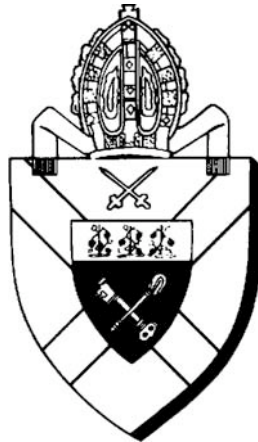


Guidelines for
Confirmation, Reception & Reaffirmation
in
The Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut



Easter 2005

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These Guidelines were developed in response to conversation at a Clergy Day in the fall of 2002 in which issues and questions regarding Confirmation were raised. A Confirmation Working Group / Task Force subsequently was formed and met over the following two years, engaging in conversations about the formational issues of Confirmation and how the Diocese of Connecticut could present materials that would be helpful to the diverse congregations in our diocese. The main question we raised was, “What is Confirmation in today’s Episcopal Church?”

The committee studied historical perspectives of Confirmation as well as current practices in our diocese. Parishes were surveyed to learn how they specifically addressed Confirmation instruction. We explored the role of the bishop and deanery. We shared models that have mentors and mission aspects. Bishops Andrew Smith (Diocesan), James Curry and Wilfrido Ramos-Orench (Suffragans) engaged in a round table discussion with the Task Force. Themes quickly emerged: the importance of ‘mature decision’ and community, movement into mission and ministry, and intentional preparation instruction. Above all, we agreed that Confirmation should be a meaningful affirmation of one’s life in Jesus made in the public community – an adult response to one’s baptismal vows.

We are particularly grateful to Sharon Pearson for her leadership and support of this project. Sharon generously offered us her master’s thesis as the starting place for our work. She had already done the research on the history of Confirmation and on child development. While everyone on the committee wrote parts of the Guidelines and Addenda, Sharon was the one who did all the pasting together, formatting, and entering of editorial changes, and for that the committee extends our profound thanks.

I want to thank our bishops, especially Bishop Curry, who met with us regularly, and I am grateful to all the members of the committee for their commitment to the ministry of spiritual formation.

We are offering these Guidelines and accompanying resources as a gift to the parishes of the Diocese of Connecticut and the wider Church. It is time for our leadership, clergy and lay, to speak to the importance of life-long formation and the mature unfolding and launching that occurs in an intentional Confirmation process. While there is a place for didactics in Confirmation instruction, we believe formation and preparation should emphasize the importance of community and faith sharing. It is an opportunity for our communities to come together and experience the gifts of one another. The Spirit is fully present in the lives of our communities – it is a time to be sent out to fulfill our mission.

Confirmation Task Force

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The Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut

“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 and public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop.”

1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 412

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

The Right Reverend Andrew Smith

Guidelines for Confirmation, Reception & Reaffirmation

By Baptism we are made full members in the Body of Christ, and in it we are sealed and confirmed as Christ’s own forever. Confirmation is the Rite of Re-affirmation of one’s Baptismal vows made in the context of the faith community that includes the laying on of hands by a bishop. Candidates are presented and asked to reaffirm their renunciation of evil and a renewal of their commitment to Jesus Christ. This is a representation of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life and his or her connection to the wider apostolic community. The act of reaffirmation is an acknowledgment that the individual is an ambassador for Christ, having found new meaning, empowerment, healing or transformation in faith. The congregation promises to support those who are recommitting themselves to their life in Christ. Preceding and following such a reaffirmation (whether it is Confirmation, Reception from another denomination into the Episcopal Church or one’s Re-affirmation years after one’s Confirmation), candidates should be engaged in ongoing, faith-forming education for discipleship, service and mission, understanding that Christians continue on a journey of faith within the context of a supportive faith community.

Episcopalians, like all Christians, believe that our life is founded on the life of Jesus Christ, and that as a church we are called to offer the redeeming love of Christ to all people. We publicly state our belief that God calls us to love all God’s children, as Jesus offered his life for all humankind. In the Diocese of Connecticut, Confirmation is a person’s commitment to renew these promises made at Baptism. It is an affirmation made publicly in the community of faith, signaling a personal movement into mission and ministry in one’s life. We are all pilgrims on a life-long journey to know Christ and become faith-full communities of the Gospel, no matter our age. Confirmation, Reception and Re-Affirmation are important threads that add strength and individuality to the tapestry of our lives of faith in Christ.

The following guidelines are to assist faith communities in preparing candidates for Confirmation, Reception and Re-Affirmation. While most of these are directed toward youth, the assumption is that adults (whether they are being Confirmed, Received or preparing for Re-Affirmation) will also participate in a comprehensive preparation program. A core curriculum for such preparation is our Baptismal Covenant. It is imperative to balance learning about the Episcopal Church and an Anglican expression of the Christian faith with putting one’s faith into practice. Addenda follow each guideline, with explanations and rationale, as well as resources to assist clergy and designated baptized adults who will oversee instruction and preparation.



“It is Jesus whom we proclaim, teaching everyone in all wisdom so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.” Colossians 1:28-29

Guidelines for Confirmation Preparation

1. Candidates for Confirmation should be in 10th grade, 16 years or older (See Addendum A)
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
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)
4. Clergy and Lay Persons share leadership in the preparation of candidates for Confirmation, Reception and Re-affirmation (see Addendum D)
5. The Rite of Confirmation is held regionally through our deaneries. The Deanery is a source of support and companionship in preparing Confirmands through retreats, mission opportunities and preparation. We are called to connect our lives and witness to each other within the greater Church, forging new connections across parish boundaries (see Addendum E)
6. The Bishop is an integral part in the preparation of Confirmands (see Addendum F)
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
8. Additional Resources (see Addendum H)

Adult Confirmation, Reception and Re-Affirmation

For adults, these rites are truly sacramental . . . an outward and visible sign of a spiritual renewal. There is an assumption that those who present themselves are experiencing significant spiritual growth and want to respond to the movement of the Spirit within them in a concrete and public way. In some cases, a person may wish to renew his/her Baptismal vows at the same time a spouse is being Confirmed or Received as a sign of support and of their shared faith life.

Some adults want to learn about the Church before they become involved in community life, while others get involved and then desire a way to formalize their relationship to the Church and God. Preparation for each of these individuals should include the areas mentioned in Guideline 7. And this should be an ongoing process; every congregation should have a means for all adults to continue in their journey of faith formation.

Sponsors should also be available to adults who are seeking to re-affirm their Baptismal Covenant. The role of these sponsors is to be a companion – one who accompanies the newly committed or renewed on their journey of growth and nurture of their faith. Regular attendance at worship, participation in the life and mission of the community and study should be expected of all candidates. A discussion of what ministries they feel called to as they grow in their faith is essential for how they live their life of faith in the church and in the world: at home, work, and community.

All adults need encouragement and support when entering into new conditions, environments and states-of-being. The community of Christian believers is a place for learning through shared journeys, supporting each other as we deal with experiences in our daily lives and endeavoring to integrate our faith into our actions. A parish that participates in active discernment for all the baptized in order to live out one's faith in the world on an ongoing basis will identify the practice of one's faith as fundamental to the Call. Confirmation, Reception and Re-Affirmation invites participants to make a personal commitment to nurture and practice their faith in daily life.

Attentiveness to the spiritual lives of all adults in a congregation is essential. Often the church focuses on the needs of our programs already in place and tries to fit people into those slots. Each parish program, committee and organization would benefit from an "Action / Reflection" model that makes sure there is an integration of church activities with individuals' spiritual lives and the mission of the Church.

Reception

Persons presented for Reception are those who have been baptized with water in the name of the Trinity, have previously made an adult public affirmation of faith in any other Christian Communion (either at their Baptism or on a separate occasion) and now desire to live their faith within the fellowship of the Episcopal Church. Preparation for reception should include how one practices the faith in the Anglican Communion and how we as Episcopalians live out our Christian mission in community.

Reaffirmation

Reaffirmation is suitable in a variety of situations for persons who have already made a mature public declaration of faith within this Communion: those baptized persons who have made a mature public declaration of faith, and have later left the church or fallen away from active faith, and now wish to express their revived commitment to the covenant of their Baptism; those baptized persons who have already made a mature public declaration of faith, and are now experiencing a call from God toward a new growth in faith, commitment, or service, may respond to and affirm that call before the Bishop and the community of faith. Reaffirmation is a repeatable rite and should be used with sensitive pastoral discernment and after appropriate preparation.

ADDENDUM A:

Age & Attendance Recommendations

“Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” Ephesians 4:5-17

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.

Rationale

A group of scholars give us insights into the development of adolescents. Jean Piaget wrote about cognitive development while Erik Erikson was concerned with psycho-social development. The work of James Fowler, Gabriel Moran, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, John Westerhoff and James Loder help us understand where the adolescent is in his or her faith journey. Development in each of these areas impacts a young person’s ability to “make a mature decision” to receive the laying-on-of-hands at Confirmation in the Episcopal Church.

In the course of development, adolescents begin to question and doubt the beliefs they have acquired in childhood and early adolescence. When moving from concrete to abstract thought, young people learn not all questions have finite answers, and questions of faith cannot always be proved. Adolescents are looking for proof. Not until adulthood do young people pass beyond this stage of disbelief and decide to set their heart on something beyond themselves, recognizing that human beings are never able to reduce life and faith in God to a rational system.

Many of the developmental changes of adolescence revolve around several key tasks that all children must accomplish as they move toward adulthood. As the individual moves through adolescence, the developing of an identity, coming to terms with one’s sexuality, developing autonomy and a planning for the future are important issues. The church can play an important role in assisting our young people move through these tasks.

Adolescence can be broken up into three chronological parts: early (11-12 years), middle (13-15 years) and late (15-17 years). However, no two adolescents develop in the same way chronologically. Yet they ask the same questions: Am I competent? Am I normal? Am I lovable and loving? Physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual development occurs in each young person differently. Some will be more focused on physical changes, while others will be more interested in the spiritual aspect of their lives. Each area of development offers the community an opportunity to support youth in their journey.

The issues faced by middle school/junior high and early high school students (ages 11-15) involve a focus on self and peer group. They are mostly interested in the present, with limited thoughts of the future as far as their own plans and expectations. In late adolescence their intellectual interests expand and they usually have greater persistence and interest in physical, mental and emotional challenges. They are concerned with ‘being normal’ and with their relationships. It is also a time when friendship patterns shift. It is a time of experimentation and limit testing. Their consciences are showing more consistency toward recognizing positive and negative behavior, and they are developing the capacity for abstract thought. It is a time of “*acquiring a religion*,” a transitional time of holding the beliefs of the faith community as

experienced in worship and instruction. It is a time when a person assumes the beliefs and faith for him or herself.

This time of search involves questioning, judging critically, and experimenting through the use of reason and argumentation in addition to feelings and experiences. It is very much a “faith of the head” rather than a “faith of the heart.” Faith will often express itself in the form of doubt and the struggle to frame philosophical formulations. Through this personal search for truth, the adolescent moves from dependence on others’ understandings and ways to a state of autonomy. To find a faith of their own, adolescents need to doubt, question, and test what has been handed down to them. They need to criticize the tradition in which they were brought up and to question their own feelings and experiences. During this period, parents (and other adults) need to be especially sensitive to the fact that changes don’t necessarily mean that faith is being discarded; it may only be that the expressions of faith, which belonged to others – often parents – now need to become uniquely those of the adolescent. It is a time to embrace and support the young person in their search for meaningful faith. Not all teenagers are ready to make a commitment to a life-long faith decision at this point. Each person should come to Confirmation when he or she is ready to make that commitment.

For John Westerhoff, the adolescent is moving between an *affiliative faith* – the sense of belonging – to a *searching faith*. In late adolescence, due to a broadening worldview and education, a person begins to doubt and question those values and statements that were fundamental to understandings of faith in previous years. Erikson states that adolescence is a struggle between *identity vs. identity confusion*. Between 12 and 18 years, an individual becomes more interested in a personal relationship with God, but may be opposed to institutional religion and reject the religious belief of their parents. Deep religious questions are asked but may be kept to one’s self because of a fear of rejection or ridicule. An adolescent can make a commitment one day, then change their mind the next, especially if a more attractive opportunity or friend has a different view. According to Fowler, faith is a process of becoming. An adolescent’s new cognitive abilities make mutual perspective-taking possible and allows the individual to integrate their faith into their identity and the new realities of their lives.

By late High School (age 16 and older), there is an increased level of independence and a more cohesive sense of identity. Individuals are more likely able to examine their inner experiences and think ideas through with more emotional stability. They can show concern for others, delay self-gratification and compromise. Peer relationships remain important, but now take a place among their other interests. They are more concerned with the future and the importance of one’s role in life. Social and cultural traditions regain importance in their lives, and there is an increased interest in moral reasoning, personal dignity, self-esteem and setting goals. It is a time to encounter and nurture one’s spirituality as well as plan for the future, further education, career and adulthood.

Young adults are able to enter into critical reflection on their beliefs and values, gaining perspective on life and understanding of the self as part of a social system. The internalization of authority and the assumption of responsibility for making explicit choices of ideology and life-style open the way for critically self-aware commitments in relationships and vocation. This “individuated-reflective” faith is an appropriate time for a person to make a commitment and re-affirmation to a particular belief system, such as being confirmed.

The Task Force on Confirmation recommends that Confirmation be offered to older adolescents. In doing so the Church will be supporting young people in their wrestling with issues and coming to a mature decision as they move from the faith of their parents to assuming for themselves their own faith. When everybody in the eighth grade is expected to be in the Confirmation class, we run the risk of pushing young people who are not ready and it may be impossible for them to resist being confirmed along with their classmates, even if they are given a choice. This is often exhibited with the comment, “everybody in

my grade at church is doing it.” It doesn’t respect their autonomy, but follows the desires of parents or peers. Such an approach does not take into account the faith development and maturity of the individual. This model of confirmation ministry can resemble a rite of passage, a reward for attending classes or arriving at the end of the education process in the church. Confirmation should be a sign of one’s growing commitment to his/her faith and the responsibilities that comes with being part of the Christian community.

Parental expectations:

Many parents and congregations are not ready or prepared for this change. For some congregations moving to this model may mean putting a “moratorium” on Confirmation classes for several years. If there absolutely must be a rite of puberty due to social and parental pressures, local clergy might consider special recognitions in the context of congregational worship to mark an individual’s milestones. Such prayers might ask for guidance during the forthcoming period of questioning and growth, for strength in the development of adult faith and for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Suggested prayers can be found in the Appendix.

In communities where young people leave home to attend boarding or preparatory school, it has become customary in some parishes to confirm them before their departure, regardless of age or previous participation in the faith community. This practice is contrary to an individual making a personal, mature decision and should be discouraged. Instead, parents and students should contact the school chaplain and find ways for the student to participate in the faith community of the school they will be attending. If the school does not provide a spiritual component as part of its student life, a local Episcopal Church can be an avenue for building new relationships in a faith community. Most boarding schools help students to understand that they do not exist apart from society, that society's issues are their issues, and that they are called to respond to the needs of others. Students are encouraged not just to share what they have with others, but also to understand the issues and complexities of society and to consider what their individual and corporate responsibilities are and to take action. It is in such an environment when one lives away from home that questions of faith and strengthening of one’s belief system can nourish and grow. This is the community that witnesses and supports the young person who is not able to attend the church community of his or her parents. It is within the context of this community that it is most appropriate for one to make a public affirmation of their faith. And it is this community that can continue to support the young adult in their faith journey.

ADDENDUM B:

Preparation Time

“It is required of those to be confirmed that they . . . are sufficiently instructed in the Christian Faith . . .”
1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 860.

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.

Rationale:

“Christians are made, not born,” said Tertullian. Following Jesus is challenging work for the Church. Many factors in modern culture seem to conspire against the Church in its efforts to grow disciples. A commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord requires more personal investment than a perfunctory 6-8 weeks of instruction classes. The Rite of Confirmation is not “graduation” in which one has completed a course of study. William Willimon (“Making Christians in a Secular World,” *The Christian Century*, Oct. 22, 1986) speaks of Confirmation as nothing less than giving people the equipment they need to be disciples. Christianity is a way of life together . . . it is experiential, personal, engaging . . . becoming disciples of Jesus through our lifestyle, beliefs and values. Confirmation (and its preparation) continues and strengthens Christian growth that has already begun. It is learning a way of being that will remain with one forever.

In order to examine and experience a comprehensive preparation program, Confirmands need adequate time for building community, learning, reflecting on and applying their faith. This cannot be accomplished in 6-8 weeks. The components of preparation can take a variety of forms (see Addendum G) and can occur at various times: Sunday “education hour,” weekend-retreats, afternoon or evening activities, mission trips and special events.

ADDENDUM C:

Role of the Faith Community

We have all been charged with the call to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” Ephesians 4:12-13

“When two or three are gathered together in my name.” Jesus has called us as Christians not to be isolated but to be in community, calling us out into the world in mission. We are members dependent on one another to be the Body of Christ, upheld by the basic principles of the Baptismal Covenant. As expressed in *The Book of Common Prayer*, this Covenant maintains that individuals and institutions are called by God to adopt certain fundamental disciplines and dispositions in order to embrace fully their basic identities. As embodiments of the Christian faith, our Episcopal Churches are created to be communities that honor, celebrate and worship God as the center of life. They are created to be models of God’s love and grace. They are created to serve God in Christ in all persons. They are created to “strive for justice and peace among all people and [to] respect the dignity of every human being.” These principles are the basis on which Christian identity and vocation exist. It is important for young people to participate in the life of the community so that they can also experience the love existing in such a community. Christian formation encompasses many aspects of our life in the community of faith and takes form in a variety of ways. Candidates should be involved in parish life and mission as their skills and gifts lend themselves to growth and new understandings.

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.

Rationale:

Thirty years ago young people could not receive communion until they were confirmed. This is no longer the case. Parishes are devising a wide range of practices for formation of young children and families as they experience Holy Eucharist. Our ministry to pre-adolescents, adolescents and post-adolescents is broadening to reflect the church’s understanding of Baptism and the church’s appreciation of human development so that we can minister to and with them in developmentally appropriate ways. The focus of Confirmation preparation is no longer about receiving communion, but about making a mature commitment to faith and affirming the promises made at Baptism.

Our diocese is comprised of cities and suburbs, towns and rural areas. All our struggles are similar, no matter where we live. All communities, regardless of size or wealth, face the enormous challenge of fragmentation. Family life is seriously threatened by the schedules we keep. Often our young people lack the sense of community beyond family that is critical to understanding the church and its mission. Experiencing community life as lively, energizing and interdependent is critical to understanding our Baptismal Covenant. Faith and religion are caught, not taught. Our parish communities can offer a context for learning about loving relationships, honesty, justice, forgiveness and all the other values essential to our faith. We can help families deepen their sense of Baptismal life.

Involving the congregation in the confirmation process encourages the development of one-to-one relationships between youth and adults. Sponsors assist those exploring their faith to share in the journey by offering insights, questions and the shared wisdom of what it means to be part of a faith community. Mentors should be baptized members of the parish community. They should have a serious commitment to sharing their faith, meeting regularly and supporting the candidate in his/her spiritual life. They should be faithful in attendance, stewardship and participation in the life of the community. Besides giving encouragement, mentors are living examples of what it means to be an Episcopalian, putting faith into practice.

The congregation as “cheerleaders”: Our young people desire to be known by name, listened to and involved. Depending on their interest and gifts, young people can participate in parish committees and ministries, such as service & mission projects, worship (acolyte, lay Eucharistic minister, lector, choir, altar guild, usher, etc.) and fellowship opportunities. They should not be just tapped for “grunt work” but asked of their opinions and ideas in planning. Following Confirmation, they should be invited to participate as Vestry members, Search committee members and other important leadership roles.

And most importantly, the faith community can pray for candidates for Confirmation in the Prayers of the People throughout their time of preparation. The community can support the Confirmands by offering both the time and money for mission trips and pilgrimages and any other events.

A congregation making a "pilgrimage" together for the Service of Confirmation will signify a deep and necessary response to Jesus, who calls us to leave the familiar and move out into new life. It is important for Confirmands to know there are members of their parish community present for the Deanery celebration of which they are re-affirming their faith in this context of the Church gathered.

On the Sunday following the Deanery Celebration of Confirmation, each parish should in the context of the main liturgy of the day recognize individually those who have re-affirmed their Baptism. (See “Liturgy of Celebration for those who have been Confirmed, Received or Re-Affirmed” in Appendix.)

ADDENDUM D:

Role of the Laity and Clergy



“You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.” Timothy 2:1-2

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.

Lay leadership:

This is an important time for encouraging the gifts of laypersons to participate as teachers and leaders. It is the role of clergy to identify appropriate individuals following “safe church guidelines.” Those who have participated in education programs such as EFM (Education for Ministry), MEEP (Ministry, Education and Exploration Program), DOCC (Disciples of Christ in Community), Journey to Adulthood leadership training, or others can be good resources. However, it is important that they receive support for this task, especially in the areas of scripture and Anglican traditions. The diocese holds regional teacher training sessions periodically and special training for Confirmation preparation leaders will be offered beginning in the fall of 2005.

Besides the traditional instruction, experiential and hands-on learning are important elements of spiritual formation. An important role of any leader is to provide a safe, supportive environment in which deep dialogue can occur. Knowing “all the answers” is not as important as being open and engaging the questions, and being seekers in relationship with one another.

Clergy leadership:

The priest-in-charge of a parish has oversight responsibility in the preparation and presentation of candidates for Confirmation, Reception and Re-Affirmation. The clergy have an important leadership role in teaching, selecting team members and modeling relationships. It is a time for a priest to develop rapport with young people and the adults moving toward reaffirming their Baptismal promises.

If a member of the congregation attends (or plans to attend) boarding school, the Task Force encourages the priest-in-charge to help the family establish a relationship with the school chaplain. This may simply involve notifying the administration of the young person’s participation in the home faith community and of their imminent arrival. The parish may keep in contact through correspondence and praying for them in the weekly Prayers of the People. The clergy can provide a bridge between home and school, insuring a supportive environment for an often-difficult transitional time in a young person’s life.

ADDENDUM E:

Role of the Deanery

“So that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” Ephesians 3:10

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. Given the increased diversity of the diocese, a shared choir, readings in several languages, and a variety of worship leadership reflects the cultural richness of our diocesan life together. Congregations combined in worship can offer a glorious witness and experience that energizes us for common life and ministry.

Rationale:

When the Deanery is an active combination of Clergy and Lay Persons, its participation in Confirmation makes the rite truly as commonly defined, the work of the people: the work of God and the people’s response to God’s work. The Bishop’s Laying on of Hands is the central sign of that work in Confirmation. The parishes in the deanery are the faith community representing the Church of which we are all members.

The Task Force on Confirmation recommends deanery events and/or retreats be offered for all persons seeking adult Baptism, Confirmation, Reception or Re-affirmation. The diocese will support the planning and preparation of such events through the Christian Education and Youth Ministry staff. The central actions of the day should engage our senses to recall, awaken, and reclaim our baptismal experiences as full initiation into our life in Christ. Led by the bishop, it is a time to share stories, baptismal memorabilia, sing, hear scripture, pray, and discover a wider community. This is also the opportunity to have some time with the Bishop in conversation, encouraging questions and sharing hospitality. The Prayers of the People for the Confirmation service can be written by the Candidates with the Bishop in preparation for the Deanery Confirmation Service.

Deanery Confirmations connect our lives and witness to each other within the greater Church. It is an opportunity for deepening our sacramental life together and forging new connections across parish boundaries. The Music and Liturgy Commission of the diocese is a resource for liturgy planning. The Appendix offers a description of how the Greater Bridgeport Deanery has successfully demonstrated how diverse congregations can come together through each of its Confirmation celebrations.

ADDENDUM F:

Role of the Bishop

“The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese” 1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 855

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.

The bishop 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.

The bishop is available to meet with candidates through deanery events, diocesan youth events and parish visitations. Conversation, questions and the mutual sharing of stories are opportunities for individuals to become personally connected with the Bishop as a representative of the wider Church as well as a faithful servant of Christ. Deaneries and parishes are strongly urged to contact the bishop’s office to arrange a convenient time for this to occur well in advance of the event you are planning.

ADDENDUM G:

Components for Preparation

- ✦ *Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?*
 - ✦ *Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?*
 - ✦ *Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?*
 - ✦ *Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?*
 - ✦ *Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?*
- The Baptismal Covenant, 1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 304-5

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 below) 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.

Scripture:

The goal of studying scripture in a Confirmation program is to insure candidates have an understanding of our Salvation History so that he/she can articulate "who they are" and "whose they are." The ability to reflect on The Story in relationship to Our Story and My Story is an important component in making a mature affirmation of one's Baptismal Covenant. Understanding the key themes, characters and stories of the Old and New Testaments helps us understand how God is in relationship with Creation and how we are called to build upon that relationship with God, through Jesus Christ and each other. The Great Vigil of Easter is an expression of our faith journey as a people of God; the retelling of the Passover Story every year makes it Our Story.

Being intentional in studying the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in a faith community allows us to answer the questions, "Who do you say that I am?" or "Who is Jesus in your life?" This is a vital question that one who comes before the bishop for Confirmation, Reception or Re-Affirmation should be able to answer.

The Book of Common Prayer:

In order to be articulate who we are as Episcopalians, candidates should be familiar and have experienced *The Book of Common Prayer* (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Eucharist, Baptism, etc.) Our Creeds are statements of our beliefs, and thus should be explored and discussed. *An Outline of the Faith* (The Catechism) in the prayer book and our Baptismal Covenant should be key elements of a preparation program.

Service & The Life of the Baptized:

Putting faith into practice and connecting the Gospel to our daily life is how we live out our Baptismal Covenant in the world. To do this, besides being committed to the Gospel, we need to recognize the spiritual gifts that have been given to us. Exploring those gifts and talents and how they can be used in the day-to-day life of a Christian in the world should be part of Confirmation preparation. An individual can share these through ministry in a congregation AND in the community. Most high schools have service components and requirements for graduation. Confirmation preparation can support that service, faithfully reflecting on what has been observed, experienced and learned. Service is not to be seen as "doing for someone" but as "being in relationship" with another for a common purpose, respecting the dignity of all of God's creation.

The life of the Baptized is centered on being Christ's disciple in the world. Discipleship lies in our personal experience, understanding and relationship to God, in Jesus and with the Holy Spirit. Discipleship lies in our small intimate relationships with family and friends, also in the larger arena of our interaction with the world: in school and places of work, with peers, colleagues and co-workers, and in our towns and cities.

Mission & Community:

The Church's mission is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. We do this as we pray, worship, proclaim the Gospel and promote justice, peace and love. Mission is an essential component of our life as we connect the teachings of the Church with who we are as individuals. Being able to answer such questions as, "How are you Christ in the World?" "What is your rule of life?" and "What have you done on a daily basis as a disciple of Christ?" is part of re-affirming one's Baptismal promises. How we offer opportunities for prayer and work is paramount during a time of formation and preparation.

Mission trips and/or experiences help the individual know Jesus Christ in a new way. Why do young people have to go outside the parish (even their own town, state or country) in order for this to occur? As one youth stated, "I needed to be stretched and taken out of my comfort zone." We need to be people who fully rely on God on a day-to-day basis . . . being with those whose only hope is God helps us take the risk of trusting the way they must trust. The moment our dependence shifts from the self to God, the Gospel becomes real. Our culture is one in which the theology of glory prevails, and thus the theology of the cross is difficult to access. How does the candidate connect with Christ crucified?

Youth mission trips put us in touch with the distinction between faith as "trust in God" and faith as "assent to doctrinal positions." Curricula and learning what it means to be an Episcopalian can often be separated from experiencing the power of the living God. Short-term mission trips stimulate discernment and encourage the recognition of one's gifts with ministry in the world. Our faith is connected to real life issues and a realization of what people gathered together in God's name can do.

Life-long formation involves equipping ourselves for mission. This occurs through sermons, being in community and experiencing God incarnationally in others. It is an opportunity for mutual spiritual enrichment. Through mission we can make two-way connections in our life-faith journey, respecting the shared wisdom and faithfulness of all God's people.

Prayer:

Prayer includes both individual and common prayer, and both are staples of a lively spirituality. There should be opportunities to learn and experience different kinds of prayer. Prayer is the common thread that should be woven into all aspects of Confirmation preparation.

The Task Force recommends that a spiritual retreat occur at the beginning and near the end of preparation. This can take the form of a Deanery event, visit to a monastery or retreat center, through mission work or a pilgrimage. It can be a time to leave other concerns behind and be open to God. The reason for including a retreat is to let the group experience yet another way of living in Christ and finding out where one can go for this kind of experience – building resources for the rest of their lives.

Keeping a journal is another means for spiritual growth and nourishment. Each of us learns and experiences the Holy in different ways. Tapping into the variety of prayer experiences through multiple intelligences (See Addendum H) will allow each person to learn more about themselves and develop life long practices.

Faith & Practice

A balance of “doing” and “being” is at the heart of baptismal living. The five promises at the end of the covenant are about how we live our faith in everyday life. By living according to those standards we become Christ’s people in the world. Being able to reflect theologically on the events of our lives and find God in them assist in putting faith our into practice. Participation in the sacramental life of the faith community, attentiveness to scripture and prayer, and having a sense of the presence of Jesus keeps us mission-focused. Diversity and anti-racism training, as well as stewardship education should be included. Being in community, we as Episcopalians have a connection with others that goes beyond our individual parishes. Each congregation needs to develop a program that both includes the elements listed above and meets the needs of its own community.

To assist in the integration of faith into daily practice, the Task Force suggests each candidate answer the following questions (adapted from the Diocese of Western Massachusetts’ guidelines) toward the end of the preparation process. (See the Appendix for additional suggestions)

1. What have you learned from your preparation that has been most important to you?
2. Who is Jesus in your life? How would you respond to His question, “Who do you say that I am?”
3. Why do you want to want to confirm your baptismal vows?
4. How do you plan to live as a mature and faithful Christian in the Church and in the world after you are Confirmed?

Episcopal Polity:

Being an Episcopalian involves understanding that we find authority for our lives in Scripture, Tradition and Reason. The ministries of the laity and clergy (bishops, priests, deacons) should be explored, as well as parish, diocesan and national governance. Representatives duly elected by the people hold decision-making authority in the Episcopal Church. Being conscious of what it means to be an Episcopalian in today’s world, to include the diocese, the entire Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion is a foundational issue to be discussed throughout a program of preparation.