**Badarak: Meaningful Moments**

*45 minutes to a richer worship experience (5th grade and above)*

**3. Liturgy of the Word: The Creed**

*Be in church for the beginning of the Synaxis (Pew Book, p.11) when the priest comes down from the bema, censing the church and people as he proceeds with the deacons, offering his hand cross to be kissed by the congregation (students can come forward or line up to do so). If your Sunday School schedule allows it or you feel it will be helpful to students, attending from the start of liturgy would be ideal but will lengthen the session. You can leave church when the priest blesses the congregation and the Synaxis portion of the liturgy is ending (Pew Book, p.22).*

**Materials Needed**

* *For Teacher*: This sheet, Pew Book
* *For Students:* Pew Book

1. *Begin:* *Write these words on the board: This is What I Believe*. “Today as we take a closer look at The Nicene Creed, that statement of faith we recite every Sunday at Badarak (and we also recite the Creed in varying forms during the sacraments of marriage, baptism, and ordination as well). Since the Creed is about what’s most important in our faith let’s think for a moment of what is important about our faith to *us*.If a friend were to ask you, “Hey, *(name of a student)*, what do *you* believe as a Christian and a member of the Armenian Church?” What would you tell them very comfortably? Take a few moments to write it down (*for 5th and 6th graders you might want to have ideas called out and discuss them together)*. Allow 5 minutes for the exercise and then ask for answers and begin to write them on the board. Accept all reasonable responses but they should include
   1. One God - God the Father (Creator) who created *everything*
   2. Jesus, God the Son (Savior) who was born as a human being, fully human and fully divine, died and rose again for our salvation.
   3. Holy Spirit (encourager)
   4. One God, therefore, as a Holy Trinity
   5. The Holy Church – the place where we can share in the Holy Eucharist and all the sacraments that are founded in God and tie us to His Church; where we grow in our faith and learn to witness and serve
   6. The sacrament of baptism brings us into the Church, the family of believers
   7. The possibility of eternal life in God’s company.
2. Wonderful discussion! Let’s read the Creed that helps us remember these important beliefs every Sunday. *(Have students turn to page 18 in the Pew Book and read aloud together.)* Now for just a very little bit of history. Just as we did today, beginning in as early as the 2nd century and continuing into the 3rd and 4th centuries, the early Church had to start talking about, “well what exactly *do* we believe? Who was this Jesus anyway? He is no longer with us here, the people who lived day in and day out with Him are long gone, and we are starting to disagree about important things.” And so the first Ecumenical Council or international council of all churches was called in 325 AD in Nicaea, modern Iznik in Turkey, to discuss an important disagreement that had come up about who Jesus was and other issues. And through prayer, discussion, and debate, the convened bishops and leaders began to formulate a creed. That word by the way comes from the word “credo” I believe. You know the Armenian is Havadamk (*write it on the board*) which is the classical Armenian for “we believe.” In our church we stress the community character of this belief, this is what *we* believe, together, as a church, as a family of believers. So back to the story -- although much was agreed upon at the Council of Nicaea, more disagreements and challenges followed, there were smaller councils convened and finally this formal set of beliefs was finalized at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381. This is what has come to be known as The Nicene Creed. Two things about our bodily stance when we say the Creed – first is the unique way we hold our hands – palms together and right thumb over left - a symbol of unity and firmness of belief, a trust in the teachings of the Church as it is guided by the Holy Spirit. Also, we bow our heads each of the three times we say the word “Havadamk” beginning with the very first word of the Creed, and then twice again a bit further. We recite it together, the entire worshipping church, as a reminder and strengthener of our foundational beliefs. And notice it’s recited immediately after the reading of Scripture; that is logical because these beliefs are founded in Holy Scripture. Okay, now before we go to church, a little assignment. When we come to the Creed and are reciting it, I’d like you to make a mental note of the line or phrase that strikes you most. Everyone understand? *(Repeat assignment) Now,* let’s go to church…

(15 min)

1. Church (20 min)
2. Wrap-up: *Discuss favorite lines or phrases.* Wonderful thoughts…. Now let’s end this morning’s activity with a prayer: “Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to pray together with our church family and to recall so powerfully each time what it is we believe. We know the poignant Gospel story of a man who brought his son hoping you could cure him, which you did. He cried out to you “Lord, I believe, help me overcome my unbelief.” Help us, too, to strengthen our faith that we might follow you with confidence and love. Amen. (10 min)

\*(Mark 9:17-27)