

*Handwritten signatures: Jeknavorian, Ludwig & Shlimovitz*

**JEKNAVORIAN, LUDWIG & SHLIMOVITZ**

ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS

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GARBIS C. JEKNAVORIAN  
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October 26, 1960

Diocesan Council of the  
Armenian Church of America  
630 Second Avenue  
New York 16, New York

Gentlemen:

I pray your indulgence and hope that you can devote a few moments to this, my voice to you, relative to the Church Building program you have authorized in the Greater Milwaukee Area, more particularly, the building in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

It is difficult for me to comprehend, how with any business acumen, the council has authorized the building of such a new church without first determining the minimum financial requirements necessary for such an undertaking, the outstanding amount of a mortgage or funded debt and the method of amortizing payment of same, the submission of construction bids from various contractors, the amount of assesment per member for the initial financing, etc. . These requirements are set forth in the Constitution and By-Laws of our Church and are the orderly criteria for the council to determine in its own judgment not only the necessity of a new church in the area, but the probability of its success as well.

I am sure that I need not supply the council with facts, which the writer feels sets forth a strong case against such an undertaking, however, it is necessary that someone answer these facts. The very fact that this area attempts to maintain two churches for a total congregation of three hundred is sheer idiocy. The fact that the purported land site is only 90 x 120 feet, an area hardly suitable for a single family residential structure without any available land for expansion is in itself imprudent. The fact that the congregation can afford only a part time Hayr Sourp should persuade a reasonable man to seek logical alternative means. It is further evident that within a period of ten years the churches in this area will be bankrupt, and NO ARMENIAN CHURCH will exist; a wise man would determine what are the available means for creating solidarity not disunity, if we desire our Church to exist for all times.

Yet in total disregard of such obvious liabilities, the council has authorized the construction of such a church in South Milwaukee. I strongly question this judgment, gentlemen, for you cannot escape your responsibility to the present generation or to that yet unborn merely by saying "Well a majority of the South Milwaukee congregation desires it this way, and

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our hands are tied." The Constitution of our Church places the responsibility of the final determination of such acts squarely upon the Council, the Board of Trustees and the Archbishop. Gentlemen, you as the spiritual and intellectual pillars of the Armenian-American communities are the fact finding and policy making body, and it is your determination and judgment which will live, and I regret, in the instant matter be living chaos until its death.

I cannot with human judgment place the fault upon the South Milwaukee Congregation, for in their limited way, they have acted in accordance with their emotional and personal feelings, without thought of the realities of today, without thought of the needs of tomorrow and without thought of determining a better way. As an unattended flock they have wandered aimlessly.

You as the shephard, cannot with a clear conscience say we shall concur with their judgment in light of the facts. You cannot in accordance with your acceptance of the oath of office, follow such judgment without being in complete dereliction of such an oath. You may with complacency, say that we in New York have a limited duty to those in Milwaukee. If this be your attitude, as is indicative of the failure of any of the council members to view the site in question, I beg of you to resign.

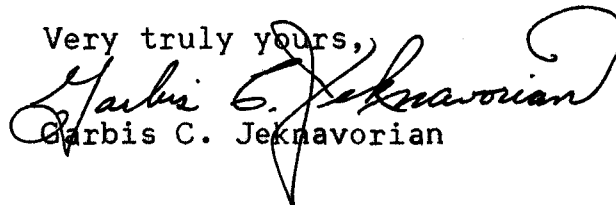
Yes, these are strong words, but gentlemen, I say as the present political aspirants to the United States Presidency have stated- These are critical years that lie ahead, and our existence tomorrow shall be measured by our actions of today.

The question whether we as a National Church and a ethnic group are to survive is to be resolved upon this generations positive and prudent acts, and gentlemen, upon you, its leaders.

If I am being outspoken, it is because of error being committed upon the entire Armenian-American community in this area.

If I may be of any assistance in this matter, please inform me.

Very truly yours,

  
Archbis C. Jeknavorian

November 21, 1960

Diocese of the Armenian Church  
630 - Second Avenue  
N. Y. 16, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

I enjoyed reading "The Functions of a Church Building Committee" in your last issue of "The Armenian Church" and shared all of Mr. Clark's sentiments.

The article states that people serving on a Building Committee should be actively interested in the progress and future of the church. If you had taken the time and interest to check, you would have discovered that So. Milwaukee's Building Committee Chairman never attended church, oftentimes not even at Easter or Christmas. The rest of the committee members, as well as Trustees, aren't even vaguely familiar with the functions of a church.

I am at a total loss to understand how you could approve of So. Milwaukee building a \$94,000<sup>00</sup> church on a 90' lot, with no possible expansion and absolutely no membership

growth when you obviously believe in this article too.

Congratulations for permitting So. Milwaukee to build a "tombstone" for all of the Armenians in Milwaukee County. If our Diocese isn't concerned about the survival of the Armenians in this area, then why, oh why, are we struggling to keep it alive?

Sincerely yours,

Jeanne Avakian,  
a lifetime member of  
St. Haroutun's who believes  
in a merger with West  
Allis for the sake of  
posterity.

5818 So. Trunthammer  
Cudahy, Wisconsin