

Preparation for young people to participate in the Rite of Confirmation at St. Peter's Episcopal Church

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.

-Book of Common Prayer, p. 412

The Book of Common Prayer specifies two requirements for young people who wish to be confirmed in The Episcopal Church.

First, they must be ready. In other words, confirmation is not an automatic rite of passage. In our diocese, our bishop generally interprets readiness as something which is discernable at age 16. Equally important is a young person's maturity and ability to assert an active choice—i.e. to be ready—to make a mature public affirmation of their baptismal promises (found in Book of Common Prayer, pp. 304-305).

Second, they must be duly prepared. In other words, confirmation of one's baptismal promises requires an informed awareness of what those promises are, what they mean, and how they apply to the life of the candidate.

Baptismal Promises

- Part of our baptismal promises entail matters of belief (Apostles Creed). Therefore, all candidates for confirmation are expected to study the creed with the help of a teacher and by reading appointed texts in order to readily understand and express those truths. In the Rite of Confirmation the bishop will lead the candidates (and the congregation) in proclaiming the Apostles Creed—(*BCP, p. 416-417*). Thus, it is imperative that the candidates can confess this faith with conviction and integrity.
- The other aspect of our baptismal promises encompasses matters of responsibility and manner of life. For example, at baptism we pledge:
 - to continue learning the Christian faith,
 - to participate in Christian fellowship,
 - to worship God in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist,
 - to keep our prayers,
 - to resist evil and—whenever necessary—repent,
 - to proclaim the Good News of Christ in word and deed,
 - to serve Christ in other persons,
 - to love our neighbors as ourselves,
 - to strive for justice and peace
 - and to respect the human dignity of all persons.

Therefore, our candidates for confirmation are expected not only to be familiar with these promises, but also to understand how they apply to their lives. With the assistance of a teacher as well as an adult mentor, our candidates will explore these promises and the responsibilities they entail. In the Rite of Confirmation, our bishop will lead the candidates (and the congregation) in renewing these baptismal promises (*BCP, p. 417*). Thus, it is imperative that the candidates can commit themselves to these responsibilities with conviction and integrity.

Expectations for Candidates

In order to be both ready and duly prepared to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their baptism, we believe a comprehensive course of preparation for the Rite of Confirmation is necessary: Therefore, candidates are expected to fully participate in the following:

1. Select and meet regularly (at least once/month) with an adult mentor—other than one’s parents—to explore how the baptismal promises and responsibilities are lived faithfully.

** There is an ancient tradition in the Church (and in the Bible) of spiritual direction and mentorship. The mentor will support the candidate in prayer and conversation, and serve as an additional resource for exploring what it means to lead a faithful life and honor one’s baptismal promises.*

**A priest or the teacher can make recommendations of possible mentors. Resources—such as “Exploring Faith Maturity” by the Search Institute—can help guide these conversations.*

2. Prepare for, attend, and participate in all group instructional sessions. These sessions will cover the 9 chapters of *My Faith, My Life: A Teen’s Guide to the Episcopal Church*.

3. Chapters of Book:

- i. Baptism and Confirmation: Beginnings
- ii. The Bible: Stories about Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
- iii. Knowing our History
- iv. Faith: What do we Believe?
- v. Worship: Responding to God’s Blessings
- vi. The Sacraments: Signs of Grace
- vii. Spirituality: Created for Prayer
- viii. Navigating the Church: From Parish to Worldwide Church
- ix. What is God Calling You to Do?

- a. Candidates are expected to read this book on their own in order to be prepared for full participation in group discussion.
- b. One excused absence is permitted.

c. Additional absences will require consultation with a priest and/or the teacher.
**This requirement is part of how we participate corporately in learning to understand and express the truths of our Christian faith. It is also part of how we continue in the Apostles Teaching.*

4. Regularly attend worship (at St. Peter's, or elsewhere when out of town).

** Since our baptismal promises are both made and lived out publicly in community, continuing in corporate worship (breaking of bread), fellowship, and prayer in Christian community is a fundamental expression of honoring one's baptismal promises*

5. Acquire (if one does not already possess copies) and use a study Bible and a Book of Common Prayer for personal reading and devotion at home.

** Personal reading of Holy Scripture and reflection/prayer time is essential to experiencing (and therefore being able to proclaim) the Good News of God in Christ. It is also an important way to recognize and resist evil, and to understand how our forebears in the faith repented and returned to the Lord.*

** If the cost of these items is prohibitive, please contact the priest and these resources will be provided at no charge.*

6. Participation in selecting and completing a service project with the full group that addresses at least one way that we

- a. Proclaim by word and example the Good News of Christ
- b. Seek and serve Christ in other persons
- c. Love our neighbors as ourselves
- d. Strive for justice and peace among all people
- e. And respect the dignity of every human being.

**Full engagement in a service project is our way of illuminating what it means to honor one's responsibilities as part of the Body of Christ in the world today.*

7. Participation in a group spiritual retreat with the other candidates for confirmation. This may entail an overnight stay and/or travel. However, the details of the retreat will be worked out in consultation with the full group.

**Committing one's self to a spiritual life is the crux of what the Rite of Confirmation is ultimately about. This retreat will provide an opportunity for focused and shared reflection on what we have learned and experienced about a spiritual life centered on God in Christ.*