

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY OF ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH

Sunday, February 8, 1981

President	Rev. Arnak Kasparian
Chairman	George Mekenian
Co-Chairman	Arthur Otchy
Parliamentarian	Ronald Kenderian
Acting Sec'y.	Queenie Varjian

Meeting Began 1:33 P.M.

Father Arnak opened the meeting with a prayer.

NOTE: A Preliminary Parish Assembly Session was begun by Rev. Arnak Kasparian at 12:10 p.m. in the Church immediately after the Divine Liturgy for the purpose of nominations for the Parish Council and the Nominating Committee, Auditing Committee, and Parish Assembly Officers for 1982.

Assembly Chairman George Mekenian asked for the Nominating Committee report. Mrs. Rose Mekenian, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, submitted into nomination the slate of candidates as mailed to parishioners. The slate was accepted. Mr. Mekenian asked for additional nominations from the floor. There being none, nominations were closed.

The Preliminary Session was adjourned at 12:15 p.m. for balloting and lunch, with the ballot box to remain open until fifteen minutes after the start of the Second Session in the Auditorium.

Chairman Mekenian opened with an introduction of the assembly officers and thanked the members present for participating in this meeting and expressed appreciation on behalf of all the parish who fulfill their obligations by attending the annual meeting. He also thanked those responsible for our delicious and delightful luncheon which the Women's Guild served under the chairmanship of Alicia

Demirjian and Mary Chookazian and all the ladies who assisted.

Chairman Mekenian stated that all members present have received the Pastor's Report, the Parish Council Report, and the Organization Reports. He suggested that we not read these reports-- they are ready for perusal and are quite comprehensive. If any questions should arise, they can be directed to the representative of the organization.

Last month, in January, the financial statement, the proposed budget, and the slate of committees were mailed to all members of the parish whether they were in good standing or not.

Chairman Mekenian called on Victor Arzoomanian, prior to the beginning of the session, to give a brief presentation on a matter of significant importance to us on diocesan and parish life. Victor Arzoomanian introduced himself as Executive Director of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund. He stated that the monies the Fund earns go towards the diocesan needs. This year the Diocese will receive \$88,000 from the fund. If this money is not given to the Diocese, our Diocesan assessments would be higher. The Fund was established under the laws of the State of New York in 1973. There was a full-time director until 1977, and from 1977 until August, 1980, there was no director. The fund has \$1,500,000 in it at this time. We currently have a pledge from Edward Bashian for \$10,000--50% of the income earned from the monies would go to St. Thomas, and 50% would go to the Diocese. The Fund's goal is \$10,000,000. We must let everyone know there is a Fund and what programs it supports. We want to publicize this Fund. We are trying to build a parish level organization called the Parish Director. At this church it is Leon Nigohosian. There are twenty-eight churches who have given Victor

Arzoomanian names of the Parish Director of their church. Victor Arzoomanian is visiting them, talking to them, and sending them letters. Wills are being made out to us so our fund will grow. When monies are given to this fund, those monies are always invested, never spent, and to a purpose that you want in your name. Victor Arzoomanian has spoken about the above to all the mid-west and eastern churches. He encouraged that we all give to this fund.

The secretary read excerpts from last year's Assembly minutes.

Chairman Mekenian stated that we have five members of this assembly who, engaged in the conduct of their responsibilities, are missing a good portion of the assembly because they are carrying out their duties as electors, in addition to that of nominating committee finding suitable candidates and then securing their nomination for office. They are Victor Arzoomanian, Antranig Ouzoonian, Zaven Poosikian, Frank Avakian-Stoneson, and Rose Mekenian.

Chairman Mekenian deferred item #2 on the agenda (verification of eligible voters) until we have the results of the election. He will then ask for formal verification.

The minutes were accepted as read.

Chairman Mekenian called on Der Hayr to speak to us relative to his annual report:

"You have my report. What I would like to do is to make some comments; and, if you have any questions or any comments from your side, I shall be happy to receive them.

About the worship services. We have some lay people speaking in the church giving a sermon. Probably, you will know that this is not the practice in the Armenian church. Probably, this is the only church where we have

this practice, and I think it is quite beneficial. If you have any comments on that, I shall be very happy to receive them. We cannot always have another priest from outside; and, also, our lay people should participate as much as possible not only in their businesses but also in their church services. That is why I have also printed some flyers where the entire congregation is partaking. This is done only in this church.

We had twenty-four baptisims this year and twenty-one marriages--nine of which were Armenian with Armenian. But, actually, seven were people from Istanbul; and, even during the marriage ceremony, most of them did not know Armenian. They were from the interior provinces. If this is the case, we wonder what will happen to our communities. Will we stay an Armenian community? What is the future? We have a cultural difference. Will the Armenian community survive mixed marriages? Newcomers are not coming in big numbers. Newcomers do not like to hear the English language in the Armenian church. We actually do not know how many have married outside the church and gone away. We should make the church a place where they feel welcome and are at home. We have many people who are active in various organizations, and they are more active than their spouses who are Armenian. We should help them to feel at home and get something out of the services.

Charles Casale was a Roman Catholic priest for eleven years. He read about the Armenian church. He feels that the Armenian church answers his quest for spiritual nourishment

and growth. We have to make this a home for him and also to those whose spouses are not Armenian. This makes it difficult for members who come from the mid-east.

This morning, there was an archdeacon from Istanbul. I asked him if he was planning to come every Sunday and that I would like to speak to him and the other deacons. I told him that he would probably find that certain things that are being done here are different than what he is used to. This young fellow does not know our ways. We have two cultures, two ways, but one home. We are going to worship God, Christ, do Badarak with a loving spirit. We belong to the same family."

During Der Hayr's report, he offered a prayer for all members of the parish who passed away this year and also a prayer for the immediate members of the family of parishioners of our church.

The chair then requested that Parish Council Chairman, Peter Jamgochian, present his report. Peter Jamgochian thanked the members of the Parish Council for the privilege of serving this past year; and, as Parish Council Chairman, he thoroughly enjoyed it, and that it was made so by the splendid cooperation by the members of the Parish Council's close-working relationship and harmony. He stated that St. Thomas has come a long way during its life materially; and that, one to another, we are very wealthy. We have learned to work together as a family. We must not lose sight of that fact. Peter Jamgochian went on to state that we have had our difficulties, to be sure, and that some of us have been disappointed. He stated that we must not sit back and be satisfied

with things as they are. Regarding the high points of his report, they are:

1. Membership - "This year, we have not had an active membership campaign. Actually, there were new members; but some people have moved, and some people have passed away. So, while we have gained, it remains the same in number. This should be a priority for next year with special emphasis on some of the older members who are no longer with us."
2. Buildings and Grounds - "Moses Kazanjian did a very good job. Repairs have been made. The sign was an expensive repair. A railing is being built similar to that which is found at the entrance of the church annex. This will be placed at the front steps of the church. New kitchen appliances have been installed including new confectioners ovens, new range and main oven, new dishwasher and booster heater. Lighting in the back has been added to the church grounds. The 9W side is now lit up. Emergency lighting has been put in the building. Plans include the enclosure of the vestibule in front to save energy and to make it more bearable for the women who work there during the bazaar. The driveways in back have to be resurfaced. Grading has to be done in the picnic area. The heating system is under discussion, and there has been a proposal, but there are also many differing opinions. There has been a discussion for the addition of a fire/burglar alarm system. I would like to thank Albert Papazian for all the research he has done on this. We need additions to this building in the way of storage space, office space, and classroom

space."

3. Sacraments and Narthex - "All of this is running well thanks to Sam Demirjian who is always here on Sunday."
4. Supplies and Custodial Service - "We are very thankful for Garo Arakelian for being so handy. He has saved us hundreds of dollars especially on the frozen pipes in the ladies' room. Garo worked on these pipes through a little opening."
5. Pledges - "Albert Papazian has done very well with pledges using a lot of tact and time."

"I would also like to thank Jack Hajinlian in connection with rentals. Jack has also been a liaison officer of the ACYOA-- he is there, he is present, he is interested. I would like to thank Ronald Kenderian as our Secretary as well as Vahan Barsamian as Treasurer, who is always telling us how much is coming in and how much is going out. He is always conscientious. I would also like to thank Michel Izmirly who helped out when Vahan has not been there as well as Tish Basmajian. I would also like to thank Virginia Malajian who served as liaison to the choir."

"Our activities this year have been a tremendous success. I would like to end my part in this report after thanking Lucy Chakmakian for making "mahs" for seventeen years and also for Dikris Malool for being the unofficial-official church secretary for the work she has done. Thank you Krikor Anoushian for being our former deacon at the altar, and I would like to thank Sandra Alpino for doing the typing on this entire report as well as the typing for the Beacon. I would like to thank Der Hayr for his guidance to help us through the rough times and certainly Yeretzgin for pointing out my mistakes and wish to thank his family and for

making this church a very pleasant place."

Peter Jamgochian then went on to discuss the recommendations for the coming year for the Parish Council and recommendations for the future as listed on page 9 of his report. Under item (e) - continue to increase religious adult activities that deal with christianity. Under item (f) - this has been handled outside of the Parish Council--it should be taken under the wing of the Parish Council.

With the conclusion of the Parish Council's report, questions were entertained from the members:

Eileen Barsamian wanted to know what happened to our old rugs. She was told that the rugs are missing. It is believed that they were stolen. Not much is known. It was not reported to insurance, because this would increase our rates. We now have a bell system so that the front door can be locked.

In concluding this portion of the meeting, Der Hayr and the Kasparian family, the Parish Council members and their families were all thanked for their contributions and sacrifices through the entire year.

Der Hayr then mentioned that he forgot to state that Maryann Saraydarian is the Editor of the Bergen Beacon and that Sandra Alpino is the typesetter.

The chair moved for the acceptances for both the Pastor's Report and the Parish Council's Report--seconded and accepted.

The chair then called upon Grace Hagopian to give the Auditing Committee report. Grace Hagopian stated that she and her committee have audited the books and records of the Parish Council and of the

church organizations with the exception of the Women's Guild books. All entries were properly made and entered. Arthur Otchy wanted to know why the Women's Guild 's books were not available. Alicia Demirjian spoke on behalf of the Women's Guild and said that the books were not ready because they had changed treasurers. The books are now available for review by the Auditing Committee.

The Auditing Committee recommended that the car raffle should be incorporated into the Men's Club treasurer's report beginning in 1981.

The Auditing Committee consisted of Grace Hagopian, Hagop Jebejian, and Dikris Malool.

It was suggested that the Auditing Committee continue their efforts to complete and audit the financial records of the Women's Guild so that the books will be in order at the close of 1980, and the treasurer could then function in 1981.

Vahan Barsamian, Parish Council Treasurer, stated that the banking balance for 1980 started out with a:

Checking Account Balance	\$10,473.13	
Savings Account	<u>45,360.28</u>	
		\$55,833.41
Income	\$158,383.12	
Disbursements	<u>132,898.77</u>	<u>25,484.35</u>
Total Cash - December 31, 1980		\$81,317.76

Our cash position has improved over the last three years mainly because of the proceeds from the bazaar.

Paul Kahaumjian questioned about the monies received from the One World Festival for 1979 and was wondering what category this was listed under. Vahan Barsamian said it should be under "Other Income, item #4, page 15". However, this did not seem

clear, and it was suggested that we get back to Paul on that; although Virginia Parseghian said that some sort of exchange was made with the Diocese. Vahan said it would have to be looked up. It is in the ledger.

Chairman Mekenian asked the Auditing Committee and they have agreed that, upon the audit of the Women's Guild's books, they will prepare a statement addressed to the chairman which will be appended to this report; we will then have a 100% audit of all the accounts of the Parish.

At this point, the Chair asked that an item regarding transfer funds be shown in the annual report as requested by an earlier assembly. He will personally see that the new treasurer gets a copy so that that particular item can so be prepared.

The chair moved that the financial report be accepted as presented and explained. Jack Hajinlian seconded, and it was passed.

Jospeh Kalemkerian reported on the 1980 Diocesan Assembly. There was a typographical error in the report as submitted--the date should be June 29, 1980. This year, it will be held the first weekend in May in Watertown, Mass., hosted by St. James Parish.

Two people, the advisors, Joanne Daghlian and Dr. Gary Dadaian, have done an exemplary job with our ACYOA youth group; we hope that their participation will spur others in their age group.

Susan Shamamian wanted acknowledgement to be given to Vasken Ohanian and Joseph Kalemkerian in connection with their participation with the "Djashoo" services in Der Hayr's absence.

In connection with the Avak Society, the name of Helen Avedisian is missing in the report. There also seems to be a discrepancy of \$800 vs. \$1200. This will have to be referred to

the Auditing Committee. Their deduction to the Parish Council is not correct. It must be corrected.

The Chair moved that the reports of the organizations be accepted as corrected or as to be examined, verified, and corrected, seconded by Ron Kenderian, motion carried.

Parish Council Chairman, Peter Jamgochian, was called on for the presentation and approval of the proposed 1981 budget, both income and expenses. We went above the budget in 1980, but the difference in the figures refers to the difference in the cost of the new mortgage, so we had stayed below the budget figures but did not exceed the budget.

Every year the clergy salary is determined by the Stipend Committee of the Diocese. This was a result of action by the Diocesan Assembly in 1974 or 1975. This year, the figures for the stipend did not come in on time, and we estimated the figure. However, the figure did come in, and, in accordance with the results of the Diocesan Assembly at that time and the Stipend Committee, a motion was proposed to adjust the figures. The motion was seconded. Chairman Mekenian suggested that we vote on all motions at one time, which will be done in a package. Therefore, the clergy salary was adjusted to \$19,145. This then adjusts the total for the proposed 1981 budget in column 1 on page 16 to \$148,095.

Puzant Torigian feels that we are conservative in our figures. Although the water cost has doubled and gas and electric has been increased approximately \$3,000, Puzant feels that these costs will be double the figures we have proposed.

Arthur Otchy questioned the fact of whether the privilege of the use of the parsonage be included in the report. He stated that

we have salary and value of the rent, etc., and that we should bring it into the expense of the edifice. However, that cannot be considered as part of clergy expense. We have the expense of operating the church and the expense of operating the parsonage--heating, lighting, gas, electric, water, and any repairs that are done to the parsonage but does not include mortgage payments which are lumped into the mortgage payment in item #1 on page 16. Arthur Otchy's point here is that if someone were to look at the budget and look at the priest's salary, they would think of it as inadequate, because it looks meager; but we should take into account other benefits that go along with it so that we can show that our ministry is not so poorly taken care of.

It was then pointed out by Peter Jamgochian that repairs are not necessarily a clergy benefit. When we repair a driveway, it is a capital expense. This matter could be further broken down.

Eileen Barsamian wanted to know if all benefits in addition to salary that are paid to a priest are noted such as social security, life insurance, etc. Her supposed concern was the fact that if youngsters were interested in the clergy, all the facts could be presented.

George Mekenian said that these comments should be studied by the Parish Council and could be presented in the 1982 annual report and budget.

Yeretzgin stated that a letter is sent by the Diocese which states all of the above facts, and this should be given to the parishioners to read. This includes parsonage rentals, retirement plans, social security benefits. This letter should be shown any parishioner, and then each parish decides how to deal with rental on services, amount to be paid, etc.

George Mekenian stated that a qualification is in order, and his recommendation is to include a copy of this letter with the package of the assembly documents, and these can then be seen in the interim. The 1975 resolution was quite comprehensive, and it was intended to represent a minimum scale.

Louise Kalemkerian wanted to know if the Diocesan dues are only going up \$14. She feels it will be much more than this. George will check out the anomaly in dues.

Again, in connection with the clergy benefits, Charles Casale felt that, in the interest of clarity, he would like to include in the investigation the equity or lack of equity of house, etc.

Albert Papazian suggested that each member should increase their pledge by 10%. The pledge system should take care of more of the slack, but it does not. Jack Hajinlian wanted to know if there was any type of follow-up. Albert does send out follow-up letters. Susan Shamamian wanted to know, in connection with the quarterly pledge system, how successful is the parish in collecting Diocesan dues' tax. Albert said that \$900 came in from that. This is 10% of the people. Albert suggested that pledge receipts be corrected to show \$34,850 in item #1 on page 15.

Arthur Otchy moved that the budget be accepted and amended by one correction--moved and seconded--budget is hereby adopted.

Regarding the George Shahinian Memorial Fund, the proposed by-laws are similar to the Kasparian Fund. The board met Jan. 13, 1981, for presentation to the Parish Assembly and approved the by-laws, seconded by Arman Ajamian. By-laws are adopted.

Peter Jamgochian went on to say that at the Parish Council a charter was proposed to adopt a Board of Trustees. The primary function would be to invest excess funds, rather than keeping them

with operating funds. In this way, the money would be gathered and saved and made available to the parish when needed.

On page 12, Power and Duties, item #3, correction: "The Committee shall provide an annual financial report to the Parish Assembly and periodic reports to the Parish Council at such times as the Parish Council may suggest."

On page 13, item #6 will be added as follows: "Decisions involving investments of funds shall be concurred upon by two-thirds of all the trustees. Each trustee's vote shall be recorded in the minutes.

A question was raised: Can you be a member of the Board of Trustees and a member of the Parish Council? It was felt that one could. Trustees will not be elected through usual procedures. They will be elected upon nominations from the Parish Council. A question was asked as to why the term of office should be so long; namely, 7 years. The purpose of this is to develop "corporate memory". Arthur Otchy wanted to know how will people be replaced. George Mekenian said that as an example, the Diocesan Board of Trustees usually consists of not less than 9 or more than 11 members, and the term of office shall be as many years as members of the board, so term of office has been 11 years. And, if a vacancy occurs, that term is filled for the balance of the term. In other words, each year, any vacancies that occur will be filled for that particular term. It was pointed out that this is an honorary list of names.

A show of hands was requested for the approval and the adoption of the by-laws, moved by Mr. Martin, seconded by Mr.

Arzoomanian, and was approved.

On page 13, last sentence of the resolution is corrected as follows: "The Parish Assembly further directs the Parish Council to report its findings to the 1982 Assembly or sooner when they are complete."

The Parish Council recommended that we dissolve the Building Equipment and Grounds Committee. Since we do not have a functioning committee, it was recommended that the by-laws be dissolved. Motion was made by Michel Izmirly, seconded by Victor Arzoomanian, and passed.

Ron Kenderian wanted to know who will take the place of these responsibilities. The Chair said that it will fall back on the Parish Council.

The question was raised to explore possibilities of expanding the auditorium. At present, there is no provision for funds. It is mainly now just for investigation. Also, the heating system would be tied into this. At this point, Paul Kahaumjian indicated concern about the heating system inasmuch as the problem was in effect last winter and nothing was done about it; and, if we wait until 1982 to make a decision, we will go through another winter. Thus, Paul wanted to have the heating system matter taken care of and not having it be a part of the investigations regarding the expansion of the auditorium. Joseph Kalemkerian suggested that we get back with an answer about the heating system say in about six months--either the end of September or beginning of October. The hassle about the heat should be settled as soon as possible. The possibility of a space heater was suggested. Ron Kenderian reiterated that the heating problem should be resolved with a six-month period and no later. Peter Jamgochian pointed out that heating does not necessarily have to tie into this resolution.

Thus, it was recommended that we have an answer to the heating system no later than October 1, and possibly come up with a suggestion as to how it will tie in with the expansion. Motion was made, seconded, and passed.

Ronald Kenderian wanted the Parish Council to have the authorization to make capital expenditures up to \$10,000 without going back to a special assembly with the revocation of the original by-laws of the Building Equipment and Grounds Committee. This leaves a vacuum in the matter of capital improvements; and, to preclude ambiguity, there should be a limitation that expenditures can be made to capital improvements. At the present time, there is no clear direction for the Parish Council to spend any money without going back to the Parish Assembly. Arthur Otchy then pointed out that heating would be a capital improvement, but this is also an emergency type thing. The intent of the motion is to provide a stop-gap provision for the Parish Council to expend capital gains for improvements up to \$10,000 for capital expenditures. Motion is carried.

New Business - Recommendations

Joseph Kalemkerian wanted to know why is it that we must know the outcome of the election right away. To allow people who are contributing members of the parish to be absent from the meeting while counting votes, etc., should not be. They are missing out on the Parish Assembly.

Puzant Torigian suggested that we have our youngsters count the ballots. He also suggested that we increase the Bergen Beacon in size and distribution. Puzant would also like Der Hayr to have an office commensurate with his position. He also feels that

youngsters of the parish be involved with the Parish Council. Also, there should never be a slate given where there is less than 150% of candidates for that job.

Other questions that came up: Should candidates be involved in the counting of votes? The Diocesan by-laws provide that the Nominating Committee shall serve as the Elections Committee. There is no bar to this dual service.

Results of the Balloting: Rose Mekenian verified the eligibility of all the voters. She reported that we had 119 ballots. Her committee had two people writing down the number of votes and one person reading the ballots and another person looking over his shoulder. There is a very close watch. Rose Mekenian stated that it took them very long to count because the vote was very close. They had several recounts to be sure that the count was correct. A number of ballots, with more than the maximum votes were nullified. Rose Mekenian wanted to thank all of those who permitted their names to be submitted into nomination. They did have a double slate. They did have a 150% vote for the Parish Council; reflecting a strong recommendation from Der Hayr. One of the 9 withdrew from the nomination (Peter Ajemian). The Elections Committee consisted of Antranig Ouzoonian, Frank Avakian-Stoneson, Zaven Poosikian, and Rose Mekenian. All the ballots are available if anyone wishes another count.

PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Frank Avakian Stoneson

Ara Babigian

Peter Jamgochian

Albert Papazian

Virginia Parseghian

Haig Varjian

First Alternate

Moses Kazanjian

Second Alternate

Paul Pinajian

Nominating Committee

Victor Arzoomanian
Alicia Demirjian
George Mekenian
Maryann Seraydarian
Susan Shamamian

First Alternate

Michel Izmirly

Auditors

Grace Hagopian
Joseph Hovsepian
John Zakar

First Alternate

Dikris Malool

Officers for 1982 Assembly

Chairman
Antranig Ouzoonian

Co-Chairman
Ronald Kenderian


Secretary
Martha Saraydarian

Alternate Secretary
Bertha Vaniskhian


Leon Nigohosian then congratulated Chairman Mekenian and all who participated for a job well done and Der Hayr held a closing prayer.

The Assembly was adjourned at 4:40 P.M.

Queenie Varjian
Acting Secretary


George Mekenian
Chairman

Approved and Ratified


Rev. Arnak Kasparian
President