

ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH OF WESTCHESTER

PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1989

The 1989 Parish Council was composed of the following members:

Officers:

Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian, President,
Lionel S. Galstaun, Chairperson,
Alice Shimshidian, Vice-chairperson,
Richard Varadian, Recording Secretary,
Mark Derderian, Corresponding Secretary,
Martha Gurahian, Treasurer,
Ara Ishkanian, Assistant Treasurer.

Councilors: Ohan Bas*, Paul Bashian, Ed Essayan, Toros Mangassarian, Dan Mushegian.

Note*: Harry Keleshian, who was next in line at the 1989 election accepted the position of Councilor, to serve the unexpired term of Ohan Bas, when Mr. Bas resigned.

Meetings were scheduled and held regularly on the third Tuesday evening of the month, with two exceptions: the November and December meetings, which were held on the second Tuesday. Two Special Meetings were held in conjunction with the Building Committee to review progress and to make plans for Special Parish Assemblies to review, discuss and approve recommendations of the Building Committee. A quorum of the Parish Council was present at all the meetings.

In overview, 1989 was a year of significant progress toward the goal of building a new church. Many issues have been clarified, but we still have a few problems that require a mutually satisfactory solution. The directives given by the Parish Assembly, and the Special Assemblies called during the year, are being followed faithfully as will become evident when the Building Committee gives its report. We have reason to hope that by this time next year, we will have most of the present problems behind us, and that we will be under way with our approvals in place. We have had comments by some concerned parishioners that we seem to be heading into a depressed real estate market, and that we should reconsider our decision to buy the property at Kenilworth Road, in the expectation that by waiting, we might get a lower price. I would like to point out that we hope to realize more on the sale of our Lincoln Avenue property than the net cost of the Kenilworth land. Under these circumstances, I submit that our present course is prudent, and that reconsideration of the decision should be weighed carefully. The Building Committee will cover the details of the present status in their report.

Since the last Annual Parish Assembly, we have been maintaining records of church attendance as well as ancillary pieces of information for statistical purposes. These records show that we had two guest celebrants for the Badarak and four joint participations by other clergymen with our Der Karekin; that our choir had excellent

representation during the whole year; and that an average of 55 parishioners were present on Sundays at the Divine Liturgy, contributing an average of \$2.26 per person.

And now, it is our pleasant duty to call your attention to the devoted efforts of many members of our parish. Without their support, we simply would not be able to operate. First, we want to highlight Elma Davidian and her continued service in dutifully and expertly maintaining the Church's financial records. I am painfully aware that she asked to be relieved of this work four years ago. I wish I could tell you that we have a replacement for Elma, but at this time, we don't. Also, let me call attention to Gale Perzigian who has done a full-time secretary's work on part time, and has consistently declined remuneration. These two women have been a pillar of strength in the operation of the church office. We hope to be able to provide Gale with some much needed assistance.

As in past years, Garo Bashian with the help of Ed Essayan conducted the two annual rug sales, both of which continue to be major sources of funding for the operating expenses of the church. The Bazaar added its good share. The Church owes its continued financial solvency to you, Garo and Ed.

A very successful picnic was held. Even the weather cooperated by giving us a beautiful day. Credit must go to the team that organized the affair, particularly to Carlen Chookhachian who, with help from Paul Bashian, did an outstanding job. As usual, Judge Gurahian and Jim Cassidy faced the hot stove all day, but the results were all we could ask. The food was delicious, the general atmosphere most congenial, and all events proceeded without a single hitch. Credit must also go to the many members who stood by to serve food, sell tickets, supervise parking and conduct the raffle. A rousing thank you to all who helped.

The status of the accounts for 1989 will be given more completely in the Treasurer's Report.

Fundraising activities for the new church and community center were not pressed during 1989. However, the investment instruments of the funds, which were changed from CD's and Money Market deposits, partially to high yield short and medium term Treasury Notes, have fared very well in the rising Bond Market. The status of the Building Funds will be covered more completely in the Fundraising Committee's report.

The airconditioners that were installed last year in the Sanctuary served us well this year. Although we had our share of torrid Sundays, those attending the Divine Liturgy had the benefit of pleasantly cool surroundings. George Davidian and his many helpers also upgraded the heating system in the Parish House, so that we have had comfortably warm surroundings during the biting cold that was experienced recently. Our thanks to all who provided help in the maintenance of the property.

The Womens' Guild, under the capable leadership of Rose Darien

has conducted its share of social events, providing delicious meals for various church functions, most, if not all of which were prepared by the members. They were a source of pride to themselves and our St. James Armenian Church, when they hosted a regional convocation of Women's Guilds. Thank you, Rose and your Guild.

George Omartian, Chairman of the Cultural Committee will report separately on the activities of this group of devoted friends of the arts. A very special affair, this year, was the symphony concert at Carnegie Hall, in which a major symphonic composition by our parishioner, Michelle Ekizian, was given its world premiere. The Committee hosted a gracious reception after the concert to give attendees a chance to meet Michelle.

We do want to call special attention and extend our thanks to the Church Choir, led by Raffi Sevadjan, the Director, and Noem Poulatian, Chairperson. Sunday after Sunday, rain or shine, they attend and perform with devotion, their vital part in the Badarak. Our records show that an average of seven members is present every Sunday. This is a living example of devotion to a chosen way of serving the Church, and reflects on the dynamic and enthusiastic personality of our Choirmaster, Raffi Sevadjan. Our congratulations and thanks to both.

Both the Senior and Junior ACYOA have had an active year. Their reports are provided separately.

Last, and certainly not least, I want to call your attention to the work of the Principals and Teachers of the Armenian and Sunday Schools. At the same time, I should repeat the request made at the 1989 Parish Assembly. Parents, please bring your children to Armenian School on Fridays, and to Sunday School on Sundays. You owe them the stimulus and benefits which come to them when they learn the basics of their religion as well as their mother tongue, their cultural background and history.

We want to take a few moments to comment on the budget.

Our major present sources of income remain the stewardship pledges, bazaar and rug sales, followed by membership dues and Sunday plate collections. These five sources account for a little more than 70 percent of our gross receipts. Bazaar and rug sale returns declined until 1988, but showed a modest increase in 1989. First, let me state categorically, that we are not considering any increase in membership dues. However, an increase in membership would be all to the good, and should increase Sunday plate collections in addition to increasing dues collections. By all means, we should try to attract families in the Westchester Armenian community to join us. We have an attractive group of members, and we should make use of this to attract others. With respect to stewardship, it is due to the singleminded devotion of John Boyajian and his Committee, that we have as many stewards as we do, and that, by and large, they fulfill their pledges. But we need more, and we need larger pledges. We hope that each and every one of you will consider this problem and give it your best shot! When you examine the proposed budget for 1990, I hope that you will recognize the importance of our Stewardship Program.

There is one further source that we have not considered sufficiently, and that is the Endowment. Thanks to the major contribution by Mr. and Mrs. Suren D. Fesjian, St. James Church has the second largest endowment among the churches of the diocese, but it is still not adequate if we consider the size of our community and its affluence. We urge all of you to consider making yearly contributions to ACEF, and to provide bequests in your wills. There is no single device that will more certainly assure the continued existence of our St. James Church for as long as a Diocese exists in the U. S. Let me make it clear that a very significant start has been made in a permanent endowment for the Church, but so far, it pays only about 5% of our annual operating costs, plus a similar amount for the Building Fund.

In conclusion, the Parish Council asks for your continued support, and, to the maximum extent consistent with your other critical needs, a step-up in the level of your commitment to St. James Church. The commitment may be financial or it may be in contribution of time. Such a commitment will make it possible for us to serve the religious and social needs of the community more adequately. Both are needed and both will be deeply and equally appreciated. Thank you.

Father Karekin Kasparian
Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian
President, Parish Council

Lionel S. Galstaun
Lionel S. Galstaun
Chairman, Parish Council

Richard Varadian
Richard Varadian
Recording Secretary