

ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH OF WESTCHESTER

PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1990

The 1990 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,
Toros Mangassarian, Corresponding Secretary,
Martha Gurahian, Treasurer,
Avadis Sakalian, Assistant Treasurer.

Councilors: Paul Bashian, Ara Ishkanian, Ara Momjian, Aida Pisani, Zaven Tachdjian.

Meetings were scheduled and held regularly on the third Tuesday evening of the month. One Special Meeting was held on July 23, in conjunction with the Building Committee, to review progress and to approve recommendations of the Building Committee. A quorum of the Parish Council was present at all the meetings.

In overview, 1990 saw progress toward the goal of building a new church. Negotiations have been pressed with the Board of the Boy Scouts of America toward acquisition of a 5.5 acre parcel of land on North Street, in White Plains. It appears that the Scouts Board is divided on the issue of selling the property, so that decisions have not been forthcoming. There have been some recent indications that a positive decision to sell may be near, but it has not materialized at the time of this writing, nor has there been any sign that mutual acceptance of terms has been achieved. Two alternate properties are under consideration. Both are in White Plains, in areas where we do not expect significant opposition from the Planning Board. This project remains in the capable hands of Ed Essayan, Garo Bashian and Zaven Tachdjian. All three have contributed countless hours in actual negotiations as well as follow-up contacts with the property owners. The entire Parish is indebted to them. The Parish is also indebted to George Davidian who chaired the Building Committee and gave leadership to the building and land acquisition programs until he asked to be temporarily replaced. As you know, Ed Essayan has taken over the chairmanship of the Building Committee, pro tem.

As reported at the last Annual Parish Assembly, we have continued to maintain records of church attendance as well as other information for statistical purposes. These records show that we had guest priests on four Sundays with Der Karekin the celebrant for the balance of the year. Our choir had excellent representation, and an average of 59 parishioners were present at the Divine Liturgy, contributing an average of \$2.58 per person. Sunday attendance and contributions per attending parishioner were up slightly from the previous year.

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 again 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 five years ago. I wish I could tell you that we have a replacement for Elma, but at this time, we don't. However, our Treasurer, Martha Gurahian has been working cooperatively with Elma, and has assumed a part of the burden. Let me also call attention to Gale Perzigian who continues to contribute valuable services as Secretary to the Pastor, without remuneration. These three women have been a mainstay in the operation of the church office.

Garò Bashian continues to run one of our major sources of income, the two rug sales; the returns from this activity showed an alarming decline in 1990. Except for what may have been a fortuitous rise in 1989, this is a continuation of a trend. A new mailing list is being developed in the hope that it will help to reverse the downward direction. The Parish Council would be very receptive to suggestions from the members of the Parish of ways to improve rug sales.

An outstandingly successful picnic was held. Even the weather cooperated by giving us a beautiful day. Credit must go to those that organized the affair, particularly to Ara Momjian who, with help from an exceptionally able team, did an outstanding job. 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. Over \$8,400 was realized as a net profit. This is an all-time record. Many thanks to all who helped.

Stewardship collections were about 24 percent under budget. This has been a major shortfall in our income during 1990, and must be corrected in 1991.

Finally, I want to comment on the brilliantly successful Tenth Anniversary Dinner-Dance held on November 17 and the visit of our new Primate which followed on December 9. Alice Shimshidian and her committee succeeded in raising very nearly \$10,000 from the contributions to the booklet and from sales of raffle tickets. The Dinner-Dance essentially broke even. Particular thanks must go to Der Hayr who did the lion's share of "selling" contributions to the booklet, and to Hachik Basmajian for his assumption of the cost of printing. We also appreciate the kindness of the raffle winner, Mrs. Carol Kasparian who elected to take the cash alternative and return \$1,000 of her winnings as a contribution to the church. The Parish is grateful to Bishop Khajag for his visitation and celebration of Badarak on December 9, the tenth anniversary of the consecration of our altar.

There is one further source of income that I want to stress, and that is the Endowment. I have brought up this matter at every one of my past reports, but I still do not see widespread participation by our parishioners. Thanks to major contributions by a few of our parishioners and particularly our *Gnkahayr*, Mr. Suren Fesjian, St. James Church has the second largest endowment among the churches of the diocese, but it would be much healthier if there

would be more participants. It is not necessary to contribute a large sum. We urge all of you to consider making yearly contributions to the Armenian Church Endowment Fund for the benefit of St. James Armenian Church, and to provide bequests in your wills. There is no single device that will more certainly assure the continued existence of our St. James Armenian Church for the benefit of future generations. 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 1990. The Fundraising Committee as a whole did not hold meetings during the year. However, the Sub-committee on Investments met as required to review the portfolio of U. S. Treasury bonds. Some of the short term bonds matured, producing capital gains in addition to the interest yields. Please refer to the Fundraising Committee Report for details.

The Sanctuary was damaged during the evening of July 3, by a fire which started from a hot plate in the storage closet at the rear of the building. All of the damage has been repaired, and the costs totally covered by our insurance. The building was unusable for about one month. Thanks are due to Mike Pisani for his steadfast pursuit of the repair project.

The Womens' Guild has not been very active during the latter part of 1990. Their assistance in the operation of the church has been a real source of strength in the past, and we hope will be again in 1991.

George Omartian, Chairman of the Cultural Programs Committee will report separately on the activities of this group of devoted friends of the arts. A cooperative project with the library of Sarah Lawrence College and the Public Library of White Plains has been initiated and is expected to be continued. The objective of this project is to provide these libraries with representative books or artifacts on the Armenians and their culture. The contributions have been timed to correspond with the April observances of the 1915-1921 genocide. Parish members, and particularly the late, beloved Mrs. Virginia Fesjian have been generous and forthcoming in support of the Cultural Programs Committee.

We do want to call special attention and extend our thanks to the Church Choir, led by Raffi Sevadjan, the Director, and Noemik Poulatian, Chairperson. Sunday after Sunday, rain or shine, they contribute their talents and perform with devotion, their vital part in the Badarak. I want to call your attention to Bishop Khajag's complimentary comments about our choir during his visitation.

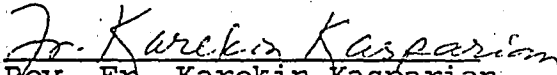
Both the Senior and Junior ACYOA have had an active year. Their reports are provided separately.

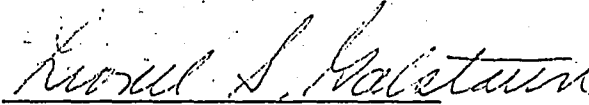
Although George Davidian has temporarily resigned from active leadership of the Maintenance Committee, we need to pause to recognize the devoted and valuable service he has contributed in all of the ten years that we have been at our present location. There has never been a time when George did not come to the rescue whenever we had any kind of mechanical or electrical failure or

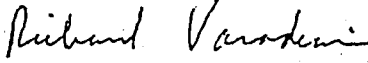
needed practical help. We all hope that George will soon feel he can again participate in the operations of the church.

I would like to take a few moments to comment on the proposed budget for 1991. In order to achieve a balance, it has been necessary to assign the total income from Mr. Fesjian's endowment fund to operations whereas in prior years, we used only a half of this source, the remaining half going to the Building Fund. In addition, we are calling on the Ways and Means Committee, appointed at the January Parish Council meeting, to raise \$8,000 by a fund raising activity for meeting our operating fund requirements. The proposed budget is really bare-bones. An Armenian community of the size and affluence of that in Westchester should do better. The prime need is for greater membership, and a more active Stewardship Program. I hope that all of our members will take it on themselves to bring new faces into our circle and contribute actively as Stewards.

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 Armenian 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 the religious and social needs of the community more adequately. Both are needed and both will be deeply and equally appreciated. Thank you.


Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian
President, Parish Council


Lionel S. Galstaun
Chairman, Parish Council


Richard Varadian
Recording Secretary

February 24, 1991