

## 1996 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY REPORT

On May 2-4, our delegates, Judge Vincent Gurahian and Dr. Lionel Galstaun, as well as our pastor and Ara Ishkanian, Parish Council Chairperson, attended the 94th Diocesan Assembly hosted by St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Church of Wynnewood, PA.

The Assembly was presided over by His Eminence, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. A quorum of the 77 registered delegates was announced.

Officers of the Assembly were elected as follows:

Assembly Chairman	Dr. Garo Garibian
Vice Chairman	Arthur S. Mardigian
English Secretary	Berjoohy Haigazian
Armenian Secretary	Very Rev. Fr. Nareg Berberian

After the approval of the minutes of the 93rd Assembly, a message from His Holiness, Karekin I was read by Very Rev. Fr. Krikor Maksoudian.

The Nominating Committee presented the names of nominees for the officers of the Diocesan Board of Trustees, Nominating Committee, Proposals Committee and Auditing Committee with the following results:

Board of Trustees	- Helen Mardigian (10 yr. term).
Nominating Committee	- Very Rev. Fr. Varoujan Kabaradjian, Kai Kazarian, George Nahabedian, Richard Norsigian, Oscar Tatosian (1 yr. term).
Proposals Committee	- Rev. Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, John Kasparian, Sahag Sahagian (1 yr. term).
Auditing Committee	- Karen Dederyan, Arthur Mardigian, Dean Shahinian, and alternates, Charles Gulesarian and George Hagopian (1 yr. term).

The Clergy Conference Report was presented by Deacon Norman Odabashian. The Diocesan Council Report was presented by the chairman, Judge Vincent Gurahian. The Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) was presented by the Executive Director, Simon Y. Balian.

Friday morning was an historic moment when the Primate delivered his address and of major importance was his announcement that in accordance with the prerogatives granted to him as Diocesan Primate, he will allow clergymen under the jurisdiction of the Catholicate of Cilicia to participate in liturgical functions within our Diocesan parishes with his permission.

Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Diocesan Chancellor, spoke about the Youth Forum Panels as did Laura Gononian, Director of the Department of Youth Ministry. Other speakers also discussing the youth and their involvement in the church were Stephen Megrđician, Vice Chairman, ACYOA and Deacon Aren Jebejian, Diocesan ACYOA Program Coordinator.

The delegates then attended the various Youth Panels which were divided as follows: College/Graduate School; Young Professionals; and Teen/Juniors.

The following Proposed By-Law Amendment to Article 61G submitted by the Diocesan Council per 1994 Auditing Committee (revised) was voted on last year and was brought back for a second majority vote. A motion was passed to accept this amendment and was carried.

Revised: To elect an Auditing Committee composed of three members for three year terms, with the duty of examining the accounts of the Diocesan Council and Diocesan Board of Trustees as well as of bodies created by Diocesan authority, and to submit the results to the Diocesan Assembly.

In the first instant, one member shall be elected for a term of three years, one for a term of two years, and one for a term of one year. Thereafter, as terms expire, positions shall be filled for three year terms. Two alternates shall be elected each year for one year terms.

The following proposals were approved:

1. That an annual budget allocation of not less than \$5,000 be included in the diocesan budget to cover all or a portion of a retired clergyman's travel and hotel expenses necessary to attend the Annual Clergy Conference and Diocesan Assembly. To be eligible, said cleric must have been under diocesan jurisdiction at the time of retirement and be currently residing within the confines of the Diocese.
2. Resolved, that representatives of the Armenian Church of America at the National Council of Churches in the United States and its constituent bodies, be appointed by the Diocesan Primate with the advice and consent of the Diocesan Council, be it further...

Resolved, that such representatives make a report of their participation in meetings of the National Council of Churches and its constituent bodies and decisions taken thereat, to the Diocesan Council on a regular basis and in a timely fashion, be it further...

Resolved, that such reports be condensed and be presented to the Annual Diocesan Assembly, be it finally...

Resolved, that all expenses incurred by the participation of our diocese and its representatives in all ecumenical inter-church activity including the NCC be included as a separate line item on the Revenue and Income page of our Annual Diocesan Financial Report, with a supporting schedule of such expenditure and that all such expenses be paid out of the regular income of the Diocese.

Membership Dues: Several churches have annual membership fees of \$100, some as high as \$250. None have any special provisions for Seniors. It was reported that many churches simply take their annual diocesan assessment and divide it by the number of members to arrive at the membership fee.

Regarding Life Insurance of the parish priest: It was not considered a good idea to regard the parish priest as an independent contractor. The Independent Contractor status does not exempt Social Security payments. Regarding Life Insurance, it was suggested that the priest be paid \$500 and allowed to shop around for the best deal he could find.

Looma: Vehapar has requested an annual Looma of \$25,000 from the Eastern Diocese. This amounts to \$3.50 per member. This is not a part of the budget and will have to be collected separately. The Primate was reminded that the parishes have already established their budgets and there has been no provision for Looma. The Primate recommended that special plates be passed for this purpose. Motion was made and passed to assess parishes to cover the \$25,000.

Greetings were received from the Canadian Diocese representative, Takvor Hopian on behalf of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Diocese.

Financial Report & Adoption of 1996 budget of \$3,613,260 was approved.

Report and addresses were heard from the Mission Parish Report, Unity Committee Report, Armenian Church Endowment Fund, New England Region Report, St. Nersess Seminary Report, Women's Guild Central Council Report, ACYOA and Armenian Church Choirs of America.

Report of Unity Committee: The report of the Unity Committee was read by its chairmab, Zarvin Kasparian. Very little formal progress was reported, but the whole situation has been changed by the Primate's address to the Assembly. The Unity Committee is not in disagreement with the policy enunciated by the Primate.

Catholicos Karekin I, considers the separation unnatural and needs to be removed. The Primate reiterated the policy that joint functions will be considered on a case by case basis and this statement was apparently accepted by the Assembly.

The prelacy again sent an observer to our Assembly. The observer, Richard Sarajian, stated it was a great pleasure for him to hear the positive discussion that had taken place at this assembly. He was hoping that once this is reported back in accordance with the resolutions to the Prelacy, he will then receive permission to proceed with discussions with the Diocesan Unity Committee.

A unanimous vote of confidence was accorded to the Primate on the administration of the announced policy on unity.

The following Assembly sites were announced and approved:

1997 -- Cleveland, OH	2001 -- Watertown, MA
1998 -- New York, NY	2002 -- Springfield, MA
1999 -- Watervliet, NY	2003 -- Detroit, MI
2000 -- Cheltenham, PA	2004 -- Westchester, NY

At the banquet concluding the 94th Diocesan Assembly, although she was unable to attend, Helen Mardigian was honored as "1996 Armenian of the Year".

Harry Gilmore was also honored at "1996 Friend of the Armenians" for his assistance to the Republic of Armenia and his strong support of the Armenian people.