

## MINUTES OF NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL MEETING

A Regional Meeting of the New England/Watervliet, N.Y., Parishes of the Armenian Church of America was held on Saturday, December 17, 1983 at the St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate, presided and the meeting was chaired by Rev. Fr. Mampre A. Kouzouian, Chairman of the Diocesan Council and Pastor of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge. The Very Rev. Fr. Jirayr Tashjian, Pastor of St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Paris, France, was present as a guest.

Following the Opening Prayer by His Eminence, the Chairman announced the Agenda naming those who were to discuss the designated subjects:

1. Public Relations Program (Diocese) - Michael Zeytoonian, Director of Public Relations and Editor of BEMA.
2. Unity Committee Activities Report (Diocese) - In the absence of Judge John K. Najarian, Chairman, Crosby Goshgarian.
3. BEMA - Michael Zeytoonian, Editor.
4. Youth Ministry Program - James Magarian, Director.
5. Regionalization - Zarvin Kasparian, Diocesan Council.
6. Clergy Insurance - Watervliet Parish.
7. Open Discussion Concerning Items Pertaining to the Diocese. The Chairman requested items to be added to the Agenda from the floor. The following additions were made:

High Rise Project  
Establishment of the new Diocese in Canada  
Theological Education  
Armenian Church Endowment Fund  
The Armenian Schools  
Guidelines of the Sacraments

In attendance were the representatives from following Churches: Holy Cross Armenian Church, Lawrence, Mass.; Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge, Mass.; St. James Armenian Church, Watertown, Mass.; Church of Our Saviour, Worcester, Mass.; St. George Armenian Church, Hartford, Conn.; Church of the Holy Resurrection, New Britain, Conn.; St. Peter Armenian Church, Watervliet, New York. Also attending were representatives from the new parish of Cape Cod.

### Public Relations Program and BEMA

Michael Zeytoonian, Director of Public Relations and Editor of BEMA stated the growth of our parishes requires need for more comprehensive public relations and better communication with the parishes.

He cited the importance of planning and asked those present to promote what their individual parishes are doing. Monthly memos will be sent by him discussing two or three items and sharing experiences of other parishes.

Mr. Zeytoonian stated he is in the process of planning a Public Relations Workshop and he, as well as others, will visit parishes in the New England area. Instructions will be given on how to submit press releases, photographs and the proper way of advertising. Letters have been written to the parishes asking for names of public relations persons whom he may contact and thus far he has received three responses.

Mr. Zeytoonian stated he became editor of BEMA in April 1983. Eight editions have been mailed and although some of the past issues have been late, this month's BEMA went out on time. Each issue is discussed and the theme is to try and obtain 3 or 4 qualified writers to address pertinent issues. He asked those present to let him know if they have knowledge of such writers.

The deadline for BEMA is the last day of each month. However, if one feels it is too late to submit an item, his office should be contacted and efforts will be made to include it in the forthcoming issue.

BEMA reaches 28,000 homes and the production cost is approximately \$50,000.00. The response to the Dollar Drive was considered successful and in New England alone 166 individuals contributed a dollar or more. More responses are anticipated and hoped for in the future.

Mr. Zeytoonian stated every month the Diocese is faced with the cost of corrective mailing and the responsibility goes back to the parishes who can help by submitting up-to-date changes in their mailing lists.

Questions from the floor were then entertained by the Chairman.

In answer to what are the requirements for photographs, Mr. Zeytoonian stated he prefers 5 x 7 black and white glossy pictures and if possible, action-type photographs.

It was called to his attention that some names of contributors from the New England area to the Archbishop's Fund were omitted from the published list in the last issue of BEMA. Mr. Zeytoonian stated that he had noted these omissions and a complete list will be published in the next issue of BEMA.

A suggestion was made to have Mr. Zeytoonian submit a package on Public Relations to each parish to be used in the future. He stated this will be done through the Workshop.

Frank Avakian Stoneson, Executive Director of the Diocese, stressed the importance of having each parish send in corrections made on their mailing list and eliminating the cost to the Diocese.

Mr. Stoneson spoke of this year's Calendar from the Diocese as being very special and the pictures have been designed for framing. He expressed the hope that everyone would respond to the message enclosed. He stated the cost of the Calendar escalates each year and this year's cost is \$32,000.00.

#### Unity Committee Activities Report

In the absence of the chairman of the Unity Committee, Judge John K. Najarian, a member of the committee, Crosby Goshgarian, was called upon to report on the progress made. Mr. Goshgarian told those present his was not an authorized report. However, he would inform them of some of the highlights and backgrounds of past meetings with the Prelacy Committee.

There have been four scheduled meetings with the Prelacy Committee, one of which was cancelled. The process is that both committees meet, once at the Prelacy and the next time at the Diocese with the chairmen of that particular group presiding. On December 3, 1983 the Unity Committee met at the Prelacy facilities. However, our group met one hour before the meeting, which is the usual procedure, in order to go to the meeting with a united and positive attitude. The meeting for the previous month was cancelled by the Prelacy Committee.

He stated our committee went to the meeting with a "hard" feeling but he, personally, sensed a positive approach when they finished the session. The present stage is discussing the bylaws. There are meetings scheduled for January 21, 1984 and in February, 1984.

Mr. Zarvin Kasparian, a member of the Unity Committee, stated he was not present at the last meeting but cautioned not to go away with the feeling that unity is in the horizon and is about to happen. He added there is a great deal of work to be done and a long time of negotiating.

Rev. Fr. Dajad Davidian, also a member of the Unity Committee, added that previous meeting had many differences of opinions, one of which concerned the bylaws. He felt the progress on bylaws was good but there are many technical aspects to consider. The Prelacy Committee did agree with using our bylaws. However, what the Prelacy Committee agrees upon has to be approved by their assembly and hierarchy.

The question was asked whether the situation has changed based on the comment made by their Prelate who has been quoted as saying that they are not giving up their Prelacy on a silver platter. Mr. Goshgarian stated the committee does have the same feeling but they do feel progress has been made.

Rev. Fr. Mampre Kouzouian cautioned that any information discussed today is not to be used for publicity purposes or to be given to newspapers.

The Prelacy press releases directing their parishes to mark with observations the visit of Catholicos Karekin to the United States and asking their faithful to rally around Antilias was discussed. Also it was noted that it took six months before our Vehapar received a reply in answer to his letter stressing the importance of unity. In addition to basic discussions at the Unity Committee meetings, the question of properties in the parishes was discussed and both sides agreed that such properties must be vested in the churches as a whole but no decision of how this is to be done was reached. There is also a difference in how their Prelate is chosen. In the election of our Primate there are three candidates and the Diocesan Delegates are permitted to add other names. In their election of a Prelate, Antilias names three candidates and delegates can vote only for one of these three candidates with no names being allowed to be added.

Rev. Fr. Dajad stated there are rumors that road block towards unity have been created by certain individuals and that this is absolutely not true. The Unity Committee, he added, has the total backing of the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

The question was raised as to how effective was the statement issued by the Eastern and Western Dioceses asking our parishioners to remain absent from any events honoring Karekin Catholicos. It was explained that before the letters were sent out, the Clergymen Conference and both Diocesan Councils submitted their approval. In addition both Primate were in agreement. The Primate emphasized the decision was not of one Primate or one Diocesan Council but rather the decision of the two Primates and the two Diocesan Councils. The letter was sent only to the parishes and not the newspapers.

### Youth Ministry Program

Mr. Stoneson introduced this item on the Agenda stating there is a need for more effectiveness in the ACYOA.

Mr. James Magarian, Youth Director, distributed pamphlets explaining the Youth Ministry Program and its goals to those attending the Regional Meeting. He explained the Diocese initiated the development of a comprehensive Youth Ministry in the Diocese realizing the needs of Armenian young people and as a preparation for future generations. In May of this year, under the direction of the Primate and with the support of the Diocesan Council, a committee for Youth Ministry in the Diocese was formed to analyze the current youth situation, to research the Youth programs of other religious denominations and to propose a plan for action to better meet the needs of the young people in the Diocese. This committee had six meetings.

Individual Committees were given assignments and results were shared at the following meeting.

One of the professional organizations consulted was the Northeast Center for Youth Ministry located in Paterson, New Jersey. Mr. Stoneson, Nancy Basmajian and he met with the Director of the Center and the director came to the Diocese on several occasions. Consideration is now being given to utilize the resources of the Center for consultation and training purposes.

Mr. Magarian stated the primary purpose of the Youth Ministry Program will be to assist and prepare young people to lead better lives as Christian Armenians. It will also challenge our youth to take a leadership role in the community parish.

Training is a top priority, according to Mr. Magarian, because without training the program will not be effective.

Mr. Magarian was asked what age groups would be involved and what the key focus would be. He answered this program will cover ages from 10 years to 30 years divided as follows: 10-13 years; 14-16 years; 17 years and college age; and post-college age and married couples. The key focus will be to start at an early age and teach them about the Church and community. For older individuals there will be more serious challenges. There will be social and recreational activities. The Primate stated the purpose of this committee is not just to suggest each Parish should have a Youth Leader, but rather a trained leader. He added we should give our youth the opportunity to be trained and if an individual parish can afford it, it should send their Youth Director to take this course. If they cannot, the Region should make the selection and help pay expenses. The Primate added there are many possibilities.

### Theological Education

Rev. Fr. Dajad informed the Regional meeting that at the last Diocesan Assembly a decision was made to request the Board of St. Nersess Seminary to review their bylaws in an effort to become closer to the Diocese. A committee was appointed for this purpose. The model was to have a self-perpetuating Board and members of this Board be selected by the Diocesan Council. Financial and activities report shall be given at the Annual Diocesan Assembly with the Assembly having the right to offer suggestions. He stated that, hopefully, by the next Annual Diocesan Assembly the Seminary will not be a separate institution.

Rev. Fr. Dajad informed those present that there are six students in residence and other students have expressed an interest in applying. No longer will high school students be accepted and only those with college degrees will be eligible.

He stated St. Nersess does have the support of the community. The problem is giving moral support to our young people who wish to serve the Armenian Church.

Rev. Fr. Mampre stated a \$25,000.00 budget has been mandated by the Annual Diocesan Assembly for Theological education. He added the Diocesan Delegates can ask for the additional \$25,000.00 to be distributed as an assessment among the parishes. The question is should a double assessment be imposed. A decision should be made by the Diocesan Council.

### High Rise Project

Mr. Stoneson informed those present that a committee was formed by the Primate and Diocesan Council to study the feasibility of building a high rise complex. \$15,000.00 was approved for this study at the Annual Diocesan Assembly.

A 4-man committee met with developers and engineers and 5 companies have been interviewed. Mr. Stoneson stated we should get the result of the study by the middle of January, 1984.

### Regionalization

Mr. Zarvin Kasparian reported the concept of regionalization is not a new one and has been studied for the past 10 years. In 1977, the Diocesan Assembly having considered a study made, approved the establishment of a sub-Diocese as a pilot program. The committee met in Providence in 1977 but because of human resources and financial reasons, this plan was never implemented.

In June, 1983 at a Regional Meeting in St. Vartanantz Church, Chelmsford, the consensus was we should have the New England parishes as a district. Because the Minutes of this meeting did not reach the Diocese, Mr. Kasparian stated he was presenting it now and asked if those present are in favor of such a plan. He suggested a committee be formed, with one member from each parish, to study and review the bylaws previously prepared. In answer to the question as to how much such a plan would cost, Rev. Fr. Mampre stated that about 7 years ago the cost was estimated between \$30,000.00 and \$35,000.00.

The Primate informed the representatives present at this meeting that our Diocese is the largest in the world and it is not easy to govern it properly. Therefore, 7 years ago when this plan was suggested to have an Arch-Diocese, His Eminence was in favor of it and has supported it since knowing that it will strengthen our Church.

The Chairman stated because we have been dealing with this issue for such a length of time and because our Primate has given his approval, a committee of 3 will be appointed to make a decision and share this information with us at a future meeting. Zarvin Kasparian, was designated Chairman and Archie Kolligian and Crosby Goshgarian were selected to serve on such a committee to make a feasibility study on establishing an Arch-Diocese in the New England District.

Clergy Insurance - (Watervliet)

Representatives from St. Peter's Armenian Church in Watervliet stated they were unaware this item would be placed on the Agenda and therefore, were not prepared to make a presentation.

Armenian Church Endowment Fund

Colonel Victor Arzooonian, Executive Director, distributed information regarding the Armenian Church Endowment Fund. He informed those present that he expects contributions for this year to total \$6,000.00. The assets of the Fund total \$1,200,000.00.

He asked parish representatives to read the pamphlet and to use it as a guide in the event they know of individuals who wish to contribute to the Armenian Church Endowment Fund.

Armenian Schools

Harry Sarkisian, Parish Council member of St. James Armenian School, stated parents of children attending Armenian school as well as Parish Council members and others were not pleased when a notice was received from the Diocese that one more year of study is required before diplomas can be issued by their Armenian School. Crosby Goshgarian added that the feeling at St. James was that it is more important not to lose students than to have them meet such requirements.

The Primate commented that the purpose is to instill the love of the Armenian language in our children. He stated he is aware there are some parents who do not want to force their children to go to school for another year. However, if we give in to this pressure we are saying our language and culture are not important.

Rev. Fr. Mampre recommended this issue be presented to the Armenian School Department of the Diocese.



### Services and Sacraments

The Chairman informed those present that a committee has been formed by the Primate to look into the uniformity of the Sacraments of our Church.

The Primate stated the Sacrament and Ritual directive is almost complete and the committee of three clergymen will finalize it in the near future.

### Additional Notes

Father Baret asked for comments on the National Council of Churches of Christ decision on the acceptance of a group of churches whose membership consists mainly of homosexuals. This issue was raised at a recent meeting of the NCCC.

The Primate stated no action was taken and the matter was postponed indefinitely. He stated this decision was to the satisfaction of all Orthodox participants and he felt the NCCC was wise in tabling the homosexuals' appeal.

Daniel Dorian, Diocesan Delegate, recommended workshops be held to determine how to raise money in a professional manner or even a text book be written on the subject. Mr. Stoneson agreed the need is valid and stated next year a staff member or himself will get involved as to how this is to be done structurally.

The question was raised as to why some of our churches have not transferred their deeds to the Diocese. It was explained that in some states this is not legal. However, a better way is being sought in which the Diocese will be sole-owner and lawyers are studying this matter.

Representatives from St. James Armenian Church asked for information about going on computer. Mr. Stoneson advised that this was a technical question and a committee will be developed in the Diocese to answer questions of this nature.

Terrorism was discussed and what effect these acts had on the Diocese. Mr. Stoneson stated after each violent act, the Diocese receives telephone calls from newspapers and media. He stated it is difficult to issue a proper statement in an emergency and agreed a committee should be formed to properly present our views on television, radio and the newspapers.

The Primate noted that on October 30th of this year he was a guest on the First Estate Program on NBC and he was asked for his views on terrorism. He stated we were against such violent acts but understood why these hot-headed individuals are doing this. This made the Turks very angry and they wrote that this Armenian "Priest" took this opportunity to tell his story which is false.

The Primate stated a group of Armenian intellectuals came to visit him with willingness to help. A suggestion was made to set up in an area of the Diocese an Information Center.

#### New Diocese in Canada

Rev. Fr. Mampre informed the gathering that last September, the Primate and Diocesan Council went to the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Canada. A Locum Tenens has been chosen and the Ad Hoc Committee was appointed to serve as Diocesan Council. Next year a Primate and a Diocesan Council will be elected.

A Benediction was offered by His Eminence and at 3:30 p.m., the Regional Meeting of New England/Watervliet Parishes was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Minassian  
Secretary

1/20/84