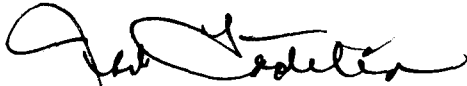


✓  
Dear Surpazan Hayr Barsamian --

I hope that you will give the attached your careful  
and thoughtful reading. Your response will be appreciated

Sincerely,



Jack Tootelian  
402 Berwickshire Drive  
Richmond, Virginia 23229-7304  
(804)740-8670

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TO: HAYR SOORP GULGULIAN & PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS OF ST. JAMES  
ARMENIAN CHURCH, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Though not a complete list, noted herein are a number of points which taken in their entirety has brought me to the conclusion whereby I, herewith, resign both as Parish Council Chairman and from the Parish Council.

- (1) Though a "1991 Steward Schedule" was provided each Parish Council member, regrettably, with two basic exceptions, the Parish Council person(s) scheduled for a given Sunday has either not shown up or has come well after Sunday services have commenced.
- (2) At our March 12, 1991 Parish Council meeting, I had requested that, at least, on the day a Parish Council person was scheduled as "Steward", that person not only be at Church some 15 minutes before Church services started (to light the necessary candles in the Church's foyer, unlock necessary doors and prepare for such special events as requiem services) but that after Church services that same person(s) plan to circulate in our Church Hall socializing with our parishioners and/or guests. Further, after everyone had left following the Church services and the social period in our Church Hall, it was the responsibility of the assigned Sunday's Steward(s) to check/turn off all lights (in our Church's sanctuary, halls, classrooms, restrooms) as well as checking the heating/air conditioning thermostats and to see that all church facilities' doors were secured/locked.
- (3) Parish Council meetings as scheduled have been poorly attended either with complete absence on the part of some Parish Council members or when a given member has come his/their arrival has been after the 7:30 P.M. starting time; as a matter of record, at our last Parish Council meeting of Monday, August 26th, only Hayr Soorp, Linda Sharigian, Virginia Greene (our Diocesan Delegate not a Parish Council member) and I were present. After waiting some 30 minutes, we cancelled the scheduled meeting and adjourned for the evening.

- (4) At the March 12th meeting and at a number of subsequent meetings, I had expressed a serious concern for and a need to review our Church's finances as well as addressing the subject of our declining membership rolls/Sunday attendance numbers. Such subjects cannot be handled in a relative vacuum. Parish Council members must be at the scheduled meetings; they should be thinking and/or making suggestions on subjects as they judge to be important.
- (5) Because the matter of finances and membership status has not been addressed, at a "special call meeting" on July 9, 1991, I presented a suggested Stewardship letter designed to stabilize our Church's finances and increase membership numbers and/or seek financial support from "friends of St. James".

Over the years and to this Parish Council -- both publicly and in personal 'one on one' conversations -- I have stated the weakness in our depending upon the "food festival" and more so the "rug sale" as major sources of revenue to meet our Parish's overhead. In my judgement, the "rug sale" is a 'cop out' on the part of all who endorse and encourage it as a source of income to the Church in lieu of a membership financial commitment.

At the "special call meeting" of July 9th, I asked each Parish Council member to review, revise, modify and/or reject in its entirety my suggested letter; in any event, I asked that each Parish Council member to bring their conclusions/suggestions, in writing, to our subsequent meeting which turned out to be on August 26th last. Needless to say, that meeting did not come off nor have I received, in writing, from any Parish Council member or Hayr Soorp any response.

- (6) Both privately to Hayr Soorp and in public conversations, I have stated that our Church's primary function is religious. If we are to motivate individuals, parents, the young people, the children to attend St. James, we must speak about Christ, His teachings, the examples he set during His time on earth. Those should be the reason for coming to St. James. St. James is a Christian Church, an orthodox Christian Church firstly and most importantly. St. James as representing the Armenian nationality is a secondary factor. St. James and its Armenian origins is in the business of preaching Christian religious doctrine -- not nationality, especially from the Altar.

- (7) Our Sevan offers too much in the Armenian language. Our community, this nation is English speaking. The children, the young adults, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation of Armenian-Americans -- like it or not- communicate in English. If these generations are to be reached, if they are to commit to St. James, Richmond, Virginia and to its sister Parishes nation-wide, preaching, counselling, instructing, praying in English is the way it will have to be done.

Our clergy, if they are to be successful -- particularly the foreign born clergy -- Richmond included -- must adopt to the American mores, social customs, methods of communications used in the United States.

Our Parish, its Parish Council, our Hayr Soorp in Richmond seems unwilling to address such subjects. Being passive is the road to failure.

- (8) There are other subjects that the Parish Council, Hayr Soorp and the community should address. From the 'grass roots' all of us in Richmond and throughout our nation should aggressively strive to bring about "unity" between the Diocese and the Prelacy Churches. None of us should take any excuse short of unity of the Armenian Orthodox Church. No one in the hierarchy of either the Diocese or Prelacy should be immune from criticism until absolute unity is achieved!

Our Sunday School program in Richmond is a failure. Our Priest must motivate, win over the parents of Sunday School age children. The winning over of the parents; having them want to come to St. James will result in the children of those parents being brought to St. James...enrolled in our Sunday School. Our Priest must personally visit prospective parishioners -- parents, their children -- in their homes -- not just once or twice. Through such visits, minds and hearts will be won over. Loyalty and commitment will result. In Chapel, a developing understanding of our ancient Liturgy (explained in English)enhanced through meaningful sermons can only result in a better St. James.

In conclusion, from my point of view, you may feel free to share this report in whole or in part with whomever you wish.

Jack Tootelian  
August 31, 1991