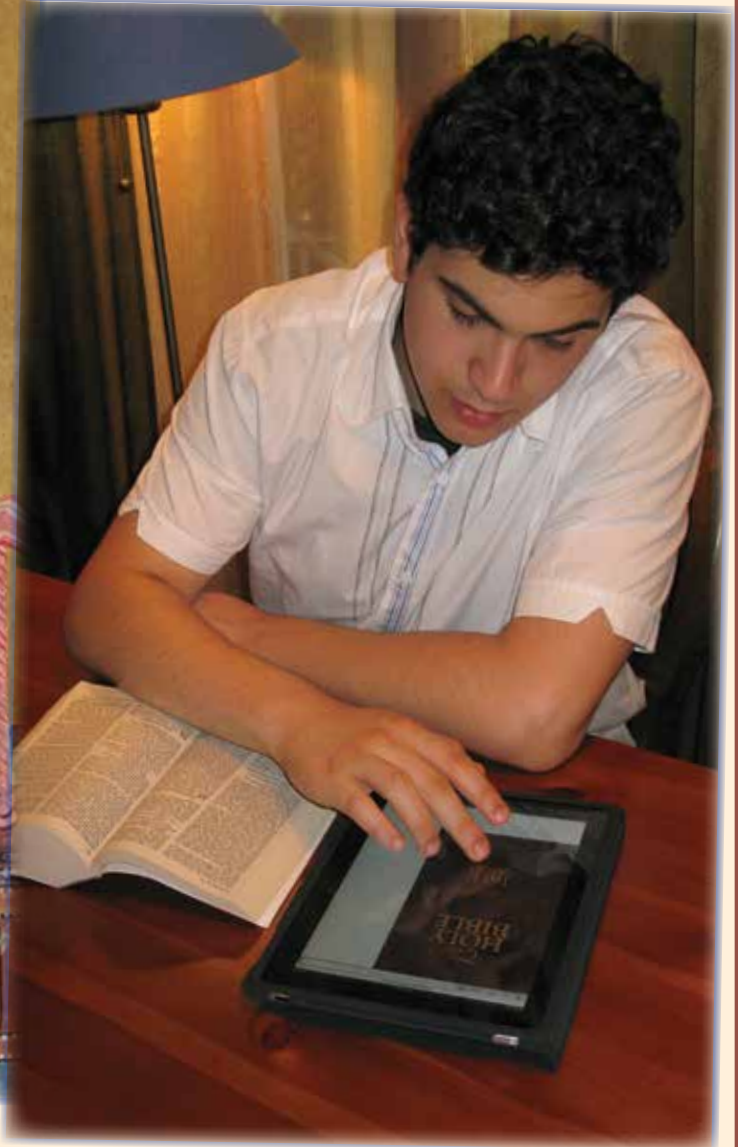


Grade Eight

The Heart of the Matter

Who Am I?

What Do I Believe?



We Believe Curriculum
Teacher Manual

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The Heart of the Matter
Who Am I? What Do I Believe?

Elise Antreassian

By order of
Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Unit One: Who Am I? Who Are We?

1. We Are Orthodox Christians	5
2. On This Rock: The Roman Catholic Church	6
3. Many Out of One: The Protestant Churches	8
4. A Sunday Visit	10
5. Roots and Branches: Judaism	10
6. Islam	12
7. Looking East: Hinduism and Buddhism	13

Unit Two: What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

1. We're in This Together: The Nicene Creed	14
2. Who's the Lord of <i>My</i> Life?	16
3. True God and the Source of Everything	17
4. Help!	18
5. God Knows How I Feel	19
6. Why Did God Have to Die?	20
7. Uh Oh... Judgment Day	21
8. The Ultimate Motivational Speaker	22
9. Once Again: We're in This Together	24
10. Living Stones	25
11. Dunked!	26
12. Act Two: Life After Life	27
13. Amen!	29
14. A Summing Up	30

Unit Three: I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

1. Living a Life That Matters	30
2. Using the Manual: The Bible	32
3. A Community of Disciples: The Circles of the Cross	33
4. The Holiness of Time	34
5. The Living Word/The Bread of Life	35
6. The Heart of the Matter	36
7. Review and Celebration	37

Appendix: Templates

Introduction

Welcome to *We Believe Grade Eight*. We wish you the very best with your class of eighth graders – so full of youth, energy, hope, and questions! Teenagers today are challenging in the best of ways – they expect that you are knowledgeable but honest and straightforward with what you don’t know. They will be helped immensely if you openly share your faith experience.

In order to have the most effective and productive year, please note the following:

- **Curriculum in General.** By definition, a curriculum is conservative, reflecting the attitudes of the community about which it is teaching. If the community remains undecided or has multiple answers to an important question, that will be reflected in the curriculum. (A classic example is how to teach the Armenian Genocide in Sunday School: as a lesson to prompt forgiveness or justice or both?)

- **Curriculum as Cookbook.** Any curriculum should serve as a *foundation* and cannot take into account your experience and style, your students’ maturity or temperaments, your specific parish setting, or unfolding events in the world. Therefore, feel free to adapt – as you would a recipe in a cookbook – to add or replace activities, or shorten or lengthen an exercise. Additional *content* needs to be approved by your superintendent who will consult with your pastor.

- **This Curriculum.** *We Believe Grade Eight* consists of three units.

Unit One is on comparative religion. This is certainly not an exhaustive survey of world religions – an impossibility in six one-hour sessions that need to be interesting and enjoyable for 8th graders. But for our children to be knowledgeable and well-informed people of faith, we provide them with the basics, starting with the Armenian Church and its connection with the other Oriental Orthodox and then the larger Eastern Orthodox family. Armed with this knowledge, students then take a crash

course in the two other Christian faith traditions of Catholicism and Protestantism; and then Judaism, where Christians have deep roots. Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism are surveyed as well.

This unit was developed by popular demand, but you may treat this as fully or as partially as interests dictate. These chapters do contain a great deal of information – be judicious in choosing what to spend time on and what to pass by or even ignore (this very much depends on your class).

Unit Two narrows the focus back to *our* faith by moving through the tenets of the creed, so densely packed with doctrine and history. Each line provides an opportunity for students to learn some pertinent background and then delve into personal issues of faith, challenging them to answer the deepest of questions: What does it mean to *me* that God created the world? How did Jesus “save” me and why do I need saving? What is the church? What’s life about and what happens next?

We don’t recommend requiring memorization of the Nicene Creed (although some Sunday Schools do), but this unit should enable students to read it fluently in English and transliteration and fully understand the words. Alternate how you go over this; you can do this as a group or individually. You might invite a choir member to come and rehearse the Armenian in chant form with the class. It might also be useful to attend church every Sunday during the synaxis when the Creed is chanted – more practice and it will grow more meaningful as the unit unfolds.

Unit Three engages students in a “summing up” of thought and content. It also asks students to plan and participate in a service project for four weeks. Ideally, this should be a project for the neighborhood, a national charity, or Armenia. If you would like to serve the parish in some way, let that be in addition to but not *instead of* the other outreach, since the purpose of the effort is for students to lovingly serve beyond their own family and parish. Come to class for the first session, prepared to suggest a few options in each of the three categories: neighborhood, national, and Armenia.

The nice thing about a neighborhood project is that students might have the possibility of being personally involved, whether it's visiting a shelter with gifts, providing and serving food at a soup kitchen, or entertaining at a children's hospital.

Timing for these sessions is for a traditional one-hour class, but you might have to adjust this and cut some activities if you want to give more in-class time to the project. Clearly, some time *outside* of class will be necessary as well. If the project involves raising funds, or helping out at a shelter or soup kitchen, this has to be scheduled to take place during these four weeks.

- **Church Attendance.** Lessons are designed for *one hour* and are meant to complement, not replace church attendance. Ideally, students should attend church either before or after this Sunday School session, as a class or with their families.

- **The Teacher Manual.** In addition to weekly use in preparing your lesson, use the teacher manual as a reference book for the future; make notes in the margin that can help when you go to teach the same session next year (or when your replacement does).

- **Be Prepared.** Read the entire student and teacher texts. Understand the key concepts and objectives and think of materials and other resources you might want to collect or have ready as the year unfolds. Decide what optional activities you will want to include. Mark on your calendar those lessons that call for special materials or visits. For example, Unit One: 4 requires a trip to another Christian church. If you are beginning with Unit One, this arrangement needs to be made immediately, including emailing parents with special instructions. Unit Two: 4 requires prepared cards for a Creed word jumble; Unit Two: 10 calls for small stones, one for each student; Unit Two: 11 requires baptismal items; Unit Two: 13 and 14 will require magazines; Unit Three: 4 requires copies of the Diocesan calendar; Unit Three: 5 calls for copies of the Divine Liturgy pew book. Other materials are occasionally needed, such as lined paper, markers, or magazines.

Never be just one lesson ahead of your class. Be prepared so that you make the most effective use of your hour as possible and so that your mind and heart can also dwell fully on the questions and needs of the students. It may well be the only hour of the week that the children are thinking and learning about God.

- **The First Ten Minutes.** In those first moments of class time, don't wait for students to filter in to begin. Use the opportunity to talk to each student who arrives, asking about their week, how they're feeling, what's new in their lives, etc. Do begin as close to the designated start time of class as possible. You might develop an incentive program for those who arrive promptly.

- **Timing.** Timing for each activity has been provided for you as a helpful planning tool. It assumes a prompt start to the hour so if you are generally starting late, you will need to accommodate accordingly. Be aware that every group differs and that you may occasionally need more or less time than indicated, depending on your style of teaching, your class, and any number of other variables. Be flexible. Adjust as you go along.

- **Reading.** If only students could be assigned reading at home and return to class the next week informed and ready to participate in the day's discussion! Unfortunately, the days of assigning homework are long past. Instead, reading must be done during class time. To avoid the inevitable "take turns and let's read aloud" syndrome, alternate how the reading is accomplished. Reading aloud can certainly be done occasionally. At other times, distribute highlighters or ask students to underline key phrases and words as they read silently or in small groups. Or, ask different students to become "experts" on a particular paragraph and teach its contents to the class. Or, you yourself can simply "teach" the text, pointing to key words and phrases that students can underline and discuss.

• **Prayer.** The opening prayer time (**heart to Heart**) often draws on the 2018 updated edition of the prayer book *Here I Am, Lord*. Distribute these to students at the beginning of the year; it might be best to keep their prayer books and textbooks in a little folder for the year and then give them both to take home at the end of the year.

Always end class with a prayer. Get everyone still, perhaps bowing heads and closing eyes. Often, the suggested prayer is in your teacher manual; but if not, you might say something very simple, “Bless us all, Lord, and keep us safe. Amen.” Or “Help us be your heart and hands this week, Lord.” Or anything else lesson-related. As you develop them, write them in the margins of your teacher text for future reference. Others can be topical, perhaps reflecting something that has happened recently. “Lord, help us reach out to the people of ____ after the recent flood.” Or simply end with the beautiful Hayr Mer, alternating Armenian and English.

You will not be reminded of these ideas in each lesson, so remember to pray creatively and purposefully where no idea is provided.

• **Review.** Always keep earlier lessons in mind to refer to and turn to. Work review into your lesson often.

Sidebars

• **heart to Heart** was mentioned above under “Prayer” and refers to the opening prayer, words from *our* hearts to the great Heart of God.

• **Verse Master** features short and pertinent Bible verses. Use them as you wish: have students memorize them; read them aloud together and discuss; write them out on the board; end class with them; have students copy them in a small notebook you distribute at the beginning of the year.

• **Scenic Overlook** offers an interesting tidbit of information related to the lesson. You may point it out during class, have a volunteer read it aloud, or just allow students to check it out before class formally begins.

• **Remember** features an important concept that can serve as the “if you remember nothing else, remember this” statement. Point it out, have students turn to it at an appropriate moment, ask a volunteer to read it.

Get to know and care about your students. Be guided by I Corinthians 8:1-3: “All of us possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him.”

So...more than the curriculum, more than the to-do list, a genuine and heart-felt interest in your students will be the best example to them of what faith in action is all about. *This* is what builds up the body of Christ and opens up hearts to the work that only God can do.

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 1

We Are Orthodox Christians

Key Concepts

1. People who believe in God share a distinctive view of the world and human life.
2. Christians believe in full realization and ultimate salvation through the Son of God, Jesus Christ.
3. Members of the Armenian Church belong to the family of Orthodox Christians known as the "Oriental" or "Lesser" Orthodox.
4. The Armenian Church has a unique history and holy tradition within that faith family.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Talk about their summer activities.
2. Read Mark 8:22-25 and discuss what it means to believe.
3. Complete a values exercise about their beliefs.
4. Explore the basics of Orthodox Christianity.
5. Brainstorm their knowledge about the Armenian Church.
6. Review an outline of the faith of the Armenian Church.

Note to the Teacher

For Lesson Four of this Unit, you will be making a class trip to a Catholic or Protestant church (preferably one that is walking distance from your church to avoid transportation problems). Announce this to the class, advise them that you will be emailing or contacting their parents (if any are interested in joining you, they are welcome), and make sure the necessary permission slips are arranged for with your superintendent. Of course, your first step is to select the church, discuss the choice with your priest, and then contact the minister or priest (it might be better for your priest to do so) to let them know about your planned visit, part of a Sunday School unit on different Christian churches. Make sure you

confirm the time when services begin so you and your class can arrive on time. If you will not have enough time back at church to discuss the experience, ask students to fill out their "Visitor's Journal" during the week.

On the permission slip to parents, please remind them that their children should be appropriately dressed for church that day (and if your Sunday School has a lax dress code, you might want to be specific).

Procedure

1. On this first day of class, welcome students warmly and begin by asking them to describe something special or interesting or exciting they were involved in over the summer - perhaps a vacation, a book they read, a special visitor, etc. Write or have a volunteer record the events on the board, followed by the student's name. After a brief discussion, distribute texts, have students open to the first page of Lesson One and read the prayer in **heart to Heart** together. You will add the specific experiences (in italics below): "Lord, thank you for your gift of the beautiful season of summer and for all the special experiences we enjoyed with the hearts and minds and souls you created. *We are all grateful for....(and then itemize the students' experiences, i.e. John's family's trip to Arizona, Ara's visit from his favorite cousin...).* Create in us, Lord, a grateful heart to always be aware of life's blessings. Amen." 10 min.
2. Introduce the year's course of study by reviewing the Table of Contents in their text. Use the introduction to this manual to further describe each unit. You might also want to explain the four repeated features of **heart to Heart**, **Verse Master**, **Scenic Overlook** and **Remember**. Then direct students to **Believing is Seeing**. Read and discuss the questions. Answers: 1. Others brought him; this can suggest that sometimes people need our help to come to Jesus as the source of true vision; 2. Jesus; 3. No, in stages – first he saw people but they looked like trees; then (v.25) his eyes were opened and he "saw everything clearly!" 4. Possible: *We Need Jesus/The Hand of God to See Clearly!* 10 min.

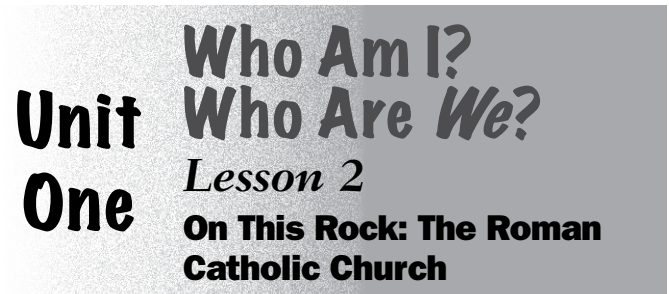
3. Segue to the next activity: “So we can see that faith in God is an ‘eye opener,’ a foundation for all we understand about the world. But from that ‘big picture’ we become part of a specific faith family - like the Armenian Church - and we each begin to learn a unique understanding of God, a certain history, a set of guiding principles based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the Church, the Bible, and all the different ways God reveals himself to us. And then we develop out of this our own understanding. For example, let’s see how each of you would answer a few questions...” Have students circle their answers in **What Do I Believe?** Then have them come forward to the front of the room as you ask each question. Show them a place on either end of an imaginary line where they would stand depending on their answer (e.g. “if your answer is ‘balloon,’ stand at this end; if it’s ‘bowling ball,’ stand there”). Discuss after each question, asking students to explain their answers. Allow for all answers; you’ll probably hear some very interesting comments! A few guidelines: 2. Of course the faith of the Armenian Church is that Christ is indivisibly human *and* divine but we all have images that emphasize one or the other depending on what stories of his life appeal to us most 3. Jesus *did* command us to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19) but it also holds the promise of a fresh start, free of sin, and the promise of eternal life 5. Hopefully, the beliefs we hold will lead us to a life of Christian action and service. 10 min.

4. Read **We Are Orthodox Christians**. You might want to write key words on the board and diagram the Orthodox family. Review quickly by having students repeat basics. 5 min.

5. Say: “Let’s see what we know about our church.” Do the following “webbing” exercise (do it quickly and energetically!): Write “The Armenian Church” and ask students to provide any information about the history or faith of the Armenian Church. Draw lines from “The Armenian Church” to record student answers. Answers might include: 301 (founding of church), Sts. Gregory the Enlightener (helped make

Armenia first Christian nation), Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew (apostles who brought Christianity to Armenia), King Drtad & Queen Ashkhen (ruling Armenia at that time), Jesus Christ, badarak (divine liturgy), prayer, saints, worship, Bible, sacraments, baptism, etc. 10 min.

6. Now direct students’ attention to **We Are Members of the Armenian Church**. Read, pausing to discuss questions. (Many students forget that as Thaddeus and Bartholomew were Jesus’ disciples and since Jesus died in approximately 33 AD, his disciples would be living and teaching in the 1st century; the event was Pentecost; being the first Christian nation is both a source of pride but also a challenge: what have we done with that honor?) As you review the list of **Basic Beliefs of the Armenian Church**, ask students to be attentive; keep it simple, summarizing quickly and simply. You might want to ask each student to read a single item and then tie it up in just two or three words. (For example, after #1 say “Okay, first, Jesus Christ.”)
7. Conclude with a lightning round reading of **Highlights** and then: “Great! Today, we started thinking about the family of faiths by defining our own – good beginning! Next week we’ll look at another Christian family, the Roman Catholic Church.” End class with a prayer: “Thank you, God, for our time together. Bless and guide us in the week ahead. Amen.” 15 min.



Key Concepts

1. The Roman Catholic and Armenian Churches share many doctrines and traditions.
2. Nevertheless, they have diverged in their faith and faith expression over the centuries.

3. Some distinctive differences in the Catholic Church are 1) the understanding of the Holy Spirit as coming from the Father *and* the Son (*filioque*), 2) the veneration of St. Mary and the role, in general, of the saints; 3) importance of evangelization and social justice, and 4) official decisions on ethical and political issues.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss the concept of “sowing” love from St. Francis’ prayer.
2. Take a review quiz on last week’s lesson.
3. Participate in a roleplay activity on the faith of the Armenian Church.
4. Read and discuss an introduction to the faith of the Roman Catholic Church.
5. Outline the similarities and differences between the two churches.

Note to the Teacher

Remind students of their upcoming trip and follow up on permission slips.

Materials Needed

Large chart paper or poster board on which you have copied bold headings of the comparative Armenian-Roman Catholic chart (see below). Fill in as you review the faith of the Armenian Church using the completed chart as a guideline.

Procedure

1. Say the opening prayer together from *Here I Am, Lord* – the famous prayer of the Catholic saint, Francis of Assisi. Briefly discuss the first question, making sure first that students understand the meaning of the word “sow.” Have someone look it up in the dictionary if the word is unfamiliar. Once they understand that sow means to scatter seeds that will grow, it might be easier for students to picture means of sowing love.
2. Have students do the **Backward Glance** quiz. Answers: 1. c; 2. d; 3. d (we were fighting the Vartanantz War); 4. b; 5. b. 10 min.

3. Now pose the following scenario to students. “Let’s pretend together for a moment. You’ve made a new friend at school; he (or she) gets religious instruction at a Roman Catholic church. You’re curious. What are the questions you would want to ask about his or her church?” Brainstorm questions and have a volunteer record them, or have them come up and each write a question on the board. These might include: What’s your service like (How long? In what language)? Do you take communion? What is that like? Do you have a priest? A minister? What are some of your basic beliefs? Etc. After a few minutes, announce: “Okay, let’s reverse things. Now he or she is asking *you* these questions about the Armenian Church. How would you answer based on last week’s lesson and your own knowledge?” Discuss by going through the list of their questions. If there is information you don’t know or questions you cannot answer, tell students you will look into it and report back next week. 20 min.

4. Now read together **A Concise Guide to the... Roman Catholic Church** and review differences. Just focus on those and keep things simple – there is such a thing as too much information! 15 min.
5. Using the **Basics Belief** list as a resource, together fill in the Armenian-Roman Catholic comparative chart (see the guideline at the end of this lesson). As you write on the newsprint or poster board, have them copy in their texts on page 10. Start with the first column of beliefs and practices we have in common and then work across.
6. Assign students the job of “Googling” the definitions (one per student) under **Digging Deeper** for next week.
7. Dismiss class with a prayer. “Thank you, Lord, for the gift of knowledge. Open our minds and hearts to the experience of other Christians as we strive to understand our own Christian story. Send us out this week as strong apostles of faith. Amen.” 15 min.

Armenian/Roman Catholic	Distinctly Armenian	Distinctly Roman Catholic
Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior	Holy Trinity: Spirit and Son proceed from the Father	Holy Trinity: Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son
	3 Councils considered ecumenical	7 councils considered ecumenical
Seven sacraments	Rites of initiation – baptism, chrismation, communion – take place together	Rites of initiation separated
	Last rites/extreme unction for clergy only	Last rites for all people
	Priest presides over and consecrates marriage	Couple marry each other; priest presides.
Divine Liturgy during which Holy Communion becomes Body and Blood of Christ	Bread dipped in wine and given together	Wafers and wine separately offered
The Church as Body of Christ		
An ordained leadership	Married/unmarried priesthood	Ordained ministry is celibate
Hierarchy	Catholicos/Etchmiadzin	Pope/Rome
Holy Tradition		
		Mission work
Bible is the foundation of Holy Tradition and most fully understood in the church		
		Social welfare/justice

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 3

Many Out of One: The Protestant Churches

Key Concepts

1. The Protestant Church was founded as a reaction against the perceived corruptions of the Church of Rome and a desire to return to what was believed to be a more authentic Gospel foundation.
2. Variant Protestant churches grew in number and historically moved from more formal “liturgical” churches to less formal.
3. While some Protestant churches have retained all seven sacraments, some only consider baptism and Holy Communion as sacramental; in others, such as the Baptist Church, both baptism and Holy Communion are remembrances rather than sacraments.

4. Distinctive doctrines in the Protestant Church include 1) more emphasis on the “priesthood of all believers;” 2) foundation on Scripture (“sola Scriptura”) more than on the community; 3) emphasis on preaching – the liturgy of the word; 4) more lay participation in church leadership which is in itself less hierarchical; 5) Trinitarian theology but in some churches, emphasis is on the Lordship of Jesus; 6) importance of creeds vary from belief in Nicene Creed to no creed whatsoever.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss the role of scripted liturgies and prayers.
2. Take a review quiz on last week’s lesson.
3. Report on the Catholic terms they researched at home.
4. Learn about some of the major Protestant traditions.
5. Prepare to teach the class a section of their reading.

Note to the Teacher

Remind students of their trip next week and make sure all permission slips are in. Announce the time students need to be at church – it might be earlier than usual to avoid being late for the service.

Also, two weeks from today, Lesson Five's review game requires extra space. You might want to plan ahead for use of the auditorium or another large empty room.

Procedure

1. As students gather have them review last week's comparative Christianity chart on display. Pray together. Inform the class that *The Book of Common Prayer* is the prayer book of the Episcopal Church, compiled for the first time in the 16th century and later expanded and revised. The book contains the Sunday and daily worship services as well as sacramental rites of the Anglican and Episcopal churches. We have these things in a few places: The Divine Liturgy service book, the *Mashdotz*, and the *Jhamakirk*. Ask students why they think (*if they do*) scripted prayers and services can be helpful (possible answers: to help give us words and thoughts we might struggle to have; so that individuals can become one voice by reading and praying the same words). 10 min.

2. Have students do the **Backward Glance** quiz.
Answers: 1. c; 2. c; 3. b; 4. b; 5. a and d.

3. Ask students assigned a definition from last week to quickly report. Provide definitions yourself, if homework wasn't done or the person is absent:

Stations of the Cross: Prayers said before 14 crosses or images set up on a symbolic path commemorating Christ's journey to the Cross.

Rosary: A string of beads used to count special prayers dedicated to Mary (such as "Hail Mary").

First Communion: The occasion when a child (usually 7 or 8) receives communion for the first time. This is customarily done in a group, after which children have their own family parties.

Ash Wednesday: The first day of Lent; believers stop in at church where the priest signs their foreheads with a cross of ashes (made from last year's Palm Sunday palms) to symbolize that as sinful creatures we are made from the earth and will return to it.

Venial sin: A minor sin, easily forgiven (i.e. wishing someone harm or abusive language)

Purgatory: A place where those who died go to be purified of their sins and made ready for Heaven; this is accomplished through the prayers of the living.

Limbo: An intermediate place for the unbaptized but innocent. 10 min.

4. In 10 minutes, review **As Concise a Guide as Possible to the....Protestant Church**. Then divide the text into sections, according to the number of students in your class, and assign students a section to learn well and stand up and "teach" to the class. If the class is large, assign a few students to the same text. When they have finished, discuss the three basic principles (P. 14): 1) An emphasis on the Bible as the sole authority (*sola scriptura*), to be read and understood by all believers. 2) A less centralized, hierarchical organization, and 3). Less sacramental foundation to baptism and communion and congregational life in general. Discuss the concluding question. Allow for all answers, but you might wrap up with: "Well, I think if we live as thoughtful, sincere Christians, knowing *and* living our faith, and meanwhile, do our best to understand and grow closer to all Christian believers, it can only work to the good. Now let's end class with a prayer for Christian understanding." 35 min.

5. On the board write the phrase 'Lord, help me understand....' (and come prepared yourself to participate in the prayer). Ask students to think about something they've been learning these past few weeks that concerns or puzzles them; give them a minute to form their thoughts and then go around hearing students' individual prayers. End with "Gracious God, hear our prayers. Amen." 5 min.

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 4

A Sunday Visit

Today, you and your class will be visiting another church for worship. Please make sure your class is appropriately dressed. Remind them that they will be representing their own church family, so respectful, courteous behavior is a must.

You should all participate – sing, pray and worship with the rest of the congregation. If communion is offered, it is fine for you to remain in your places as observers. Make notes in your “Visitor’s Journal” to guide next week’s discussion.

Students should be given their textbooks to take home that day so they can fill in their journal page to discuss next week. You might want to send reminder emails or call them so that the books come back to class with them.

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 5

Roots and Branches: Judaism

Key Concepts

1. Judaism was the first religion to worship One God.
2. Distinctive doctrines in Judaism include emphasis on the Torah and the written Word of God and its study, and anticipation of a Messiah who is yet to come.
3. The first Christians were Jews who adhered to the call of Jesus to reform and expand the Jewish faith.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss last week’s church visit.

2. Play a review game.
3. Read and discuss an overview of Judaism.
4. Share information with one another about basic Jewish beliefs, holidays, and symbols through a group activity.

Materials Needed

“Summing It Up,” copied from Appendix (p. 40) and cut into strips. Place them in a bag and have ready for procedure # 4.

Procedure

1. As students gather, begin discussing last week’s visit, referring to your own observations as a guideline. 10 min.
2. Now divide students into two groups for a review game. You need space for this game, so clear some desks aside or meet in another room. Put two chairs side by side and tape to one (so it’s visible, of course) the word TRUE and to the other, FALSE. Then have students stand a good ten feet away from the chairs, in two lines. As each question is about to be asked, the first in each line will take one step forward. Direct them to walk quickly to the chair that correctly answers the question (when they hear it) and sit...fast! Read the following statements and start the game.

True or False

1. The Protestant reformation can be traced back to the efforts of King Henry VIII to divorce his wife and marry Anne Boleyn. **False.** *Although Henry VIII’s desire for a divorce led to the founding of the Anglican Church over which he presided, it was Martin Luther who launched what would later be termed the Reformation with his protests against church corruption.*
2. All Protestant communions would have once, historically, recognized the Pope as their spiritual leader. **True,** *since all Protestants can trace their roots back to the Catholic Church.*
3. The Baptist Church would be the Protestant communion considered closest to the Orthodox and Catholic churches. **False.** *The Episcopal Church is probably the most liturgical and formal, thereby the closest. The Baptists are among the least “liturgical” and formal.*

4. The name “Presbyterian” refers to the founder of this denomination, John Presbyter of Scotland. **False.** *Presbyterianism gets its name from the Greek New Testament word for “elder” – presbyter. Presbyterianism came into being from the teachings of John Calvin.*
 5. Methodists were named for their methodical study and prayer habits. **True.**
 6. The most distinctive doctrine of the Baptist Church is its belief that only adults can make a reasoned decision to be baptized. **True.**
 7. Consecration of the bread and wine to become the body and blood of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit occurs during the liturgy of any church that calls itself Christian. **False.** *For many of the Protestant denominations, Holy Communion is a remembrance more than a sacrament.*
 8. All mainstream Christian churches believe in the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **True.** 10 min.
3. After the review game, continue with opening prayer and then: “You know, today’s prayer is a very important one for the people of the religion we’re going to look at today. It is called the ‘Shema’ prayer, from the Hebrew for its first word, ‘Hear.’ This first line is really a central Jewish confession of faith, because it talks about the Lord, the one God being *our* God, so it’s about a relationship, an exclusive one between a certain people and the one God.”
 4. “We looked at the highlights of our own and other Christian traditions so far, but today we shift gears to look at Judaism. It’s important to have an informed understanding of this religion since, guess what – all the first Christians were Jews! Everyone in the Christian beginnings – including Jesus himself, Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Simeon, the 12 disciples – were all practicing members of their ancestral faith. Jesus came, remember, not to *destroy* the law but to fulfill it as the prophets foretold. And so Jesus’ teachings began as a movement to reform the corruptions and hypocrisies of the Jewish leaders and people of his time as he, and frankly, the entire prophetic tradition before him, saw it. Let’s read about it together.” Read **The Jewish Path** and **Highlights**, discussing questions. (1. God’s command: “Leave your country, your people, your home and go to the land I will show you; his promises: “I will make you a great nation and bless you; your name will be great and you will be a blessing; I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” 2. Have students look up the words “blessed” and “blessing” in a dictionary. Then discuss. Conclude with “perhaps being blessed comes with an obligation or a natural desire to *be* a blessing!” 20 min.
 5. As a way of pulling all this information together and simplifying, have students sit in a circle (with their textbooks); pass bag of ‘Summing it Up’ strips to each student and have them pick one. Have students take turns answering the questions on each strip. Let everyone get involved.
 6. Conclude class with the **Closing Prayer** exercise. Have students fill it in and then read their entries aloud, ending with “Thank you, Lord, for our knowledge; grant us a safe and healthy week, and may your love and wisdom shine in all we do and say. Amen.” 20 min.

SUMMING IT UP

Answers

(See page 40 for Student Activity Strips.)

Why are Abraham and Sarah famous?

Abraham was the first of the great patriarchs. God called him and his wife Sarah to leave their ancestral land and begin the journey to the land God promises them and where they will found a great nation.

In what Old Testament book do you read about Abraham and Sarah?

Genesis

What great patriarch freed the Jews from their bondage in Egypt?

Moses

Who led the Jews into the “Promised Land”?

Joshua

What are the names of Israel’s three kings, who ruled one after the other?

Saul, David, and Solomon

What does the term “The Babylonian Exile” refer to?

In 586 BC, the Babylonians attacked Judah, destroying the Temple in Jerusalem and deporting most of Judah’s inhabitants. It was during this exile that the Jewish religion took shape, as the exiles had to define their national religion without a nation.

What does the Jewish holiday Passover commemorate and how does that connect with the Christian story?

Passover recalls how Hebrew homes were “passed over” by the angel of death during the last plague (that took the life of first-born boys) sent upon the Egyptians by God. The commemorative meal is called a “seder.” Jesus was said to be celebrating the Passover when he held his Last Supper with the disciples. The yearly date to celebrate Easter is connected with Passover.

Why is the menorah a symbol of the Jewish holiday Channukah?

The menorah is an 8-branched candleholder lit by a 9th for each day of Channukah. This symbolically recalls the defeat of the Syrian Greeks by the Maccabees in 165 BC and the rededication of the Temple in which a tiny container of oil burned miraculously for 8 days.

What are three practices you associate with stricter forms of Judaism?

Kosher dietary laws; very restricted activity on the Sabbath (Saturday); the importance of the Torah

What are the three major divisions of Judaism?

Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, each one a bit less strict in their observances and customs.

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 6

Islam

Key Concepts

1. The Muslim religion is second only to Christianity in number of followers.
2. Muslims believe that the one just and merciful God, creator of all, revealed his purposes to Mohammed, his messenger, through the sacred Koran and the teachings and fellowship of the community.
3. The “five pillars” in Islam are prayer, witness, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage.

Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Create a review quiz for the class.
2. Read and discuss questions in an overview of Islam.
3. Summarize the difference between the Bible and the Koran.
4. Do an exercise on the holy places of the faiths studied so far.

Materials Needed

Lined paper, one sheet for each student (see procedure #1)
Blank white copy paper – one for each student, taped around the room at intervals.

Procedure

1. Have a sheet of lined paper on everyone’s desk. Write instructions on the board as follows: “Welcome dear students! Please turn to page 20 of your student text and follow the instructions.” After five or ten minutes, stop to say the opening prayer together and then either allow more time for solo work or begin right in with exercise. Students are to pair off and give each other their “review exams.” 15 min.
2. Read through **The Muslim Story** and **Highlights** together, pausing to discuss questions. The difference between the Bible and the Koran: Muslims consider

the Koran as the *dictated* word of God and therefore not to be edited or translated. Muslims still must hear the Koran and read it in Arabic, although translations of course exist, for teaching purposes. Christians believe the Holy Bible to be *inspired* by God, but composed by human beings prone to error; the Truth of the Bible is guaranteed, but errors of geography or chronology are accepted as understandable and beside the point. New translations and archaeology continue to enhance meaning. 15 min.

3. Then assign each student a section of the text to “master.” Have them each go to a paper sheet (taped on the wall) and write 2 or 3 key sentences or phrases from their assigned section. Have everyone sit and then call on each student in order to come forward and read their summarized phrases. Discuss. 20 min.

4. Have class quickly stand in 2 groups on either side of the room (this can be boys vs girls, or just a random divide) for a lightning round recap. Ask each group a question at which time a team member may sit (they can consult for the answer, but only one answers and he or she can then sit). You can stop whenever class time is over by having everyone sit for a prayer: “Lord, keep all the people of the world close to your heart. Help us understand one another and reflect our faith in the love, wisdom, and peace of our ways. Amen.” 10 min.

1. In what year did the prophet Mohammed encounter God? (610 A.D.)
2. What is the holiest city of Islam? (Mecca)
3. What are the 5 pillars of Islam? (a confession of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage)
4. What is the holy book of Muslims called? (the Koran)
5. What is the name of the building in which Muslims worship? (mosque)
6. What are the two main branches of Islam? (Sunni and Shi’ite)
7. What is the holy day of the week for Muslims? (Friday)
8. What is the feast of Ramadan? (a month of fasting launching the new year)

9. Why do Muslims always have running water in the vestibule of the mosque? (for ritual cleansing)
10. What is an “imam?” (worship leader and teacher)
11. What do you call food prepared according to Islamic religious law - similar to Kosher regulations? Halal food.
12. How many times a day are Muslims asked to face Mecca and pray? (5)

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We? Lesson 7 Looking East: Hinduism and Buddhism

Key Concepts

1. Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world, with more than one billion believers.
2. It is a religion that is characterized by many different “avatars” or manifestations of the one God.
3. Buddhism is the 4th largest religion in the world and has influenced Western culture in its philosophy of detachment from worldly desires.

Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Take a review quiz on last week’s lesson.
2. Work in groups to make presentations on Hinduism and Buddhism.

Materials Needed

Two large poster board or oak tag sheets

Markers

Blank paper

Scotch tape

Have these materials set up on two work tables for each group to work around as they prepare their poster. It might be advisable to use two corners of an auditorium or large classroom so each group has relative space and quiet to work and you can go back and forth between the two groups to help (or, ideally, have an assistant to work with one group).

Procedure

1. Welcome students and have a volunteer read the opening prayer aloud.
2. Have students do the **A Backward Glance** quiz.
Answers are: 1. b, 2. c, 3. d, 4. b, 5, b 5 min.
3. Begin class with: "Today, we're on the final day of our journey through the world's great religions and I think it's a good time for you to do all the research and all the teaching! I'm going to divide the class in two and assign you one of two very important and influential religions: Hinduism and Buddhism (write these on the board as you say them). Together, you'll read about your religion and share what you've learned with the other group. Okay, let's get started." Divide the class into two and have them take their textbooks to their assigned table. (Division of group and assignment may be adapted to size of class.) There, have one group read the text on Hinduism, the other on Buddhism. Then have them divide up the task of presenting their religion to the other group via history, key figures, key sentences, images, and vocabulary. As a means of organizing their work, call on volunteers to do the following: (using paper and markers):
 - a. Draw an important symbol or image (use the pictures in the textbook as a guide)
 - b. Write a few key historical figures and dates.
 - c. Write two important words and be prepared to discuss their definitions.
 - d. List important elements of their beliefs, using key phrases.
 - e. Create a few "Scenic Overlook" items – things of interest.These are five assignments; share them among the students. Students should work on their own sheets of paper, which they can then lay out on the poster under the large title of their assigned religion. Allow 10 minutes to read their text, 5 minutes to locate the information necessary for their "task", and 15 minutes to write up or draw it. Help them meet the time limit. 30 min.
4. Have each group hold up (or prop up on a chair) their poster and take turns describing their entries. Each group may take 10 minutes 20 min.

5. Tape up posters for classroom display. Commend students for the hard work and conclude with prayer: "Dear God, thank you for the opportunity we have had today to take a closer look at two world religions. May Jesus continue to fill our hearts with the special love and wisdom of his way and keep us strong in our faith, a faith that brings peace, love, understanding, and salvation. Amen." 5 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do / Believe? Lesson 1 We're in This Together: The Nicene Creed

Key Concepts

1. A community articulates the experience of God through concrete statements of faith.
2. These statements evolved in the Christian community through prayerful deliberations, councils, and debates in the centuries following Jesus' earthly ministry.
3. The Nicene Creed is the foundational articulation of our faith and was developed in two Ecumenical Councils.
4. The Nicene Creed is proclaimed at every Divine Liturgy.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a continuum exercise about their beliefs.
2. Create a personal creed.
3. Complete a creed exercise with their classmates.
4. Read about the historical background of the Nicene Creed.
5. Analyze and study the first statement of the Creed.

Materials Needed

Lined paper (see procedure #2)

Note to the Teacher

For lesson 10 of this unit, you will be inviting six active parishioners (these might include: parish council chair, parish council member, a committee chair, Sunday School teacher, choir member, deacon, janitor, Women's guild member, etc.) to give a two-minute presentation about their service in the church. Contact them *now* (to make sure they're available on that date) with this as a possible script:

"Our 8th grade Sunday School class is doing a unit on the Nicene Creed and will have a lesson on the church and all the people who make up the living Body of Christ. You are a great example of a special gift that you bring to this parish as *his or her function*. Would you be able to come to class on Sunday morning, date, at time, to talk to us for two minutes on what you do and how you came to serve the church in this way?" *If they agree, give them this slip of paper:*

Please make a two-minute (no longer than this, please) presentation on your role in the church. If it is at all possible, please bring a photo of yourself which we will use for a poster about the church family; we will return your photo before the end of the Sunday School year:

1. State your name and define your involvement (parish council, Women's Guild chair, etc.).
2. Describe what you do. What qualities (personal, such as patience, etc.) and what skills (engineering background, good with numbers, etc.) are needed?
3. Share how you came to be involved in the parish in this way.

Follow up with a reminder as the date approaches.

Procedure

1. Greet students as they gather. When you're ready to begin, announce that the opening prayer is the first statement of the Nicene Creed. Read it together in English and Armenian. Ask students to think of a gift of God – visible or invisible – for which they can give thanks (i.e. love, the sun, peace, our families). Have a recorder list them on the board and then simply pray: "Thank you, God, for (recite the items)." Once the prayer exercise is over, read the creed statement again a

few times in both languages. Tell students that during this unit we will focus on the Creed as an important summary of our beliefs, learning more about what each of these important sentences mean. It will also be an opportunity to think about what each of these beliefs might mean in real daily living. "But first, let's see where we stand on a few matters of faith." Point to opposite sides of the front of the room and tell students they will stand in either corner, depending on their answers to some questions you'll be asking. Begin game, pausing to discuss after each question.

- a. Is God someone who (point to a corner) is right here in the middle of my life or is "up there" somewhere (the other corner)?
- b. I can't say I understand everything about it, but I believe that Jesus is the true Son of God (one corner). I think Jesus was a great man and a religious reformer (another corner).
- c. I think heaven is an actual place where people who are good can stay forever with God (one corner); I think heaven is just a state of mind, something like being at peace.

Discuss. Guidelines: b. and c. might need some guided response from you. If there are students who think Jesus was just a great man, conclude after discussion: "I like these honest answers, because that's exactly how people gathered to discuss these statements of faith we call the Creed. They came together having very different opinions and talked about how, for example, Jesus is indeed the Son of God, using the Bible and the experience of witnesses to support their thoughts. But we'll learn more about that later." For c. you might conclude after discussion: "Beautiful. Well, thinking that heaven is a specific place as well as a state of mind is perfect, because Jesus tells us that it is *both* in a way, that the kingdom of heaven is a distinct place that will be fully realized at the end of time *and* a kingdom that we can realize in an imperfect but real way right on earth. But again, we'll be thinking more about that later." 15 min.

2. Have students turn to **My Creed** and fill in the exercise. Then form groups of three, hand out a lined piece of paper and have them devise a single creed

they can all agree on drawing from their individual lists. Then join groups together and have them repeat the exercise; continue with this synthesis process until you cannot go further. (If your class is small, just have students work singly and then form one group for the group creed.) Have a volunteer write the final list on the board and have students copy it into their **Our Creed** list. Discuss the process with students. Was it easy to agree? (If it was, perhaps it was because we take a lot of these faith formulas for granted or really haven't thought about it before; if it wasn't, that was a small taste of what it might have been like to try to hammer out creeds in the early church). Tell the class to compare the two lists (**My Creed** and **Our Creed**) in their textbooks. Are they very different?

20 min.

3. Read **From "I Believe" to "We Believe"** and review the text by saying "Okay, let's keep some key things in mind. (As you ask questions, wait for answers; suggest students glance at their text.) Why did it become important to formalize our beliefs in precise statements? (*The first generation of witnesses to Jesus' teachings, life, and resurrection were gone; influential preachers were casting doubt on important beliefs; the Christian Church was newly recognized as the official religion of the Empire by Constantine and needed to be unified in its thinking.*) Why state this during a worship service? (*To clearly demonstrate the congregation's unity of belief.*) Do we do this in the Armenian Church? (*Yes; it entered our service in the later 5th century, c. 485.*)

15 min.

4. Have them copy the first creed statement in their text in the space provided on page 32. Review it again, reading the English and Armenian in unison. Then have them fill in **We Say...Which Means To Me**, by simply expanding on the phrase in their own words, explaining it in their own way. Give them a few minutes to write, then read each creedal phrase and have students follow with a quick round of their answers. When the last answer is read, say "beautifully done...Amen." Dismiss the class.

10 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe? Lesson 2 Who's the Lord of My Life?

Key Concepts

1. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ are the foundations of our faith.
2. In order that these may inform our lives, we need to know them well.
3. This knowledge and understanding changes how we feel, think and act.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a review quiz.
2. Recall information on the life of Christ from memory; locate and list missing details.
3. Participate in a reflection exercise to determine how Christ, in his teachings, can truly be the Lord of our lives.

Materials Needed

Newspaper/magazine photo large enough for the class to see. Choose one that reflects a current event in need of prayer.

Index card for each student; small paper or plastic bag.

Procedure

1. As students gather, direct them to complete the review quiz, **A Backward Glance**. After 5 minutes or so, show students the photo and ask them to formulate a one line prayer based on it. You might want to write on the board: "Lord, I pray that...." Give them a minute to think and write in their texts. Then begin your own and run through the class with their lines of prayer. End with "Amen." Go over quiz answers by first reciting last week's creed statement together. Answers: 2.b (The two councils: The 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, 325; the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, 381, 3.c, 4.e (although Christians *were* persecuted through the early 4th century, this was not a reason to formulate a creed), 5.b.

15 min.

2. Have students close their books. Distribute index cards and ask students to write the words *Jesus Christ* at the top and 10 things they know about his life and teachings (they can number 1 to 5 on each side). 5 min.
3. Pass around the bag for students to deposit cards. Then give the bag to a student, have him or her pick out a card. Call on 2 recorders to be at the board (opposite ends). Have one write “Jesus’ life” and the other “Jesus’ teachings.” As student reads items, have the recorders write them under the appropriate heading (students can take turns picking a card out of the bag). As cards are read, there will be less and less to add. Review final list and use the references in **Jesus in Scripture** to fill in what’s missing. Have students look them up in their textbooks according to time remaining. 25 min.
4. Spend remaining class time on **So Jesus Lived and Taught**. (A yoke attaches two animals together as a pair so that two oxen can pull a heavy plow or two horses can pull a carriage.) Before students begin **What’s That Got to Do With Me? Now?**, give an example or two (A friend makes a sarcastic comment about something you did: be forgiving; you’re not getting enough credit for helping your aunt clean out her backyard: do good deeds for *God’s* glory). After discussion, dismiss class with this prayer: “Lord, help us understand that to know you is more than just knowing *about* you. Lead us to you through Scripture and prayer and in the many opportunities life gives us to be your heart and hands in the world. Amen.” 15 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe? Lesson 3 True God and the Source of Everything

Key Concepts

1. Jesus is true God, of one substance with the Father.
2. God is the Creator of the universe and everything in it.

3. Evolution is compatible with this understanding of life’s origins.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss doubts they may be feeling about their faith.
2. Complete a review quiz.
3. Explore the relationship between science and faith in the matter of evolution.
4. Examine Genesis 1.
5. Participate in a dilemma exercise about evolution.

Procedure

1. Have students turn to page 53 in *Here I Am, Lord*. (This can be on the board before class). Read the prayers together and discuss the question. If students share doubts, list them on the board. Discuss how some of these can be resolved in very specific ways (in the Bible, via Sunday School, talking with other Christians) and some are resolved over time, as we live our faith and pray for guidance, and through the example of others. Affirm that God is okay with our doubts and asks only that we work with him to answer them. 10 min.
2. Turn to the review quiz. The first question asks students to recall the first two creed statements. Tell the class that reciting the creed regularly at Badarak and at milestone moments such as when parents baptize their children or when we marry is a way that the community continues to affirm its basic beliefs. Have students complete quiz; discuss answers. (1. Father, Almighty, visible, invisible, Lord, begotten, substance, 2. See student lesson 2) 5 min.
3. Read **By Whom All Things Came Into Being**. Form students into smaller groups to read the Scripture and discuss questions (or you can read aloud together). Then have an all-class discussion. (Answers: 1. “*there was evening and there was morning*” - a beautiful sense of the orderliness; this ancient understanding of the day beginning at sundown the night *before* is still evident in the Jewish start of the Sabbath on Friday night; we also reflect this understanding when

we celebrate Easter liturgy on the eve of Easter; “*it was good*” – a *good* creation; “*and God said*” – the importance of the Word; with the presence of God’s Spirit (v. 2), this Word coming out of the Father Creator has been long understood to stand for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so that the Trinity is clearly present at Creation; 2. 1st: night and day; 2nd: separates water and sky which were once thought to overlap; 3rd: land and vegetation; 4th: stars, moon and sun – different from the light that was formed in the void on the first day; 5th: sea creatures and birds; 6th: animals and humankind; 7th: God rested, making the day a holy day of rest; 3. Humankind is made in God’s image, able to know him; they are made good stewards of the rest of creation. Mention to students that the word translated as “man” actually means simply creature of the earth in the original Hebrew, sort of “earthling” and that God created humankind as male and female. 25 min.

4. Have students respond in **Dilemma: What Would You Say?** Discuss. Answers could include: for eons, even in the modern world, people have a feeling that there is something greater than the human mind at work in the world; there is nothing in science that contradicts the faith of the Armenian Church; evolution is certainly possible in the Orthodox Christian’s understanding of the creation of the world; the point of Genesis is that God is the source of all life – it doesn’t tell us *how* the world was created; a “day” in the Genesis story could be a million years or it could just be a poetic expression; the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve are perhaps *symbols* of our beginning – the perfection of living in union with God.
5. Dismiss class with the prayer: “Lord, thank you for the wisdom of faithful people who did and continue to guide us in defining and understanding our faith. Help us think and pray, too, that we might grow closer to understanding your will for us. Amen.” 20 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do /Believe?

Lesson 4 Help!

Key Concepts

1. Humankind is free to accept or reject a relationship with God.
2. God’s intervention in human history was needed to redeem humanity once and for all.
3. Jesus was born of Mary in union with the Holy Spirit; this is called the “Incarnation.”

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Play review games on the first three creed statements.
2. Recite the 4th statement in English and Armenian and define terms.
3. Read about salvation history.
4. List the Ten Commandments.
5. Examine St. Athanasius’ renowned description of the Incarnation.
6. Participate in a voting exercise.

Materials Needed

Large 4” X 6” index cards with one word of each of the first two creed statements in English (capitalize the first letter of the first word) written in thick, bold letters OR prepare these by computer on white paper. These should be taped on two opposite walls, out of order. Have the 3rd and 4th creed statements also prepared.

Two rolls of masking tape

Dictionary

Procedure

1. Open by having students turn to page 19 in *Here I Am, Lord*. Tell students that these are the very words we sing at the end of Badarak in “Orhnetzitz Der.” Discuss question. Possible answers: practicing kindness, being generous with our time and attention, living gratefully, answering parents with

respect and patience, being a good brother or sister; honoring friendships. 5 min.

2. Form students into two groups (or call on volunteers if class is large) and have them gather in front of the wall where each creed statement is mounted. See which group can put the words in the correct order the fastest. 5 min.

3. Now review the 4th Creed statement in English and Armenian. After you've recited it together a few times, define a few of the terms with the class and write the words on the board as you explain them. 1. "man" Of course this is a translation of the Armenian word "martgan" which doesn't mean just men, but refers to all of humankind, male and female. Although the translation remains in its older form, perhaps it will be modernized in the future with a gender-inclusive word. You might want to ask students for some ideas (who for us human beings?). 2. "salvation" – have a volunteer look the word up in a dictionary and write some of the key phrases (preservation or deliverance from destruction or evil; deliverance from sin); mention that you'll be returning to this word in a moment to look at its uniquely Christian meaning; 3. "became man" refers to his becoming a human being; Jesus Christ was, of course, a man, but the important theological fact is that he became *human* 4. was born perfectly means that Jesus was, of course, born without sin (note to teacher: the Roman Catholic doctrine of "immaculate conception" is a reference to Mary's being born without sin, and is *not* a doctrine of our church).

Now form students into two groups again, hand one group the cards for the 3rd creed statement, and the other for the one they just learned. Have them tape up the cards, out of order, for the opposing "team" to correct. Let them switch places and work to assemble the cards in the right order. 20 min.

4. Read **Help! A Crash Course in Salvation History**. (Ten Commandments are 1. I am the Lord God; you shall have no other gods before me 2. You will not worship graven idols 3. You will not take the Lord's

name in vain 4. Keep the Sabbath holy 5 Honor your parents 6. Do not kill 7. Do not commit adultery 8. Do not steal 9. Do not give false witness against your neighbor 10. Do not desire what is your neighbor's.) Ask students to summarize St. Athanasius' teaching (God sent his Son to restore human nature just as an artist has a person sit again for a portrait that has been tarnished by time). 15 min.

5. Have students look at **What Do You Think? A Voting Exercise**. Instruct them to vote in the following manner on each statement as you read it: "If you agree, raise your hand. If you strongly agree, raise your hand and wave it. If you disagree, give a thumbs down signal. If you strongly disagree, shake your thumb. And if you have no opinion, fold your arms across your chest." Pause for discussion. Guidelines: 1. Whatever we do should honor that image rather than disrespect it – many examples: behavior, language, how we care for our bodies, self-respect, etc. 2. Very true, of course 3. Even during Jesus' time on earth, it was tough to get people to change their ways; now we have the long history of God's actions and words, Jesus himself, and the life of the Church to guide us and still it's hard work 4. No doubt! 5. A good discussion possible, but people always found reasons to neglect their relationship with God.
6. Conclude with a prayer and dismiss class. 15 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe? Lesson 5 God Knows How I Feel

Key Concepts

1. Jesus was completely and truly human.
2. The Incarnation enabled all of human experience to be redeemed.
3. God shares in our sorrows and joys.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review the creed statements learned so far and clarify their meaning by paraphrasing and discussion.
2. Interpret Scripture stories in terms of Jesus' human emotions and experiences.
3. Share similar experiences they have had and reflect on how Jesus' experience impacts on theirs.

Procedure

1. Open with "Prayer for a Safe Journey" on p. 31 of *Here I Am, Lord*. Have them answer questions. (12th-13th century; a town near Yerevan, Armenia's capital; he healed, preached, traveled to convert people, and lived in prayerful solitude). Tell students: "You know, this is a prayer for a journey. What are the four journeys described in the prayer? (Joseph to Egypt, Israelites through the Red Sea, Moses to Mt. Sinai, and the Israelites to the Promised Land) But we are all on a journey, aren't we? Each day of our lives is a journey in a way – we can really be said to 'travel' through the day. So this is a good prayer for not only trips but for first thing every morning." Pose the question: "When you pray the words 'lead me in peace,' what does this mean to you?" Discuss the question at the bottom of the page. 15 min.
2. Do a quick review of the creed so far, by having students flip back to the first lesson of Unit Two and continue to the first pages of each subsequent lesson. After a group recitation of each in Armenian and English, stop each time and ask for volunteers to share the statement in their own words. 10 min.
3. Review today's creed statement in Armenian and English. Ask students what it means that he took body, mind, and soul, "truly and not in semblance." (Jesus experienced every human experience and emotion.) Read **Jesus was Fully Human: He Felt What I Feel!** Have students look up Bible passages and answer the questions. You can have them work singly or in pairs. Time will probably not permit students to read every scripture passage, so assign different stories to different students or pairs. When they have completed their reading, have each report

on their stories; do the matching exercise together as you go along. Answers: 1.h, 2.e, 3.b, 4.f, 5.d, 6.l, 7.j, 8.i, 9.k, 10.g, 11. a, 12.c 25 min.

4. In the time remaining, discuss the final question in their text. Dismiss class with the prayer. "Lord, we thank you for this chance to grow closer to you today. Remind us always of how every moment and every experience of our lives is made holier because you share it all with us. Amen." 10 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do /Believe? Lesson 6 Why Did God Have To Die?

Key Concepts

1. Jesus' death and resurrection assured us the possibility of knowing God once again and living with him forever.
2. The suffering and death of Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament.
3. We share in Jesus' death and resurrection in our baptism.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a review quiz.
2. Define all the terms in this week's Creed statement.
3. Read about some of the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus' death and resurrection.
4. Review the narrative of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection in Scripture.
5. Participate in a brief group reading from the Armenian baptismal service.

Procedure

1. Open with the prayer in the student text. Have students take the review quiz. Answers: 1. c; 2. b; 3. d; 4. Jesus approached the tomb of his dead friend Lazarus (John 11:35) 5. St. Hovhannes of Garni. 10 min.

2. Call on a student to come up and write the first two words of today's Creed statement on the board. Ask students what they think "he suffered" refers to. Discuss. Continue to reflect on each phrase together and discuss. Ask them to take notes on the discussion in the space in their textbooks.

He suffered: was deserted by his friends and followers; betrayed by a friend; humiliated by the authorities and the crowds; was beaten; was nailed to a cross to die.

And was crucified: crucifixion was a painful and degrading punishment meant to cause pain and public humiliation. Criminals who were crucified were left on display; they would eventually suffocate from the weight of their bodies but it would take a long time for death to come.

And was buried: Joseph of Arimathea, a follower, contributed his cemetery space and family tomb.

And rose again on the third day: After three days, when the women went to the tomb to anoint his body with spices as was the custom, they found the tomb empty; angels there told them he had risen from the dead.

And ascended into heaven with the same body: we read about the actual ascension, when Jesus rose into heaven (as opposed to from the grave) in two places: Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:3-9. That he rose with the same body declares that Jesus' humanity was taken up into heaven as well.

And sat at the right hand of the Father: Have students read **On the Right Hand** for more about this. 20 min.

3. In **The End That Was the Beginning**, start by reading one Scripture verse under each heading together as a class. Add readings as time permits; these can be given to students to read silently or aloud. There is a lot to read in 25 minutes so you might prefer to start with 1, 4, 7, 9, and 13. Periodically ask questions such as: "In this reading what word or words strike you, speak to you personally? Any questions about what we just read? How might you have felt if you had witnessed/heard this? How do you think ____ felt about what was happening?" Add readings as time permits. 25 min.

4. Read **Surprise!** Explain the word "catechumen" (cá-tuh-cue-mun) which means someone studying to

be a Christian. Then have students read the priest's prayer together, inserting their own name in the beginning (it's okay if you hear different names at the same time – it will be beautiful). Then tell students that as this is happening, the instructions in the service book say that the priest will immerse the child three times in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, symbolizing the three days Jesus was in the tomb. Call on a volunteer to read from the epistle to the Romans from their texts.

5. Dismiss class as follows: "Great. Let's end class today with the final prayer of the baptismal service: "Guard us, O Christ, under the shadow of your holy and precious cross in peace. Save us from the evils we can see and those we can't. Make us worthy to know you and give thanks. Amen." 10 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe? Lesson 7 Uh Oh...Judgment Day

Key Concepts

1. Jesus will return in the fullness of time, an event known as the Second Coming.
2. When he returns, in the glory of the Father, he will judge the living and the dead.
3. We live good lives in anticipation of this event.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a prayer activity.
2. Recite the next Creed statement of faith.
3. Play a review game on the Creed statements learned so far.
4. Read about The Second Coming.
5. Complete a values exercise on Creed statements.

Materials Needed

Lined paper, a sheet for each team (see procedure # 3)

Procedure

1. Open class with the **heart to Heart** prayer activity. Go over each line so it is clear what students are being asked to fill in; you might explain it this way: 1. Of all the beliefs the Creed has itemized so far, what do you feel the strongest about? 2. In all that the Creed has so far summarized, what makes you feel grateful, happy that it is true? 3. What feelings or habits or situations can Jesus help you with? Give them 5 minutes to write. Then tell students that you will pray as a group. You will begin each line with your own answer and each student will follow with theirs. For example: You begin: "Good and gracious God, I believe that "you created the world and everything in it." Then a student continues: "that..." and so on. When everyone has spoken, start with the second line. Etc. 15 min.
2. Review/recite the new Creed statement together with the class in English and Armenian. Draw students' attention to **Scenic Overlook** for a good footnote on "the living and the dead." (Re "militant": perhaps it's because we are still on the battlefield of life and continue to fight the good fight.) 5 min.
3. Form two teams (or more, depending on class size) and distribute lined paper. With books closed, have them number the page 1 to 6 with three lines of space between. Ask them to work together, from memory, writing the Creed they have reviewed so far. They may need hints and prompts so assist as needed. The point of this exercise is not to require memorization but to move from passive recitation to a deeper understanding. You might coach them along: "Okay, the first two words should be a no-brainer, right? And what's the place we begin in our faith? The *one* God? So, so far..."we believe in one God...etc." Make it fun, moving as quickly along as practical. 20 min.
4. Read and discuss **The Second Coming**. Pause at the end of the second paragraph to look up the Scripture verses in Exodus. Then ask students to think about the unexpected blessings (e.g. getting a good grade on a test without studying; rainy weather clearing up for a ball game; a visit you dreaded from a relative turns out to be fun) in their lives. How long does the gratitude last? 10 min.

5. Then have students stand to participate in a values continuum. Tell them that at the front of the classroom (or wherever there is sufficient room) is an imaginary line. They are to stand at any point on the line (with *yes* being the extreme right and *no* being the extreme left) that would match their answers to the following questions. Discuss after each "line-up," using the following questions/comments to stimulate discussion:
 - a. The fact that God is the source of all life affects how I think about everything. (*It should, but how? In what ways can we reflect the holiness of life in everything we think, say or do?*)
 - b. I understand the idea of God as the Holy Trinity. (*It's a hard concept, actually one of the "mysteries" of our faith; our understanding grows as we read the Bible; understanding is further inspired in prayer and worship.*)
 - c. God shouldn't have made people who were going to sin and need salvation. (*This was touched upon in an earlier lesson; we needed to freely love God and with free will comes error and sin.*)
 - d. We would have been better off with a superman God who didn't have to die. (*Christ's sacrifice on the cross was the "final" sacrifice, making all other sacrificial offerings unnecessary. Now it is our faithful lives in prayer, love, and service that are offered to God.*)
 - e. The Second Coming seems scary. (*Everything about it in Scripture assures us of God's merciful judgment. The Book of Revelation talks about a renewed creation, a place, beyond pain and tears.*)

Conclude with a prayer and dismiss the class.

15 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do /Believe? Lesson 8 The Ultimate Motivational Speaker

Key Concepts

1. The Holy Spirit is perfect and true God.
2. The Holy Spirit was present in the Law, the prophets, the disciples, the gospel writers, and the saints.

3. The Holy Spirit dwells in the church and the individual believer.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Recite the next Creed statement of faith.
2. Restate their understanding of the Holy Spirit in their own words.
3. Read Scripture passages on the Holy Spirit.
4. Participate in a breathing and visualization exercise.
5. Explore a fruit of the Spirit in their own lives.

Materials Needed

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit handout

Note to the Teacher

Assign students the task of bringing in a picture of themselves, either a school photo or a family photo or even one they can take with their phone and print out. This will be for lesson 10 but they can bring it in next week. An email reminder might be in order during the week.

Procedure

1. Read the prayer based on the Armenian hymn for Pente-cost on page 49 of *Here I Am, Lord*. Discuss the question.
2. Review and recite the new creed statement in English and Armenian. 10 min.
3. Tell students: "Today our statement of faith concerns which Person of the Holy Trinity? (*the Holy Spirit*) In this Creed statement, like all the others, we're sort of summarizing our understanding. If you only had these few sentences from the Creed, what would you be able to say about the Holy Spirit?" Have students fill in the outline in **The Holy Spirit...** (Guidelines: 1. The Holy Spirit always was; as a Person of the Holy Trinity there was never a time when he did not exist; being God, he is perfect in every way. 2. It was his presence that guided the Hebrews in their understanding of and living out the Law; 3. The Spirit's inspiration called individuals to be prophets to share God's messages and warnings with them;

4. He inspired those who wrote about Jesus; 5. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, where the Spirit appeared (*have students open their Bibles to Luke 3: 22-23 and read*). 6. He opened their hearts to the message and calling of Jesus. 7. Who are saints? From the word for holy, this was the word first used for believers, those who had come to believe in Jesus; again, he inspired their faith and the building of the early community. "Saints" later came to mean men and women who were honored for their holiness. The Holy Spirit continues to live in the church and in the hearts of believers.) 10 min.

4. Read the Bible verses in **The Ultimate Motivational Speaker** and do the matching exercise together OR divide readings among students and share answers. *Answers:* 1.m, 2.g, 3.e, 4.i, 5.k, 6.l, 7.c, 8.j, 9.h, 10.a, 11.f, 12.d, 13.b 15 min.
5. Invite students to meditate by closing their eyes and taking three deep breaths. Then tell them to continue breathing slowly and deeply as they remember that breath is essential to life. Point out examples from the Scripture they had just read that illustrate this idea.
 - The Biblical writers associated the Spirit of God with breath, which gives and sustains life.
 - In the creation story, God works in the wind "that swept over the waters" and breathes into Adam the "breath of life."
 - In the New Testament, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is described as a mighty rushing wind.

Suggest that students think of the Biblical images of God associated with breath, strength, and wind as they fill their lungs with life-giving oxygen. As they meditate say: "Imagine that just as your body is cleansed and refreshed by deep breaths, your soul is nourished, empowered, and renewed by the Spirit of God who dwells in you. The spirit is as essential for your life as breath itself. Now when you open your eyes, continue to be aware of God's Spirit as breath, wind, life, soul, mind, and power." Ask students to open their eyes and look at the picture on page 51, completing the caption. Ask them, "If you were an illustrator, what

photos would you choose to convey the reality of the Holy Spirit? Allow time for sharing. 10 min.

6. Distribute *The Fruit of the Holy Spirit* handout. Allow students 5 minutes to write; share answers for the remaining time. Conclude with a prayer and dismiss class. 15 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do /Believe? Lesson 9 Once Again: We're in This Together!

Key Concepts

1. The Church is the Body of Christ on earth.
2. It is in the Church that we most fully realize our faith, growing closer to God and to one another and being empowered to identify our spiritual gifts.
3. The Holy Spirit endows everyone with a spiritual gift that will serve the Body.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a group reading of I Corinthians 12:12-31.
2. Discuss the definition of the Church as one body consisting of many parts.
3. Follow this immediately with a group reading of I Corinthians 13.
4. Participate in an either/or activity on the Church.
5. Review the Creed learned to date and define terms.
6. Read about the growth of the Early Church.
7. Participate in a Bible study on the Church.

Note to the Teacher

1. Reconfirm your invitations to the parishioners who will be speaking to the class next week.
2. Remind students to bring in a photo of themselves – a school photo or one they can take with their phones and print out.

Procedure

1. Write these instructions on the board for students to note as they come in: “Read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31.” When you are ready to begin, have a different student read each verse and pause while everyone responds: “We are one body, one body in Christ.” 10 min.
2. Direct students to the questions in their text. Guidelines: 1. Just as the body consists of many different parts that all work together harmoniously, so all of us – different in background and experience and identity – all become one body working and existing as one. 2. He was actually talking to a community that had been disrupted by disputes and separation, so St. Paul was stressing with almost comical specificity how parts of the body work together (for verses 17 and 18, you might want to draw first a huge eye and then a huge ear to illustrate the absurdity of such a body) and, more seriously, how, if one suffers, the whole body suffers (students know how hard it is to walk with a twisted ankle, etc.). 3. Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, people who speak in tongues (a mystical experience). Now say “Okay, we can see how important every single person and gift is to the whole church family. But St. Paul doesn’t stop there. He tells us that none of this is helpful without the most important Christian ingredient. Let’s find out what that is by reading the world-famous ‘love’ chapter, I Corinthians 13. Let’s read it together out loud.” 15 min.
3. Now have students come to the front of the room (if your class is large, find a place where this can be safely done) and pose the following questions. Tell them that according to their answers, they should choose the appropriate end point of the imaginary line you indicate:

The Church is more like

Stand on left side

Stand on right side

A feast

A snack

New

Old

One

Many

A question

An answer

After each question ask students to explain their position. All choices are fine and you will probably hear some interesting thoughts. You might want to interject: the church can be considered a feast in that it provides a huge offering of nourishing experiences, above all Holy Communion, but also fellowship, service, learning, etc. (tell students we'll be looking at more of that in today's lesson); the Church is new in that all things are made new in Christ, as he promised; also we are renewed at every Holy Communion; but the Church also incorporates the past (what students might consider "old"); "one" can refer to the spirit of unity, the fact that we become one with other believers when we are together, but the "many" can recall the number of members who come with many experiences and backgrounds; the Church gives us many answers but, just as Jesus did, it also prompts us to ask ourselves questions, e.g.: Who is our neighbor? What is the "good" life? Etc.

15 min.

4. "Okay, let's get to today's new creed verse, which happens to be about? Of course! The church." Review the verse in English and Armenian. Then read or teach **Defining Terms**.

10 min.

5. Read or teach **What is the Church?** Verbs in Acts, depending on the translation: devoting themselves, teaching, breaking bread, praying, filled with awe, wonders and miracles were done by the apostles, all believers were together, they had everything in common, sold their possessions and gave to those in need, they met together daily, ate together in their homes, were glad and sincere, praised God, enjoyed the favor of all people, and the number saved increased. (In John 15:5, Jesus describes himself as the vine and we as the branches. Away from him we cannot bear fruit.)

Conclude with a prayer and dismiss the class. 10 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do /Believe? Lesson 10 Living Stones

Key Concepts

1. Jesus Christ is the sturdy cornerstone of a spiritual house into which he invites us.
2. Each of us is a living stone in this spiritual structure.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a prayer activity on 1 Peter 2:4-10.
2. Listen to parishioners witness to their service.
3. Reflect on their own gifts.

Materials Needed

Flat stones, from your garden or a garden center (these can be kept for next year)

Large outline of the church on a large sheet of poster paper (use the sample below as a guide) Write the title "Living Stones: A People Belonging to God" – 1 Peter 2-10

Tape

Note to the Teacher

Parish members who will be making presentations can be seated in the back of the room or invited in at the appropriate time.

Procedure

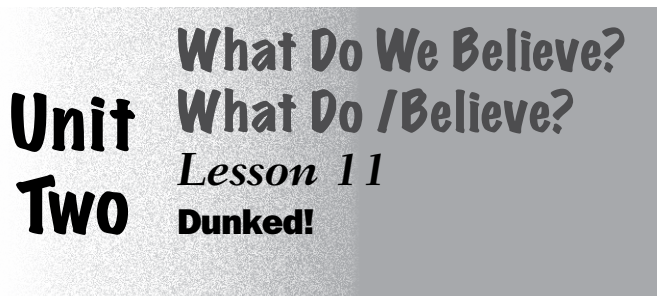
1. Have stones in a bowl on your desk and the instruction "Please take a stone and read 1 Peter 2:1-10 in your Bibles written on the board." When you're ready to begin, call on a volunteer to read the Bible passage. Discuss questions in student text. Guidelines: 1. Stones are strong and hard; they can be cut and shaped to fit a building; they will last a long time; 2. The priest in Old Testament times presided over the temple sacrifices; St. Paul is telling us that in this spiritual structure, we too are like priests, in charge of our spiritual relationship with Jesus. Our entire lives are given over to God, just as doves and lambs

were once given as a sacrifice; 3. chosen people, royal priesthood, a holy nation; a people belonging to God; 4. praise God.

Now re-read the passage verse by verse aloud, following the student text. Instruct students to read the response (in italics) together. Then pass the empty bowl around for students to replace their stone as each person says aloud “I am a living stone built into this spiritual house.” 15 min.

2. Invite parish members to the front of the room. Allow them to introduce themselves, using the guidelines they were given. Instruct students to write their names and take notes on the presentations in their student texts. Keep guests to their allotted time and then have the students respond with questions or comments. 30 min.
3. Now have students fill in the Me line. Discuss. Conclude by saying, “Wow, this was wonderful! We have been enlightened today by our esteemed panel about what it takes to find a place in this spiritual house and be a truly *living* stone. Now I’d like to ask each of you to come forward with your photos and tape them onto the church poster.”

After everyone has come forward. Say “Let us pray: Thank you, Lord, for our wonderful guests, who are your loving servants and a great example to us. Bless them and all of us as we grow stronger in faith and find our own place in your house. Amen.” 15 min.



Key Concepts

1. We are baptized to be freed from original sin and become participating members of the Church.
2. A person can only be baptized once.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Take a review quiz.
2. Define important terms in the new Creed statement.
3. Review the Creed to date.
4. Examine the sacrament of baptism.
5. Reflect on the concrete ways they can shine the light of Christ.

Materials Needed

Bowl of water, small cruet of oil, white baby clothes, narod with cross (get one from your pastor or make one yourself with red and white yarn and an inexpensive Armenian cross; optional: candle and cross
Divine Liturgy books

Procedure

1. Have a bowl of water, a white baby’s shirt (or baptismal dress if you have access to one), and a small dish of olive oil (the oil can be in a small cruet) on your desk. A cross and a candle are optional. Pray from **heart to Heart** and discuss reflection question. Add to the discussion such thoughts as: “I will respect myself more, take better care of what I put in my body, reflect in my outer behavior that the Spirit lives in me,” etc.)

Ask the class to identify the items on your desk and to guess what sacrament these relate to. “Yes, of course....baptism. Now before we get into our lesson today, take the review quiz, **A Backward Glance.**”
Answers: 1. c, 2. a, 3. b, 4. One, catholic, apostolic, and holy, 5. b. 15 min.

2. Review the new Creed statement in English and Armenian. Underline the words “repentance,” “remission” and “forgiveness;” then write each word separately underneath and ask for definitions. Have volunteers look up the words in the dictionary (repentance: to make a change for the better as a result of feeling sorry for wrongdoings; remission: literally, the ‘sending back’ so this means the release of a debt or forgiveness; forgiveness: to excuse or pardon for an offense; to absolve from payment of a debt). 10 min.

3. Now distribute Divine Liturgy books and ask students to turn to page 18 where the Creed begins. Read together first in English, then in Armenian. Alternatively, have students take turns or call on volunteers. Recap each statement as follows (be energetic and quick):

1. Okay, who believes? WE believe, the entire church, everyone assembled! What do we believe in? ONE God, the creator of everything! Anyone have an additional comment or question?
2. So, One Lord, God's Son, the Son of God but at the same time the same as God. A difficult concept for us to understand as it is revealed to us in the Bible, but we slowly understand it better as we grow in faith.
3. So Jesus is God completely, light and truth totally, not created, always was. God who is responsible for all things on earth and in heaven, things we can see and the things we can't, such as? (*love, hope, faithfulness, even anger!*)
4. Then God, God the Son came down from heaven, and was born a human being, a man, by the Holy Spirit. His mother was Mary.
5. He was completely human, in every way, body, soul, and mind.
6. Very humanly, he suffered and died, but he rose out of the grave on the third day. Then went up to heaven to share once again in the power and glory of the Father.
7. And he'll return, with the same glorified body, and we will be judged then, all who are living and all who have passed away.
8. What else do we believe? In the Holy Spirit, also without beginning or end; he has made his presence known; where? In the Law! Where else? In the words of the prophets; and also? In the words of those who wrote of their encounter with Jesus through the Gospels.
9. This Holy Spirit did what? He came down over Jesus' head in the form of a dove, blessing his baptism; he inspired the apostles in their courage and teaching; and? He lived in the hearts and souls of the saints – those who followed Jesus.
10. What else do we believe? In the Church – and

the four essential marks of the true church are? That it is one, catholic or universal, apostolic and holy. 20 min.

4. Collect liturgy books and direct students' attention back to their texts. "Today's Creed statement is about baptism. Read **Dunked! One Baptism Does A Lot...But Not Everything!** by first having students read the introduction silently and then asking for a volunteer to come up and stand before each item on your desk as they read the appropriate section aloud. To conclude class, have everyone stand; say "Okay, we've seen the powerful connection made with God when we're baptized – it's like an adoption, isn't it? We are adopted by God and in all the symbols of the service – the water, the oil, the narod, the new white clothes, the communion – we become true members of the Church. But, as we said, the rest is up to us. Now each of you think – what is one way you can – even now – shine the light of Christ? As each of you offers an idea, you can sit down and when we're all seated we will say a group 'Amen' and be dismissed."

15 min.

What Do We Believe? Unit Two What Do I Believe? Lesson 12 Act Two: Life After Life

Key Concepts

1. The Kingdom of Heaven is both about the here and now and about God's promise to restore creation to wholeness.
2. Life eternal is a state of everlasting happiness with God.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss prayers from Scripture and the Armenian funeral service.
2. Explore Scripture passages describing the Kingdom of Heaven.

3. Write a poem about the Kingdom of Heaven using their own imagery.

Materials Needed

Lined paper (see procedure # 2)

Tape

Note to the Teacher

Next week and the week after, your students will be going to church for the first part of liturgy, the “Synaxis,” during which they will sit in the front pews. Note: If your parish regularly recites the Creed in Armenian, ask if the students may recite in English. It is permissible for pedagogic purposes.

For Lesson 14, students will do more than simply recite the creed; they will be leading the congregation in reciting it. Discuss this with your pastor; have a special note put in the church bulletin. “The Sunday School 8th graders have been studying the Creed for the past three months and will be leading the congregation in its recitation today.”

Procedure

1. Pray the prayers from Revelation and the Armenian requiem service on p. 51 of *Here I Am, Lord*. Discuss the question. Additional discussion questions you might want to pose: How do we trust in God’s promise? (*Because we see throughout Scripture how he has kept all the promises he made to his people, e.g. a covenant with them, escape from slavery in Egypt, rescue from the 40 years of wandering, a king.*) Why do we use the phrase “fallen asleep” to describe those who have died? (*It’s a sophisticated understanding and cannot really be taken literally – scary to little children perhaps, but what it simply means is that death is just a temporary state in God’s scheme.*) Who are these “just” who are assembled? (*The saints who have already been accepted into God’s eternal kingdom.*) 5 min.

2. Read **Life Eternal**. Some questions student pose might be (or if they come up with none, ask these):

- Why the word “exile”? *It is meant to tell us that the kind of world we live in – which can be difficult and troubled*

- came about after we were exiled from Paradise, a perfect life with God. We now have the opportunity to achieve that again after death.

- Why “worldly toils” and “illusive deceptions”? What does that mean? Is life on earth bad? *In the story of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had to leave Paradise when they chose their own self-importance (the snake’s temptation that they would “know it all” if they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree). They were also reminded by God (Genesis 3) that life would be hard from then on. There are many difficult things about living in this world that are the result of human vanity and self-importance.* Ask students to name some: corruption, lying, greed, war, hate, racism, prejudice, etc. *Illusive deceptions are those things we think are important but are not really in God’s view.* Ask students for examples: money, success, beauty, great clothes, etc.
- Who are those “chosen ones”? *Those who followed God’s instructions for a truly “good” life.*

If you are asked a question to which you don’t know the answer, don’t hesitate to reply: “You know, that’s an excellent question and I’m not sure of the answer. Let me do some investigating with our pastor and get back to you next week.” And make sure you do! 15 min.

3. Have students work in pairs for the readings in **The Kingdom of Heaven**. You might have to divide up the readings to complete the assignment in time. Discuss questions and end with the poem that each of them is to do. Allow ten minutes for the Bible study; ten minutes for discussion; ten minutes for their writing; and ten minutes to read them and post them on the bulletin board or board.

Discussion guidelines: 4:17 (The Kingdom of Heaven is near); 7:21 (not all who called me Lord will get into the Kingdom of Heaven); 18:3-4 (have to become like a child to enter Kingdom of Heaven); 13:24-29 (man planting good seed in a field); 32 (mustard seed); 33 (yeast); 44 (hidden treasure); 45 (a pearl of great price); 47-49 (the net). Images of the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God) throughout the New Testament

refer to both the Kingdom here and now as well as the one to come. 1-6 might refer to what is here and now; 7 to both; and 8 and 9 to the one to come.

4. Conclude class by reading one or more of the poems.

40 min.

*Note: If you read **Scenic Overlook** as a class; students *may* ask where we believe the soul of the deceased is (since the priest is “sealing” the grave with prayer). The correct response would be: we believe that we rest in Christ in some special way even as we wait for our full restoration at his Second Coming. Also, if they ask about people who choose to be cremated, reply that they, too, await full restoration in the Lord.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do /Believe? Lesson 13 Amen

Key Concepts

1. The Nicene Creed is an emphatic statement of faith said by the Body of Christ in one voice at the Eucharistic liturgy.
2. The Creed is also an important statement *against* erroneous teachings.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review the Nicene Creed.
2. Attend the first part of the liturgy – the “Synaxis” during which the Creed is recited. (You may leave as the deacons chant “mi vok” and “Marmin deroonagan” is being sung.
3. Define the “anathema.”
4. Begin a mural on the Nicene Creed (to be completed and mounted next week).

Materials needed

You can be as imaginative as you wish to create a final work of art on the Nicene Creed: for example, a butcher block paper wall mural using tempera paints or a large

felt banner and cut out shapes. These can be conducted by a volunteer art teacher. But if you want to keep the project simple and mountable on a bulletin board:

Sheets of 8” X 14” construction paper – one per pair of students

Titles from back of teacher manual – cut them out and post them on the black board, taped on the back, so that when they’re pulled off, they will not be damaged.

LOTS of magazines, stick glue and scissors for each pair of students.

Dictionary

Divine Liturgy books, one for each student

Space will be needed for the art project. If there is not sufficient space in your classroom, you might have to set up a large table or two elsewhere and assemble there for the project.

Note to the Teacher

The culminating art project on the Creed is to be conducted over two class sessions, so this may simply be the beginning. If attending church and conducting the abbreviated class activities of today’s lesson makes it difficult to begin the art project, you can choose to begin it next week. Design lessons 13 and 14 as you feel appropriate.

Procedure

1. Leave for church as soon as students have gathered. Sit in front pew and encourage students to recite the creed loudly.
2. Open class with prayer and discuss question. 5 min.
3. Read **Here’s What We Don’t Believe** and ask a volunteer to look up the definition for “anathema” for students to write in their texts. Review the information. 10 min.
4. Advise students that they will be meeting first in class next week to review the creed once together and then will depart for church. At the time for reciting the creed, students will *face* the congregation and lead the chant of the creed.

“But for now, we’re going to wrap up our study of the Creed in a sort of “right brain” way. All these weeks we’ve been learning historical and theological information, reciting and reviewing. At this point, let’s try to summarize all that left-brain book learning in a creative and evocative way. I’m going to assign pairs (if the class is small, students can work alone or in pairs with more than one Creed statement to illustrate) to take one of these basic tenets of the Creed and illustrate it. Here are magazines, glue, scissors and markers. Our aim is to assemble images and perhaps even words that help describe the statement. When we’re through, we’ll be displaying this on a bulletin board for the rest of the school and parish to enjoy and learn from.”

5. Clean up in a way that materials will be accessible next week. Conclude with the priest’s part of the anathema as a prayer. Before praying together in unison, remind students that this is the priest’s prayer directly following the anathema and is an affirmation of our faith. 25 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe? Lesson 14 A Summing Up

Key Concepts

1. The Nicene Creed is a statement of faith that can provoke deeper reflection.
2. The Nicene Creed is clearly and thoughtfully proclaimed at liturgy.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Attend church and lead the congregation in reciting the Creed. (You may leave as the deacons chant “mi vok” and “Marmin deroonagan” is being sung.
2. Complete their art project (it can be mounted by students or later by the teacher and parent volunteer).

3. Play a review game.
4. Participate in a personal reflection exercise on the Creed.

Material needed

As indicated in previous lesson.

Note to the Teacher

Remember that students will be leading the congregation in reciting the Creed today.

Procedure

1. Gather in class and review the Creed. In church, sit in the front pew; at the appropriate time, stand, face the congregation and recite.
2. Complete the art project and clean up (and mount the display if time permits). 20 min.
3. Instruct students to look through Unit Two and come up with 5 “answers” (along with the page number where this information can be found) for which fellow students will have to provide the questions. For example, the answer is Arius. The question would be? (see if students can answer this one) Yes. The priest who was teaching the heresy that Jesus was created and was not one with God.” Allow 10 minutes for them to come up with answers and 10 minutes for reviewing some of them together. Depending on class size, you can have students share all or just some of their answers. 20 min.

Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More Lesson 1 Living a Life That Matters

Key Concepts

1. We were created to live with God at the center of our lives.
2. Life with God at the center will result in the best life we can live.
3. All our faith knowledge means nothing if it does not change how we live.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a poll on issues of faith.
2. Explore, through prayer and Scripture, the importance of *living* our faith.
3. Read about the science of spirituality.
4. Study Biblical, historical, and current examples of people living their faith.
5. Reflect on Jesus' call to loving service in Matthew 25.
6. Discuss and select a service project.

Materials Needed

Bring in a newspaper or magazine article about a person in the news whose actions or words reflect their faith (see procedure #5). Also think of someone you know personally who evidences this same quality.

Note to the Teacher

This unit will include a service project that students will begin to discuss today. Bring in the ideas you have put together (see **Introduction**) for local, national or international (including Armenia) charities.

Procedure

1. Have students turn to page 87 in *Here I Am, Lord*. Pray and discuss the question. Together peruse the brief biographies on pp 104-106 (be prepared to choose the ones you want to highlight), reading 2 or 3; discuss with students what character and qualities appeal to them.
2. Have students look at the verse in **Verse Master** and then its continuation in their Bibles, James 1:23-25; 2:14-17. Tell the class: "We're learning something very simple here. If you read the powerful teachings of Jesus, if you hear about what God is telling us is *really* important about life, if we hear that faith is caring for the poor and hungry, and then we walk away and go about our lives as if we never heard these things, well then, we might as well have never read it, right? Look at again at verse 17 in chapter 2. Why would faith be dead without any kind of action?" Solicit answers and then conclude: "Yes, our faith needs to *live* in the things we do and say, otherwise it's the world's best-kept secret, no?" 10 min.
3. Take a quick poll (agree, raise hand; strongly agree, wave raised hand; disagree, thumb down; strongly disagree, shake thumb up and down) by reading the statements in **What I'm Thinking...** (Guidelines: 1. For those who disagree, explore why; what brought them to this conclusion? 2. Explore what students consider a "good" relationship – does it include time with God in prayer? Reading the Bible to learn more about him? Etc. Advise them that in a few lessons they'll be exploring this matter more closely. 3. For those who agree, emphasize that God wants us to get out of our comfort zone; mention the examples of Moses who thought he couldn't speak well enough to go to the Pharaoh (God told him not to worry, he would help him do what needed to be done as well as provide his brother Aaron as a further support); the prophet Jeremiah thought he was too young but God again assured him he could do the task; Jesus called disciples who were not necessarily skilled in all the right ways – but he knew that love of God would empower them as needed; service is the most important part of being Christian, since it honors the most important commandments (loving God, loving others). 4. Here's where you can provide a great segue to the next activity: "As a matter of fact, and maybe surprising to you, faith *does* have something to do with science. More and more scientists are discovering that we may be *biologically* equipped to know God. Let's read about it." 10 min.
4. Read **And You Thought It Was Just "Old Time Religion"**! 5 min.
5. Teach **A Cloud of Witnesses**; discuss the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Have students make a quick study of the Bible people mentioned (Answers: Noah – built an ark when God warned him of the impending flood; Abraham – obeyed God and left home to go to a place he knew nothing about; Jacob – blessed his sons even as he lay dying – faith in the future God promised; Joseph – believing in God's plan and knowing he was going to die, spoke of Israel's exodus from Egypt and gave instructions for his burial; Moses – took the slaves

out of Egypt; Hebrews – went through the Red Sea believing they would be safe.) Continue by saying “These were just some of the people in the Bible who acted in faith. But let’s think of a few others. How about Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew who received the gift of speaking Armenian at Pentecost and traveled to Armenia to share the Good News. What did *they* do by faith? (Traveled to a distant land, believing that God would grant their mission success.) How about the first recognized Armenian saint, St. Santookht, the princess who converted to Christianity because of St. Thaddeus’ teaching and defied her father? Remember her story? (She chose to be Christian, facing certain death at her pagan father’s hands, believing that Christ was more important than a rich life in the palace.) Or St. Gregory, who converted Armenia to a Christian nation in 301A.D.? (Even with the enormous suffering and difficulties, he believed God would help him succeed in converting the Armenian people.)” Ask students to identify people in their lives who evidence this kind of strong faith. Begin with your newspaper story and an example of your own. 15 min.

6. Tell students: “Well, we’ve spent the year looking at other people’s experiences of God, and our own basic faith through the Nicene Creed and we’ve done some productive thinking today about how all of that has to have some kind of *impact* on how we live or else, I guess you could say, what’s the difference if you know it or not? Let’s turn to what Jesus tells his disciples about the most important thing they have to do.” Have students read Matthew 25:31-40. Conclude: “So there it is, loud and clear. Jesus is telling us: “When you neglect those who need help, you’re neglecting me. When you reach out to them, it’s *me* you are serving. We’re going to spend the next few weeks on a service project. We’ll either raise money or collect food and clothing or serve in some way we’ll all decide together.” Begin the discussion. Students should choose a project and begin mapping out a plan that should include: 1) designing a flyer describing the project and 2) plan of action over the next month (project should be concluded in 4 weeks’ time).

End with the simple prayer: “Lord, thank you for giving us ideas and energy as we plan our service project. Fill us with your Holy Spirit over the next four weeks so that our love for you will turn into our love and service to others. Amen.” 20 min.

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Unit Three Lesson 2

Using the Manual: The Bible

Key Concepts

1. The most important resource for our faith is the Holy Bible as it came to be in the Holy Church.
2. As we would with any book, we need to learn what the Bible is and how to use it.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a review game on what they know about the Bible.
2. Read about how the Bible came to be and review Bible basics.
3. Consider how Scripture can impact on their own lives.
4. Compare and contrast examples of different current translations.
5. Continue their service project.

Materials Needed

Samples, if possible of 3-4 different Bible translations (NIV, NRSV, The Message, CEV, Armenian language)

Procedure

1. The opening prayer is based on verses from 2 Timothy that underscore the importance of Scripture. Ask students to underline the phrases that describe what the Bible can do. Then discuss answers. 5 min.
2. “Okay, let’s see what we know about this amazing book!” Form two teams. Write Holy Bible at top of board and draw a line to divide board in half. Then

have team members take turns (a member from each team at a time) going to the board with any word, person, place, or event they connect with the Bible; nothing can be duplicated. Stop when students cannot come up with anything more. (i.e.: New Testament, Old Testament, different books of the Bible, people of the Bible, Holy Spirit, Jesus, Mary, covenant, heaven, kingdom, God, Bethlehem and other places of the Bible, etc.) Use this as an opportunity for review. If they run out of ideas quickly, give hints or allow them to open their Bibles for more ideas. 15 min.

3. Tell class: “Excellent work! You know, after years of learning about the Bible, hearing and reading it, talking about it, you know a lot more than you think. But the thing that makes the Bible the greatest book in the world is that you *never* stop learning more and understanding more. It’s as if each time you open the Bible, even if you’re reading the same story, you learn something different – about the story, about yourself, about God. How many times have you heard the parable of the Prodigal Son? And yet at every age, you relate to someone or something different – sometimes it’s about the father, sometimes about the wild younger son, sometimes it’s about the obedient resentful son. For us to really live a life with God at the center, a life that matters, we have to come to read and love the Bible.” Read or teach **The Bestseller of All Time**. Have students take their Bibles in their hands as you read together, pausing to have students fill in answers before you continue. (History books start with Joshua and end with Esther; wisdom literature starts with Job and ends with Song of Songs; prophets start with Isaiah and end with Malachi.) 10 min.

4. Have students look up the passages and then share the message of each: trust in the Lord and you will be blessed; be joyful, patient when you’re suffering, pray faithfully; the Holy Spirit will bear this fruit in you: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; don’t worry about anything but pray, then Christ will fill you with a peace beyond comprehension; follow God, resist the devil and he’ll run! Discuss changes students would make according to their chosen passage. 10 min.

5. Show students the different translations by saying: “You know, one Bible is not necessarily exactly like another. Ever since the Bible was written in its original Hebrew and Greek, scholars have been translating it into newer and newer versions, often helped by new archaeological or language discoveries that make translations accurate. So for example...(show those you’ve brought to class). Let’s look at a specific example of how the same story is translated in three different ways.” Have three students read the versions. Compare and contrast together; note that they are all based on the original Greek text; the King James version (early 17th century) was considered one of the most beautiful translations ever, but has been followed by many others considered more accurate and easier to understand. 5 min.

6. Continue work on project. This time can be used to visit other classes to explain project, to set up a display in church, etc. or however you wish to use time. 15 min.

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Unit Three Lesson 3

A Community of Disciples: The Circles of the Cross

Key Concepts

1. The Christian faith calls us to discipleship through community.
2. Christian community is founded in worship, service, witness, education, and fellowship.
3. These “five circles of the cross” form the program platform of the ACYOA (Armenian Church Youth Organization of America).

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Explore the meaning of “community.”
2. Read about the five circles of the cross.
3. Discuss questions pertaining to their practical application.
4. List concrete ways they might participate in these five aspects of church life.

5. Continue work on their service project.

Note to the Teacher

You will visit two classes next week for a presentation of your outreach project.

Arrange for this with the teachers (perhaps one younger grade and one older).

Procedure

1. Pray **heart to Heart** together and then write the words “church community” on the board. Ask for a volunteer to record answers underneath as you ask: when you see these words what do you think? If ideas are not forthcoming, give them hints. Answers could include: eating meals, prayer, Badarak, dances, fun, classes, Sunday School, reading the Bible, etc. Conclude with “Okay, I think it’s clear that almost everything we mentioned is richer and wider and more fulfilling because we do it *together*. The first thing Jesus did was form a *community*, a group of people who would first follow and then teach others and so on and so on. And when his earthly ministry ended, what did he tell his followers to do? To gather and break bread together, specifically to share in the bread and wine of communion, his own body and blood, in remembrance of him. All these things we do together as a community of believers are very important to our faith. Let’s learn more about that today as another way that we can live a life that matters with God at the center.” 10 min.
2. Teach or read **The Cross of Circles**. For the moment, skip working on the five ideas under each circle; just concentrate on the information. Review Scripture together and discuss questions. 15 min.
3. Divide students into pairs or groups of three to come up with five concrete ways they might participate in each circle. OR have them choose just one circle to work on. If you prefer or if the class is small, work together. Survey results. 20 min.
4. Continue work on service project. 15 min.
5. Conclude with a prayer. 15 min.

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Unit Three

Lesson 4

The Holiness of Time

Key Concepts

1. The holiness bestowed upon us through the feasts of the church help us grow in faith.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Explore the concept of celebration and feasts in the church.
2. Identify some important people and events commemorated in the church calendar.
3. Itemize how feast day celebrations can help us grow in faith.
4. Wrap up their service project by preparing and then presenting a summary to two other classes

Materials Needed

Diocesan calendars – one for each student

Note to the Teacher

Next week you’ll need a nushkhar, if possible.

Procedure

1. Pray the opening prayer. Read **What Does It Take to Grow A Faithful Heart?** Have them list the ways faith is nourished and strengthened. Ask them to identify five, leaving the last line blank. Answers could include prayer, attending church, the faith of friends, example of parents, teachers, and other faithful adults, reading books about it, helping others, reading the Bible, appreciating the outdoors, animals, etc., the example of saints in the past; Sunday School. 10 min.
2. Students will probably *not* have listed feasts of the church. Tell them: “This is a great beginning to what could probably be a very long list. Because almost every moment of your day and everything

you do could be an opportunity to strengthen your faith. There are some very specific times that the Church has set aside, days that celebrate God's story. Let's read about this together." Distribute Diocesan calendars. Read **Feasts: Celebration** → **Transformation**. (Celebrations: birthdays, anniversaries, graduations. National celebrations: July 4th, Memorial Day, Washington's birthday, Earth Day, Labor Day, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc.) Review their findings under each one of the next three categories (these will be self-evident on the calendar). 10 min.

3. Spend the balance of class time preparing for a brief presentation on their service project. A poster with pictures would be ideal. Spend 20 minutes preparing and 20 minutes visiting two classes. 40 min.

Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 5

The Living Word/The Bread of Life

Key Concepts

1. The Word of God refers to both the written words of Scripture as well as Jesus himself, the living Word.
2. Through the Eucharist, we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, true spiritual food.
3. Both Word and Eucharist nourish our faith.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review the concept of the Word of God as both Scripture and Savior.
2. Re-enact pertinent sections of the Divine Liturgy.
3. Create a mini-poster with their own definitions of the Word as spiritual food.

Materials Needed

Divine Liturgy books

Color copies of **Feeding My Faith** handout from Appendix, one for each student

Markers

Procedure

1. Have a Bible and a nushkhar on your desk. Pray with the beautiful verses from Psalm 119 on p. 13 of *Here I Am, Lord*. Discuss only the first question. False ways might include: lying, buying into society's idea of attractiveness (getting the right clothes, jewelry, etc.), cheating in school work, neglecting the feelings of family members, jealousy of the good luck of others; too much use of cell phones, texting, excessive TV as entertainment and communication, etc. 5 min.
2. Have students fill in answers for **A Backward Glance**. Review answers: Feasts commemorating events in Jesus' life: Christmas (his birth and baptism), the Presentation to the Temple, February 14 (he was presented to the temple by his parents), Transfiguration (June-August), Palm Sunday (entry into Jerusalem), Easter (his resurrection). There are many other possible answers. Events: Vartanantz, February or March (battle of Avarayr, 451); April 24 (the Armenian Genocide); the Ecumenical Councils; Pentecost (the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, often called the "birthday of the Church"), deliverance of St. Gregory from the pit. There are many other possible answers.

Finally, discuss student answers for #3. 10 min.

3. Hold up the Bible and the nushkhar on your desk and tell students that today's lesson is on a very specific way we feed our faith: through the Word of God (hold up the Bible) and through Jesus Christ, who is himself called "the Word of God" (hold up the nushkhar). "In all your years of Sunday School, including this year as well, you've been learning about the ways that the Bible and Jesus Christ have touched your lives. But do you know when we experience them both the most deeply? (*Wait for answer*). Yes, at Badarak, at the Divine Liturgy, in church every Sunday. Let's read about it." Read **The Word as words...** Have students do the readings in

Scenic Overlook and ask “Now what do you see in all three of these little stories?” (Servants of God being instructed to *eat* the divine words; they tasted as sweet as honey). “Why do you think that Ezekiel and John were warned that it would be bitter or sour in their stomachs?” (Allow students thinking and discussion time; there’s no one right answer here – perhaps it’s because the truth of God’s vision is not always easy to take, “to digest”?) Continue reading **The Word As Body and Blood.** 15 min.

4. Continue with **Talking with Someone We Love:**

Prayer. Discuss questions together. Guidelines: 2. It’s okay to share any hopes and concerns with God, but prayer is a lot more than a wish list; the closer we get to God, the better our prayer conversations are 3. Accept all answers but propose that even though there’s nothing wrong with asking God for things like these, they are not really what prayer is about and they shouldn’t be disappointed in God if they don’t get what they ask for. If all we do to someone we love is present them with a list of things we want to get from them, that’s not much of a relationship, right? 4. We imagine that God’s view of our lives is something like a person flying an airplane overhead and able to see the entire map below. What we say, think, and do now and many years from now are all known by God. And yet that does not mean he doesn’t want to have a relationship with us, hear our voices, listen to our hopes and thoughts, and respond in different ways in our lives. 5. These and other verses always raise the question: “If all you have to do is believe and just ask and you’ll get what you ask for....so how come you don’t get what you ask for?” However, no Scripture verse really stands alone as the definitive answer – there is much guidance about prayer that leads us to a fuller conclusion such as those in 6. We pray with a heart and words that have come to know God’s heart, and therefore pleasing him, a heart that will be open to the special peace that God can provide for everything we ask. 7. Yes, it is important because it is only in that way that we can ask for what’s truly possible for God to bestow. 8. This can be a matter of just letting ourselves trust God’s ways. 10 min.

5. Distribute **Feeding My Faith** handout. Have students fill in answers. As a concluding prayer, share answers. 10 min.

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Unit Three Lesson 6

The Heart of the Matter

Key Concepts

1. Our relationship with God is the most important one in our lives.
2. As in any relationship, it needs our time and loving attention.
3. Prayer is an important tool of communication with God.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a values exercise on how they communicate with God.
2. Discuss the characteristics of a close relationship.
3. Explore the purpose and meaning of prayer in that relationship.

Procedure

1. Pray **heart to Heart** and discuss question. 10 min.
2. Begin class by saying “All year, we’ve been talking about one thing – how we get to know who God is. That’s not a short-answer question, is it? We started the year by looking at some of the other religious traditions and how other people understand God. Then we looked in depth at our creed, line by line, to get a deeper sense of what it is we believe about God and how we came to believe these things. In doing so, we got in touch with some *really foundational* concepts – how important the church community is, the Bible, the sacraments and feasts of the church, prayer and service – all these are paths to deeper faith. In the last unit of our year, we’ve been looking at how we get closer to God. And in this

lesson, we're at a sort of summary point. What are we doing and what do we *need* to do as Christians. So first, what are doing. Take a few moments now and fill out the little survey in your textbooks called **Hello....God?**" Have students answer the questions and then discuss answers. 15 min.

3. After the discussion, draw students' attention to the first question and say "so here's a relationship of love that we want to strengthen. But to understand that relationship, all we have to do is to think of a real love relationship we may have, for example, a parent – a mother or father – or for a brother or sister, or maybe for a best friend. When you love someone what are some of the things you want to do with or for that person? Write down five things in your student text that you would do in a love relationship. The first one is given as an example." Possible answers: want to spend time with them, share your feelings with them, talk with them, buy gifts for them, care about how they feel, want to please them, make them happy, etc. Now ask how that could be the same in a relationship with God (spending time with God in prayer, in Scripture, in church; pleasing him through our lifestyle and choices, we give gifts of money, flowers, and other things to the church in his name, etc.). 5 min.

4. Continue with **Talking with Someone We Love: Prayer**. Discuss questions together. Guidelines: 2. It's okay to share any hopes and concerns with God, but prayer is a lot more than a wish list; the closer we get to God, the better our prayer conversations are 3. Accept all answers but propose that even though there's nothing wrong with asking God for things like these, they are not really what prayer is about and they shouldn't be disappointed in God if they don't get what they ask for. If all we do to someone we love is present them with a list of things we want to get from them, that's not much of a relationship, right? 4. We imagine that God's view of our lives is something like a person flying an airplane overhead and able to see the entire map below. What we say, think, and do now and many years from now are all known by God. And

yet that does not mean he doesn't want to have a relationship with us, hear our voices, listen to our hopes and thoughts, and respond in different ways in our lives. 5. These and other verses always raise the question: "If all you have to do is believe and just ask and you'll get what you ask for....so how come you don't get what you ask for?" However, no Scripture verse really stands alone as the definitive answer – there is much guidance about prayer that leads us to a fuller conclusion such as those in 6. We pray with a heart and words that have come to know God's heart, and therefore pleasing him, a heart that will be open to the special peace that God can provide for everything we ask. 7. Yes, it is important because it is only in that way that we can ask for what's truly possible for God to bestow. 8. This can be a matter of just letting ourselves trust God's ways.

Conclude with a prayer: "Lord, help us keep you in our minds and hearts so that through prayer we might grow closer to *your* mind and heart. Amen." Dismiss the class. 20 min.

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Unit Three Lesson 7

Review and Celebration

Key Concepts

1. Students organizing their own review of the year's work is an effective wrap-up.
2. Celebrate!

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a review game on the year's work.
2. Celebrate their year together.

Materials Needed

Small gifts for your students (optional)

Refreshments (this can be arranged with parents). Have

refreshments set up on a side table or your desk at the start of class.

Procedure

1. Pray **heart to Heart** together. Discuss question.
5 min.
2. Form students into two teams and have them work together to create 10 review “answers.” Instruct them to list the page where the answer can be found as well as be ready to fully answer the question if the other team cannot.
15 min.
3. Have teams alternate with answers. Questions will be posed this way: “The answer is _____. What is the question?” Keep this at a lively pace for interest to be maintained.
15 min.
4. Distribute refreshments. Relax and celebrate the year’s accomplishments! Discuss upcoming events in students’ lives, summer plans....have fun. End class by distributing gifts (if you’ve decided to do so) and pray: “Dear Lord, thank you for the beautiful year you gifted us. What a blessing for us all to journey together in the Holy Church growing closer to you all the time. Bless each and every one of us, Lord, keep us safe, and may our hearts be ever open to your love and will, amen.” Have a great summer, everyone, and see you in church on Sundays!”
25 min.

Appendix

Summing It Up

Student Activity Strips

Why are Abraham and Sarah famous?

In what Old Testament book do you read about Abraham and Sarah?

What great patriarch freed the Jews from their bondage in Egypt?

Who led the Jews into the “Promised Land”?

What are the names of Israel’s three kings, who ruled one after the other?

What does the term “The Babylonian Exile” refer to?

What does Passover commemorate and how does that connect with the Christian story?

Why is the menorah a symbol of the Jewish holiday Channukah?

What are three practices you associate with stricter forms of Judaism?

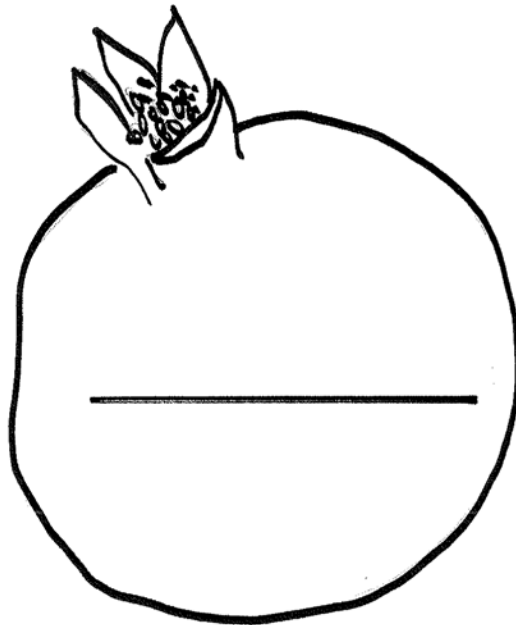
What are the three major divisions of Judaism?

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5: 22

The pomegranate is a fruit of special importance to Armenians. It grows in abundance in the Armenian climate. Filled with ruby-red seeds, it has been a symbol of fertility, abundance, and life in many cultures. On the pomegranate below, write down one of the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit that means the most to you. You now know that all who walk in the Spirit bear this kind of fruit in what they think, speak, and do. How do you evidence signs of fruitfulness in this area? Write about how this quality is reflected in your life or where you need to be more mindful about letting it appear.



The Nicene Creed

We Believe in...

One God, maker of heaven and earth

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Church

One baptism

The Kingdom of Heaven

Life everlasting

Jesus Christ, light from light
Born perfectly of Mary by the Holy Spirit

Truly human in every way

Crucified, died and rose again

To come again to judge the whole world

Feeding My Faith

The Word of God as Scripture nourishes my faith by

The Word of God as Holy Communion nourishes my faith by



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Notes

[illegible]

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Department of Christian Education
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
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