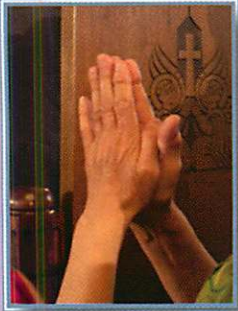


## Unit One: A Community Over Time

### Lesson 8

# Sacred Music and the Arts



### Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyn Surpo, Amen.

We who have passed this long night adore you, O Lord our God, and as we gather here to offer you our morning prayers, we bless, glorify, and give thanks to you. For you have counted us worthy to pass this night in peace and attain this morning hour. Deem us worthy, O Lord, to receive the promise of eternal life with you, a promise beyond words, that you have given to us your beloved ones. O true God, Jesus Christ our Lord, save us and have mercy.

*Morning Prayer of the Armenian Church*

## Quick Quiz

### True or False

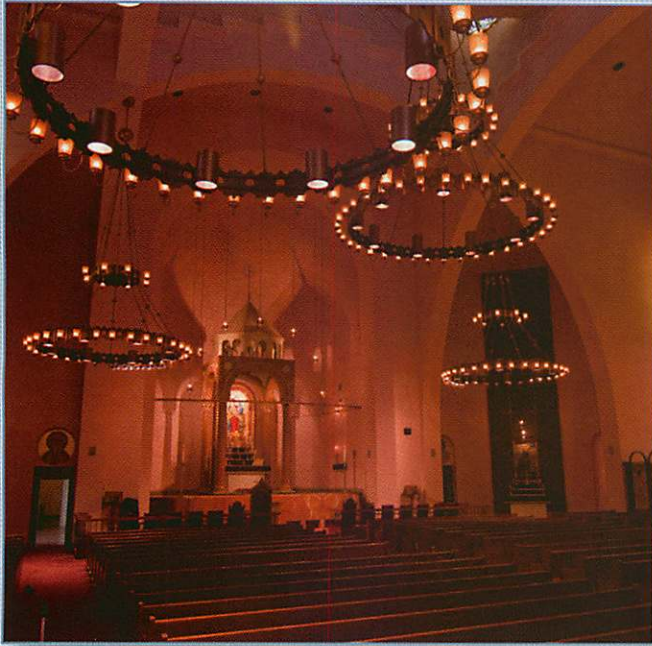
- Special milestone events in the life of a Christian are called sacrifices.
- The Armenian Church finds the origin of our sacraments in the writings of St. Gregory the Illuminator.
- Hebrews 5:4, which says “No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was,” refers to the sacrament of marriage.
- John 1:32 is talking about the sacrament of chrismation when it says “Then John gave this testimony: ‘I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.’”
- In the Armenian Church, babies receive their baptism, confirmation (chrismation), and first holy communion all at once.

### Did You Know?

Many of the Psalms were meant to be sung. Some Psalms include instructions to sing them “to the tune of,” followed by the title of some ancient lost song.

In the Old Testament, God gave the Jews specific directions on how to make the priests’ clothing. In Exodus 28:5, God says the garments should contain “gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.” Beautiful color and sounds are to be part of our expressions of faith.





## Reflections of God's Glory

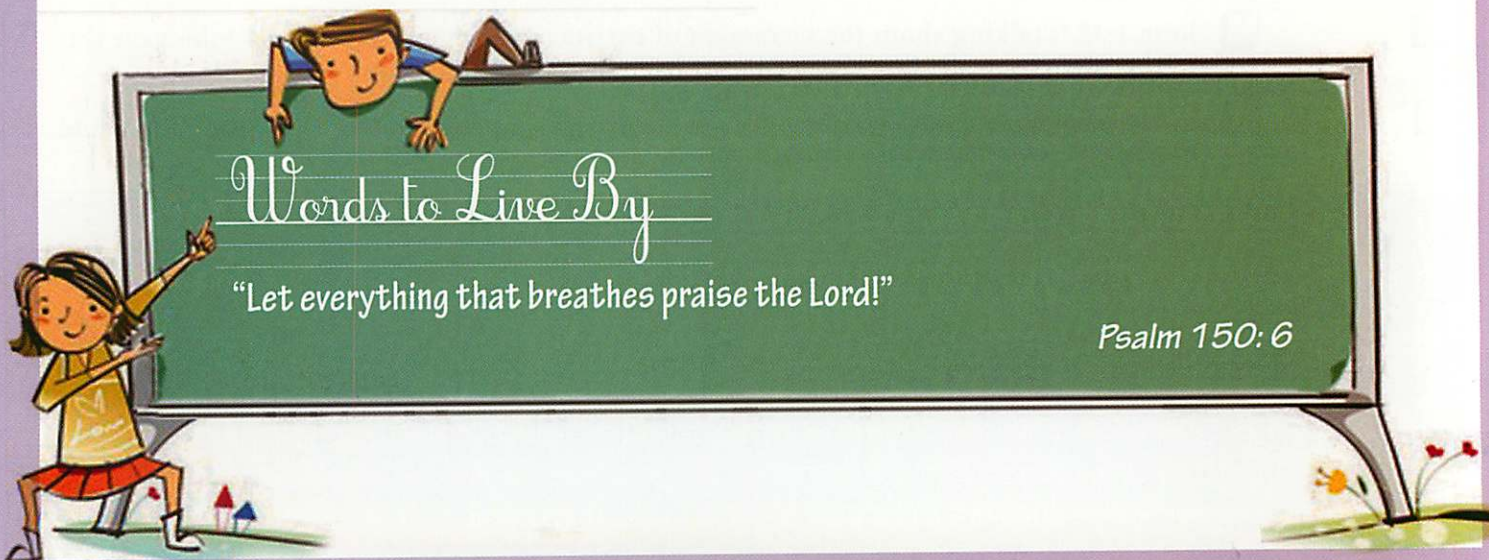
What do you see and hear when you enter an Armenian church? The buildings themselves are unusual, with their domes and vaulted rooflines. Inside, you see colorful stained glass windows (although Armenian churches did not originally feature stained glass) and paintings that show important events in our faith and history. There are gold chalices and jeweled crosses. Our clergymen celebrate Badarak wearing crowns and robes of breathtaking fabrics. Beautiful, ancient-sounding hymns are sung. Clouds of fragrant incense drift slowly toward heaven. You know you are someplace very special.

Though we are a small population, Armenians are well-known for their love of art, music, and literature, as well as a great devotion to their Christian heritage. It is natural that our artists would want to combine those elements when they created our hymns, priestly vestments, altar icons, and other parts of our church. For them, it is the highest expression of love for God to give their best work to make our Divine Liturgy as full of beauty as possible. We try to come as close as we can to imitating the glory of heaven and God's nature with color, shape, music, and verse.

Scripture encourages us to praise God with instruments and song. Psalm 33:1-5 says:

“Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous;  
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.  
Praise the Lord with the harp;  
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.  
Sing to him a new song;  
play skillfully, and shout for joy.  
For the word of the Lord is right and true;  
he is faithful in all he does.  
The Lord loves righteousness and justice;  
the earth is full of his unfailing love.

In fact, the Book of Psalms is concluded by a reminder to give God musical praise. Read Psalm 150.











## Priestly Vestments

The vestments worn by the priests have evolved through literally centuries. Most of them derive from the garments worn by the temple priests as described in chapters 28-30 of the Book of Exodus. Some vestment pieces, such as the bishop's miter (the tall pointed headdress came into use in the 14th century) entered Armenian tradition later, under different influences. These beautiful vestments represent a spiritual "armor" (Ephesians 6:11-17) that clothe the priest in Christian virtues, preparing him to celebrate Badarak and preside over the Eucharist.



## Khachkars

Anyone who spends time in Armenia will notice stone crosses throughout the landscape. These monuments are called khachkars, or "cross-stones." Khachkars made their initial appearance in the 4th century. The 12th and 13th centuries saw the creation of the most complex designs for khachkars. Carved out of local stone, they often featured images of birds, lace patterns, or people.

They were sometimes used as gravestones, but many of them simply marked important places and events. It was a way of dedicating an activity to God, and seeking his blessing and protection. New khachkars were welcomed with prayers, readings, and holy oil or water and wine. They have stood for centuries as open-air places of prayer to remind us that God is everywhere and should be included in everything we do.

The following poem by Vahagn Davtian highlights the solitary beauty of our khachkars:

### KHACHKAR

In weeds, among rocks,  
In the face of the wind, in snows,  
In the searing heat of the sun,  
There it stands, alone, erect.

Meek, yet defiant,  
Crumbling, yet upright,  
Intricate, yet pristine,  
There it stands, beneath the heavens.

There it stands, in the face of the sun  
As a pillar of sorrow, of compassion,  
It stands there, centuries on end,  
As beauty Crucified.

