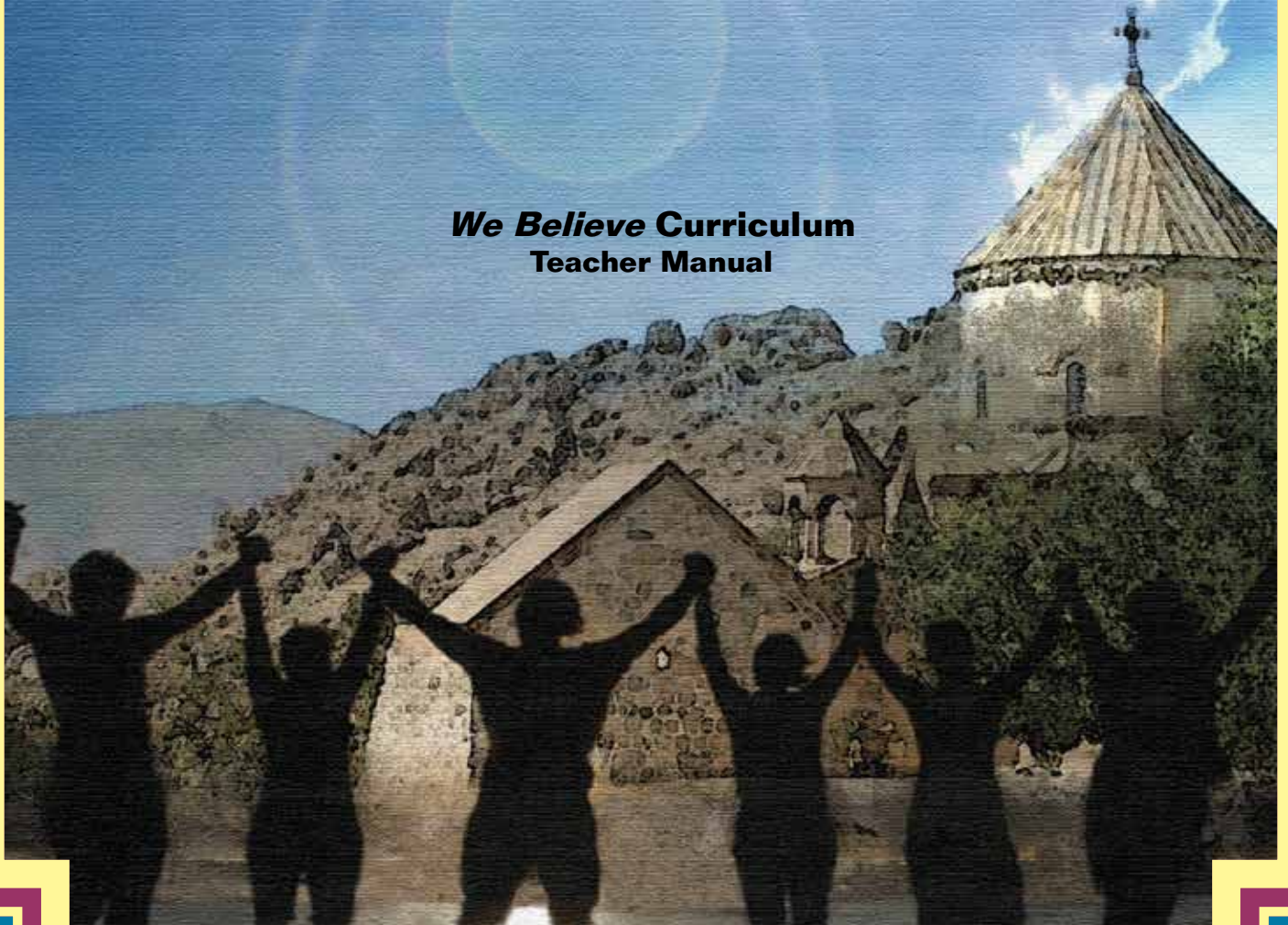


Grade Seven

Surprised By Joy
Discovering God

We Believe Curriculum
Teacher Manual



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Surprised By Joy
Discovering God

Debbie J. Derderian

By order of
Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

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A Few Important Words

Welcome to *We Believe Grade Seven*. We wish you the very best with your class of seventh graders – so full of youth, energy, hope, and questions! Teenagers today are challenging in the best of ways – they expect that you are knowledgeable but honest and straightforward with what you don't know. They will be helped immensely if you openly share your own faith journey.

In order to have the most effective and productive year, please note the following:

- **Curriculum in General.** By definition, a curriculum is conservative, reflecting the attitudes of the community about which it is teaching. If the community remains undecided or has multiple answers to an important question, that will be reflected in the curriculum. (A classic example is how to teach the Armenian Genocide in Sunday School: as a lesson to prompt forgiveness or justice or both?)
- **Curriculum as Cookbook.** Any curriculum should serve as a *foundation* and cannot take into account your experience and style, your students' maturity or temperaments, your specific parish setting, or unfolding events in the world. Therefore, feel free to adapt – as you would a recipe in a cookbook – to add or replace activities, or shorten or lengthen an exercise. Additional *content* of a theological nature needs to be discussed with your superintendent who will consult with your pastor.
- **This Curriculum.** *We Believe Grade Seven* consists of **four units**.

Unit One: *Looking At Life* focuses on the myriad ways we discover God in the world, our church community, and ourselves, even in our questions and doubts.

Unit Two: *The Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body* is about God's unique self-revelation through the life and teachings of his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Unit Three: *The Faith Journey* charts the path of Christ's mission from his inner circle, to their missionary work across the known world, to Armenia, and ultimately to the Armenian Church in America.

Unit Four: *Plugged In* brings students full circle to God's ongoing revelation in each heart by means of worship (the Divine Liturgy), prayer, and sacrament.

- **The Teacher Manual.** In addition to weekly use in preparing your lesson, use the teacher manual as a reference book for the future; make notes in the margin that can help when you go to teach the same session next year (or when your replacement does).
- **Be Prepared.** Read the entire student and teacher texts. Understand the key concepts and objectives and think of materials and other resources you might want to collect or have ready as the year unfolds. Decide what optional activities you will want to include. Mark on your calendar those lessons that call for special materials. Happily, this curriculum includes some very creative projects that call for planning. Just a *few* examples: Unit One: 3 requires display items such as a rock, flowers, a small caged pet (if possible!), toys, a cell phone and other items. Unit One: 4 requires a photo from each student; Unit One: 5 calls for football props – a ball, a stadium blanket, a pompom. Etc. With advance planning, you can begin to collect materials and have them ready OR if you are unable to assemble them, plan an alternative. Other materials are occasionally needed such as lined paper, markers, or magazines.

Never be just one lesson ahead of your class. Be prepared so that you make the most effective use as possible of your hour and your mind and heart can dwell fully on the questions and needs of the students. It may well be the only hour of the week that the children are thinking and learning about God.

- **The First Ten Minutes.** In those first moments of class time, don't wait for students to filter in to begin. Use the opportunity to talk to each student who arrives, asking about their week, how they're feeling, what's new in their lives, etc. Do begin as close to the designated start time of class as possible. You might develop an incentive program for those who arrive promptly.
- **Timing.** Timing for each activity (or a few activities together) has been provided for you as a helpful planning tool (not every procedure is timed; often a few activities are timed together to allow flexibility). It assumes a prompt start to the hour so if you are generally starting late, you will need to accommodate accordingly. Be aware that every group differs and that you may occasionally need more or less time than indicated, depending on your style of teaching, your class, and any number of other variables. Be flexible. Adjust as you go along.

- **Church Attendance.** Lessons are designed for *one hour* and are meant to complement, not replace church attendance. Ideally, students should attend church either before or after this Sunday School session, as a class or with their families.
- **Reading.** To avoid the inevitable “take turns and let’s read aloud” syndrome, alternate how the reading is accomplished. Reading aloud can certainly be done occasionally. At other times, distribute highlighters or ask students to underline key phrases and words as they read silently or in small groups. Or, ask different students to become “experts” on a particular paragraph and teach its contents to the class. Or, you yourself can simply “teach” the text, pointing to key words and phrases that students can underline and discuss.
- **Prayer.** Class always begins with the featured prayer in **Here I Am, Lord**, a reference to the many people of Scripture who responded wholeheartedly to God’s call (Isaiah: Isaiah 6:8; Samuel: I Samuel 3:4-5) End your session with prayer. These have been provided but feel free to add something topical, perhaps reflecting events in the world, the parish or in students’ lives, e.g. “Lord, help us reach out to the people of ____ after the recent flood.”
- **Sacred Space.** In the first lesson, there is a Bible meditation that suggests students withdraw to a “sacred space.” Adolescence is a perfect time for students to develop their personal prayer skills. Establishing a special place set aside for prayer is one way to encourage this. Some of you might be meeting in locations that will require work and imagination to transform – it might be best to move to a larger room or hall. But using sacred space is a way for us to encourage the children to spend time in their ‘heart-room’ alone with God, in a place that is unique & special to them. You might want to have a corner of the room with floor pillows (for sitting, not lying down) or a corner of a larger hall with chairs set up. Some basic ground rules: They must be silent and respectful of you their guide & others who are centering themselves in God’s presence. Once seated, they must stay there until the prayer experience is over. The only personal conversation they will have is with God. They choose the same spot all the time...this avoids wasting time.
- **Guided Scriptural Reflections.** Once they have found their sacred space, begin the exercise. (And feel free to incorporate this process whenever Scripture reflections appear in other lessons.) Have them breathe deeply and deliberately as they sit quietly for at least one minute, paying attention to the movement of their breath and the steady beat of their heart. Say: “Imagine the charged thoughts in your mind becoming still as a soundless pond under the reflection of the sun. As you feel your mind becoming more settled and silent, notice the presence of the Holy One around you, and let yourself rest in that presence. Now open the door of your heart-room, the place where you can encounter God. Remember the encounter and dialogue with Jesus Christ is what is critical.” (Further specific directions are given when this technique is used.) Meditative music is a definite plus. The volume of the music should serve as background, not dominate the exercise.
- **Review.** Always keep earlier lessons in mind to refer to and turn to. Work review into your lesson often.
- **Love Your Students.** Get to know and care about your students. Be guided by I Corinthians 8:1-3: “All of us possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him.”

So...more than the curriculum, more than the to-do list, a genuine and heart-felt interest in your students will be the best example to them of what faith in action is all about. *This* is what builds up the body of Christ and opens up hearts to the work that only God can do.

Unit One: Looking At Life

Session 1 Hello God? I Have a Few Questions...

Key Concepts

1. Through trust we learn to accept that while our faith answers many of life's questions, some answers will only be revealed in the "fullness of time."
2. We first learn to trust through our experiences within the family and faith community.
3. God lovingly encourages us to express our questions and concerns.
4. The Psalmists expressed these very feelings through their prayer songs.

Objectives

During the session students will

1. Identify someone they trust.
2. Explore how faith grows with trust.
3. Participate in a spiritual reflection using the story of Jesus' calming the storm (Matthew 8:23-27).
4. Discuss some of life's challenging questions.
5. Read and analyze Psalm 43 and review its use in the Armenian Divine Liturgy.
6. Write their own psalm.
7. Read about St Gregory of Narek and examine Prayer 24.
8. Identify some of their blessings.

Materials Needed

Index cards

Procedure

1. Welcome students. For the opening prayer, divide the class in two and have them pray as a responsorial prayer together.
2. Distribute the index cards and ask students to write the name of one person they trust more than anyone else in the world. Next to that person's name have them add one adjective that describes the characteristic that he or she possesses that makes them feel this way about them. Write the word "Trust" on the board and invite students one by one to come up to the board and write their word under it. Discuss results. Note repetitions and unusual words.
3. Read **But I Need to Know More!** together and discuss the question. (Discussion guidelines: God could change us by filling us with stronger faith, more love, more patience, kindness, understanding, joy, etc.) 15 min.
4. In preparation for the guided journey to meet Christ, ask the students the following questions. Be prepared to prompt the students by relating a personal experience you've had.
 1. Has trusting someone ever put you in an awkward situation?
 2. What happened? (Allow 1 or 2 students to relay an incident.)
 3. Were you ever able to trust that person again?
 4. Why or why not?Conclude by acknowledging that it is not always easy to reach out in absolute trust. Set the stage for the journey to meet Christ by saying "*Let's join the disciples on the stormy sea to see how they handled a similar situation.*"
5. If room permits, have the students move to their "Sacred Space." If space is limited have the children remain in their seats as you guide them. (You will find explicit instructions on 'Sacred Space' and 'Guided Scriptural Reflections' outlined in the **Introduction** of this manual.) Have students close their eyes as directed in **Scriptural Reflection**. Read Matthew 8: 23-27 Then lead them in the meditation as follows: "You are one of the disciples with Jesus in a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. All of a sudden the sun is covered by the clouds. The

wind is getting stronger and the waves bigger. Now the puffy white clouds turn dark and the boat is being tossed from side to side. You are finding it hard to stay in your seat and are holding tightly to the side of the boat. You know that Jesus is there in the boat and are puzzled that he is asleep instead of doing something to save the crew. Finally, the storm is so great that you go in fear and wake Jesus up asking him to do something. He responds by asking ‘why are you afraid – don’t you trust in me?’ He shakes his head in disappointment that you do not have faith in him...nonetheless he calms the sea. You look at one another in amazement – never have you seen anything like this before – the storm stops – everything is calm. You look over at Jesus...a bit ashamed that you did not have faith that being with him was all the protection you needed. You have learned a good lesson ...now you know that this is someone that you can trust. You look at Jesus, hug him and say sorry...I love you. Come out of your heart room...gently close the door! Take a deep breath and turn around and move your mind back to your sacred space. Open your eyes – move back to your desks.” 15 min.

6. Read and discuss **Jesus, Can I Trust You Will Send Me a Lifeboat?** Guidelines for discussion:
 1. We don’t know why God created a perfect world and then allowed it, through sin, to deteriorate to a place where there is disease and death. But we know that *someday*, in what is Biblically called “the fullness of time” (refer back to 1 Corinthians 13 in their text), when we see God, we will have answers to questions we struggle with now. Until then we remember: God loved his Son, but asked that he suffer greatly for all of us – we must always remember that God is with us especially in our suffering – when we suffer, he suffers.
 2. Again, someday we will understand why we live in a world where natural disasters occur. But for now, natural disasters can provide opportunities for people to care for one another and to act as God’s representatives here on earth. They can prompt people to find ways of preventing or lessening their effects. Use examples of heroic and generous actions that often occur after natural disasters.
 3. Death is the end of this life...but the beginning of eternal life. In God’s design, often the end of one thing is the beginning of something new. Reiterate that our God is a God of new beginnings.
 4. The 4th question is of a personal nature; discuss students’ questions together. A good response is always “we don’t always find definitive answers to the questions of life exactly when we want them...God sometimes responds to us in stages as we are ready for the truth. Our part is to always keep our hearts and minds open to hear his voice...and the best way to do this is through prayer.” 10 min.

7. Read or teach **Psalms: Questions → Questions → Trust → Praise.** (Answer guideline: the Psalm is appropriate – and is immediately preceded by the praise-filled psalm 100 – in that it reflects the priest and the congregation’s human frailty while expressing joy that they are going up to the holy altar – to truth, and light, to the place where God dwells, the “holy mountain.” Help them to dissect the psalm using the questions provided. Answers: 1. 1,3; 2. 4,5; 3. 2,5)

8. Continue with **Write Your Own Psalm.** Have students work alone, in groups, or together as a class. If there are groups elect a leader from each group to read the psalm. 10 min.

9. As a segue into **Our Armenian Way**, tell them that the Armenians have their own master psalmist. Read the text and prayer together. Discuss the question (be prepared with some blessings of your own to mention).

10. Conclude with a closing prayer – either St. Gregory’s Prayer 24 or one of the students’ psalms. 10 min.

Extending the Lesson

Have students explore the Divine Liturgy books to see if they can identify other Psalms incorporated in the Liturgy.

Unit One: Looking At Life

Session 2: God Reveals Himself

Key Concepts

1. God reveals himself through his Son, the Church, one another, life itself, and his Word – the Holy Bible.
2. The Bible is the written Word of God.
3. All believers need to nourish themselves with Scripture, but deepest understanding and interpretation take place in the Church, the Body of Christ.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Reflect on how we experience God through our senses.
2. Identify the resources available to us to learn about Jesus.
3. Read about the importance of the believing community (the Church) for understanding Scripture.
4. Participate in a Bible study on John 1:1-14 emphasizing Jesus' revelation as Word and light.
5. Imagine Jesus as a contemporary.
6. Review the story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and identify the four marks of the True Church.
7. Read about the establishment of Holy Communion (Luke 22:14-20) as well as related Armenian vocabulary.
8. Complete a fill-in exercise on following God's lead as we make choices.

Materials Needed

1. Index cards
2. Box or bowl in which students will place the cards

Procedure

1. As students arrive give them an index card and ask them to write down the resources that they would use if they had to prepare a written report on Jesus Christ, and place them in the box you provided for them. 5 min.
2. Reflect on the opening prayer together and discuss question. (Answers might include: seeing a loved one's face, beautiful sights, smells, and sounds in nature, linking arms with a friend, feeling a snowflake on our face...all helping us understand God's love and glory without words, etc.).
3. Continue by teaching or reading **God Has Given Us Ways to Find Answers**. Have them each select an index card from the box and read it – continue until all the cards have been read. Answers might include: the Bible, other religious books, the authority of the Church, my pastor, knowledgeable family members and parishioners, Sunday School teachers, media. 10 min.
4. Continue: "Let's see what the Gospel of John has to tell us about the living Word." Read John 1:1-14 to them twice; the first time ask them to listen for one word from the reading that stands out to them. Before reading the passage again, ask them to think about what that word reveals to them. Discuss. Read **John's Words on the Word**. Segue to the next activity by saying: "Let's think a little bit more now about how *we* think of Jesus." 10 min.
5. Have students quickly circle words and jot down their thoughts in **Imagine Jesus**. Then discuss. Add a little personal humor...make them comfortable in their realization of Christ's humanity. 5 min.
6. Re-read John 1:3-5 together and ask these question: What do you think John means when he says that Jesus is the true light of the world that overcomes darkness? (Jesus is the single unfailing light that will defeat the sorrows, limitations, and evils of this world.) How can our actions and attitudes continue to be a light in the world? (We can be God's ambassadors in this world, alleviating suffering, etc.) 5 min.

7. Segue with: “Well, how exactly did the Church grow and spread in order to do exactly what we’ve been talking about – spread the light of Christ?” Ask students how many languages their families speak at home and if they know the same languages. Ask if any of them had ever gone to school in a place where they did not know the language. If none have had this experience, ask them to imagine what it might be like and consider what difficulties they might encounter if they had to complete a big project with four other students, and they all spoke different languages. (Read Genesis 11 prior to the session and briefly recap the Tower of Babel.) Read Acts 2:1-12 together, and then **Our Armenian Way.** 10 min.
8. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 22:7-22. Then teach or read **Holy Communion**, concluding that “here once again, something so foundational to our faith as the establishment of Holy Communion through which we share in Christ every Sunday, is recorded for us in Scripture. We follow Jesus ‘example.” Review the Armenian words. 5 min.
9. Complete **Choices and Decisions: Following God’s Lead** together as a class. Answers are: *multiple, works, choices, desire, mercy, impact, future*. Conclude by saying: “Throughout this session we’ve explored some of the ways that God reveals his will to us. God is not like anyone else you have ever or will ever know. You can talk with him at *any* time about *anything*. He knows everything about you, and loves you no matter what. He expects that we will make mistakes as we grow, but he expects that we will learn from our mistakes. God is forever faithful and forgiving so you can definitely say our God is a God of second chances, but you must remember that you will still live with the consequences of your decisions and actions...so why not consult God first? Let’s see how we can start to do that...”
10. Review the eight tips provided – tell students that these are good instructions for them to write into their phones as reminders.. You might consider making posters of these tips for permanent display in your classroom.
11. Conclude with a closing prayer: “Lord, be with us this week, drawing us closer to you in every moment and in every way, amen.” 10 min.

Unit One: Looking At Life

Session 3: The Alpha and Omega

Key Concepts

1. God is the source of all life, embracing the theory of evolution and intelligent design.
2. Both Old and New Testaments confirm the origins of life in God.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Examine the meaning of “alpha and omega.”
2. Compare the accounts of Creation in Genesis 1 & 2.
3. Reflect upon the differences between human creation and God’s creation.
4. Identify their personal beliefs about life’s origins in a continuum exercise.
5. Explore the faith foundation of evolution.
6. Read about the Armenian services of blessing – Blessing of the Fields and Home Blessing – as rededicating God’s creation to holiness.

Materials Needed

Four definitions of Alpha & Omega (these can be hand-written or done in large type on computer; see Procedure #1):

1. The first and last letters of the Classical Greek alphabet.
2. The first and the last – the beginning and the end
3. A phrase found in the book of Revelation
4. A phrase interpreted by many Christians to mean that Jesus existed from eternity.

Examples of God’s creative genius: large rock, leaves, flowers, small caged pet, etc.

Man-made items: toy, cell phone, palms pilot, video game etc.

Note to the Teacher

In preparation for next week, ask the children to bring a younger picture of themselves with others – family, friends, etc. They should be prepared to share the story behind the photo. Our reflections will be on human relationships and how significant human relationships are the key to developing an intimate relationship with God. It's all a matter of 'love.' It would be helpful to email reminders to students during the week so that everyone brings in a photo.

Procedure

1. Before students arrive, hang the four different definitions of '**Alpha & Omega**' in each corner of the room. When class begins, ask them to stand in front of the definition that they feel is correct (all four definitions are correct). As you point to each definition and the student(s) standing under it, observing that each is correct, conclude with the fourth as the most important: "When we use the term Alpha & Omega in relation to Jesus we mean that he was with the Father in the beginning at creation and he will be the gateway for us to return to spend eternity with the Father." Read them the sidebar on the Armenian letters "ayp" and "keh" and write these letters on the board as you do.
2. Have students gather to stand as a group for the opening prayer; ask for two volunteers for the "voices." 10 min.
3. Before students return to their seats, ask them to look at the items that you have on display on your desk. Ask the group to describe how the items came into existence. After a few minutes of discussion, you will point out that it is easy to see what is man-made and what is created by God. Once students are seated, read Genesis 1 & 2 together, then turn to the activity in **A Peek at Primeval History** (the New Revised Standard Bible was used. There might be variations depending on what translation you are using). Break the students into two groups, or they can work in triads or dyads. Assign one group Chapter 1 and the other Chapter 2 (without identifying which is which in the text). The first group to complete the task will be the first to come to the front of the room and read the events of their chapter in the proper order (let them pre-select a reader). Group 2 will do the same. Answer Key: Genesis 2: a) 4, b)2, c) 7, d) 6, e) 1, f) 5, g) 3 h) 8 Genesis 1: a)3, b) 5, c)4, d)7, e)8 f)1, g)6 h) 2 15 min.
4. Now discuss **Digging Deeper**. (It might be hard for students to recollect the differences and similarities in what they just read, so you might have to take the lead in the discussion.) *How are the two accounts different?* (Genesis 1 is a poetic, almost epic retelling of the great truths of creation: that God created the world and everything in it and that *it is good*; that humankind alone was created *in God's image* and therefore is capable of knowing and being *like* God in love, service, and mercy. That humankind was created male and female, to complement and complete one another; therefore, human beings are created to be in relationship with *God* and with *one another*. Genesis 2 is almost fable-like, a close-up of the wide-angle lens used in Genesis 1. Humankind here is created from the earth ("Adam literally means 'creature of the earth') as a helper...to toil or care for the garden. Humankind was given the honor to name the rest of creation and ultimately, became itself a composite being, male and female (Adam's rib) when God saw the need for humankind to have a mate and partner in life, again to complete and complement one another. *How are the two accounts the same?* (Human beings are God's crowning glory, created in his image and meant to be good stewards of each other and the earth, knowing and seeking God for guidance in all things. All things that were created by God were 'good.' *What is the most difficult for you to accept in the story of creation?* Discuss freely. 10 min.
5. Read **God's Awesome Creativity!** Again consider the items that you have on display as you respond to the question regarding the differences between human and divine creation. (When we make something, the materials we need are already there. The potter uses clay, the carpenter uses wood from trees; an artist paints something that he or she can see and even a writer must use words that already exist. It's not the same with God – He did not merely make us...HE CREATED US, and he created us from nothing! God also brought the universe into existence from nothing.
6. Draw an imaginary line in the middle of your class – the left side of the room represents 'creation' and the right side 'evolution.' You stand in the middle of the two. Ask the children to move to the location that they personally believe represents how we humans came into being. While they remain standing, ask for volunteers to share their opinions.

Please remain open-minded, and allow them to talk freely. Remember that an accepting spirit helps students know that their opinions are valuable. Give them opportunity to share their doubts; when we discount their doubts we can push them further away from God rather than encouraging them to seek understanding in faith as they seek answers. 5 min.

7. Continue with **Testing the Waters...Science versus Faith**. (See **Extending the Lesson** for an additional activity, time permitting.)
8. Refer back to procedure #5; ask students if they were to go back and stand on the line would their position be different because they now feel different? If yes, ask them to share the most important factor that they discovered in today's lesson that led to their change of mind 10 min.
9. Read or teach **Our Armenian Way**. Below are the items that the priest brings to the *Dnorhnek*.
 - ❖ Incense-an ancient symbol of prayers rising up to God – also symbolizing our souls burning with love for God.
 - ❖ *Nushkhar*-the round wafer of blessed bread stamped with the crucifix or plain cross and designs of grapes and wheat. The *nushkhar* can be kept in flour, salt, sugar, rice or wheat as a symbol of the presence of God's blessings.
 - ❖ Bible - during the *Dnorhnek*, Scripture is read.
 - ❖ Armenian Cross
10. Conclude with a progressive prayer. Ask everyone to think of something in God's world for which they are thankful, then start: "God you are indeed the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end that is forever. We are so thankful for..." (you begin and have students add to the list). End with "Amen." Remind students to bring their photos next week (see this lesson's **Note to the Teacher**). 10 min.

Extending the Lesson

1. Have students look up three New Testament references about Creation: Mark 13:19 (written c. 65 AD by a non-Jewish Christian probably in Rome); Matthew 19:4 (written c. 85 AD to a Christian-Jewish community); Acts 17:26 (author identified as Luke, written c.80 AD, for Greek Christians throughout the world) Commonality: They all make reference to the creation and/or Adam and Eve.
2. Teach "Amen. Alleluia."

Unit One: Looking at Life Session 4: It's All About Relationship

Key Concepts

1. God created us to know and love him and one another.
2. It is in that relationship and the ones we have with others that our humanity is most fully realized.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Reflect on the meaning of "image of God" in Genesis 1:27.
2. Share their photos and family memories with one another.
3. Explore the meaning of their names.
4. Review the concept of family and relationship in the Bible.
5. Participate in a theater exercise and "either/or" continuum about Cain and Abel and the first relationship conflict.
6. Learn the Scriptural foundation for the "Kiss of Peace" and its place in the Armenian liturgy where it restores a congregation through the healing power of reconciliation.

Materials Needed

Poster board (or oak tag) See Procedure #3.

Movable glue (non-permanent)

Personal photos

Book of Names and their meanings <http://www.babynames.com/> *

Armenian names: <http://www.behindthename.com/names/usage/armenian>*

*Make sure you have acquired the meaning of every student's name

Divine Liturgy Books (have these scattered around the room so time won't be needed later to distribute them)

CD/tape of Kreesdos ee mech (optional)

Note to the Teacher

Next week, you might choose to show a You Tube rendering of "We Are Many Parts" (see Session 5, **Materials Needed**). If so, you will need to bring a laptop computer and be prepared with the specific version you pre-selected.

Procedure

1. If possible, have chairs set up in a circle. If that is not possible, have students turn chairs and desks to face each other once they are seated. As the children enter collect their photos and have them take a seat. Begin with the opening prayer.
2. In advance select a student to read: Genesis 1:27. Open with the comment: "We did not have the opportunity to actually *meet* Adam and Eve, but we know about them and the relationship they had with God. Let's listen to a description of the moment God created humankind. The verse is in your book, but close your eyes and listen." After the reading, ask them what they think about when they hear the word 'image.' Have students read the verse in their texts and answer the two questions. Discuss. Guideline to answers: 1. Because we are made in God's image, we alone of all Creation are able to know and love him and one another. 2. To love and care for one another and the world around us; to grow closer to God, as well, through others, the Church, prayer, Scripture, etc. 10 min.
3. Continue with: "We're going to play a little game called "Photo Play." One by one I will pass your photographs around the group until you each have one. (Be sure that a student does not get his or her own photo.) Each of you will have the opportunity to guess who the person is. Once the person is identified, he or she will have the opportunity to talk about the photo (if the answer is too brief, ask questions so the class can learn enough to fill in **Photo Play**). If you listen carefully to your classmates, you're sure to find out something that you did not know about them. Listening is key in building strong personal relationships. You know, our own relationships are built step by step through knowledge and experience. Our relationship with God is actually realized in the same way." Have students fill in the three things they learned and share briefly. Then ask students to glue their photographs on the poster board and write their names under their photo (promise them that photos will be returned in a few weeks). 20 min.
4. Read or teach **Tracing Our Ancestry**. Note that the Old Testament stories of Creation and the relationship that God desires with his people are also a part of our family history. Open the book of names (or the list you have from the Internet) and take a few minutes to look up each student's name and share the information with them. Have children write the meaning of their name and its origin on the poster board. Remind them of their readings of Genesis 1 and 2 last session and how important "naming" is. God knows each of us by name. 5 min.
5. Continue by reading **Family Issues... We are the family of God!** and briefly discuss the question (answers might include patience, trust, tolerance, love, empathy, understanding, etc.). Read Genesis 4:1-16 by assigning 4 parts: Narrator, God, Cain, and Abel (who doesn't speak but can simply act out his part along with Cain and God). Have them come to the front of the room. After they perform the story, discuss questions with the use of an "Either/Or" line.

For both questions, point to 2 opposite sides of the room, one for a “yes” answer, one for “no.” Have students go to the corner that matches their answer. Discuss their reasons. Question 2: God punished Cain for his *response* to God’s judgment but has love and compassion enough to protect him. For **Hmmmm**: Direct students to verses 3,4 and 5 where we read that Cain gave “some” of his harvest, but Abel gave his best, out of love and respect. And then Cain sulked and was angry. Verse 7 suggests we need to master our sinful tendencies. 15 min.

6. Continue: “Loving and caring for one another is such an important part of the Christian path, that we have a specific place during the Divine Liturgy where we make sure our hearts are clear and open to one another. Anyone know the name of the ritual kiss we share at every Badarak? Yes, the “Kiss of Peace.” Read **Our Armenian Way**. If you have it, play the CD of the hymn sung during the exchange: “Kreesdos ee Mech.” Use your Divine Liturgy books to identify where the Kiss of Peace is located in the Liturgy (p. 27). Answers : 1. Christ is revealed among us. 2. Orhnyal eh haydnootyoonun Krisdosi. Ask students to pay particular attention to the 5th and 6th lines in which we see that the Church has become one with the kiss as a bond.

7. Conclude with the prayer in the student text and the Kiss of Peace greeting in Armenian and English. 10 min.

Unit One: Looking At Life

Session 5: God’s Shining Light

Key Concepts

1. God endows all people with gifts of ability and service.
2. It is an important Christian task to discern and use these gifts.
3. Extraordinary events and people in Armenian history have exemplified God’s bounty.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Identify their place in the Christian community in a football-themed activity.
2. Read Romans 12:1-8 and hear/see/reenact a song version.
3. Define and participate in a litany of gratitude for God’s creation.
4. Review the gifts and contributions of Armenians via T/F and matching games.
5. Reflect upon their own gifts and those they would want to cultivate.
6. Conclude with a litany of thanks for God’s abundant gifts.

Materials Needed

Props for a football game: ball, pom-pom, clipboard, stadium-type blanket, and poster board or oak tag for signs (see Procedure #1)

For the singing (or watching/listening) of “We Are Many Parts,” select a You Tube version to play in class. Take your laptop to class or arrange for one.

Prior to your class session have the room set up for a football game. Move the students desks/chairs to clear the center of the room - use them to represent the football stadium. To create the experience of a football game, put these four props around the room with a sign under each that explains its significance: a ball = player, a pom-pom=cheerleader, clipboard=coach, stadium-type blanket=fan in the stands.

Procedure

1. Open the session by asking the students to think about ways sports and Christian life are alike. Ask one student to read **A Great Team** and another to read Romans 12:1-8 aloud to the class. Point out that everyone has a unique role to play in the image of Christianity portrayed in the readings. Explain your football stadium setup to the students and suggest that they think about the experience of a football game parallel to Christian life. Have the students chose their location in the stadium representing where they might fit into Christian life.

Help them by asking: “Are you in the midst of the action, calling the shots, cheering others on, or watching from the stands?” After the students select their spots next to the appropriate prop, ask them to share the reason for their choices. When everyone has shared their thoughts, ask, “Do Christians give as much attention to Christian life as they do sports?” Compare the “one body” image Paul uses to describe the Christian community with the football stadium model. Lead a discussion focusing on these questions:

- a. Are the roles in the stadium model complete? Can you think of others?
- b. Are people in the stands contributing to the Christian community as Paul pictured? Why or why not?
- c. Are you satisfied with where you currently place yourself? Would you like to participate in another way?
- d. Why is the body a good image for the Christian community? 15 min.

2. Read or teach **Spiritual Gifts in Action**. Then reread Romans 12:1-8. If you’ve had an opportunity to select a YouTube presentation of “We Are Many Parts” and have arranged to play it in class, do so now and then, if you wish, sing it once all together. 10 min.

3. Lead into the prayer experience by reiterating that the football game & the Scripture reading both help us to realize that there is a diversity of gifts, many that we do not take the time to even notice. Move into the definition of ‘litany,’ a prayer form which students will practice today. Turn to **Practice Makes Perfect** and read the opening paragraph. Tell students: “Before an event most athletes take a deep breath to help them focus themselves ...let’s begin our prayer experience today by doing just that... focusing on your breathing. As you inhale, ask God to be with you. As you exhale, let go of everything you’re thinking about to make room for God’s Holy Spirit. This litany is prayed right after the Scripture readings during our Divine Liturgy. Your response will always be... “Grant it, Lord! *Shmorhya Der.*” Pray the litany. 5 min.

4. Segue with: “Well, we know that God asks us to use all the gifts and talents he gave us for the good of all. As members of the Armenian Church, we have a long and rich history and lots of role models. Let’s take a fast and fun look.” Have students answer questions in **Our Armenian Way** (according to the size of your class and/or time restraints you can divide the class into teams and have a competition or work on the exercise together as one big team). (Answers: they are all true; Armenian Hall of Fame: 1.i, 2.d, 3.f, 4.h, 5.l, 6.k, 7.a, 8.g, 9.b, 10.c, 11.e, 12.j. 15 min.

5. Continue the session by asking students: “What about you? How do you fit into God’s plan? Many of us start out clueless about what our talents and gifts might be. Often, it takes a family member, friend, teacher, priest, coach or neighbor to help you notice what your gifts are, and often they can even help you find ways to further develop them. Perhaps your teacher notices that you not only understand the concept of math, but have a knack for helping other people understand. Asking you to become a tutor for students that have a hard time understanding could open unexpected doors for you. God is always willing to open doors for you...all you have to do is ask. Be assured that as a part of the Body of Christ, God will use you to make miracles happen...” Ask students to spend a few moments on **What Are My Gifts?**

6. Before the recitation, have students think of a gift or quality of their own they might offer up in thanksgiving. Then conclude class with the **Litany of Thanksgiving**. 5 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 1 The Holy Bible: A Map for Our Life Journey

Key Concepts

1. The Bible is a single powerful story of God’s plan told through a collection of many stories.
2. The Church is the inspired community that compiled these stories into the Bible.

3. The Bible introduces us to Christ, our life-guide.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Identify the basic genres and purpose of the Bible through a line-up activity.
2. Read about and discuss the importance of the Bible as a life guide.
3. Examine the role the Church plays in understanding Scripture.
4. Order the key parts and significant events in the Bible story.
5. Learn two key facts about the Armenian translation of the Bible and create a bookmark.
6. Explore the personal response to Scripture and Christ's leadership.

Materials Needed

Index cards (2 different colors)

Clothesline or twine

Markers, glue

Spring-clip clothes pins

Hand-lettered or computer-generated signs as indicated in **Note to the Teacher**

Time line strips from the back of this manual (See Procedure # 5)

Bookmark templates (from the back of this manual), preferably copied onto card stock – or students may glue them onto card stock– on which they can write the Bible verses II Timothy 3:16-17 (see Procedure #7).

Note to the Teacher

Prior to class, string a clothesline across the room. This will be used for the activity in Procedure # 5. If you cannot or would rather not use a clothesline, simply tape papers onto the board or wall. And if time is brief or space is an issue, the game can be played exclusively in the Student Text.

For the first activity, tape construction paper signs around the classroom that identify the many ways people can view the Bible. Signs can read: history book, story book, geography book, guide book, road atlas, book of family genealogy, book of literature, book of poetry, collection of letters. The Bible contains elements of all of these different literary styles.

Procedure

1. As students arrive ask them to stand beneath the sign that would be the definition they would use if they had to describe the Bible to someone who had never seen one. After everyone is situated, let each student explain why they made their selection. When they have completed this part of the activity ask them to imagine the clothesline (if you were unable to set one up, use an imaginary line) as a sliding scale: if they consider the Bible to be a book of 'past events' have them stand on the left; future events stand on the right and if they think it is a book for "all times" have them stand in the middle (everyone should be in the middle, but discuss!). 10 min.
2. Pray the opening prayer together.
3. Read or teach **Where's the Map?** and pause at the planning activity. You can have students complete this activity as a team, individually or together as a class – write the best five responses on the board. Then read or teach through to the end and discuss the final question. Answers might include: people don't *know* about the Church and the Bible; people may have had a discouraging experience at church; people don't often understand the Bible and need help reading it.
4. Continue reading **The Bible and the Church – The Story and A Witness** and complete the "Promise Story."
Answers: *God, human race, dealings, come, promise, evil, universe, original, creation, salvation, trusted.* 15 min.

5. Now ask class to help you create a time line by participating in **Line It Up**. Have the pre-cut **Significant Events and Themes** strips in a box or bag. Set out the square **Basic Parts** slips on your desk in random order and decide as a class where they belong on the clothesline or board *first*. This can be done via individual volunteers or in teams or together as a class. Then let them proceed with the 18 **Significant Events and Themes** by drawing strips out one at a time and hanging them on the line (or taping them on the board) in their proper place. Encourage them to challenge one another if they think something is out of sequence.

If you can leave the time line up for a while, you can begin next week's session with a quick recap. Whatever you do, have students record answers in their texts at the end of the activity. Answers:

Basic Parts & Significant Events and Themes

1. Creation – Genesis 1 - 2:3

- a. God brought the universe into being out of nothing, simply by speaking.
- b. God placed people in his world to care for it and bring it to its full potential.
- c. Humankind had responsibility for the animals, birds, trees and plants.

2. The fall of humankind - Genesis Chapter 2:4 - 3:24

- a. God gave his people freedom to explore the garden in which he had placed them, but told them not to eat the fruit from one particular tree.
- b. Tempted by the serpent, they chose not to do as God wished.
- c. God responded by banishing them from the Garden – this is considered the fall of humankind and the universe is out of relationship with God.

3. The time of Israel (Abraham-God's threefold promise-Covenant)

- a. God established a covenant with Abraham.
- b. Generations led by Isaac, Jacob and Joseph followed Abraham.
- c. Israel established itself in the Promised Land.

4. Jesus

- a. The Son of God is born in a humble stable.
- b. He lives a human life, full of love and without sin, as God intended it.
- c. Jesus dies and rises from the tomb, granting eternal life to all.

5. Christ's followers

- a. Communities of believers (churches) form and gather regularly.
- b. They are appointed and given authority to carry the Good News throughout the world.
- c. They are given the power of the Holy Spirit at the Jewish festival of Pentecost.

6. The End Times

- a. Explained in the last book of the Bible, Revelation.
- b. The ultimate victory of God over the forces of evil.
- c. When those who trust God will see him face to face.

20 min.

7. Read **Our Armenian Way**. Time permitting, distribute bookmark template from manual and have students glue them on the oak tag and write out II Timothy 3: 16-17 and then color.

8. As a closing prayer, read **Are You Ready to RSVP?**

15 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 2 A Quick Glance

Key Concepts

1. The Bible is God's written revelation to humankind and tells us repeatedly that God is absolutely reliable though all generations.
2. Understanding the many different literary styles of the Bible helps us determine what God is trying to reveal to us.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Pray and discuss Psalm 23 and learn a few important facts about the Psalms.
2. Examine their understanding of Bible basics in a True/False exercise.
3. Define the diverse literary forms contained within the Bible.
4. Identify the specific literary forms of five Bible passages.
5. Examine the special Armenian connection with the Apocryphal Book of Maccabees.

Materials Needed

Newspapers (see procedure #3)

Armenian version of the Bible (with the Apocrypha); place a bookmark in the book of Maccabees

Procedure

1. Read or teach the preface to Psalm 23 in **Here I Am, Lord**. Pray the Psalm and briefly discuss question. (Images and feelings might include safety, security, tenderness, loving care, vigilance on God's part, we are part of a flock God watches over, etc.)
2. Segue with: "The Psalms are the most widely read book of the Bible. Jesus prayed the Psalms and many scholars say if you know the Psalms you understand the entire Old Testament. Look at the **Key facts about the Psalms**. (Review them.) We're going to continue today to discover some more interesting facts about the Bible. Read or teach **What Do You Know About The Bible?** Enjoy the True and False questions by reading them together as a class. Answers: 1. T, 2. T, 3. F (Exodus), 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. F (the famous phrase was "Queen" of translations), 8. F (both Testaments together give us the complete story), 9. T
15 min.
3. Read or teach **God Speaks To Us in Many Different Ways**. Give each student (or pair or triad) a complete newspaper and ask them to find an example of the following:
 - a) An editorial
 - b) A recipe in the food section
 - c) An advertisement for a store
 - d) A classified for a car or house
 - e) A sports headlineDiscuss a-d. Answer guidelines: Readers should know a. This is an opinion; facts about the topic will help reader evaluate the editorial; b. What ingredients are, familiarity with cooking instruction terms; c. What the store sells, what constitutes a good buy; d. Meaning of specific vocabulary (4-wheel drive, 1-Family), familiarity of going rates. Then discuss the two questions in text for "e."
15 min.
4. Continue with **What Are You Trying To Say?** Answers: Proverb, History, Myth, Sermon, Psalm, Letter, Saga, Prophecy, List, Law, Parable.
5. Segue to **What's Your Style?** by saying: "Let's go one step further now and see if we can identify the forms we find in the Bible passages in your text." Answers: 1. History; 2. Prophecy and/or history; 3. Parable; 4. Letter; 5. Prophecy. Please note that some of the Scripture references might fall into more than one category. If there is time, discuss a

few general questions: *Do you like to read poetry? Do you prefer to read books of fact or fiction? Why? If you became a famous writer, which literary form would you prefer to publish: Poetry, fiction (which kind?), scholarly research, editorials/ opinions, or? Why?* 20 min.

6. Ask for student volunteers to read **Our Armenian Way**. Hold up the Armenian Bible and point out the Book of Maccabees. Explain that not all Bibles contain the Deuterocanonical books or Apocrypha. But the Orthodox and Catholic churches believe that these books are also inspired and so we include them in our Bibles.
7. Continue: “St. Vartan and his men trusted that God would guide them – in fact they trusted so profoundly that they were willing to risk their lives for their God-given religious traditions.” Teach **Words You Can Trust...Words You Can Live By**.
8. Conclude by praying the Lord’s Prayer. 10 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 3: The Old Testament

Key Concepts

1. The Old Testament is a living contract between God and his people.
2. To fully understand God’s plan for the human race, we need both the Old and New Testaments.
3. The stories of the Old Testament prepare us to understand the New Testament and how Jesus fulfills God’s promise to save us from sin and death.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review their knowledge of the Psalms.
2. Participate in a webbing activity on the Old Testament.
3. Read about the four major divisions of the Old Testament.
4. Examine the art form of Armenian miniatures and one of its most famous practitioners, Toros Roslin (13th century).
5. Produce creative interpretations of Old Testament events.
6. Reflect briefly on the importance of their relationship with God in the environment of social networking.

Materials Needed

Armenian Bible

Paper, pens/ pencils and markers (see procedure # 5)

Procedure

1. Begin class with the verses from Psalm 25 (**Here I Am, Lord**). Tell students: “This is a great prayer for us as Sunday School students, isn’t it? What Testament is the Book of Psalms found in, Old or New? (Old) What do you remember about the Book of Psalms?” (Refer students to page 28 of the Student Text to refresh their memories.) 5 min.
2. Continue by writing the words “Old Testament” on the board and have students come up and write the name of a person or event that they remember from the Old Testament. If the word “covenant” or “contract” isn’t there, add it. (Answers might include: creation, Moses, Noah, Adam and Eve, Garden of Eden, Tower of Babel, prophets, Isaiah, psalms, etc.) Then teach or read **A Sprint Through Salvation History**. 10 min.
3. Read **Bringing the Past to Life** and answer, together, the question after each part.
Answers: 1-c; 2-a; 3: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom & Sirach; 4. Zechariah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah.

4. Read or teach **Our Armenian Way**. The miniature depicts the raising of Lazarus. 15 min.
5. In **Creative Expression – Gifts from God** have students choose which of the four “creative expression” assignments they wish to do (the first can be done in the book; distribute paper for the other three). If you prefer, or if the class is small, work on one or two as a class. Work for 15 minutes and share results for 10. Answers for #1: Ten Commandments, Bible, Law, Mount Sinai, key, decisions, God.) 25 min.
6. Take a fast look at **What Rules Your Life**. Conclude with this prayer: “Lord, thank you for the gift of your Word. In the Old Testament, we are able to experience your first covenant and the abiding love you have for your beloved creation from the beginning of time. We are grateful that we too can be creative and express our faith in beautiful ways. Help us seek you as the *true* ruler of our lives. Amen.” 5 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 4: The New Testament: Overview

Key Concepts

1. The New Testament is a collection of books and letters written over a period of approximately 50 years in different styles, by a number of authors.
2. The basic genres of the New Testament are sacred biography, history, letters, and apocalyptic literature.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a fill-in exercise on basic Bible facts.
2. Learn about the four different types of writing in the New Testament.
3. Review the Four Gospels and take a quick quiz.
4. Compare and contrast the same story told in each Gospel.
5. Read about the book of Acts and the Epistles.
6. Explore the vision of Christ in Revelation 1:12-19 and recreate it in words and pictures.
7. Read about the celebration of the first printed Bible by Armenians in Venice as celebrated in the 2012 exhibition by the Library of Congress.

Materials Needed

For Procedure #4: Large piece of newsprint (also optional in procedure #8) taped in a central area of the room-visible to all; draw four columns, label one column for each Gospel; 4 markers (1 for each team); 4 “eyewitness index cards,” each with one of the following gospel references written on it: 1. Mark 14:1-5, 2. Matthew 26:2-5; 6-7, 3. Luke 22:1-2; 3-6, 4. John 11:38-53; 12-3.

Procedure

1. Have the students open their Bibles to 1 Corinthians 13. Introduce the reading by saying: “As you know, many of the epistles or letters of the New Testament were written to communities where churches were forming and growing and where apostles and missionaries like St. Paul had visited and preached. We are going to open our class with a prayer based on the world-famous chapter 13 in I Corinthians, the first of two letters that St. Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, Greece.” Read together or choose a volunteer. Conclude with an “Amen.” 5 min.
2. Segue to the fill-in activity with “Okay, let’s first do a quick review of Bible basics.” Work through the exercise **Digging for Facts** together as a class or in teams. Answers: (book, authors, inspired, thinking, error, human, style, create, Scripture, chooses). Call on a volunteer to read the concluding paragraph.

3. Tell the class: “Let’s first look at the “sacred biography” genre of the New Testament in the form of what we call Gospels.” Read or teach **Exploring the New Testament** and **Eyewitness News...**. Then complete **So What Did We Just Learn?** as a group. (Answers: c, c, d, b) 10 min.

4. For **Four Witnesses – Four Stories**, segue with “Now let’s focus on this idea of four different witnesses and take a close-up look.” Form class into 4 groups of 2-3 students. Adapt according to your class size. Give them the “eyewitness index cards” and have them open their Bibles.

5. Allow them a few minutes to read the scripture passage and think about the answers. They may jot down notes on the index cards. Call teams to the front one at a time and have them respond to the questions and write their brief answers on the newsprint. Option: You write their answers in the appropriate column.

6. When all 4 teams have completed writing their answers, recap the answers.

Question 1: Synoptic Gospels: Passover/Feast of Unleavened bread. **John:** after raising Lazarus

Question 2: Mark: The chief priests & teachers of the law; **Matthew:** The chief priests and the elders. **Luke:** The chief priests and the teachers of the law. **John:** Some of Mary’s visitors, the Pharisees and chief priests, the Sanhedrin Council, Caiaphas

Question 3: Mark: Looking for a way to arrest Jesus in secret to put him to death. **Matthew:** Make plans to arrest Jesus & put him to death. **Luke:** Trying to find a way to get rid of Jesus **John:** Deciding how best to get rid of Jesus

Question 4: Mark: Putting him to death on the feast day which would make the people riot. **Matthew:** Putting him to death on the feast day since the people would riot. **Luke:** They were afraid of the people’s reaction. **John:** Having more and more people believe in him.

Question 5: Mark: During dinner Jesus’ head is anointed with expensive perfume. **Matthew:** During dinner Jesus’ head is anointed with expensive perfume. **Luke:** Judas betrays Jesus. **John:** Mary anoints Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume and wipes them with her hair.

Conclude that the Church was blessed with these four inspired accounts of Jesus’ life which were hugely popular in the decades following Jesus’ Resurrection. By the 4th century we see them officially accepted as part of the New Testament canon. 20 min.

7. Read **Early Church History** and then ask students to read Acts 6:1-7 silently and carefully in their texts. When they are finished, discuss questions together. Guidelines: 1. The Greek-speaking believers thought their needy widows were not getting a fair amount of the food being distributed. Tell students that widows were a particularly vulnerable group since without a husband, they had no formal legal protection (v.1). 2. They called a meeting of *everyone* (v.2). 3. They decided to choose seven men to tend to the poor while the apostles traveled and taught. You might want to remind students that women were not chosen in these official capacities, even though there were many women serving in different ways in the church communities, because women were not deemed suitable as public figures at that time (vs 2-4). 4. They were looking for men who were respected and full of wisdom and the Spirit (v.3). 5. Everyone liked the idea (v.5). 6. God’s message spread, the number of believers grew, and Jewish priests began to follow Christ. Conclude by saying: “You know what moment in history we’ve just read about? The first ordination of deacons, of church helpers! Eventually this role became symbolic and the deacons helped the priest exclusively during worship services. But this records its very beginning.” Teach or read **Love Letters**. 10 min.

8. Conclude with **Apocalyptic Writing**. Have students write the answers for **A Vision of Christ** as you review them together. If there is an artist in the class or you simply want to have fun with a group effort, have a large poster paper taped to the board, and have volunteers come up and draw as each element of the vision is described. 4. Golden sash around his chest 5. Head and hair white as snow 6. Fiery eyes 7. Feet of fiery bronze, glowing 8. Voice the sound of rushing waters 9. Held 7 stars in his right hand 10. Out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword (the Word of God is depicted as a double-edged sword in 1 Peter) 11. Face shone like the sun 12. He said he is the First and Last, the Living One, who was dead but will live forever, holds the keys of death. 10 min.

9. Complete the lesson by reading **Our Armenian Way**. Conclude with “Let us remember our opening words from Scripture, the famous love passages from 1 Corinthians 13, especially, ‘And now these three remain; faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.’ Amen.” 5 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 5: Beyond the Gospels: A Story Through Acts and Letters

Key Concepts

1. The events of Ascension and Pentecost laid the foundation for Christian discipleship.
2. The early centuries after Christ were times of great growth and great trial for believers.
3. The Church expanded into the wider world, including Armenia.
4. The Epistles served as support and advice.
5. The Book of Revelation was written as a source of encouragement and hope.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a reflection exercise on characteristics of love (I Cor. 13: 4-7).
2. Analyze the Ascension and Pentecost as depicted in Acts 1 and 2.
3. Examine the characteristics of the first church community as portrayed in Acts 2: 42-47.
4. Explore how the apostles continued to teach and encourage the early Church communities through written communication.
5. Read about the Book of Revelation and learn about its place in the teaching of the Armenian Church.

Materials Needed

Reflection question strips (from the back of this manual; use as many as needed for your class; see procedure #1) in a paper bag.

Procedure

1. As students arrive, have them reach into the paper bag for a reflection question making sure that you have one for each student. Read I Corinthians 13: 4-7 in **Here I Am, Lord** and then give them five minutes to respond to the reflection suggestions. (If a student cannot really relate to the question he or she picked, have them choose another.) Share answers. Conclude with: “Now, dear Lord, give us the love to share in the ways we have described.” 15 min.
2. Read **A Reliable Source**. Read Acts 1:1-5 and respond to the questions asked in **We Gather...We Send!** Answers: Leave Jerusalem; the Holy Spirit; baptized with water; baptized with the Holy Spirit. Continue reading Acts 1:6-25 and identify the order of events: Answers: a. 3, b. 5, c. 7, d. 1, e. 8, f. 2, g. 6, h. 4.
3. Read Acts 2:1-13 and as a class identify five important events that took place in this episode. Answers:
 1. They were all together.
 2. A sound like a violent wind came & filled the house that they were in.
 3. Tongues of fire rested on each of them & they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
 4. They began to speak in different languages.
 5. Visitors heard the message in their own language.

Continue to read about the events of Pentecost.

20 min.

4. Teach **The Good News Spreads – The First 30 Years**. Read Acts 2:42-47 and respond to the question. (They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to sharing meals, to prayer; the apostles performed many wonders and signs and the people were filled with awe; they were together; shared everything; they sold what they had and gave to those who were in need; they met daily; happily shared meals in their homes; praised God and enjoyed the favor of all people; *and their numbers grew*.) Conclude that people *flocked* to a faith where all of this was happening. Tell students: “We’ll be returning to this description later on this year in some more detail.” 5 min.

5. Teach **The Good News Faces Tough Opposition** and **A World of Letters**. Read the two brief excerpts and answer

the questions together. Guidelines for the reading from James: the community may have been disagreeing in loud, argumentative fashion, disrespectful to one another; for Thessalonians: questions about what happens after we die and should Christians grieve for their dead since they will live on in heaven. Discuss freely the final question.

6. Read **Our Armenian Way** and conclude class by calling on a volunteer to read Revelation 21: 1-4. 20 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 6: In A Nutshell

Key Concepts

1. The earliest statements of faith were made by the apostles as eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and teaching.
2. As the believing community grew and evolved, these developed into summary statements of faith and finally the universally accepted Nicene Creed.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss the Armenian baptismal creed.
2. Participate in a Bible study on apostolic (Mark, Peter, and Paul) statements of faith.
3. Read about the first council in Jerusalem and the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.
4. Examine the Nicene Creed with the help of a webbing exercise.
5. Reflect on its meaning by considering the Creed in their own words.

Materials Needed

Divine Liturgy books

Procedure

1. Begin class by praying the baptismal creed together. After the prayer, explain to students that this was inspired by the abbreviated creed recited by all those gathered at an Armenian baptism. Discuss briefly by asking: "Since the baby being baptized clearly cannot participate in this recitation why have the parents, the godparents, and all the witnesses recite it? (Because these are the members of the believing community who pledge to help bring up the child as a Christian.) "Even though the Nicene Creed we recite every Sunday in church is much longer, what is the basic belief we are expressing in this summary?" (Have students recall as much as they can without looking at text.) 10 min.
2. Segue with: "We can see in the words and acts of Jesus' closest followers – his disciples – how this faith, the faith we now can recite in a formulated Creed, was beginning to be shaped. These people were the first 'witnesses.' What is a witness (wait for answer, and then confirm that a witness has seen something with his or her own eyes)?" Let's look into some of these first statements of faith together. It wasn't easy to openly declare these. Let's see why." Read **They Can't Be Silenced!** and **Who were the Sadducees and Pharisees?** 5 min.
3. Have students read the verses in Mark in **Eyewitness News**. (Answers: 1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene 2. He appeared to two disciples 3. He appeared to eleven disciples.) Continue reading what Peter proclaimed in Acts 4:1-12. (Answers: 1. That Jesus was crucified 2. He rose from the dead 3. This truth is the cornerstone of faith.) For Acts 5:27-39, accept answers but conclude that Gamaliel was probably a good man who felt that the truth would prevail no matter what the Sanhedrin would do. It turned out he was right!
4. Continue with 1 Corinthians 15: 3-11. (Answers: 1. Christ died for our sins 2. Christ was buried 3. Christ rose on the third day.) Identify that these three facts are the essential statements of faith in the Creed we proclaim each time we gather for Badarak. 20 min.

5. Teach or read **The Nicene Creed**. Then distribute Liturgy books and read through the Havadamk as a group. Now write the word Nicene Creed on the board and draw a box around it. Call on students (this can be done with their Liturgy books now closed or open for reference; you might start with them closed and then – if students are stumped – have them open) to come up and write words or simple phrases from the Creed around it. (i.e. “Jesus is God; Church; one baptism, etc.) Stop when all important concepts are on the board. Review them. 10 min.
6. Then ask students to start writing the Creed (**Our Armenian Way**) in their own words. Stop after five minutes and simply discuss. 10 min.
7. Conclude with the closing prayer on the top of page 47 in the Student Text which is adapted from the prayer the priest recites at the end of the Havadamk. 5 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 7: The Master Teacher

Key Concepts

1. The Ten Commandments exemplify a foundational stage of moral living, the “letter of the Law.”
2. The Beatitudes personify the New Covenant – the “spirit of the Law” which focuses on the attitudes of our hearts, rather than specific actions.
3. The Kingdom of God is realized when people live in peace, righteousness and joy.
4. In a collection of his teachings that have come to be known as “The Sermon on the Mount,” our Lord taught the epitome of discipleship.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Learn about the teachings of Jesus in “the Sermon on the Mount.”
2. Review the Beatitudes in a Bible charades game.
3. Explore the meaning of the Beatitudes.
4. Complete a reflection exercise comparing a God-centered world with a me-centered world.
5. Identify the ‘things’ they would buy if money were no object, and what this says about “treasure” as Jesus defines it.
6. Explore the faith treasures of the Armenian Church in a display, especially the role of the alphabet in transmitting the faith.
7. Complete a Word Search on the Beatitudes.

Materials Needed

Prepared Bible Charades strips (using template from the back of this manual; see procedure #2) in a paper bag or box
 Desk display items: Prints or pictures of the Armenian Alphabet, Bible. Samples of Armenian poetry, art, books, khachkars, religious artifacts, etc.

Procedure

1. Have the display items on your desk. If students have questions as they come in and look them over, comment that these are some of the Armenian “treasures” expressing the strong faith of the Armenian people over the centuries. Pray the opening prayer together. 5 min.
2. Read the **Sermon on the Mount**. Segue with “Let’s review these powerful insights of Jesus’ principles that can help us live the deepest, most meaningful life by playing a game you all know well, charades – “Beatitudes charades.” Place the cards face-down in a pile. Also write on the board the phrases “Blessed are” and “for.”

Begin by asking the students to read Matthew 5: 1-12 silently. Divide the class into two teams (or play with individual volunteers with the entire class guessing) and have them take turns drawing a Beatitude out of the

bag. Explain that the student should then perform the phrase as a charade for his or her team to guess. Draw the students' attention to the phrase "Blessed are" and "for" on the board and mention that the performer does not need to include those phrases in the charade. You can start each charade with "Blessed are" and when that is guessed, say "for." Once the first team has guessed its phrase, call a representative from the second team to act out a phrase (or continue to call on individual volunteers). 15 min.

3. Discuss the meaning of the Beatitudes in **The Beatitudes: From Letter of the Law to Spirit**. 5 min.

4. Read **The Master Teacher** and discuss the questions. Be prepared with examples and ideas of your own.

5. Have students complete the sentences in **It's All About God** by looking up the verses. Answers:

1. the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!
2. for they will inherit the earth.
3. the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.
4. if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him.
5. love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
6. but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
7. tomorrow will worry about itself.
8. who does the will of my Father in Heaven.

Then have them imagine the **It's All About Me** responses. Discuss answers. Possible answers: 2. Blessed are the arrogant; they will impress people and get what they want, 3. Happy are those who deny their faith to save themselves; at least they will live longer, 4. Yes, it will make you feel a lot better! 5. Hating your enemies is a good thing; they deserve it, 6. Really, it's the only place where treasures count, so go for it, 7. there are lots of other things to worry about! 8. but it can't hurt to keep up the charade! 10 min.

6. Have students list items they would buy. Ask for volunteers to share their list. Continue the reading and discuss question. 10 min.

7. Re-examine the Armenian "Treasures" you have on your desk as you read or teach **Our Armenian Way**. Enjoy the **Sermon on the Mount Word Search**. End by reading the Beatitudes again by dividing the students into two groups, one group will read "...Blessed are ...," the other will read the response..."for..." 15 min.

Sermon on the Mount Word Search



Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 8: Revealing God's Glory

Key Concepts

1. Through his miracles and healing, Jesus revealed the power, glory, and mercy of God the Father.
2. Miracles are meant to reveal God's glory rather than prove his existence.

Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Explore the concept of miracles through an "unfinished sentence" exercise.
2. Participate in a Bible study of Jesus' miracles as told in the four Gospels.
3. Imagine their own presence at one of Jesus' miracles in a brief meditation.
4. Pray a litany together.
5. Hear about the miraculous events connected with the 40 Martyrs of Sebastia.

Materials Needed

Desk display: Prints or pictures depicting some of the Gospel Miracles (Google images are a great source) or use physical items that were identified in the gospel accounts (bread basket, fish, children's doctor kit, picture of water, bottle of wine, etc.)

Beach ball

Note to the Teacher

Today we will not open with a prayer, but in the middle of the session we will enjoy a 'Litany of Miracles' prayer exercise.

1. Open today's session by asking students how or what they feel about miracles. You will do this by using the technique called 'Unfinished Sentences.' You can either write the phrase on the board or simply say it. Have volunteers provide answers and then discuss as a class.

I would define a miracle as...

It is difficult at times to believe in miracles because....

I would describe the meaning of miracle to my friend by saying...

10 min.

2. Read or teach **Miracles**. 5 min.

3. Lead into **Miracles: A Closer Look** by asking students to recall from memory some of the different miracles Jesus performed during his earthly ministry. These might include: feeding the 5,000, turning water into wine, calming a storm, walking on water, healing the blind and deaf, healing Jairus' daughter, casting out demons, etc. Break the group into teams depending on the size of the group, or invite a competition between individual students. Make a time limit of ten minutes for the exercise. Answers: 1-h, 2-d, 3-g, 4-b, 5-j, 6-i, 7-a, 8-c, 9-e, 10-f.

4. Have the students/teams complete the missing letter game or work together as a class: Answers: Blind, mute, paralyzed, demons, hungry, leper, wedding feast at Cana. 15 min.

5. Read or teach **Miracles... Much More Than a Virtual Reality!** Have students spend some quiet time writing their answers. Allow five minutes for the exercise and then discuss. Be prepared with your own example. 10 min.

6. Have students pray **A Litany of Miracles**. Ask them if they remember what the definition of a litany is from past lessons – the Webster definition is in their text. Pray the litany together (you can be or choose a leader). Then ask for volunteers to read aloud **I Can See Life's Miracles... If Only I Believe!** 10 min.

7. Read or teach **Our Armenian Way: *The Miracle of the Forty Martyrs.*** 5 min.
8. For the last five minutes of class, recap the day's learning by playing **Miracle Beach Ball**. *Directions:* Begin by having students each quickly review their text to come up with one question and the answer on Jesus' miracles. Then have students stand in a circle. The game is played by asking a 'miracle' question and tossing the ball to another person. That person must answer the question and toss the ball to someone else who answers the next question and so on. If the person who catches the ball is unable to answer the question, open it to everyone for the answer. The ball gets tossed until everyone has answered a question. The fun of the game is to keep the ball moving. No one holds it more than five seconds. 5 min.

Unit Two: Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Session 9: The Challenges of Lordship

Key Concepts

1. Jesus' earthly ministry was fraught with challenges; the Christian journey is challenging for his followers even today.
2. As Christians we have the responsibility to live and act as Jesus did.
3. Jesus fed the poor and taught mercy and justice; we have a responsibility to do the same.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss poverty using a picture display and reflection question.
2. Explore the political and economic oppression the Jewish people encountered under Roman rule, which undoubtedly made it very difficult for Jesus to convey the truths of a *spiritual* Kingdom rather than an earthly one.
3. Explore two events recorded in the Bible that reveal the misunderstandings Jesus' had to endure from his family and his followers.
4. Participate in an object lesson activity that demonstrates the uneven distribution of food in the world and the responsibilities of a just society.
5. Do a Bible study on Jesus' qualities as messianic leader.
6. Examine the challenges of their own faith journey.

Materials Needed

Desk display: pictures of poverty, hunger, developing countries or poverty here at home

Four signs: on one write 'Government' on another 'Community & Church Organizations', on the third write 'Marketplace and Business' and on the fourth write 'Families and Individuals'. Post the signs in the four corners of the room.

100 pretzels; tickets in three different colors; a paper bag for tickets (see Procedure #5)

Box with slips of paper that have either group 'A' or 'B' written on them (see Procedure #1)

Procedure

1. As students arrive have them select a slip of paper from the box. Pray the opening group prayer having the group take turns reading the prayer according to the slip they selected.
2. Hold up display pictures and ask students to identify how they feel when they see pictures or advertisements that identify poverty. Discuss briefly and then ask the class to think about how they would complete the following sentence: *When I am walking and I see someone begging, I usually...* Discuss. 10 min.
3. Read or teach **Journey Through Palestine with Jesus**. Direct students to the two passages and discuss answers.
 1. Even after all the healings and miracles that Jesus performed under their eyes, and his astounding *Resurrection*,

the disciples were *still* wondering where the earthly kingdom was that Jesus was supposed to restore (in their understanding). Many people in Israel hoped for a Messiah who would solve their problems. The Messiah they hoped for would put food on the tables and make Israel a powerful world nation. Undoubtedly, the apostles and other disciples felt hopeless, abandoned and lost – as they watched their candidate for king being nailed to the cross. They had given up everything to follow him: homes, families, and jobs. He touched their hearts and they changed their lives for him. And now, in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus tells them he is leaving them. But as a departing word of comfort, he tells them to wait (Acts 1:4) assuring them that God has promised a gift for them, the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit will fill them with power and give them everything they need to carry on when he is gone. 2. Jesus' mother and relatives (common understanding of the word "brothers") were upset with Jesus' travels and teachings; this must have been difficult for everyone, including Jesus. It is here that Jesus affirms that the family of believers may be more important than your actual family. 10 min.

4. As a segue to the next activity, ask students who it is they believe is responsible for creating a framework for a just programs that help feed the poor? (food stamps) b. What does your church or school do? c. Businesses? d. Community organizations? (i.e. Meals on Wheels) d. What does your own family do for those in need?

Ask them to stand by the sign that they feel has the most responsibility to fix the problem. If they believe they all are equal allow them to stand in the middle of the room. Discuss their choices. The best answer is all four; it's been said that to "set a table with food enough for all requires all four legs." Ask the class: a. Do they know of government programs that help feed the poor? (food stamps) b. What does your church or school do? c. Businesses? Community organizations (i.e. Meals on Wheels) d. What does your own family do for those in need? 10 min.

5. Teach or read **Healing Leadership Still Needed**. Have students conduct the food distribution exercise as directed in their text. Conclude the segment by asking the students to collectively reflect on the responsibilities of Christians to helping others across the globe. 10 min.
6. Explore the five Scripture passages in Matthew which identify the leadership qualifications that the Jewish people of Jesus' time witnessed in **We the People Choose Jesus!** Allow the students time to complete the reflection questions that follow each passage. Answers: (authority/power; heals, feeds, models faith, teaches). 10 min.
7. Teach or read **Our Armenian Way**. Allow the students time to identify the challenges they have in their faith journey. Discuss briefly. Answers might include scientific world that plays down religion (even though science and faith are not mutually exclusive), non-believer friends, family's lack of emphasis on faith.
8. Conclude the class with everyone reading the prayer in their text. 10 min.

Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 1: What Now? On the Edge of Adventure

Key Concepts

1. With the Great Commission, Jesus entrusted his disciples – the same men who had deserted him – to be evangelists in the world.
2. Gathered in our humanness, we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit for the mission and we are SENT.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Pray the words of the Pentecost hymn "Arakelo Aghavno" and complete a synonym activity.
2. Complete a review exercise.
3. Explore Peter's denial of Jesus and reflect on its meaning for us today.

4. Participate in a Bible study and discussion on the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16-20).
5. Read and “enter into” the Pentecost story (Acts 2: 1- 4) through a continuum exercise.
6. Complete a Word Search on Pentecost.
7. Recognize that the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew to go to Armenia and empowers each of us in the sacrament of chrismation.

Procedure

1. Pray the words of the hymn “Arakelo Aghavno” together. Review the story of Pentecost quickly by asking students to retell the story together (turn to Acts 2: 1- 4 for help). Then have them write in the synonyms (*coming down, equipped, that did not burn them, without form, of the same substance as, life eternal*). When they have finished, pray the prayer with the synonyms. 10 min.
2. Review last week’s session by responding to the questions in **One Step Back**. Answers:
 - A. That Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah promised in the Hebrew Scriptures. B-1 A king would care for them and give them identity. B-2 A king would unite them. B-3. A king would make them a mighty nation. C. Too much food gets consumed by wealthy nations and not enough gets to countries where food is scarce and people are starving. Scripture gives us the story of the Last Judgment (see Mt 25:35-36) and reminds us that we will be judged by our response to the ‘least among us.’ Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church. It is our Christian responsibility to offer them relief through works of charity which will always be an essential part of the mission of the Church. 10 min.
3. Tell students: “When we read the gospels, or hear them read, we often fail to realize that the events involved ordinary people like us, people who didn’t understand what was happening to them. For the apostles, knowing Jesus and spending time with him was a daily adventure. They never quite knew what would happen next. I am going to read a passage from Matthew’s gospel. As I read, try to get inside the story. Imagine what it would have been like to be there, to be one of the disciples who had spent so much time with Jesus and then saw him arrested and beaten.” Read **Matthew 26:69-75** and then discuss the reflection questions. Spend at least five minutes on the second question as this has to do with daily living. Only the last question has a definitive answer: “This is an important message for people of all times everywhere: Jesus will deal with our mess-ups just as he did with the apostles...as long as we keep trying to improve, God will continue to forgive us and use us to bring his light and love to the world. He always gives us the opportunity to start over.” Conclude by reading **Peter’s Disloyalty is Our Problem, Too**. 10 min.
4. Read or teach **Behold, I Make All Things New...Yes, Even You!** Allow students five minutes to answer all questions, then discuss. 10 min.
5. Read Acts 2:1- 4 (reminding students that they must surely remember this reading from earlier lessons) together from the Student Text (**On the Edge of an Adventure**), dramatically. Add sound effects, use movements. You might want to call on a few volunteers to provide a dramatic version for the class. After the reading, play a “continuum game” to prompt discussion. Tell students that in the front of the room there’s an imaginary continuous line with points on either side of the room. You will ask a question and students will get up and stand along the line according to their answer. Then ask students: “If you had been one of the apostles when all the noise and wind began blowing, what do you think you would have done?” To the extreme left: ‘shrink back in terror;’ on the extreme right: ‘moved closer to the activity to see what was going on.’ If somewhere in between, have students stand accordingly. Discuss. A second question: “I might have been thinking” (extreme left): ‘that Jesus was perhaps punishing me for being disloyal and abandoning him’ or (extreme right): ‘trusting in Jesus, knowing that this could only lead to something good’ and then points in between. Discuss. Conclude that, no doubt, the apostles reacted in many different ways, just as students had today. But in the end, the power of the Holy Spirit made them strong in their faith and able to do many things they never would have imagined they could do. End with a “just-for-fun” discussion of what language they might have wanted to suddenly know if they had been there on the day of Pentecost. 10 min.

6. Have students complete the **Word Search**.

7. Read **Our Armenian Way** and then **How Do I Witness?** Discussion guidelines: Wind: Jesus compares the Spirit's work to wind: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going." (John 3: 8) Fire: Fire speaks of purity and power. Steel is tempered with fire to make it stronger. The Spirit's work is both mysterious and powerful. He breaks the sinner's stubborn will. He changes sinners into saints. For #3, refer students to the last few lines of **Our Armenian Way**.

8. Conclude with St. Nersess' prayer in their texts.

10 min.



Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 2: The Holy Spirit: An Eye-Opener!

Key Concepts

1. Thanks to the vigor and commitment of the apostles and St. Paul, the Early Church grew exponentially.
2. The Church grew under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as documented in the Book of Acts.
3. Conversion, as evidenced in St. Paul, is dying to old ways of thinking and acting and opening oneself to an authentic relationship with Christ.
4. Both the Armenian nation and every individual, from the apostles to each one of us, are called to conversion.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a review exercise.
2. Perform Acts 9: 1-31 as a Reader's Theater.

3. Discuss “conversion” and the concept of seeing things in a new way, drawing on their own experience.
4. Relate the concept of conversion to the beginnings of Christianity in Armenia.
5. Participate in a Bible study on the Early Church as described in Acts 2:42-47 and compare and contrast with their own parish.

Procedure

1. Welcome students and pray the opening prayer together. Have them respond to the questions in **One Step Back**. Answers: 1. F (it was *Peter* who denied Jesus as per His prediction) 2. T, 3. F (the Feast of *Pentecost*) 4. T, 5. c. 5 min.
2. Teach or read **The Church Takes Root and Grows Strong** and the short opening paragraph of **It Takes Conversion...Saul Meets Jesus**.
3. Ask students to open their Bibles to **Acts 9:1-31** which they will read/perform in “Reader’s Theater” format as follows. Call on volunteers to read the following 8 parts: Narrator 1: 1-7, Narrator 2: 8-19, Narrator 3: 20-25, Narrator 4: 26-31 (if you want to include everyone in the reading and the class is larger than 8, have narrations read in groups; if the class is smaller, double up on parts), Jesus, Paul, Ananias, and Barnabas. Have them come to the front of the room and read the story. Pause after verses 7, 19, 25 and 31 to ask for a recap of the story so far. After volunteers take their seats, continue reading **It Takes Conversion...Saul Meets Jesus**. Explain that sometimes conversion is a “wow” event as Saul experienced, but most often it is our changing the way we look and respond to things – trying to see the world through God’s eyes. Conclude with the reflection. Be prepared to share an experience of your own. 20 min.
4. Continue on the theme of conversion by reading or teaching **Our Armenian Way**. The boxed information on Armenia’s ancient pagan gods might interest students. The poem on the birth of Vahagn is thousands of years old. Certainly mention to students that these pagan names are still popular today and they may even know people named Anahid, Vahagn, and Astghig, or variations such as Mihran or Tiran. 5 min.
5. Segue with “In a previous lesson, we had a first peek at the earliest church community ever described. It was in the Book of Acts. We’re going to look at it again, this time in more detail, and a bit more creatively.” Read **The First Church**. Allow students ten minutes to describe this early church with words and pictures in their texts. Then call on volunteers to come up one at a time to put their words and pictures on the board, thereby creating a visual picture of the community. Make sure everything is covered (as per the following verses): 42. They taught and learned from each other; prayed; broke bread (shared meals, even the communal meal that developed into Holy Communion as we know it today). 43. The apostles worked wonders in their midst, the people were filled with a reverence – awe – for God. 44. Everyone shared what they had with each other, perhaps some even shared living quarters. 45. They sold what they had and made sure everyone had enough. 46. They met daily for worshipful fellowship, ate in each other’s homes and were sincerely happy. 47. They continually praised God and were well liked by those around them. They grew in number continually.
6. Then discuss similarities and differences. If students say there are no longer wonders being performed, ask if there might not be different *kinds* of wonders today – the miracle of sacrificing for one another, etc. They might also point out that today we do not routinely share what we have with those who don’t have enough; perhaps this is done more with money donations to charities. Discuss the benefits of doing so with actual *things* (can bring us closer). There are many other differences and similarities – discuss freely. If students wish their communities were more like this early church, discuss together some concrete ways this can happen. Conclude with the **Closing Prayer**. 30 min.

Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 3: Hearts of Stone to Hearts of Flesh: The Conversion of Armenia

Key Concepts

1. Beginning with Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew, Christianity was planted in Armenia, bearing fruit finally in the conversion of the king and the royal court in 301 A.D.
2. God uses faithful witnesses to share the Good News.
2. Conversion is an ongoing process in the life of a Christian.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a review exercise.
2. Participate in a 'blindness' activity reflecting Paul's experience in Acts 9: 1-19.
3. Participate in a Bible study (Acts 8:26-40; 16: 11-15) on the famous evangelization of two Gentiles, the Ethiopian eunuch and the merchant Lydia.
4. Read about the conversion of Armenia and the important feasts of St. Gregory.
5. Write a short reflection on how Armenia's conversion to Christianity 1700+ years ago affects (or does not) how they live today.

Materials Needed

Diocesan calendar(s)

Blindfolds (see Procedure #3)

Lined paper

Note to the Teacher

For the blindfold exercise in Procedure #3, you might need to be in a larger room or hall for part of the class. *If your class is large, an assistant would be advisable, to keep a careful eye on students.*

Procedure

1. Welcome students and pray the opening prayer. Have them respond to the questions in **One Step Back**. Answers:
1. a, 2. c, 3. b, 4. a, 5. d 5 min.
2. Tell students: "Last week, we read about the Christian persecutor Saul's conversion to Christianity. He went from being *against* Christ passionately to loving Christ *so* much that he had to teach others about the Lord. In this event, what was the first thing that happened to him? (He encountered Jesus and was blinded for three days). Why do you think God made Saul go through this? (He had to experience actual blindness to realize he had been spiritually blind; his true vision was obscured and he had to understand what it meant to see with eyes of faith.) Let's get a sense of what it was like for Saul to be blind to experience such a radical conversion."
3. Begin with a fast review of Acts 9:1-19. Have students read silently and then, round-robin-style, have them re-tell it in their own words. Keep a brisk pace going so the story is retold in a few minutes. Emphasize the stages of Saul's conversion in your comments:
 - First, Saul could see physically but was spiritually blinded to Jesus' message.
 - Then he was physically blinded while receiving spiritual sight.
 - Finally, both his physical and spiritual sight were restored.
 - a. Provide blindfolds for half the class, and pair each blindfolded student up with a non-blindfolded student. Direct the non-blindfolded student to lead their blinded partners on a faith walk around the classroom. Then have the pair alternate leaders. (if you are able to do this in a larger space or room in the building, it will be more interesting.)

- b. Invite the students to reflect on their experience of leading and being led, of being able to see and not being able to see. Ask what it was like to be dependent on another and forced to trust one's safety to someone else.
- c. Conclude by leading a discussion about conversion as a profound change of heart. Point out these ideas in your own words: Many people can hear God's voice more clearly when something suddenly stops them short and forces them to negotiate their lives in a new way; illness, loss, suffering and new situations make it difficult for us to see where we are going and force us to reach out to others or God in a way we might not when we feel self-assured on our familiar path. 20 min.
4. Tell students: "Last week, we read about the how God used Ananias and Barnabus to bring about the conversion of Saul. This week let's read about another biblical example of how God uses faithful witnesses to bear the Good News to others..." Turn to **Faithful Witnesses Continue to Share the Good News**. Have a student read Acts 8:26-40 and another student read the commentary in the Student Text. Then have someone read Acts 16: 11-15 and another read the commentary that follows it. Ask students: "How are the two accounts similar?" (God used faithful witnesses, Paul & Philip, to spread the seeds of faith among the Gentiles; as Philip baptized the eunuch & Paul baptized Lydia, geographical, ethnic and legal barriers were washed away; both the eunuch & Lydia were Gentiles; both were wealthy or had impressive positions; the eunuch had just been to Jerusalem to worship God, Lydia was by the river – a place of prayer and worship...both were actively seeking God.) "How are they different?" (Philip, prompted by the angel, approached the eunuch; but Lydia, whose heart was open to the message already, approached Paul; the eunuch did not see Philip again, but Lydia became instrumental in Paul's missionary journeys; after the eunuch was baptized Philip was snatched away, but Paul remained and even stayed at home.) 10 min.
5. Read or teach **The Seeds of Faith Spread to Armenia**, a reinforcement of what students have been touching upon more briefly in earlier lessons and began to learn in more detail last week. Then, go over the facts; have students tell the story themselves (they may also refer back to last week's session). Ask them to think, as well, about the similarities between Lydia and Sts. Santookht & Volouhi. (In both cultures women were considered inferior to men and were not able to make life decisions for themselves; however these women were converted and baptized and successfully worked to convert others to Christ.)
6. Read **Our Armenian Way** to review the feast days celebrated in remembrance of St. Gregory the Illuminator. Ask students why they think so many days are set aside to remember specific events in St. Gregory's life. (As *the* person who Christianized the Armenian people, St. Gregory has a central role in our Christian story. After the events in Christ's life – all of them remembered and commemorated – those of St. Gregory are those most commemorated in the Armenian Church). Have students look up these three feast days in the Diocesan calendar (or have a volunteer do this, if you only have one copy) 10 min.
7. Distribute paper and point to the writing assignment in the Text: **How the Conversion of Armenia in 301 A.D. Affects How I Live Today in the 21st century**. Tell students (and you can write key names on the board as you talk): "Okay, we've been putting together the amazing story of how Armenia became the first Christian nation from Christ, through the Holy Spirit through the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew through St. Gregory and the royal family, King Drtad, Queen Ashkhen and Princess Khosrovitookht. Okay. That was almost 2,000 years ago! So how does this make a change in how *you* live today? Or does it? I'd like you to think seriously for a few moments about how this incredible event – about which we are so proud - affects you today. Please write thoughtfully and honestly and legibly. We're going to discuss your answers together and I'll be collecting them." (At the conclusion of the exercise, collect them and type them up at home to post on a bulletin board (if they are thoughtful answers of course!).
8. Conclude with the Ephesians-inspired **Closing Prayer**. 15 min.

Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 4: In the Beginning Was The Word

Key Concepts

1. The invention of an Armenian alphabet enabled the Armenian Church to translate Scripture; this launched a Golden Age of conversion, writing, and translation.
2. It was a life of faith and a desire to further the Christian message that inspired Saints Sahag & Mesrob and provided them heavenly support for their enormous undertaking.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a review exercise.
2. Examine the importance of the written word in a memory activity.
3. Review the creation of the Armenian alphabet.
4. Participate in a Bible study on the best use of a language.
5. Read about Mashtotz' 5th century biographer and the Feast of the Holy Translators.
6. Decorate Armenian bird letter initials for a bulletin board display.

Materials Needed

Bird letter templates for procedure #5. These may be requested by contacting the Department of Christian Education. Print out bird letters for each of the initials of your students.

Colored construction paper, glue, markers.

Bulletin Board display text (from the back of this manual).

Procedure

1. Welcome students and pray the opening prayer together.
2. Have them respond to the questions in **One Step Back**. Answers: 1. c, 2. b, 3. a, 4. b, 5. Commitment to the Pit, Deliverance from the Pit, Discovery of his Holy Relics. 5 min.
3. To introduce **Write It Down for Me...**, ask students to close their books and sit and listen very carefully to what you are going to teach them. Now teach the contents of this section. Then ask students to come to the board one by one and write whatever they remember from what they heard. It will probably be minimal. Now have them *read* the same information and then (and they can refer to the textbook) call on them to come up and write something they learned. The list will probably be much longer and more detailed. Conclude by observing that a written language can help knowledge 'stick' and take root. 15 min.
4. Turn to **How Do I Use Language?** and ask for a quick answer to the True/False. Then continue: "Whether written or spoken, words are powerful things, with the potential to uplift or to bring down." Relay a personal story of how you've witnessed, or have been a party to both examples and ask the students if they would like to share a personal experience. Do the Bible readings and questions together. This can be done by having the class work in pairs or singly. Then share answers. (Answer guidelines: 1. Being careful with our words can lead to a long rewarding life and being careless with our words can ruin things. 2. We can cause great damage with careless words, just like a small spark can set a huge forest on fire. 3. Such talk can lead to behavior that wouldn't please God. 4. This verse tells us that the proverbs were meant to teach people wisdom and understanding, which having their own alphabet will do as well. 15 min.

5. Read **Our Armenian Way** and distribute the bird letters to each student. Have them color each letter, cut it out and

glue onto colored construction paper. At the bottom, direct them to write (e.g., if their name is Alice): “A” is for Alice. Use the letters and the template (which you might want to read aloud to students) at the back of this manual for a bulletin board or classroom display.

6. Review **My Language and My Life Counts!** Encourage the student to think and pray that their words during the week will *add* to their holiness and not detract. Pray the closing prayer. 25 min.

Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 5: Men and Women Living The Word

Key Concepts

1. God’s light shines through people of faith whose love for God leads to love of his creation and a desire to turn others to him.
2. We are all called to be holy, to be saints.
3. Holiness is being the best version of yourself, *God’s* version.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Identify the heroes they would choose to help change the world for the better.
2. Complete a review exercise.
3. Explore St. Paul’s letter to the Romans as a guidebook for Christian living.
4. Examine the idea of holiness and the lives of three Armenian saints.
5. Create a magazine collage on “Holy Living/Saintly Lives.”

Materials Needed

Display (Procedures #1, 2, 4)

Pictures of contemporary cartoon super-heroes, i.e. Batman, Spiderman, Wonder-Woman or Transformer heroes/X-Men etc.

Pictures of Jesus and of recognizable famous saints (these can be taken from the Internet, or copied from the curriculum pages (color copier preferred)

A video game

Directions to build a complicated toy

A textbook

A Bible open to St. Paul’s letter to the Romans

Collage (Procedure #5) Have these assembled on a desk or table.

Magazines (make sure they have plenty of pictures of people)

Newspaper photos

A copy of a picture of Jesus from the text (one for each student) color copies, please

Pictures of saints (these and the above can be taken from the Internet, or copied from the curriculum pages (color copier preferred)

Photos from the church newsletter of people serving (committees, parish council, etc.)

Large oak tag (9 X 12 would be fine), one for each student

Glue sticks

Scissors

Procedure

1. Prior to students’ arrival, tape pictures of super heroes on one side of the room, picture of Jesus and well-known saints on the other. On your desk place a video game, directions to build a complicated toy, a math or science textbook, and a Bible open to St. Paul’s letter to the Romans.

2. Begin class by asking students to think about this question: “If you were given the opportunity to change the world what would you do, and what would be your first step?” Allow them a few minutes to think of some ideas. Now ask them to go and stand by the picture of the ‘hero’ whom they feel could help them make this change. Give each student an opportunity to briefly share the reason for their choice. Then have them return to their seats for the opening prayer. 10 min.

3. Read **You Can Change the World** and then move right into **One Step Back** to review last week’s lesson. (Answers: 1. a, 2. d, 3. b, 4. b, 5. c. Bonus Question: Wisdom, instruction, understanding. 5 min.

4. Now ask students while pointing to each of the items that you’ve placed on the table: “Have you ever been confused by the directions for playing a new video game? Or have you ever had trouble with a new math concept or a chapter in one of your textbooks? Reading St. Paul’s letter to the Romans is like that for some people, sort of like an instruction manual which is full of great hints that Christians can follow to become the person God wants each of us to be – a holy person, a saint.” Read **Celebrating Hope...Celebrating Christian Life**.

Work through the Bible readings and questions together. For **Romans 1:16-17**: The Gospel/Good News; how God puts people right with himself; through faith; by faith. Key #3. **Romans 3:9-24**: All who have turned away from God; through deceitfulness, bitterness, violence, lack of reverence for God; lets us know that we have sinned; faith in Jesus Christ. Key #1. **Romans 8:28-39**: That all things will work out for the best; to be conformed to the likeness of His Son; they are justified and glorified, Key #2. 15 min.

5. Review the sidebar. Then read or teach **Superhero Saints** and **Our Armenian Way**. Hand out the poster paper, pictures of Jesus, magazines and/or newspapers and ask students to first glue Jesus’ picture in the center and then select pictures of people who portray qualities of holy living – could be a person at work, a loving expression, etc. as well as any other images (perhaps from nature) that communicate holiness, and glue them around the photo. They may also decorate or draw other symbols with markers. Allow 15 minutes to create the collage. Then clean up and collect supplies. Tape the collages on the board (use masking tape so they won’t be damaged when removed) and discuss the images as a class. End the activity by sharing with them this thought: “God does not call you to live a holy life in order to stifle or control you. He invites you to live a holy life so that, from an infinite number of possibilities, you can become the-best-version-of-yourself. In a very beautiful way God wants you to be yourself. It’s not the self your ego wants you to be, and not the self the world wants you to be. Rather, it’s the self God had in mind when he created you. In other words, God is saying ‘Be all I created you to be.’” You may consider having students share their project with parishioners during coffee hour. 25 min.

6. Conclude by reading **How Does God’s Light Shine Through in My Life?** Remind students that the goal of Christian life is holiness. The Church has been carried throughout the ages by the personal holiness of a handful of her members in each place and each time...we are the next generation of saints.

7. Pray the closing prayer together. 5 min.

Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 6: The Oldest Church in the New World

Key Concepts

1. God will remain faithful to his promise “to be our God and accept us as his people.” (Jeremiah 31:33)
2. The Armenian Church in America established its first church in Worcester, MA in 1898 and grew to embrace three Dioceses and thousands of faithful.
3. The Armenian Church always served as a beacon for Armenians wherever they lived.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Explore the meaning of the word “community.”
2. Analyze the hymn *Kreesdos Ee Mech Mer* (Christ in Our Midst).
3. Complete a brief review quiz.
4. Identify the six main chapters of our faith story.
5. Participate in a Bible study focusing on Jesus’ call to the apostles and to us today.
6. Read about St. Paul’s missionary journeys.
7. Review the facts of the first immigration of Armenians to the United States and the founding of the first church in Worcester, MA.

Materials Needed

Large cross

Divine Liturgy pew books (one for each pair of students)

Procedure

1. Begin class by asking students what word or words come to mind when they hear the word ‘community.’ Give them time to respond and write answers on the board. Then turn to **Here I Am, Lord**. Distribute Divine Liturgy books. Have students turn to page 27 and tell them: “This is the hymn that we sing while we share the “Kiss of Peace” during *Badarak*. It is a way of expressing our love and togetherness in Christ, since it is during the Divine Liturgy that Christ brings all of us together in him through Holy Communion. For that reason, we need to be in complete peace with *one another* so that our hearts are pure and open and ready to receive God.” Hold up the cross and note that our communion with one another and with God is symbolized in Christ’s holy cross. “The vertical leg of the cross represents our relationship with God; the horizontal arm represents our relationship with one another.” Give them five minutes to complete the assignment, using the pew books. When they are done, pray the prayer together. Answers (students will answer in English, but review some of the more important Armenian terms by pointing to them in pew book; the words may vary slightly because of grammatical prefixes or suffixes but they will be recognizable): *Christ/Kreesdos, God/Asdvadz, peace/khaghaghootyoon, Holy/Soorp, greeting/voghchooyrn, church/yegeghetsee, soul/hokee, kiss/hampooyr, love/ser, voices, blessings, angels.* 10 min.
2. Read or teach **God’s Promise to the Armenian Nation**.
3. Tell students: “Let’s look at **One Step Back** for our little review quiz and see what we remember from last week’s lesson.” Answers: T, F (she never persecuted Christians), F (Catholicos Khrimian accomplished this), T, F (it means “filled with Grace;” holy is “soorp” in Armenian). 10 min.
4. Ask for a volunteer to read **Charting A Spiritual Journey**. On the board make five columns, one for each passage below. Divide students into five groups (this can be done in pairs or singly or as one group if the class is small) and assign each one of the Scripture passages. Direct them to read their passage and respond to the questions. (Timing will depend on whether you work as one group or five.) If working in groups, allow ten minutes for the reading and the answers, and ten minutes for a quick review together. As you discuss, record (or ask for volunteers to do so) their answers in the appropriate column on the board. Have them copy answers into their books.

5.

Matthew 28:16-20	Mark 16:14-18	Luke 24:33-49	John 20:19-23	Acts 1:3-9
Together on a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go.	They were together eating	Together in Jerusalem	Behind locked doors together	Together in Jerusalem
They worshiped but some doubted.	Disbelief-doubt	They were terrified; they thought he was a ghost. But eventually they were filled with joy & wonder.	Doubtful, but filled with joy when Jesus revealed himself as the Lord, showing his wounds.	They no longer doubted that Jesus was still alive (v.3).
Make disciples of all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teach them to obey the commandments.	Go out throughout the world, preach the Good News, and baptize believers.	They would be his witnesses throughout the world.	Gave them the power to forgive people's sins.	Wait for the Holy Spirit, the gift the Father promised; then they would tell people everywhere about Jesus.
That they would not be alone, Jesus would always be with them.	The Lord worked with them.	He would send them the Holy Spirit as the Father promised.	He breathed the power of the Holy Spirit upon them.	The Holy Spirit

In conclusion, make the connection that our Christian journey is the same today as it was for the apostles and summarize all the findings quickly:

Where the apostles were or what they were doing? They were together-Christians journey together in community.

What reaction did they have to Jesus's appearance? Mixed reaction, fear, doubt and finally joy. Our faith journey very often is a mixed reaction. But once we truly believe, we are filled with joy –which is a sure sign of the Holy Spirit.

What did Jesus tell them to do? To be his witnesses throughout the world, with the power to baptize, perform miracles & forgive sins: The Church's mission has not changed – our mission is still the same.

What should they expect? The gift that the Father promised, Jesus' authority, power and the grace of God's Holy Spirit. As the body of Christ we are can count on the Holy Spirit to guide us in the Church's mission.

6. Teach or read **St. Paul Rocks His World!** Give students a few minutes to address their parish. Share answers. If students can't think of anything, prompt them to think of what Christ asks us to do in following him: give to the poor, pray, love one another, serve one another, etc. 10 min.

7. Read **Our Armenian Way** and recite Vahan Tekeyan's poem as a closing reflection. 10 min.

Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 7: We Are The Church

Key Concepts

1. The church is the Body of Christ on earth, a community of gifts, a redeemed family of believers.
2. Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit.
3. The Holy Spirit guides and strengthens all the faithful, who are Christ's Body, through his gifts & through the spiritual fruit we bear when we live in him.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Sing/pray the hymn “Lutzak” and reflect on God’s bounty in their lives.
2. Complete a review quiz.
3. Participate in a Bible study on verses in John 16 and Acts 2 to review Christ’s promise of the Holy Spirit as personal guide and anchor of the believing community.
4. Identify their spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12).
5. Examine the fruits of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5: 22-25.
6. Create a craft based on Galatians 5: 22-23.
7. Explore the concrete ways our lives might bear this fruit in a prayer exercise.

Materials Needed

Laptop, cell phone or mp3 player to play “Lutzak” (the hymn after communion)

For procedure #7:

Color copy of **Fruit of the Spirit** from the back of this manual; cut individual fruit out.

White 8 ½ X 11 paper cut into four squares.

A large white poster board (or simple large newsprint page) with a tree trunk and branches drawn on it) Galatians 5:22-23 written at the top

Stick glue

Colored pens or markers

Optional (this can be on display on your desk): Fruit bowl with nine different types of (plastic) fruit each with the name of one of the fruits of the spirit taped on it.

Procedure

1. Have the hymn “Lutzak” playing as students arrive and tell them to follow along by using the words in their textbook. Once everyone has arrived or class has officially begun, sing the hymn together. Then pray the English words. Discuss the question. (Answers might include family, friends, a brain to think with and solve problems, love, the beauty of the natural world, etc.)
2. Complete the review questions in **One Step Back** as a class. (Answers: 1.d, 2.c, f, a, b e, d, 3.b, 4.b, 5.b (he was converted as an adult on the road to Damascus; he wrote his letters mostly to *communities* of Christians, not individuals; he went on three missionary journeys.) 10 min.
3. Read or teach the initial text in **Christ Lives in Us Through the Holy Spirit**. Then have them read (or call on a volunteer to read) **John 16: 7, 12-15** and ask them to respond to the questions. Answers: 1. It is to their advantage that he return to the Father; unless Jesus leaves them, the Counselor will not come. 2. He will guide them in the Truth. 3. He will bring him glory by making Jesus known to all.
4. Ask for a volunteer to read **Acts 2:42-47** (remind them that they’ve looked at this before from other angles) and ask them to identify the four things that the early Christian communities devoted themselves to. (Answers: studying, fellowship, sharing meals, and praying.) Conclude by asking if parish life is similar today. (In these four ways, basically yes: we learn through Sunday School, parish lectures and educational events, Bible study; we gather often for social occasions and for meals; and we pray together at Badarak.) 10 min.
5. Read **Gifts That Keep On Giving**. 1. In verse 7, St. Paul tells us that these gifts are given “for the common good.” 2. The image Paul uses is a body and its parts. Let students observe how many different ways Paul describes the *interdependence* of believers. Conclude with verses 25 and 26 which emphasize how God wants believers to think of themselves as a whole – that if one suffers, all suffer and if one thrives, all thrive. 3. Call on volunteers to answer and then come to the board to write their answer. Answers: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, people who help others, administrators, those who speak in tongues. When all the answers are on the board, discuss,

using the following as a “script:” “Who are the apostles in a community? *If no one has an answer:* Well, who were the apostles in Jesus’ day? Yes, the people who preached, and healed hearts, and baptized. Who might that be today? The priest, the pastor of the parish, right? How about prophets? What *is* a prophet? Someone who keeps everyone focused on God’s will for how we behave, how we think, what we do. Who could be a prophet in our parish? Well, anyone who helps us stay on track as Christians, who reminds us of how we need to behave. That is not just our pastor but can be other people in the parish as well. Teachers are not just Sunday School or Armenian School teachers but people who share their knowledge with us at lectures and other kinds of parish programs. The priest is our teacher when he gives his sermon in church or conducts Bible study. Miracle workers might be people who do amazing things in God’s name, for example, rallying the parish to open a soup kitchen. Healers can be those people who have a gift for comforting people who are grieving or feeling blue. Helping others, well we know what that’s all about and it’s so important! As for speaking in tongues, that was a gift of the Holy Spirit in the early Church when people, during worship, exclaimed their feelings for God in almost hard-to-understand words; it’s about feeling God’s presence in a deep and personal way. In some Christian denominations, this continues to this day.”

Discuss with students what they think *their* gifts are and where they might use them to serve the parish. 15 min.

6. Read **Galatians 5:22-23**. Tell students that we are no longer reading about “gifts,” but rather about “fruit.” Write both words on the board. Ask students to define a “gift.” (something freely given, given with love, something we don’t ask for but receive). Then have them define “fruit.” (the essence of a fruit, is something that a living tree bears – it springs out of the very nature of a tree, i.e, an apple tree can, of course, only produce apples.) So what are things that people living in the Spirit, walking with the Spirit bear? Here are the nine fruits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

7. Distribute “fruit”– one to a student along with a piece of the pre-cut paper and a marker; if there are less than nine students, double up to cover all nine. Direct students to think prayerfully for a moment on this particular Spirit-born virtue. Have them glue their fruit in the middle or in one corner of the paper, allowing space around or next to it to write examples of how this virtue can be reflected in daily life. They can write out examples in words or use drawings or symbols (i.e. for generosity they might write: “give to charities whenever I can” bring my offering to Sunday School;” symbols can be an extended hand, a dollar sign, etc.) Allow five minutes for working, then have students come up and tape their fruit to the tree. Discuss the results. Conclude with: “It’s so impressive to see these beautiful virtues as the natural fruit of a life lived in the Spirit. And, you know, St. Paul reminds us as well in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that ‘if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!’ so by being this kind (point to the tree) of “fruitful” person in your everyday life you will see a newer, better you being created. 15 min.

8. Read **Our Armenian Way**. Conclude with the progressive prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Form a circle. Begin the exercise by completing the first request as an example for the students. Ask the person next to you to complete the second request. Continue in that pattern until the prayer is complete. 10 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Lesson 1: Come, Let Us Worship!

Key Concepts

1. We respond naturally to God and all of his gifts with awe and thanksgiving.
2. The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church is our central expression of worship.
3. The Badarak consists of two main parts leading to its central event, Holy Communion.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review the Transfiguration story.

2. Explore their feelings about worship.
3. Read a variety of Scripture passages about people who respond in awe to Jesus.
4. Order the basic events in each of the two main parts of the Divine Liturgy.
5. Identify the personal benefits of worship and consider the roles they can play in their community worship service.
6. Complete an art activity on worship.

Materials Needed

Pens /Pencils/crayons/markers/drawing supplies

Masking tape (optional: see procedure #2)

Construction paper; optional: prepared computer title: **Come, Let Us Worship!** (see procedure #7)

Procedure

1. To open today's session read or retell the Transfiguration story (Matthew 17:1-9) to the group. Note that similar accounts of this story are also found in the Gospels of Mark (9:2-10) and Luke (9:28-36). Ask them to imagine being with Jesus and experiencing the Transfiguration. Remember to emphasize the feelings of awe and amazement. Pray **A Glimpse of Glory** aloud together.
2. Lead the students into the **Liturgy Opinion Poll**, telling them that today they are going to have the opportunity to share how they feel about the worship experience. With masking tape (or just by pointing to end points and middle) create an imaginary line across the room. Label left side-absolutely agree; middle-sometimes agree; right side-never agree. The statements that follow focus on different aspects of worship and their worship service experience. Ask the students to go and stand on the part of the line that best identifies their feelings. After each question allow the students to share why they are standing where they are. Let the students debate one topic where there is not total agreement. Guidelines for discussion (encourage students to share what they would change or like to see done differently): 1. For those who can't answer this with a "yes" (and that might be most), explore reasons. 2. Point out that the prayers and hymns are full of positive messages and meaning; perhaps it's the "minor key" of the music and the chanting that can sound a bit sad. 3. Clearly, the Scripture should be understood; sometimes traditions are hard to change, especially in an ethnic church struggling with self-preservation. 4. Yes, worshipping with the believing community is important - it strengthens faith and has the potential to increase one's joy at worship. Praying in "one voice" at liturgy calls us to a special task – to receive Jesus in Word and Body together. For those who disagree, explore reasons; there are probably good reasons that need to be affirmed. 5. The hymns of the Armenian Church are eloquent theological statements expressed in the universal language of music; they are meant to enrich and enhance the worship experience – everyone should sing! 6. The entire purpose of the liturgy is to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord in Holy Communion - a "great spiritual medicine."
3. Continue on in the text asking the students to share their views on their favorite parts of liturgy and explain their choices. Conclude by saying that the central event of our Badarak worship is Holy Communion but that all else leads to it and fulfills it in a full and rich experience. Review the two Scripture passages. Answers: 1. You worship what you do not know. 2. Worship the Lord your God and serve him only. 25 min.
4. Read **The WOW Factor!** and explore the Scripture passages that describe transforming encounters with Jesus. Answers: 1.d, 2.e, 3.c, 4.f, 5.a., 6.b
5. Read or teach **Our Armenian Way**, then divide the class into 2 teams for the "**What Happens When**" activity. Each team will try to apportion the 14 liturgical events evenly between the two sections. Draw a simple diagram of the church as displayed in the curriculum on the board, and write the answers in so that you can review them together. The team with the most correct and the most in the correct order wins.
Liturgy of the Word: Priest vests; procession into the church to the altar; priest confesses his sins; sing Soorp Asdvadz; the deacon holds up the Gospel book; reading the Gospel; Havadamk (Creed). **Liturgy of the Eucharist:** Priest receives the chalice; Kiss of Peace; bread and wine become Body and Blood; sing Hayr Mer; confess our sins; Holy Communion; kiss the Gospel book.

6. Lead into **Life Issues** by asking: “Do you still wonder why you need to worship”? Read the five consideration points and then read and discuss **Stepping Up**. 20 min.
7. **Thanksgiving Mural.** Distribute construction paper squares and markers and ask students to draw an image or images of worship – either from one of the Bible accounts they read today or people, vessels, gestures, etc. that happen in church. Write or post your prepared title **Come, Let Us Worship!** in the center on the wall or board and as students complete their drawing affix them around the sign (this could be a bulletin board display as well. While they are drawing, play music from the Armenian Church liturgy.
8. Pray or sing *Kohanamk* together. 15 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Lesson 2: Liturgy: The Work of the People

Key Concepts

1. Two important tasks of the worshipper are sharing the Kiss of Peace (affirming divinely-inspired unity) and then kissing the Gospel at worship’s end (taking the Word into the world).
2. Our Christian responsibilities do not end with Badarak; our communion with God and with one another is the fuel needed to make the world a better place.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a “Kiss of Peace” floor puzzle.
2. Do a quick review.
3. Examine how the Armenian Liturgy incorporates all of our senses...a total spiritual workout.
4. Identify the Kiss of Peace and the kissing the Gospel at the end of liturgy as gestures of commitment to one another and to the world.
5. Participate in a Bible study on Christian attributes.
6. Discuss a story about a 7th grader who brings God’s love to his community through service.
7. Create a banner on how we can make the world a better place.

Materials

Kreesdos Ee Mech puzzle pieces (from the back of this manual); you might want to laminate these for permanent use. Banner (see Procedure #8): 1 ½’ dowel; large piece of felt cut out in the shape of a banner; fold over 1” over the dowel and staple.

Enlarged color copies of any photos in the Student Text pertinent to the “Christ’s love in the world” theme (certainly pages 96 and 97).

Ribbons

Magazines & newspapers

Glue

Optional: recording of *Kreesdos Ee Mech*

Procedure

1. Opening Prayer Activity: Have the Kreesdos Ee Mech puzzle pieces on the desk in a jumble. Ask students to work together to put the puzzle in correct order in either Armenian or English. (if possible have the *Kreesdos ee mech* playing in the background) When they’ve completed the activity, pray the prayer together in English in **Here I Am, Lord**.

2. Work through **One Step Back**. Answers: a, d, a, b, b. 15 min.
3. Read **Worship in Action**. Allow some time for students to jot down answers and then discuss. Answer guidelines: Senses: Smelling the sweet incense and candles, hearing the chants and hymns, the jangle of the *pourvar* (censer) and the bells of the *kushotz* (fan); seeing the chalice and Bible elevated, the candles, etc.; tasting the Communion; touch/movement: crossing oneself, standing, kneeling, sitting, bowing, raising arms, kissing the cross and the Bible, singing.
4. Ask the students if they remember what the Kiss of Peace is (from an earlier lesson) and what *yergurbakootyoon* means (kissing the ground). Ask them if they can identify other times, during the Liturgy, when we kiss something? (The priest's hand cross as he proceeds through the church and, at the end of Liturgy, the Gospel book). Read **Christian Love, It's More Than Just A Kiss!**
5. Move right into **The Action Continues** by writing the following words on the board in large letters, leaving enough room under each for students to write a Bible verse: Salt, light, living stones, ambassador, chosen people. Now have students read the Bible verses and match them with the correct answers in their textbooks. Allow five minutes for them to work and then call on volunteers to write the correct Bible verse under each word.
(Answers: Matthew 5:13—you are the salt of the earth, Matthew 5:14—light of the world, 1 Peter 2:5—living stones, 2 Corinthians 5:20—ambassador & I Peter 2:9—chosen people. Explore the questions that follow as a class. Desired responses might include:
- Christians are a preservative and give flavor to the world.
 - Light provides a direction and path for others to follow.
 - Be a physical temple of God's love and compassion; be an active part of your parish community.
 - An ambassador is one who is authorized to represent their own country while residing in a foreign nation.
 - We can be ambassadors by reflecting the values and love of God to others, by being an exemplary person and Christian in the world.
 - To grow in our own faith, closer to Christ; to love and share life with a believing community, our parish; to serve others.
6. Have students read **Special Eyewitness Report** aloud. Discuss questions. 25 min.
7. Read **Life Issue: What Does It Mean To Love The "Other?"** Give students a few minutes to read the Scripture verses and respond. (Discussion guidelines: In Matthew 5:23-24, he asks us to be reconciled with those close to us; in fact, even before we come to church or approach the altar, we need to forgive and be forgiven; in Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus asks us to love those outside our circle, even our enemies; after all, how hard is it to love the people who love us?)
8. Read or teach **Our Armenian Way**. Then mount the blank banner in front of students. Place the title **We Are Christ's Love in the World** and photos at top center and announce that students have ten minutes to find magazine pictures, newspaper articles or draw an original illustration of how we can make the world a better place. Invite them to bring up their pieces as they finish and glue them in place on the banner. Distribute magazines, newspapers and construction paper.
9. Conclude the session with the prayer in the Student Text. 20 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Lesson 3: Liturgy: Starting Over Each Week

Key Concepts

1. Through the bread and wine of Holy Communion, we partake of Christ himself and are spiritually renewed.
2. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is another gift from our Church that allows us a fresh new start and to be worthy to receive the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Explore the pathways to reconciliation by looking at an actual map.
2. Examine the Armenian form of Confession and reflect on the specific ways students might have “missed the mark.”
3. Participate in a creative Bible study on Luke 22:1-38 focusing on the Last Supper and Peter’s denial.
4. Review the purpose of the ritual of confession in the Armenian Church and its deeper personal meaning.
5. Complete a bookmark-making activity using the Armenian miniature “Peter’s denial.”

Materials Needed

Badarak book (with confessional prayer)

Fold out map, highlighter and a small toy car (have map mounted on the board or wall before class begins)

Copies of the “Peter’s denial” bookmark (from the back of this manual)

Cardboard to mount bookmarks (if you have not made copies on card stock)

Glue

Colored markers

CD of “Der Vorghormya”

Procedure

1. Welcome the students. Point to the map and tell them that today we are going to study how a roadmap can help us know more about reconciliation. Write the word “reconciliation” on the board and ask students what they think it means (literally means “bringing back together” - to re-establish a close relationship; to become more harmonious). Ask if they know that there is a hymn asking for God’s mercy that is sung in the Armenian Church at every Liturgy: “Der Voghormya.” Listen to it being sung and then pray together with the words in the Student Text.

2. Read **Free to Say Yes...and No**. Now point students to the road map. Then ask these questions:
What kind of things do we need to do to prepare for a trip?
Is there anything in particular we need to bring with us?
One of the most essential items to bring might be a map. What does a map do?
Perhaps you need a compass. What does a compass do? Or we might be best served by having a GPS.

Continue the activity. With a highlighter, begin to trace a route one might take to go from one point on the map to another. Make it a long trip. Talk about where you start and where you will end. After you have your route planned and mapped, take a small car and begin the trip. As you go, deviate from the route. Students may notice and ask why you’re doing that, or you may bring to their attention that you have gone off course.

Ask them:

When you take a wrong turn what might you do?

How might we get back to the route planned?

Should we cancel the trip entirely?

Continue: “Like a road trip, our route to God sometimes gets off course and we may lose our way because of wrong choices we make. When we get lost, we have to ask directions. There are always people who can help us get back on the right track and back to God. We can call upon our parents, teachers, priests, or good friends to help us get back on the road to a better relationship with God.

We can do that especially in the sacrament of reconciliation or confession. Reconciliation helps us to see the way more clearly. This sacrament gives us the opportunity to become one with God again and it helps us on our journey to arrive safely at our destination. 15 min.

3. Have students read **When We Have Missed the Mark** silently and then say: “Let’s practice doing a thoughtful self-

reflection while we make this rather formal confession.” Pick up the Divine Liturgy book and say: “I’ll read from the confession we do in church, and then we can read a paraphrased version in the book. Look at some of the ways we might be committing this sin and volunteer your answers. At the end of each discussion we’ll repeat *‘Megha Asdoodzo...I have sinned against God.’*” 10 min.

4. Luke 22: 1-38 includes the plot, betrayal, Passover preparation, Last Supper, argument about greatness, Peter’s denial and that in Christ we have everything we need. Since there is a significant amount of reading, allow students to take turns. Read the first two verses then choose someone to read 4 verses; when they have completed reading their passage, allow them to select the next reader for the next 4 verses. Work together on **Top Stories: What Are Our Headlines?** *Answers: Plot to kill Jesus; a guest room in the city; A New Covenant; His body, given for them; be a servant of all; deny him three times; purse, bag and sandals.* Headlines: 5, 7, 2, 3, 4, 6, 1 15 min.

5. Read through **Our Armenian Way** and **Life Issue**.

6. Enjoy an art activity based on Luke 22:31-34. Have students recall the story and how Peter denied that Jesus was his friend three times. Ask: “How do you think Peter felt when the soldiers took Jesus? How do you think he felt when the rooster crowed? Have you ever felt ashamed of something you said or did?” Remind the students that Jesus loved Peter anyway and that God still loves them when they make mistakes. He knows how we are but he doesn’t want to leave us that way! He is always ready to forgive and restore. Distribute the pictures of the Armenian miniature of Peter’s denial and markers. Have students color the bookmark and then glue onto the sturdy cardboard (if the copies are not on card stock). They can use this as a Bible bookmark. Ask them to please show it to parents and tell them the story of how one of Jesus’ most successful apostles began his ministry in misery, by denying his friendship with Jesus. There’s hope for all of us!

7. Conclude the lesson by saying: “Now let’s end our morning by saying together something we all say often during Badarak, always together, and always with great hope.” Pray and dismiss the class. 15 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Lesson 4: Praying On My Own Time (All the Time)

Key Concepts

1. Our Lord modeled with his own life that prayer is essential to attain spiritual strength and insight.
2. Prayer is essential in the life of a Christian – like the body needs air to live, the soul needs prayer.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Read about the importance of prayer.
2. Discover what St Paul says about prayer while identifying traditional Armenian prayers.
3. Reading Scripture passages about how Christ always sought a quiet place to pray – a good example for us to follow.
4. Share and discuss their personal thoughts about prayer.
5. Read brief notes on four great saints and their contributions to the faith of the Armenian people.
6. Complete an activity on the four different types of prayer.
7. Create a prayer box and write a prayer.

Materials Needed:

Pens /pencils/markers/crayons

Scissors/glue

5 large white index cards (see procedure #3)

Write 1 of the following statements on each card

1. The best place for me to pray is...
2. Prayer is...

3. Prayer is not...
4. The biggest help in my prayer life has been...
5. Prayer brings us close to God because...

For procedure #7:

Large shoe-box with cover

Arts & craft supplies to decorate the box (foam faith-shapes are great)

4 different color index cards (see procedure #7 for instructions)

Procedure

1. Welcome the students and pray the opening prayer. Poll the students as to what type of prayer (when, how often, where, in what mood? Etc.) they believe most pleases God? Discuss but conclude with “All sincere prayer pleases God...let’s learn some facts about prayer.” Read **A Community that Prays Together Stays Together** and move directly into **Name That Prayer**. Answer will read: PRAY CONSTANTLY. 15 min.
2. Have students read the Scripture passages in **Turn Down the Noise** and then ask: “What are these passages about?” (Jesus prayed continuously and he often went to a quiet place to do so.) Read or teach the remaining paragraph. Ask them what is significant about Christ retreating to a quiet place.
3. Play **Unfinished Sentences** using the five question cards that you prepared in advance. Have the students sit in a circle. In the middle of the circle place the cards face down on a desk/table. Select one of the students to take the first card and read the beginning of the sentence, and select one of the other students to respond by passing the card to him. Continue this process until everyone who wants to respond has an opportunity and all questions have been discussed. Don’t let students finish the sentences with a one-word answer. Answers should include explanations, thoughts or feelings. Give them the opportunity to explore possible responses. 15 min.
4. When exercise is complete ask them if they have ever written a poem, prayer, song or story. Are any considering writing professionally as they get older? Depending on their response, add that writing is a gift – and the Armenian Church has a rich history of prayer and hymn writers. Read **Our Armenian Way** containing brief biographies of four great saints who have written beautiful prayers (St. Nersess and St. Gregory are familiar to them already). Ask students to underline the most important thing about each saint. Share answers. The biography of St. Gregory of Narek identifies that his prayers were considered to have healing powers. Discuss the question that follows about prayer and healing power. You might want to conclude with: “It has long been documented that strong faith affects our physical bodies. There are proven health benefits of prayer. It is believed that even just occasional private prayer and Scripture meditation help people live healthier lives.”
5. Read **Life Issues** and **The Top 5 Reasons Why We Should Pray**. Point out the sidebar.
6. Review **Four Different Types of Prayer** (A C T S) and have students identify the examples. Answers: S, T, C, A, S, A. 15 min.



7. Use the remainder of the class to create a Prayer Box with the art supplies that you can assemble on your desk. Students may work together or simply pass the box around for each student to add to; they could sign their name somewhere on the box as well. When box is decorated, show students cards you have color-coded to identify the type of prayer, i.e. pink-adoration, yellow/thanksgiving etc. Ask students to select a card and write a brief prayer to place in the box. Always keep a pile of these index/note cards in different colors on your desk during class. Encourage students to write their prayer requests each day and place them in the box. Check before and after each class and offer prayers as needed.
8. Conclude with St. Gregory of Narek's prayer. 15 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Session 5: Milestone Moments and More...The Sacraments of Initiation

Key Concepts

1. The sacraments are a gift of God's special presence at "milestone" moments where community and individuals share blessing.
2. All life is sacramental as God is with us everywhere and at all times.
3. The sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete an activity on signs and symbols.
2. Read about sacrament basics.
3. Explore the concept of initiation.
4. Examine the sacraments of initiation (baptism, chrismation, and holy communion) through Scripture passages, background text, and discussion questions.
5. Review the Armenian Church understanding of sacraments.
6. Reflect on the concept of holiness.
7. Play a review game.

Materials Needed

A clear bowl of water

White towel

(Optional) Baptismal garment or pictures of a baptism

Whiteboard or newsprint and markers

Procedure #9: Sacrament cards from the back of this manual; masking tape.

Two copies of "A Sacraments Review" from the back of this manual, one for each team.

Procedure

1. Begin class with the prayer in **Here I Am, Lord**. Read **Our World of Signs and Symbols** and complete the exercise that follows. 15 min.
2. Tell students: "We're going to do a quick survey today of our sacraments and their signs and graces at what we could call "milestone moments." Read **Welcome to the Family** and ask students: "What do we mean by initiation? "(Allow for answers – initiation is a rite of passage ceremony marking entrance or acceptance into a group or society; it can also signify a transformation in which the initiate is 'reborn' into a new role.) What are some examples of initiation other than the ones we read about? (Allow for answers – Christian baptism, Catholic confirmation, Jewish bar or bat mitzvah, a college fraternity, a religious order, or graduation from school or recruit training.) 10 min.

3. Point to the clear bowl of water. Ask them why water is so important to us. Try to get as many answers as possible and write them down on the chalkboard or newsprint. Look for answers that indicate the thirst-quenching, life-giving, cleansing, and refreshing qualities of water. Then call for specific examples of how students have seen water used at church. (Responses: *baptism, priest washing his hands during Badarak; blessing of the water on Armenian Christmas, washing of the feet on Holy Thursday*)

4. Ask the class some questions to lead into the next reading: 1. Was Jesus ever baptized? [He was] 2. Does anyone know who baptized Jesus? [John the Baptist] 3. Because Jesus decided that even he – the Son of God – needed to be baptized, what does that indicate about the importance of baptism? [It must be pretty important] 4. What do you think the ritual of baptism symbolizes? 5. Why do you think Christians practice baptism? Now explain that in the early church, baptism was done differently. People took off the old outer garments and were led into the river. Men baptized men and women baptized women – in separate sections of the river. Those being baptized were completely submerged underwater to symbolize their death. And when they were brought up out of the water, they were given new white robes. They never wore those old clothes again. Baptism symbolizes our rebirth in Christ. Continue to explain that being baptized and joining the early church was a little more risky than being baptized and joining the church today. Back then, people could lose their job or even be killed for being a Christian. Their faith community was so important to them that they hung on to it for dear life. Christians met each week and prayed, told stories about Jesus, read letters, and shared a meal of bread and wine together. Those weekly meetings were all the early church members had to keep themselves going, because life was really tough. They never thought of not showing up for their worship service!

5. Segue with: “Now let’s look at what Jesus said about the importance of baptism.” Read **Baptism –A Brand New Me!** and discuss the questions which follow. Responses: 1. Water essential for life...can live without food for a period of time, but not without water. Water can also take lives and cause great destruction: floods, typhoons, drowning. 2. Dying to sin, receiving new life in Christ 3. Wedding, baptism new beginning, pureness, brand new start.

6. Read Matthew 3:13-17 and Luke 3:21-22 which is the account of Jesus baptism’ which was confirmed from heaven in the form of God the Father’s voice and the dove which is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ baptism & transfiguration are two occasions which identify all three persons of the Holy Trinity. Read **Chrismation - Signed, Sealed and Delivered!** and answer the questions which follow. Responses: Oil has healing qualities in life too. Essential oils have been an integral part of the daily lives of people for over ten thousand years. They have been used to heal the body, mind, and spirit since before the time of record-keeping as we know it. Athletes use oil to relieve muscle pain; peppermint oil for indigestion; lavender oil can reduce stress; cod liver oil helps the brain and nervous system function.

7. Have students read Mark 14:22-24 and John 6:54-57 in **Communion –Pure Soul Food**. Ask them which sacrament the scripture refers to (Holy Communion). Now continue the reading.

8. Read or teach **Our Armenian Way and Life Issue**. 15 min.

9. To wrap up the session and give the class an opportunity to recap what they learned, play a review game, using the surface of a wall or blackboard.
 - a. Divide the class into two teams and give “A Sacraments Review” sheet to each. Allow a few minutes for the teams to meet and for the teammates to review the sheet together. This will serve as a group review. Collect sheets.
 - b. Designate two places where “correct” answer cards will be piled for each team. The team that collects the most cards will win the game.
 - c. Have the teams stand in two parallel lines, with the first person in each line facing the board. Tape up the first group of ten answers.

- d. Ask a Group 1 question. The two players at the head of the line race to see who can point to the correct answer first. The winner takes down the card and puts it in their team pile. Both players then go the end of the line. In case of a tie, ask a second question.
- e. When Group 1 questions have been asked, add the next group of ten to the board. Use this same process until all the cards have been used.

10. Closing Prayer.

15 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Lesson 6: Sacraments of Trust and Commitment

Key Concept

The sacraments of marriage, ordination, and prayers for the sick ask for the faith of a community to affirm the calling of believers to marriage, vocation, and health.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Examine symbols of these sacraments.
2. Discuss the meaning of “vocation.”
3. Explore what it means to “be the Church.”
4. Read about the sacraments of marriage, ordination, and prayers for the sick as experienced in the Armenian Church.
5. Participate in a Bible study on the sacraments.
6. Complete a review puzzle on the last two lessons.

Materials Needed

Pens /pencils/scissors/glue

Symbols of sacraments: (pictures or actual items). Water for baptism, a cruet of oil, white garments or towel, wine glass and bread, wedding rings or something symbolic of a matrimony, medicine bottle, a deacon’s stole, part of a priest’s vestment, a picture of your faith community together in worship. Place them on your desk or in the middle of the room.

White board or newsprint

Procedure

1. Welcome the students to the session and point out the items on display. Ask them to identify what sacrament each symbol might represent. Identify today’s lesson as a study of the sacraments of matrimony, ordination, and healing. Ask students to consider marriage and ordination as “vocations.” Allow them to share their understanding of the word ‘vocation’ (a calling to a certain lifestyle or lifework). Move into the opening prayer.
2. Have the children work in teams to answer the questions in **One Step Back**. (Direct them to fill in the correct answer wherever they have marked it “false.”) Answers: 1. F-symbols not signs; 2. F-It’s a symbol of our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ; 3. T; 4. F-Chrismation not Confession; 5. T. Bonus Question: 1. To be set apart to serve God and his people. 15 min.
3. Read **Don’t Just Go to Church...BE THE CHURCH!**
4. Lead into **Our Armenian Way** by asking how each of us can “be the Church.” Allow them time to respond – accept all their responses identifying that the way we are ‘Church’ is, along with our presence and involvement in a community of believers (the parish), to reflect Christ in the world through the normal routine of our lives. “Our faithful Christian service in the world is actually living out our baptismal promise. The Church in her wisdom continues to build on the sacrament of baptism, by providing nourishment – gifts of grace that guide and strengthen

us for the journey of life. We receive grace with each sacrament. Let's read more about how the Church prepares us for our life journey." Read **Our Armenian Way** which covers the sacraments of matrimony, ordination & prayers for the sick. 15 min.

5. Tell students: "Sometimes we forget how deeply connected our sacraments are to their origins in Scripture – in Jesus' life and teachings and in the early Church. Let's take a closer look." Ask volunteers to read the passages in **Scripture Tells All** and as a group identify which sacrament is being represented.

Answers: Genesis 1:26-28 (M); Mark 1:16 (O); Acts 6:1-7 (O); Genesis 2:20-24 (M); James 5:14-15 (P).

6. On the whiteboard or newsprint list three categories: 'married life'; 'single life' and 'ordained life' under each category write 'pros' and 'cons'. Ask the students to share what they feel could be positive and negative about each vocation. Tell them that their opinions will change as they get older and have more life experiences to draw from. Read **What's Calling Me**. Identify that God's desire for each and every one of us is happiness. Whatever we choose to do with our lives will be blessed by God if we learn to seek his will for our lives. 15 min.

7. Enjoy the review puzzle "**Find Four**" you can work as a class, in teams or allow each student to work on the puzzle alone. Go over the answers together. Answers: THE LIFE OF CHRIST

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Apostle - t | 9. Confirmation - f |
| 2. Eucharist - h | 10. Disciples - c |
| 3. Domestic Church - e | 11. faith - h |
| 4. Reconciliation - l | 12. Martyr - r |
| 5. Baptism - i | 13. Priest - i |
| 6. Confess - f | 14. Baptism - s |
| 7. Forgives - e | 15 Matrimony - t |
| 8. Covenant - o | |

8. Pray the closing prayer together.

15 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Session 7: Faith Makes A Difference

Key Concepts

1. The 'deposit of faith' is God's legacy to us: his revelation through his Son Jesus and the ongoing enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.
2. Faith is our personal acceptance of this revelation.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Explore the inheritance of faith gifted to us by God.
2. Produce their own definition of "faith."
3. Complete a Bible study on Hebrews 11.
4. Write about how faith has and will be a source of guidance and inspiration in life.
5. Briefly review St. Gregory of Nazianzen and the *Book of Questions*.
6. Participate in a review activity and celebrate the year!

Materials Needed:

Note paper or index cards
Refreshments

Procedure:

1. Welcome the students to the class. Pray from **Here I Am, Lord**. Then distribute index cards and ask students to write down *three* things they learned this year (you might have to prompt them by skimming through the units). Allow 5 minutes and then collect cards.
2. Read **God's Sure Promise...Our Birthright** and then ask students if any of them have ever received an inheritance. To receive an inheritance means that you are related or have had a relationship with that person. Grandparents often leave their grandchildren inheritances for college or to help secure their future. We too have a faith birthright because we have a relationship with God and through God with others in our faith community.
3. Continue into **A Deposit Made in Your Name** by pointing to the picture of the savings account passbook and telling students that before on-line banking, books like this were used to record deposits made into a savings account. Read the text and have the children share what they believe the definition of faith is. There will be an explanation later in the lesson. 15 min.
4. Read **Simply...FAITH!** together, including Hebrews 11. Distribute paper and have students write their paragraphs and share answers.
5. Ask students if it is ok for them to have questions about their faith (it is perfectly ok!). Read **Our Armenian Way** which highlights St. Gregory of Datev and his famous **work** *Kirk Hartzmantz (The Book of Questions)* Segue to reading **Life Issue** by saying: Okay, we've just read about this amazing churchman who specialized in questions and answers. And that's exactly what belonging to a faith community can help us with – enriching us with faith-based answers. Let's read....” 15 min.
6. Before the final review exercise invite students to get some of the refreshments that are provided. Explain that their **'Final Exam'** will be a group effort. Have them all develop five questions by going through their textbooks. They should write the question and answer and provide the page where the answer can be found. Assign each student a different lesson. Form two teams and begin to ask and answer questions. Play for 20 minutes. Give winners *and* losers a prize! Conclude by reading the students' cards about what they learned during the year. End with closing prayer from you: “Lord, be with us all over the summer; open our eyes to the beauty of the world and every human heart. Thank you for this year together. Amen! 30 min.

APPENDIX

Craft & Activity Templates

UNIT TWO

Lesson One... Basic Parts/Significant Events and Themes

Lesson One... Bible Bookmark

Lesson Five...Reflection Questions

Lesson Seven..Bible Charades

UNIT THREE

Lesson Four...Bird Letter Display Text

Lesson Seven...Fruit of the Spirit

UNIT FOUR

Lesson Two...Kiss of Peace Floor Puzzle

Lesson Three...Peter's Denial Bookmark

Lesson Five...Sacrament Cards

Lesson Five...A Sacraments Review

CREATION

**The fall of
humankind**

The time of Israel

Lesbus

Christ's followers

The End

Times

**God brought the universe into being
out of nothing, simply by speaking.**

**God placed people in his world to care
for it and bring it to its full potential.**

**Humankind had responsibility for
the animals, birds, trees and plants.**

God gave his people freedom to explore the garden in which he had placed them, but told them not to eat the fruit from one particular tree.

Tempted by the serpent, they chose not to do as God wished.

God responded by banishing them from the Garden-this is considered the fall of humankind and the universe is out of relationship with God.

**God established a covenant with
Abraham.**

**Generations led by Isaac, Jacob and
Joseph followed Abraham.**

**Israel established itself in the
Promised Land.**

**The Son of God is born in a
humble stable.**

**He lives a human life, full of love and
without sin, as God intended it.**

**Jesus dies and rises from the tomb,
granting eternal life to all.**

**Communities of believers (churches)
form and gather regularly.**

**They are appointed and given
authority to carry the Good News
throughout the world.**

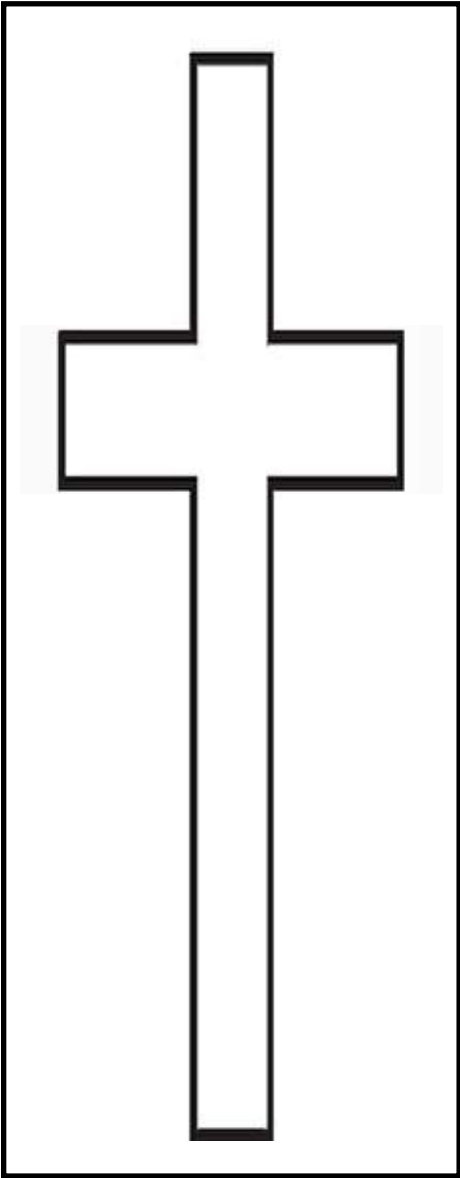
**They are given the power of the Holy
Spirit at the Jewish festival of
Pentecost.**

**Explained in the last book of the
Bible, Revelation.**

**The ultimate victory of God over
the forces of evil.**

**When those who trust God will see
him face to face.**

Unit Two, Lesson 1: Bible Bookmark



Unit Two, Lesson 5: Reflection Questions

I show love to _____ by being patient when _____

I need to show kindness to _____ especially when _____

I should not be envious of _____ because _____

I should not act arrogantly with _____ when _____

I should not be rude with _____ when _____

I should not force my way on _____ in regard to _____

When _____ does _____ to me, I should not become resentful.

When _____ does _____ to me, I should forgive them

When _____ suffers or experiences something bad, I should show empathy

I should rejoice in the truth whenever _____

I must bear the behaviors that bother me, especially _____

I must believe when I am told _____

I must hope that my relationship with _____ will be _____

I should endure hard times with _____ even though _____

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

**Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness, for they will
be fulfilled.**

**Blessed are the merciful, for they
will receive mercy.**

**Blessed are the pure in heart, for
they will see God.**

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Unit Three, Lesson 4: Bird Letter Bulletin Board Display Text

Our 7th graders learned about how the Armenian alphabet was invented to bring the light of Christ to the Armenian people.

Some interesting facts:

- Mesrob Mashtotz was chiefly responsible for inventing the Armenian alphabet. He was a monk (vartabed).
- After a great deal of prayerful reflection, Mashtotz consulted with Sahag, Catholicos of Greater Armenia, who was very receptive to his idea. Together they prayed for God's divine wisdom to guide them. Soon they enlisted the aid of King Vramshaboo.
- Mashtotz enlisted the help of young assistants and sent them to different cities to study languages and alphabets. He himself labored tirelessly. But they were still unable to complete the task. One day, as Mashtotz was meditating in a cave, the saint had a vision, in which the hand of God wrote the alphabet in letters of fire. Undoubtedly, God had a plan for the Armenian nation!
- Mesrob Mashtotz went on to build schools across Armenia to teach the alphabet and is even credited for the role he played in developing the alphabets of neighboring nations.
- The invention of the Armenian alphabet also paved the way for the famous 5th century Golden Age of Armenia. Students who were educated abroad returned and originated a new literature, now rich with Christian concepts. The new national alphabet fostered a stronger faith that captivated all Armenian hearts.
- Nearly every book of importance written in Greek and Syriac was translated into Armenian. Some of these have been lost in their original language and are available *only* in the Armenian translation!
- The style of "bird letters" (*trchnakir*) was developed in the Middle Ages. Fanciful bird forms were created to form the capital letters of the Armenian alphabet.

Unit Three, Lesson 7: Fruit of the Spirit



Kreesdos ee mech Mer haydnetsav



Vor Enn Asd vadz asd pazmetsav





Khaghaghootyan

Tsayn hunchetsav

Soorp voghchoonee

hraman duvav



**Yegeghetsees mee ants
yeghev; Hampooyrus hot**

Iurman duvav



Tushnamootyoonun
heratsav; sern
hunthanoorus supretsav



Art bashdonyayk partsyal uztsayn; dook zorhnotyoon ee mee peran



**Meeasnagan
Asdvadzootyann;
Voroom srovpekn yen
surpapan.**



Christ is revealed among us!



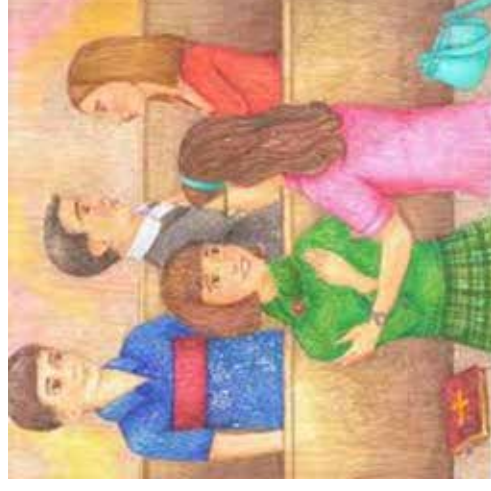
**He who is God
is seated here.**





**The voice of peace
has resounded**

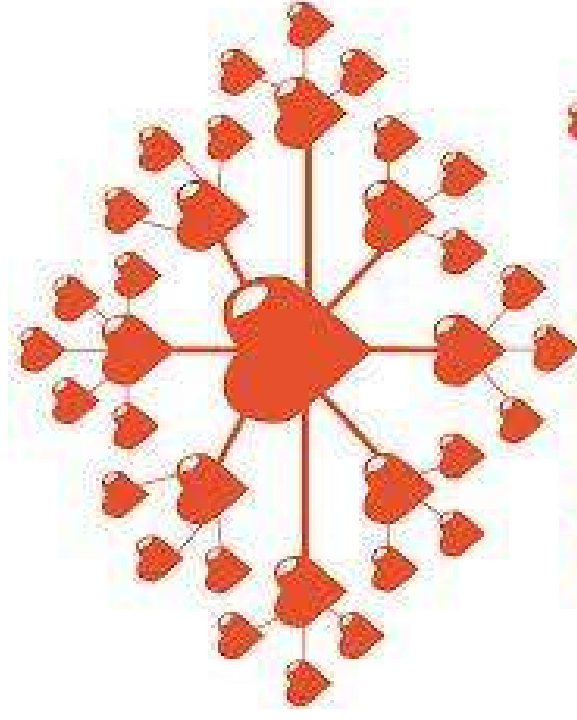
**A holy greeting is
commanded.**



**The Church has now become
one soul; the kiss is given to
bind us completely
together.**



**Love is spread
over all.**



SPREAD LOVE

IT ONLY TAKES ONE.

**Now, priests, lift up your
voices, and give blessings
together**





**To the one God
while the Angels sing
“Holy, Holy, Holy!”**

Unit Four, Lesson 3: "Peter's Denial" Bookmark Template



Unit Four, Lesson 5: Sacraments Review Game

DOVE

WHITE

BAPTISM

CHRISMATION

JESUS
(Messiah)

COMMUNION

WATER

MGRDOOTYOON

GNOONK

OIL

COMMUNION

SACRAMENTS

SIGNS

SYMBOLS

BEGINNING

HOLY

GRACE

**BREAD
& WINE**

PLUNGE

**BODY &
BLOOD
OF CHRIST**

HOLINESS

INITIATION

**LAST
SUPPER**

CHALICE

**BAPTISMAL
FONT**

CANDLES

**HOLY
THURSDAY**

NUSHKHAR

**NEW
CREATION**

**BEING BORN
AGAIN**

A Sacraments Review Game

Group 1

1. This is the symbol of the Holy Spirit (dove)
2. This is the color which symbolizes purity in baptism (white)
3. Without this sacrament, a person cannot receive the other sacraments (baptism)
4. In this sacrament 9 parts of the body are anointed (chrismation)
5. This person's name means 'anointed'. (Jesus - "Messiah")
6. This sacrament of initiation can be received more than once in a lifetime (communion)
7. This symbolizes both death and life (water)
8. This is the Armenian word for baptism (mgrdootyoon)
9. This Armenian word means sealing (gnoonk)
10. This is what the Armenian word 'Muron' means." (oil)

Group 2

11. This sacrament is considered the new and everlasting Covenant. (Communion)
12. There are 7 of these that we celebrate in the church. (sacraments)
13. These provide practical and immediately recognizable direction. (signs)
14. These have the ability to express deeper meanings and create new feelings (symbols)
15. Initiation is all about...(beginning)
16. This word means something or someone set apart for God (holy)
17. Sacraments are visible signs of invisible...? (grace)
18. These elements are considered the real presence of Christ (bread & wine)
19. The word baptism in Greek means to do what (plunge)
20. The bread and wine in the sacrament of communion become this (Body & Blood of Christ)

Group 3

21. A right relationship with God will result in this (holiness)
22. This ceremony is often considered a rite of passage (initiation)
23. This is the last dinner that Jesus had with his good friends. (Last Supper)
24. This is the holy cup that is used for the precious body and blood of Christ. (chalice)
25. This is where we are born again spiritually. (baptismal font)
26. In church, they symbolize that Jesus is the light of the world (candles)
27. This is the night during Holy week that we celebrate the Last Supper. (Holy Thursday)
28. In the Armenian Church we call the communion bread that the priest makes. (nushkar)
29. The white garments worn after baptism symbolize that the person is a (new creation)
30. The Jewish leader, Nicodemus questioned Jesus about baptism, because he did not understand this fact. (being born again)



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