

## THE PEOPLE AT ST. SARKIS CHURCH HAVE SPOKEN

FIRST EVER ARMENIAN CHURCH PARISH IN LONDON ESTABLISHED BY 122 FOUNDING MEMBERS

Palm Sunday, 1 April 2012, was a historic day for St. Sarkis Church in London as 122 registered members of the congregation became the Founding Members of St. Sarkis Church Parish. The founding Parish Assembly meeting started in the church at 2:00 PM with 106 registered members present and presided by the Primate of the Armenian Church in Great Britain, His Grace Bishop Vahan Hovhannessian. The Primate opened the meeting with a prayer and introductory remarks. He then introduced Her Excellency Karine Kazinian, Armenia's Ambassador to the UK, who congratulated the Parish Assembly for the historic initiative of founding the first parish in London. Ambassador Kazinian then presented to Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian, Chairman of St. Sarkis Church Trust, with the Diaspora Award of the Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia, for his significant contributions to the preservation of Armenian identity and culture in the Diaspora. Dr. Tchilingirian thanked the Ministry of Diaspora and Her Excellency the Ambassador for the Award and noted that he is accepting this honour not for his personal contributions, but on behalf of the newly established Parish for their collective achievement.

The main agenda items of the inaugural Parish Assembly meeting were: Adoption of the Bylaws of the Parish; Election of Assembly Officers; Election of Parish Council; and Parish Ministry.



Following Primate's introduction, explanations and detailed discussion by members, the Assembly unanimously voted to accept the "Bylaws of St. Sarkis Church Parish" as the governing document of the parish. These bylaws, approved by the Primate to serve as the basis for the formation of the Parish, are in accordance to the bylaws of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church adopted in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in 2009. Following the vote to adopt the bylaws, the next important item on the agenda was to elect the *Tivan* of the Assembly. According to the Bylaws, the Pastor of St. Sarkis, the Rev. Fr. Shnork Bagdassarian, is the President of the Parish *ex-officio*. Three candidates were nominated for the position of Chairman; two candidates were nominated for the position of Secretary. Ballot papers were handed out to registered members of the Assembly. Following voting by secret ballot and counting by the Ballot Committee, the Primate announced the official results: Hratch Tchilingirian was elected Chairman of the Parish Assembly and Annie Khenian as Assembly Secretary.

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The next significant item on the agenda was the election of the Parish Council, which is the executive body of the Parish. Thirteen candidates were nominated for the 7-member Council. Following secret voting and counting, the Chairman of the Assembly announced the names of those who were elected to the Parish Council: Violetta Barzankian-Kaydan, Louisa Culleton, Anahid Demirjian, Hovik Hovhanissyan, Arman Sarvarian, Patricia Setrakian and Stepan Yeghiazarian.

A discussion about the ministry of the parish and projects ensued and a number of new ideas were entertained. The Assembly unanimously voted delegating the Chairman of the Parish Assembly and the Chairman of the Parish Council with the responsibility to negotiate a formal agreement with St. Sarkis Church Trust that would clarify the

relationship of the Parish with the Trust, as well as to represent the Parish in discussions and formal talks about the formation of a Diocese in Great Britain. The 2.5 hour founding Assembly of St. Sarkis Parish concluded with the Primate's closing prayers and blessings.

Registered dues-paying members of the parish will have the privilege of participating in the decision-making process of the parish by attending and voting at the Annual Parish Assembly. They are an integral partner and steward in the life of the Parish and will be entitled to be eligible to be an officer of the Parish and serve the congregation in various capacities. Contrary to some misconceptions, becoming a parishioner of St. Sarkis Church does not mean one cannot attend or worship in other churches. Anyone is free to attend any churches they wish to at any time, but becoming a parishioner is about commitment to the ministry of a particular congregation and is not just about attending Sunday services. The life of Armenian Church communities around the world are organised around parishes, according to the canons and traditions of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Congratulations to the Armenians of Great Britain and to the St. Sarkis Parish!



PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE WILL BE NO BIBLE STUDY SESSIONS DURING HOLY WEEK