

Circular

DRAFT

TO: Parishioners of St. Mary Armenian Church
Elberon, New Jersey

Dear Parishioners:

For a period of time, certain questions, difficulties, and personality conflicts have arisen in the parish of St. Mary Armenian Church, Elberon, New Jersey and, more particularly, since the January 1975 parish assembly.

Several parishioners have communicated with the Diocese of the Armenian Church indicating their feelings regarding the lay and clerical activities in the Church. The Primate and the Diocesan Council have expended long hours to the issues that have been raised and have attempted to seek compromise and give direction to all concerned.

Many communications have been forwarded to the Diocese, consisting of letters, petitions, and reports.

Several conferences were held between the Primate, Diocesan Council, Pastor and Parish Council. Representatives of the Diocese have met at St. Mary Armenian Church; and as a result thereof, reports have been submitted to the Diocese.

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On October 29, 1975, the Primate and the Diocesan Council issued a

directive:-

- a. suspending future parish assemblies until further notification
- b. the Pastor was to carry out his duties and receive his salary and other benefits as under the policy in effect and until such time as he would be reassigned *to another Parish.*
- c. the elected Parish Council members were suspended and an interim committee comprised of Barkave Elian, Chairman, Araxy Gokbeck, Recording Secretary, and Sarkis Dadourian, Treasurer, together with the Pastor as President, was named to carry on the affairs of the Church.
- d. all committees were directed to cease to function.

The interim committee did function; and on December 29, 1975, the Primate and Diocesan Council named an interim Parish Council to handle the affairs of the Church, and most recently, on January 8, 1976, three

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members of the Diocesan Council met with the elected Parish Council and the interim appointed Parish Council; ^{this} and ~~which~~ meeting adjourned with certain members not recognizing the administrative authority of the Primate and Diocesan Council.

The attitudes which have been expressed are, in the opinion of the Diocesan Council, contrary to the spirit and intent of the by-laws of the Armenian Church.

It had been explicitly explained to the various members of the elected Parish Council that, in order for the St. Mary Armenian Church to be functional and its affairs conducted without interruption for the best interests of its parishioners and the Armenian Church of America, the Primate and Diocesan Council must have the utmost cooperation of all concerned and that in situations which require the directions of the Primate and the Diocesan Council the directions ^{res} set forth must be followed. We are sorry to say that various members of the Parish Council have refused to follow the advice and directions submitted, indicating that they have no obligation to follow the directions ^{v-23}.

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received except in ecclesiastical and religious matters. The particular members of the elected Parish Council refused to take direction as submitted; and, therefore, the Primate and the Diocesan Council had no alternative but to take the action to suspend the elected Parish Council, as of ~~October 29, 1975 and named an interim appointed Parish Council on December 29, 1975.~~

On January 8, 1976, at a joint meeting with three members of the Diocesan Council and which meeting is referenced to above, some members of the elected Parish Council indicated their refusal to cooperate, indicating they do not have to comply with the provisions set forth by the Diocese.

The intent of the Diocesan Council was to attempt to bring all parties together in the best interests of the Church; however, these various members have indicated they will not be a part of any temporary arrangement, with a view to having the issues resolved.

The interim committee of Mr. Elian, Mrs. Gokbeck, and Mr. Dadourian did function from October 29, 1975 until the appointment of the interim appointed Parish Council and now refuse to recognize said interim appointed Parish Council.

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The Diocesan Council has considered, with the Primate, all letters, petitions, reports, meetings, and the general attitude of the community and, in the best interests of the Church, has directed this interim committee, comprised of Mr. Elian, Mrs. Gokbeck, and Mr. Dadourian to surrender up and deliver to the Diocese of the Armenian Church all personal property, bank accounts, and monies, including all real estate owned by St. Mary Armenian Church on or before January 30, 1976.

You undoubtedly will receive or hear several versions of the issues involved; however, basically the issues are:

1. appointment, removal or transfer of the clergy ;
2. the administrative activities of the Church ;
3. the authority of the Diocese, [#] the Primate, and the Diocesan

^{are} Council ~~is~~ always sensitive to the wishes of the community regarding the placement of ~~ests~~ priests and also the administrative functions of a church; however, the Primate and the Diocesan Council will never be intimidated to the point that their duties to the Diocese will be undermined or inter~~er~~fered with.

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The Primate and the Diocesan Council will not allow a priest of the Parish to be destroyed; however, will consider the effectiveness of a priest in a particular parish. You should remember the placement and transfer of priests is no easy task and all that was requested by your Diocesan Council was cooperation and time to have the issue resolved. The priest of St. Mary Armenian Church has resigned, and the Primate and Diocesan Council ^{have} ~~has~~ noted the same. and ^{have} ~~has~~ acted accordingly and ^{have} ~~is~~ presently making arrangements for transfer.

^{However,}
~~The time has come that~~ certain members of the Parish Council by their actions have created a situation of confrontation. ^Infact, inferences of law suits have been made; and in view of this, to protect and strengthen the Armenian Church of America in the event the individuals involved do not ^{directives} ~~directions~~ comply with the ~~directions~~ set forth on or before January 30, 1976, said individuals have been notified that they will be held liable and accountable for their actions.

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We are presenting the above with a view that all loyal parishioners will understand and agree with the position of the Diocese, and your feelings be made known to the parties concerned.

Please remember that you are a member of the St. Mary Armenian Church parish and your devotion to your Church is commendable. However, it is also your duty to explain to those acting contrary to the interest of the Diocese that it is their duty to administer their church wisely, soundly, and without beligerance and disharmony.

This is to advise that considering they refuse to accept the authority of the Primate and the Diocesan Council of the Armenian Church of America in administrative matters, Mr. Barkave Elian, Dr. Anna Haratounian, Araxy Gokbeck, and Sarkis Dadourian have been suspended from the office of Parish Council. Further, the convening of parish assemblies are suspended until further notification of the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

On December 29, 1975, the Primate and Diocesan Council appointed a committee to handle the affairs of the Church to be known as the "interim appointed Parish Council," all of whom did not accept appointments.

Those accepting appointments and who ^{are} ~~will be~~ charged ^{to} ~~at the~~ ^{properly} ~~time~~

~~to~~ conduct the affairs of the Church are:

- John Chakamian (Chairman)
- Mary Hachigian *Secretary*
- John Kaiserian *Ordin*
- Zareh Manigian *Treasurer*
- John Pehlivanian *Vice Chair*
- Mary Ann Tutunjian *Assoc. Corresp.*

Judge John K. Najarian
Chairman of the Diocesan Council,
of the Armenian Church of America