

Former Pastors of Our Church
Rev. S. K. Emurian
(Served 1951 to 1954)



Answered call on May 1, 1951 at age 77 as our first full-time Pastor. Halleluiah! When Rev. Emurian came it allowed Rev. R. Allen Brown to return as the Pastor of East Ocean View Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Sisag Krikor Emurian was a native of Armenia who became an American citizen in 1907 in Cleveland. He originally came to America to become an opera singer and for a time was a pioneer gospel singer with a local Norfolk Radio Station WTAR. Even though he eventually answered the call of the ministry, he continued to sing and compose church music throughout his life. His best-known solo was an arrangement of "The Lord's Prayer" which he composed in 1914, and another hymn "God's Best From Me." In 1936 he published "The Westminster Catechism." Preparing for pastoral turnover, Rev. Emurian attended the last service conducted by Rev. R. Allen Brown, where Rev. Brown introduced Rev. Emurian to the congregation as the new pastor. As a slight variation to the normal turnover, Rev. Brown asked Rev. Emurian to sing a solo to the 23 members present, which he joyfully did.

Rev. Emurian was a widely known Presbyterian Pastor-Evangelist. Before coming to Bayside he served twelve churches in the Norfolk Presbytery, including Zuni Presbyterian Church, earning him the nickname “The Bishop.” Since five of the twelve churches were founded by Rev. Emurian, he was also known as the “Builder of Churches.”

An interesting story that involved Rev. Emurian went something like this: Landsdale Presbyterian opened in the mid-1950s. Rev. Emurian was its Pastor and wanted a pulpit Bible for the Sanctuary. Mr. and Mrs. Allen/Edna Carithers donated the Bible. Landsdale Presbyterian was later renamed St. Columba Presbyterian serving the 1600 residents of the Robin Hood apartment complex off Military Highway. When St. Columba dissolved as a church, Edna Carithers asked about the Bible. The Norfolk Presbytery returned the Bible to Edna, who donated it to the chapel at Westminster Canterbury, where she was living at the time (i.e., circa 1984). Westminster Canterbury was developed as a joint venture by the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, and at the time Edna donated the Bible, the Executive Director of Westminster Canterbury was the Rev. Daniel D. Dickenson, who later volunteered his time to supply our church after Rev. Keever left in 2008.

During Rev. Emurian’s short three-year tenure a lot was accomplished. We have much information on his term because he kept a diary. He was a big believer in setting goals – membership goals, VBS goals, Men and Women’s Fellowship goals, and equipment/furnishing goals for the church. He set goals for several choirs to be established – senior and junior. He set a goal for the organization of the boys and girls of the community into scout groups.

He made calls to the homes of the people in the Robbins Corner area – it was a daily afternoon mission for him. He was known to drive to various neighborhoods and would stop the car when he spotted children playing outside. He would get out of the car and play Sunday School songs on a hand held organ for them. He visited the local schools to sing, and teach hymns. He motivated people to serve in various capacities to help the church mature. Quarterly pot-luck dinners were held. He encouraged the membership to branch out and attend meetings at the Norfolk Presbytery for the purpose of “forming friendships with other churches, enlarging of horizons, and opening visions of new activities.” Under his guidance Bayside became an ecumenical-minded church. His enthusiasm and optimism were infectious, and he used these traits along with a lot of charisma and singing talents to bring people to the church.

One of the first things he did when he came was to change the worship service from afternoon to morning. All of our pastors before him were part time pastors, and could only conduct only evening worship services. He initiated the first Vacation Bible School in our church; created the first budget; issued the first church envelopes; and issued the first church bulletins. As membership grew he saw the need for a building expansion to increase space for additional Sunday School classrooms. He saw to the budget and fund raising needed for the expansion. He turned the first spadeful of dirt at the groundbreaking. When it was completed, the new addition was named the “Emurian Building.” In addition, a Vestibule was added to the Sanctuary – having been built by the volunteer efforts of a member of the congregation. He presided over the enlarging of the pulpit area of the Sanctuary and building of two choir lofts for the Senior and Junior choirs he wanted. A new

heating system was installed. The church grounds were landscaped and concrete sidewalks poured. A Manse Committee was appointed for the building of a Manse. The Men's Fellowship presented a Spinet Electric Organ to the church. On March 31, 1954 Boy Scout Troop 364 received its charter.

Mrs. Emurian served as Rev. Emurian's able assistant in building and organizing the church. She wrote the church history from 1952 – 1954. She was very active in the Women of the Church – as soon as the Emurians arrived, Mrs. Emurian visited the Women's Circle meeting, and later led several Bible studies, served on the nominating committee and the budget committee, and served as the first President of its only circle in 1952. In 1953, she continued to serve as the President of Circle 1, and Circle 2 was established.

A crowning achievement in Rev. Emurian's tenure was that Robbins Corner Chapel grew/evolved sufficiently as to enable it to reorganize as Bayside Presbyterian Church. The formal organization and dedication of the church was a stated goal of Rev. Emurian's in 1953. On July 30, 1953 Council voted that when the church was formally organized it would be named "Bayside Presbyterian Church." And beginning Sunday, September 6, 1953, members of the church signed a petition to the Norfolk Presbytery stating they were ready to assume the responsibilities of a regularly organized church. The signers of that petition became the church's charter members. The petition was presented to Norfolk Presbytery on October 25, 1953. It became the 50th church in the Norfolk Presbytery.

Rev. Emurian wrote: "Only once in a lifetime comes the privilege of organizing and building a new church that will stand for generations in the community for which it is built. It symbolizes Our Love and Devotion to Jesus Christ. It sets forth the Cross as the answer to the world's needs. It speaks of God's claim supreme upon every human Life. It represents our hope of Universal Brotherhood and Peace. We are grateful to the Giver of every good and perfect gift that he has made the new church possible for us. We give Him the honor and praise and know it is his will that this church was built to his Glory."

On March 7, 1954, the church bulletin called for the appointment of a Pulpit Committee to find a successor for Rev. Emurian. Before he left, the church celebrated its 1st Anniversary. His church had grown to over 90 members, and 200 Sunday School "scholars." At age 80, his work was finished at Bayside and he was ready to move on to the next church to be built.

Rev. Emurian left Bayside on December 31, 1954. He died November 20, 1968 at age 94. At the time he was living in the Sunnyside Presbyterian Home in Massanetta Springs, VA. Before that he lived at 1707 St. Denis Avenue in Norfolk. His wife had passed before him in September 1966, and only one son remained. In honor of Rev. Emurian, Rev. Hutcheson read an expression of gratitude at the November 24, 1968 worship service; the statement and actions were entered in the permanent record; his name entered into our Book of Memory, and a Memorial Fund was set up for him.

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