

Sunday School

Leslie Banerian
Sunday School Co-superintendent

Luke 2:49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

Wow! Another Christmas has gone by. Always a time of reflection. Did I even stop one moment to enjoy the reason for the season? The gift of God's son, Jesus.

Our children are a gift too from God. In a blink of an eye they are all grown up. Did I do a good job in God's eyes with them? What more could I have done? I suppose these are questions we will all ask ourselves at some point. Where did the time go? I was so busy, getting them to school on time, to sports on time, music lessons, speech lessons; making breakfast, lunches, dinner too; homework, reading bedtime stories, bathing, making sure their clothes were clean and ironed. I wish I would have taken one more moment to play with their dolls, build that Lego castle or jump in the leaves with them. Oh wait; there was the weekend too. I had one more thing I needed to do for them. I needed to take them to church.

I look back now on those Sunday mornings; no one wanted to get out of bed; no one wanted to get all dressed up; no one wanted to be out the door by 10:30. I can hear all the yelling now like it was yesterday. Looking back, it was the best battle I fought and it was the best thing I did for them.

They are all grown now. They can care for themselves, read their own books, cook their own meals and drive themselves to where they need to be. Sunday mornings are so quiet now. They get up, get dressed in their Sunday clothes and are out the door by 10:30. Even when they were away at college they managed to find a church on their own. A place they wanted to be on Sunday mornings. When I look back, of all the hours I spent taking care of them, the best hour I may have given them was their hour in church on Sunday mornings. It is the one thing that stuck with them. They were surrounded by family and friends and the word of God. A firm foundation, built on a rock, love, forgiveness, a giving heart; where else could I have found this for my children but in God's house. That is where we needed to be on Sunday mornings, with God, in His house.

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God's Great Love

When I was in elementary school, each year before Valentine's Day we would bring an empty shoebox. We would cover those boxes with pink and red papers and heart shaped cut-outs, and then add our names in big letters. When Valentine's Day finally arrived, our classmates would drop cards into a slit cut out at the top of the box. Back then, kids only had to bring in cards for the people they liked. No mandatory Valentine's Day cards for every kid in the class. So when you went home that afternoon, you counted your cards to see how many friends you had – it was a childish way to measure your worth.

These days, we don't need shoebox Valentines for that, we have social media. Based on the number of likes, follows, retweets and pins, we can tally up how many "friends" we have, still boiling things down to numbers. We keep a record of how much we are loved based on how others treat us. Our relationships are based on *quid pro quo* – scratching backs and getting favors. "What have you done for me lately?" is the tune of many modern relationships. We only give as much as someone else has given to us. We like to keep the scales balanced. Thankfully our worth isn't based on how many likes or retweets we get on social media. God's love for us is different, it doesn't come in the form of Valentine's Day cards but it conveys a real love.

And really love is not something you can measure in that way. The love God has for us is beyond measure. When God promised to bless Abraham with countless descendants, he used the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore as a metaphor. These are things people simply cannot count. Paul described the love of Christ as surpassing knowledge (Ephesians 3:19), and the Psalmist wrote, "Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness stretches to the skies" (Psalm 36:5).

God's love for us is a love that does not hold back. His love gives us everything, to the point of sacrificing His very own Son. At the cross, the perfect eternal love of the triune God was shown most vividly as the Son bore all our sins for us. This love is immeasurable, unquantifiable.

Unlike many human relationships, we can't add to God's love for us. We can't do anything to make him "unfriend" us. His love for us is perfect and complete. It is not based on what we can do for him or what we have to offer. His love originates in himself and not in anything we have done or will do. This unconditional love is the love he set on Israel and it is the same love he has for us. "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the lord loves you" (Deuteronomy 7:7-8)

**Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone),
Rev. Shant Barsoumian**

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Valentine's Family Night



Come share the love of God on Friday, February 24 at 6:00 p.m. when the Women's Christian Fellowship will hold their annual family night, featuring an Italian dinner and fun and games for the whole family.

Donation for adults \$12, Children 5-12 years old \$6, no charge for children under 5. Please call the church office to RSVP.

Vartanantz

The Greater Detroit Armenian Churches are sponsoring a united Vartanantz observance, on Thursday, February 23 at 7:30 p.m. The host church is St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church.

We invite all of you to join us for this special gathering at St. Thomas Syriac Catholic Church, 25600 Drake Road, Farmington Hills MI 48335 (11 Mile and Drake Roads.)

Living Water Women's Bible Study

As women, our lives can be complicated and stressful. Burdened by many responsibilities and roles, we can easily feel overwhelmed and stressed. It is important to take care of ourselves physically, emotionally as well as spiritually. When stress and anxiety sets in, our spiritual well-being usually becomes the least of our priorities. In Romans 6:33, God asks us to first seek his kingdom and his righteousness, and everything else that we need, will be given to us. The daily challenges we face, produces worry, and worry results in distraction. We become distracted, and take our eyes off of God.

Every Friday morning, from 10am-12pm, a group of us women gather to study God's word. It is an invitation to sit at His feet, and spend time with Him, just like Mary did in the familiar story of Martha and Mary. The title of our study this winter

is "Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World". Our study encourages us to develop a balance in serving God and having a Mary heart that delights in spending time with Him. As we sip our warm coffee seated around a table with our Bibles at hand, we have many discussions, many laughs, and offer each other the encouragement to draw closer to God.

On March 24, 2017 we will begin our Spring study titled "The Armor of God"; a seven-week study that concludes on May 12. Please join us, all women are welcome. For any questions, please contact Salpi Tachian at (248) 219-9544 or at stachian@sbcglobal.net

ACC Gratefully Acknowledges The Following Donations

Mary Jo Agbabian- *Christmas Missions*
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CHURCH CALENDAR

Weekly

Worship Service, Sunday 11:00 a.m.

Church School, Sunday 11:00 a.m.

Bible Study, (Every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.)

Monthly

ACC Women's Fellowship, (Second Sunday of the month, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.)

Board of Trustees Meeting, (Third Sunday of the month, 12:30 p.m.)

Board of Deacons Meeting, (Last Sunday of the month, 12:30 p.m.)

Women's Bible Study, (Every Friday, 10:00 to 12:00 p.m.)

Children's Message, (First Sunday of the month. Parents bring your children into the worship service).

Book Review

Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian's Latest Book: "Experiences"

In the early days of the New Year 2017, the Armenian Heritage Committee of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit published the 39th bilingual book entitled "*Experiences/Portzarootyunner*", authored by the veteran, senior pastor, well known intellectual and educator, the Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian.

The book is composed of 160 pages with 31 articles in English and 15 in the Armenian languages. In this bilingual collection of concise, focused and inspirational articles and essays, the author imparts insights gathered over the years through his personal and professional experiences that will enrich the faith of his readers with authentic illustrations, Scriptural examples and reflective questions.

Once again, Dr. Tootikian has demonstrated that, as an acute observer and a good communicator, he has a special talent of being a spokesman for God's word, a gift he has generously shared with the reading public.

In this wonderfully-written book the author deals with a variety of subjects, such as religious, educational, social, ethical and ethnic issues, as well as dealing with such subjects as nature, national observances and religious feast and festivals.

The author has dedicated his 39th book, "*Experiences*," to the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit, where he has served as the senior pastor for over 30 years (1975-2005), and since then serving as minister emeritus.

Our personal experiences become our best teachers if we can learn from them. Based on his experiences, the author provides practical and logical suggestions in this volume. Writing in an accessible, impeccable and engaging style, he tackles with the questions of "*What*", "*Why*" "*How*", and "*When*". His strong faith for Christian principles and unconditional love towards his Armenian culture are very apparent in his writings. His readers, especially those who know him personally, cannot miss seeing in him the model Armenian clergyman and the true Armenian patriot.

Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian strongly believes that one cannot separate the Armenian Christian from his culture. Both Christianity and culture go parallel, guarantying the survival of the Armenian nationhood. He also believes strongly that the preservation of the Armenian heritage and defending the Armenian Cause are inseparable and complement each other.

A widely recognized and distinguished Armenian scholar, Rev. Tootikian, writes with warmth, clarity and eloquence. Both in the English and Armenian sections of the book, his essays are compact, lucid and inspirational.

On the publication of his 39th book, I congratulate the Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian for his untiring endeavor and perseverance in using his writing ability and talent, among other qualities, all dedicated to the glory of God and to his fellow humans.

I highly recommend this book to the reading public.

The price of the book with shipping and handling is \$28.50 and may be ordered from:

Armenian Heritage Committee

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Mihran Jizmejjan,
President, Armenian Missionary
Association of Canada