

# ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH OF WESTCHESTER

## REPORT OF PARISH COUNCIL FOR 1995

The 1995 Parish Council comprised the following members:

### Officers:

President: Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian; Chairman: Lionel S. Galstaun;  
Vice-Chairman: Ara Ishkanian; Recording Secretary: Lily D. Mekenian;  
Corresponding Secretary: Michael Pisani; Treasurer: Harry Tavitian;  
Assistant Treasurer: Paul Keyishian.

### Councilors:

Alice Basmajian; Lisa Kouzoujian; Van Krikorian; Ara Momjian; Richard Papalian.

### Actions

Meetings were held regularly on the third Tuesday evening of the month, except in December when the meeting was advanced a week. A special joint meeting was held with the Building Committee on January 24, 1995, with the agenda concentrating on the Building Program. Quorums were present at all meetings. Motions were made and unanimously approved to:

1. Engage William A. Kelly Company as Construction Manager;
2. Authorize the Design Consultants to complete Design Development
3. Engage Project Architect Tom Ashbahian to prepare bid solicitation documents and supervise construction.
4. Place before the Parish Assembly a motion to authorize expenditure of up to \$137,000 for completion of Design Development;
5. Approve a budget of \$3,487,000 for construction of the church, hall and site work.

All of the above resolutions were presented to the 1995 Parish Assembly and approved.

The Parish Council voted to approve for presentation to the Parish Assembly, the proposed operating budget for 1995, and a Resolution on Ordination of Women to the Diaconate. Both proposals were approved by the Parish Assembly. (Note: The Resolution on Ordination of Women was approved in May by the Diocesan Assembly).

The "Old House" at 1131 North Street was used to house seminarians from St. Nersess Seminary during the renovation of the Seminary building. Several repairs became necessary with the costs being shared between St. James and St. Nersess.

Funds were collected for needy children in Artsagh and Armenia. These were dispatched in the care of people traveling to Armenia for the election of the Catholics.

Lenten dinners were held on alternate Fridays during Lent. They were sponsored by church organizations, and were highly successful.

Economic studies of *Tufa* versus cast facing blocks were made. The cast facing blocks turned out more economic because of the high cost of transporting *Tufa* from Armenia. Ten blocks of *Tufa* were brought from Armenia at a cost of \$875. These were intended as samples for examination by our parishioners. They were placed on exhibit at 1131 North Street. It was decided by the Parish Council to use these blocks as corner stones in the new church; they were consecrated by H. H. Catholicos Karekin I during his visit to our church in January 1996.

Motion was made and unanimously approved to put our property at 2 Lincoln Lane on sale, with appropriate restrictions to permit our continued use until our new facilities are available. At least two formal offers have been received, at \$1.25 million with reasonable times to vacate the property. We have a particularly choice site and expect it to bring a good price. Previous "guesstimates" by enthusiastic realtors have ranged up to \$2-million plus. A site planner was hired to prepare a subdivision plan for 2 Lincoln Lane. A three-lot plan is feasible and conforms to present zoning.

Ground Blessing of our building site by His Eminence, Khajag Barsamian was held on September 16, 1995. A fundraising Dinner-Dance was held at the Rye-Hilton following the Ground Blessing, which attracted about 140 people. Socially, it was a highly successful affair which created much enthusiasm in the community for the Building Project. Approximately \$620,000 was raised in pledges spread out over four years. As of the end of 1995, collections amount to \$173,618.88. The Building Fund, on December 31, 1995, held about \$252,000 in a money market account and about \$22,000 in other liquid assets. The Dinner-Dance and Ground Blessing ceremony resulted in a cost to the Building Fund of \$6,700.

Fundraising results have not been overpowering. If we are ever to complete the construction of the new facilities on a reasonable schedule, I am convinced that we will have to take out construction loans. The interest for the loans will have to be entered as a cost of construction, with the expectation that the four-year spread on pledge payments will enable us to end up without a long term mortgage which would wreck our annual budgets. This subject will be reviewed by our capable Building Committee Chairman's report. I do want to highlight the issue because it is critically important.

Rug Sales were held in April and October. These were not as successful as in the past, and have left a deficit in our financial condition due to our budget projection of greater earnings. Possible reasons include competition from simultaneous sales elsewhere, and unusually pleasant weather. Exit surveys were conducted. These indicated that the majority of buyers came in response to newspaper advertising. Curtailment of the direct mail solicitation is under consideration because it is costly in personnel time and postage. There seems to be some reluctance on the part of the rug suppliers to continue providing the merchandise in the face of decreasing revenue. The continuation of the rug sales is being studied further.

A very successful picnic was held. Even though the price of food was reduced, the large crowd more than made up the difference in gross receipts. The St. James Annual Picnics have begun to attract large segments of the Armenian Community in the entire Tri-state area. Mike Guroian and Mark Derderian gathered a very capable committee, all of whom deserve our deep appreciation.

A joint meeting was held on September 7, by the Parish Council and representatives of the Church Groups. The newly reorganized Women's Guild, the Hye Steppers, the Sunday School and the compilers of the New Directory were present. Information was exchanged on Parish Council activities, the status of the Building Project and those of the groups present.

The Parish Council reviewed the accounting procedures of the church and decided that among other things, capital accounts should be separated from operating. It was moved and adopted that professional advice should be solicited for setting up a system of accounts adequate to produce an annual balance sheet. George Sanossian of Sanossian and Sardis, a firm of CPA's, agreed to assist the church in defining and setting up the system; at his request, he is being reimbursed only for out-of-pocket costs. Our Treasurer, Harry Tavitian has been the prime contact with Sanossian and Sardis. The study is still in progress. We are most appreciative of George Sanossian for the contribution of his expertise.

### **Proposed Budget for 1996**

The Budget for 1996 proposed by the Parish Council will be presented by the Treasurer, Harry Tavitian. It is in balance only because special activities are proposed which we hope will raise enough funds to bring closure.

I have made it a point to repeat two recommendations at each year where I have had the duty to report to you. These are:

1. We need a greater commitment to the Stewardship Program. This is purely a voluntary program, but it is essential for the short term. Paul Keyishian has done an exemplary job of following up and bringing contributions up to the budgeted level.

2. We need more annual contributions from our Parish to the Armenian Church Endowment Fund, with the proceeds designated for our church. This is also voluntary, and essential, but in the long term.

It has been said many times that our new facilities will cost substantially more to run. We will have almost double the acreage as well as more than double the floor area under roof. Everything will rise, including utilities, salaries, maintenance and everything else. We are all hoping that the more attractive facility will also raise special contributions for usage. But that will take time, and we must face the increased costs which will happen immediately.

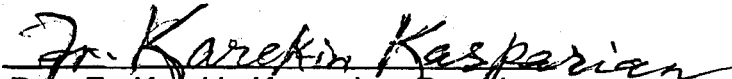
## Acknowledgements


As always, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the devoted contribution of Gale Perzigian who works many hours and keeps open our communication channels, whether by phone, letter, or mailers to the entire parish. She has done this, three days a week, without any compensation, for more years than I want to recall.

Nancy Kayekjian resigned as bookkeeper due to family relocation needs. She performed her functions efficiently and with minimal supervision. She will be missed.

Elma Davidian has returned to assume the duties of bookkeeper, and she is contributing her knowledge and capabilities with her usual grace and competence. We are fortunate in having a person of her background ready to fill in when needed. Many thanks are due her for her devotion and willingness to help.

Finally, I want to thank Der Hayr and all the members of the Parish Council for their support. There have been a few complaints that our meetings take excessive time, with adjournment frequently coming at midnight. I admit this, but it has to be attributed to the interest and determination on the part of the Parish Council, that all subjects should get thorough consideration. And they do!

  
Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian, President

  
Lionel S. Galstaun, Chairman

  
Lily D. Mekenian, Recording Secretary