

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
OF
ST. JOHN'S ARMENIAN CHURCH OF GREATER DETROIT

February 9, 1973

Armenian Cultural Building

The meeting was called to order by the chairman of Parish Council, Mr. Michael Megregian at 8:30 p.m. Very Rev. Fr. Paren Avedikian gave the invocation. Mr. Megregian announced that a quorum of the voting membership was present. Mr. Edward Mardigian was elected chairman of the Parish Assembly and Mr. Hike Semerjian as secretary.

Mr. Edward Korkoian made a motion to dispense with the reading of last year's minutes. It was seconded, voted upon and passed. It was suggested that the Parish Council Secretary, Mr. Margosian, go through the minutes and pick out pertinent highlights and read them to the Assembly.

Mrs. Varsenick Apkarian made a motion and it was seconded, that the Parish Assembly minutes be printed in the Annual Booklet. During the discussion that followed it was pointed out that this would add to the cost of the booklet, perhaps another \$500. Mr. Kelch amended the motion to have the Annual Parish Assembly Minutes mimeographed and passed out at the meeting.

Mr. Mardigian said the next order of business was the election of Parish Council members, Auditor and Nominating Committee members. He asked Mr. Archie Yeghissian to present the slate. Mr. Yeghissian explained to the members that due to some very important commitment, the nominating committee chairman, Mr. Martin Manoogian, was unable to be present and he was asked to conduct the election. He presented the following slate for Parish Council members (5 to be elected for two year term.)

Edward Baharian
Alex Chavdarian
Nick Derderian
Noubar Dourjalian
Arthur Mardigian

Maritza Negohosian
John Noraian
Anoush Papelian
Albert Semonian (Incumbent)
Carl Varadian

Mr. Yeghissian asked for nominations from the floor for the Parish Council. None were presented. Upon motion nomination was closed. Mr. Yeghissian asked the nominees to come forward. He introduced them to the Assembly with a short introduction of their past service to the Church.

The following names were presented by Mr. Yeghissian for the nominating committee (3 to be elected for one year term.)

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| Agnes Carman | Simon Javizian |
| Sooren Gozmanian | Martin Manoogian (Incumbent) |
| Paul Hovsepian | Simon Tashjian |

Mr. Yeghissian asked for nominations from the floor. None were presented.

When the Auditing Committee was presented, since Mr. Paul Emelian was unable to assume responsibility because of some personal reasons, and since no nominations were presented from the floor, Mr. Ronald Keoleian was elected for three years by acclamation.

Mr. Jack Margosian read some of the important points from last year's Assembly minutes.

The ballots were distributed and cast, and the Assembly proceeded with the other matters of the Agenda, which was consideration of Church Auxiliary Organization Reports.

Mr. Mardigian gave information as to why Apostolic Society's accounts were delayed. He appreciated Mr. Richard Simonian's monumental task of preparing the accounting which appears in the Booklet. He also said that Dr. Dennis Papazian is preparing a history book of the Armenian community of Greater Detroit which will include the story of the Apostolic Society and the names of all contributors. He stated that 90% of the book was completed. That even though Dr. Papazian is busy he has proceeded so far with the present book that it would be impractical to get someone else to work on it. He requested the Assembly to be a little more patient.

Mr. Harry Zartarian inquired about Mr. Jack Antreassian's building management recommendations. Mr. Megregian said that his recommendations are being considered and the Parish Council is looking for an administrator to assist the Pastor in the operation of the building staff and other personnel. Also that the recommendations in the structural changes in the offices were being implemented.

Mr. Vahe Papelian inquired about the subject of clergy rotation on the Diocesan Delegate Report (page 14.) Mr. Korkoian stated that we have a rotation from here, but a priest was not rotated to our parish. Mr. Mardigian said that rotation was not approved by the Diocesan Assembly. If any rotation was to be done, it was a movement by the Primate.

Mr. Korkoian, as a member of the Diocesan Council, said that rotation is dead. The Surpazan used his own power, as the head of our Churches, to make changes due to certain circumstances he saw in various parishes. Detroit was not the only one involved, there were nine parishes.

A question was asked regarding the proposed monument. Hayr Soorp said that a committee, headed by Mr. Derderian, recently met and turned over the sum of \$5,300 to the Apostolic Society with the hope that in the near future a monument will be constructed and these monies collected will be used in the construction.

A question was asked regarding the \$12,000 owed to the Apostolic Society by the Parish Council, why it was not shown as a liability in the Parish Council statement. This is a correction that must be made since it is still owed to the Apostolic Society by the Parish Council.

Next item of the Agenda was the 1973 Proposed Budget. Mr. Steve Boyajian was asked to comment on the budget. He explained that due to rising costs we will have a deficit Budget of \$12,000. Our Diocesan dues this year is \$26,600, almost double the previous year. In order to meet this deficit, he said the Parish Council proposes a raise in pledges of \$.50 per week raise of the minimum pledge to those who

pay \$104.00 per year (husband and wife), and \$.25 for those who pay \$52.00 (single members), making provisions of course, for those who are unable to pay any.

At this time questions were asked about the Riverfront Festival. How much was grossed and how much net profit was made. These questions were referred to the treasurer, Mr. Harry Kezelian.

Mr. John Semizian questioned the amount of \$20,000 put into the Budget for the Festival, particularly if we are sharing the Festival with the three other Armenian Churches. Mr. Boyajian said that the Parish Council has other projects in mind other than the Riverfront Festival. A Church Bazaar, and that we have received an invitation to participate in a three day City of Southfield Arts Festival.

Mr. Megregian explained the position that the Parish Council has taken with regard to our participation in this year's Riverfront Festival. He gave a history of the harassment that the Parish Council was subjected to by the St. Sarkis and the Congregational Churches last year until an agreement was reached to look into the feasibility of participating jointly this year.

An invitation was extended by the City of Detroit this year, on the condition that all four churches (Armenian) participate jointly, namely St. John's, St. Sarkis, Armenian Congregational and St. Vartan. Several meetings have been held and even though there have been some misunderstandings and other difficulties, the Parish Council is trying to work out an acceptable agreement.

Questions were asked regarding the increase in the Diocesan dues. Mr. Korkoian gave a detailed explanation regarding the Diocesan Budget and how it affected all parishes. Mr. Hoplamazian explained the process that the Diocese uses to make the assessments.

Mr. Semizian asked a question regarding the item on administrator or clergy in the Budget. It was suggested that the budget be increased to cover the cost of one or the other.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Budget with the amendment to cover the cost of an administrator or clergyman.

Before the motion was voted upon, a question was raised regarding accepting a deficit Budget. It was decided to vote on the motion made by the Parish Council to raise the dues. The motion carried.

New Business

Dr. Papazian wanted to know why the Armenian clergy will not be involved in the Riverfront Festival. Mr. Megregian and Hayr Soorp gave detailed reasons. The clarification Hayr Soorp gave was that since clergy participation might create problems, and since the goal of the Festival was to bring the Armenians of Detroit together, but not necessarily solve the problem which exists between the Churches, it was decided not to have the clergy actively participate in the Festival.

Mr. Margosian also gave his views of what had happened in the joint meeting. He clarified the Parish Council position that a common ground of operation had to be reached and the only way to do so was to eliminate the areas of conflict. That there would be no clergy from any of the churches participating in the opening ceremony. Also that there would be no political party involvement, and no flags or banners flown. Dr. Papazian stated that he would watch this very carefully. Mrs. Zenian suggested to start a real Armenian Festival with the cooperation of all parties involved.

Dr. Papazian indicated that he was a member of the Armenian Assembly and that this organization was established to build bridges among the Armenians to be one people and that he was aware that the Diocese was trying to negotiate an understanding with the separate brethren.

An Armenian Assembly will be held in Washington in early spring and clergy will be invited.

Mr. Mardigian said he agreed with Dr. Papazian in principal but the Parish Council has and is, doing the best it can in this matter and they (Parish Council) have the blessing and approval of the Primate in principal and agree we should try to get along. Mr. Mardigian also stated that the Armenian Assembly is a new national organization and its objective is to get all Armenians to work together and establish a better understanding and cooperation among all Armenians. He and Mr. Manoogian approved and supported this organization. They have their complete blessing and financial support as well. He and Mr. Manoogian express to the Parish Council that they try to cooperate in these matters with the various factions and work out their problems.

Mr. Korkoian said that the Church and clergy operate under a chain of commands and directives sent our clergy that they are not to participate with our dissident brethren in an official capacity.

Mr. Korkoian referred to a recent Gontag which was printed in the Torch Bearer and stated that people should understand the restrictions placed upon our clergy. That our clergy are following the edicts of the Primate and His Holiness.

Mrs. Alex Manoogian took the floor and asked the Parish Council to read a letter that was sent by A.G.B.U. The letter was a request that henceforth all the names of donors for In Lieu of Flowers that are for the Church and A.G.B.U. and other organizations be published in the Jahagir.

Mr. Megregian answered Mr. Ara Haig's question regarding the disposition of this letter by the Parish Council. He indicated that the letter was just received and that many members felt this was a matter for the Parish Assembly to decide.

After some discussion Mrs. Gozmanian moved that no names or amounts should be printed in the Jahagir for In Lieu of Flower donations, only the total amount should be entered. This motion was defeated.

Dr. Papazian moved to include all donations of In Lieu of Flowers to A.G.B.U. and other organizations to appear in the Jahagir. This motion was carried.

Mrs. Martin Apkarian presented the following motion. "Last year at the Parish Assembly action was taken to have the minutes of the Parish Council available for parishioners to read at the Secretary's office. I would like to move that upon the request of any one member of the Parish Council a roll call vote must be taken, the vote recorded and posted by name as an official part of the minutes. It being understood that the minutes will continue to be available to any parish member in good standing in the Secretary's office." This motion was carried.

Mr. Sooren Gozmanian explained the pathetic condition of our Church microphone system. Mr. Megregian told that they are working on it with experts.

Mr. Semonian gave the following explanation about the charges of Hokejash. For members it is \$60, for non-members \$110. If all In Lieu of Flowers donations are made for the Church there is no charge. This is to cover the extra help needed for the occasion.

Mr. Archie Yeghissian took the podium to announce the results of the election for nominating committee for a one year term: Messrs. Sooren Gozmanian, Paul Hovsepian and Simon Javizian. For Parish Council, two year term, Mr. Arthur Mardigian, Mrs. Maritza Negohosian, Mr. John Noraian, Mrs. Anoush Papelian and Mr. Carl Varadian. There were 309 voting members.

Mr. Haigaz Yagoobian moved to have a vote of appreciation to Mr. Michael Megregian for his devoted work. The audience responded with extended applause.

Mr. Mardigian invited Hayr Soorp to close the meeting with his message and prayer.

Hayr Soorp indicated that he had four points he would like to make tonight.

1. He wanted to thank all who have taken the time to attend this important parish assembly meeting and he expressed his unhappiness that so few, only 309, a fifth of the Church membership saw fit to come.

2. He expressed his thanks, not only to Mr. Megregian, but to all members of the Parish Council and to the Nominating Committee and to the Auditors, and the officers of the Annual Assembly.

3. He expressed his concern, as did many parishioners, regarding our participation in a Bazaar, Riverfront Festival as well as the Southfield Arts Festival, as being overwhelming tasks for a single year. Yet he said, we either must go ahead with these projects or we must raise the necessary funds to operate the Church. It would be ideal to be able to operate the Church from funds that came from dues and donations, but since this is not being done, we must resort to other means available to raise our operating funds.

4. He expressed his views regarding the cooperation of the four Armenian Churches in the Detroit Ethnic Festival. He stated that there are certain rules which we as members of the Church have to abide by. Unfortunately when we talk only from our hearts, without realizing we tend to create complications. We might resolve one problem and create a new one for the Church. I feel ashamed at this moment, as a clergyman, to admit that there is this separation between our Church and the other Church, namely the St. Sarkis Church. There is a history of forty years behind the problem which exists today, and we cannot ignore it. By ignoring it we will never be able to solve it. On the contrary, we should accept that the problem exists and then try to solve it. I am very happy for the Armenian Assembly which was organized during the past year. Two years ago, I myself, made a similar suggestion to Mr. Manoogian, hoping that he would sponsor such an Assembly, but probably at the time the idea was considered premature. I am very happy that finally the idea has been adopted and is being pursued. One good thing coming from this Assembly is that our Church will be relieved of unnecessary pressures. There is no reason why our whole political life should evolve around the Churches. I think that

Armenians in this country should be able to express their views and pursue their objectives through another vehicle than the Church. It is a blessing that the Armenian Assembly has been established. I hope it will serve its purpose and absorb some of the problems which exist among us and unduly subject the Church to pressures or deform her image. The purpose of the Armenian Festival is to bring the Armenian people living in this community together, and not solve the problem which exists in their Churches. The separation exists between the Churches, we should not give ourselves the right to rectify the situation. Our Diocese is in a position to do that, we are not. We are just a branch of the Church in this country under the jurisdiction of the Primate and the Diocesan Council, and we should abide by their rules. As a branch of the Church existing in this country we cannot give ourselves the right and privilege to negotiate unity and understanding with the other churches. This is the order we have received, and we have to abide by these rules.

With the singing of Hayr Mer and Hayr Soorp's benediction, the meeting was closed at 12:00 p.m. After the meeting refreshments were served by the Parish Council wives, headed by Mrs. Steve Boyajian.

Hike Semerjian
Secretary

Fr. Paren Avedikian
President

Edward Mardigian
Chairman