

1993 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY REPORT

The Diocesan Assembly of the Armenian Church of America took place on April 29 - May 1, 1993. The Assembly was hosted by St. Gregory Armenian Church, Chicago, Illinois, and the meetings were held in the Drake Hotel.

The Assembly was attended by 187 delegates, including clergy, Diocesan Delegates and parish council chairmen. The Assembly elected Dr. Garo Garibian as Chairman, Mr. George Marifian, Vice Chairman, Ms. Berjoohy Haigazian, English Secretary and Rev. Diran Papazian, Armenian Secretary. New clergy were introduced and a brief memorial prayer said for deceased delegates.

The Assembly elected as members of the Diocesan Council Rev. Dajad Davidian, Rev. Baret Yeretizian, Mrs. Rose Mekenian, Mr. Asbed Zakarian, Mr. Edward Brewster and Mr. George Papalian. These join five members of the Council whose terms continue, including our pastor, Rev. Vertanes Kalayjian, and Dean Shahinian. The Assembly elected to the Nominating Committee: Rev. Diran Papazian, Dr. Gary Zamanigian, Mr. George Marifian, Mr. George Nahabedian and Mr. Richard Norsigian; to the Auditing Committee, Mr. Haig Dadourian, Mr. Sahag Sahagian and Ms. Karen Derderyan; to the Proposals Committee, Rev. Aved Terzian, Rev. Zenob Nalbandian, Mr. Aris Derderian, Mr. William Aznavorian and Mr. James Kalustian; and to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Alex Manoogian.

Reports and messages were received from the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, New England Region, Unity Committee, Primate, Clergy Conference, Diocesan Council, Auditing Committee, Women's Guild Central Council, Association of Armenian Church Choirs of America, Armenian Church Youth Organization of America and Armenian Church Endowment Fund.

Presentations were made by the Diocese departments, including Religious Education, Armenian Language Laboratory, Youth Ministry, Social Services, Information Center and Fundraising departments to make presentations to the delegates during workshop sessions.

Mr. Kai Musurlian, representative of the Western Diocese, greeted the Assembly, described their activities and said that their greatest concern was integrating young adults in the church community. Delegates expressed similar concerns about our Diocese. Later, some delegates expressed concern that many clergy work in the Diocese while many parishes have no clergy.

The Unity Committee reported that they have not reached agreement with the Prelacy on 15 articles and recommended that they stop negotiating unless unity is achieved by October 1, 1993. The delegates generally disagreed strongly; several delegates asked that the Committee disclose the 15 articles of disagreement, but the Committee said that the delegates may not be able to fully

understand the issues and did not disclose these articles. After very strenuous discussion, the Assembly by majority resolved to direct the Unity Committee to continue negotiations and report back to the 1994 Assembly with recommendations.

Mr. Shahinian moved that the Diocesan staff prepare a book on the Armenian Church teachings on contemporary moral issues, which the Assembly passed in 1986 but the Diocese has not written in the 7 years since. He noted that the Diocese recently published books on the schism with the Prelacy, why Catholics should stay out of Armenia and the Worcester parish's 100th anniversary, and said that a book on Church teachings would have more readers than these books and may prevent some people from leaving the Armenian Church to other churches. The Primate told the delegates he would take care of it (and to vote no) and the motion was withdrawn.

Rev. Kalayjian and Rev. Karekin Kasparian made a motion for support and to allow the HAVAD committee to raise funds in the Diocese to fund a missions project and a religious camp in Armenia. They noted that there is a need to safeguard the traditional faith of the Armenians against cults and other non-religious influences and reclaim Armenia's Christian heritage. Delegates amended the motion to permit only moral support, without fund raising authority, and the motion passed.

The budget was discussed at great length. A motion was passed to freeze parish dues at 1992 levels.

The Assembly passed for the second consecutive year amendments to Bylaws 7 and 27. The Assembly defeated proposals to: credit 25% of the amount that a parish spends on youth directors towards Diocesan dues; include in the Diocesan Budget \$50,000 for the New England Region; and to survey the needs of Armenian women, permit women to serve as deacons, stolebearers and acolytes, and encourage women to seek representation on the Diocesan Council. (Although the last motion was defeated, the Assembly elected to the Council Mrs. Rose Mekenian on the first ballot, only the second woman in the Council's history, and almost elected another woman on the fourth ballot.) The Assembly passed a motion to include discussions on Diocese departments in the next Assembly and, by majority, ruled out of order two proposals because they were submitted by a priest rather than a parish.

The 1994 Diocesan Assembly will be sponsored by St. Kevork Armenian Church, Houston, Texas, April 27-30, 1994.

Rev. Vertanes Kalayjian, Pastor
Dean V. Shahinian, Esq., Diocesan Delegate
Dr. Edward Onanian, Diocesan Delegate
Mr. Stephen Ohanian, Parish Council Chairman