

Parish Council Report - B

of Cain, Farrell & Bell, and other problems which came up later in the year, we were unable to adhere to our timetable. Our search for a new architect culminated in the hiring of Thomas Ashbahian of Ramsey, New Jersey. As mentioned above, our site plan has been finalized; that is, the location of the church, the cultural hall, the parking areas, etc., have been decided. Much time and effort have been applied to the serious problem of adequate water supply and the related costs. A detailed Building Committee report, which is attached, will be given by George Davidian, Chairperson, and following his presentation, you will be brought up to date with the latest developments in our building program. We do believe we see a light at the end of the tunnel.

The Fundraising Committee's report, also attached, will be given by the Chairperson, Lionel Galstaun.

COMMITTEES

Buildings and Property Maintenance

The members of this committee are: George Davidian, Chairperson, Berj Derdiarian, Mike Pisani, and Al Darien who is the Parish Council liaison. As everyone who is actively involved in the parish knows, whenever anything goes wrong in either one of our two buildings, the first thing we do is to call George. Whatever the problem - heating, plumbing, electrical, or water - he sees to it that it is taken care of one way or another: one way being to do the work himself or with the help of his committee members, at no cost to the parish; the other being to promptly contact the appropriate service people.

During 1987, apart from taking care of many routine problems, the Maintenance Committee installed new wiring and two air conditioners in the parish house and, with the help of several other parishioners whose names were mentioned in the January issue of HOPE, painted the church and cleaned all the chairs here. The Parish Council is grateful to all of them.

In August, our lawsuit against Jorno Roofing Contractors was settled for \$4,000. The Parish Council wishes to express its appreciation in this report to Gary Bashian, Larry Reiss (a member of Gary's law firm,) and the Hon. Vincent Gurahian for their efforts to bring this matter to a successful conclusion. We paid no legal fees.

Stewardship

The members of this committee are: John Boyajian, Chairperson, Anahid Chookhachian and Ara Ishkanian.

Every parish has a handful of people so dedicated that they will take on the difficult jobs most of us shy away from. Invariably, the jobs in this category involve asking for money. Fortunately for us, John Boyajian has been willing, for the past three years, to head our Stewardship Committee and, slowly but surely, the number of parishioners participating in the program has increased.

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Last February, wanting to express its gratitude to the Stewards of St. James, the Parish Council decided to issue one complimentary ticket to the St. James Award Banquet to each family that had made an annual pledge. Honoring Stewards is a wonderful idea, but a costly one if the event is held outside the church. For the time being, we will recognize our Stewards by listing their names on a board to be hung in the parish house.

Through the generosity of Ohan Bas who offered the use of his office and telephones, the committee conducted a phone-a-thon on May 20th in an effort to recruit new Stewards. Unfortunately, we did not have the dramatic results some other churches get from phone-a-thons.

Despite mail and phone solicitations, the level of participation in our Stewardship Program is not as high as it should be. The Parish Council has several times discussed the various practices other religious denominations employ to encourage financial support from their members, such as tithing, but they have all been rejected as contrary to the traditions of our church. The preferred methods are the ones we continually urge our members to use: an increase in the number and amount of pledges to the Stewardship Program, bequests to the church in wills, and endowments through the Armenian Church Endowment Fund. Using these methods to achieve the desired goal of financial stability for our church signifies that the pledgor or donor understands and appreciates the role of the church in the life of every Armenian in the community.

The Parish Council wishes to thank John, Anahid and Ara for performing an unpopular job.

Cultural Programs

Early in 1987, it was decided that since the chairman of this committee, Lionel Galstaun, had agreed to accept the Chairmanship of the Fundraising Committee — in addition to his responsibilities on the Parish Council and the Building Committee — another member of the Cultural Programs Committee be asked to head this organization. The logical choice was George Omartian who agreed to accept the position. George has been a conscientious and energetic chairman who has the enthusiastic and capable support of the committee members in planning programs which enlighten and entertain us.

In addition to the Ani Kavafian concert and reception in April and the book sale on three successive Sundays in November and December, this committee sponsored five Sunday afternoon programs during the year and provided the refreshments at the ten Monday evening lectures held in the Spring. The Parish Council gratefully acknowledges the work of this committee.

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

On April 2nd, the Parish Council met with the leaders of church organizations and the following topics were discussed:

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- 1) the importance of submitting annual reports on time and keeping financial records current and accurate;
- 2) the proper use of buildings and property, namely, the need to conserve fuel and electricity; control noise and traffic; avoid parking in areas where the neighbors could object; checking windows, lights and thermostats when leaving a building after a meeting or an event; making sure the rooms which are used are left clean, especially the kitchen;
- 3) the custodian's fees when his services are requested;
- 4) use of the copying machine.

Women's Guild

For two years, Nevart Kuntashian efficiently chaired the re-activated Women's Guild while remaining an active member of the Cultural Programs Committee. Her report is attached.

The Parish Council would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to Nevart, the Executive Committee, and those members who, by accepting special assignments, saw to it that the Guild fulfilled its obligations.

Comments

The Council, at the request of our pastor, has devoted many hours over the past few years to discussing the problem of church organizations in our parish. St. James Church does not seem to be able to sustain the variety of organizations which form an integral part of most established parishes.

Here in Westchester, we have witnessed the formation of several groups which, after a while, lose the momentum with which they began. This report is not the place to discuss the reasons for this phenomenon but I would like to pose a question for your consideration: Should we be concerned that we do not have an active Mr. and Mrs. Club, for example, or a Young Couples group, or a Senior Citizen's group, or a Men's Club, or a Hospitality Committee to arrange for the coffee and cake after church services? (For lack of volunteers, this last responsibility has been assumed by the Parish Council members who should not have to do this in addition to their many other duties but who feel strongly that the fellowship hour serves an important purpose.)

The bright side of the picture is that, despite the dearth of church organizations, St. James does have a full calendar of events each year which we manage to carry out with the cooperation of the existing groups, the "old faithfuls" and a few new recruits each time around. The good taste and high caliber of all our functions — be they educational, cultural, or otherwise — is a tribute to our pastor and the doers.

FUNCTIONS

- Jan. 6 Celebration of Nativity and Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Badarak" and pot luck luncheon in the parish house after church services.
- Jan. 18 St. James Award Banquet. Yeretzgin Dawn received St. James Award for fifteen years of devoted service to our church at a banquet in her honor held at Aphrodite Restaurant. Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan presided. (Stewardship Committee)
- Feb. 28 Poon Pareqentan celebration. Dinner with program held at church. (Women's Guild)
- Apr. 12 Palm Sunday/ACYOA Day. Dinner with program held at church following services. (Jr. & Sr. ACYOAs)
- May 16 Spring Rug Sale. (Garo Bashian, with the assistance of Ed Essayan and Ann Boghosian)
- June 7 Mother's & Father's Day commemoration. Dinner with program held at church following services. (Women's Guild)
- Aug. 30 Picnic. (Chaired by Paul Bashian with the invaluable support of the "old faithful" whose names are not listed here because the list would be too long and, by now, we all know who they are.)
- Oct. 2-4 Get Away Weekend. Attended by a smaller group than last year's but a great time was had by all. \$1,874 raised for church. (Mary Azarian and Grace Cassidy)
- Oct. 17-18 Bazaar & Fall Rug Sale. (Ed Essayan, Ara and Alice Shimshidian, Garo and Annette Bashian, Elise Bas, Yeretzgin Dawn, Valerie Ogullukian)
- Nov. 17 "Keff" Night. An evening of dancing with refreshments at Temple Emanuel in Yonkers. (Hye Steppers)
- Dec. 24 Christmas Eve service and pageant with fellowship hour following service. (Sunday School & ACYOA)

ST. JAMES CHURCH'S PARTICIPATION IN DIOCESAN
AND OTHER CHURCH-RELATED ACTIVITIES

☒ On March 11th, twelve women from our parish attended a service, luncheon, and program commemorating Armenian women saints at St. Leon Church in Fairlawn, New Jersey.

☒ At the Diocesan Assembly in May, we were represented by Der Hayr, Vincent Gurahian, Lionel Galstaun (our newly elected Diocesan delegate,) and the Parish Council Chairperson. The Assembly re-elected Vincent Gurahian to the Diocesan Council for his second

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four-year term following which he was re-elected Diocesan Council Chairman for the third consecutive year.

⌘ We were represented at two Diocesan banquets: one honoring Helen and Edward Mardigian; the other for the Choir Association.

⌘ In September, we participated in the Diocesan One World Festival thanks to the efforts of Ed Dorian, Jr., and our ACYOA members.

⌘ In connection with the events held on the occasion of the Vehapar's visit in October, members of St. James Church were actively involved at all levels. Our pastor has already referred to his participation. Suren Fesjian co-chaired the special Diocesan Committee formed for the visit, and he and Mrs. Fesjian were either sponsors or patrons of several events. Suren was toastmaster at the New York banquet and one of the ten people who accompanied Vehapar when he met with President Reagan. Vincent Gurahian also served on the special committee. He was one of the four canopy bearers in the procession at St. John the Divine Cathedral, an honor and a privilege accompanied by the risk of a heart attack when the pole one is holding slips out of the canopy frame and when a horde of people close in on you and seem about to crush you to death. Vincent also attended the Vehapar when His Holiness met with the President. Finally, several Parish Council members served as ushers during the "Badarak" at St. John the Divine.

⌘ Throughout the year, I have continued to attend meetings of the Coalition for Church Unity.

PARISH COUNCIL DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

⌘ On May 30th, the Parish Council members attended a day-long educational seminar led by Der Hayr.

⌘ A gift was presented to Deacon Hratch Chilingirian from our parish on the occasion of his graduation from the seminary.

⌘ St. James Church provided sleeping accommodations in our parish house for fourteen boys who were attending choir training sessions for one week at the seminary.

⌘ Funds were made available for a bus to transport our parishioners to St. John the Divine Cathedral in Manhattan.

⌘ The Parish Council proposed a resolution on church unity for submission to the Diocesan Assembly. A large majority of the delegates voted to approve it.

⌘ In April, Zaven Tachdjian was appointed to the Building Committee.

⌘ During the summer, the Parish Council authorized the expenditure of \$1,700 for reflecting window shades for all of the windows on the second floor of the parish house.

MISCELLANEOUS

Elma Davidian - This report would not be complete without acknowledging our indebtedness to Elma Davidian. After requesting 'retirement' two years ago, Elma has continued to serve as the church bookkeeper for yet another year, patiently waiting for a replacement to be found. Moreover, she also brings her invaluable expertise to many church events, including the annual picnic. After Der Hayr, she is probably the most knowledgeable person on church affairs and always has the answer to any question put to her. She is devoted, capable and dependable - a true pillar of the church - and we offer her our heartfelt gratitude for fifteen years of service.

Church Secretary - At the end of April, Helen Galbraith, our church secretary for three years, left to accept another position. She was an asset to St. James because among the many attributes she brought to the job were intelligence, competence and dedication. We were sorry to lose her. A newcomer to our parish, Vicky Toutoundjian, was prevailed upon by Der Hayr to accept the position temporarily and we were indeed fortunate to have someone with her capabilities and background working in our church office. Vicky was even mastering the use of our computer when the inevitable offer she could not refuse came in October, and once again we were searching for a replacement. She came in the person of Gale Perzigian who, for three months has been serving the church as office secretary without remuneration. Gale, too, is more than qualified for the job she is performing at great personal sacrifice. We deeply appreciate her contribution to the church community.

(We may be tempted at times to wonder why The Almighty is not being more supportive of our efforts to build a new church, but we cannot wonder about His cooperation with Der Hayr in his efforts to find church secretaries.)

Church Directory Update - In the Fall, Ann Boghosian graciously undertook to coordinate the tedious and time-consuming project of updating our church directory. Assisting her in this endeavor are: Elma Davidian, Barbara Dorian, Anita Essayan and Alice Tashjian. Sometime in 1988, there should be a new directory available, thanks to their efforts.

Rental of Facilities - The church facilities were rented on five occasions during the past year for a total income of \$500.

Membership Dues - The Parish Council would like to impress upon our parishioners the importance of remitting their annual membership dues in January for the forthcoming year. It has become a practice with many people to pay the previous year's dues at the time of the Parish Assembly. This is twelve months after it is due. The Council would greatly appreciate the cooperation of all members in this matter, even if it means writing out another check today for your 1988 membership dues.

CONCLUSION

Every February, for the past three years, I have stood here before the members of St. James Church and given the annual Parish Council Report, and every year the Council has felt constrained to direct your attention to the precarious state of our finances. The present Council's concern is not unique to it. Ever since we settled in Purchase, every Parish Council has expressed the same concern. "What, then," you may ask, "is new?" With your continued indulgence, I will tell you.

When we review the 1988 budget, you will see that, once again, the Council is proposing a budget which is lower than the previous year's. The reason for this is that we anticipate lower revenues. With our present facilities and staff, we can coast along on the kind of budget we are proposing. Earlier in this report, it was pointed out that we have been extremely fortunate to have dedicated people who will not accept the remuneration provided for their services, people such as Elma Davidian and Gale Perzigian, and our organists Alice Sakalian and Meline Kasparian. This allows us to use for operating expenses the monies allocated in the budget for the services they perform. We cannot expect that it will always be so.

Regarding our facilities, our two buildings are not especially spacious, luxurious, or costly to maintain. We do try to keep them in a state of good repair and, thanks to people like George Davidian and the members of his committee, repairs and improvements are often made at no cost to the parish. Our worship services are held in a converted garage and we do not have a hall in which to hold banquets, dances or bazaars. However, we have accepted these conditions for the past seven years because we knew they were temporary. The vision of a beautiful new church and community center has loomed large in our minds.

As members of the Parish Council, we would be shirking our responsibility if we did not state the obvious: a budget of \$118,000 is not going to be adequate to operate and maintain the new complex. The costs for electricity, water (we will have a water meter,) heat, maintenance (we will require a full-time caretaker,) insurance, etc., will be almost three times that amount. And yet, as the dream gets closer to becoming a reality, our revenues are decreasing rather than increasing.

Building the new church complex is not our most difficult task. Despite the delays, it will be built. Even more difficult is the answer to the question we must now ask ourselves: "Do we have the resources to operate and maintain it?" The statistics indicate that we do. Consequently, it behooves every Armenian served by St. James Church to prove this is so.

In closing, all of us on the Parish Council wish to thank our members for their confidence in our abilities and for affording us the opportunity to serve our church.

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We also wish to thank all those individuals who, without fanfare, supported and cooperated with the Parish Council in various ways to achieve our common goal: a thriving St. James parish.

Martha Guraian
Martha Guraian, Chairperson

Lionel A. Galstaun
Lionel Galstaun,
Recording Secretary

Fr. Karekin Kasparian
Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian,
Pastor