

REPORT OF THE 1998 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

The 96th. Diocesan Assembly was held at St. Vartan Cathedral, New York, from May 7 to 9, 1998. It recognized the centenary celebration of the founding of the first Armenian Church, in the United States (1898) in the city of Worcester, MA. Our church was represented by Hon. Vincent Gurahian and Lionel Galstaun as Delegates, and Rev. Fr. Kasparian as Pastor and Ara Ishkanian as Parish Council Chairman. A number of special events were staged in connection with the centennial celebration. This report is limited to the Diocesan Assembly itself, and will not cover the many functions conducted in parallel with the Assembly.

At roll call, 151 registrants were present out of a total of 197 eligible Delegates, Parish Council Chairmen and Clergy.

Candidates for the office of Primate: Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Bishop Aris Shirvanian and Archbishop Mesrop Krikorian were proposed by Haig Dadourian as candidates for Primate.

Officers of the Assembly: Dr. Garo Garibian (Holy Trinity, Cheltenham, PA) was elected Chairman of the Assembly. Harry Terzian (St. John's, Southfield, MI) was named Vice-Chairman, Anne Marie Norehad (St. James, Evanston, IL) English Secretary, and Rev. Fr. Nareg Berberian (St. James, Richmond, VA) Armenian Secretary.

Proposals:

St. George Armenian Church of Waukegan, IL. Offered a proposal calling for Work Shops instead of Panels to consider the following:

Leadership Training; Youth Development; Empowerment of Laity and Missions of the Church; Departments of the Diocese.

The intent is to replace "good intentions" with training in the "nuts and bolts" of operations.

The amendment was passed.

Holy Cross Armenian Church of Lawrence, MA offered a proposal dealing with the longevity allowance of clergy stipends. Essentially, it calls for enforcement of the 23 -year-old stipend formula. The amendment did not have the backing of the Proposals Committee because it was felt that enforcement would essentially increase the "assessment".

Despite the unfavorable recommendation of the Proposals Committee, the Amendment was approved.

St. George Armenian Church of Hartford, CT proposed abolition of the Stipends Committee and its replacement with a five-member CLERGY COMMITTEE, with representation by clergy and lay members. It included a detailed list of the scope of the committee's activities, and was intended to resolve problems before they become intractable. A number of wording changes were proposed and passed. The Diocesan Council felt that the amendment was inconsistent with the By-Laws, but the primate suggested that intractable issues could be referred to his office. An amendment to the proposal was offered by adding an insurance professional to the Clergy Committee and was passed.

The original proposal, as amended, was then approved.

St. James Armenian Church of Watertown, MA calls for the adoption of a *sister-church* in Armenia or Karabagh, and an assistance plan to be developed with the Primate, Diocesan Council and Diocesan Assembly. An amendment was added, that the churches in America be current in their obligations to the Diocese before undertaking assistance to another church.

The amended proposal was approved.

Diocesan Council Report: Haig Dadourian led a page-by-page review of the 49 page report.

Election Results:

1. Board of Trustees: Suren Fesjian elected
2. Auditing Committee: Arthur Mardikian elected
3. Proposals Committee: Michelle Babikian, Rev. Fr. Tavit Boyajian and Rev. Fr. Haroutiun Dagley, George Marifian and George Nahabedian elected.
4. Nominating Committee: Rev. Fr. Mardiros Chevian, George Develetian, Nubar Dorian, George Manuelian and John Nersessian elected.
5. Primate: Abp. Khajag Barsamian elected. Rev. Fr. Nareg Berberian addressed a letter to His Holiness Karekin I of the re-election of Abp. Khajag, and requesting ratification.

Youth Ministry Assessments: Unpaid Youth Ministry assessments total \$32,563.

There was discussion on why activities have been curtailed - Youth Ministry (DYM) is being combined with Dept. of Religious Education (DRE) mainly due to staff restrictions. The Diocesan Council is prepared to take whatever steps are needed to re-staff DYM. Outside funding may be needed.

Stipend Guidelines: Question was raised whether the "Guide Lines" are mandatory. Answer: They are.

Disbursements from Restricted Funds: This requires that expenditures of over \$1000 from Restricted Funds be made only with the approval of two signatures of people who are not in the "employment chain" of the originator. It was approved and referred to Diocesan Council for implementing.

1999 Budget: Considerable discussion centered on various adjustments in funding for one or another activity. In the end, the proposed budget for 1999 was adopted at \$3, 656,900.

Unity Committee: The Unity Committee reported that the Prelacy apparently was not ready even to accept the 1982 Guidelines, to which they had been favorably disposed earlier. The Diocesan Unity Committee recommends that "the Diocese through its Unity Committee move forward to complete the Unity Process when the Prelacy is prepared to proceed in implementing the Unity Guidelines".

It was moved, seconded and approved that the Unity Committee's report be accepted.

Clergy Conference Report:

The Clergy Conference was convened at the Cardinal Spellman Retreat Center in Riverdale, NY on May 4-7, 1998. The report of the conference was prepared by V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan and presented to the Assembly by Rev. Fr. Mampre Kouzouian. There were 75 clergy in attendance, 47 from the Eastern Diocese, 15 from the Western Diocese, 5 from the Canadian Diocese, and 8 guests including the Primate of South American Dioceses.

Rev. Fr. Kochakian noted that His Holiness Karekin I received an honorary doctorate from General Theological Seminary

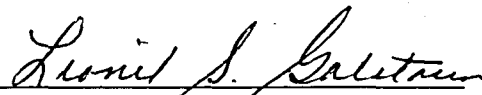
A motion was made, seconded and approved that the Clergy Conference Report be accepted.

1999 Diocesan Assembly Site:

The 97th. Diocesan Assembly will be held at St. Peter Armenian Church, Watervliet, NY during the first weekend of May 1999.

There being no further business, the 96th. Diocesan Assembly was adjourned at 11:15 a.m. Very Rev. Fr. Krikor Maksoudian led the closing prayer.

Minutes excerpted by


Lionel S. Galstaun