

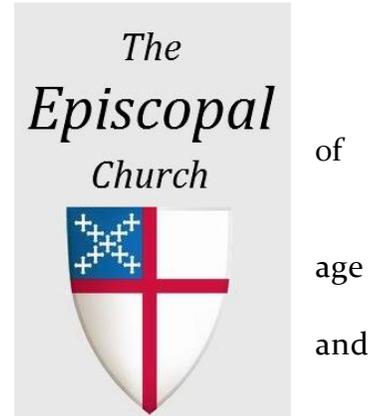
Youth Confirmation Program

St. James's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA

2017-2018

Confirmation in the Episcopal Church

Confirmation is a sacrament, or a sacramental rite, in which the candidates “express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop” (BCP, p. 86o). A sacrament is an outward visible sign an inward spiritual grace (the God-given desire and the power to do God’s will). Episcopalians recognize seven sacraments: the two major ones being Holy Baptism and Eucharist. Individuals who were baptized at an early age are given the chance to make a mature public affirmation of their faith, recommit themselves to the responsibilities of their baptism, receive laying on of hands by a bishop at confirmation (BCP, p. 412). Youth who have not been baptized can still participate in a confirmation preparation program and be baptized and/or confirmed when the bishop comes.



Preparation for confirmation allows candidates to discover the meaning of Christian commitment in their lives, and explore ways that their Christian commitment can be lived out. The candidates reaffirm their renunciation of evil, and renew their commitment to Jesus Christ. They reaffirm the promises made for them at their infant baptism. Those present in the congregation promise to do all in their power to support the candidates in their life in Christ.

The Episcopal Church’s theology of confirmation has continued to evolve along with its understanding of baptism. Confirmation is no longer seen as the completion of Christian initiation/membership, nor is confirmation your meal ticket or a prerequisite for receiving communion. Baptism is now understood as full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s body the Church (BCP, p. 298). Accordingly, confirmation has been increasingly understood in terms of a mature, public reaffirmation of the Christian faith and the baptismal promises. Confirmation is not graduation from faith formation, but rather marks the beginning of mature participation in the mission and ministries of the church.

Confirmation at St. James’s

Students: The youth confirmation class is for students in 9th grade. Older youth who are not yet confirmed, but who desire to be confirmed, are encouraged to contact the director of youth ministry or a member of the clergy about a confirmation process tailored to your individual situation. Adults seeking confirmation are encouraged to participate in the Pilgrim’s Path program.

Registration: If you would like to participate in the youth confirmation class this year, please complete and return the enclosed “Intent to Participate” form no later than August 15, 2017.

Schedule: The class meets most Sundays from 10:15-11:00 a.m. in Michaux House #302 unless the schedule specifically indicates otherwise. Our first event is the Youth Ministry Fall Kick Off and we will conclude the program on Confirmation Sunday when the Bishop visits in May 2018. (The confirmation date is still tentative and pending final approval from the bishop's office.) The enclosed 2017-2018 confirmation schedule lists dates for all confirmation activities including Sunday classes, field trips, required worship services, and special events. Please note that parents are expected to attend certain events with youth confirmands.

Attendance: We are providing you the full program schedule now so you're able to plan carefully and prioritize participation in confirmation related activities. The confirmation experience is a process that depends heavily on the community and relationships of the group. For the mutual benefit of all confirmands, regular attendance at St. James's Sunday worship AND at confirmation class/events is expected. Skipping church and attending class only undermines the entire point of this process. We understand that many of our families live quite a distance from St. James's and travel for holidays. If you are unable to make it to St. James's for one of the required worship services listed in purple on the schedule, you may attend another Episcopal church more convenient to your location. We understand that there will be the *occasional* unavoidable conflict or illness that results in your absence from a confirmation class/event, and expect you to notify your teachers in advance of your absence.

Mentors: Each confirmand will select a non-parent adult mentor (sometimes called a sponsor) who is willing to support them throughout the confirmation process. Students will learn more about the role of a confirmation mentor during class this fall, so wait until then to ask someone to be your mentor. Youth will be expected to meet with their mentor 3-5 times over the course of the year so it's important this person lives locally. These meetings can happen anytime between now and confirmation Sunday, at a time and location that's convenient for you and your mentor. During these meetings, we encourage students to tell their mentor about their confirmation experience, ask their mentor about their faith life/spiritual journey, and discuss any questions students may have. We also encourage students and mentors to go to church together if possible. A great opportunity to do this is during Holy Week. These "meetings" can also be relaxed and fun – perhaps an outing to a farmers market or ice cream. Mentors should be present at the Confirmation Rehearsal & Banquet and for Confirmation Sunday.

Partnering with Parents: Parents are the #1 influence, for better or for worse, on their child's faith formation process. This is why we stress the importance of attending worship services regularly with your 9th grader. Don't worry-the church doesn't expect you to navigate this road alone. The St. James's clergy, youth staff, and confirmation leaders are here to support you as parents, just as much as your child in the confirmation program. Please let us know how we can help you along this journey. There will be times during the confirmation process that we'll ask for your help volunteering to help coordinate things like the service project, field trip chaperones/drivers, bringing food, and coordinating the end-of-year banquet. Thank you in advance for your help!

Curriculum: Our class content comes from the program *Confirm not Conform* (www.confirmnotconform.com) and other Episcopal based resources.

Questions: Contact Mary Beth Abplanalp, Director of Youth & Young Adults at St. James's Episcopal Church (mbabplanalp@doers.org or 804-355-1779 ext. 334).

Join our 'St. James's Youth Ministry' Facebook group to keep in touch!