

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
ST. THOMAS ARMENIAN CHURCH, TENAFLY, NJ
SECOND SESSION - SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1991

The Assembly Chairman, Ronald Kenderian, welcomed members to the second session of the Annual Parish Assembly at 1:50 p.m. and asked Father Arnak to lead us in prayer.

MINUTES - The Chairman referred to the tabled motion from the first session re waiving the reading of the 1990 Parish Assembly Minutes and asked for a vote. The motion was passed.

George Mekenian subsequently moved to accept the Minutes of the 1990 Parish Assembly. The motion was seconded and passed.

Ronald Kenderian announced the verification of eligible voters will be postponed until just prior to the report on elections. He also said the session was being tape recorded (by Puzant Torigian) for our information in addition to the taking of minutes by Rose Mekenian.

PASTOR'S REPORT - Father Arnak read aloud the beginning and ending portions of his Pastor's Report as included in the Annual Report. He referred to his first Parish Assembly with St. Thomas in 1962 and this Parish Assembly as his last one as our Pastor prior to his retirement. Der Hayr briefly reflected on some of the significant aspects of his ministry in our parish, acknowledged Yeretzgin Violet's support throughout his pastorate, and wished God's blessings on us all. He then offered a prayer for parishioners who were deceased during the past year. Father Arnak also voiced his special appreciation to the current Parish Council Chairman, Joanne Torigian, and to our church staff, particularly Louise Kalemkerian, Pastoral Assistant, and said he had asked Louise to prepare a separate report. Der Hayr spoke of his many warm and wonderful years at St. Thomas and wished his successor the same fruitful pastorate.

The Assembly Chairman thanked Der Hayr for his years of service to St. Thomas, and the Assembly gave Der Hayr a standing ovation.

PASTORAL ASSISTANT'S REPORT - no questions.

Ronald Kenderian announced we will not read the individual reports printed in the Annual Report, but as we go through the agenda, if there are any questions, the person who prepared the report will be asked to respond.

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT - Joanne Torigian, Parish Council Chairman, apologized for the omission of our Diocesan Delegates from her report - Shakaie Shahinian, Victor Arzoomanian, and George Mekenian. She further said though she had recognized a number of people in her report, she wished to verbally thank the following: The Men's Club and Women's Guild for their support, and also the AVaks; Raymond Berberian, attorney who assisted the Parish Council during the year; the Mekhjian Family, the Nazarian Family, and Roupén Saddler who paid for our new hall chairs; Bazaar - Dick Keurajian, Chairman, and Dr. Harout Mekhjian, Cake Sale.

The Parish Council Chairman then referred to the portion of her printed report on the "Status of Various Projects" and entertained questions.

Hall Rentals - Frank Avakian Stoneson inquired about the nature of the merchandising we are doing for our hall facilities. Joanne said there had been limited funds, but a test brochure had been prepared. Also, the condition and insufficient number of our chairs had been a rental deterrent, and 350 new chairs were purchased as mentioned. Frank said his concern was about our tax exempt status and how the merchandising might affect that. Joanne replied she had checked with Attorney Raymond Berberian who informed her as we are a church, under the religious assembly situation, we are covered, and it shouldn't present a problem, but if it should, it would be very nominal. Richard Papazian pointed out that Joanne Torigian did the bulk of the work on hall rentals herself. Joanne acknowledged the efforts of the office, also, particularly Toni Barker, and said the hall rentals were a team effort.

Priest Search Committee - In response to a request for a progress report, Joanne reiterated what was in her report and stated another priest had been approached a few days prior to this meeting, and he, also, had not worked out.

Leon Nigohosian asked how many priests had been considered overall, or was it just the 11 referred to in the report. In the absence of Dr. Harout Mekhjian, Chairman of the Priest Search Committee, Joanne Torigian and George Mekenian clarified that the list of 11 was a comprehensive list of those the committee approached from names given to the Priest Search Committee, plus those the committee had screened from among all the priests in North America, including other Dioceses, as well as priests the committee heard had expressed an interest on their own in St. Thomas who the committee felt had the credentials to serve as pastor of St. Thomas.

Albert Victoria asked what the plans would be if we did not find anyone from the present search list. Joanne Torigian replied the Priest Search Committee had been trying to find the finest priest it could for this parish, but if we do not find someone by the time Father Arnak leaves, we will have to use visiting clergy and continue our search until we do find a priest. She pointed out that contact has been maintained with the Primate, including asking for his recommendations initially, and he knows exactly where we are to date on this situation. She has talked with the Primate about meeting after this Parish Assembly with the Priest Search Committee and whoever is the Parish Council Chairman to give us his further recommendations and guidance.

Joanne Torigian emphasized that the Priest Search Committee has been working very diligently to try to find a priest.

Jack Ekizian said he felt every priest in the United States knows there is a vacancy here, and if interested, they would have let us know.

Joanne Torigian wanted the Assembly to know Father Arnak had been very cooperative and helpful with the committee and had provided any information requested, including Sacramental financial data.

Frank Avakian Stoneson pointed out the shortage of priests.

Marlene Ross felt it would be hard to find someone according to the standards we had set up at our parish meeting last July. Vahan Soukiassian questioned the age restrictions we had discussed last summer. Joanne Torigian stated we are trying to find a priest who can relate to the various needs of our parish, and though this is not easy, she feels it is not impossible.

Peter Ajemian said the parish has to exercise patience and give the Priest Search Committee time to get a suitable priest for us.

Arlene Hajinlian asked about the two priests who had indicated interest, but later withdrew, and if there is any problem about which something might be done. George Mekenian said that re the two priests we had thus far considered very seriously who had turned us down, in essence what it came down to was they were very comfortable in their current pastoral assignments; they and their Yeretzgins and families were comfortable with their housing arrangements, their communities, their schools, and on balance decided not to change their assignments. He said the priests had been interested, but pointed out that for a Der Hayr, particularly, there are considerations other than just his ministry which are important to him.

Yeretzgin Violet related she had originally not wanted to come to St. Thomas from Detroit, but Der Hayr didn't listen even though she was pregnant. She added she has never regretted coming. Nowadays, she continued, though we have wonderful younger Yeretzgins, some of their feelings are different from those of Yeretzgins years ago, and we have to consider this. She noted that Der Hayrs need to work with their Yeretzgins, and the more they agree, the better the life of the parish will be. Yeretzgin Violet commended the efforts of the committee and felt we would eventually find a priest.

Leon Nigohosian asked what we have done or will do in the future to try to appeal to Yeretzgins. Joanne Torigian responded we have really been trying, and she reviewed the efforts expended in that direction.

Shakae Shahinian asked if there is a Diocesan stipulation re rotation of priests every five years or so if the Diocese so requests. Frank Avakian Stoneson and George Mekenian clarified there is no such policy at this time and only a provision that parishes confirm their individual pastors every five years.

Puzant Torigian mentioned Leon Nigohosian is professionally involved in ferreting out people for jobs and might be able to help the Priest Search Committee. Albert Victoria moved that Leon Nigohosian be added to the Priest Search Committee. The motion was seconded, but the Assembly Chairman asked that this be held off until New Business. Frank Avakian Stoneson felt the current Priest Search Committee is following the path we need and adding anyone new to the committee will not alter that, so we should leave the committee as is.

Vahan Soukiassian wanted to emphasize that a priest should concentrate on priestly duties and not so much on some of the administrative aspects.

Gregory Doudoukjian said one way in which we may better our chances to obtain a priest is to increase financial incentives. Joanne Torigian replied we were generous in our offers.

John Armen inquired if the committee had given any thought to getting anyone new ordained and brought here. Joanne said it was considered, but there were some committee members for it and some against.

Archie Minassian questioned if the committee mentioned all the community benefits, and Joanne said they saw it all.

Jeannie Amerkanian asked if we were zeroing in on only Der Hayrs rather than Hayr Soorps, and the answer was, we are considering both.

There being no other questions on the Parish Council Report, the Assembly Chairman thanked Joanne Torigian for her report.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT - An addition to their report was distributed at this session. There were no questions.

There were also no questions on the following reports: MEMORIAL COMMITTEE, ACEF LISTING, FINANCIAL REPORT, AUDITING COMMITTEE, BUILDING COMMITTEE.

CASPAR M. KASPARIAN MEMORIAL FUND - An issue was raised by Sam Demirjian that was ruled out of order by the Assembly Chairman as that issue was resolved at a previous Assembly.

GEORGE SHAHINIAN MEMORIAL FUND and MARTIN (SONNY) TASHJIAN MEMORIAL FUND reports were distributed at this session. There were no questions.

ORGANIZATION REPORTS

ACYOA Juniors - no questions. There were no reports from the ACYOA Seniors and the Avaks.

Choir Report - Jeannie Amerkanian corrected what appeared on page 23 in the Calendar of Events for May to "Bake Sale".

Christian Education - no questions.

Kirikian Armenian School - Martha Saraydarian reported their number of students should be 100, not 97, on page 26, and added that the Armenian School had sponsored a Hoki Hankisd on the second anniversary of the earthquake in Armenia.

Men's Club - Jack Ekizian said the "Balance on hand 12/31/90" on page 18 should be \$2,580.39, rather than \$2,580.19. Richard Papazian added the Men's Club gave \$2,000 more than their pledge to the church.

NJ Singles - no report.

Women's Guild - Adrienne Tenbekjian offered the following changes to her report: On page 20, add "October 23 - Cotillion Meeting - Beverly Hajinlian - chairman"; correct "October 27 - Armenian School Halloween Celebration - cupcakes donated - Marion Babigian chaired", and "October 28 - Sunday School Halloween Celebration - cider and donuts - Adrienne Tenbekjian and Margaret Minassian." Also, on page 21 under "A Special Thank You!!!", correction in paragraph #3 - "We received an honorable mention at the 1990 Women's Guild Fourth Annual Assembly."

Arthur Azarik raised a belated question pertaining to the Building Committee Report about the \$10,000 being held in abeyance from Kiseli pending recaulking and leak repair. Albert Victoria said we have to change the time reference pertaining to that situation; amounts are still being negotiated. Re leaks, Paul Kahaumjian said he has met with Paul Kiseli, and they are working on this aspect.

NEW BUSINESS - Vahan Soukiassian read a statement he had prepared with his thoughts on the spiritual life of this church. Included was his recommendation that our church school teachers should be paid and do not necessarily need to be Armenian.

Albert Victoria brought up his motion made and seconded that Leon Nigohosian become a member of the Priest Search Committee. The motion was defeated.

John Armen spoke about encouraging the church to sponsor events for the youth in the parish similar to what the Knights of Vartan have been doing in the community. Father Arnak stated the Parish Council is planning to open our facilities twice a month to the 25-45 age group.

Gregory Hourdajian questioned the apparent elimination of the position of Pastoral Assistant when Father Arnak leaves in June according to the allocation in the budget. Ronald Kenderian said the Assembly can make a change at the time of consideration of the budget, if it so wishes. Sam Demirjian said he opposes the continuation of the position, particularly citing financial considerations. Peter Ajemian recommended we wait until we get a new pastor to see whether or not he wishes a Pastoral Assistant before we make a decision.

Frank Stoneson asked about any planned fund-raisers. The Parish Council Chairman reported Dr. Harout Mekhjian had said the Board of Trustees would have a fund-raiser to refurbish the parish house. Frank felt we need to consider fund-raising for both short-term and long-term goals and perhaps need to think in terms of an endowment fund. He further felt there should be a standing committee to consider this as the Parish Council changes each year.

On behalf of the Parish Council, Joanne Torigian presented the following motion: "That a Church Complex Maintenance Committee be formed with Moses Kazanjian as chairman and members to be Albert Victoria, Andy Ouzoonian, and a representative of the Parish Council. This Committee needs a minimum of \$30,000 to carry out the maintenance program." The motion was seconded. George Mekenian questioned whether \$30,000 is the total needed or an annual amount. Albert Victoria said annually. After some discussion, George Mekenian moved to amend the motion so that in 1991, the Maintenance Committee, with the Parish Council, and whoever they might invite, draft a comprehensive charter for the Committee and the maintenance of the Church Complex, covering a program for capital repairs and the annual cost, including a report on the life expectancy of capital facilities and improvements and the cost of repairing or replacing them. The amendment was seconded. It was clarified that the Maintenance Committee can be active and functioning in 1991. Leon Nigohosian proposed a second amendment requesting a review of the amounts needed before making an allocation and the "fleshing out" of the program per George Mekenian's first amendment be done before June 1 and reported at a

special meeting of this body. The amendment was seconded. Puzant Torigian moved a third amendment that the dollar amount in the motion is whatever is allocated in the budget this year and the \$30,000 will not be specific for 1991. This amendment was seconded. During discussion, the possibility of donations toward church complex maintenance costs was raised by the Parish Council Chairman. A vote on the third amendment was passed. The second amendment was approved after deletion by the Assembly Chairman of the portion pertaining to the delay in making an allocation as it was in conflict with the third amendment already approved. The first amendment was passed. The final motion with amendments was approved as follows:

"That a Church Complex Maintenance Committee be formed with Moses Kazanjian as chairman and members to be Albert Victoria, Andy Ouzoonian, and a representative of the Parish Council. This Maintenance Committee, with the Parish Council, and whoever they might invite, shall draft a comprehensive charter for the Committee and the maintenance of the Church Complex, covering a program for capital repairs and the annual cost, including a report on the life expectancy of capital facilities and improvements and the cost of repairing or replacing them and present it at a special meeting of this body before June 1, 1991. The dollar amount to carry out the maintenance program in 1991 will be whatever is allocated in the budget this year, unless there are other donations given to the Committee."

Ara Pekmezian moved that Puzant Torigian be a member of the Church Complex Maintenance Committee. Motion was seconded and passed.

Joanne Torigian presented a motion from the Parish Council re the Caspar Kasparian, George Shahinian, and Martin Tashjian Memorial Funds which the Assembly Chairman ruled out of order as it in effect would be an amendment to the Charters of the Funds, and though such amendments can be made by the Parish Assembly, the motion as submitted is not an amendment.

It was stressed from the floor that the Memorial Funds should spend their interest income during the year.

Two proposals submitted by the Parish Council to amend the Kasparian Fund Charter were as follows: (underlined portions)

1. Purpose of the Fund:

- a. To provide full or partial scholarships to primarily further the religious education of the youth of St. Thomas, and in exceptional cases full-time seminary students of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America or youth of Holy Cross Parish of NY and St. Mary Parish of Washington, DC.
- b. To provide financial assistance to the St. Thomas Parish Christian Education Department for printed religious educational material as well as to sponsor religious education programs.
- c. To sponsor retreats for Sunday School teachers.
- d. To provide full or partial scholarships for children of St. Thomas Parish to attend the Diocesan Summer Camp.

The proposed amendment was seconded, and the Parish Council Chairman called on Joseph Kalemkerian to review the proposed additions. After discussion, the amendment was carried.

2. Assets: Shall consist of the donations and any earnings therefrom made in memory of Caspar Kasparian and any future donations made, solicited or raised by the parish or the board of directors. The board shall endeavor to preserve the principal to the greatest degree possible. This mandate, however, shall not deter assistance in an especially noteworthy or deserving case upon approval by the Parish Council. Income from principal may be reserved for scholarships for no more than two calendar years before converting to principal.

This second proposed amendment to delete the last sentence above was withdrawn.

Leon Nigohosian asked whether the passage of the new additions to the purposes of the Kasparian Fund would affect the priorities of the existing purpose. Joseph Kalemkerian replied that religious education scholarship assistance for the youth of St. Thomas was and will be the primary priority. The youth in the other parishes mentioned apply only in exceptional cases. In response to a question, Joseph Kalemkerian said no assistance had been given to youth from the other parishes as yet, though these parishes had been informed when the Fund was established and know of its existence. Henry Hagopian recommended the Board of Directors keep the other parishes involved apprised about the Fund.

Yeretzgin Violet raised a question about whether families of deceased should be able to transfer funds donated to St. Thomas in-lieu-of-flowers to a memorial fund for the deceased. Puzant Torigian moved that the Parish Council consider this and present a proposal next year at the Parish Assembly which can then be made available to families of deceased re in-lieu-of-flowers donations and when memorial funds may or may not be established. Motion was seconded and passed. Peter Ajemian suggested this was a matter which could be brought up at the Diocesan Assembly level.

Charles Doudoukjian moved to extend the term of the Pastoral Assistant for one year. The motion was seconded. Joanne Torigian stated the matter of the Pastoral Assistant had created considerable dissension in the parish, and due to this, she had asked the Parish Council and the Trustees to meet together to see if this problem could be resolved. She said Nazar Nazarian asked that the Parish Council and the Trustees go along with supporting the Pastoral Assistant through June, 1991, when Father Arnak would retire, and Nazar contributed toward the financing of the Pastoral Assistant's salary toward that end. The Parish Council in budgeting the Pastoral Assistant through June was honoring this agreement. A question was raised whether Louise Kalemkerian would continue as our Director of Religious Education if she is no longer the Pastoral Assistant, and the Parish Council Chairman informed us Louise has said she is not interested in doing that. Joanne said the Director of Religious Education is still in the budget and Louise is welcome to stay on in that post, if she wishes. Considerable discussion followed with strong feelings expressed pro and con. Those speaking for the motion felt the Pastoral Assistant is a valuable asset to the church and church school, other parishes have expressed interest in Pastoral Assistants, it is important to have someone at the church after Father Arnak leaves until we get a priest. Those speaking against the motion said the situation is causing animosity in the parish, questioned the financing needed to retain the position, said other parishes without priests are managing without Pastoral Assistants, objected to the person holding the position. The motion was ultimately carried.

BUDGET FOR 1991 - John Derderian, Treasurer, responded to questions on the proposed budget. A recommendation was made by Virginia Victoria that if monies budgeted for World Wide Charity (aid to people in addition to Armenians) are unused, they be given to the Armenian Earthquake Fund. Albert Victoria felt when monies are budgeted for St. Nersess Seminary, they should be sent. The salary of the Pastoral Assistant was adjusted from \$10,750 to \$21,500 under "Disbursements". Discussion followed on how to raise the additional funds needed, and various alternatives were mentioned. Richard Papazian suggested the Board of Trustees raise more funds, in accordance with their Charter. Albert Victoria said the Board of Trustees had made contributions from interest income on principal funds, and various individual Trustees have been exceedingly generous to St. Thomas. Vay Najarian moved we add an additional line item under "Church Affairs" for a Fund-Raiser for \$10,750, and the Board of Trustees, or someone, would raise the funds. Seconded and passed. A budget of \$270,550 was approved by the Assembly.

VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS - Richard Papazian of the Parish Council provided this verification.

ELECTION RESULTS - Edward Parseghian, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, announced there were 186 ballots cast, and the following, given alphabetically, were elected:

Parish Council - Ara Babikian, Joseph Kalemkerian, Richard Keurajian, Gregory Tenbekjian, Joanne Torigian, Virginia Victoria. Alternate: Ardis Kasparian Waldron

Nominating Committee - Eileen Barsamian, Celia Martaian, Albert Papazian, Richard Papazian, Zaven Poosikian. Alternate: Eli Karalian

Auditing Committee - Sandra Alpino, Alice Arzoomanian, Artemis Nazarian.

1992 Parish Assembly Chairman - Andy Ouzoonian

1992 Parish Assembly Secretary - Mary Ann Saraydarian

Edward Parseghian thanked the members of the Nominating Committee and wished good luck to those elected. Ronald Kenderian thanked the Nominating Committee for conducting the elections.

Father Arnak presented a bouquet to Parish Council Chairman, Joanne Torigian, and closed the meeting with a prayer.

The Assembly was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Mekenian

Rose Mekenian

Secretary of the Assembly

RONALD V. KENDERIAN
Chairman of the Assembly

REV. FR. ARNAK KASPARIAN
President of the Assembly