

**St. John Armenian Church Sunday School:
High School Graduation and All the Rest**

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High School Graduation

Congratulations to the 2025 St. John Armenian Church Sunday School Graduates: Ara Badalyan, Stella Baldwin, Taline Caliskan, Sevag Ghazarian, Bakrad Khasroof, Layla Kujawa, Rebecca Magee, Areg Mailian, Aren Vardanyan and Lucas Yessayan. As these great minds move into their next box of life, their experiences at St. John have blessed them with the strength, the courage and the inspiration to reach their goals.

A couple graduates shared some heartwarming thoughts about their experience in Sunday School, their future intentions and some words of encouragement for new and continuing students.

Bakrad Khasroof started Sunday School in the 9th grade. He thanks all his teachers, and personally thanks Father Aren who was a major influence on him when he was just starting to get involved in the church community.

"Sundays at St. John were tough at the beginning. I found it difficult to wake-up early in the morning rather than being lazy and sleeping. At times, it felt like a chore more than anything else. Later I learned to adapt to the difficulty of being a follower of Christ and I am slowly making progress. Now, I'm more excited to be go to church on Sundays and serving God."

Bakrad is planning to attend college to become an accountant, but ultimately, he wants to make people happy and smile. "It warms my heart to seeing clips on social media of influencers helping people, particularly the homeless." Finally, Bakrad offers a word of encouragement, "Enjoy the time you have, because you're definitely going to miss it once it's gone."

Lucas Yessayan shared a favorite line from his valedictorian speech: "Finally, and most importantly, we owe it to our Lord Jesus Christ, for without him, nothing is possible." Lucas

plans to major in statistics as a pre-med major at the University of Michigan. He loves how Sunday school strengthened his faith by being part of a community. "It truly showed me that your relationship with God can be shared with others around you."

In addition to their Sunday studies, the high school students were involved in many service projects throughout the year, including making blankets for Children's Hospital, donating Christmas baskets to families in need, preparing meals for Motor City Mittens and working at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen Garden.

In a touching tribute, Victoria Esther Abajian-Sarkisian gifted the Esther Atamian Memorial Scholarship in memory of her grandmother, Esther Atamian. Applicants were asked to write a one-to-two-page essay on how Sunday School has impacted their life. Vickie was so inspired by the three essays she received that she gave scholarships to all of them: Sevag Ghazarian, Rebecca McGee and Lucas Yessayan. Rebecca McGee also received the Ajamian scholarship.

All the Rest

Sunday mornings are busy and there are a lot of opportunities to learn and have fun with old and new friends! The opening of the Nursery on Sunday mornings for our youngest parishioners and their families has been a super success. Under the leadership and direction of Jenni Morris, families arrive early eager to do a craft activity and sing and play with peers. Jenni lovingly creates a safe space of fun for the multi aged group of children and adults that gather.

Church school volunteers report every week to greet and instruct students of all ages. Together we learn about what it means to be a Christian, how to develop and grow our relationship with God, and how to understand our Armenian faith and culture at levels that are developmentally appropriate for the students' age. A typical Sunday includes 45 to 60 minutes learning in a classroom using a [diocese approved curriculum](#).

Twice a month children attend a worship service with Paulette Apkarian, Anahit Toumajan, or Deacon Rubik Mailian. Each month Father Aren offers a children's sermon in church, and the

students take part in communion. First and second graders also recited the Hayr Mer in Armenian in front of the church congregation in May.

During our meeting in September 2024, parents enthusiastically supported the idea of a weekly Goodnight Prayer by Father Aren. An archive of prayers can be viewed by clicking the blue box in the Sunday school section of the weekly church bulletin. The one-to-two-minute prayers include calendar sensitive content, visuals, church references and prayers. They are excellent and viewed by family members and parishioners of all ages.

A couple annual student presentation events were repeated this past year. Our annual Christmas Pageant highlighted each classroom of students performing a song, reciting bible verses, and dancing under the leadership of their teachers and Paulette. Joined by the audience, a hearty rendition of *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* ended the program followed by cookies and punch.

Something new this fall will be the anticipated return of Arsen Terjimanian to the eighth grade. Also, Dikran Callan will teach seventh grade and Rayeanne Magee will be leaving the classroom to join the security team. We also continue to recruit substitutes. Please let Father Aren know if you are interested in being added to the list.

The diocese has reinstated the Mardigian Institute for teacher and church school leaders. Interested and available staff are planning to attend in August, in New York, and represent our parish. We wish them safe travels, pleasant weather, and a lot of opportunities to learn from old and new friends across the diocese.

St. John's Church School offers a variety of experiences to students and instructors teaching the Sacred Scriptures, the Gospel message of Christ's love and by building their knowledge of the Divine Liturgy and meaningfully teaching their faith through regular worship in the tradition of the Armenian Orthodox faith. The goal of the Church School is to help our children to know our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, the ethics and morals our faith teaches us, and to develop a pious prayer life.

Today the Sunday School is a well-established organization that has become increasingly progressive, improving, and experimenting with curriculum and initiating new programs and events.

[Church School Registration](#)