

Confirmation Curricula Overview

The Catechism Curriculum

A multigenerational curriculum which follows, and in order, the 18 sections of the catechism itself.

Leader Resources - www.leaderresources.com

Encountering Christ in the Episcopal Church: A Youth and Intergenerational Faith Experience Leading to a Renewal and Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant. A curriculum that begins with consideration of identity and moves into the identity of Jesus, then into the Bible, the BCP, considerations of the sacraments, Christian belief, the Church, symbols, Christian living, prayer, the Eucharist and concludes with lessons on Jesus as savior, a review of the whole, plans for a retreat and rehearsal for the rite.

Morehouse Publishing - www.morehousepublishing.com

I Will, With God's Help

A curriculum that is self-consciously and explicitly built on the baptismal covenant; it begins with the creed and devotes the next five sessions to the 5 questions.

Part of Living the Good News section, Morehouse Publishing – www.livingthegoodnews.com

Keeping the Promise: A Mentoring Program for Confirmation in the Episcopal Church

A curriculum that is based on the mentor/confirmand model and is meant to be a mutual exploration of the life of faith; major points are bible, sacraments, spiritual life, the Church ministry, turning points in life.

Morehouse Publishing – www.morehousepublishing.com

The New Episcopal Way

A basic introduction to the faith of the Episcopal Church set in an 'old-fashioned' methodology includes a checklist of the 'curriculum' of the church from morality to devotional life to the bible and the creeds and the sacraments and more, with examinations suggested.

Morehouse Publishing – www.morehousepublishing.com

Sealed and Sent Forth

A curriculum exploring what it means to be a Christian, an Episcopalian, what the Christian community has to do with any of its members; each session includes worship, content, discussion, reflection and community building.

Leader Resources - www.leaderresources.com

The Seekers: A Voyage of Faith for Young Adults

A program of exploration and self-discovery that is process oriented and conversation driven covering 4 major themes: faith, life, self, values.

Leader Resources - www.leaderresources.com

I have most of these programs in the Resource Center available for preview. We gave credit for the above information because it didn't make sense to "re-invent the wheel".

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A Confirming Imagination: Some Considerations and Ideas

Taken by permission from the Diocese of Chicago

I remember it happening one very hot summer Sunday morning. I was in church, as was my family's custom - and one not to be debated, at that - but Sunday school was not in session, so there I sat, with my father and mother, brother and sister, hot, sweaty, the sun beating down on my knees and my feet so uncomfortable in my leather shoes. I slipped them off, as well as my socks, and ran my feet through the thick, red carpet. The minister stood, as he had for some time now, in the tall pulpit, his black gown flowing over the edges of the lectern, his wrinkled hands caressing the worn leather bible, his body a part of the sermon itself.

I felt perfect serenity, the feeling that you are where you are supposed to be, you are becoming who you are being called to be. I do not remember at all what my pastor said or what the message was to take home that day. But I remember the feeling of being there, truly being there. It was, I have come to realize, a feeling of being formed. It was a feeling that expressed itself in the warmth and comfort of a place but also a feeling that this Body of Christ was part of my body, my identity. It was a feeling of being confirmed in my baptismal ministry.

Confirmation is public baptismal ministry.

Confirmation is intimately wedded to baptism, and baptism, in turn, is the primary commissioning of every Christian person. The Book of Common Prayer (1979) moved the beautiful prayer for new life and blessing, once found in the confirmation rite, to baptism (p.308). And so we pray that the newly baptized will have an 'inquiring and discerning heart,' that, in baptism, the fullness of God's blessing is imparted, just as we make clear in a symbolic fashion that the young child is 'marked as Christ's own forever.'

Confirmation nevertheless has a vital role. It is the moment wherein a person makes a 'mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their baptism' (BCP 1979, p.412). It assumes the power of baptism. And yet confirmation adds to it a public renewal, a covenant, on the part of the Church and confirmand, to participate in the work of reconciliation that is the work of the Church, to be sent out.

Confirmation is a lifelong process.

Confirmation is an ongoing process of Christian formation, not so much neither a sacrament nor a sacramental rite - such are outward signs that reveal to the community that these moments of grace have been building and will continue to build the People of God. Confirmation is about the process of Christian formation, and the lifelong process, at that. In my own experience, I have come to be confirmed in my baptismal ministry in a number of ways, sitting in church on a hot summer Sunday, going to church camp every summer with my siblings and friends and other kids, being allowed to ask critical and hard questions in a faith community (even though I wanted to ask such questions in spite of a faith community), and being told, all the while, by parents, elders, pastors, and friends, that I am loved deeply by God.

Confirmation is an ongoing process of Christian formation. It is not only personal; it requires a whole community and a willing community as well. It is not only parochial; it requires an experience of the larger Church, the whole cloud of witnesses, at all ages, and all stages of life. It is neither exclusively sacramental; confirmation is about lifelong formation, those events and moments that build towards and continue after the laying on of hands. Perhaps it is, then, a most deeply sacramental event, but only if we expand our vision to take in a holistic and sacramental cosmos.

Confirmation is a product of an intentional Christian life lived in community.

Confirmation raises anxieties. There's a great need to 'get it done,' take care of the event and not look at the overall process of formation that might otherwise lead, more naturally and compellingly, to such an event. Step back. What does this need to 'get it done' say about you? About the young person whom you wish to be confirmed? About the relevance of a Christian life in our world today? About baptism?

Avoid rushing into confirmation as a class, a series of seminars, or a specifically age-limited program. Avoid working backwards, that all-too-easy temptation to find out when the bishop is coming and, quick!, get some kids in a confirmation class. That's not confirmation. That's 'getting it done.' And, in the end, it gets very little done.

The life of a Christian parish church and diocese, if lived intentionally and in prayer, already offers the necessary ingredients for adequate, lifelong Christian formation. In what ways are the ministries of your church, and those you do so well, part of what it means to be confirmed in one's baptismal ministry? Why do people show up for the holiday bazaars, the bible studies, the food pantry, or the altar guild workday? Are not these regular, daily, seemingly ordinary aspects of our Christian life an integral part of what it means to live publicly a mature commitment to the Christian faith?

The whole life of a Christian parish is the work of Christian formation and, if done intentionally, provides the raw material to come to realize that this, all along, is what it means to live publicly the Christian life. Starting here helps us avoid thinking narrowly and age-specifically about confirmation.

Confirmation requires a goal.

But yet it's not enough simply to say that the Church is always already doing confirmation. That's not the end of the story, for the members of the Body will not be willing nor able to proclaim to the world that they are, indeed, living a public Christian life unless the Church - be it parish or diocese - equips them with language and means of expression adequate to describe and enact the transformation that God is already working.

The Church must be intentional about holding up the power of baptism, not to mention the commitment that it also requires, and also call the People of God towards that goal. In other words, the Church must give people the tools to be ever confirming.

The Church must have a goal, not only for itself but for the sake of the world for which we pray. More than a mission statement, a goal is the particular charism of the Body of Christ. Perhaps our most basic and central goal: To adore God and to love God's People.

Once a goal is set, objectives or specific ways to reach that goal can be articulated. Once objectives are reached, programs can be created. Once programs are created, one can review curricula or confirmation textbooks or anything else that we tend to think of as the rite itself. And thus again we avoid another great pitfall of confirmation: the tendency to start from our needs, as anxious and worldly as they are, and not imagine the greater People to which God is calling us.

Confirmation is a means of expressing baptismal ecclesiology.

The hallmarks of such a People are conveyed in baptism. The gifts imparted to us - freedom, imagination, God's love, participation in the Body of Christ - are signs of our primary calling; namely, to be God's People. As such, baptism is a significant personal commitment.

And yet baptism is also a corporate commitment, for we are never on our own in the Christian journey. We are members of a particular People, a special tribe and chosen nation. Confirmation, then, is that one means by which we are enabled to understand that we are part of a corporate whole called the Body of Christ but also that it is the larger Church that is the locus of our identity, our vehicle for inspiration, and place of respite.

In short, the Church in its many incarnations needs to be the place where lifelong Christian formation happens - and happens intentionally - and where God's People are always being confirmed in their baptismal ministry.

There are several ways to make this happen, and while I hesitate tossing out ideas for quick-and-easy consumption, I do so only in the hopes that it might start this conversation and inform of an upcoming program.

IN THE PARISH:

Intergenerational Confirmation Preparation

Make your parish confirmation class an intergenerational experience. Do not recruit members, but open the net wide. Advertise it to all persons, newcomers and the long-comers. Help the group come to some identity in their time together by engaging them in retreats, prayers, activities (a shared life-journey timeline), or regular dinners together, either in someone's home or at a neutral place such as the parish hall.

The advantage of this approach is that it quite literally carries out, in word and deed, the idea that confirmation is not just something that sixteen-year-olds do; rather, confirmation is the work of the whole parish.

Confirmation is the work of the parish or larger Church because we all agree that Christian formation is a lifelong journey to adore God and love God's People.

IN THE DIOCESE:

Confirmation Camp

If confirmation is indeed an ecclesiastical sacrament (the only one that is exclusively reserved for the bishop, the chief pastor of the Church universal), then it should follow that the diocese would also be a place wherein confirmation is encouraged. No longer a loosely organized federation of parishes that all run their own confirmation program, the Diocese of Chicago sponsors a program called 'Confirmation Camp' near the end of the year, a program meant to both summarize all the good work that has been done in the parishes all year but also collect all the people who desire to be confirmed and give them a larger experience, a wider scope, and a more lasting feeling of what it means to be called God's People.

If we but stop for a while and run our bare feet through the carpet, or remember what it is to be the People of God - and all those people, and all those experiences that have helped us along the way to adore God more fervently and love God's People more openly - then perhaps we are already on the way to a healthy, less stressful and more abundant theology of confirmation. This is nothing short of the work of imagination, but isn't that our most basic gift, being children of a creating God?

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