

St. James Armenian Church
Richmond, Virginia
Parish Council Report - 1988

The new parish council took office after the parish Assembly meeting in January 1988. Beginning with the problem of less than adequate income, a vote of confidence for Der Hyer and the in-activity of many of our parish organizations; the task appeared insurmountable.

At the first meeting in February of the new parish council, the agenda began to take shape with the assignment of each parish council member as liaison for the various church organizations. By creating this assignment process each organization would be able to have direct communication to the parish council thru its representative. At each parish council meeting, the liaison member would then give a report of the current status of the represented organization thereby keeping the parish aware of forthcoming problems.

The second Monday of each month was set for the scheduled parish council meetings of record. The parish was notified of these meetings and members could be in attendance if they so desired. Input for attending parish members were allowed only if the matter was pre-scheduled and placed on the agenda of the scheduled meeting. Throughout the year monthly scheduled meetings were held and also many call meetings were held to discuss pending situations that needed attention immediately. This process made the parish council more productive and attentive.

Karabagh was considered throughout the year and various activities concerning this situation in Armenia was addressed by our community. Using the local media and community sources, the St. James Armenian Church of Richmond was able to keep the Richmond citizens and governmental bodies interested in the Karabagh situation.

After attending the Diocesan Assembly in May of 1988, the community discovered that our Der Hyer Arsen Barsamian had accepted a position at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown, Mass. Accordingly; we discussed the matter with the Diocesan Council members attending the Assembly and also with our Archbishop Torkom Manoogian. We were assured by all that the Richmond, Virginia Armenian Church would not be without a priest and that unless a replacement can be secured for our church, Der Hyer Barsamian would not be allowed to leave to accept his new assignment. This relieved our members greatly since the Diocese would see that our priestly needs would always be fulfilled.

Upon returning from the Diocesan Assembly, a Search Committee was formed in order to help find a priest for our parish. We were informed by the other people in attendance at the Assembly that there is no clear cut method of finding a priest and each parish has to search on its own in order to locate a priest that is willing to serve the parish. This process is presently the procedure in our Diocese because the shortage of priest leaves many churches without priest and the availability of new priest does not seem eminent. Our Search Committee was formed by selecting members of our parish that could give a diverse input into this selection. After many months of recruiting, the committee was only able to assemble three (3) possible candidates. These names were presented to our Archbishop but were rejected for various reasons by the Diocesan office.

Archbishop Manoogian did send Father Chinchinian to visit our parish as a possible candidate but he was found to be not suitable by the Search Committee. To-date we have found no replacement for Der Hyer Barsamian and neither has the Diocese found us a replacement. REcently we have been informed by theDiocese that Der Hyer Barsamian will be leaving Richmond, Virginia no later than May 31, 1989 to accept his new position in Watertown, Mass and it appears that the St. James Armenian Church will not have any priest after that date. Since the church has been built this is the first time that Richmond, Virginia has been without a priest. The parish members do not like this situation and expect a priest soon.

As the parish council began to address the many problems facing the community and trying to find its solutions, the earthquake in Armenia took place and all our problems took a back-seat. The community began pulling together. A clothing drive was scheduled and with the co-operation of St. Mary's Armenian Church in Washington, D. C. a tractor-trailor full of clothes from Richmond was sent to Armenian people in need. This transportation of clothes was directed by "Feed the Children" program under the direction of Rev. Larry Jones. Rev. Jones also came to Richmond, Virginia after his return from Armenia and showed the community pictures of this event. The full Richmond Community gave generously to the Earthquake Relief Fund which will be forwarded to the Diocese.

As the year was coming to a close, the parish council began to grasp a feel for the needs that are forthcoming. Hopefully in the future year, the new Parish Council will be able to fulfill its goals and help to create a vibrant Armenian Community again here in Richmohd, Virginia.


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Parish Council Chairman