

**MINUTES OF THE
ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH PARISH ASSEMBLY.**

The meeting came to order on 02/09/97 with a prayer lead by V. Rev. Fr. Nareg Berberian.

ATTENDANCE: 43 out of 84 members were present.

Wilfrid Schein was elected Chair of the Day and Laura Klanian was elected Secretary.

ASSEMBLY MINUTES – 1996

The Assembly Minutes were not accessible to verbally report, therefore, the report will be printed in the next issue of Sevan.

TREASURER'S REPORT

St. James spent approximately \$3000 more than income in 1996. Expenses were paid out of the money market account, netting \$3000. The annual rug sale is not anticipated to take place in 1997. St. James paid \$12,000 to the Diocese and projected approximately \$783 per month will be paid to the Diocese for 1997. The need exists to raise income to cover 1997 expenses. The Capital Reserve Fund, used for building maintenance, is not reflected in the budget because there are no funds available.

A few years ago, dues were \$225, then decreased to \$100. The hope was for members to pledge the difference or more, but was unsuccessful. Any change in the dues must be approved by the Diocese. It could take 2 years before the change is approved and implemented. In addition, the general membership must be notified of the change. The Diocese is given 60% of all dues and 25% for all other donations including pledges. Some parishioners felt financial support should be from the congregation and not from outside the church. However, there were suggestions fundraising ideas.

The first fundraising idea was to send a combined membership and pledge notice where the pledge has a minimum amount. The notice will list the expenses requiring funds whereby a member could pledge money to a specific expense of the member's choice. Another suggestion included sending the notices to all Armenians in the Richmond area plus non-Armenians, promoting you do not have to be Armenian to belong St. James. The question was if a flat membership fee and minimum pledge were worth the change. Concerns included why people do not come, particularly young people. The congregation must make new parishioners feel comfortable. Another method would be to use pledge cards like colleges and universities use. Cards and return envelopes could be sent as expenses are anticipated. The issue of dues will be placed on the agenda for the next Parish Council meeting. Mr. Schein volunteered to assist. It was recommended that Fr. Berberian personally contact some people to encourage them to join the church and pledge.

An idea was suggested where members bring new members to the church. Membership should not be the responsibility of the Parish Council, but the responsibility of the congregation.

Another member suggested for new fundraising ideas other than the Food Festival, such as a raffle or silent auction.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Fr. Berberian gave an overview of church activities for 1996 – Year of the Youth. He felt the Armenian church was losing the youth, either being attracted to other denominations or losing interest in the church

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entirely. Fr. Berberian talked to some youth to understand why. Some youth felt language was a barrier. Our encouragement and youth participation was needed. Fr. Berberian will continue concentrating on the youth in 1997. Hoping to increase interest, with the assistance of Ginna Dalton, Bible Classes were held, but cancelled due to lack of participation. Mrs. Dalton resigned as Church Secretary in October 1996. Those serving the church in all capacities, such as choir members, altar servers or teachers need to be recognized. Fr. Berberian went on to list 1996 church activity. St. James is now a recognized member of the Virginia Council of Churches and Mrs. Dalton has been elected President of the VCC. Efforts for the Charlotte mission church will not continue and Fr. Berberian will not be leading another group to Armenia in 1997. Fr. Berberian successfully completed his studies at Union Theological Seminary and will further his studies toward his doctorate. The last portion of the Pastor's Report will be published in the next issue of Sevan.

AUDIT REPORT

The audit was completed by the Auditing Committee. Few oversights and errors were reported.

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

The report listed 1996 church activities. St. James' organizations are expected to present funds to the Parish Council at the end of every year. Although lax in the past, the practice has been increasing.

Currently, St. James owes the City of Richmond \$624. With everyone present donating, the bill will be covered.

Additional brainstormed fundraising ideas included a rummage sale, thrift shop or a silent auction where services are auctioned off, but the proceeds go to the church. Mary Washington Hospital was very successful in their thrift shop and used the proceeds for a new building.

WOMEN'S GUILD REPORT

The Women's Guild ending balance in checking was \$1031.70. A check was given to the Parish Council. The Women's Guild hopes 1997 will be more successful than 1996 in terms of participation and events.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Nominees for 1997 Parish Council members were read. One nomination for Parish Council and one for Nominating Committee was needed before voting could commence. Once nominations were complete, the ballots were distributed, voting commenced and ballots collected.

CHOIR REPORT

There are 11 members the church choir; however, the choir would like more members, particularly male singers. St. James was represented at the 1996 Choir Assembly. Recognition was paid to our dedicated organist.

ASSEMBLY REPORT

The Assembly took place in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania in 1996. The Year of the Youth was defined to include young professionals. The Assembly Report included such topics as St. Nersess Seminary, Endowment Fund, ACYOA, Women's Guild Central Council and a report from Etchmiadzin.

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ENDOWMENT FUND

According to the Trust Document, the principal cannot be withdrawn. The Endowment Fund Committee, which is not part of the Parish Council, can inform the Parish Council what money is available to be spent, but does not have the authority to tell the Parish Council how to spend it. This Committee, consisting of 3 members, needed nominations from the floor to fill 2 positions, Jack Tootelian and Sam Baronian. Mr. Tootelian and Ron Green were nominated and Mr. Tootelian was re-elected. Another nomination was made for Mr. Schein; he will take it under consideration. The nomination for Mr. Green will require follow up by the Parish Council. Mr. Green is not a paid member of the church and was not present at the meeting.

SUNDAY SCHOOL REPORT

1996 activities were listed. Co-Superintendents has been instituted for 1997. Childrens' programs are in the planning stage plus education and training for the teachers. The Sunday School schedule for 1997 was set up to allow 1 Sunday per month for church attendance and participation or manning the Nursery.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The elected candidates were reported. Monies for the City of Richmond bill of \$624 was collected totaling \$640.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

The meeting was adjourned.