

ANNUAL REPORT OF ST. JOHN'S ARMENIAN CHURCH SCHOOL
DETROIT, MICHIGAN
FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR OF SEPT. 1957-SEPT. 1958

The year of 1957-58 marked the tenth Anniversary of St. John's Armenian Church School. Deacon Levon N. Zenian was reinstated, for the sixth year, as superintendent of the Church School by the Priest and Parish Council. In turn Deacon Zenian reappointed Mrs. Helen Armoudlian as supervisor for the Primary Department.

The executive Body suffered a great loss by the departure of Miss Ardemeas Toovalian from Detroit after her marriage. We take pleasure in recording here with deep appreciation Miss Toovalian's services and devotion to the Armenian Church School of Detroit.

ORGANIZATION

The Church School, at present has only two departments: Primary and Secondary. The Primary is comprised of children five to eight years of age, Secondary from nine to seventeen years of age.

A. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: The Executive Committee was composed as follows:

Chairman	Supt. Deacon Levon N. Zenian
Vice-Chairman	Ass't Supt. Mrs. Helen Armoudlian
Recording Secretary	Secretary Miss Louise C. Kushigian
Ass't Recording Sec'y	Ass't Sec'y Miss Mary Toovalian
Member	Treasurer Mns. Terry Kelch
Member	Sec. Teachers' Rep. Mrs. Anoush Papelian
Member	Pri. Teachers' Rep. Mrs. Virginia Sivazlian

The Executive Committee held eleven meetings during the School year most of them at the home of Deacon and Mrs. Zenian.

B. STAFF: The year started with a staff of fifty-five members, Six men and Forty-nine women. Thirty-five teachers were in charge of classes and the rest served as officers and substitute teachers. During the year four full staff meetings were held at the Armenian Cultural Hall, in Sept. and Dec., 1957 and in January, March and April, 1958.

C. ENROLLMENT: The enrollment for the year comprised of 407 pupils, 206 in Primary and 201 in Secondary department. Of this number 195 were boys and 212 were girls, representing 270 families of the Parish. (In 1958-59 enrollment reached 460 pupils)

This constant increase of pupils is creating a serious problem of class room shortage. The school may be compelled to withhold enrollment of new pupils in the fall of 1959, on account of the inadequacy of the essential accommodations. The average attendance for the year has been about Seventy-Six per cent.

C. CURRICULUM: The Church School Curriculum is based on twelve year courses of study from five to seventeen years of age. Upon the completion of every three year cycle, the pupils are awarded Promotion Certificates. At the end of the twelfth year, a Diploma is awarded to the Graduates who fulfill the requirements which include both written and oral examinations and a term paper. The present curriculum, with minor variations, is the same as prepared by the Council of Religious Education for the Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. This was the outcome of the Church School Superintendents' Conference held in New York in the fall of 1957, under the auspices of the Prelacy, to which our Parish Council delegated Miss Ardemeas Toovalian, the Supervisor of the Secondary Department.

E. THE ASSEMBLY: The spirit of worship and fellowship is emphasized during the half hour period of assembly. Short talks are given by the teachers on character building; the biographies of Saints and Church Fathers are presented;

and the meaning of the feast days and symbols are explained. Lections of Jashou for Sundays are read by the Senior class members and brief comments made on the application of the lesson. In Assembly the children learn prayers, Bible verses, hymns, sharagans, songs, Havadamk (Nicene Creed) and the sacred etiquette of church attendance. Emphasis is laid upon making the Sign of the Cross and the Lord's Prayer both in Armenian and English. Selected English Hymns are also taught to be used on the occasions of Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. A loose leaf booklet has been prepared for the use of the teachers and pupils of the Secondary Division containing worship material, sharagans and prayers transliterated and translated into English to help children understand the meaning.

II ACTIVITIES

A. TEACHER TRAINING: The Teacher Training program started several years ago, and continued by the help of a few devoted teachers who opened their homes for weekly meetings to the enlisted groups. These leaders were Mrs. Zabelle Atesian, Yeretzgin Rosalie Papazian, Miss Sirvart Mezian and Miss Rose Samarian. The Subject of study for 1957-58 was "The Life of Christ" using a special work-book provided for each teacher.

The Midwest Religious Education Conference under the sponsorship of the Central Council of the A.C.Y.O.A. was held at Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing Michigan, during the weekend of March 14th, 15th and 16th, 1958. Nearly fifty percent of the teachers attended this conference to improve their knowledge and experience as Church School teachers. The Church School delegated two members of the Senior Class and took care of their basic expenses. The delegates were required to report on Conference to the Senior Dept. pupils.

B. TRAINING FOR CHEERFUL GIVING: One of the vital lessons that children are taught to practice is the voluntary and generous giving. During the fiscal year of 1958 the offerings of the school amounted to \$2,312.95 which means \$5.68 per pupil, during the year.

Besides the class room offerings every Sunday, pupils as well as teachers make a free will offering on the occasion of their Birthdays and receive a birthday card at their home address from the school. The pupils and teachers following their birthday come before the school and after hearing the Happy Birthday song receive a little token from the Superintendent. The total amount realized from Birthday offering during 1958 was \$193.89. This was added to the Building Fund.

In order to encourage regular attendance and generous giving, the school has initiated a Banner System which is awarded to the class at the end of each month whose per capita average is the highest.

C. SUPPLEMENTARY PROJECTS IN GIVING:

1. Building Fund. Participation to the Church Building Fund was accepted and carried out during the past five years. Each pupil has pledged to donate \$3.00 each year for the Building Fund. Various methods have been tried to collect these pledges with the least overhead expenses and the best results.

During the past five years over \$5000.00 have been raised. We hope the school will carry on this project through the cooperation of the parents and by the self-imposed sacrifice of the pupils until the new Church School building becomes a reality.

2. Thanksgiving Baskets. Every year, before Thanksgiving and Christmas the Children are given an opportunity to bring canned foods and groceries to be distributed to the needy Armenian families along with the Thanksgiving Baskets of the Armenian Veterans'.

3. Christmas Gifts. Until two years ago the Church School used to buy Christmas gifts for the pupils. In 1957, before Christmas, the School voted to give up the idea of receiving gifts and instead donate the equivalent sum to a worthy cause, not directly connected

with our Church. As a result, \$100.00 was donated to the "Leader Dogs for the Blind" institution at Rochester, Mich. In turn the said organization provided candy canes for all the children of the school.

In 1958 the school voted again to eliminate the Christmas gifts and donate the equivalent sum to the "Institute for Armenian Blind and Deaf" in Beirut, Lebanon. The five year old classes in the Primary Dept. During the last Lenten period had spontaneously raised \$30.00 by putting a penny a day in the collection boxes made by each pupil. This sacrificial offering was sent to Miss Leila Karagheusian to take with her to Beirut and provide a special treat for the Armenian T.B. or Deaf & Blind children there.

D. CHRISTMAS PROGRAM: One of the very popular projects of the Church School has been giving Christmas programs every year before Christmas, to convey the message and the spirit of Christmas to the parents and their children. In 1957 a deviation was made from the customary joint program. Instead each department presented its own program, the Primary children in the morning and the Secondary in the evening. Co-Chairman of Christmas Program were Miss Gladys Barsamian and Miss Alberta Ochanasian. Primary Dept. presented Tabloids and Secondary Dept. presented Dickens' "A Christmas Carol".

E. PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (P.T.A): The Church School P.T.A. held three meetings during the year; Nov. 20, 1957, Feb. 19, and May 21, 1958, in accordance with the Constitution and BY Laws of the organization. The Superintendent, as an Ex-Officio member of the Board attended the meetings with his Asst. Superintendent, Mrs. Helen Armoudlian. The cooperation of the Church School Staff was commendable. All paid their dues and two served on the Executive Board as required by the P.T.A. Constitution.

F. CHURCH SCHOOL PICNIC: The Annual Picnic took place on June 15th 1958 at Palmer Park, under the sponsorship of Mr. & Mrs. Ed. Korkoian. The arrangements and general supervision were taken care of by the P.T.A. Executive Board. The games and contests were supervised by the members of our staff.

G. OPEN HOUSE FOR TEACHERS: Some friends of the Church School as a gesture of their appreciation and encouragement to the members of the staff, opened up their homes on a summer Saturday afternoon to entertain the Church School teachers in a congenial atmosphere.

In the summer of 1956, Mr. & Mrs. Alex Manoogian, In 1957 Mr. & Mrs. Edward Mardigian and In 1958 Mr. and Mrs. Joe Toumajian opened their homes and gave buffet suppers on their delightful lawns to the members of the staff. The Church School Staff wishes to record its sincere appreciation to all these friends for their genuine interest and hospitality.

H. ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL DINNER: The Parish Council Annual Dinner given to the Church School staff at the end of the school year, was held on Sept. 12, 1958 at the Armenian Cultural Hall. This year the Parish Council had conceived the fine idea of inviting the leaders of all the organizations affiliated with the Church, with their wives and husbands. A unique fellowship was enjoyed by all who attended the dinner, renewing their zeal and pledge for another year of service in their respective organizations.

The Church School staff extends once more its thanks for this kind consideration of the Parish Council.

I. HOLY COMMUNION: Every year two special Communion Services are held for the Church School pupils and teachers, before the feasts of Soorp Dznoont (Holy Nativity and Theophany) and Zadig (Easter). During the last year two-thirds of the school children were present who after general preparation and Confession led by Deacon Zenian, took Holy Communion in an atmosphere of reverence and worship.

Following the Easter Communion, the customary breakfast was served by the Women's Guild of the Church. This is a delightful scene to watch the children enjoy their Easter eggs and cheoreks with milk. The Guild is worthy of praise for this provision but the participation of numerous adults has taken away some of the charm of this fine project which is meant only for the little ones.

J. ANNUAL TESTS: In both departments, the second Sunday in June is set aside for the final tests. The parents should cooperate with the school that children may have no reason for being absent on this Sunday. Mimeographed questions are given to the Secondary dept. pupils, prepared by the age group teachers and based on the year's course of study. The pupils are also tested for their ability to apply the religious principles in meeting moral situations.

K. TOUMAJIAN AWARDS. Mr. & Mrs. Jow Toumajian have established an award system for the last two years to be given for the best compositions submitted by the pupils of the Secondary Division. An Award Committee has set the rules and regulations for the awards. Names of Committee are Mrs. Anoush Papelian, Mrs. Rosalie Papažian, Mr. Harry Der Kevorkian. The first years amount was \$30.00 and was raised for the year 1957-58 to \$100.00. Fifty-two pupils nine to sixteen years of age have participated by submitting interesting compositions on various subjects related to Bible and Armenian Church. On Rally Day the winners received \$10.00 and \$5.00 prizes from the hand of Mr. Toumajian. There were six first and seven second prize winners. The rest of the participants received small gold plated crosses.

L. RALLY DAY: Two years ago the Church School adopted a new activity by observing Rally Day Sunday, on the first Sunday of the School year. This is a combination of closing and opening exercises, attended by pupils and parents.

The last Rally Day was held on Sept. 7, 1958, the Rev. Father Arnak presiding. After the opening worship, attractive Promotion Certificates were given to boys and girls advancing from one Department to another, after completing the three year cycle.

Certificates of acknowledgment and appreciation were given to teachers for perfect attendance, and for services rendered during the year as Committee Members and Teachers' Training Class Leaders. The pupils received book gifts for perfect attendance also Certificates of Recognition for having attended Divine Liturgy during the summer months.

At the close of the program the Church School graduates received their Diplomas and a copy of the "Church of Armenia" by Archbishop Malachia Ormanian. The 1957-58 graduates were the Misses Janet Atesian, Elizabeth Coumajian and Nancy Torosian. Each graduate passed an oral examination before the Executive Committee, Parish Council representatives, parents of the graduates and Mrs. Zabelle Atesian, the class teacher.

The Rally Day program was followed by an impressive service of Dedication and Installation of the officers and teachers for the next school year. This is led by the Superintendent and the Secretary of the Parish Council. At the end the Staff members were led to the Church for Confession and Holy Communion. An inspiring and appropriate sermon was delivered by Deacon Levon N. Zenian.

The Church School is making gradual progress, but we are aware of its great need for improvement. The limitations and inadequacy of our buildings and lack of additional trained staff members are two handicaps that have to be remedied in order to attain our goal by providing more effective and church-centered religious education for our youngsters. A close cooperation of parents will make our task pleasant and fruitful.

Our hearty thanks to Parish Priests and Council.

February, 1959

Respectfully Submitted,

Louise Kushigian, -- Secretary-Treasurer

Page 4