Formation of the New Board

The 2014 Annual Membership Meeting of the Soorp Khatch Armenian Apostolic Church was held on Sunday, February 22, 2015 in the Keshishian Community Center, Arabian Hall.

The newly elected Board of Trustees (also Board or BoT) members were:
- Dr. Teny Abrahamian (incumbent);
- Mrs. Janet Albeyaz Tovar (incumbent);
- Mr. Raffi Guiragossian (incumbent);
- Mrs. Elda Hacopian (newly elected);
- Mr. Kajaz Safarian (incumbent); and
- Mr. Aram Sarafian (newly elected).

The following Board members were not up for reelection:
- Mrs. Maral Achikian;
- Mr. Garbo Afarian;
- Mrs. Mirra Dersookian;
- Ms. Yeran Simonian; and
- Mr. Hampar Vartanian.

The BoT determined the following executive:

Chairman – Mr. Aram Sarafian
Vice Chairman – Mr. Kajaz Safarian
Treasurer – Mrs. Mirra Dersookian
Recording Secretary – Mrs. Janet Albeyaz Tovar
Correspondence Secretary – Mrs. Maral Achikian

Initiatives

The Board of Trustees prioritized the commemoration ceremonies for the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. These events included traditional community events such as the vigil at the White House, a protest in front of the Turkish embassy, a ceremony at the Armenian embassy, and special Hokehankisd service at our church.

The BoT was heavily involved in the organization and execution of the National 100th Anniversary events. Locally, these included: the service at the National Cathedral on Thursday, May 7, 2015; a concert at the Strathmore Music Center on Friday, May 8, 2015; the service at the National Shrine on Saturday, May 9, 2015; and the Banquet on Saturday evening, May 9, 2015.

Both Vehapars participated in these events.

Other initiatives included greater outreach to our community organizations including updates regarding each organization in our BoT meetings.

The Soorp Khatch Armenian Apostolic Church, National Representative Assembly (NRA) representatives are Mr. Khatchig Achikian, Mr. Hovig Apkarian, Mr. John Jerikian, Mr. Garbis Muradian, and Mr. Levon Palian.

Church Membership

Church membership declined in 2015 to 285 paid members (including 3 student members) as of mid-February 2016. This may partly be explained by an increasing number of members who are renewing their membership later, including a significant number of January and February 2016 renewals of 2015 memberships. Even though additional members may renew their 2015 memberships at the annual church meeting or later in 2016, this will unlikely make up the difference. Church membership in 2014 was 343 members (333 adult and 10 student memberships) representing a reduction of 51
adult and 7 student memberships between 2014 and 2015.

The BoT asks our members to encourage others into active membership with the church. Even as membership has dropped, there has been an increasing number of people attending events at the church and community center, watching web-streamed church services, and receiving the church e-news bulletin indicating that we are not translating this interest into active memberships. The BoT sent reminder letters and emails in 2015 and will continue to do so in 2016 to restore our membership numbers.

The 285 paid 2015 members (including 3 student members) so far represent $44,450.00 in annual dues which were collected in both 2015 and 2016. During the 2015 calendar year, $44,250.00 in church dues were collected for 2015, 2014, and prior years.

Property Maintenance

In 2015, the BoT continued to carry out the required maintenance of the facility. Significant work was done on the HVAC system with two of four air conditioning (A/C) condenser units replaced or significantly repaired, two new A/C outlets installed in the sanctuary to improve air flow, and 1 new A/C outlet installed in the kitchen to provide A/C previously not available there. In addition, freezer fan units were repaired that nearly resulted in a catastrophic failure of the freezers before the church bazaar. A new grill unit was also purchased and installed. The BoT would like to acknowledge the help and support of the following Board members and parishioners with these and other annual maintenance tasks: Mr. Hrayr Atamian, Mr. Onnig Mutafian, Mr. Kajaz Safarian, Mr. Hamo Sardarbegians, and Dr. Zareh Soghomonian.

Church Reserve Fund

The BoT Treasurer, Mrs. Mirra Dersookian, met with the financial advisory committee members, Mr. Eddie Dombalagian, Mr. Karekin Jelalian, and Mr. Hratch Najarian, to assess the performance of various investments. During the last investment review meeting in October, 2014, some revisions were made to long- and short-term asset allocations in our investments according to the investment policies adopted in 2013.

Based on the recommendations received, bond/cash exposure was adjusted to just over 33%, which was just above the 30% lower limit of our agreed Investment Policy guidelines. No significant changes were made to the policy since the portfolio continued to grow conservatively over the course of the year. The details of the short- and long-term investment accounts, asset allocations, as well as the implemented recommendations can be found in the financial report (to be disclosed at the General Meeting).

The advisory committee will strive for continued communication regarding potential changes to the accounts based on market fluctuations, and will decide on required course of actions in anticipation of market changes.

Educational Advisory Committee

After an absence of many years, the BoT reinstated a Soorp Khatch Church Educational Advisory Committee (“Education Committee”) in July 2015. The Education Committee consists of BoT members – Dr. Teny Abrahamian, Mrs. Janet Albeyaz Tovar, Mr. Garbo Afarian, Mrs. Maral Achikian, and Mr. Hampar Vartanian; the principal of the Hamasdegh Armenian School – Mrs. Maida Mehranian and Hamasdegh School – Mrs. Zvart Albeyaz and Mrs. Lena Tatarian; and Hamasdegh PTA President – Mrs. Lorig Kevoorkian and PTA member – Tsolhig Hekimian. The intent of the Education Committee is to provide greater communication between the BoT, School, and PTA and to provide a forum where all parties can address issues at one time. In the past, the BoT has exercised less oversight of the School and PTA than the current BoT feels is necessary to meet its fiduciary and other responsibilities to the community.

The first chair of the Education Committee—Dr. Teny Abrahamian—needed to step down because of other commitments and Mrs. Janet Albeyaz Tovar was appointed by the BoT as the Education Committee Chair.

Among other issues, the Education Committee is working with the School and PTA on the implementation of the Armenian conversation classes.

Hamasdegh Armenian School/PTA

Hamasdegh Armenian School is currently providing quality Armenian education to 84 students for the 2015-2016 school year, down from 85 in the 2014-1015 school year. The school offered ten classes during the 2014-2015 school year for the following
grade classifications: Pre-K, K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th. For the 2015-2016 school year, a new combined Armenian conversation class for 1st and 2nd grade was added and the regular Armenian 1st and 2nd grade classes were combined due to lack of classroom space.

As discussed, an Armenian conversation class was added as an experiment to meet the needs of our community families where the parents have limited Armenian language knowledge and want to focus their children’s learning on conversational (speaking/listening) skills that they can sustain. Often these families leave Hamasdegh Armenian School during the 1st and 2nd grades and the BoT feels it is worth the effort to see if this accommodation keeps more students in Hamasdegh School and learning the Armenian language.

The school staff structure was mainly unchanged in 2015, with eleven classroom teachers (Pre-K and K having two teachers each), a religious education teacher, a volunteer singing instructor, four staff members (Principal, Assistant Principal, Secretary, and Treasurer), and five volunteer classroom and office assistants.

Over the past year the Hamasdegh Armenian School continued to flourish under the direction of the principal, Mrs. Maida Mehranian and her devoted teachers. The PTA of the Hamasdegh Armenian School and its members, under the leadership of Mrs. Tsoghig Hekimian (2014-2015 school year) and Mrs. Lorig Kevorkian (2015-2016 school year), collaborated closely with the school to plan, execute and stage various events and fundraising initiatives.

The BoT acknowledges the tireless efforts and unwavering dedication of the school administrative staff, teachers, PTA members and volunteers, and looks forward to fostering closer collaboration in providing the best educational program possible for our students.

**Fundraising Events**

**Church Bazaar and Food Festival**

The Church Bazaar and Food Festival took place on September 24-26, 2015. This event generated a near record of $41,216.00 in net profit greatly exceeding the approximately $30,200.00 in net profit generated last year and approaching the record $43,000.00 in net profit in 2011. The bazaar was heavily advertised or covered including a mention in the Washington Post. Valpak coupons were not used this year but food coupons were given to donors and free meals were distributed to neighbors to build goodwill and to encourage their participation.

The BoT would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of the Ladies Guild and the Bazaar Committee members: Mrs. Elda Hacopian (Committee Chair), Mrs. Karine Sahagian, Dr. Tety Abrahamian, Mrs. Mirra Dersookian, Mrs. Hakinth Terpandjian, Mrs. Akabi Atamian, Ms. Anahid Dardarian, Mrs. Mary Garabedian, Ms. Thelma Kostegian, and Mrs. Jemma Simonian as well as the sponsors and numerous volunteers who supported this event. The BoT would also like to acknowledge the unwavering support of our community organizations who were involved in planning, logistics, public-relations, hall set-up, food preparation, purchases, raffle sales, and most importantly, fundraising efforts: ARF, ARS, AYF, Hamasdegh School, Hamazkayin, Homenetmen, and Hamasdegh PTA.

**Soorp Khatch Church 51st Anniversary**

The 51st anniversary of the consecration of Soorp Khatch Armenian Apostolic Church was celebrated on Saturday, November 7, 2015, at The Ballroom in Bethesda, Maryland. The dinner was presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan. The event was also attended by the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia, H.E. Tigran Sargsyan, and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (Artsakh) Representative to the United States, H.E. Robert Avetisyan.

During the anniversary banquet, the parish’s Lifetime Service Award was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Vrege & Mary Najarian and Der Hayr’s Award was presented to Mr. George Zabounian. Prelacy awards were presented to Mrs. Lena Tatarian and Dr. Zareh Soghomonian.

Guest performers were Sareen Nairi Balian and Arya Anoush Balian who entertained the attendees with their exceptional flute performance. Mr. Hratch Najarian and Ms. Sevan Kolejian served as Masters of Ceremony.

The new cross to be mounted on top of the church was also unveiled at the dinner. The cross and its mounting on the church were made possible by the generous donations of Ms. Lucie Sarkissian and family in memory of her son Garbis Sarkissian and AIW Inc. The cross was consecrated by His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan the next day on Sunday, November 8, 2015.
The event generated $38,640 in net profits. Der Hayr and the BoT would like to extend our sincere gratitude to our sponsors and supporters who submitted their donations for the anniversary dinner.

*Dessert Festival (Fall Festival)*

A second annual Soorp Khatch Armenian Apostolic Church Dessert Festival (“Fall Festival”) was organized by the BoT on Saturday, December 5, 2015. Various selections of Armenian desserts, pastries and other treats were offered to the community for sale. The event generated $3,888.00 in net profit, an improvement over the ~$3,400.00 in net profit last year. We expect to continue this event in future years.

*New Year’s Eve Dinner*

The BoT authorized a joint New Year’s Eve Dinner with Saint Mary’s Armenian Church. The event had a very good atmosphere and was enjoyed by the attendees but unfortunately resulted in a net loss of $6,198.50. A loss of $17,193.00 was recorded in 2015 because expenses were paid out in 2015 while most revenue was received in 2016—a separate reporting year. The BoT will organize another New Year’s Eve event next year but will make sure that lessons learned from this event result in a more financially successful event next year. The BoT would like to recognize the hard work that went into this event and the good atmosphere of community cooperation created with Saint Mary’s church community.

*Other Activities*

*2015 NRA and NALG Conventions*

The 2015 National Representative Assembly (NRA), along with the clergy conference, took place on June 2-6 with, for the first time ever, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia His Holiness Aram I, attending. This event was hosted by the Saint Stephen’s (Soorp Stepanos) Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, Massachusetts and included over 100 representatives and clergy. In conjunction with the NRA, the National Association of Ladies Guilds (NALG) convention took place nearby with over 40 representatives attending. Rev. Fr. Sarkis Aktavoukian and one of our NRA members attended this event and participated in the related discussion conveying the direction given to them by the Board. Unfortunately, four of our five NRA members were not able to attend due to conflicting schedules. NRA members will provide a summary of the convention at the General Meeting.

*Consecration of the Church Cross*

The BoT were able to arrange for a new cross for the outside of the church. This new cross and its mounting on the church were made possible by the generous donations of Ms. Lucie Sarkissian and family in memory of her son Garbis Sarkissian and AIW Inc. The cross was consecrated by His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan on Sunday, November 8, 2015, the day after the church anniversary dinner.

The cross is not yet mounted outside the church replacing the older cross because additional structural reinforcement to the roof must first be completed. The BoT are hopeful the cross will be installed this springtime.

*Board of Trustees Mid-Atlantic Regional Workshop*

The Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America held a Board of Trustees Mid-Atlantic Regional Workshop on Saturday, November 21 at the Saint Illuminators Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in Manhattan. Rev. Fr. Sarkis Aktavoukian, Mr. Garbo Afarian, Mrs. Elda Hacopian, and Mr. Aram Sarafian attended on behalf of our church. The workshop was presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan and Mr. Stephen Hagopian, Chairman of the Prelacy Executive Council. The focus of the workshop was on refining our mission and to focus the work of each church Board.

*Acknowledgments*

The BoT expresses its sincere gratitude to His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan for his leadership, guidance, and blessings, our Der Hayr for his efforts to serve the spiritual and moral needs of the community and Yeretzgin Maggie Aktavoukian for her continuous dedication to the community and participation in the Ladies Guild and the church choir. The BoT greatly appreciates Mrs. Nora Kasparian and Ms. Thelma Kostegian for their help with various events as well as regular administrative tasks and Mrs. Hnazant Arabian for her dedication to the church by making the mahs.

The Chairman further extends his gratitude to all Board and NRA members past and present for their time, effort, and commitment to the well-being of the church.
The BoT also expresses its sincere appreciation to our Deacons – Mr. Sarkis Aktavoukian, Mr. Sarkis Doudaklian, and Mr. George Zabounian; our organists – Mrs. Eleanor Seda Caroglanian and Ms. Sona Mekerdijian; and our Soorp Khatch choir members – Yeretzgin Maggie Aktavoukian, Ms. Vivian Chakarian, Mrs. Zabel Sabounjian, Ms. Anahid Dardarian, Mrs. Nayiri Apkarian, Mrs. Mary Altounjian, Mrs. Emma Soghomonian, Ms. Ani Achikian, Dr. Avedis Abrahamian, Mr. Kajaz Safarian, Mr. Onnik Mutafian, Mr. Vrej Beshirian, and Mr. Mihran Kochyan.

The BoT particularly extends its gratitude to the Ladies Guild, under the leadership of Mrs. Akabi Atamian; Hamasdegh Armenian School under the leadership of Mrs. Maida Mehranian; and the Hamasdegh PTA under the leadership of Mrs. Lorig Kevorkian, for their partnership with the BoT and their continuous service to the community.

The BoT would like to acknowledge the help and the cooperation of the NRA representatives during the course of the year.

Finally, and most importantly, the BoT expresses its appreciation to our community organizations (ARF, ARS, ANC, AYC, AYF, Hamasdegh School/ PTA, Hamazkayin, Homenetmen, and Ladies Guild), parish members, and volunteers for their support of the church throughout the years.