

THE BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE REPORT - MARCH, 1988

INTRODUCTION

The Blue Ribbon Committee has been established to investigate the drastic decline in youth participation in the Armenian Church community. Its purpose is to understand the reasons for this decline and to establish a framework for the revitalization of youth involvement.

The committee studied youth participation in the ACYOA programs and parish life; analyzed the needs of today's youth; and examined the needs of the Armenian Church.

Based on the consideration of this information, the committee presents the following findings, conclusions and recommendations.

FINDINGS

Programs

1. A small percentage of potential Armenian youth are participating in existing programs. We have identified only 15% of those Armenian youth ages 0-35 in the Diocese and of those no more than 20% participate.
2. Programs have remained stagnant during a time when the influences of American mainstream culture have surpassed and now outweigh the influences of the family and Armenian Church.
3. Social and athletic activities have become the emphasis of ACYOA because success has been based on maximizing participation and profits.
4. Programs in the past, which have led to involvement in the church do not provide the same result today.
5. There are gaps in the youth programs for the age group 0-35, most notably children, college aged young adults, and unmarried or newly married couples in their late 20's and early 30's.

Resources

1. Diocese and Parishes are understaffed in the youth area:
 - * Five full-time Diocesan youth workers to organize, manage, and implement the Sunday School, St. Vartan Camp, Armenian School, ACYOA Jr. and ACYOA Sr. programs.
 - * One part-time parish youth worker.
 - * Dependence on volunteers whom:
 - Lack training
 - Have a high turnover
 - Vary in enthusiasm and commitment
 - Lack adequate time

2. Increased personal contact in conjunction with a resource center from which newsletters, books, videotapes, guidelines, etc. are produced and disseminated will help to increase programs, commitment, and involvement.
3. We lack data which is specific to the Armenian-American community in the following areas:
 - Religious attitudes
 - Demographics
 - Sociological
 - Psychological

Finance

1. Programs in human development that benefit and encourage involvement have an initial investment with a long term return.
2. In order to hire, properly qualified personnel, funding must be provided for education and salaries.
3. When organizations spend a majority of their time and effort raising money as a means to achieve an end; raising money becomes an end in itself.
4. Budgets have not been determined by setting goals and costing them out. Instead we have limited our vision by fitting programs into a budget.

Attitudes

1. Inter-generational attitudes are not parallel and sometimes can be combative.
2. Young people are getting their spiritual, social, moral, service, and educational direction, if any, from outside the church.
3. The family has less of an influence on the youth today than a generation ago.
4. Success of the youth programs are directly related to the support of the parish priest, lay leadership and membership.

CONCLUSIONS

Programs

1. The ACYOA, at both the senior and junior levels, has contributed significantly toward the development of church leaders and members for more than four decades. As an organization, the ACYOA has met this goal, and it merits far more Diocesan and parish support than it has received in recent years. The ACYOA is making efforts to create new and refine existing programs, and this movement should be supported in every way possible. A re-directed ACYOA should remain a part of an overall Diocesan and parish youth program.

2. Youth programs should be balanced to include elements of the four pillars of the church: Worship, Service, Education, and Fellowship. By not including all four, or stressing one, we undermine the strength and uniqueness of the Armenian Church as opposed to other faiths, social groups, or cultural organizations. Young people must be taught why their faith and heritage is a strength so that their families and church are a priority when they make life decisions.
3. Programs should be more concerned with the quality of the program, and meeting the goals of the organization, with less emphasis on the quantity of attendance and/or funds raised.
4. Programs should be based on an understanding of the reality of the religious, social, and psychological profile of today's young people. This must be the starting point from which our programs should be planned; leading toward spiritual, cultural, and attitudinal changes which will attract young people to the church community.
5. Programs should be designed not only to benefit those young people who are involved in their church communities, but to attract the majority who are not involved.

Resources

1. On the Diocesan level, we should create a Department of Youth Ministry in order to organize, implement, and manage youth programs for the broad age group we have cited.

DYM Objectives: Staff with professionals who will keep current with trends in youth ministry.

Work with Central Council, national committees, and regional committees.

Train parish and regional youth workers, both paid and volunteer.

Serve as a resource center for clergy and lay youth workers.

Produce publications, videos, slide presentations, and other multi-media materials to aid clergy and lay youth workers in parish youth programs.

Organize and coordinate Diocesan and regional programs.

Advise, assist, and support parishes.

Gather and evaluate demographic and sociological data to be used in understanding the needs of the Armenian-American youth and in designing appropriate programs.

2. The DYM would initially include the existing positions of Senior and Junior ACYOA Directors, with the addition of two administrative assistants. It may eventually include directors to handle other areas of need.

3. The DYM would work with the Department of Religious Education and Armenian Language Lab and Resource Center to develop a comprehensive Diocesan youth program.
4. We must develop a data base in order to properly set goals, plan and budget.
 - Comprehensive census data compiled by each parish.
 - Studies of religious beliefs, cultural affiliations, social attitudes, and psychological profiles of Armenian-American young people provided by the DYM.
5. We must encourage young people to choose careers in church work, and provide educational opportunities and salaried positions for those who have this desire.
6. We must increase personal contact between youth workers and the Armenian youth. Diocesan youth directors must spend greater amounts of time in the field, working with clergy, lay leaders, parents, and youth. Therefore, we must support their efforts with administrative assistants who will assist in organization and coordination of programs, collect from and disseminate information to the parishes, provide clerical assistance, etc.

Finance

1. Efforts at the national and regional levels will achieve little lasting success unless supplemented and supported in each parish. Resources vary from parish to parish, but each should insure that the needs of the youth receive top priority, especially in budgetary actions.
2. We must financially support programs and resources which develop our youth in the service of the Armenian Church and in the Christian development of the individual.

Example of such programs are the cultural and leadership weekends recently initiated by the ACYOA which help teach our Armenian heritage and build a leadership base for the church. These efforts will have an immediate return and, they are laying new foundations for the future of our church.

3. Efforts which are financially successful should not be overlooked but the youth should engage in spiritual, cultural, educational, and service, activities that have goals coinciding with those of the church.
4. Budgets should be prepared to support the personnel requirements, resources, and programs which are necessary means to achieve our goal of youth involvement in the Armenian Church community.

Attitudes

1. We must establish an environment for our young people where each can grow spiritually, socially, culturally, and individually.

Success in achieving this is only possible if each individual assumes a personal responsibility towards the needs of the youth, and at a minimum, should strive to maintain a loving, caring, and supportive environment in the parish.

2. Positive attitudes can be developed through productive and cooperative efforts by the youth and the experienced leaders in the church.

Recommendations

Accordingly, we recommend that the Diocesan Council take the following actions in 1988:

1. Authorize the establishment of a Department of Youth Ministry so as to permit better coordination of Senior and Junior ACYOA programs. The staff should include the present Senior and Junior Directors, and two administrative assistants who would back up their efforts at both the Diocesan Office and in the field. Funding of \$36,000 per annum, is recommended and job qualifications and descriptions are attached.
2. Provide funds for ACYOA program initiatives so that the Executive Directors and Central Council can direct their full energies toward implementation of these programs. A funding request for 1988 is attached.
3. Encourage and fund efforts to develop statistical and attitudinal data on which to base a comprehensive youth program. No cost data are yet available.
4. Establish a continuing advisory committee drawn initially from the members of the Blue Ribbon Committee to work with the Department of Youth Ministry in developing a comprehensive youth program. Funding of \$5,000 should be provided in 1988 to meet travel expenses incurred by committee members.
5. Increase parish assessments to cover these appropriations for ACYOA in 1988. This is a program area which has been neglected for much too long, and the added costs proposed should be quite modest, particularly when compared to the long run potential benefits.

Respectfully submitted,

The Blue Ribbon Committee

Attachments

ACYOA (SENIORS) BUDGET 1988 - 1989

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ACYOA EXPENSES		1988	1989
1	VISITATIONS	5000	6000
2	The cost of visitations includes: air		
3	travel or auto travel, lodging, and meals.		
4	Traveling plans will be made in an effort		
5	to visit approx. 25 existing chapters and		
6	approx. 15 parishes or mission parishes		
7	which have potential for the formation		
8	of chapters. In order to organize chapters,		
9	assist chapters, and to promote programs,		
10	increased personal contact is necessary.		
11			
12	PUBLICATIONS	4000	5000
13	Production of the <u>Youth Forum</u> . We expect		
14	to publish four in 1988 and five in 1989.		
15	This is an important vehicle for promotion		
16	of programs, dissemination of information,		
17	and a forum young adults to develop and		
18	display writing talents.		
19			
20	MAILING	2000	3000
21	In order to update our mailing list, we		
22	should have at least two first class		
23	mailings per year. We will be increasing		
24	our mailings as we increase the number of		
25	programs, and we plan to increase our		
26	membership.		
27			
28	TELEPHONE	2000	3000
29	Individual departments will be charged		
30	for their telephone calls, beginning in		
31	1988.		
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33	OFFICE SUPPLIES	500	500
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35	PRINTING		
36	Cost of photocopying in-house.	500	1000
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38	MEETINGS/CONFERENCES/SPORTS WEEKEND	2000	3000
39	The cost of travel, lodging, and meals for		
40	regional meetings, Western Dioc. Gen. Assem.,		
	ACYOA Gen. Assem., national programs.		

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1	PROGRAMS		
2	The following programs fall into the		
3	categories of Christian, Educational,		
4	and Cultural, and follow proposals which		
5	were passed at the 1987 ACYOA General		
6	Assembly. In 1988, the programs are		
7	national, which limits participation to		
8	those who can travel. Therefore, in 1989		
9	we want to regionalize some programs so		
10	we can reach areas like the Midwest and		
11	the South, in addition to maintaining		
12	our efforts in the Mid-Atlantic and New		
13	England regions. We will also be adding		
14	programs in 1989 to accomplish our goals.		
15			
16	Armenian Cultural Weekend	8000	16000
17	Study of Armenian language, culture,		
18	history, and the Divine Liturgy.		
19			
20	Christian Leadership Weekend	6000	12000
21	Study of the basics of Christian leader-		
22	ship.		
23			
24	Armenian/Christian Studies - College Students	5000	5000
25	An outreach program to educate college		
26	students and get them into the mainstream.		
27			
28	Chapter "A" Assistance Program	3000	3000
29	The executive committee of the outstanding		
30	chapter will visit one of the emerging		
31	chapters to help in organizing programs,		
32	and assist in the implementation of		
33	leadership, communication, and service		
34	projects.		
35			
36	Christian Retreat		5000
37	A program for spiratual development		
38	and renewal.		
39			
40	PROGRAMS TOTAL	22000	41000

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1	VIDEO TAPE/PHOTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY	3000	6000
2	The production of video recordings, slide		
3	presentations, and photographs to be used		
4	to preserve the history of ACYOA and		
5	Armenians in America and to provide		
6	resources for chapter meetings and programs.		
7			
8	YOUTH MINISTRY LIBRARY	1000	2000
9	The purchase of books and journals to		
10	be used as resources for Diocesan staff,		
11	volunteer and paid youth workers through-		
12	out the Diocese.		
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14	TOTAL EXPENSES	42000	70500
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	ACYOA INCOME	1988	1989
1	FUNDS TRANSFERRED FROM ACYOA CENTRAL COUNCIL	10000	13000
2	In 1987, we had our first national fund		
3	raiser, and we had financially successful		
4	national programs. We cannot assume an		
5	annual contribution of this magnitude,		
6	although we will make every effort to		
7	attempt it. We need a permanent and		
8	strong financial commitment to the		
9	development of youth programs.		
10			
11	ACEF		
12	Edward and Helen Mardigian (\$50,000)	—	4500
13	Central Council (\$15,000)	—	1350
14			
15	PROGRAM REGISTRATION FEES	5000	14000
16			
17	TOTAL INCOME	15000	32850
18			
19	DIOCESAN CONTRIBUTION	27000	37650
20			
21	In order to achieve the goals of ACYOA,		
22	which are to reach, instruct, guide, and		
23	assist young adults to grow as Armenian		
24	Christians, and to lead and support the		
25	their parishes, we must increase our		
26	personal contact and our programs.		
27			
28	We are asking for large increases in these		
29	two areas because our intensified efforts		
30	in 1987 and early 1988 have produced		
31	satisfying results. We have attracted		
32	more people into the ACYOA, and our programs		
33	have been well attended. (Examples: General		
34	Assembly/Sports Weekend - Detroit, New		
35	England Regional Meeting, Mid-Atlantic		
36	Regional Meeting, Cultural Weekend, and		
37	Christian Leadership Weekend) We believe		
38	we can do even more, in 1989, with the		
39	budget we propose.		
40			

JOB DESCRIPTION: Administrative Assistant to
ACYOA Junior and Senior Offices

- (1) Provide the following clerical skills:

Type reports, correspondence, etc.

Create and maintain files

Maintain regular telephone communication and correspondence
with parishes to obtain and transmit information

Coordinate mailings

update mailing lists

- (2) Assist in the organization of national and regional
programs with the emphasis on logistics

- (3) Assist in production of publications, announcements, etc.

- (4) Prepare news releases

- (5) Coordinate visitation and speaking schedules of Junior
and Senior directors

- (6) Work with parishes in home region

Junior assistant to be located in Diocese, therefore he or she
would work with NY/NJ parishes

Senior assistant may be located outside the Diocese, therefore
he or she would work with parishes in the region of residence

- (7) Senior assistant would assist in organization, implementation,
and management of college outreach program

QUALIFICATIONS: Administrative Assistant to
ACYOA Junior and Senior Offices

Education:

minimum two years of college
(willing to take courses in youth ministry)

Experience:

clerical, managerial and organizational experience
necessary
preferably experience working with ACYOA Junior and
Senior programs or similar youth-oriented programs
possess good oral and written communication skills

Other requirements:

Must be willing to:

1. travel in regional area
2. work at Diocesan headquarters regularly
(at least five days a month)
3. attend ACYOA programs where determined
appropriate

REPORT FOR BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

AGE GROUP: 13-17

OVERALL GOAL: To encourage youth to participate in parish life and maintain ties to their church and community now and in the future. To prepare youth for life.

OBJECTIVES: The church should provide youth with opportunities in the following areas:

1. Spiritual development - application of the faith they are learning about in Sunday School, the God-me relationship, how does the faith of the Armenian Church affect my everyday life, etc. (includes worship)
2. Personal development - guidance in tackling contemporary teen issues in such areas as morality--sexuality, drugs, parental conflict, relationships, etc.--and identity--being Armenian in the American culture--as well as other areas
3. Leadership development - learning leadership skills in communication, decision-making, problem-solving, etc. and using these skills in the youth group structure as well as in the parish and life in general (life coping skills)
4. Service - ways to serve the parish and the larger church as well as the Armenian community and the non-Armenian community in their city, state, country and world (Witness)
5. Fellowship - being with and sharing with peers--social, sports, fun, etc.

STRUCTURE:

1. Diocese - This office acts as a resource center providing concrete materials, programs, training and direction for youth programming. Works mostly with the regional office but on occasion directly with a parish.
2. Region - This office works directly with the parishes in its region setting up activities and programs for the parish as well as organizing and coordinating activities and events that bring regional youth together. (Works under the direction of the Diocesan office.)
3. Parish - The youth leader works directly with parish youth implementing a variety of programs as suggested by the regional and Diocesan offices. Works mostly with the regional office and on occasion with the Diocesan office.

CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH JUNIORS PROGRAM

1. Turnover of parish advisors - burnout, difficulty relating to youth, scope of the job, lack of commitment, etc.
2. Lack of training on part of advisors and clergy
3. Clergy apathy
4. Parental apathy

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Set up regional structure/hire regional youth coordinators.
2. Provide funds for training programs.
3. Encourage parishes to pay part-time youth leaders.

Nancy

Nancy Basmajian
October 12, 1987