



Confirmation

In the Diocese of West Missouri

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AN INTRODUCTION

Every year, confirmation is a hot topic across the church.

- † What are we doing at Confirmation?
- † What does confirmation mean?
- † What are we expected to teach confirmands of all ages?
- † At what age should we be confirming young people?
- † Is Confirmation a Rite of Passage for young people attaining a certain age or measured in maturity?

These questions lead to the larger, over-riding question: how do we re-create Confirmation as a meaningful experience?

Frequently, decisions related to the Sacramental Rite of Confirmation are made at the congregational level and sometimes by families without input from clergy leaders. As a result, wide variation in Confirmation theology and practice exists across our diocese.

This booklet is an effort to bring diocesan-wide structure and standards to Confirmation that can be used within a flexible framework. Hopefully, the adults and young people seeking Confirmation, parents, congregations, sponsors and clergy will find it helpful in the process of confirming or reaffirming their faith.

WHAT IS CONFIRMATION and how does it relate to faith formation?

The Book of Common Prayer (p. 860) defines Confirmation this way: Confirmation is a sacramental rite in which the candidate “expresses a mature commitment to Christ, and receive(s) strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop” (BCP, p. 860)

The Prayer Book also says (p. 412): “In the course of their Christian development, those baptized at an early age are expected, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop.”

Therefore, fundamentally, Confirmation is a Sacramental Rite of the Church. It is a sacred act of commitment by an individual to follow Jesus’ way of love, and a reciprocal commitment by the Church to support that individual as they walk through life with Jesus.

In the Rite of Confirmation, the individual renews the commitments made at Baptism, and as part of the rite, the Church pledges its support, which support is most keenly expressed by the Bishop’s laying on of hands and by a prayer asking the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit to come anew and with increasing strength into the person’s life.

Second, Confirmation is the culmination of a time of intensive, intentional learning and focused examination of the practices and beliefs of the Christian faith (this instruction was, in the Greek language used by the early Church, called *catechesis*). It is the Church’s hope that, in this period of *catechesis*, individuals will find sustenance in the beliefs and practices of the Church that feeds their spiritual hunger. It is also hoped that the participants (*catechumens*) will gain clarity about what it means to follow the way of Jesus and, at the same time, become committed to following Jesus throughout the person’s life.

Confirmation, then, is part of a process of lifelong, faith formation and a critical bridge to understanding and practicing one's faith. And it is an opportunity to grow in one's understanding of God, human relationships, and life's highest meaning.

One Confirmand put it this way: "I feel like it's really a start of deeper thinking about religion. It's been more than going to a few classes, being confirmed and then I'm done. It's really been the start of making God the center of your life and letting that give your life direction." This quote beautifully sums up the truth that one's personal story and the Christian story are intrinsically intertwined.

OUR HOPE AND PRAYER is that—with the support of their congregation, clergy, parents, family, sponsors, the bishop, and their fellow participants—**each Confirmand will become a disciple of Jesus** and confirm that commitment publicly through the Sacramental Rite of Confirmation.

In regards to doctrine:

- † Begin to know many of God's stories and understand how we read the Bible.
- † Know major themes of Scripture (i.e. forgiveness, mercy, love, redemption, etc).
- † Understand basic doctrine - the ability to apply what we believe to how we live.
- † Understand how we worship as Episcopalians.
- † Understand Episcopalian elements of Rites and why we do them.

In regards to sharing faith

- † Begin a habit of regular participation in the life of the church.
- † Be able to engage with other mature Christians outside of family.
- † Be able to share what they learn with others.
- † Obtain experiential competency (through service projects, etc).

In regards to gifts discernment and leadership development

- † Understand that they are ministers of the church and that there are a variety of ministries to which one might be led.
- † Explore personal gifts through participation in a variety of parish activities.
- † Take advantage of opportunities to hold leadership positions within the Church.
- † Participate in theological reflection after serving in various forms of ministry.

Active disciples have three characteristics in common, regardless of age:

- † They are converted (meaning, they own their faith)
- † They are equipped (have been readied, not entertained)
- † They are engaged in ministry (serving and living into their gifts)

Obtaining these characteristics is the goal of the period of faith formation. The Sacramental Rite of Confirmation is the culminating liturgical act whereby

- † The person makes a mature commitment to be a minister (apostle, ambassador, messenger) of and for Jesus Christ
- † The Church prays that God's Holy Spirit will empower the person to carry out this commitment.

THREE HOPEFUL CULTURAL SHIFTS in purpose, pedagogy and context

The way the Church understands and practices Confirmation is changing, and its foundations are shifting. Three hopeful cultural shifts on the purpose, pedagogy and context of a thoughtful and intentional confirmation experience help us be true to who we say we are.

Purpose

While our theological roots remain solid, the point of purpose for confirmation is shifting. Congregations that are doing confirmation really well and with great hope have recognized that they have to find ways to engage people BEFORE the start of catechesis, before they present doctrine. The emerging best-practice is Engagement First, Doctrine Second. The key to this is building a process that listens and responds to spiritual hunger with engagement not pat answers or platitudes.

We all know life can be challenging at any age; there is loads of stress, pressure to do everything well, to “be” something special. But, what do people long for? The church community can engage people in places of rest and bring them into community so that they find a place of formation that is holy space. Maybe it’s around social justice issues or the needs of your community; current events or a thoughtful, structured way to deal with questions of race and race relations. Whatever that point of engagement is, how can you engage in listening together to hear the still, small voice of God.

The goal is to build lifelong followers of Jesus first, Christian community second. This represents a shift from focusing on equipping persons for church membership and instilling denominational loyalty to embarking on lifelong journeys as followers of Jesus; a shift from making “Episcopalians” to being helping be engaged with Jesus.

The period of preparation and Confirmation is more than episodic classes with a big ceremony at the end. It is a time of learning intended to be relevant to people of all ages in their life situation as well as a form of intensification that asks something of them. The time together means something - maybe it’s good pizza, maybe people are nice to them, maybe people shared their stories. Hopefully, the preparation time becomes a time to be completely honest about what they know and don’t know, what they doubt, what they believe or don’t believe, while in a safe place and being supported by a wider system.

Pedagogy (Freedom & Accountability)

The method and practice of teaching confirmands is shifting from the traditional, didactic classroom instruction to a resource-rich relational learning environment. It’s about bringing content into a dialogical environment that honors curiosity and invites people to interact with another and their surrounds as the basis for the learning process.

And, it’s not all about doctrine; Christianity is life-wide (what does it mean for me to care for my neighbor? How does faith come into my everyday life?). It is relationally—rich from learning about Christianity to actively engaging it.

Success can be found in multiple environments; there are multiple ways to connect our personal life, faith, and world. This allows for the freedom to create whatever learning environment best suits your congregation. This should be transformational learning!!!!

Context

The circumstances that form the setting for concepts to be fully understood and assessed is shifting beyond the classroom...and into the world. Building on existing strengths and the character of the

congregation keeps it practical, meaningful and organic. It takes into account congregational demographics and geography with an eye to the wider church environment; et al working with critical issues in a neighborhood.

Ideally, confirmation is a process owned by the entire congregation; a deeper shared experience.

New traditions are formed, in which the whole congregation participates and the process becomes part of their story. Church-wide, confirmation is transforming, it no longer needs to be considered a separate ministry event that happens in a classroom at a certain time of year in a certain room. It has become a contextual process owned by the entire congregation.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

In the course of their Christian development, those baptized at an early age are expected, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop. (BCP, 412)

If someone has never been confirmed by the laying on of hands of a bishop in communion with the Episcopal Church, then Confirmation is the route to enter into our fellowship.

If a bishop in communion with our church has already confirmed someone, they should not be presented again for Confirmation. They also should not be presented for Reception. They are already a part of our fellowship. It is advisable to suggest to a parishioner under these circumstances that he/she renew Baptismal vows upon becoming a member of the Episcopal Church.

If someone has been confirmed by a bishop in apostolic succession within a tradition that is not in Communion with the Episcopal Church, he/she should be presented for Reception into our fellowship.

As confirmation changes, so do our expectations. Confirmands should be mature enough in age and spirit to offer a personal response to the questions:

How does the gospel lay a stake on my life?

What is the sacrifice I'm willing to make?

In regards to young people, the Diocese of West Missouri believes confirmation should not be viewed as "graduation". Offering the opportunity to be confirmed too early in a young persons life may potentially not stick. Understandably, the decision to ask that young people wait until they are 15 is not popular with parents. Mainly, the fear is that if we don't do it now, a young person will leave the church. We have hope, however, that anyone given instruction into the Christian faith will remain committed next year and throughout their life.

The Bishop asks candidates for Confirmation/Reception be 15 years of age.

KEY PRACTICES OF SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATIONS

- † **Tend relationships** - Confirmation is practical, formative and evangelistic! Put content in the context of relationality; or in other words, content doesn't trump relationships. Do people know each other? Can our relationships be deeper? Relationships and deep connections hold the confirmation experience together – not content. The understanding grows that 'church', being with peers, (and for young people, adult peers) is something that helps you live your faith beyond confirmations.
- † **Use mentors** - Beyond a token, check it off the list. This is an opportunity to connect the person to another adult in the congregation – beyond a programmatic way. How do you integrate this faith into everyday life?" Mentors literally are 'the church' to a person. Mentoring offers a one-on-one relationship that can go deeper than a program.
- † **Explore beliefs, ask questions** - Allow young people to ask questions in their own frame of reference and in their own words.
- † **Encourage Public Affirmation** - A public affirmation of faith gives everyone involved a sense of ownership; of being shaped and formed by a community. There is a new interest in creating a "rite" that gives people a structured opportunity to 'give testimony'; an affirmation of faith. The fruit of this is an entire congregation being enriched as a result of traditions such as a special liturgy where people share a creed they have written together, or a portion of scripture they have chosen and why they chose it, how they would interpret it. Host a big party where people of all generations come out to support the ongoing confirmations

WHAT DO SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATIONAL PROGRAMS HAVE IN COMMON?

- † **Resilience!** A knowledge that this rite connected to baptism is somehow important in the transition from youth to adulthood; and that we want to celebrate and consider it our responsibility.
- † **Built on the strengths of the local congregation** - They recognize resources in people, neighborhoods and teenagers. The congregation wraps itself around young people, listening well to questions and responding to needs.
- † **Adaptive and responsive** – Though some use a curriculum or resource. Confirmation is not a static process but a responsive, ongoing assessment – are young people receiving this? Engaging this? Are they building on the practices of faith? Are they responding with words of their own about faith?
- † **Deeply Committed identifiable leadership and resources** – Even in a tiny church, you can point to the people who say we are not going to miss the opportunity to raise up young people and offer them a rich confirmation program. The time, talent and treasure of elected leadership, volunteer leadership and clergy offer the best they can for confirmation.
- † **High levels of parental investment** (though not necessarily commitment) Parents help young people get to church, communicate their needs and want their teenagers to be involved in some significant way, They say, in words or action, "This matters."
- † **Embrace the idea that this is not graduation from the church**, from Christian formation programs or the denomination that has raised them. Rather, it is saying, "You now have skills, and knowledge and language to carry your faith forward and make this journey your own."

STAGES OF FORMATION

Every age has development needs and the following information has been gleaned from various experts in the field. Gathering some basic knowledge of formational stages gives reason and logic to our decision-making when choosing how we move into the planning stage.

Developmental Characteristics of Adults

Millennials - 1984-2002

These are pilgrims and seekers who value and need relationships and fellowship. They resonate with the Christ-like way of living and seek a service culture. They are looking to connect their inner life with the outer world (i.e. applying theology to values/action). They are in the process of figuring out who they are to be as well as where and with whom. This demographic mostly lacks sophisticated Bible Literacy and the big picture of Christian history, traditions and practices.

Gen-X, 1965-1983

Gen-Xers emphasize openness and tolerance of differences. They like to cross boundaries of opposing groups and might find doctrinal boundaries unhelpful or dogma distasteful. They believe in challenging a group from within and prime values include love, mercy and inclusion. Sin is not a prescribed behavior, but any kind of barrier to relationship. They think institutions should change for people, not vice-versa and can be mistrustful, especially of institutions and authorities. Credibility is earned, one person at a time.

Boomers, 1946-1964

Boomers are life-long learners who reject the stereotypes of “old”. They aspire to uniqueness, embrace informality and seek “adventure”. Generally, there is a low regard for institutions, as boomers will continue to challenge the status quo. They don’t respond well to stuff created without their input (who does?) and are cause-oriented. Most boomers seek after spiritual meaning; “what is important?” They want to feel pride and accomplishment as well as connected to the present.

Builders: The Silent Generation, Pre-1946

The Builders believe in sacrifice and commitment for the common good. Generally speaking, they are less anxious than younger groups and more content with passive states. There is the possibility of decreased mobility, less dynamic cognition and memory. Builders have an ethic of independence; though prize connections with family and friends. They have likely experienced multiple losses and multiple kinds of loss.¹

¹ "Cheryl Cementina - Coordinator of Adult Christian Formation" <https://www.linkedin.com/in/cherylcementina>. Accessed 9 Oct. 2019.

Developmental Characteristics of Junior High age students

Who am I? I really don't know.

If early adolescents (middle schoolers) could describe themselves, they might tell us:

- I'm trying to sort out my identity.
- I'm starting to separate from my parents and my family, turning to my peers for support.
- I may reject traditions and teachings I accepted as a child.
- Sometimes I'm painfully self-conscious. I can lack self-confidence, feel awkward and be self-critical.
- Emotionally, I can overreact, be moody, and unpredictable.
- Physically, I'm developing rapidly, leading to my incoordination and clumsiness.
- I make moral choices based on reciprocity.
- I've got loads of extra energy and physical activities help me burn it off.
- I need creative outlets to let me experiment; painting, writing, dance, music, service, cooking, sports.
- I need affirmation. I want to belong.
- I like ritual.
- I want all this God-stuff to be relevant to the things I struggle with everyday: loneliness, anger, sexuality, fear...
- I'm looking for guidance, clear limits, and guidelines.
- I want to contribute. Ask me!
- God is a spirit, mystery and Savior.
- The Bible is a manual to live by.
- My question: Who am I?²

Developmental Characteristics of Senior High age students

Who am I? I'm working on it.

If older adolescents could describe themselves, they might tell us:

- I'm forging my own identity, struggling to "be real," to be myself, including my gender identity.
- I'm separating from my parents and family, finding support among my peers.
- I'm starting to accept some of the beliefs and traditions that I rejected only a few years ago.
- Asking tough spiritual questions helps my faith to grow.
- I ask lots of questions (in my head, if not aloud), and canned answers don't cut it.
- If you expect me to listen to you, be authentic and don't pretend to know what you don't know.
- Be willing to wrestle with me over what's really important in life and faith.
- I am stressed. I may be juggling a job along with a ton of schoolwork. I may be worried about college and my future. I need a safe place to decompress.
- As I finish high school I'm starting to make moral decisions based on what's best for everyone, not just my friends.
- Physically, I'm transitioning into full adulthood, but my emotions and experiences might not match my physical development and strength.
- Model for me what it means to be a growing Christian.
- God is in the tension between "man," Jesus, and a universal God.
- The Bible is a summary of values and truths.
- My questions: Who am I? Where do I fit in the world?³

² Pearson, Sharon Ely. *The Episcopal Christian Educator's Handbook*. Morehouse, 2013.

³ Pearson, Sharon Ely. *The Episcopal Christian Educator's Handbook*. Morehouse, 2013.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE in the confirmation process - confirmands, parents, the congregation, sponsors (or mentors), clergy, and the bishop.

The Role of the Confirmand

- † Engage in mission: Create, design, and reflect theologically on service projects and ministries
- † Engage with Scripture on a regular basis
- † Participate by attending worship, educational, and fellowship opportunities regularly
- † Pray

The Role of Parents is vital

- † Enter into a written covenant
- † Bring youth to church regularly (worship, Sunday school and/or youth group)
- † Talk to youth about your faith
- † Pray
- † Offer and ask for forgiveness Have family meals
- † Regular engagement with Scripture
- † Practice letting go and allowing more adolescent independence, letting youth make decisions and experience natural consequences and allowing youth to test their faith and ask questions of their parents' beliefs

The Role of the Congregation remains constant throughout the confirmation process. Every member of the congregation is called to:

- † Be present and listen, creating a safe place for confirmands to –
 - Test and articulate their faith.
 - Ask difficult questions.
 - Form lasting friendships with each other.
 - Form relationships of trust with adults/others in the community.
 - Learn more about the content of Christian faith.
 - Experience the full and abundant love of God.
- † Model the Christian faith -
 - Being regularly present in the community.
 - Articulating their own faith.
 - Telling the truth.
 - Holding each other responsible and accountable in love and humility.
- † Work towards unity and reconciled relationships –
 - Know the name of every confirmand.
 - Encourage participation in ministry, help confirmands recognize their giftedness.
 - Support and encourage parents and family.
 - Model confession and forgiveness.

The Role of Sponsors

In his book, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, Edward C. Sellner writes that “Spiritual mentoring is an age-old Christian tradition, a calling and a gift more common than perhaps previously thought. It depends more on mutuality, reciprocity, and friendship, than direction given from “the top down” or a relationship with someone who supposedly has all the answers while the other is only a passive recipient of such wisdom.”

Used in this sense, sponsor is interchangeable with mentor, counselor, advocate, soul-friend, guide, teacher, advisor - someone who builds a relationship with the confirmand and who is there to help a person thrive. The sponsor offers guidance or instruction that is intended to facilitate growth and development.

There is an emotional bond whose foundation is a sense of trust. Informally, sponsors share their stories of faith and make a place for people to ask deeper questions that might not otherwise be asked. A sponsor models being a human being.

People's learned spiritual behaviors – compassion, devotion, forgiveness – come from seeing these behaviors modeled by family and significant adults members of their community.

Edward Sellner goes on to say, “spirituality is difficult, if not possible, to teach in the abstract.” This is why it is critical to have embodied, enfolded relationships of mentoring in times of confirmation preparation – a place to test the theories, does it really matter, is it going to make my life better, is it better than magic, is it really going to work? It's only through other people's sort of incarnational experience, their witness to that in their lives, that people can begin to trust and see that it has sturdiness and trustworthiness over time.”

Mentoring is also mutually beneficial. “Mentors and apprentices are partners in an ancient human dance, and one of teaching's great rewards is the daily chance it gives us to get back on the dance floor. It is the dance of the spiraling generations, in which the “old” empower the “young” with their experience and (in turn) the young empower the old with new life...” Parker Palmer

In addition and depending on the circumstances lay leaders, youth leaders, and Catechists may take on a role as teacher and/or mentor.

The Role of Clergy is both pastoral and liturgical

† Pastoral

- Ensure each youth has a one-on-one conversation with one staff clergy in order to ensure the youth's ability to articulate (and to validate the articulation of) their faith
- Provide opportunities for youth to engage in all of the various ministries of the church

† Liturgical

- Assist youth in planning for confirmation Doctrinally –
- Teach or ensure teaching.

The Role of the Bishop

† Participate in diocesan confirmation retreats

† Confirm confirmands

SET THE COURSE

With the understanding that preparation for confirmation is the beginning of a life-long formation process, fulfilling your vision of the confirmand's experience can be met by

- † Coming to consensus on an appropriate **time-frame** in which to provide a full sense of the subjects presented
- † Reviewing the **Confirmation Topics** and deciding which you want to include
- † Exploring **Curriculum Options**
- † Determining what **Roles We Want to Fill** and who might fill those roles as covered earlier in this guide.

DETERMINE A TIMEFRAME

- † **Confirmation topics can be covered** in nine-week, nine-month, three-year (7-12 grades), or even pre and post confirmation coursework using study material from a nearly inexhaustible array of books, resources and personal experience.
- † **Logistically speaking, the process of confirmation is holistic** when a consistent, realistic, time-based program that aligns with your vision of a quality confirmation experience is knit together with the help of many and supported by the entire congregation.
- † **Because everyone has a role in the confirmation process, instruction does not need to fall to clergy alone;** godparents, sponsors and mentors of are an invaluable resource!

SUGGESTED REQUIRED ACTIVITIES

- † Attendance at all confirmation classes
- † Mission/Outreach: making your faith real by answering Christ's command to love one another. For example, 8 hours of service or a service project.
- † Worship
- † Community-based Education that can take the form of
- † Faith conversation with parents,/guardians and mentors "Homework" – assigned completed together with parents/guardians/ mentors
- † Vestry and Confirmands Meal before confirmation (perhaps including a public articulation of faith for everyone who has been involved in the faith formation process)

SUGGESTED RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

- † Attend a Diocesan Confirmation Retreat with other members of their congregation where they can meet with the Bishop and do faith formational activities
- † Interactive Eucharist as it is laid out in the BCP
- † Allow confirmands to plan the confirmation service – including the selection of music, prayers of the people (could be written by them) etc. They can serve as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, musicians, ushers, etc.

MAKE SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

- † Congregations are encouraged to offer special opportunities, such as a Confirmands' Meal, to mark the transition into a mature faith. At the meal, a public articulation of faith occurs for all individuals who have been involved in the faith formation process, whether they choose to be confirmed or not.
- † We would also recommend that confirmands help plan the confirmation service (hymn selection, prayers of the people, etc.) whenever and however possible. Confirmands should also serve as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, musicians, ushers, etc.

BROAD OUTLINE OF CONFIRMATION TOPICS: Christian Identity, Scripture, Prayer, Sacraments, Faith in Action (ministry), Anglican Identity, and more

Christian Identity

- † **Outline of the Faith: Concerning the Catechism** can be accessed online through the Episcopal Resources Web Site at www.episcopalresources.us
- † **The Catechism of Creation** as understood by Episcopalians was prepared for study in congregations and is written in a traditional question-and-answer format. It is available online at www.episcopalchurch.org/library/document/catechism-creation
- † **Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer** by Rowan Williams In this simple, beautifully written book Rowan Williams explores four essential components of the Christian life: baptism, Bible, Eucharist, and prayer. Despite huge differences in Christian thinking and practice both today and in past centuries, he says, these four basic elements have remained constant and indispensable for the majority of those who call themselves Christians. In accessible, pastoral terms Williams discusses the meaning and practice of baptism, the Bible, the Eucharist, and prayer, inviting readers to really think through the Christian faith and how to live it out. Questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each chapter help readers to dig deeper and apply Williams's insights to their own lives. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **Embracing A Life Of Meaning** by Kathleen Norris provides a unique viewpoint of "what matters most," including these sessions: belief matters, the Bible matters, Community matters, place matters, we matter. The five DVD sessions begin with a 10-15 minute video presentation. Workbook is available. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **Liturgy Of The Ordinary: Sacred Practices In Everyday Life** by Tish Harrison Warren. Available through www.amazon.com
- † **Your Daily Life Is Your Temple** by Anne Rowthorn. Many of us sense that God is with us in our daily lives but can't put words to the longings we feel, and most churches and synagogues aren't helping us. If we still go to church, we wonder why we are still there and feel we've lost the connections between the faith we practice on Sunday morning and a passionate life in the everyday world. Using Carlo Carretto's definition of spirituality as "a way of thinking, living and sanctifying our lives," Rowthorn shows how we can uncover an authentic faith for our times. To be passionately engaged, all we need to do is take the ordinary acts of our lives and see them differently. We have only to unwrap the gifts we already hold in our hands--the people we meet, the places we go, and the choices we make about work, children, friendships, politics, the arts, and hospitality. Available through www.amazon.com
- † **The Christian Moral Life: Practices Of Piety (updated)** by Timothy F. Sedgwick explores demonstrates that the way of life we call Christian is lived in relationships to others. Christian faith, understood as practical piety, calls for a life opened to the world at large, concerned for the "stranger" as well as for the neighbor. Sedgwick further emphasizes that the Christian life is grounded in the experience and worship of God. *His work thus develops Christian ethics* as "sacramental ethics," an ethic that has at its center a deepening encounter with God. Written in a style accessible to non-specialists, this book provides readers with an ideal introduction to Christian ethics. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **Embracing An Adult Faith** - Author and Bible scholar Marcus Borg invites us to join him in revisiting Christianity's most fundamental questions: Who is God? What does salvation mean? What place does Jesus hold in contemporary Christian faith? In this five-session, faith-formation resource, participants enjoy the rare privilege of witnessing Marcus in dialogue with a small, diverse group of adults as they honestly — and sometimes painfully — confront the big questions and work together toward authentic answers. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † What does 'salvation' mean?

Scripture

- † As a source of inspiration, encouragement, and support learn Bible “mechanics” or how to find your own around both the Old and New Testament
- † Read, discuss and gain the ability to communicate “our” collective story in your own words
- † Holy Scripture basics – briefly discuss languages written (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic), who is thought to have written some sections and why.
- † Key biblical figures in a historical timeline
- † Bible Study Tools – explore options available at the parish level and online supportive resources

Prayer

- † Discuss what prayer is and the role it plays in our life
- † Explore **alternative forms of prayer**, such as Prayer Beads, Contemplative/Meditative, Centering Prayer, Meditation, Journaling, Praying in Color, etc.
- † **2000 Years Of Prayer** by Michael Counsell - . Tracing two thousand years of Christian spirituality, it contains prayers from every era, every continent and every tradition. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **A Brush With God: An Icon Workbook** by Peter Pearson is a guide to painting icons and using them in prayer. Written with warmth and energy, it describes the history of icons and examines why they’ve been a spiritual tool for so many centuries. Written from a uniquely Western perspective, the book guides artists—from novices to professionals—through the process of icon painting, using traditional techniques but employing contemporary materials. Included are eight full-color plates of the artist’s icons. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **Praying Our Days** by Frank T. Griswold is the first new devotional resource of its kind for Episcopalians in more than two generations. It includes devotions to mark the rhythm of the day (brief prayers at fixed hours); the mystery of time and the rhythm of the week, the months, and the Christian year; self-examination and preparation for reconciliation and the Eucharist; intercessory prayers; devotions to the Mother of Jesus; praying with the saints; plus praying with icons. Each section of the book will open with a brief introduction and “teaching” by Bishop Griswold, guiding the reader in the effective use of the material. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **You Are Already Praying** by Cathy H. George underscores the reality that prayer is both quiet and reflective and active and participatory. The goal of prayer is to practice it without ceasing. Focusing on the prayer lives of the laity, this book includes stories of individuals seeking to connect their faith with their work in the world. The goal of this connection is to affirm that prayer is both a quiet act of reverence and an active dynamic expressed in daily life situations at work and home. Through the stories of people at work and prayer, the book seeks to encourage an understanding of prayer as that dimension of our relationship with God equally alive at work and at play, in public and at home. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **Praying In Color: Drawing A New Path To God (Active Prayer)** by Sybil MacBeth is here for the visual or kinesthetic learner, a distractible or impatient soul, or a word-weary pray-er. If you struggle with a short attention span, a restless body, or a tendency to live in your head, this prayer form can take as little or as much time as you have or want to commit, from 15 minutes to a weekend retreat. "A new prayer form gives God an invitation and a new door to penetrate the locked cells of our hearts and minds," explains Sybil MacBeth. "For many of us, using only words to pray reduces God by the limits of our finite words." Available through www.amazon.com

Sacraments

- † **Sacramental Stations** by Jenifer Gamber is a self-guided meditation with seven stations – one for each of the sacraments: Holy Baptism, Holy Eucharist, Unction, Matrimony, Ordination, Confirmation, and Reconciliation of a Penitent. It is experimental and sensory in nature, with participants reflecting on prayers, tasting, touching, viewing objects, and journaling. Appropriate for an intergenerational event, confirmation class, or Lenten reflection, as well as any time the sacraments are studied
- † Explore in more detail the catechistic definition of sacraments; identify what they are and what is required to perform them (i.e. baptism needs water, etc.)

Ministry – Faith in Action!

- † (BCP, p 855) Explore the basic theology of mission and service. What does it mean that ALL are ministers?
- † How can and will confirmands live out their baptismal covenant?
- † How will confirmands ‘take care’ of people, the earth, things and their faith community going forward?
- † Discuss the discernment of personal ministry

Anglican Identity - The Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement

- † **The Episcopal Story: Birth and Rebirth** by Thomas C. Ferguson In this second volume, seminary dean and popular blogger Thomas Ferguson traces the history of Christianity, with a special focus on the rise of the Anglican Communion and the birth and continual rebirth of The Episcopal Church. Explores how we got here and where we might be going. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **The Episcopal Handbook** - Provides helpful and insightful information about the Episcopal ethos with a certain amount of whimsy and complete accessibility, this revision maintains the best features of the original work, but adds an update and an expansion on the church today. The goal is to provide a book suitable for a wide range of uses and settings, including confirmations and inquirer classes. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **A People Called Episcopalians** by John H. Westerhoff with Sharon Ely Pearson explores five main areas of Episcopal life: identity, authority, spirituality, temperament, and polity. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **Jesus Was An Episcopalian (And You Can Be One, Too)** by Chris Yaw invites readers to take a new look at the Episcopal Church. "It's an amazing time to be an Episcopalian. Our church has a renewed sense of vision and leadership that's all about feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. We're all about standing up for equal rights and the environment. We're all about welcoming everybody to the table, preaching repentance and accepting forgiveness. We hold together modern thought and an ancient faith firmly rooted in Jesus Christ. We offer vital communities that help families, singles - countless people make sense of their lives and their places in the world. Available through www.amazon.com
- † **Living Water: Baptism As A Way Of Life** – Author Klara Tammany begins with the premise that ongoing Christian education must be central to a life of faith, and then proceeds from the corollary that baptism must be central to all Christian education. *“This is one of the best resources for Christian Formation that I've used in my 10 years in the field. I am an Episcopal priest and have used it for Baptism preparation, Confirmation classes, and retreats. Every chapter has more ideas, exercises, readings, etc than you can possibly use in a single class session.”* Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **The Art Of Theological Reflection** by Patricia O’Connell Killen and John de Beer. Here is a book for the millions of Christians who want to make a vital connection between their faith and their lives. The authors describe theological reflection as "the artful discipline of putting our experience into conversation with the heritage of the Christian tradition." Their practical book provides a way for all of

us to experience greater meaning in life and a more tangible sense of God's creative presence.

Available through www.churchpublishing.org

- † **Unabashedly Episcopalian.** Bishop Andrew Doyle offers a heartfelt, smart and practical book that calls Episcopalians to wake up to the church's unique gifts and story, and equips them to share that witness in their neighborhoods and out in the world. Available through www.amazon.com
- † **Living Faithfully As A Prayer Book People** by John H. Westerhoff. Episcopalians consider themselves to be people whose individual and corporate lives are shaped by the Book of Common Prayer. Westerhoff walks readers through the ways in which the contents of the Prayer Book can (and should) shape the life of those who call themselves Episcopalian. Available through www.churchpublishing.org
- † **Explore the Book of Common Prayer, it's history and content:** Daily Offices, Holy Eucharist, Creeds, Psalms, Prayers and Thanksgiving, the Catechism, etc.
- † **Discuss the importance of engaging in life-long learning**
- † Explore how we are the same or different than other denominations? Religions?
- † Stewardship (beyond financial) is a big part of being Episcopalian!
 - **To Serve And Guard The Earth** by Beth Bojarski on environmental stewardship is available through www.churchpublishing.org
 - **Stewardship: Living A Biblical Call** by Bernard F. Evans is also available through www.churchpublishing.org

Other

- † **Commit to memory** Psalm 23, James 3:13-17, Proverbs 22:1-3, John 6:68, Psalm 62:1-2, James 1:19-20, John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-8, James 2:14-19, John 1:1-5, Corinthians 13:1-7 and Psalm 1
- † **Signed, Sealed, Delivered: Theologies of Confirmation for the 21st Century** by Sharon Ely Pearson is an all-in-one volume sharing the history, practice, and viewpoints of Confirmation in the Episcopal Church. Includes questions for reflection and study by individuals and groups. Available through www.churchpublishing.org and www.amazon.com

CHOOSING CURRICULUM THAT “FITS”

Many people start their search with the question, “What’s the *best* confirmation curriculum?” A more productive question is, “What confirmation curriculum is the best *fit*?”

Sometimes determining the *fit* of a confirmation curriculum is difficult because there are competing priorities or constraints. The one you like the most costs too much. The one you like only lightly covers subjects and you know *you* will not like it. Perhaps one covers all the bases but is completely uninspiring. Or one turns out to involve too much (or too little!) time. You may have to make changes in your choices as you recognize how these factors play out.

Did you know some churches do not use a formal confirmation curriculum at all? Some prefer to select and use multiple non-curricular resources instead of curriculum.

Choosing the ‘*best*’ curriculum is not nearly as important as exploring the factors that play into your choice of which, or even whether, to use curriculum or a combination of resources. It is worth the time to access the unique needs of a congregation and develop the process that will enrich everyone involved!

Many factors play into your choice of which or even whether to use a set curriculum. In order to find what is the best fit for your congregation, **consider your confirmands, your facilitator, and your situation.** Decide on a confirmation curriculum that addresses all three. This guide will help you evaluate these considerations, as well as determine if a confirmation curriculum is a fit for your unique needs.

Any way you choose to creatively respond to the spiritual hunger of others, the effect for them can be to understand what it means to follow the way of Jesus Christ. Creativity may be needed to condense or expand coursework, clergy may have a selection of favorite, time-tested material at their disposal or the entire process may rely on only two people who are passionate about confirmation; you might meet online or in person, as individuals or small groups, or to use homework as a tool.

Choosing Confirmation Curriculum with Confirmands in Mind

People come in different ages, stages, levels of development, learning preferences, personality types, and activity levels, and they have different interests.

- † **Learning styles.** Some people learn by creating and making things; others through reading or talking to people. When you choose your curriculum, take these preferences into consideration by exploring learning styles like visual, auditory and kinesthetic.
- † **Interest-led learning.** If confirmands have a strong interest in a particular subject you may want to include interest-led learning or letting the confirmands’ interest lead the learning process. You can choose resources that support the interest, and that might not include choosing a formal confirmation curriculum.

Choosing Confirmation Curriculum with Facilitator(s) in Mind

Consider time limitations or other factors that may affect the process.

- † Do you plan to meet at church or homes?
- † Will you be able to provide first-hand assistance?
- † Have you thought about a Philosophy of Formational Ministry?
- † Are you oriented toward doing hands-on things?
- † Are you highly interested in checking off lists for requirements?
- † Do you prefer more open-ended holistic experiences for yourself and the confirmands?
- † Are you open to personal growth and change?

Choosing Confirmation Curriculum with Your Situation in Mind

Congregations in all types of situations successfully move through the confirmation process, but success depends on recognizing and working with your circumstances.

Consider what your situation will be as you choose what to include in your curriculum:

- † We've never tried a set curriculum before
- † You may be interested in using multiple resources
- † You may have limitations of time, money, technology, or expectations.
- † You may be attempting to meet a timeline

When determining if a specific curriculum will *fit*, look at

- † the content
- † the approach to learning
- † the delivery

Content. What topics do the content cover? For example, does the content of My Faith: My Life cover all of most of the confirmation topics? Can whatever topic is not contained in the resource be presented in another way?

Approach. Are you looking for a structured approach in confirmation curriculum, or do you like the idea of curriculum consisting of living books as recommended by personal experience? Deciding on a curriculum that's flexible may have benefits.

A great way to learn more about confirmation curriculum is to visit with the Assistant to the Bishop for Christian Formation who has copies of books and resources available for you to hold it in your hands and thumbs through pages.

CONFIRMATION CURRICULUM RESOURCES

As of February 2018, [the Confirmation Project](#) research concluded most leaders are flexible with how they use curriculum, adapting it to their context.

The majority of leaders (59%) indicated using their denomination's curriculum at least some of the time, though less than half (44%) used it exclusively. Over a third (35%) indicated that they write their own curriculum.

New confirmation curriculum has become available in the last few years. Each is different—some are particular to a denomination, some offer flexible meeting times, and most take the art of raising questions seriously.

Confirm Not Conform

This is a confirmation program that celebrates questions and choices. Confirm not Conform provides a safe place for people to explore the breadth of the Christian tradition, to ask questions and express their doubts, and to discover what they truly believe. Available through www.confirmnotconform.com

The Discovery Series by the Diocese of Texas

Designed to help every Christian discover their own path to a life in Christ this series places a remarkable resource into the hands of all congregations, regardless of their size or available staff. Five courses provide comprehensive training for Baptism, confirmation, spiritual gifts assessment, discipleship and worship (with instructed Eucharist). The series is an invitation to spiritual growth and lays the groundwork to begin or continue a spiritual journey. Available through www.epicenter.org

I Believe: Confirmation For The 21st Century by Leader Resources

This two-year confirmation program provides everything you need to guide a group of young people towards affirming their commitment to Christ and the Church. It combines classroom teaching with opportunities to discover and encounter Christ in their lives and the lives of others. It includes weekend retreats, community service, mentoring, a pilgrimage experience and lay ministry "internships." Available through www.leaderresources.org

Pilgrim: A Course For The Christian Journey series

By Stephen Cottrell, Steven croft, Paula Gooder, Robert Atwell, and Sharon Ely Pearson

Pilgrim is a teaching and discipleship resource that helps inquirers and new Christians explore what it means to travel through life with Christ. A Christian course for the twenty-first century, *Pilgrim* offers an approach of participation, not persuasion. Following the practice of the ancient disciplines of biblical reflection and prayer with quotes from the Christian tradition throughout the ages, *Pilgrim* assumes little or no knowledge of the Christian faith. Individuals or small groups on the journey of discipleship in the Episcopal tradition can use *Pilgrim* at any point. Available through www.churchpublishing.org

Sealed And Sent Forth by Leader Resources

This program examines what it means to be a Christian and an Episcopalian and invites participants to examine what a particular Christian community does and means. The sessions are suitable for confirmation preparation for both youth or adults new to the church as well as for general Christian formation programs for adults and youth. Sessions include worship, historical and theological content, discussion, reflection and community building. The fifteen 2-hour sessions can also be used in one-hour sessions or in weekend retreat format. Available through www.leaderresources.org

Journey To Adulthood

The Journey to Adulthood (J2A) is a complete youth ministry program of spiritual formation for 6th-12th grades. There are three two-year segments included in the program encouraging relational ministry using Bible study, prayer, rites of passage, outreach ministries and both serious and playful activities to underscore the two guiding principles of the program: 1) Manhood and womanhood are free gifts from God; and 2) Adulthood must be earned. Available through www.leaderresources.org

My Faith, My Life (Teen's Guide) and **Your Faith, Your Life** (Adult Guide)

The everything-you-need to know guides to the Episcopal Church that are easy to read but with substance for anyone who desire to know more about their church. The language of worship, theology, church structure, sacraments, and discipleship offers a framework to explore the meaning and practice of being an Episcopalian and follower of Jesus. Available through www.churchpublishing.org

I Will, With God's Help by Mary Lee Wile

This confirmation program, developed with the help of Episcopal educators, clergy and theologians across the country, encourages youth and adults to enter into a uniquely Episcopal—yet profoundly Christian—faith journey. The easily-adapted format works for a traditional six- to twelve-week program, at a contemporary Confirmation retreat or conference, or as a sacramental supplement to other two- to three-year programs. Available through www.churchpublishing.org

SAMPLE CONFIRMATION COVENANT

It is important confirmands have clarity on their commitment to the confirmation process. The following sample covenant provides pertinent information as well as standards for active participation. *Terms of the Covenant should be modified to reflect the age of confirmands, and norms of each congregation.*

COMMITMENT TO CONFIRMATION

In preparation for Confirmation and as a member of this church:

I agree and commit to attend all Confirmation classes/meetings. If conflicts do occur, I agree to not miss more than three classes, excluding the Confirmation Retreat. If I miss a class I will call or email to find out what material I missed and will do my best to notify _____ of my conflict and absence at least three days prior to the missed class. If I miss more than three classes, I will be required to meet with clergy to discuss missed material and my commitment to Confirmation.

I acknowledge the importance of attending:

The Confirmation Retreat (DATES)

The Parish Annual Meeting (DATES)

One Diocesan Retreat Weekend (Youth: Happening, DYG, or adult comparable)

I agree to be involved in Mission/Outreach Projects, even if they occur after my Confirmation date.

I acknowledge sponsors will be selected in discussion with the rector and will be approved by the rector.

I agree to behave respectfully and give my full attention so that all members of this call may benefit from this experience and instruction.

I agree to be a full participant in all activities and discussions.

I agree that if at any time during preparation I feel ill prepared, or not ready to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, I will contact my teachers.

Signature of Confirmation Director _____ Date _____

Signature of Confirmand _____ Date _____

Signature of Parent _____ Date _____

Signature of Sponsor _____ Date _____