

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

Armenian Church Youth Organization of America

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate

March 11, 1987

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ACYOA SENIOR DIVISION MONTHLY REPORT

His Eminence
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian
Primate
Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America
630 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Your Eminence,

This is a report of my activities as the Acting Executive Secretary to the ACYOA, Senior Division for January 23, to March 7th and 8th.

Chapter Visitations

During these two months, I visited and evaluated two Parishes, Miami and Fort Lauderdale (South Florida). Both of these parishes have a limited amount of youth, and the visitation was to evaluate the potential for youth programs. A chapter evaluation for each parish will be included with this report.

General ACYOA Visitations and Business

This two month period has been one of little progress as far as visitations and meetings. Much of this can be attributed to the weather during these months. Two Regional meetings, one in Boston, MA, and the other is Wynnewood, PA, were cancelled due to the weather. Chapter visitations in Washington, DC and Virginia were also cancelled. On all four of these occasions, I had either reached my destination, or was enroute when these appointments were cancelled.

On the brighter side, I did reschedule the regional conferences, and on March 7th, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference took place at Tenafly, NJ. Six of of Seven Chapters were represented, and the meeting was very productive. A meeting with Fr. Mardiros Chevian was also held at St. Nersess discussing the ACYOA Advisory Committee. Fr. Mardiros is invited to attend the next Central Council Meeting. A meeting was also held with ^{the} V. Rev. Fr. Vasken Tatoyan in Miami.



Central Council

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America 630 Second Avenue New York, N. Y. 10016 (212) 686-0710

Armenian Church Youth Organization of America

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate

Central Council Meeting

? The next Central Council Meeting is scheduled for March 21st, and 22nd. The Archbishop has been informed of this meeting, also the Diocesan Council liaison has been invited to attend. The Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian will be giving a presentation on the mission program.

National Fund-raiser

The ACYOA National Fund-raiser officially was announced on February 15, 1987. A directive by the Primate was sent to all Clergy, Delegates, and Parish Council Chairman asking them to support this national program sponsored by the youth. Fund-raising tickets have been distributed to members throughout the Diocese, and the program has begun.

ACYOA Publication

The first issue of the ACYOA Publication, "The Armenian Youth Forum" will be released within two weeks. The publication is a compilation of articles written by the youth, and distributed as information for other youth.

The Armenian Studies Program

Applications for the Armenian Studies Program, trip to Armenia have been rolling in. We have approximately ten applications at this time. The Clergy for this program has not yet been assigned, and it is crucial that one is chosen soon. Mrs. Martha Gurahyan will be the female councilor for this program. Coloyan Travel is handling the arrangements, and have applied to "Intourist" for admittance. ?

ACYOA Directors Status

? Again, I reiterate, an active search for the position of Director of the ACYOA should be pursued. Advertisements and inquiries should be initiated. The proper transition is crucial to perpetuate our new goals and objectives.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anthony J. Barsamian, Jr.
Acting Executive Secretary



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ACTING EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S PARISH VISITATIONS

February 7th and 8th

Office Work

February 14th and 15th

Providence, RI (Cancelled)

February 20th and 21st

Miami Parish - research potential ACYOA

February 27th and 28th

South Florida ACYOA - Fort Lauderdale
Combined ACYOA and AGBU Youth Meeting
South Florida Parish Dance

March 6th and 7th

Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting (Rescheduled)
Tenafly, New York

March 13th and 14th

Providence ACYOA

March 21st, and 22nd

Central Council Meeting
New York City

March 28th and 29th

New England Regional Meeting
Worcester ACYOA



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ACTING EXECUTIVE SECRETARY PARISH VISITATIONS

April 4th and 5th

Cambridge ACYOA

April 11th and 12th

Palm Sunday, Westchester ACYOA

April 18th and 19th

Easter

April 25th and 26th

Hartford ACYOA
Springfield ACYOA
New Britain ACYOA

May 1, 2, 3rd

Archbishop's Basketball Tournament
Washington, DC

May 6th, 7th, and 8th

Diocesan Convention
Springfield MA

May 15th, 16th, and 17th

Racine and Greenfield ACYOA
Mid-West



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