

Hymns School

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I consider last year's hymns classes to be a huge success: We had more classes than ever, more servants than ever, taught more hymns than ever. We had many new servants who didn't teach hymns rise up and teach hymns (Amanda, Merna, Sandy, Mark, Andrew, Jan). Many dedicated servants who continued to teach hymns. God bless you.

Every year, we will try to move into a little bit more structure as a Hymns School. Last year, the goal was to get accustomed to the new classes - now we are separated by age and smaller classes, and a loose curriculum. This helped inform finalizing the curriculum for this year - understanding the levels of the kids at each age group... seeing where we are and where we want to be. This year, we will start to keep track of what each class learned at the age group to help inform the next years. Also this year we will start with the curriculum website.

I just want to share some points with you:

- We are not just teaching hazzat, but we are teaching rituals, we are teaching theology by the words of the hymns, and very importantly, we are teaching confidence. We have to instill confidence in our boys and girls when they sing hymns, but to do that, we as servants have to be confident. I want you to feel empowered in your class, to know what you are doing and what you are saying, to be prepared. Hymns class is not something I show up for without any preparation... I have to listen and practice and listen again and grab a pen and write something down and practice some more. I have to be ready when I enter the class.
- Don't waste time with lectures... we all had it at some point where it's a lecture about behavior and maybe we all gave it at some point. But if you ever gave a lecture twice, that means it's not effective! Or the first time would have worked. So don't waste time on it - either during class or after class. It's not worth it. Use that time to focus on the hymns.
- If you have a talkative group, don't leave time for talking! No silent moments! And actually, this is much easier if you are prepared
- Encourage your kids to come to Vespers and Praises every week. And you come to Vespers and Praises every week. Come and see them and even stand by them. Let them see you. Encourage them to sing along. Tell them "You know this!" - we really need to work on this.
- Don't hesitate to ask me a question, or ask me for a recording, or ask me to send you the words, or ask me where to find it on Coptic Reader. Don't hesitate and don't feel embarrassed. Let's all work together for the enrichment and growth of our boys and girls.
- Don't worry when Abouna or I come in your class... we are not coming to judge you or to see if you're a good teacher. All of us are learning - sometimes I want to come and listen to the kids and see what they are doing. Sometimes I want to come and see your style of teaching - I get many ideas from you guys and I learn a lot watching you teach. For

example I never served G1 before, and I like to go and see Carol and Sandy's enthusiasm for example. Or I like when I go in G3-4-5 girls and I see that the girls are invested in the hymn they are learning... they are debating different ways of saying [] and debating pronunciation of the Coptic word! I love to get to know the children and to see their talents. Just to come and enjoy God's creation and the talents He gave them. So don't get nervous or embarrassed or anxious when I come in the class or when Abouna comes in the class!

- It is very important for me to tie the Hymns Classes with the Liturgical Services. So I like to say a hymn in liturgy when a class has just finished learning it. I try to pay attention, but sometimes I don't - either to the classes or to the hymns that were said in liturgies... So if you find us neglecting a hymn during liturgy or tasbeha, and you learned it in class, please let me know! "Hey we're learning Praxis Response in Coptic but we didn't say it in a few weeks do you mind saying it this week?" And I will let the leaders in the deacons know and we will incorporate it. So our children can see and feel the liturgical use of the hymns they learned.