

## PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

1977

1977 was a very important year for our parish. We made some very far-reaching decisions and all of us, the Parish Council and you, the parishioners, shared in these decisions.

1977 was the year that St. George Armenian Church, for the first time, had its own priest. The decision to have a priest was not taken lightly. During our discussions last year many questions were asked, such as: can we afford a priest? is our Armenian community large enough to have a priest? can we conduct services every Sunday? and most important of all, will people join our church and will they attend our activities?

To your everlasting credit, you, our parishioners said - Let's try - let's bring the Der Hayr and let's try to organize our parish into a real church. And while there can be many improvements in our efforts, the Parish Council can report to you today that we are succeeding. We have a priest, we have church services every Sunday, our membership has grown and our activities are well attended. You are all to be congratulated.

As good as our intentions are, however, it takes two to make a partnership -- the parishioners on one hand and the Der Hayr on the other.

Der Terenig Kondralian came here last summer with his eyes open. He knew the situation. But he came here with a desire to succeed. He came with enthusiasm, with a dedication to his profession as a clergyman. He came here to give of himself and of his family. He came here to do the work of God. Each one of us must judge his efforts in his or her own way; but the Parish Council wants to report to you today that we feel we have the right partner for our parish. And for that, Der Hayr, we welcome you and we thank you.

How did all this come about?

In February of 1977, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian visited the Houston Parish, and the Parish Council made a strong recommendation to the effect that the Houston Armenian community had grown large enough and was financially able to have a full-time priest. The result was that the Archbishop recommended Der Terenig Kondralian, then pastor of the Armenian Church in Haverhill, Massachusetts, as a candidate for parish priest in Houston. Der Terenig visited Houston in May and after discussions with the Parish Council, and with approval from the Archbishop, the Council made the recommendation at a special meeting of parishioners on June 16 that Der Terenig be invited to Houston. Parishioners approved by a vote of 37-0. The Der Hayr and his wife, Christine, were officially welcomed to Houston with a reception and dinner on September 11 and the first Divine Liturgy officiated by Der Terenig was on September 25.

The Parish Council purchased a home for use by Der Terenig and his family at 15119 Wellman Lane, Houston, in August of 1977. Purchase price of the home was \$32,213. The Parish Council assumed the existing mortgage on the home since the mortgage rate was only 6-1/4%. To do this the Parish Council put down \$20,178 - leaving a mortgage balance of \$12,000. Monthly payments, including taxes, etc., are \$150.00 - but we have applied to have the home tax exempted and these payments will be reduced.

Let me now introduce the members of our Parish Council. They are: Y. Hekimian, Chairman; S. Saxenian, Vice Chairman; G. Keramian, Treasurer; J. Boyajian, Secretary, and S. Yeriazarian and H. Ohanian. Three other members have resigned over the last two years because of the pressure of their businesses.

The Parish Council has held 26 meetings during the year, and from September to December met at least once a week.

Starting a new parish meant much work had to be done.

Part of this work was investigating the possibility of selling our present 2-acre site on Bering Drive, the reason being that since purchase of the property in 1964 at a price of \$35,000, the property had increased in value to more than \$500,000. Because of the constantly increasing costs of all land in the Houston area, the Parish Council started a search for a site the church could purchase at reasonable cost. Such a site was found by a real estate firm - a 3.6 acre piece of land approximately 10 miles west of the present site. Purchase price was \$1.25 per sq. ft. or \$196,000. Sale of our present property at more than \$500,000 and purchase of the new site at \$196,000 meant that the church hopefully would have a minimum of \$300,000 profit - enough money to build a hall and adjoining chapel.

On Sunday, October 2, the Parish Council called a special parish meeting of all parishioners and made three proposals for their approval. They were (1) that the 2-acre site on Bering Drive be put up for sale; (2) that we go ahead with plans to purchase the 3.6 acre site at Synott Road for \$196,000, and (3) proposal was also made that our future church services be held temporarily in the St. Thomas High School Chapel. All three proposals were passed unanimously.

The first services at St. Thomas were held on October 9, 1977. The property on Bering Drive is now for sale; and a \$5,000 deposit has been put on the new property with closing scheduled for February 15, 1978.

Church services are now held every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. with a social gathering afterward. The coming of services every Sunday has caused the forming of a Church Choir Association and the appointment of a church organist, Mrs. S. Boyajian, and choir director, J. Boyajian. The choir has 17 members. Named as deacons were Hovig Frankian and Vartkes Tatakjian.

In order to get all these activities done, the Parish Council appointed numerous committees from among its members and they are as follows:

- For purchase of the new property - G. Keramian, Der Hayr and J. Boyajian
- For sale of the property - Y. Hekimian and S. Saxenian
- Purchase of home for Der Hayr - G. Keramian, J. Boyajian and S. Yeriazarian
- Arrangements to bring the Der Hayr to Houston - J. Boyajian and G. Keramian
- A building committee was also named. Their charge was to develop plans for a Community Hall and Church. Members of this committee are:  
S. Saxenian, Chairman; and members S. Yeriazarian, Aram Vartanian, John Jordan and Der Hayr.

Appointed co-chairpersons of the New Years Dance were Mimi Mavoulian and Houri Sarkissian.

We should also mention that Gladys Abajian was appointed recording secretary to the Parish Council and we all thank her for her excellent efforts, week after week.

Activities conducted by the Parish Council, in addition to those mentioned above, were the St. Vartanantz observance and, during the Spring of this year, Church Services on February 7 by Archbishop T. Manoogian; also Der Terenig Kondralian; and 2 services by Rev. Arton Sempadian. We also held a Parish Meeting with Archbishop Manoogian in Henry's Steak House in February.

The Parish Council conducted a very active membership drive during the year, establishing dues at \$25 per person, and urging that all join the church as full time members. Paid membership rose from 39 in May to 79 at the end of 1977. The Parish Council also set up procedures and rules, with the approval of Archbishop T. Manoogian, for the holding of the first Parish Assembly of St. George Armenian Church.

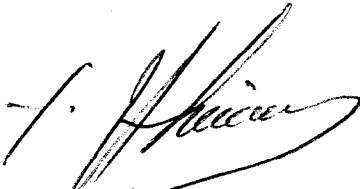
The Parish Council wishes to thank all of its members for their efforts, especially all of the committee chairmen for their work; the Ladies Auxiliary, the New Years Eve Committee and the choir get a special vote of thanks.

In addition the Parish Council once again wishes to acknowledge the dedication of Der Terenig. We appreciate his many visitations to parishioners, his work with the organizations of the church and, most important, the guidance he has given all of us in the development of our community.

As you are aware, this Parish Council was appointed by Archbishop Torkom Manoogian. Many persons have worked diligently on the Council over the years and a number of us have served continuously for 8, 10, 12 years. All of us have tried over the years to keep our parish alive and to have it grow until the time when it could stand on its own two feet. That time has now come. This Parish Assembly will elect, for the first time, its own Parish Council members, its own Nominating Committee, its own Auditing Committee and its own Delegate.

We are overjoyed. We welcome it, and we wish to the new Parish Council well.

Thank you.



Y. Hekimian  
Chairman



J. Boyajian  
Secretary