



GYM Confirmation 2016 - 2017

"Christians are made, not born."

- Tertullian

What is Confirmation?

Our journey as Christians begins in Holy Baptism. We are claimed by God, "sealed by the Holy Spirit, given identity as a member of the church, welcomed to the Lord's Table, and set apart for a life of Christian service."¹ Both Baptism and Confirmation signify our adoption into the family of God. Baptism signifies God's loving claim on our lives, Confirmation, our response to that claim.

Confirmation an important rite of passage in the faith and life of your child. Throughout the journey of Confirmation, our faithful Lord and Savior confirms his loving claim upon each of their lives. In light of what God has done for all of us in Christ Jesus, we as a congregation have both the privilege and responsibility to equip them to discern and respond to the movement of God's grace in their lives and encourage them to accept responsibility for their own faith within the church.

Historically, confirmation has always been the community of elders, with unified voice, affirming that an individual has completed the tasks of adolescence and is now ready and equipped to leave on the journey to "adulthood." Christian nurture is the process of "forming" Christ in the believer. It is the responsibility and work of the entire church. "*My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!*" (Galatians 4:19). Confirmation simply put is God's approval, through the Church, of the person in whom his saving work has already begun.

Why be Confirmed?

Study after study has shown that involvement in church and church related activities including youth group and church membership has been on the decline for over a decade. A recurring public sentiment echoes through the empty hallways of Christendom, "the church is no longer *relevant*", because "it doesn't meet *my* needs". Yet *we* ourselves *are* the visible expression of the church! A Grace youth who was recently confirmed told his mentor that he believed the younger generations are the *heartbeat* of the Church. I think he was pointing to the fact that they are the "seers" of our day. With so many choices available to us as consumers of culture, fewer families are "joining" any church, and a correspondingly fewer percentage of youth are being confirmed, let alone becoming involved in a youth group where they can be encountered by the gospel in a way that transforms their worldview lifestyles in a way that will shape their culture and transform their world.

¹ Book of Order, W-4.2001

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The Church today is still one of the few places of transformation. Salvation in Christ and the living power of the Holy Spirit are an awesome Mystery inviting us into the very life of God, who out of all of the furthest reaches of the cosmos, desires to make his home, his dwelling place in us! The primary goal of confirmation is simply to plant and water the seed of faith, which becomes a willingness in the confirmand and mentor to embark together upon the journey of transformation into Christ-likeness. Our purpose is not simply to teach our youth *what* to believe, but rather *how* to believe. This is the journey of discipleship. The Scriptures are filled with stories of transformational journeys, what we usually refer to as “the call of God,” from Abraham to Jesus to the Church. In the narratives of the Prophets, God is always the One who *Calls*, the One who *Initiates*, and the One who brings *Unity* in Christ. The church family is a support and companion along the way.

The Grace confirmation journey focuses on the three ways adolescents and adults alike experience real “conversion,” *encounter* (hearing and following “the call” of God), *initiation* (undergoing “tests and trials” that strengthen one’s faith), *integration* (a new member in the church body, as one who is “sent”). Ultimately it is about coming to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives, the One who has Always Known us! It always comes as a surprise, for it is all about Relationship!

Grace to you and peace to your family, the mentors, the confirmands, and the church as it embarks upon an exciting journey!

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What is involved in Confirmation?

The church, through the confirmation mentors, the pastoral staff and the parents, nurtures those baptized as children and calls them to make a personal profession of their faith and to “actively belong” in the life of the church. During the course of six months (Nov-Apr):

- **13 Sessions covering the Christian Faith:** 10 sessions are mentor/confirmand meetings arranged around your schedules; 3 sessions are All Group (confirmands/mentors) led by pastoral staff. Parents are encouraged but not expected to attend. The sessions are found in “Making Disciples” by William H. Willimon and include a personal “Luke Journal” and other activities.
- **A variety of activities:** Each mentor/confirmand may choose to do together to make faith sessions come alive. Attend a funeral service, baptism, communion, session meeting, or visit a saint!
- **(2) Group-Building Retreats:** Overnighter usually in the mountains. All confirmands expected to participate, 2 mentors must chaperone/driver. Parents are to provide food for us to cook during retreats.
- **A Group worship / service experience:** putting faith into practice through worship and service.
- **Personal Statement of Faith:** Each confirmand must, at the end of the journey, share their faith with session. Either a one-page statement, poetry, or art piece by which confirmand can articulate faith.

At the end of this exciting journey, when the confirmands are ready, they will be examined by the session, interviewed regarding their personal faith.

- **The Closing Dinner:** The confirmands, parents, siblings & friends, mentors, session elders, and staff are invited to a nice dinner with gifts for confirmands and a surprise.
- **Service of Reception into Full Membership:** After the session has received them as active members in the church, they will be presented to the congregation during a service of public worship. In that service the church will confirm them in their baptismal identity. They are asked to reaffirm their baptismal vows, commissioned to active participation in the church and welcomed by the congregation. Confirmands/mentors & family will attend reception of the confirmands into full membership of the church during the Easter service! Photographs will be available.

For more information, join us at our **informational meeting Sunday, October 7th at 10:10 am in room #117.**

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Sunday, October 26th **Confirmand / Mentor Blessing (10:00 am Service)**

Mentor Meetings - **Session #1** (Getting Acquainted)

Saturday, November 1st Confirmation Kick-Off - Session #2 "God"
(9 am – 11:30 am) Location: TBA. Bring your Confirmation Journals! Breakfast potluck.

Mentor Meetings – **Session #3 (Jesus)**
*Attend a communion service together.

December 6-7th Group Building Retreat I - Session #10 "The Spiritual Life"
Leave Saturday morning at 9:30 am and return Sunday afternoon at 3:30 pm. Parent volunteers for meals. 2 mentors to chaperone & drive.

Mentor Meetings – **Session #4 (Holy Spirit)** and **Session #8 (Ministry)**
*There will be an opportunity for the mentors and confirmands to participate together in a Youth Group Mission Night. Date: TBA

Mentor Meetings – **Session #6 (Bible)** and **Session #7 (Saints & Gifts)**
* Visit with and interview a "saint" from the congregation.

Sunday, February 8th All Group Meeting – Session #11 "Death and Resurrection"
This will be an evening meeting with "The Way".
*If possible, attend a funeral service together.

Mentor Meetings – **Session #5 (Worship)**
* There will be an opportunity for the mentors and confirmands to attend a service of worship at a temple, cathedral, synagogue, etc. Date: TBA

Sunday, February 15th Confirmands will be involved.

Wednesday, February 18th Ash Wednesday Service – Mentors/Confirmands attend.

March 7th (Sat.) and/or March 8th (Sun) Group Building Retreat II: Session #9 "Sacraments: Baptism and Lord's Supper" Team Building Fun Time Sat. or Sun. afternoon + Sun. evening Meeting with "The Way".

Mentor Meeting – **Session #12 (Life in the Church)**

March 29th Palm Sunday – Confirmands will be involved. Later there will also be a rehearsal for The Great Vigil of Easter which will involve confirmands.

April 2nd Maundy Thursday Service – Confirmands will participate in service.

April 4th (Sat.) The Great Vigil of Easter – Confirmands will be involved.

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What is expected of parents, confirmands, mentors, session, and the church?

It is the responsibility of the **whole CONGREGATION**, through the session, to nurture those baptized to respond to the invitation to the Lord's Supper. **The SESSION** equips and supports the parents for their role in nurturing their child to understand the meaning and mystery of the sacraments and to faithfully receive the Lord's Supper. For this reason, it is **necessary that the parents be active members, or intend to become active members of the church.** There must be **one session elder per confirmand** who will interview the confirmand before the Closing Dinner.

It is the responsibility of the **MENTOR** to work with the parents of the confirmands to set dates, times, and locations for all meetings and to exchange contact information as needed. Mentors are to meet either in the home of the confirmand with a parent present, in the church or public in plain view, never in private. Mentors must always maintain healthy and safe boundaries according to the **Child Protection Policy**. It is ultimately the mentor's responsibility to work with the parents to make sure all sessions/activities are completed before the confirmand meets with the session. The Mentor will accompany the confirmand on their faith statement interview with a session elder.

It is the responsibility of the **PARENTS** to fully support their child in the confirmation program. This means scheduling meetings with the mentor and their child; bringing their child on time to each scheduled meeting or event, All Group lessons, retreats, and Closing Dinner; supplying help with food or snacks when needed; contacting the Coordinator (Matt Syrdal) directly with any questions, or issues that arise. This is a very important experience and rite-of-passage for each youth and parents are encouraged to talk with their child about what they are learning, in order to help them process their unique experience. Parents must make sure their child is ready for membership.

It is the responsibility of the **CONFIRMANDS** to make new friends, have lots of fun, and behave respectfully and responsibly toward the mentors, coordinator, session elders, parents, and staff. Ask lots of questions and never be afraid to share your thoughts and feelings! At the Service of Reception, you will be asked to reaffirm your personal faith in Jesus Christ!

I have read, and agree to, the expectations written above:

Parent Signature

Date

Confirmand Signature

Date

Mentor Signature

Date