

Niagara Falls: Here's an example of a small church with an outstanding Sunday School. The two teachers - a mother-daughter team - attended the Mardigian Institute last summer and with that impetus, invested the new year's classes with creativity, imagination, and hard work. Their 5 to 7 regular students are getting an extraordinary Armenian Christian education. The DRE film, "The Growth of Our Children" was shown to the small group of parishioners assembled, but the highlight of the visit was meeting with the teachers and seeing their fine work. As in the case of so many parishes, ^{and} there are Armenian families in the area that remain uninvolved in the church. ~~As~~ Arsen Avdoian, Parish Council Chairman, explained the difficulties: the ironic proximity of the "other" church; the hard work and long hours it takes to bring the "unchurched" into the community, etc. etc. Deacon Michael Ohanesian, who lives in Detroit, visits the parish regularly and is trying to set up a learning center for children and adults in the church building.

Holy Trinity, Toronto: The dedication and love of the teachers of the Holy Trinity Sunday School was an inspiration. Unfortunately, they are beset with a number of problems entirely out of their hands. The parish is embroiled in a controversy over the site of their new church; there is a considerable problem with Armenian families involved in all sorts of cultural and social activities but not involved in the church. Because of this, the Sunday School is considering a step which the DRE heartily approves: using a bus to bring children and young people to church. In the past, the idea has been discouraged on the grounds that church is for families. Now, at the prospect of losing a new generation because their parents are apathetic or ill-informed, schools are beginning to think in terms of providing transportation. On the day I visited the School, there were countless children milling around in the vestibule who, I was informed, were not members of the Sunday School! It seems their families had come on this Sunday only because of the special parish assembly. Otherwise, they and their children are not at the church on Sundays. A meeting with the teachers and superintendents highlighted some of the ways a Sunday School can work to be strong despite community apathy.

Classes at Toronto are taught in Armenian with some English. They use DRE curriculum as well as material on the Armenian Church prepared in Armenian in Syria (Samples of these were obtained for use with the few other parishes who teach Sunday School in Armenian.)

North York, Toronto: In this budding parish, we had the exciting opportunity of launching a new Sunday School. Five teachers and a temporary superintendent were assembled and met to discuss DRE materials, school procedures, and a possible schedule for setting up a School. After the meeting, at a special parish Vartanantz program, a brief presentation was made on religious education. The parish seems intent on trying to be a true church, not a "club" (as was mentioned on a few occasions) and seems genuinely interested in seeing that the Sunday School succeed. The Parish Council Chairman, Onnig Torossian, and the entire community were very gracious and enthusiastic.

Work in

Four days spent in the Toronto, Canada area proved to be highly fruitful. Parishes visited: St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Toronto, and North York.

St. Catharines : An all-day session was held with superintendent and teachers of the School, which has been slipping in quality and number of programs as well as attendance. Teachers cited their own burn-out, parish apathy, competing institutions (the "agooomp", etc.) and lack of students as reasons for their difficulty. Together we worked out a recruitment program, month-by-month, for both new students and new teachers, as well as a curriculum and program of special activities for the next several months. At the general parish gathering the same evening, a good number of children and young people showed up whose families were not at all active in the church! The film, "The Growth of Our Children" was shown, followed by a brief talk on religious education. The comments by countless people after the program indicated that: it had taken a great effort to get so many people to attend, as is the case for any general parish gathering; that there is great concern for the weakness of parish auxiliaries; and a frustration over the lack of full community participation in church life, especially youth. The pastor expressed the same concerns.

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Dates of visit: February 24-27

Additional notes to attached:

✓ Rev. ST. Catharines - a very established parish, i.e. founded quite a while ago. Pastor, Father Kegham Zakarian, who was-along with the parish was a gracious host....

Interest ~~and~~ in the religious education and an active parish life evidenced by all parishioners; frustrated by the competing institutions, by internal difficulties that can arise in any family-parish parish family

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Niagara Falls: Stress great energy and devotion of Avdoian family; the fact that there is a community ~~in-Armenian~~ of Armenians that could potentially make the St. Sarkis Church their home... (Mardigian Institute graduates...) -

Also involvement of Deacon Michael... *Deacon: Nisith Deacon*

Holy Trinity ^{of Toronto} - dedication of teachers and superintendents, gracious hospitality, teaching of in Armenian with use of DRE texts and supplementary materials, supers Kaspar Yardemian and Alis Kuyumjian (have attended Mardigian Institutes)

North York: Mr. Onnig Torossian, chairman who had worked hard along with his parish council and the entire brand-new community to have "one beautiful church family, not a club, but a true church-church.." the interest and in establishing a Sunday School with obviously qualified individuals ..warmth and enthusiasm of parish who had a huge Vartan ~~program~~ program (delayed with permission) which also marked the new sefforts to open a Sunday School.....acting Supetindent, Luiz Kassabian

No permit Pastor

Toronto
Spiritual Administration
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Committee

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