense of belonging,
 - actively drawing people to church as a community gathering place (*ecclesia* – which is what **yegeghetsi** եկեղեցի means)
 - equipping the Home to bear more of the burden of transmitting Armenian Christian spirit and culture.



Rapidly Changing World

- Cultural transmission shift
 - from formal to informal institutions
 - from periodic to episodic
- Pace of life and competing demands on time and attention
- Drift from regular commitments world-wide
 - drop in regular Sunday or Saturday School attendance, regular church going



Church has mission

- Tend its flock –founded by the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew and organized by St. Gregory the Enlightener
- New times demand new ways
- Finding our place in faith community
- Keeping faith with our entire flock
- Gather rather than cull
- Hereditary denomination



Tending the Flock Where it is

- Take into account the special needs of our flock today
- Take into account its diversity –
 - generational and country of origin
 - more often at Home than at Church
 - more often non-Armenian speaking than Armenian-speaking
 - more often unschooled and unchurched than schooled or churched



No longer "One Size Fits All"

- By reliable counts, more than 20 distinct subgroups in the Armenian Flock
- Ethnic background, Cultural Knowledge, Church Affiliation
 - Various subgroups within each
 - Very different needs
 - Beyond our current resources at the parish or Diocesan Level

Dilemma of Hereditary Denominations

- 20th-21th Century – Decoupling
 - Religious Affiliation
trend: individual conscience
 - Ethnic Background
trend: intermarriage
 - Enculturation
trend: bi-cultural, multi-cultural, non-Armenian
Dominant



Pace of Change

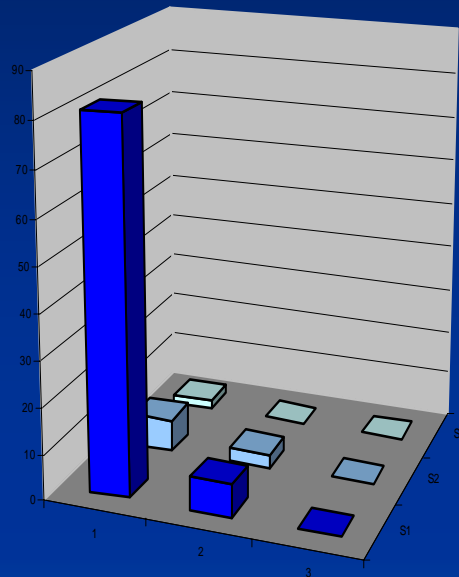
- Discrete, not Gradual
- **Religious Affiliation**
Armenian Churched, Other Churched, Un-churched (some double-dipping)
- Ethnic Background
>50% loss per generation
- **Enculturation**
usually one dominant, rarely balanced, quick erosion after 1st generation



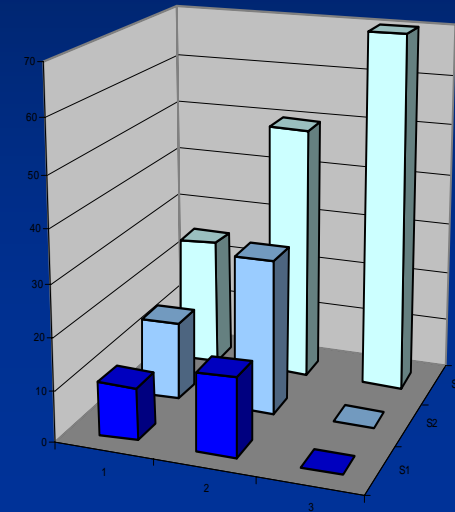
Demographic Drift

1920

2040



Armenian Dominant



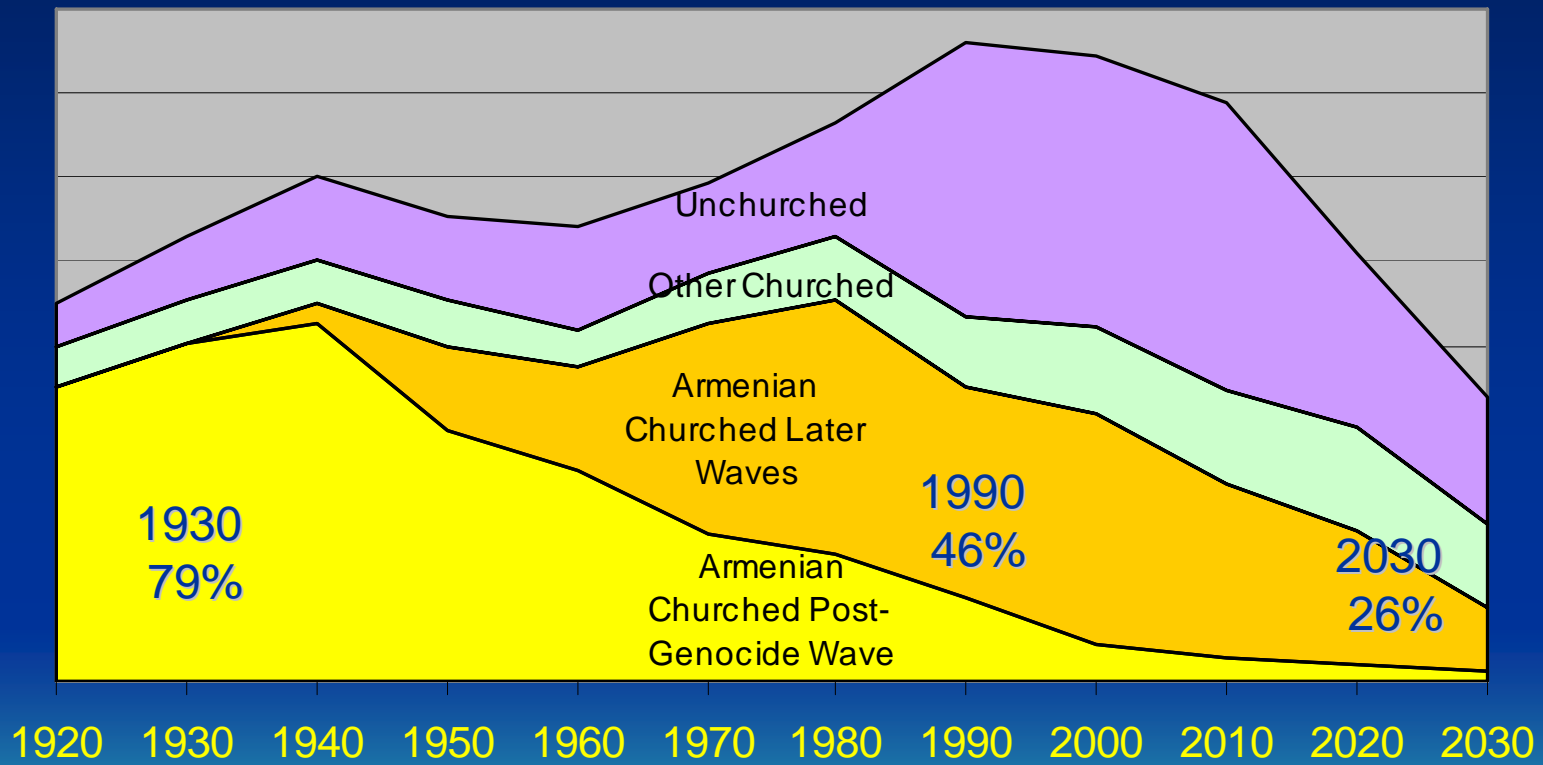
Non-Armenian Dominant



Demographic Simulation Ethnic Core

1920

2030



1930
79%

1990
46%

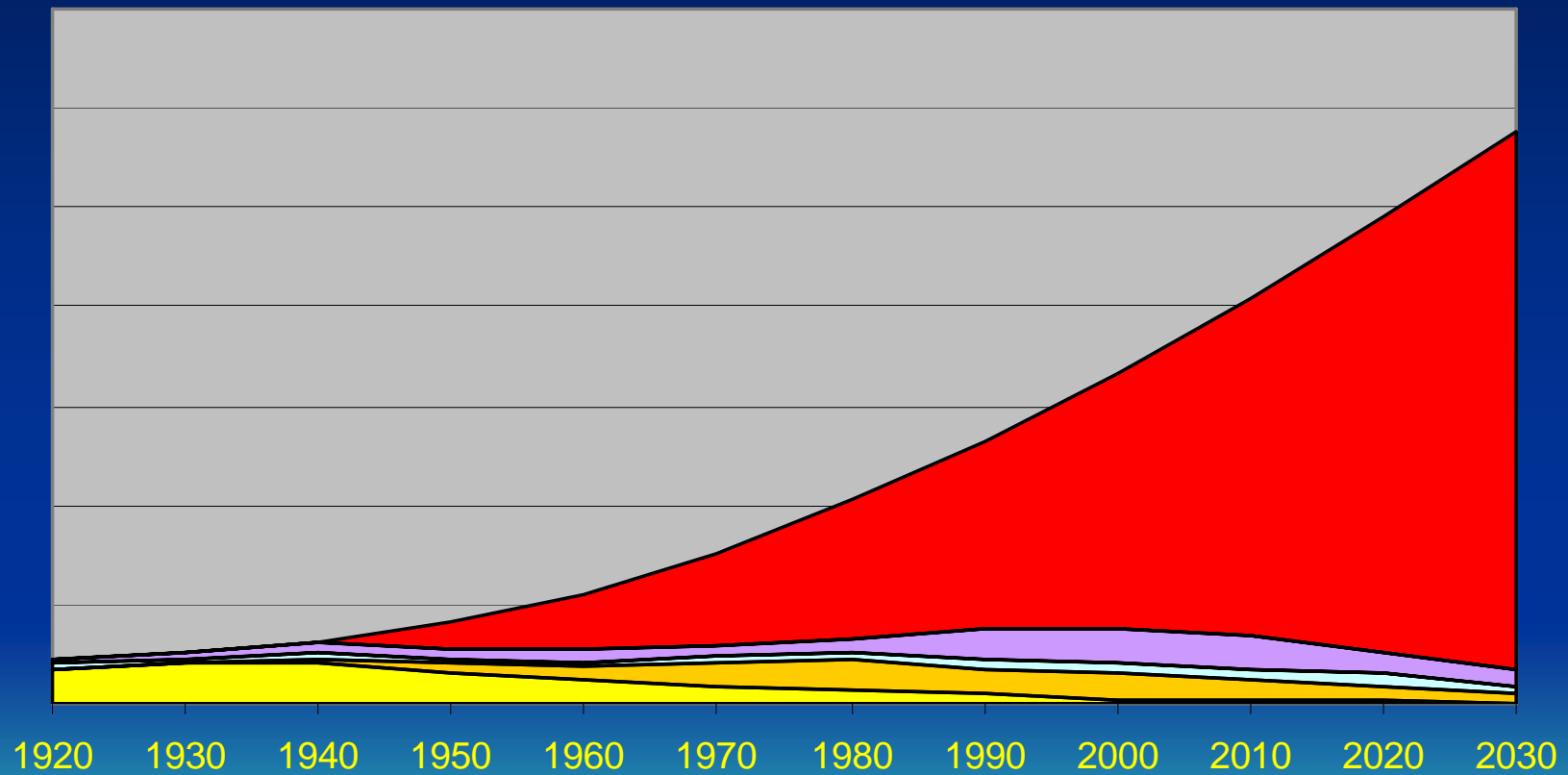
2030
26%



Demographic Simulation - All

1920

2030



Many Paths from Home to Church

- Sometimes via **regular attendance at Church School or Services**
- Sometimes via **home study and training** – a **dedicated and knowledgeable parent, grandparent, relative, neighbor or friend**
- Sometimes via **immersion programs in the US**, such as St. Nersess Conferences, St. Vartan Camp, ACYOA
- Often via **immersion programs in Armenia**, such as Armenian Service Program, Armenian Volunteer Corps, Birthright Armenia



Church - Shepherd to All

- guides its flock, lighting the way on these various paths
- church provides caring, knowledge, inspiration, examples
- Church and Home are truly one in spirit
- Sacred Trust - well-being of the next generation



Church - Home to All

- a place where
 - people feel welcome
 - they feel comfortable
 - they feel they belong
 - they are accepted
 - Comfort, competence necessary for commitment
 - Belonging and ownership necessary for commitment



Find Common Ground in our Diversity

- Church as a place of **sacramental** and **social** communion
 - Caring, Hospitality and Values
 - Meeting people where they are
 - Helping them feel comfortable and competent
- By design, not by chance



The Gavit/Kavit & Sanctuary

- Many Armenian Churches traditionally have a Gavit (Kavit) and a Sanctuary
- Our Badarak reminds us each Sunday at the beginning of the Communion Service
- "Mi vok herakhayits" Մի ոք յերախայից . . . "Only the baptized may take communion"
- The Kavit is where the laity gathered for instruction and fellowship
- The Sanctuary is the primary place of worship, where sacraments are administered



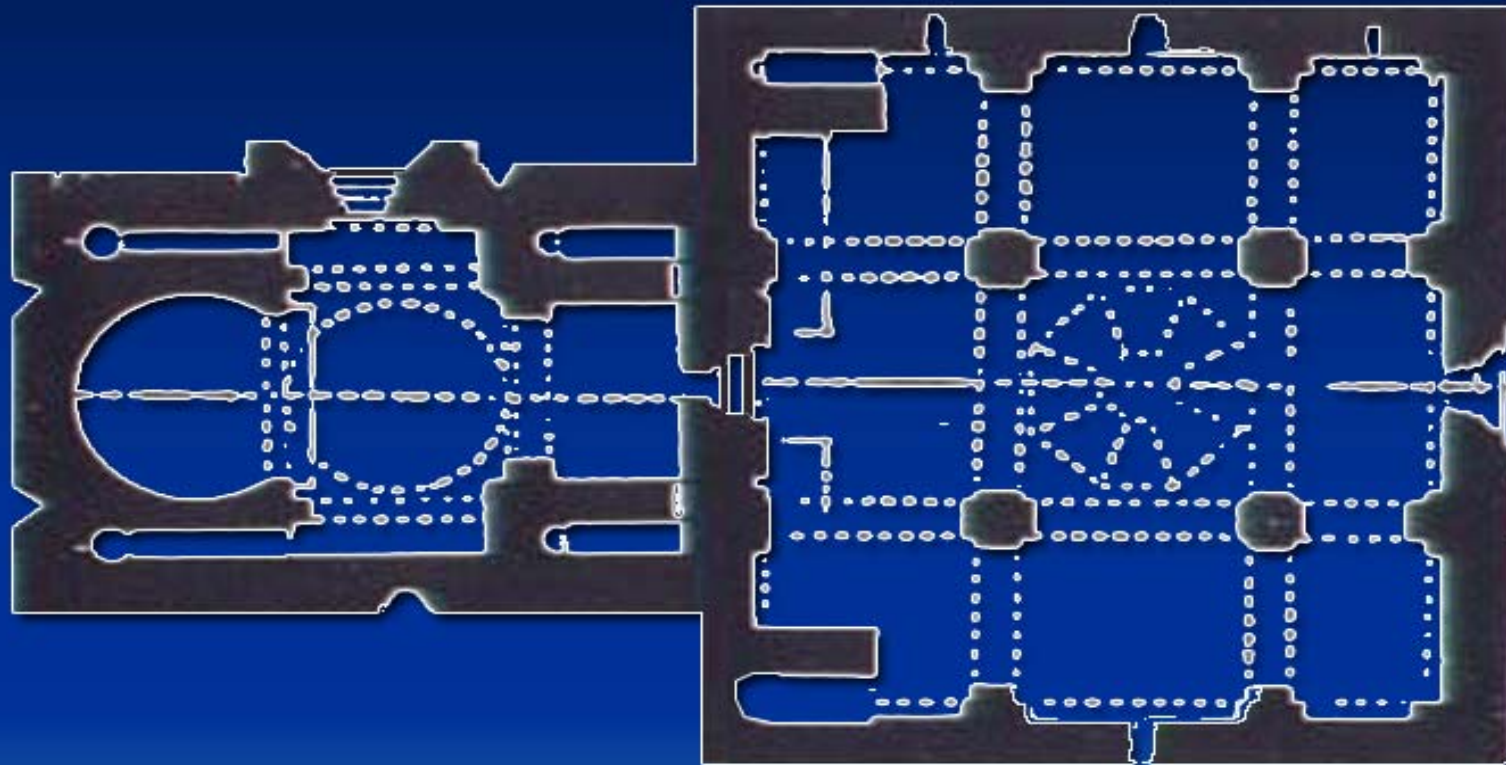


Saghmosavank Armenia



Sanctuary

Kavit



Sanctuary



Kavit



The Kavita Today - Underutilized?

- Today's Kavita is the hall and school rooms.
- The Kavita is a place to **learn and build community** – It is the natural bridge between Church and Home
- The Kavita catches people on the way from home to church



Where to Start

- Which Groups? Which tasks?
 - best to build on what's begun
 - find those who are seeking and help them become more involved
 - focus on essentials "Back to Basics"
 - tailor to audience
 - look at the trends
 - Much as we may want to, can't do everything for everyone at once



Home to Church

- Observation: Often the most **direct route from home to church** is via **immersion programs** in the US and the homeland



Post-Immersion Drift

- We invest in these programs and people, but don't follow up effectively
 - lack social infrastructure
 - many highly motivated alumni are in post-immersion drift rather than engagement
 - need to enhance our institutional capacity to facilitate re-engagement
 - facilitate passing along and spreading their knowledge and enthusiasm



Why this Starting Point?

- Identifiable Group
- Demonstrated Interest and Receptivity
- Church has Capacity to Address their Needs
- Once again - Not the only Group
- No one-size fits all
- We have to start somewhere
- Don't have the resources to do everything for everyone
- Not the only thing that needs to be taught
- Just because we can't do everything for everyone, doesn't mean we should not do what we can for this group



Approach Tailored to Group

- People for whom a missing piece is a more detailed understanding of the text and language of the Communion Service
- A sacred language or text not like a conversational language. It can be mastered, it is finite, learnable in small increments.



Back to Basics

- Comfort and Competence during Communion
- Different methods for different types
- Make Hayr Mer a daily, home ritual, at rising, grace at dinner or before going to bed



Back to Basics

- making sure people understand the basic tenets of our faith
- the basic seasons and key holy days
- the basic saints who built our faith and church
- the events and people that have shaped our flock
- enough of the language and culture to feel like they belong



Attainable Goal

- The core of the Badarak – the Communion Service is short, repetitive - many related words, many cognates or international words
- Best of all, mastery of the Hayr Mer and roughly 10-15 phrases covers about 70% of the linguistic ground
- Moreover, many are also words that are useful in everyday life – e.g., hats, marmin, aryun, yergir, yergink, orti, hayr, hoki, hաց, մարմին, արիւն, երկիր, երկինք, որդի, հայր, մայր, հոգի



Program:

"Getting to the Root of It"

- **First-step** – just to put the text with clear explanations in peoples' hands, with a 'Study Guide'
- **Next** – handouts, worksheets, on-line exercises, down-loadable audio and other materials, web-sites, correspondence courses, etc.
- Coming throughout this year



Summary

- **In the Sanctuary** – active understanding and participation in the Communion Service
- **In the Kavit** – active commitment to better ourselves, our understanding, our faith and our world
- **At Home** – equip home with materials, in print and on-line, equip the home to teach, reinforce the Hayr Mer as daily prayer.



Resources

- www.arak29.am (Church - Tutorial)
- www.badarak.am (Church Armenian Tutorial)
- www.sharakan.am (Calendar)
- www.birthrightarmenia.org (E. Arm. Tutorial)
- www.stgregoryofnarek.am

Thank you!

