

**St. Sarkis Armenian Church**  
**2015 Annual Parish Assembly Meeting Minutes**  
**Sunday, February 28, 2016**

**1. Opening Prayer (12:55pm)**

Fr. Ghevond Ajamian started the meeting for Raffi Ohanian (prior year chairman) who was unable to attend. Fr. Garabed Kochakian (chairman of the Ecclesiastical Arts and Architecture Committee of the Eastern Diocese and retired pastor from St. John Armenian Church in Detroit) was present.

**2. Election of the officers of the assembly meeting**

- Ani Tovar-Bolat nominated Paul Kirazian as chairman of the day, Daron Bolat seconded the motion and the motion passed; Paul Kirazian elected was chairman of the day.
- Shevan Basmajian nominated Ani Tovar-Bolat as secretary of the day. Daron Bolat seconded the motion and the motion passed; Ani Tovar-Bolat was secretary of the day.

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

- Shevan Basmajian made a motion to conduct elections during Reports of Subordinate Organizations. Ara Minassian seconded the motion and the motion passed.

**4. Verification of eligible voting members**

- Quorum was established with 40 out of 91 dues paid members present.

**5. Approval of minutes of the previous assembly meeting**

- Serena Gostanian made a motion to accept the minutes and Joan Stuckman seconded the motion, the motion passed and minutes were accepted
- Paul Kirazian took a moment to remember Jere Graham and asked Fr. Ajamian to present his report immediately after the Parish Council report and to draft the agenda as such next year.
- Sarkis Kechejian resigned from diocesan delegate therefore Sarkis Altunian (alternate) will fulfill Mr. Kechejian's duties until his term is complete at the end of 2016. Fr. Garabed Kochakian reminded the assembly Sarkis Kechejian must submit a letter of resignation to the parish council and upon receipt Fr. Ghevond must send a letter to the Primate notifying him of the change in delegate for 2016. In the event that Sarkis Altunian is unable to fulfill his alternate duties in 2016, Fr. Ghevond will send a letter to the Primate and the Primate will select an alternate.

**6. Annual report of the Parish Council**

**A. Report of the Parish Council (Vahe Dayian, Chairman)**

- Vahe indicated that \$630,000 out of \$1,000,000 has been raised as of today for the New Building United Vision Fund.
- Vahe highlighted accomplishments from 2015 including:
  - Armenian Genocide Committee projects and events led by Hamlet Sarokhanian.
  - Implementation of ParishSoft, the new accounting software purchased by the parish so that all sub organizations can use the same system of record.
  - ArmeniaFest profit of \$85,000, up from \$60,000 in 2014.
  - Various parties and events held by the parish including Taleen the Entertainer for children and a presentation by Fr. Daniel Findikian.
- In 2014, the pledge program raised \$90,000 however the amount decreased in 2015. Vahe attributed the decrease to the various sub-organizations and committees raising money for events (including Genocide commemoration events).
- Vahe said that the Parish Council has been asking parishioners not be dues paid members unless they plan to attend Parish Assembly so that numbers are not skewed for quorum at the assembly meeting. Parish Council has focused on asking people to donate the amount of dues (\$150 per person) as a general donation instead. This will continue to be the focus of the parish council.
- Sarkis Kechejian asked how much money was raised from parish events throughout the year. Sylva SImonian (parish council treasurer) said that different events had different goals. Sylva said Genocide Centennial events lost around \$9-10K and all other events generated profit.
- Sandra Morath stated that it is hard to volunteer for events during the day for many people (including Armenia Fest) and it may be easier to get volunteers after work in the evening.
- Daron Bolat moved that the assembly accept the parish council report. Sandra Morath seconded the motion and the motion passed. The Parish Council report was accepted.

#### **B. Pastor's Report (Fr. Ghevond Ajamian)**

- Fr. Ghevond's goal is to welcome people to the parish and not loose them for not being welcome.
- He is trying to reach out to other Orthodox parishes and organizations within the community.
- He has done private confession with Indian Orthodox church.
- He is trying to have International Children's Day in June (this is a holiday in Armenia) with balloons and face painting for parish children at St. Sarkis.
- 2015 had more funerals than any other year, weddings were low. However, Fr. Ajamian has six weddings planned in 2016.
- Sarkis Kechejian suggested that the parish hire a part time secretary, Fr. Ajamian agreed and said a non-Armenian secretary would be best for confidentiality

purposes. Boghos Kirazian mentioned that he has written a job description for this position.

- Sylva Dayian asked how the Taleen show had 90 children and the St. Sarkis School doesn't even have 90 students enrolled. Sylva suggested a free potluck for all families (new and old).
- Ara Minassian reminded everyone that Fr. Ghevond does a great job of introducing new people at coffee hour every Sunday.
- Paul Kirazian said he noticed that when we have new people we are not good about talking to them.
- Ryma Jarjur suggested having a welcome committee. Maral Aznavour said that before St. Sarkis School was moved to Sundays, she and Nora Dayian lead the welcome committee.
- Elie Akilian said that one person must lead the welcome committee team and maintain a strong team of volunteers to ensure there are weekly greeters.
- Joe Aleman suggested Parish Council establish the welcome committee.
- Elie Akilian said that several people expressed to him that St. Sarkis does not feel like their home and people don't talk to them and it's not a good feeling.
- Paul Kirazian reminded Vahe Dayian that the Parish Council must take this action item and ensure we have a welcome committee.
- Sandra Morath made a motion to accept the Parish Council report and Maral Aznavour seconded the motion. The motion passed and the Parish Council report passed.

## **7. Reports of the subordinate organizations**

*Representatives did not present reports; instead the assembly was given ten minutes to read and ask questions.*

- Annie Graham said the senior citizen events were not in the booklet [financials] and Sylva Simonian said that they were excluded because they are an auxiliary group.
- Ryma Jarjur asked for clarification on the Women's Guild Financial Line Items and Salpi Katanjian clarified the following: (1) Donations (luncheons) are miscellaneous donations received at luncheons, (2) Hospitality (Coffee Hour) is the basket next to the coffee pot, (3) Luncheons are from tickets sold at the door for meals.
- Annie Graham said that her husband's memorial raised \$12,500 for the senior's group and remembered each lost member of 2015.
- Annie Ghanoum said that the St. Sarkis School was able to donate \$20,000 to the building fund in 2015.
- Kevouk Koulian asked what would happen to the \$9,004.73 listed in the ACYOA account in their Annual Report and how they earned it. Njteh Keleshian said they earned the most at Palm Sunday and small amounts at other events throughout the year. Sylva Simonian confirmed that no funds were transferred to the parish council account in 2015.

- Salpi Katanjian asked if the ACYOA would transfer [to the parish account] quarterly like other sub-organizations. Sylva Simonian said that since they are not as active as other groups, their transfers might be less frequent.
- Paul Kirazian thanked the youth for their participation in church events throughout 2015.
- Ani Tovar-Bolat made a motion for the ACYOA to provide 2 scholarships in 2016: (1) for a child to go to a Diocesan Summer Camp with fully paid tuition for up to 2 weeks and (2) for a child to a St. Nersess conference. The recipient should be picked with the assistance of Fr. Ajamian and can be as young as age 8 and as old as the maximum age for participants at these events.  
Shevan Basmajian amended the motion for need based and Joan Stuckman amended to include any Diocesan camps.  
Daron Bolat and Joan Stuckman seconded the motion and the motion passed.
- Ryma Jarjour made a motion to approve the sub organization report. Sandra Morath seconded and the motion passed. The sub organization report was accepted.
- Questions about the 2015 Financial Statements are below:
  - Sam Simonian asked why the current property on Random Road was not listed as an “asset” on the line item in the financials. Fr. Ajamian said he would ask the Diocese.
  - Paul Kirazian asked if the Compass Bank account 6984 (Pg 11) should be maintained by the Parish Council or moved to the building fund and said he would ask the building committee. Andrew Kourajian said he would talk to Sylva Simonian about having the \$68,994.02 transferred to the building fund.
  - Shevan Basmajian asked why there was a line item of \$28,622.78 on page 17 under Actual 2015 Receipts-Special Concerns. Sylva Simonian said that was the one-time expense for the choir and centennial genocide events.
  - Sarkis Kechejian asked if excess funds will be transferred to the building fund and Sylva Simonian said it could be and that the parish spent less than expected in 2015.
  - Sarkis Altunian made a motion to close and accept the subordinate organizations; Joan Stuckman seconded the motion and the motion passed.

## **8. Election of the officers**

### **A. Parish Council**

- Names [already] on the ballot for Parish Council: Lusine Meeks, Mikael Mikaelyan, Vicken Minasian, Chris Rea, Hamlet Sarokhanian (incumbent) and Joan Stuckmann (incumbent).
- Sylva Dayian nominated Sylva Simonian for parish council and Sylva Simonian accepted the nomination. Paul Kirazian nominated Sarkis Kechejian for parish council and Sarkis accepted the nomination.
- Annie Graham made a motion to close nominations and Annie Ghanoum seconded the motion. The motion passed and parish council nominations were closed.
- The newly elected members of parish council were Sylva Simonian, Joan Stuckman and Sarkis Kechejian. Alternates are Lusine Meeks, Hamlet Sarokhanian.

## **B. Auditing Committee**

- Njteh Keleshian nominated Daron Bolat for the auditing committee, Serena Gostanian seconded the nomination and Daron accepted, Daron Bolat was added to the auditing committee ballot.
- The ballot included Annie Ghanoum and Daron Bolat. Annie Ghanoum was elected to the auditing committee and Daron Bolat is the alternate for 2016.
- The final auditing committee for 2016 is: Joe Aleman (to be replaced in 2018), Nareg Basmajian (to be replaced in 2017) and Annie Ghanoum (to be replaced in 2019)

## **C. Nominating Committee**

- Maral Aznavour nominated Nora Dayian for the Nominating committee. Paul Kirazian seconded the motion. Nora accepted and was added to the ballot.
- New members for 2016 are Nora Dayian, Serena Gostanian, Maral Aznavour and alternate Elizabeth Klachian.

## ~~Diocesan Delegate~~

~~Removed from the ballot~~

## **9. Presentation and approval of the 2016 budget**

- Daron Bolat made a motion to add a \$15,000 line item to the budget for a parish secretary. Paul Kirazian seconded the motion and the motion passed.
- Sarkis Altunian made a motion to have a maintenance budget for the current and new properties. Sylva Simonian said there is a line item on page 16 titled Parish Exp-Repairs & Maint.
- Ani Tovar-Bolat asked if there would be adjustments made to the budget for the addition of the \$15,000 line item for the secretary. Paul Kirazian said the General Donations would be increased by \$15,000.
- Shevan Basmajian made a motion to accept the 2016 proposed budget with the addition of \$15,000 for a secretary. Ara Minassian seconded the motion and the motion passed.

## **10. Old Business Discussion**

Daron Bolat made a motion to close old business. Sarkis Altunian seconded the motion and the motion passed.

## **11. New Business**

- Shevan Basmajian suggested the Parish Council assign an adult to mentor and work with the ACYOA.
- Paul Kirazian said there should always be a Square available in the office to use for donations. Sylva Dayian said that the parish now has 2 squares and 2 iPads for credit card collection.
- Paul Kirazian suggested the community build grass roots interest in the new building so that we can reach our \$1 million goal.

- Sevak Koulian asked why there was such a large difference in pledges between 2014, 2015 and 2016 on page 12. Sylva Simonian said that these were based on dates. For example, a check received in 2014 may have cleared in 2015, which is why it was listed in 2014 because that's when it was received.
- Paul Kirazian encouraged Sevak Koulian and the youth to volunteer in grass roots projects for the new church.
- Shevan Basmajian said that parish visitors should be spaced out and coordinated with parish and school calendars to boost attendance and ensure we do not have visitors during Spring Break and ArmeniaFest.
- Ryma Jarjur suggested that the building committee have input from parents of young children to ensure all demographics are being considered. Ryma also suggested that the new church consider having a preschool in the new space.
- Sandra Morath asked if we were still in quorum since we have lost so many people during the meeting and the chairman confirmed that we were.
- Sylva Simonian discussed the new automated accounting software and said volunteers are needed to enter parishioner information. This will enable the parish to be more efficient and we will require less CPA usage.
- Kevork Koulian asked if the ACYOA could volunteer to enter the information and Sylva said they would have laptops on Sundays for volunteers to enter information.
- Ara Minassian suggested having free or reduced price events and perhaps even open up events for free after the dinner later in the evening to encourage attendance. Paul Kirazian said the parish has free events and provides a good balance.
- Ryma Jarjur said there a lot of people that get turned off by having large gala events but would like to feel included at other milestone events. Ryma suggested having a free groundbreaking event.
- Sarkis Kechejian said that in the past events cost less so more people could afford to attend. Paul Kirazian said that we need to set the bar high once a year for certain events and that the parish has been having these types of events for over 30 years; however, people have different perspectives at different times.
- Daron Bolat made a motion to close new business. Shevan Basmajian seconded the motion and the motion passed.

## **12. Closing Prayer and Benediction 3:47 pm by Fr. Ghevond**

Faithfully Submitted,

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**Paul Kirazian, Chairman**

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**Ani Tovar-Bolat, Secretary**