

# Yale

YOUTH MINISTRY  
INSTITUTE

## Confirmation Best Practices

Considerations for Confirmation teachers as they



create and formulate curricula for their classes.



## CONFIRMATION BEST PRACTICES

### I. Introduction

The Rite of Confirmation (or Sacrament, in Roman Catholic tradition) is a sacred undertaking for all congregations. It is an opportunity to educate young people in the Christian faith; it is also a chance to contextualize faith for youth and remind them that Confirmation is but a step in a lifelong faith journey.

Because many denominations have specific requirements for their confirmation classes, our primary recommendation is to follow what is requested by your denomination. Other denominations, however, allow for great flexibility in confirmation programming. Consequently, we have amassed a set of considerations for Confirmation teachers as they create and formulate curricula for their classes.

### II. Assumptions

Here are a few core assumptions that the authors of this document hold:

1. To take part in a confirmation class is a matter between the parents and the youth; to join the church is a matter between the youth and God. If there is a sense of coercion or implied expectation, youth will not enter into the Confirmation experience with an open spirit. This understanding should be iterated to parents, youth, and teachers, so that everyone is on the same page. Not all Confirmation class participants need to be confirmed at the end of the year. In fact, some of the most thoughtful youth choose not to be confirmed, and the seriousness by which this decision is reached should be celebrated and encouraged.
2. The Confirmation class can be a journey for youth; and really, it is a journey within a larger lifelong journey of faith introspection and discovery. The end goal is not for the youth to “know everything;” the end goal is for the youth to know that they are deeply loved by God, and that the church is a safe space to continue to ask questions, long after the class has concluded.
3. Confirmation class can be hands-on, fun, and engaging. Different learning styles can be taken into account when formulating lessons.
4. Good questioning needs to be modeled. Confirmation need not be just a dispensation of information; thoughtful discussions and genuine curiosity about what the youth think about God should be interspersed throughout all lessons.

### III. Key Areas of Focus for a Confirmation Curriculum:

Ideally, Confirmation curriculum should include:

1. A connection to the wider congregation. This can take the form of mentoring, adult guest speakers, Bible study partners, youth meeting with church leadership, and other forms altogether. The purpose of these relationships is to remind young people that adults are also part of the same faith journey, and that youth are valuable members of the faith community.
2. An understanding of worship and prayer. Some classes require youth to report back on worship services they attend, or they create a separate space for the class to worship together. Similarly, teaching young people how to pray is one of the greatest gifts that can be given (to both youth and adult leaders alike).
3. An appreciation for one's denomination, and individual congregation. Learning the history of one's context can remind youth that they belong somewhere. A brief sketch of how one's denomination fits into the history of the church should be included as well. This can be accomplished in very fun ways, with games related to facts about the denomination; scavenger hunts around the church building are a favorite, as are sharing old pictures from church archives.
4. An understanding of the liturgical year. Many classes have found success in talking through holidays, and the colors that might be seen displayed in the sanctuary at given times of the year.
5. A study of other religions. Having youth visit worship services that differ from their home church's traditions is often a highlight in Confirmation class calendars.
6. A study of Scripture. This can be done in different ways, but it should be understood that the Bible was put together from many different sources, and over the course of thousands of years. The genres found therein—poetry, history, letters, previously oral stories—should be a focus as well. Perhaps most importantly, inner reflection on the Scriptures should be modeled.
7. A sense of the Trinity, and how God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are related. There is mystery here, and that is entirely the point.
8. What it means to join the church, and to be a part of community of faith.

## IV. Format

Many churches have found very creative ways in which to gather their youth to cover all of the above topics. Some churches have found success in regularly scheduled classes, meeting weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc. Other churches have found that retreats draw a larger number of youth, and so the material is spread out among three or so retreats throughout the year. Whatever the packaging, commitment to the program is critical. Confirmation is not youth group, and there should be an emphasis on a higher level of commitment.

## V. Conclusion

There are a number of ways to teach Confirmation well. The implicit hope is that this be an



educational and joyful experience for youth and adults alike, and only the beginning of a much longer (lifelong) journey.