

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

2023

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THE PREVIOUS EDITION OF THE BYLAWS of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern Diocese) was distributed to our parishes in 2022. Amendments to eight articles of the Bylaws have been duly made by the 110th through 118th Annual Diocesan Assemblies (convening 2012 through 2020); the present edition collates all such changes made and confirmed through April 2021. The amendments contained in this edition of the Bylaws were confirmed by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

The amendments contained in the present edition reflect updates made to the following bylaws: 6, 14-B, 51, 62, 65-W, 74, 75-C, and 76.

The present edition of the Bylaws is provided to our parishes for their governance, and supersedes all previous editions.

The Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, *Primate*
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
New York, N.Y.

February 24, 2023

**BYLAWS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
(Eastern Diocese)**

SPHERE OF JURISDICTION AND ORGANIZATION

1. The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America is an indivisible part of the Armenian Holy Apostolic Orthodox Church under the Supreme Ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, at Holy Etchmiadzin.

All religious communities or parishes of the Armenian Church throughout the United States of America, with the exception of those in the Western Diocese, constitute the Eastern Diocese.

2. The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America comprises the following administrative bodies headed and presided over by the Arachnort, i.e. the Ordinary or the Primate of the Diocese:

- A. Parish Assembly.
- B. Parish Council.
- C. Diocesan Assembly.
- D. Diocesan Council.
- E. Diocesan Board of Trustees.

3. The primary Diocesan Office shall be located in the City and State of New York.

PARISH ASSEMBLY

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.
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.
6. Every member of the Parish, 25 years of age or over, shall pay to his (or her) Church an annual due, the amount of which shall be determined by the Diocesan Assembly AND shall be paid in full by December 31 of the current year. Every member between the ages of 18 to 24 years of age will be eligible to pay an annual due that is twenty-five percent (25%) of the due required by the Diocesan Assembly in order to be considered a member in good standing. Such amount may be increased, but not decreased by the Parish Assembly.
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.
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.
9. No one may be a voting member in more than one Parish at the same time.
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.
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.
12. In communities where there is no Parish Priest, meetings shall be held under the presidency of the Chairman of the Parish Council.

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.

14. The duties of the Annual Parish Assembly shall be:

- A. To elect Officers of the Annual Parish Assembly from a slate to be determined by the Parish Assembly.
- B. 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, no less than fifty percent (50%) greater than 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.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.
- E. To decide the Budget estimate for the ensuing year.
- F. 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.
- G. To elect the members of the Parish Council.

- H. 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.
- I. To render decisions and pass resolutions relative to questions that appear on the agenda attached to the announcement of the meeting.
- J. 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.
- K. 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.
- L. To adopt resolutions to be submitted to the Diocesan Assembly.
- M. To report in writing on all decisions and resolutions of the Parish Assembly to the Primate and the Diocesan Council for approval.

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:

- A. To organize charitable, educational and social bodies with the approval of the Diocesan Council.
- B. To elect candidates for ministry in the Church.
- C. To adopt resolutions to meet the specific needs of the Church, including all the duties set forth in Article 14.
- D. 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.
- E. To authorize the payment of all expenses or dues determined by the Holy See in Etchmiadzin, the Diocesan Assembly and the Diocesan Council.
- F. To adopt resolutions to be submitted to the Diocesan Assembly and to receive reports from the Diocesan Delegates.
- G. To submit within four weeks reports on all decisions of the Parish Assembly to the Diocesan Council for approval.

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.

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.

A. 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.

B. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

PARISH COUNCIL

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

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.
32. The Parish Council shall have an official seal in the name of the Church.
33. The powers and duties of the Parish Council shall be:
 - A. To carry out the decisions of the Parish Assembly.
 - B. 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.
 - C. To prepare the Annual Budget and submit the same to the Parish Assembly for approval.
 - D. To examine and approve, once in every year, the accounts of its subordinate bodies and to supervise and regulate their financial and administrative affairs.
 - E. To see to it that the Church dues and all other income of the Parish are regularly collected.
 - F. 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.
 - G. To ensure the proper and regular performance of Church Services.
 - H. To establish, to supervise and to give moral and financial support to the various schools of the Parish.
 - I. To encourage all educational, benevolent and cultural organizations in the community.
 - J. 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.
 - K. 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.
 - L. 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 accordance with the powers vested in them by these Bylaws.

M. 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.

N. To meet with the Diocesan Delegates at least one month prior to the Diocesan Assembly to review the affairs and status of the Parish.

O. To ensure the regular and timely payments to the Diocese of all regular and special Diocesan assessments.

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.

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.

AUDITING COMMITTEE

36. The Auditing Committee shall examine the accounts of the Parish Council, all Parish auxiliary organizations and all Parish standing committees at least annually and shall report its findings and recommendations to the Parish Assembly.

37. The Auditing Committee shall have the right to conduct special investigations and in case of misappropriation of funds or other abuses or irregularities shall report in writing to the Parish Priest, who shall call a special Parish Assembly to consider the report of the Auditing Committee. A copy of the report shall be communicated to the members of the Parish Council prior to the Parish Assembly. If the Parish has no Priest, or if such Priest fails to perform his duty, the Auditing Committee shall report its findings to the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

THE CLERGY

38. If more than one clergyman has been assigned to a Parish, one shall be designated as the Parish Priest and the others as assistants, under the immediate authority of the Parish Priest.

39. A Parish Priest or a candidate for ordination to serve in the Parish shall be elected by the Parish Assembly and his election shall be submitted to the Primate and the Diocesan Council for approval.

40. Following elections at a Parish Assembly, the Priest presiding over the Parish Assembly together with the Chairman and the Secretary shall send to the Primate and the Diocesan Council a copy of the Minutes of the Assembly, together with a letter signed by the Priest-elect or the candidate for ordination to serve in the Parish, declaring his willingness to accept the office.

41. The Priest of a Parish shall be elected for a term of five years and may be re-elected. He may resign, or may be removed from his office by the decision of the Primate and the Diocesan Council. A Parish Priest may be removed from his office also by a decision of the Parish Assembly, provided such decision is confirmed by the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

42. The powers and duties of the Parish Priest shall be:

- A. To conduct religious services and administer the sacraments in accordance with the canons and traditions of the Armenian Church.
- B. To visit the people of his Parish; to comfort the sick, the needy, and the bereaved of his flock, and to perform all the good deeds prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and prescribed by Ecclesiastical Councils and the Holy Fathers of the Church for the advancement of spiritual life and good order in the Parish.
- C. To supervise the Parochial and Church Schools of the Parish.
- D. To ensure, by careful supervision, the proper observance of the provisions of these Bylaws and the proper execution of the decisions of the Parish Assembly and the instructions of the Primate and the Diocesan Council.
- E. To present annually a report of his activities to the Parish Assembly and to the Primate.

43. The Parish Priest shall preside over the meeting of the Parish Council and the Parish Assembly.

44. A Priest acting contrary to the canons of the Church, or accused of deeds unworthy of his office, shall be suspended by the Primate, who shall refer the matter to the

Diocesan Council for investigation. Upon receipt of the result of such investigation, and after due hearing, the Primate in consultation with the Diocesan Council shall render his decision and report the same to the Priest. If the decision is to divest the Priest of his sacred office or to unfrock him, such decision shall be reported to His Holiness, the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians for final determination. The Priest shall have the right to appeal from the decision of the Primate to His Holiness, the Patriarch-Catholicos, for the reconsideration of his case.

45. A Priest cannot officiate in any Parish other than his own without the consent of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council of that Parish. In communities where there is no Priest or a Parish Council, a clergyman may officiate with the consent or on the instruction of the Primate.

46. A Priest who is under the jurisdiction of this Diocese may leave this Diocese for another only when he has obtained permission from the Primate to do so.

47. When there is a vacancy in the Priest's office, the Primate shall appoint a Priest to take charge of the Parish, with the agreement of the Parish Council.

48. Deacons, choirmasters, sacristans, and office workers may be appointed by the Parish Priest, with the consent of the Parish Council, and shall be subject to the authority of the Parish Priest, and may be discharged by the latter with the consent of the Parish Council.

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

49. The Diocesan Assembly is the representative body of the Parishes of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and shall exercise supervision and control over all ecclesiastical-administrative bodies within the jurisdiction of the Diocese, and is under the Supreme Ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians at Holy Etchmiadzin.

50. The Diocesan Assembly is a permanent body and shall consist of elected lay delegates, Parish Council Chairmen, and all the Priests, Deacons-in-Charge, and higher-ranking clergymen under the jurisdiction of the Diocese.

51. Delegates shall be elected for a four-year term only by their respective Parish. Each year the term of office of one-fourth of the lay delegates of the Diocesan Assembly shall expire. The respective Parishes shall be instructed by the Primate and the Diocesan Council to hold new elections to fill vacancies. Lay delegates may serve for a maximum of three consecutive terms, and after the interim of one (1) term, may become eligible again for election as a Diocesan Delegate. In the event this provision does not prove feasible for small Parishes, the Primate and Diocesan Council shall have authority to make special arrangements. For the initial implementation of this Bylaw amendment, each individual Parish that has two (2) or more delegates shall, at only their first (1st) forthcoming scheduled election of Diocesan Delegates, designate the top one half (1/2) of the elected delegates, (plus one (1) where there is an uneven number of delegates to be elected) receiving the greatest number of votes, as being eligible to run for the three (3) consecutive terms as provided herein. The remaining elected delegates, receiving the lesser number of votes, shall only be eligible to run for two (2) consecutive terms.

52. When the Diocesan Assembly is newly formed, the Primate and the Diocesan Council shall divide the Parishes in the Diocese into four groups, so that each group shall comprise approximately one-fourth of the total number of lay delegates to the Diocesan Assembly, and they shall further designate the groups to comprise delegates who shall serve for one, two, three or four years, respectively. As the term of office of the delegates of each group expires, their successors shall be elected for four years.

53. At various intervals, when deemed advisable, the Primate with the consent of the Diocesan Council may regroup the Parishes in the Diocese in order to equalize as nearly as possible the number of lay delegates to be elected each year, notwithstanding the fact that by such regrouping the number of years of the term of office of some delegates to be newly elected may be reduced.

54. Parishes having one hundred eligible voting members or less shall have one elected lay delegate in the Diocesan Assembly. Parishes having more than one hundred such members shall be entitled to one elected delegate for each of said one hundred members, or a fraction thereof; however, that such fraction shall be no less than twenty-five, provided further that no Parish shall have more than seven elected delegates. The number of eligible voting members, that shall determine the number of delegates a

parish may elect, shall be based on the average number of such members as of December 31 of the four years commencing with the year immediately preceding the last year in which there was an election of delegates. In the event that a Parish Council Chairman is unable to attend the Diocesan Assembly, a member of the Parish Council may attend as an alternate and be an ex-officio delegate with the same privileges and rights as elected delegates.

55. Each delegate shall have only one vote which is not transferable and must be cast in person. In the event of illness, death, or permanent absence of a delegate, he (or she) shall be substituted or replaced as the case may be by the alternate having received the next highest number of votes short of election.

56. The election of a Diocesan Delegate is verified by the Primate and the Diocesan Council and is presented to the Diocesan Assembly for confirmation. The newly elected delegate shall present to the Diocesan Assembly a credential signed by the Parish Priest, or in the absence of a Parish Priest, by the Chairman and Secretary of the Parish Council.

57. The Diocesan Assembly shall meet annually during the first weekend of May, unless otherwise determined by the previous Diocesan Assembly.

58. Special sessions of the Diocesan Assembly may be called by the Primate and the Diocesan Council, or on written request of one-third of the delegates, or at the recommendation of His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians.

59. The Primate shall preside over the Diocesan Assembly. The Assembly shall elect its officers composed of chairmen and secretaries, in such numbers as it may deem necessary, to conduct the meetings. These shall hold office until the next Annual Assembly whereat their successors shall be elected. The Diocesan Assembly shall also elect the following standing committees: Nominating and Proposals. These committees shall serve a term of one year starting with the adjournment of the Assembly whereat they were elected and ending with the completion of the next Annual Assembly. The standing committees shall convene at least once before the Annual Assembly. The Assembly Chairman may appoint such other committees as are necessary for the conduct of the Assembly.

60. Relations between the Diocesan Assembly and His Holiness the Patriarch Catholicos of All Armenians shall be maintained through the Primate, and the Diocesan Council shall be informed thereof. The Primate shall forward to His Holiness a report on all the resolutions adopted by the Diocesan Assembly within one month from the date of their adoption.

61. The powers and the duties of the Diocesan Assembly shall be:

- A. To adopt the agenda of its meeting with due regard to the proposals made by the Diocesan Council and to the resolutions formally proposed by various Parishes through their respective delegates.
- B. To supervise the strict observance of the provisions of these Bylaws and to interpret them.
- C. To elect delegates or representatives to take part in the National Church Assembly or other church assemblies or conferences as may be advisable or necessary.
- D. To elect the Primate by secret ballot from a slate of three candidates to be submitted by the Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Assembly may add other names to the list by petition of at least twenty delegates submitted in writing to the Diocesan Assembly previous to the election session, and the election shall be held on the list of candidates so revised. If on the first ballot NO registered candidate receives a majority vote of all the delegates, a second ballot shall be conducted on the two candidates having received the highest number of votes. The candidates receiving the majority votes of all the registered delegates shall be declared elected, and upon the confirmation of His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, he shall become the duly constituted Primate.
- E. To elect by majority vote of the delegates present and voting the members of the Diocesan Council and of the Auditing Committee and their alternates and to remove any member thereof by majority vote of the delegates present and voting.
- F. To elect by majority vote of the delegates present and voting the members of the Diocesan Board of Trustees, such elections being subject to approval and confirmation by His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians. The Diocesan Assembly by majority vote of the delegates present and voting may suspend or remove from office a member of the Diocesan Board of Trustees, provided such suspension or removal is in the first instance recommended by the majority vote of all the members of the Diocesan Board of Trustees.
- G. To elect an Auditing Committee composed of three members for three-year terms with the duty of examining the accounts of the Diocesan Council and Diocesan Board of Trustees as well as of bodies created by Diocesan authority, and to submit the results of their examinations to the Diocesan Assembly. In the first instance, one member shall be elected for a term of three years, one for a term of two years, and one for a term of one year. Thereafter, as the terms of office expire, positions shall be filled for three-year terms. Two alternates shall be elected each year for one-year terms.

- H. To examine the accounts and financial statements and reports of the Diocesan Council, the Diocesan Board of Trustees, and of the other bodies created by Diocesan authority.
- I. To examine, modify if necessary, and approve the Annual Budget of the Diocese prepared by the Diocesan Council.
- J. To investigate complaints against the Primate, to hear his explanations thereon and act accordingly. In the event that the Diocesan Assembly by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting find either justifiable cause to remove the Primate, or request his resignation from office, its decision shall be set forth in a report containing all the charges against him and his explanations thereon, duly signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Diocesan Assembly, and shall be submitted to His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians for final determination.
- K. To examine and adjudge complaints against the Diocesan Council, Diocesan Board of Trustees, and bodies created under Diocesan Authority or individual members thereof.
- L. To decide on the nature and assess the amount of regular Diocesan and Parish dues.

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

62. The Diocesan Council shall consist of eleven members of whom four shall be clergymen and seven shall be laymen, elected by the Diocesan Assembly. Two clergymen and three laymen for membership in the Diocesan Council in the first instance shall be elected for a term of two years and two clergymen and four laymen shall be elected for a term of four years. The term of office of their successors shall be four years. At each election an alternate clergyman and an alternate layman shall be elected to fill, until the next partial election of the Diocesan Council, any vacancy that may occur in the Council. The person receiving the highest plurality vote short of election shall be, respectively, the alternates for clergy and lay membership of the Council. Members of the Diocesan Council shall serve for a maximum of three consecutive terms and after the interim of two years may become eligible for election again as members of the Diocesan Council. Terms that commenced prior to the adoption of consecutive term limits, as provided in the immediately preceding sentence, shall count toward the maximum of three permissible consecutive terms.

63. Voting members of any Parish within the jurisdiction of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America are eligible for membership in the Diocesan Council.

64. The Diocesan Council shall meet at least once a month.

65. The powers and duties of the Diocesan Council shall be:

- A. To supervise all the parochial institutions and organizations of the Diocese, and the activities of the officers thereof.
- B. To examine and decide, jointly with the Primate, on matters relative to the establishment of churches, educational and charitable institutions, and organizations within the Diocese.
- C. To give necessary instructions to church and community organizations within the jurisdiction of the Diocese, in accordance with the provision of these Bylaws.
- D. To confirm or reject the decisions and elections of Parish Assemblies and advise same of its decisions thereon.
- E. To confirm or to dismiss the members of a Parish Council in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws.
- F. To appoint, when deemed necessary, a Director for the supervision of educational institutions and schools of the Diocese to fix his salary, supervise his work, and receive and examine his reports.

- G. To supervise the financial and educational activities of Parish Council Schools (Armenian language and Sunday) and to examine the reports of their activities and accounts.
- H. To receive the Annual Reports of Parish Councils and to guide their activities.
- I. To examine disputes arising among church organizations or among school bodies and their officers; to examine complaints made by or against them, and to make the necessary decisions.
- J. To appoint committees for the examination of problems requiring detailed study or for the performance of specific duties.
- K. To appoint an auditor or auditors, whenever necessary, to examine the accounts of Diocesan and parochial organizations.
- L. To fix the amount of incidental dues to be paid by local Parish Councils and other church organizations or auxiliary bodies under its jurisdiction.
- M. To elect a Locum-Tenens for the Diocese when the office of the Primate has become vacant.
- N. To prepare a list of three candidates for the office of the Primate, to send the names of such candidates to the members of the Diocesan Assembly not less than 30 days prior to the date of the Assembly and subsequently to submit the names of such candidates to the Diocesan Assembly for election.
- O. To devise ways and means to increase the revenue of the Diocese and to submit proposals to that end to the Diocesan Assembly.
- P. To be responsible for the economic administration of the Diocesan Office and to defray the expenses thereof within the limits of the Budget adopted by the Diocesan Assembly.
- Q. To submit every year a detailed report of its activities and financial status to the Diocesan Assembly.
- R. To report annually through the office of the Primate the general activities of the Diocese to His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians.
- S. To invite, jointly with the Primate, the delegates to the Diocesan Assembly, to prepare its agenda and to have it mailed to the delegates not less than thirty days in advance of that date set for the Assembly.
- T. To have on file a detailed list of real properties owned or used by all Parishes through the Diocese – such as church buildings, schools, libraries, and in general

all real properties owned by educational, benevolent, youth and other organizations within the jurisdiction of the Diocese.

- U. To decide the establishment, or examine and approve proposals for the establishment of new Church communities or Parishes or various other Church or community organizations.
- V. To determine complaints against a Parish Assembly or a Parish Council in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws.
- W. To meet jointly with the Diocesan Board of Trustees and at such joint meetings, which shall be presided over by the Primate, and of which a quorum shall be formed by the physical, telephonic or electronic presence of a majority of members of each group, decide by separate majority vote of each constituent body to sell, convey, lease, exchange, improve, alienate, mortgage or encumber real property belonging to this Diocese, and to construct and reconstruct thereon. Members participating by telephone conference or other electronic means shall be deemed present as if physically present and entitled to vote. Whenever one of the two bodies lack quorum, decisions shall be rendered by a separate two-thirds vote of each constituent body.
- X. To prepare and present to the Diocesan Assembly the Budget for the current year which must be sent to the delegates and local Parish Councils at least one month before the Annual Assembly convenes.

66. The Primate, and in his absence his Vicar, shall preside over the meetings of the Diocesan Council. In the event of the office of the Primate being vacant, the Locum-Tenens of the Diocese shall preside.

67. A majority of the members of the Diocesan Council shall constitute a quorum, provided the Primate or his Vicar presides. In case of a tie vote in the meetings of the Diocesan Council, the presiding officer shall cast the deciding vote.

68. In all matters pertaining to the discipline of the clergy, and in all religious and ritual matters, the decision of the Primate shall prevail.

69. In case of vacancy due to resignation, death, or absence from four consecutive meetings without a compelling reason, of a member of the Diocesan Council, the alternate elected at the same Diocesan Assembly where such member was elected, shall be invited to fill the vacancy and to serve until the next partial election of the Diocesan Council.

70. The sources of income of the Diocese are:

- A. Dues imposed by the Diocesan Assembly.

- B. Voluntary gifts and bequests.
- C. Revenue from personal and real properties of the Diocese excluding revenues derived from properties assigned and used for the benefit of Parishes.
- D. Incidental incomes, donations, and special collections.
- E. Proceeds from functions sponsored by the Diocese.

DIOCESAN BOARD OF TRUSTEES

71. The Diocesan Board of Trustees shall consist of not less than nine and not more than eleven members elected from among the members in good standing of any Church or Parish in the Diocese. The members of the Diocesan Board of Trustees shall be elected by majority vote of the delegates present and voting at the Diocesan Assembly, but their election shall be subject to the approval and confirmation of His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians. Only those who have been voting members of a Parish for at least five consecutive years shall be eligible for election to the Diocesan Board of Trustees.

72. Each member of the Diocesan Board of Trustees shall serve as many years as there are members on the Board. Each year the term of office of one member shall terminate and his successor shall be elected from among three candidates whose names shall be submitted to the Diocesan Assembly by the remaining members of the Board and nominations may be made from the floor by majority vote. At the first election the term of office of each Trustee shall be determined by the Diocesan Assembly.

73. In the case of a vacancy in the Diocesan Board of Trustees due to resignation, death, or continued absence of any member thereof, the following Diocesan Assembly shall elect, according to Article 71, a new member to serve the unexpired term of office.

74. All meetings of the Diocesan Board of Trustees and its joint meeting with the Diocesan Council shall be presided over by the Primate who shall be the President of the Board. A quorum of the joint meeting of the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Board of Trustees shall be formed by the physical, telephonic or electronic presence of the majority of the members of each group. Members participating by telephone conference or other electronic means shall be deemed present as if physically present and entitled to vote. Decisions shall be made by a separate majority vote of each constituent body, or when a minimum of two-thirds of the members of one group are present then decisions shall be rendered by a separate two-thirds vote of each constituent body.

75. The Diocesan Board of Trustees shall have the following powers and duties:

- A. To exercise supervision and proprietary control over all the real property of property rights in real estate used as a place of worship or for any other purpose by a Parish or an organization operating under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.
- B. To hold title to real property and property rights in the name of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and to retain possession of all deeds and other evidence of title to such property subject, however, to the rights and privileges of the respective Parishes as contained in Article 95 of these Bylaws.

- C. To sell, convey, lease, improve, exchange, alienate, mortgage or encumber real property belonging to the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, in such a manner and upon such terms as may be determined by a separate majority vote of the Diocesan Council and Diocesan Board of Trustees assembled in a joint meeting presided over by the Primate, and having regard to Articles 14-K and 95 of these Bylaws. Whenever one of the two bodies lack quorum, decisions shall be rendered by a separate two-thirds vote of each constituent body.
- D. The Diocesan Board of Trustees, by majority vote, may elect or remove from office any of its officers or committees and it may prescribe rules of procedure for the conduct of its activities.

76. The quorum of the Diocesan Board of Trustees shall be formed by the physical, telephonic or electronic presence of the majority of the members of the Board. Members participating by telephone conference or other electronic means shall be deemed present as if physically present and entitled to vote.

THE PRIMATE (Arachnort)

77. The Primate of the Diocese shall be elected by secret ballot by the majority of the registered delegates at the Diocesan Assembly, and shall hold office according to Article 61-D for a term of four years.

78. The Primate-elect shall assume his duties immediately after his election has been confirmed by His Holiness Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, or by the Locum-Tenens of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin.

79. All high ranking clergymen (Vartapets and Bishops) who recognize and accept the supreme authority of His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians and of the Supreme Spiritual Council may be candidates for the office of the Primate of the Diocese.

80. The Primate in his capacity as the President of the Diocesan Assembly, the Diocesan Council, and the Diocesan Board of Trustees and all Diocesan bodies, is the executive officer of said bodies. As the representative of His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, the Primate shall maintain official relations with other churches, institutions, organizations, and with civil and political authorities.

81. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the Primate for any reason whatever, the Diocesan Council shall elect a Locum-Tenens from among the clergy of the Diocese. The Locum-Tenens shall preside over the Diocesan Council. A new Primate shall be elected in accordance with the provisions of Article 61-D at a special meeting of the Diocesan Assembly to be called within 90 days of the date of such vacancy.

82. The Locum-Tenens shall perform the duties of the Primate until a Primate is elected by the Diocesan Assembly and confirmed by His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians.

83. The Primate may appoint, in consultation with the Diocesan Council, a Vicar to direct the affairs of the Diocesan Office in the absence of the Primate or to assist or represent him when necessary.

84. The Primate, in consultation with the Diocesan Council, may appoint a Suffragan when necessary, in any region in the name and under the direction of the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

85. The Primate shall call, at least once a year, a Conference of the Clergy composed of all the clergymen and ordained deacons holding office within the Diocese, over which he shall preside. Such Conference shall be held at the place where the diocesan Assembly is held and shall immediately precede the Assembly. The Clergy Conference may adopt its own rules of procedure.

86. The duties of the Primate shall be:

- A. To perform the duties of a spiritual leader of his Diocese in accordance with the dominical, apostolic and ecclesiastical teachings, statutes and canons, by exercising his hierarchical authority.
- B. To exercise proper vigilance for the preservation and observance of the canons, rites and doctrines of the Armenian Church; to strengthen the spiritual life in the Parishes; to promote good preaching in the Churches of the Diocese and to make every effort for each Parish to have its own Priest. To ensure the regular and proper performance of the rites of the Church; to investigate complaints against the clergy and make proper dispositions.
- C. To visit periodically the Churches and communities of the Diocese; to cultivate solidarity among the clergy by means of annual gatherings and by proper instructions; to devise special plans for providing means for the care of aged and needy clergymen and put such plans in effect in accordance with decisions of the Diocesan Assembly.
- D. To pay particular attention to the state of the clergy, the Churches, the educational and benevolent institutions of the Diocese and to the proper care of church properties; to take the necessary measures in cases of urgency and subsequently to report to the Diocesan Council.
- E. To be guided by the principles of these Bylaws and supervise the faithful execution thereof.
- F. To examine and take proper measures, jointly with the executive bodies concerned, against any officers or organizations whose conduct goes contrary to the spirit, principles and provisions of these Bylaws.
- G. To ordain clergymen with the consent of the Diocesan Council, and Parish Deacons upon the recommendation of the Parish Priest. To petition His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians for the grant of conferments and promotions to clergymen of merit, as well as to petition for an award, with the recommendation of the Diocesan Council, on behalf of persons who have performed extraordinary services in the Diocese. The right of ordination of Deacons and married Priests in the Diocese is reserved to the Primate of the Diocese, provided the Primate is a Bishop. The Primate may delegate his powers, when expedient, to another Bishop, in writing.
- H. To give permission to the publication of religious books for use in the Diocese.
- I. To perform such other duties as may pertain to his office, or are within his jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws and the rules and canons of the Armenian Church.

- J. To appoint members to the Diocesan Office Staff, with the consent of the Diocesan Council. Such officers are subject to the authority of the Primate and may be relieved from their duties by the Primate in consultation with the Diocesan Council.
- K. To make appointments of clergy or changes of Parish Priests with the consent of the Diocesan Council.
- L. To take care of the internal missionary work of the Diocese, organizing new Parishes wherever possible. To create the necessary procedures for the religious education of members of the Armenian Church.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

87. Armenian Churches within the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America constitute a spiritual and administrative unity, the official name of which is the Armenian Church of America, and as such duly accepts and abides by the statutes and canons of the Armenian Holy Apostolic Orthodox Church, in all matters pertaining to creed, rites, order and discipline and remains subject to the supreme ecclesiastical authority of His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, at Holy Etchmiadzin.

88. The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America conducts its affairs under the provisions of Bylaws approved by His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians.

89. These Bylaws may be amended at the Annual, or Special, meeting of the Diocesan Assembly, provided the proposed amendments are sent in advance to the delegates and local Parish Councils at least one month before such meeting and shall take effect after majority vote of two consecutive Diocesan Assemblies and upon the confirmation by His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians.

90. The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America is governed, according to the traditional custom of the Armenian Church, by elected bodies or officers.

91. Only men and women who have completed their 25th year of age and are voting members in good standing of the Armenian Church can become delegates to the Diocesan Assembly, members of the Diocesan Council or the Diocesan Board of Trustees.

92. Except in cases specifically provided herein, all meetings shall be considered regular when a quorum is formed.

93. Except in cases specifically provided herein, all elections are conducted by secret ballot.

94. Title to all real property located within the jurisdictional limits of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America used by a Church, Parish, or congregation acting under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of the Armenian Church, shall be vested in the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

95. Parishes and other organizations, created or recognized and confirmed by the Primate and the Diocesan Council and existing or operating under the jurisdiction thereof, shall have the unobstructed use of the church edifices or other buildings assigned to them for religious worship and for the needs and purposes of the Parish or other organizations, within the scope of these Bylaws, provided however, that such Parish or other organizations shall receive all income or benefits derived from such edifices or buildings and shall bear and defray all expenses in connection with the

maintenance thereof, and do all things necessary to keep the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America free of any claim or obligation in connection with the purchase, maintenance and operation of said real property.

96. The purchase of real property or construction of a building or buildings by a Parish are made with the approval of the Primate and the Diocesan Council and title to such property shall be transferred and vested in the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, wherever and whenever such transfer of title is not in violation of local ordinances and statutes and does not hinder the proper supervision and maintenance of such buildings and church edifices due to lack of proprietary rights.

97. The sale, conveyance, exchange, lease or mortgage of real property, of which title is vested in the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, may be made by the majority vote of the Diocesan Council together with the majority vote of the Diocesan Board of Trustees at duly constituted, though separate meetings, of each body or at a joint meeting of both bodies in which event the provisions of Article 65-W, Article 74 and Article 75-C of these Bylaws shall be applicable. In all such decisions due regard shall be made to the provisions of Articles 14-K and 95.

98. Each Church or Parish may be incorporated in accordance with the laws of the state or country in which such Church or Parish is located provided such corporation functions subject to and in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws. And provided further that the instrument of such corporation is approved and confirmed in writing by the Primate and the Diocesan Council prior to the filing of the incorporation papers in compliance with the laws of respective states and countries.

99. Any Parish may adopt rules and regulations, subject to and in conformity with these Bylaws, for the conduct of its internal affairs, provided such rules and regulations are first approved by the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

100. Whenever the number of parishioners of an Armenian Church is so reduced as to render impossible or inadvisable the proper maintenance of the church and the buildings and other properties, the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Board of Trustees in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph C of Article 75 of these Bylaws, shall make the necessary dispositions by selling or operating such properties or by assigning them for other appropriate purposes.

101. In the event of dissolution of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America title to all real estate shall be vested in His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians at Holy Etchmiadzin, who shall have the sole right to determine the use and disposition of such properties as he deems best for the benefit of the Armenian Church wherever it may be. Whenever the title to any property is vested in local organizations, as corporations or trusts, the Bylaws of such corporations and Trust Agreements shall contain similar provisions concerning the property rights of His Holiness the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians.

THE END OF THE BYLAWS
Of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern Diocese)

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