

CORRECTIONS TO THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
HOLY CROSS ARMENIAN CHURCH
UNION CITY, NEW JERSEY
Pastor's Account

I signed the minutes of the Parish Assembly despite the fact that it contained not only several omissions and misstatements, but also errors of fact. My feeling at the time was that to withhold my signature would not help to solve any problems, but would instead create more tension between the Pastor and the Parish Council. I would, however, like to take exception to its inaccuracies and its offensive tone and I would like to rectify its many errors.

1. The second paragraph of the minutes should be corrected to read:

The meeting was reconvened at 1:15 with the Invocation appropriate for the occasion, offered by the Pastor, Fr. Diran Papazian.

2. In Paragraph 5, beginning with "Mr. Hagop Hovsepien..."

My portion of the annual report does in fact appear in Armenian after the English version, albeit in an abbreviated form.

The rest of this critique will concern itself with the report under the heading of General Discussion which begins on page 4 of the minutes.

The general discussion reported on page 4 was in lieu of the Parish Council's report which immediately followed the Pastor's report, the first item on the agenda. The rationale for placement of the general discussion at the end of the minutes camouflages the fact that the meeting was opened in such an aggressive manner.

In contrast to the statement on the minutes "The Chairman, on behalf of the Assembly, took strong exception...", the Chairman was in fact speaking only on his own behalf. There was no expressed consensus (nor even discussion) by the Assembly supporting this statement. The Chairman then read the epilogues of my two previous years' reports' and he interpreted my candid conversation in this year's epilogue in the dramatic way recorded.

I would like to note here that my concerns regarding the challenges facing Holy Cross Armenian Church are never expressed with such cynicism, but rather with a desire to identify our problems so that we can begin to solve them.

Immediately following this attack, the Assembly Chairman called on the Parish Council Chairman to offer further criticism of the Pastor. As you can imagine, a shocked silence on the part of the parishioners followed.

It is apparent to me that such behavior was an obvious attempt by the Parish Council to set a hostile and negative tone toward the Pastor.

3. Remaining with the general discussion, Mr. Nubar Dorian mentioned at the meeting only the points 1 and 2; points 3 and 4 were inserted later as they were not brought up at the meeting.

a. With regard to point number 1, the Pastor generally adheres to the regular office hours of 10-1, even though this is an arbitrary block of time decided on by the Pastor himself. There are of course times when the Pastor does not adhere to these stated office hours - for funerals, emergency hospital visits, etc.

b. Regarding Vision. The Parish paper is not published once in three months as stated in point 2 of the general discussion. It is published more frequently than that. The real issue of complaint is quite different and goes deeper than apparent. The paper has its editor, Gary Kulhanjian, to whom complaints can be addressed; Mr. Kulhanjian knows best all the obstructions related to timely publication. The chief obstacle with Vision is the lack of secretarial help.

c. Although point number 3 in the general discussion was not raised at the Parish Assembly meeting, I would like to address it as it has been incorporated into the minutes.

The Pastor reports on the number and nature of all his visits to the Parish Council at its regular monthly meetings; the number of these visits are quite respectable as his reports verify. As for major visitations, every-member canvasses, membership campaigns, pledge drives, etc., the Pastor advised the parish council from the very beginning that it is a shared responsibility and that a visitation membership committee should be appointed to map out a carefully planned strategy for visitations to community members. Parish Council members have never followed up on my suggestions.

d. Regarding point number 4 of the minutes. Again, while not discussed at the meeting as implied by its inclusion into the minutes, I would like to respond.

The reality of my involvement is completely opposite of what is described in point #4. The Pastor approached the Bolsahay community and established warm friendships with its members. It should be remembered that the Pastor is himself a Bolsetzi. It was primarily because of the Pastor's encouragement that the Bolsetzis undertook the annual picnic, which the Parish Council was going to abandon because of lack of helping hands. But more important than that is the February 13th gala. Such a function had never before occurred in this parish. The Bolsetzis gave a

very successful dinner-dance with all proceeds donated to the Church. Within a few hours, the staggering sum of over \$15,000 was realized. This event was possible mainly through the efforts of Alice Yigitkurt, a Parish Council member and respected member of the Bolsahay community. The Pastor relentlessly worked throughout the year to lay the foundation for this affair. I'm happy to add that there is willingness on the part of the Bolsetzis to give similar parties throughout the year for the benefit of the Church. I would like to say, however, that within the Bolsetzi community, respect for the priest as head of the Church runs high and it is with the priest that they communicate. The Pastor is presently making plans for Easter home blessing among the Bolsahay.

4. In the paragraph following point number 4, it is noted that the Chairman asked the Pastor to respond. The Chairman DID NOT ask me to respond. Additionally, I am misquoted in the next paragraph. I responded later in the meeting to some questions posed by Deacon Hagop Hovsepien, although my comments are not recorded. At that time I also offered my willingness to meet with th Parish Council to resolve any differences.

5. It is omitted that Fr. Papazian thanked the retiring members of the Parish Council and welcomed the newly elected members. He also thanked all those who helped him throughout the year in various ways and particularly all those who continued their services and sacrifices with great dedication to their beloved Church.

6. Also omitted is the fact that I closed the meeting with a Benediction.

Some Comments and Observations

It is obvious from these corrections that the minutes do not objectively reflect the proceedings of the Annual Parish Assembly meeting; instead they constitute an attempt to build a case against the Pastor. This is a tactic that has no place in Church business. It is sad and unfortunate when tension is created between lay officials of the Church and clergy. There is no winner in such battles; everyone loses - the parishioners, the clergy and the officials and this is altogether uncalled for.

In the Parish Council's Annual Report there is a line to thank the Pastor for his attending the spiritual needs of the community. The Pastor did just that. He conscientiously discharged his duties as the spiritual shepherd of the flock; however the Pastor as the President of the parish and Parish Council unfortunately could not effectively administer the parish because of lack of support and cooperation on the part of the Parish Council. This is sad but should be said: without the mutual trust, respect and cooperation between the Pastor and Parish Council we cannot expect fruitful activities. In the final analysis, may I say, a positive attitude in the Church will be beneficial to all; in the absence of a positive attitude, the Church will suffer.

