

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH, TENAFLY, NJ
SECOND SESSION - SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1989

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Antranig Ouzoonian at 1:20 p.m. and Father Arnak led us in prayer. There were 102 members present. Chairman Ouzoonian appointed George Mekenian as Parliamentarian. Verification of eligible voters was made by Richard Papazian.

Since copies of the Annual Reports were distributed to parishioners at the first session on January 29 and still available, Chairman Ouzoonian said no reports would be read aloud, but any supplementary information to the reports could be given by the Pastor, Parish Council, and organization representatives and any questions from the floor answered by them.

Fr. Arnak said a prayer for members and those of members' families who were deceased this past year. He then brought special attention to some personal pastoral concerns related in the latter portion of his report and asked for comments.

Leon Nigohosian asked Fr. Arnak what specific goals and plans there were to attract and hold young adults and to bring back the families we have lost at St. Thomas. During discussion, it was felt these were complex but important matters which should be discussed at a special meeting or at seminars. Peter Ajemian pointed out the Parish Relations Committee had been set up to attempt to address some of the questions mentioned, and the Membership Committee had brought in many new members. No figures were available on how many were former members. Frank Avakian-Stoneson recommended the questions raised be discussed in the near future.

In the unavoidable absence of Parish Council Chairman Edward Parseghian, Vice Chairman Joanne Torigian thanked all the organizations, committees, and individuals who served St. Thomas. Yeretzgin Violet said the Parish Council should be commended for an outstanding year.

Nazar Nazarian recommended a portion of the \$100,000 balance in the Board of Trustees account be used to reduce the \$200,000 mortgage. It was explained there is a dispute with the estate of the builder in process and until that is settled, the funds are needed in that account.

Vay Najarian asked why the Library Fund amount was listed as income on the 1988 Income Statement rather than shown elsewhere as a special fund. Michel Izmirly felt the money received had to be shown as such at this time.

Henry Hagopian said the Ardashes & Siranoush Tekirian Memorial Fund in the ACEF Report should be \$2530.

Women's Guild Chairman Roxy Daghlian asked why if other church organizations have been permitted to make Memorial donations or other gifts to the church, the Women's Guild had not been so

permitted this past year. After some discussion referring to Diocesan Bylaws and Parish Council policies, it was recommended that inasmuch as these questions on organizational funds have bedeviled our organizations for a couple of years, a blue-ribbon committee be appointed to evaluate this situation and recommend improvements.

Alice Arzoomanian, Parish Council Treasurer, responded to questions regarding the 1988 Financial Report, and it was accepted.

The Auditing Committee Report was presented by Stephen Jarahian, stating the committee found the records they examined to be financially in order. Variations in financial records and reporting were pointed out. Frank Avakian-Stoneson said there had been a previous Parish Assembly decision for every organization to follow the same procedure. Yeretzgin Violet suggested the Auditing Committee be provided with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the treasurers of all organizations to expedite their work.

In connection with the Building Committee Treasurer's Report, Michel Izmirly said Nazar Nazarians are donating \$10,000 more toward the mortgage. It is hoped other families will also be making additional donations.

Re the Caspar Kasparian Memorial Fund, Samuel Demirjian said he felt compelled to tell the parish that at a recent Parish Council meeting, George Mekenian had informed them of an anonymous donation to the Fund of \$150,000 made four years ago.

Mr. Mekenian, Treasurer of the Kasparian Fund, responded by describing in detail how the donation had come about, the nature of the anonymous benefactor's wishes, and the attempts by the CKMF Board of Directors to find suitable alternative projects acceptable to the donor when it became apparent that the benefactor's initial intention could not be fulfilled. That initial intention was to have the teachings, sermons, and lectures of Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan put in a form to be passed on to the young people of the Armenian Church, especially the seminarians. Mr. Mekenian stated the funds had been placed in a separate account and none of the principal or interest had been spent. He said the Board of Directors had acted in good faith, not expecting the situation to drag on as it did, and after four years strongly felt it had to be brought to a conclusion. When the anonymous benefactor requested that \$50,000 be contributed to the Diocesan Earthquake Relief Fund, the CKMF Board concurred and presented the entire matter to the Parish Council in January, intending also that it be brought up at this Parish Assembly. At a subsequent meeting of the Pastor and Parish Council with Ronald Kenderian - legal advisor, Michel Izmirly - fiscal advisor, Edward Bashian, Board of Trustees Chairman, and the CKMF Board, the whole matter was reviewed, including the current recommendation of the CKMF Board that the remaining \$100,000 of the principal be donated to the St. Nersess Seminary Endowment Fund held in the ACEF. It was noted that the benefactor had made a commitment, and is to confirm in writing, that the accumulated interest on the principal, \$41,000 to date, is to become part of

the assets of the Kasparian Fund and used for its purposes. Mr. Mekenian related those present at the meeting concurred with the \$50,000 donation to the Earthquake Relief Fund and decided a letter would be sent to the benefactor by the CKMF Board expressing the desire of the Parish Council to bring this situation to termination and requesting his concurrence with the recommendations of the CKMF Board within 45 days or the matter will be acted upon by the Board.

Ron Kenderian pointed out the donation was a contingent gift. He said the Kasparian Fund Board of Directors was informed to finalize the disposition of the funds this year and to give a complete report next year.

Peter Ajemian reported that as Parish Council Chairman at the time, he, with Fr. Arnak and members of the CKMF Board had attended the initial meeting with Archbishop Tiran on the intended project, but he had not been fully aware of the amount of the anonymous donation.

Joseph Kalemkerian, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kasparian Fund, stated he is the only person to know the identity of the anonymous donor and had been the only person to be in contact with the benefactor.

Fr. Arnak was asked if there were any other similar funds in our parish, and he said he is not aware of any.

Organization Reports

Under the Kirikian Armenian School report, Mary Ann Saraydarian said Sam Demirjian's name should be added to the committee.

Richard Keurajian, Vice Chairman of the Men's Club, emphasized the congeniality of their group.

Frank Avakian-Stoneson commended the Women's Guild as the backbone of the church. Roxy Daghlian said the Parish Council needs to reevaluate that women have to be recognized a little more in our church.

Chairman Ouzoonian encouraged organizations to keep in touch with their Parish Council liaisons.

Peter Ajemian complimented the singing of the Choir.

Fr. Arnak pointed out that since a couple of weeks ago, there is no longer a Northern NJ ACYQA Seniors. Each NJ parish will have its own chapter. Some pro and con discussion followed.

Ronald Kenderian moved that "New Business" be the last item on the agenda. Seconded and passed.

Budget

Alice Arzoomanian and Michel Izmirly answered questions on the 1989 Budget.

Mary Ann Saraydarian asked about disbursements for the Armenian History lectures, and we were informed they will appear next year.

Albert Victoria inquired about the \$5000 anonymous donation for this year toward the Pastoral Assistant's salary. Fr. Arnak said one has not yet been received.

Shakae Shahinian recommended that gross income from the ACEF should be shown and also the disbursements.

A motion was made by Nazar Nazarian to increase our donation to St. Nersess Seminary for 1989 from \$1000 to \$3000. Seconded and passed. "Investment Income" was increased \$2000 to balance this.

In answer to a query by Yeretzgin Violet, Sam Demirjian said he is still holding the Karabakh checks donated in our parish because the earthquake situation intervened, but the checks will be sent.

Henry Hagopian inquired about the doubling of "Supplies/Postage/Printing" expenses. Mrs. Arzoomanian explained this was primarily because of an increase in BEACON expenses. She also said "desk" under "Church Building Expenses" should be "deck" for the replacement deck at the Parsonage. Chairman Ouzoonian pointed out there will be additional capital expenses at the Parsonage this year.

Nazar Nazarian moved to reduce our mortgage by a lump sum amount of \$40,000 from the Parish Council Fund for the year 1989 in addition to the regular monthly mortgage payments scheduled for the year. Seconded and passed. In response to a question, Michel Izmirly clarified he would be able to arrange with the bank to reduce the amount of the principal of the mortgage without penalty so that our monthly payments will also be reduced.

Puzant Torigian asked whether we can ascertain the costs of using our halls. Virginia Victoria, in charge of rentals, said it would be helpful to have such a study.

A motion was made by Puzant Torigian that the annual stipend for the Choirmaster and Organist be increased 10%. Seconded and passed. "Investment Income" will be increased another \$230 to balance.

Re salaries of hired personnel, Paul Kahaumjian spoke of the role of the Parish Council in evaluating and reviewing their performance and salaries on a timely basis.

The 1989 Budget was accepted as adjusted to \$235,030.

George Mekenian moved that the Assembly authorize the Parish Council to make line item adjustments to the Budget as necessary during the year. Seconded and passed.

A motion by George Mekenian to take up "New Business" before the "Report of Elections" was seconded, but defeated.

Election Results

Shakae Shahinian preceded her report with a statement denouncing the anonymous letter mailed to some of our parishioners re candidates for election.

The following were elected.

PARISH COUNCIL:

Paul Kahaumjian, Joseph Kalemkerian, Thomas Mirjanian, Richard Papazian, Gregory Tenbekjian, Joanne Torigian. 1st alternate: Charles Sarajian, 2nd alternate: Leon Nigohosian.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Arman Ajamian, Edward Daghlilian, Grace Hagopian, Edward Parseghian, Zaven Poosikian. Alternate: Paul Pinajian.

AUDITING COMMITTEE:

Grace Hagopian, Fred Karagosian, Artemis Nazarian. Alternate: Susan Avakian-Stoneson.

⁹⁰~~1989~~ ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN: George Mekenian

⁹⁰~~1989~~ ASSEMBLY SECRETARY: Alin Papazian.

There were 175 ballots cast.

Chairman Ouzoonian congratulated those elected and thanked everyone who had been willing to serve as a candidate.

New Business

Elsie Nigohosian read a commendatory open letter to Joanne Torigian.

A motion was made by George Mekenian that the St. Thomas Parish send a proposal to the Diocesan Assembly complimenting the work done by the ACEF and in particular the Director, Victor Arzoomanian, for the excellent job he has done in raising the amounts of money in the ACEF. Seconded and passed.

Grace Haledjian commended Louise Kalemkerian for her Christian Education efforts.

A discussion then ensued on why we are losing members and how we might get them back. It was felt all parishioners must try to reach out to people and help maintain members, but the effort needs to be lead by the Pastor and Parish Council.

Henry Hagopian raised the issue of alcohol drinking by teenagers at the Armenian Churches Sports Association dance held at our church. The Parish Council said a decision had been made that alcohol not be permitted at that dance.

Puzant Torigian recommended an Earthquake Relief Committee in our parish. Peter Kalemkerian suggested the Parish Council ask for volunteers, which was done. Those volunteering were Frank Avakian-Stoneson, Sam and Alicia Demirjian, Peter and Harriet Kalemkerian, Leon and Elsie Nigohosian, and Puzant Torigian.

It was recommended by Frank Avakian-Stoneson that the Parish Council have an extended body to serve on membership and concentrate on that. Joseph Kalemkerian said the last two years only Parish Council members had served on the Membership Committee and gave a brief summary report.

Richard Papazian presented a motion requested by Edward Parseghian that Parish Assembly Minutes be incorporated in the Annual Report. An amendment to the motion to have the Minutes available to the parish in the interim was accepted and the amended motion seconded and passed.

Chairman Ouzoonian raised the matter of a uniform fiscal year for our church organizations. He requested that the Parish Council appoint a committee to look at the parish and organizational financial structures and come forth with guidelines that can be acted upon at next year's Assembly.

Appreciation was expressed to the luncheon committee for the day.

Frank Avakian-Stoneson recommended that at the beginning of subsequent Parish Assemblies it be stated that our meetings are conducted according to the Diocesan Bylaws in addition to Robert's Rules of Order.

The meeting was adjourned with a prayer at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Mekenian, Secretary