

Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut

A Summary of Guidelines for Confirmation Preparation

“Confirmation is one’s promise to follow Jesus Christ for the rest of your life.”

The Right Reverend Andrew Smith

1. Candidates for Confirmation should be in 10th grade, 16 years or older (See Addendum A)

The Diocese of Connecticut believes that individuals who are presented for Confirmation should be 16 years or older (10th or 11th grade). Since Confirmation is making a “mature” commitment to one’s faith, we believe these age guidelines will support young people in making decisions that can have a life-long impact. The Task Force on Confirmation also recommends that candidates be active members of the congregation for at least one year prior to beginning preparation instruction, since affirmation of one’s Baptism is rooted in living in community.

2. Preparation should be a minimum of one academic year (September – May) with a preference for two years of preparation prior to the Rite of Confirmation (see Addendum B) with opportunities for on-going formation and education for all ages post-Confirmation

Due to the comprehensive and encompassing content in which the Diocese of Connecticut desires for preparation of its Candidates for Confirmation, the Task Force recommends that two years be dedicated to Confirmation instruction. At a minimum, instruction should take place over the course of one academic year (September – May). In recent years we have experienced more prepared candidates for Confirmation from those parishes that have been more intentional about taking the time, energy and integrity in providing instruction and formation programs for adolescents. With parishes using programs such as *Journey to Adulthood* and those engaged in mission trips and on-going service projects, we have seen that longer, as opposed to short term, preparation time prepares individuals much better.

3. The Faith Community should take an active role in supporting Confirmands through prayer, recognition and serving as mentors to journey with each candidate (see Addendum C)

Youth ministry is the responsibility of the entire congregation. Youth ministry, including Confirmation ministry, ought to be rooted in relationships. Balanced leadership of adults from a variety of ages, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds are most effective in helping youth identify with the wider church. Candidates should also have a sponsor or mentor from the parish to accompany them throughout their preparation period. Sponsors/mentors (selected and organized under “safe church guidelines”) take on a special relationship with the candidate that is different than other mentor relationships found in the secular world. They are companions on the journey, and they understand that Christians walk with Christ together, not independently.

4. Clergy and Lay Persons share leadership in the preparation of candidates for Confirmation, Reception and Re-affirmation (see Addendum D)

Understanding that a faith community consists of many individuals with different gifts, the Task Force hopes that a variety of adults will participate in the leadership of any preparation program. Candidates benefit from a variety of relationships with adults when on a journey of faith: pastor, priest, teacher, friend, sponsor and co-seeker.

(over)

5. The Deanery is a source of support and companionship in preparing Confirmands through retreats, mission opportunities and the Rite of Confirmation service (see Addendum E)

In the year 2000 the Diocese of Connecticut shifted services of Confirmation from being parish-centered to being deanery-centered. In the context of the Deanery, with many parishes celebrating and joining together, our ties to one another as companions in Christ in the Episcopal Church have been identified and strengthened. Making a “pilgrimage” together for the Service of Confirmation reminds us that Jesus calls us to leave the familiar and move into new life. Congregations combined in worship can offer a glorious witness and experience that energizes us for common life and ministry.

6. The Bishop is an integral part in the preparation of Confirmands (see Addendum F)

The Bishop Diocesan is the chief pastor and teacher in the diocese, a role he or she shares with the Bishops Suffragan. The presence of a bishop at Confirmation underscores the importance of this rite in the life of the Church. He or she is the Celebrant and Preacher at Confirmation services. Confirmation is an opportunity for individuals to experience the ministry of the bishops. The laying on of hands at Confirmation is an outward sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit and forms a personal and physical link between the Confirmand and the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church throughout the world and through time.

7. Components for preparation (see Addendum G) should include:

- ✦ Scripture
- ✦ The Book of Common Prayer
- ✦ Service & the Life of the Baptized
- ✦ Mission & Community
- ✦ Prayer
- ✦ Faith & Practice – to include participation in worship, stewardship, Christian ethics, moral decision making and theological reflection
- ✦ Episcopal polity

Both students and leaders are members of the Body of Christ, exploring the content of the Christian revelation and learning from each other. While the transmission of content (as listed above) is important, the joint exploration of the Gospel and what it means in our life is vital. It is the Church’s job to help support and sustain a life of faith put into practice, yet fun and friendship are part of the abundant life of Christ. Even the hard work of preparing people to live that life is work done in joy.

8. Additional Resources (see Addendum H)

Support is given with these guidelines. There are a wide variety of materials and resources available for parish use. In addition to those listed here, the diocese will provide regional training for those (clergy & lay) who will be preparing candidates for Confirmation, Reception or Re-Affirmation. Deanery retreats and gatherings with the confirming bishop will also be scheduled for parishes to participate in each year.