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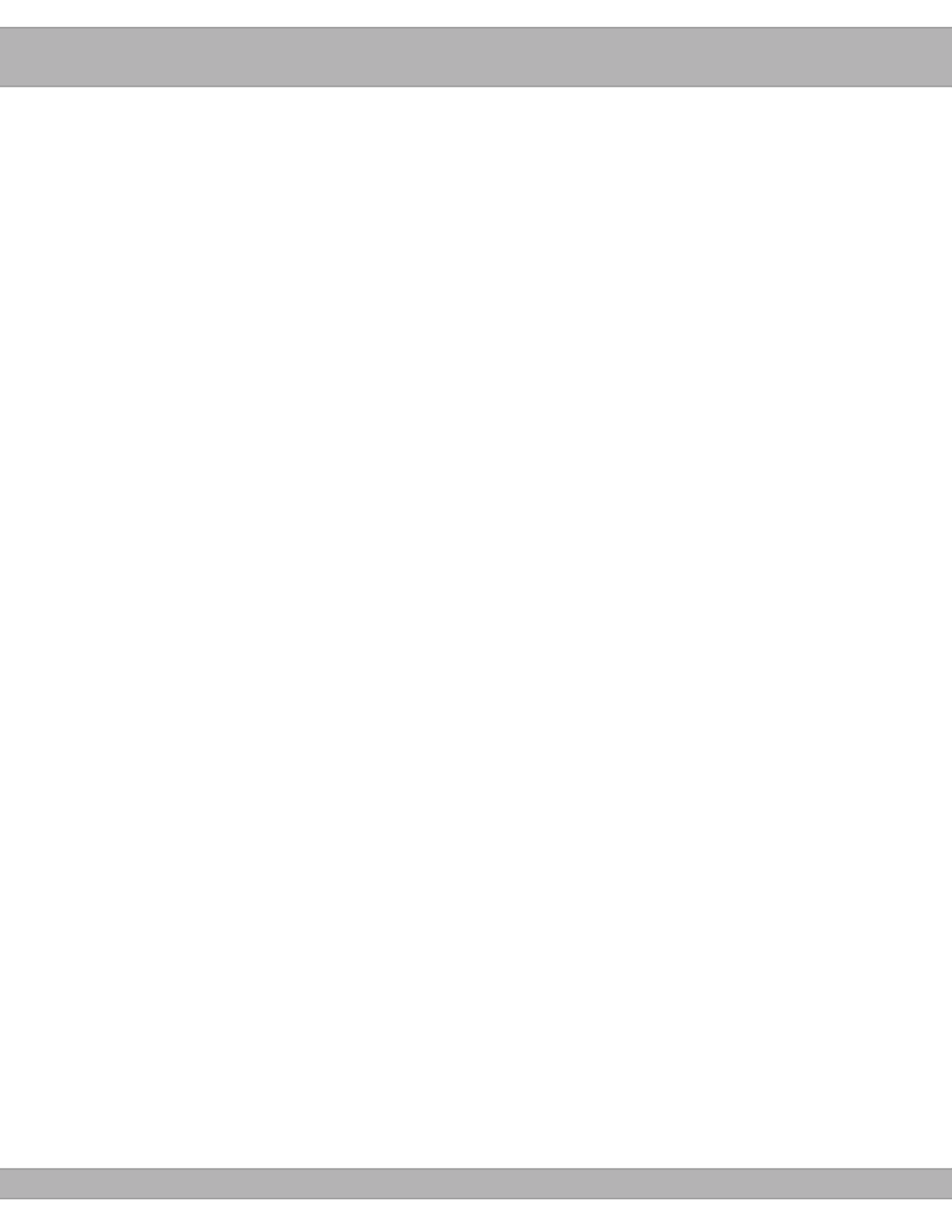
*The*  
**Parish Council  
Handbook**

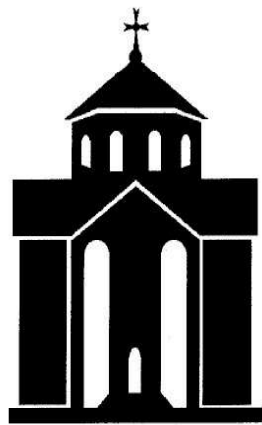
**A SOURCEBOOK  
FOR LEADERSHIP**

*in Your Local Church*

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**DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)**





*The*  
**Parish Council  
Handbook**

**A SOURCEBOOK  
FOR LEADERSHIP**  
*in Your Local Church*

BY ORDER OF  
**HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP KHAJAG BARSAMIAN**  
**PRIMATE**

**DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)**

Editing & Layout: Arpie Nakashian McQueen

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# Parish Council Handbook

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# Preface

The Armenian Church is governed both by those who have received authority from God through ordination, and by the people who comprise the church – by spiritual authority and by temporal authority. The spiritual authority is exercised in teaching the faith, administering sacraments and observing the canons that are the laws of the Church. The temporal authority is applied in financial management, social activities, property maintenance, most administrative matters and governance.

This handbook was developed especially for Parish Council members as a guide to supplement your knowledge of the Armenian Church and your role in it. It provides basic information about the Armenian Church, its hierarchy, rituals and feasts, along with the duties and responsibilities of its parish leaders – the Parish Council.

Parish Council members are called to serve God and the Armenian Church as special assistants to the Pastor and representatives of the parish congregation. Together they form a team dedicated to the mission of maintaining the church as a source and center of Christian teachings and life. They strive to make the church a place where all Armenian Christians congregate to participate in worship, learning, fellowship and service, and receive spiritual solace, strength, joy, hope and forgiveness.

While the Pastor is charged with the ultimate responsibility of meeting the spiritual and Armenian educational needs of the church community, the Parish Council may assist him in several of his duties as chief administrator.

Every Parish Council member must be looked upon as a Christian who is continually growing in his or her spiritual knowledge, faith in and service to the church, and who is building upon the example of our forefathers in strengthening the Armenian Church. Their station is a privilege indeed, and also a challenge and an invitation to give and to grow.

The effectiveness of the Parish Council depends upon each member's knowledge of our spiritual and cultural heritage, in addition to commitment to their Christian faith and dedication as a servant leader. This handbook is intended to render the service of council members more effective and rewarding.

May the Lord bless and reward your hard work and service.

With Prayers,



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate  
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

# Introduction

In the Armenian Church, clergy and laymen share the common responsibility of making the church an avenue towards the salvation of the total man. This collaborative work proceeds under the guidance of the Primate who is elected by the people and approved by the Catholicos of All Armenians to exercise full authority in a given diocese. The Diocesan Council works in partnership with the Primate to oversee the spiritual, financial and social affairs of a diocese and each Parish Council.

## The Parish Council and the Church

The Parish Council is the governing body elected by parish members to guide the parish in its spiritual, educational and financial endeavors, in cooperation with the Pastor. Each Parish Council member is expected to serve in the spirit of that responsibility.

The Parish Council should be in active communication and contact with the parishioners and organization chairs, and not act as an elite hierarchical body. As elected officials, Parish Council members should be a representative voice of the faithful as a community and avoid focus to further their personal agendas.

Good Parish Council members never lose sight of the fact that they are servants of Christ. They therefore seek to increase their own capacity to understand the Armenian Church, which also enshrines our national culture. Since the Parish Council's responsibility extends beyond financial matters, each Parish Council member should strive to be adequately informed on all matters related to the parish and to the Armenian Church in general.

Parish Council members should lead by example, by striving to be good church members and models to the rest of the congregation. They should take personal interest in all activities of the parish by furthering education, communication and youth activities, helping the needy, the unfortunate and the sick and delegating responsibility. Particular focus should be placed on acting as a representative voice for the parish community concerning pastoral plans and activities.

### **The Parish Council and the Pastor**

The function of the Pastor is two-fold: He is the shepherd of the flock, the representative of the Primate in the local Armenian Church community and the president of the parish. While he is responsible for the parish as a whole, he works collaboratively with the Parish Council as its president for the effective administration of the Parish.

As the servant of the people, the Pastor fulfills his vocation of priesthood partly by serving the local parish community. His presence is not to be viewed as one who has been hired to do a job by the Parish Council. Rather the Pastor is assigned to the parish by the Primate as his representative, to be the servant-leader of the parish as by the example of Jesus Christ. He should guide, provide suggestions and define his stand on various issues.

The Pastor has the ultimate authority for religious decisions and topics related to the liturgical life of the parish, in accordance with the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), the canons of the Armenian Orthodox Church and its traditions.

An atmosphere of mutual understanding and agreement should prevail between the Pastor and the Parish Council. The Pastor and the Parish Council share the responsibilities related to the welfare of the church. Both Pastor and Parish Council are bound by the canons of the church and are under the administrative jurisdiction of the diocesan authorities. The Pastor will hold office hours at the parish to fulfill the administrative needs of the parish and remain informed about administrative business.

# Governance

## The Church of Armenia

The Armenian Church is an autonomous Christian church, and is a member of the communion of churches known as Oriental Orthodox. Its head is the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians – currently His Holiness Karekin II – who resides in Holy Etchmiadzin, near Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

In the middle of the First Century, two of Jesus Christ’s original apostles, St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew, introduced Christianity into Armenia. They are referred to as the “first enlighteners of Armenia” to distinguish them from the second enlightener, St. Gregory. According to tradition, the two apostles were put to death in Armenia. The generally accepted chronology gives a period of eight years to the mission of St. Thaddeus (35-43 A.D.) and sixteen years to that of St. Bartholomew (44-60 A.D.)

Repeated persecutions failed to stem the rapid growth of the new faith, and Christianity was declared the state religion of Armenia in 301 a.d., thus Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity as its state religion.

This was largely due to the efforts of St. Gregory the Illuminator, who converted Armenia’s King Tiridates. Conversion of the rest of the population soon followed, and in 303 A.D., St. Gregory built the Mother Church in the city of Vagharshabad, naming it Holy Etchmiadzin.

Today Holy Etchmiadzin is the primary spiritual seat of authority for the six million Armenian Christians living in Armenia and in Diasporan communities around the globe. Overt expressions of the Church’s activity in Armenia itself were severely hampered during that country’s seventy-year period of Soviet rule; however, since the demise of the USSR, the new Independent Republic of Armenia has experienced a vigorous revival of religious spirit, and the Armenian Church has resumed its traditional public role as the “national faith” of the Armenian people.

Today, about one million Armenians live in North America. The Church has three North American dioceses: the Eastern Diocese — known officially as the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) — the Western Diocese, and the Diocese of Canada. There are 42 fully-organized parishes, 21 mission parishes and

four mission communities in the Eastern Diocese, which is headed by the Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. The Primate is headquartered at the Diocesan Complex adjacent to St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York City.

For a more detailed history of the Armenian Church, please visit the Diocese website: [www.armenianchurch.org](http://www.armenianchurch.org).

### Hierarchy of the Armenian Church

The head of the Armenian Apostolic Church is the Catholicos of All Armenians, seated at Etchmiadzin, Armenia. He is elected by the National-Ecclesiastical Assembly at the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin in a secret ballot and he occupies the throne for life. Currently, His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, is the head of the Armenian Church.

The Armenian Apostolic Church, divided into geographical areas or demographic units for the purpose of efficient government, includes more than a dozen dioceses and three hierarchical Sees which are subordinate to the Holy See of Etchmiadzin in spiritual affairs:

- The Catholicossal See of Cilicia
- The Patriarchal See of Armenians of Holy Jerusalem
- The Patriarchal See of Armenians of Turkey

Throughout the Diaspora, bishops and archbishops who oversee the clergy and laity within their jurisdiction govern dioceses as geographical regions within the Church.

A directory of the Armenian Apostolic Church appears in the annual Diocese calendar. A description of the various orders of the Armenian Church and the duties that are assigned to each appears in Appendix D.

## The Diocesan Council

The Diocesan Council supervises the parochial institutions and organizations of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and its activities, examining and deciding jointly with the Primate on matters relative to the establishment of

## Parish Council Handbook

churches, educational and charitable institutions and organizations within the Diocese.

The Diocesan Council also decides the establishment of new church communities, parishes or various organizations.

Additionally, the Council is responsible for preparing and presenting an annual operating budget to the Diocesan Assembly. The Diocesan Council consists of 11 members – four of clergymen and seven laymen – elected by the Diocesan Assembly. The names of the Diocesan Council members are updated each year in the Diocesan Directory.

# Duties of the Parish Council

## General Requirements

- The Parish Council should strive to be inclusive as a representative voice of and for the parish.
- Parish Council members should participate in the Divine Liturgy every Sunday.
- He/she should attend as many church functions as possible.
- One Parish Council member is present at all funerals and weddings to supervise the proceedings and be of general assistance.
- The Parish Council together with the Pastor, as president and head of all the church organizations, shall always be considered one unit or one team.
- The church community — its real properties as well as its spiritual well-being — depends upon the conscientious performance of the Parish Council.
- Parish Council members should work for the preservation and progress of the parish, and they should never strive to fulfill personal agendas.
- Goals of the Parish Council should focus away from worldly possessions.
- Parish Council members should be concerned with the mental, moral and spiritual enrichment of the people, as well as the financial success of the church. The facilities of the church should be used to capacity for such ends.
- Funds are held in the name of the church and checks are drawn upon two out of three signatures of Parish Council officers.
- Detailed job descriptions for officers and employees should be written and revised at each parish, using general guidelines provided in this handbook.
- The Parish Council periodically should call a joint meeting of the organizations of the church, to receive their reports, prepare and plan activities, and discuss important matters that may arise.
- Parish Council members wishing to resign are expected to submit a written statement to the Pastor, as president of the Parish Council.
- Standard operating procedures for recording donations, office record keeping, fellowship hour responsibilities should be established.
- Facilitate communication between parish organizations by establishing the proper chain of communication.
- Determine reporting deadlines for meetings for agendas and reports according to the needs of the parish and the Parish Council member producing the agenda.
- Arrange for the timely payment of assessments by the Diocesan Council.

## Parish Council Officers and Their Responsibilities

While the Pastor and Parish Council members function as one body, officers and members nevertheless have specific responsibilities, as follows:

**President:** The Pastor, as president, presides over meetings of the Parish Council, and opens and closes each meeting with a prayer. In case of a tie in any voting, he casts the deciding vote (Appendix A, Article 24, Diocesan By-Laws). He is responsible for religious services, performance of sacraments, visitations, spiritual counseling and the like. He may, on his own initiative, invite other clergymen, individuals or groups for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy or other sacraments, and attend to similar priestly matters. However, the Parish Council is to be consulted when visiting clergy, etc., are to be compensated for their services.

The Pastor, as overseer and leader of the parish, should at each meeting submit a report which covers parish news and activities in which he participated as the church representative, both within and outside the parish. He should respond in a timely manner to e-mail and phone messages. He should update the Parish Council about relevant Diocesan news and correspondence.

The Pastor must hold office hours at the parish to the administrative needs of

the parish and remain informed about administrative business.

**Chairman:** Conducts the meetings and supervises the implementation of all decisions of the Parish Council. He/She delegates authority and responsibility as needed to maintain smooth operations throughout the parish.

The chairman appoints, in consultation with the president and council members, the liaison officers for the parish organizations. He/she prepares a duty roster and assigns each Parish Council member. He/She appoints, in consultation with the president and council, the chairmen of standing committees (from among council members or any qualified church members) as follows:

- **Financial Committee:** to supervise and assure the success of the pledge system and other financial projects.
- **Church Maintenance:** to care for and keep an inventory of the grounds, buildings, and furniture of the church.
- **Altar Guild:** to oversee candles and holy bread – *mas* – supply, vessels and vestments, altar flowers, and maintain the altar according to the customs of the Armenian Church. See *Guidelines for Altar Guilds* publication for details.

## Parish Council Officers and their responsibilities

- **Membership Committee:** to register voting members.
  - **Welcome Committee:** to welcome all visitors to church services or gatherings, to visit newcomers in the parish and welcome them to church activities, introduce them to the Pastor, Parish Council and church members.
  - **Publicity Committee:** to publicize the church and its activities, particularly among its members.
  - **Sunday School Superintendent:** to supervise the staff and fulfill the Armenian Church mission to provide a thorough Christian education using the Diocesan curriculum and other materials as approved or suggested by the Diocese Department of Education.
  - **Armenian Language School Superintendent:** to supervise staff and fulfill the Armenian Church mission to provide cultural studies using the Diocese curriculum.
- Vice-Chairman:** Assumes the duties of the chairman in the absence of the latter. He/She also coordinates the use of church facilities, and oversees the work of committees appointed by the Parish Council.
- Secretary:** Takes the minutes of meetings, keeps records of the church in proper files and is in charge of the correspondence of the Parish Council. All files must be kept at the church.
- Assistant Secretary:** Assists the secretary and assumes the latter's duties in his/her absence.
- Treasurer:** Keeps the financial records of the church; approves the bills and pays them by check.
- Assistant Treasurer:** Assists the treasurer and assumes the latter's duties when he/she is absent.
- Other Parish Council members:** Serve as advisors and assume responsibilities on various committees.
- Diocesan Delegate:** Represents the parish at the annual Diocesan Assembly, according to arrangements set forth in the parish by-laws. He/she does not have voting power in the Parish Council, but is encouraged to attend Parish Council meetings. The Diocesan Delegate should be included on all relevant e-mails, faxes and correspondence as well as agendas and reports of the Parish Council, and communicate with the Pastor and chairman frequently. The Diocesan Delegate may help with job evaluations for parish employees, and suggest improvements.

## During church services

The Parish Council should assure that:

- ◆ men, women and children are properly dressed to enter church. Disrespectful and immodest attire is prohibited from church;
- ◆ veils or scarves to be used by women as headcoverings are available and distributed when needed during services;
- ◆ disrespectful posture such as crossed legs or gum chewing are avoided in the church;
- ◆ communications to the celebrant are kept to a minimum and delivered inconspicuously by a deacon or choir member.
- ◆ conversation in the sanctuary and loitering in other parts of the church are discouraged.

## Parish Council Participation

The Parish Council chairman or his/her designee should create and maintain a schedule for all Parish Council members to participate in the following duties. The schedule should be fair and equitable, as well as accommodating to members' personal schedules and strengths.

### ► **At least two Parish Council members must be present in the church at the beginning of the services.**

- ◆ Parish Council members should seat themselves so they may be available to leave the sanctuary without disturbing the congregation. They must be prepared to assist their colleagues when required. They may wear an identifying badge or pin in order to be recognized.
- ◆ Parish Council members should try to fill the front pews first, and they should keep the aisles clear.

### ► **Two Parish Council members must be ready in the vestibule to guide the incoming worshippers to available seats whenever such assistance is called for.**

- ◆ Parish Council members should prohibit people from congregating and loitering inside and outside the church building, and encourage them to participate in the worship.
- ◆ Parish Council members should prohibit distractions throughout *badarak*, and particularly during:

- The reading of the Gospel and the recitation of the Nicene Creed;
- The Great Entrance of *Veraperoom* when the deacon brings the Holy Chalice to the celebrant;
- The intonation by the celebrant of *Arek Gereke* and *Arpek ee smane*;
- The singing by the choir of *Vorti Asdoodzo* when the Host and Chalice are privately censed by the deacon and are consecrated by the celebrant;
- The singing of the *Hayr Mer*;
- The singing of *Miayn Soorp* until the end of *Der Voghormia* when the choir and congregation are kneeling;
- All other times when the faithful are kneeling;
- The sermon.

► **One or two council members shall be at the table in the church vestibule, attending to the collection plate, purchase of candles, distribution of bulletins, programs and offering envelopes.**

### Collection of the Offering

Collect the offering confidently, as it is an integral part of the Divine Liturgy, and must be received with reverence. Without the offering, the Liturgy is not complete, so there must not be excessive concern over “disturbing” the congregants.

► **Convenient times for the offering are:**

- ◆ The General Intercessions - *Arakelots Srpotz*. The deacons mention the apostles, prophets, enlighteners, etc., and the choir responds several times with *Hishya Der yev voghormia* – remember Lord and have mercy. The collection should be completed before the beginning of the *Hayr Mer*.
- ◆ The period following Communion when the veil of the altar is drawn and the choir sings the Song of Thanksgiving – *Lutzak ee barootiantz kotz*.

► **The offering shall be collected as follows:**

- ◆ Two or four Parish Council members with collection plates shall walk up the central and side aisles, stop at the front pews, make the Sign of the Cross, and after pausing, step back and pass the plates.
- ◆ They must face the altar and never turn their backs to it during the collection.
- ◆ When the *badarak* is over, two or more Parish Council members shall carefully count the money, record the amount on a form (see Appendix B) and sign it before delivering the money for deposit to the treasurer, who should also sign the form.

## **The Kiss of Peace - *Voghchooyn***

When the celebrant says “Peace Unto All” – *khaghaghootiun amenetzoon* – after the Great Entrance:

► **Two members of the Parish Council walk up the central aisle and stand side by side, facing the altar, just outside the chancel.**

- ◆ If there is a priest in the chancel, they kiss his hand when he turns to greet them.
- ◆ If there is no priest in the chancel, they receive the Kiss of Peace from the deacon. They wait until the deacon ascends the bema and the celebrant says *Khaghaghootiun amenetzoon*.

► **They make the Sign of the Cross, turn to the congregation and proceed to give the Kiss of Peace to the first person closest to the center aisle in each pew.**

► **The greeter says *Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetzav* (Christ is revealed). The person receiving the greeting shall place his right palm on his heart, and bending over to the right and then the left shoulder of the greeter, shall say *Orhnial eh haydnootiunun kirsdosi* (Blessed is the Revelation of Christ).**

► **They assure that choir members receive the greeting, if the choir is situated away from the congregation.**

## Holy Communion

Church canons dictate that women should cover their heads in church. The Armenian Church in the U.S. today is more concerned with a person's preparation to receive Holy Communion with a pure heart and mind, however.

► **A person wishing to receive Holy Communion must approach the altar with a pure heart, freed of ill will and negative thoughts and:**

- ◆ should have fasted and received the Sacrament of Penance through confession prior to Communion;
- ◆ make the Sign of the Cross and say *Megha Asdoodz'o* – I have sinned against God;
- ◆ extend his/her tongue so that the priest may place a particle of the Holy Communion upon it without touching the lips of the communicant;
- ◆ make an effort not to chew the Holy Communion since it is the body and blood of Christ;
- ◆ swallow the sacrament and make the Sign of the Cross.

When the church is crowded, Parish Council members shall see to it that the people approach the altar in an orderly manner to receive Holy Communion, and that they wait, facing the altar, for the celebrant's blessing before returning to their pews. However, during extremely crowded services, they may return to their pews to receive the celebrant's blessing.

## Mas

Near the end of the Divine Liturgy a Parish Council member shall stand in the side aisle, in the rear of the chancel, and wait for the deacon to bring the mas. He shall then take the mas to the church vestibule to be distributed to the faithful.

- ◆ The person giving the *mas* says: *Mas yev pajbin yeghitzi kez ee soorp badarakes* – May this be to thee a share and a portion from the Holy Sacrifice.
- ◆ The person receiving the mas responds, *Pajbin im Asdvadz Havidian* – God is my portion forever.

## Service for the Repose of Souls (*Hokehankisd*)

- ◆ Requests for *Hokehankisd* – Service for the Repose of Souls or Requiem— should be submitted by an established weekly deadline for inclusion in the bulletin and submitted to the Celebrant for remembrance in his private prayers. Last-minute requests on Sundays must be submitted well before the *Voghchooyn*.
- ◆ Each request should contain the name of the deceased along with the name of the person requesting the prayers. The suggested donation is determined by the Parish Council.
- ◆ Families requesting *Hokehankisd* are seated together in the front pews, if possible.
- ◆ Parish Council members should distribute tapers to the family members and friends in each *Hokehankisd* party and should light them from a side altar or deacon's lighted candle at the beginning of the *Hokehankisd* service.
- ◆ Candles may be distributed to the entire congregation when prayers are said for a deceased clergyman or under special circumstances.
- ◆ Requiem services for all deceased Parish Council members may be held on the same day as the annual Parish Assembly.

## Lighting Candles

- ◆ Parish Council members in charge of the votive candles should see that the candles burn as long as possible and spent candles are removed.
- ◆ If requested, a Parish Council member shall approach the candle stand and light a candle on behalf of the offerer, crossing oneself and saying a short prayer.

# **Appendix A**

## **By-Laws of the Diocese Relating to the Parish Council**

**Article 23:** The Parish Assembly shall elect from among its members a Parish Council, consisting of not less than five nor more than fifteen members, who shall be custodians of the properties of the Church and shall, together with the Parish Priest, be in charge of the conduct of the affairs of the Parish.

**Article 24:** The Priest of the Parish shall be ex-officio President of the Parish Council and shall preside over its meetings. Delegates to the Diocesan Assembly may attend all meetings of the Parish Council to give advice and counsel. In case of a tie in any voting, the President shall cast the deciding vote. When there is no Priest in charge of the Church, the Chairman of the Parish Council shall act as President.

**Article 25:** Members of the Parish Council shall be elected for a term of two years and their election shall be subject to ratification by the Primate and the Diocesan Council. At the first election, one-half of the members shall be elected for one year and one-half of the members for two years. Their successors shall be elected for two years.

**Article 26:** Members of the Parish Council may serve for a maximum of three consecutive terms, and after

the interim of one year may become eligible for election again as a member of the Parish Council. In the event this provision does not prove feasible for small Parishes, the Primate and the Diocesan Council shall have authority to make special arrangements.

**Article 27:** In case of vacancies in the Parish Council due to resignations or deaths, the persons who had received the highest number of votes short of election in the last Parish Assembly shall be invited to complete the unexpired term of the member he replaces, beginning with the alternate with the highest votes short of election and, working down, subject to confirmation by the Primate.

**Article 28:** Members of the Parish Council shall continue to serve until their successors are duly elected and confirmed by the Primate and assume office.

**Article 29:** Any member of the Parish Council who fails to attend four consecutive meetings of the Council without a reasonable and compelling cause, shall be reported to the Primate and to the Diocesan Council which may, at their discretion, declare him (or her) to have resigned by his (or her) own action.

**Article 30:** The Parish Council shall elect from among its members, for service of one year, a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. These together with the President shall constitute the Officers of the Council. The Council may also elect an Assistant Secretary and an Assistant Treasurer to serve in their respective offices during the absence of the former.

**Article 31:** The Parish Council shall meet at least once a month. The President, together with the Chairman and Secretary, shall prepare the agenda of the meeting. They shall, in their respective official capacities, sign official documents.

**Article 32:** The Parish Council shall have an official seal in the name of the Church.

**Article 33:** The powers and duties of the Parish Council shall be:

- To carry out the decisions of the Parish Assembly.
- To present to the Parish Assembly its financial statement, after it is duly examined and approved by the Auditing Committee, and to send a copy of the same to the Primate and the Diocesan Council.
- To prepare the Annual Budget and submit the same to the Parish Assembly for approval.
- To examine and approve, once in every year, the accounts of its subordinate

bodies and to supervise and regulate their financial and administrative affairs.

- To see to it that the Church dues and all other income of the Parish are regularly collected.
- To see to it that all expenses of the Parish, incurred in connection with religious services and other religious and educational activities and maintenance of the church, are defrayed and the purchase price and the costs of construction or repairs of all buildings and properties are paid.
- To ensure the proper and regular performance of Church Services.
- To establish, to supervise and to give moral and financial support to the various schools of the Parish.
- To encourage all educational, benevolent and cultural organizations in the community.
- To record in a special book the name and address of each member of the Church, and to keep proper records in a Register of baptisms, marriages and deaths.
- To receive a Priest to be in charge of the Parish for the time being as ordered by the Primate until a Priest elected by the Parish Assembly can be installed.
- To execute the instructions given by the Primate and the Diocesan Council on matters relating to the administration of the Diocese and the Parish, in

# By-Laws Of The Diocese Relating To The Parish Assembly

accordance with the powers vested in them by these Bylaws.

- To do all things and perform all duties pertaining to their office as prescribed by these Bylaws, and determined by the Parish Assembly or by the Diocesan Council.
- To meet with the Diocesan Delegates at least one month prior to the Diocesan Assembly to review the affairs and status of the Parish.
- To ensure the regular and timely payments to the Diocese of all regular and special Diocesan assessments.

## By-Laws Of The Diocese Relating To The Parish Assembly

**Article 4:** Members of the Armenian Church in each community, together with the clergy, shall form a Parish of the Armenian Church of America, which shall become a duly constituted Parish upon confirmation by the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

**Article 5:** All persons who have been baptized and confirmed in the Armenian Church, who accept its doctrine, canons and rites, and who fulfill their obligations to the Church and community, shall be members in good standing of the Parish Church and shall constitute the Parish Assembly.

**Article 6:** Every member of the Parish, 18 years of age or over, shall pay to his (or her) Church an annual due, the

**Article 34:** Complaints concerning the Parish Council as a body or against any one of its members must be made in writing through the Parish Priest or, in his absence directly to the Primate and the Diocesan Council for decision.

**Article 35:** Any dispute arising between the members of the Parish Council and the Parish Priest must be submitted to the Primate and the Diocesan Council for settlement. Their decision shall be final.

amount of which shall be determined by the Diocesan Assembly. Such amount may be increased, but not decreased by the Parish Assembly.

**Article 7:** Members in good standing of a Parish Church, who are 18 years of age or over, may participate in the Assemblies of the same Parish and may vote, provided that at least six months have elapsed since they have registered and paid dues at the time of registration as members of the Parish. They may be eligible for office one year after becoming members, provided they have attained the age of 21.

**Article 8:** Members who fail to pay their dues for one or more years automatically forfeit their right to vote

at Parish Assemblies, or to hold elective office within the Parish. Such members may reinstate these rights by payment of their dues in arrears for at least the previous two years.

**Article 9:** No one may be a voting member in more than one Parish at the same time.

**Article 10:** A member of a Parish acting in contravention of these Bylaws may be deprived of his right to vote and to hold office by the TWO-THIRDS vote of the members present in a duly assembled Parish Assembly. The decision shall be effective upon confirmation by the Primate.

**Article 11:** A meeting of the members in good standing of the Church, presided over by the Parish Priest, shall form the Parish Assembly which shall conduct such affairs as may come within its jurisdiction.

**Article 12:** In communities where there is no Parish Priest, meetings shall be held under the presidency of the Chairman of the Parish Council.

**Article 13:** The Annual Parish Assembly shall be held regularly once a year during the months of January or February, unless decided otherwise by the previous Annual Parish Assembly. Special Assemblies may be held when necessary. Annual or Special Assemblies shall be called with the approval of the Parish Council by the Parish Priest or

the Chairman of the Parish Council, as the case may be.

**Article 14:** The duties of the Annual Parish Assembly shall be:

- To elect Officers of the Annual Parish Assembly from a slate to be determined by the Parish Assembly.
- To elect a Nominating Committee composed of not less than three and not more than five members for a one-year period.
- The Nominating Committee shall prepare lists of candidates, at least double the number of vacancies for the election of the Parish Council, Auditing Committee, Officers of the Annual Parish Assembly, subsequent Nominating Committee and Diocesan Delegates. Members of the Nominating Committee may enter their names as candidates for office.
- The Nominating Committee shall nominate candidates by majority vote.
- The Nominating Committee, together with the Auditing Committee, shall govern the elections of the Parish Council members, Diocesan Delegates, Nominating and Auditing Committees during the Parish Assembly.
- The members of this committee may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms and after an interim period of one year may be eligible for election again as members of the Nominating Committee.

# By-Laws Of The Diocese Relating To The Parish Assembly

- To elect Diocesan Delegates from the Parish membership. Those who receive the next highest number of votes in the same election shall be considered alternates in the order of their plurality.
- To examine the written annual statements and reports of the Parish Priest, the Parish Council and their subordinate bodies for all activities during the year.
- To decide the Budget estimate for the ensuing year.
- To elect an Auditing Committee composed of three members. Each member shall serve for three years, one member shall be elected for a term of two years and one member shall be elected for a term of one year. Thereafter as terms of office expire, positions will be filled for three-year terms.
- To elect the members of the Parish Council.
- To transfer, at the end of every fiscal year, to the Reserve Fund a part of the excess of income over expenditures of the preceding years as determined by the Parish Assembly.
- To render decisions and pass resolutions relative to questions that appear on the agenda attached to the announcement of the meeting.
- To render decisions relative to the purchase or construction of real properties, and to submit them to the

Primate and the Diocesan Council for their approval.

- To adopt resolutions concerning the sale, exchange, lease or mortgaging of real property, and to submit such resolutions to the Primate and the Diocesan Council, for approval.
- To adopt resolutions to be submitted to the Diocesan Assembly.
- To report in writing on all decisions and resolutions of the Parish Assembly to the Primate and the Diocesan Council for approval.

**Article 15:** Special Parish Assemblies may be held also upon the written request of at least one-third of the total membership or fifty members of the Parish, whichever is the lesser.

Special Parish Assemblies may be held for the following purposes:

- To organize charitable, educational and social bodies with the approval of the Diocesan Council.
- To elect candidates for ministry in the Church.
- To adopt resolutions to meet the specific needs of the Church, including all the duties set forth in Article 14.
- To establish and maintain a Reserve Fund, and to determine the purpose and method of its use as it may seem necessary from time to time, under the direction of the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

- To authorize the payment of all expenses or dues determined by the Holy See in Etchmiadzin, the Diocesan Assembly and the Diocesan Council.
- To adopt resolutions to be submitted to the Diocesan Assembly and to receive reports from the Diocesan Delegates.
- To submit within four weeks reports on all decisions of the Parish Assembly to the Diocesan Council for approval.

**Article 16:** The invitation to a Parish Assembly shall be in writing to each individual member at least one week before the meeting and shall include the agenda of the Assembly. The agenda of the Parish Assembly shall be prepared by the Parish Priest and the Parish Council. Other matters of new business may be added by majority vote of the Parish Assembly.

**Article 17:** At Parish Assemblies the presence of a minimum of one-third of the eligible voting membership or fifty members shall constitute a quorum, and decisions shall be rendered by majority vote of members present and voting, with the exception of Section A and B of this Article.

Should, however, the Assembly fail to form a quorum, the affirmative votes of two-thirds of the members present shall be required to arrive at each decision at such a meeting, provided such decisions are approved and confirmed by the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

For the election of a Parish Priest by the Parish Assembly, or for the removal from office of a Parish Priest elected by the Assembly, decisions shall be submitted for the approval of the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

For the purchase, for the proposal to sell, to mortgage, to lease or to exchange real estate, or for the construction of a building for a Parish, decisions shall be made by the affirmative votes of the two-thirds of the members present and voting, and shall be submitted for the approval of the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

**Article 18:** The Annual Parish Assembly shall elect a Chairman and a Secretary by a plurality of the members present and voting. Special Parish Assemblies shall be conducted by the Parish Council Chairman, and the Parish Council Secretary will act as Secretary of these Assemblies.

**Article 19:** The Parish Priest, or in his absence, his assistant shall preside, ex-officio, over the Parish Assembly except when the Primate or his Vicar is present, in which case the latter shall preside.

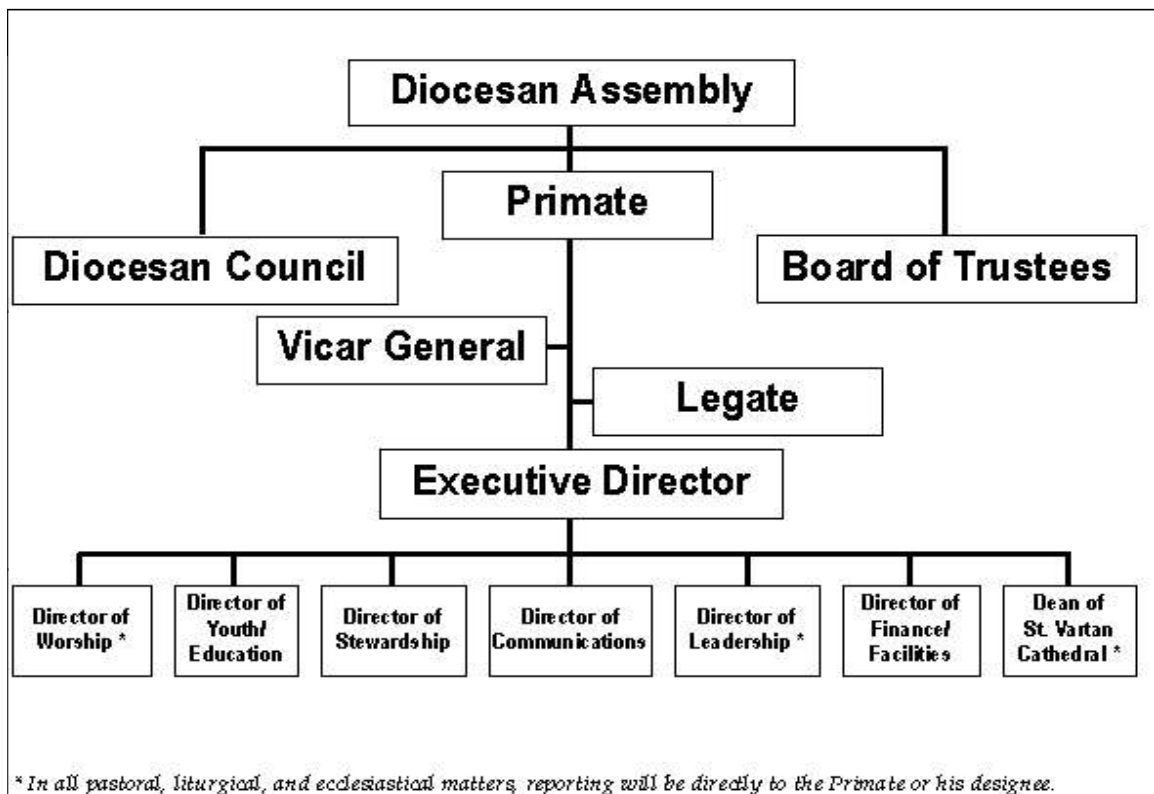
**Article 20:** Any member of the Parish questioning the legality of a Parish Assembly or its resolution or elections may, within seven days from the date of the meeting, file a written complaint with the Parish Priest who will immediately forward same to the Diocesan Council for necessary action.

**Article 21:** The members of the Parish Council, the Auditing and the Nominating Committees, the Diocesan Delegates and the Officers of the Parish Assembly shall be elected by secret ballot. Voting may take place only after the meeting has been called to order. For these elections a plurality vote shall be considered in order. All other matters shall be decided by a show of hands, unless otherwise decided by the Parish Assembly.

**Article 22:** In a Parish Assembly each member shall be entitled to one vote which is not transferable and must be cast in person. In case of a tie vote the presiding officer shall cast the deciding vote or he shall authorize a second balloting upon the same question.

## Appendix B

### Diocesan Hierarchy



# Appendix C

## Parish Council Dedication Service

For the Dedication Service, the Parish Council shall assemble in their Church and stand before the chancel facing the Priest, deacon, and two acolytes to participate in the following ceremony:

**Deacon:** Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Receive, save and have mercy.

**Pastor:** Blessings and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

**Hymn:** O heavenly wisdom, Thou didst descend from above to call together them that Thou hast chosen from the beginning of the world, bringing them out of their worldly ignorance; Thou didst fill with Thy light so that they may chase the darkness of ignorance away from us; through the intercession of Thy disciples, save us O Savior who lovest men.

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans. (12:1-21)**

*Alleluia. Alleluia. Der hovestseh intz, yev inch voch badasesetsi.*

**A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John (15:1-11).**

Glory to Thee, O Lord, our God.

**The Deacon's Litany:** Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. That by day and by night, and in every hour we may proclaim the word of the Lord, let us beseech the Lord.

— Lord, have mercy

That we may not fall into temptation which we cannot resist, let us beseech the Lord.

— Lord, have mercy

That the Holy Spirit may lead us in our good endeavors, let us beseech the Lord.

— Lord, have mercy

That we may stand pure and blameless before the dread judgement seat of Christ, let us beseech the Lord.

— Lord, have mercy

That he may lead us into the haven of life everlasting, let us beseech the Lord.

— Lord, have mercy

And with one accord for our true and holy faith, let us beseech the Lord.

— Lord, have mercy

Let us commit ourselves and one another unto the Lord God Almighty.

— To Thee, O Lord, we commit ourselves.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord our God, according Thy great mercy. Let us all say with one accord;

— Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

**The Priest:** By day and by night and in every hour we pray and beseech Thee, O Lord, to hear us. Incline Thine ear to our petitions, that the labors of Thy servants may not be in vain but be received as works of righteousness and fruits of piety. Accepts our efforts, O Lord, and grant unto us generously Thy mercy, Keep us under the protection of Thine all-powerful Holy Cross and strengthen us and fill us with the power of Thy Holy Spirit. And we shall glorify You always, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Peace unto you all.

—*And with they spirit*

Let us bow down to God.

—Before Thee, O Lord.

Thou O Lord, as the good and eternal shepherd, look upon us as Thy rational flock. Bless us all, especially these Thy servants who seek to serve You as the elders and council of your church. Grant them wisdom to see your glory in all of creation and in the work which they are about to undertake. Guide them on the paths of righteousness as they are to guide others. Enlighten all our minds and hearts with your presence so we may give You glory everlasting, O God of mercies, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen

**The Invocation:** Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. You have come to this Holy Church and before this Holy Altar willingly to be installed in your

calling in the service of The Lord and his Holy Church as members of the Parish Council. As such, you are asked to stand firm in the faith of Jesus Christ, to faithfully uphold the teachings and Sacred Traditions of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church, and to fulfill your duties in the administration of this parish of (name of church) according to the bylaws of our Diocese. I now ask you to affirm your willingness to serve.

**The Candidates:** Reverend Father, I pledge and vow to meet my responsibilities as a member of the Parish Council of (name of church), to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, to uphold adhere faithfully to the doctrines and Sacred Traditions of our Holy Armenian Apostolic and Orthodox Church, and to fulfill my duties in the administration of this parish, according to the prescribed bylaws of our Diocese.

**The Deacon:** By the Holy Cross let us beseech the Lord, that He may thereby deliver us from our sins and may save us by the grace of His mercy. Almighty Lord, our God, save and have mercy.

**The Priest:** Guard us, O Christ our God, under the shadow of Thine holy and precious cross in peace. Deliver us from the enemies visible and invisible. Make us worthy to give thanks to Thee and to glorify Thee with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## Appendix D

### Orders within the Armenian Church

► **Catholicos** – *Gatoghigos* – Universal head of the Armenian Church who has authority to:

- ◆ Bless the holy oil – *muron* – and distributing it among dioceses
- ◆ Consecrate bishops
- ◆ Conferring the honorary degree of Archbishop upon recommended bishops
- ◆ Defrock clergy members
- ◆ Grant pardon to defrocked clergy members
- ◆ Decide canonical matters of divorce

► **Bishop** – *Yebiscobos* – who has authority to:

- ◆ Ordination and consecration of priests
- ◆ Ordination of deacons, subdeacons, and servers of minor orders
- ◆ Conferring of the academic degree of *Vartabed* (doctor) and *Dzayrakooyin Vartabed* (supreme doctor).
- ◆ Conferring the honorary designation of *Avak* (senior) upon married priests
- ◆ Conferring the right to wear certain liturgical decorations upon worthy clergy
- ◆ Consecration of church buildings and items

► **Priest** –

- ◆ Celibate – *Apegba* – may be promoted to the degrees of *Vartabed*, *Dzayrakooyin Vartabed*, Bishop, Archbishop and Catholicos.
- ◆ Married (lay) Priest – *Kahana* – May receive honorary designation of *Avak* (senior).

Priests have the right to perform the following sacraments and rites:

- ◆ Baptism – *Mugurdootyoon*
- ◆ Chrismation – *Gnoonk*
- ◆ Penance – *Abashkharootyoon* – hearing confessions and giving absolution
- ◆ Divine Liturgy – *Soorp Badarak*
- ◆ Communion – *Haghortootyoon*

# Orders within the Armenian Church

- ◆ Holy Matrimony – *Soorp Busag*
- ◆ Burial – *Tagboom*
- ◆ Also specified rites as prescribed by the *Book of Mashdotz*
  
- ▶ **Deacon – *Sargavak* – and Senior Deacon – *Avak Sargavak* – has the right to:**
  - ◆ Perform the Great Entrance (*Veraperoom*) in the *Soorp Badarak*, which is the act of bringing the gifts to the altar
  - ◆ Read the lesson/reading (*jashou* lection) of the Gospel
  - ◆ Chant the bidding of the *badarak* and other services
  - ◆ Cense the altar and congregation
  - ◆ Carry the chalice and other sacramental objects
  
- ▶ **Sub deacon – *Gisasargavak***
  - ◆ Entitled to all the prerogatives of the Deacon and Senior Deacon except the right to perform the *Veraperoom*
  
- ▶ **Minor Orders**
  - ◆ Clerk/Chorister – *Tbir*
  - ◆ Cantor of psalms and hymns
  - ◆ Lector of Scriptures
  - ◆ Door-keeper
  - ◆ Acolyte/Candle-bearer
  - ◆ Sweeper of the church

# Appendix E

## Parish Council Sunday Data Form

Date: Month/Day/Year	Name of Church	Weather
Celebrant	Guest Clergy	Number of altar servers
Organist	Choir Master	Number of choir singers
Bible reader(s)	Deacon(s)	Special ceremonies

### COLLECTIONS

Candles	Regular	Special _____
___ x\$1= _____	___ x\$1= _____	___ x\$1= _____
___ x\$5= _____	___ x\$5= _____	___ x\$5= _____
___ x\$10= _____	___ x\$10= _____	___ x\$10= _____
___ x\$20= _____	___ x\$20= _____	___ x\$20= _____
___ x\$50= _____	___ x\$50= _____	___ x\$50= _____
TOTAL= _____	TOTAL= _____	TOTAL= _____

### STATISTICS

BADARAK	# worshipers
Start time _____	
Bible "kissing"	
Kiss of Peace	
Collection	
Special Service	

### TOTALS

COLLECTION	
TOTAL	
STEWARDSHIP	
TOTAL	
HOKIHANKISD	
TOTAL	
OTHER	
DONATIONS	
GRAND TOTAL	

### CERTIFICATION

Attested to by:	
Attested to by:	
of the Parish Council.	

# Notes



**DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)**  
**ԱՌԱՋՆՈՐԴՈՒԹԻՒՆ ՅԱՅՈՑ ԱՄԵՐԻԿԱՅԻ ԱՐԵՒԵԼԵԱՆ ԹԵՄԻ**

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