

Guidelines for Confirmation

May, 2016

Almighty and everlasting God,
let your fatherly hand ever be over *these* your servants;
let your Holy Spirit ever be with *them*;
and so lead *them* in the knowledge
and obedience of your Word,
that *they* may serve you in this life,
and dwell with you in the life to come;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*
(*Book of Common Prayer* page 419).

Welcome to *Guidelines for Confirmation* for the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas. Developed at the request of Bishop George Sumner, the intention of these guidelines is to offer a framework of necessary topics for those who are responsible for preparing people, especially young people, for the sacrament of Confirmation. The guide offers varying types of instruction: from basic to comprehensive preparation.

There are many effective ways to prepare for Confirmation as well as a multitude of resources and methods. These guidelines are not meant to be an exhaustive list. These are *tools not rules*.

From Bishop George Sumner

Confirmation has an important history, especially in the history of English Christianity. However, in recent times there has been a debate about it. Is it an adult and public confession of faith and, for many, 'owning' of the promises made for us in infant baptism? Or is it a 'rite of passage' in young adulthood? I think good reasons can be given to say 'all of the above.' It is a rich enough tradition to cover them all. As to the former, we Episcopalians, sometimes shy about witnessing to our faith, need occasions to acknowledge our conversion. As to the latter, being an adolescent and a Christian is so hard in our time that all possible support should be marshaled on behalf of young people. We know that commitment to Christ is in mind, soul, strength, and body. So our preparation should involve memorizing the basics, reading about our heritage, uplifting worship, fellowship with peers, leadership opportunities, service to those in need, and growth in contemplation and personal prayer life. I am confident that we can design confirmation programs that include all of these, even as we allow for a diversity of particular approaches in our parishes and missions.

The Catechism and Confirmation

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).

The Catechism definition of Confirmation

Q. What is Confirmation?

A. Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop.

Q. What is required of those to be confirmed?

A. It is required of those to be confirmed that they have been baptized, are sufficiently instructed in the Christian Faith, are penitent for their sins, and are ready to affirm their confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (BCP page 360).

The Baseline

Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation would include instruction in:

1. The Lord's Prayer
2. The Ten Commandments
3. The Apostles' Creed
4. The Sacraments
5. The Holy Scriptures
6. The Christian life-style, Christian community, and how to develop a moral lifestyle
7. Rule of Life
8. The Episcopal Church
9. How to tell one's story of faith and how to discern a desire to be confirmed
10. Participation in an annual retreat at Camp All Saints

Diocese of Dallas Guidelines for Confirmation:

The bullet points following each topic begin with general studies and increase to more in-depth preparation. A well-prepared candidate will know more than the first bullet point of each topic.

1. The Lord's Prayer

"Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words. Our Lord gave us the example of prayer known as the Lord's Prayer. The principle kinds of prayer are adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition" (BCP page 856).

- Can be said by memory
- Understands its source and meaning
- Understands how it is a model for all other prayers

- Is familiar with different kinds of prayers
- Can lead prayer with others

2. The Ten Commandments

“God’s will for us is shown most clearly in the Ten Commandments, the laws given to Moses and the people of Israel. We learn two things: our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbors. Since we do not fully obey them, we see more clearly our sin and need for redemption” (BCP pages 847, 848).

- Understands their source and meaning
- Understands how they are relevant today
- Can explain how “our duty to God is to believe and trust in Him” and “our duty to our neighbors is to love them as ourselves, and to do to other people as we would wish for them to do for us”

3. The Apostles’ Creed

“The Creeds are statements of our basic beliefs about God. The Apostles’ Creed is the ancient creed of Baptism; it is used in the Church’s daily worship to recall our Baptismal Covenant.” (BCP page 852).

- Can be said by memory
- Understands its source and meaning and universality
- Can explain its relevance to one’s personal statement of faith

4. The Sacraments

“The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace” (BCP page 857).

- Can name and describe all seven sacraments
- Understands their source and meaning

5. The Holy Scriptures

“The Holy Scriptures, commonly called the Bible, are the books of the Old and New Testaments; other books, called the Apocrypha, are often included in the Bible. We call them the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible. We understand the meaning of the Bible by the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church in the true interpretation of the Scriptures” (BCP pages 853, 854).

- Knows how the Bible is organized into Old and New Testaments, books, chapters, and verses
- Is familiar with the overarching themes of the Old and New Testaments
- Knows general Bible stories and where to find them
- Can describe favorite passages in Scripture and where to find them
- Knows who Jesus Christ is and can share a narrative of his life from Annunciation to Ascension
- Can explain the meaning of several parables
- Participates in some type of regular reading/study of the Holy Scriptures

6. The Christian life-style, Christian community, and how to develop a moral lifestyle

“The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church” (BCP page 855).

- Is a member of a church
- Participates regularly in activities at a church
- Knows what tithing means and gives regularly to the mission of the church
- Understands how to seek support and advice from the Christian community
- Knows how to respond to God’s call to ministry, lay or ordained
- Has had mission and outreach experience through the Christian community
- Understands what sin is and what it means to repent and return to the Lord
- Knows how to make positive life choices and how to respond to negative influences

7. A Rule of Life

“The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God” (BCP page 856).

- Knows how to find the tools, advice and support for developing a personal Rule of Life
- Has a personal Rule of Life

8. The Episcopal Church

“The Church of England, to which the Protestant Episcopal Church in these States is indebted, under God, for her first foundation and a long continuance of nursing care and protection...” (BCP page 9).

- Understands how to use the Book of Common Prayer and hymnals in public worship
- Knows the parts of *The Book of Common Prayer*
- Has an understanding of the history of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion
- Is familiar with the Outline of Faith commonly called the Catechism
- Can describe the four types of ministers of the church and describe their ministries
- Can describe what makes the Episcopal church unique

9. How to tell one’s story of faith and how to discern a desire to be confirmed

“Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ? I do, and with God’s grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord” (BCP page 415).

- Can tell their story of faith up to the present
- Has some concept of, and can articulate, when Jesus became real to them, or when they owned their faith, and the difference this has made in their life.
- Is able to say why they desire to be confirmed

10. Participation in a service project or mission trip and an annual retreat at Camp All Saints

“The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love. The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members” (BCP page 855).

- Participates in service projects or a mission trip
- Participates in a diocesan youth retreat at Camp All Saints
- Understands the importance of taking time to be away from normal activities in order to spend time with God, examine priorities of life and make resolutions for improvement

Resources & Tools to Consider

The Holy Bible (any study edition)

Bible commentaries, such as

- *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
- *For Everyone Guides to the New Testament* by N. T. Wright
- *The Daily Study Bible* by William Barclay
- *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*

Book of Common Prayer

- Commentaries on the Book of Common Prayer

An Inquiring and Discerning Heart: Guidelines for Christian Formation in the Diocese of Dallas (available for download at edod.org under Christian Formation)

The instructor's personal devotional favorites, such as

- *St. Augustine's Prayer Book*
- *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis
- *Simply Christianity* by N. T. Wright
- *By Little and By Little* by Dorothy Day
- *Butler's Lives of the Saints*
- *Devotional Classics* edited by Richard Foster and James Smith
- *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer
- *Soul Shaper* by Tony Jones
- *Blue Like Jazz* by Donald Miller

Online Resources, such as:

- The Diocese of Alabama - <http://dioala.org/formation/cf-confirmation.html>
- Church Next online courses - <https://churchnextblog.wordpress.com/courses/>
- Father Matthew videos - <http://www.fathermatthewpresents.com/?p=212>
- 2016 Overview of Confirmation Preparation Resources compiled by Sharon Ely

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Please note that all Episcopal Resources referred to in this document will be available for review in the Deacon Dorothy Michaelsen Resource Center. By Fall of 2016 the entire Resource Center will be available via an Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) linked to edod.org.

SPEAKERS/MENTORS

All of the members of the Confirmation Guidelines Committee are willing to assist those who are planning Confirmation preparation classes. Others will be added as they volunteer to be placed on this list.

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