

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION MODELS

"Unlocking the Promises" - A guideline for Confirmation preparation in the Diocese of Fredericton

"Our journey has come to an end and yet it's only just the beginning. We have a long voyage ahead of us. Be ambassadors of your faith, be proud to be who you are and to stand up for what you believe in, and, most importantly, let Jesus guide you in all you do for He will always light your way." From a Valedictorian address after Confirmation, see Appendix D.

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Credits

Objective:

By the time Confirmation takes place the candidate will see the ceremony as marking the beginning of a life process of continued growth into a deeper and deeper relationship with Christ within a faith community. He/she will be a well integrated member of a congregation who understands the giving of time, talent and treasure for the benefit of Church and community as an expression of the Christian life.

Key aspects of the programme:

- * It is designed for candidates between 11 and 18 years old.
- * It is expected to take 9 months to complete.
- * Options are given in order to meet the needs of the diversities within the diocese.

- * A mentor is assigned to each candidate, at the rector's discretion, to aid and encourage him/her in developing his or her faith.
- * The programme adopts a "formation versus information" approach with an emphasis on "process as well as content."
- * It is multi-faceted, using group discussion, community service and guidance for personal faith development.

Mentors

"... when Samuel declared his readiness to hear . . . it took the wisdom of a fellow traveller, Old Eli, to help Samuel make sense of what was happening to him, and to discern whose voice he heard; how there was no going back once he had heard the Word of the Lord; and how that Word changed his life forever." Barbara Brown-Taylor.

We are looking for the Eli's, Simeon's and Anna's in our congregations who can respond to those searching by sharing their faith and love of God.

Recognizing that clergy bring different gifts to this process, and that parishes vary, the following are recommendations regarding the mentor-ship programme to be used at the rector's discretion.

A mentor should exhibit the following qualities:

- * Be an active member of the Anglican faith community,
- * Have a mature and living faith, and be willing and able to share it with others, including the rector.
- * Be perceived to have a gift for aiding and encouraging a young person in developing his/her faith.
- * Have good listening skills, with the wisdom to respond appropriately to young people.
- * Like teenagers.
- * Be willing to be under the direction of and guided by the rector.

Qualifications of a mentor:

- * Be the same gender as the candidate.
- * Be outside the immediate family of the candidate, although they could be a godparent.

The rector 'mentors the mentor' by meeting with him/her monthly and acts as a resource.

It is recommended that the mentor meets with the candidate weekly from the start of the programme. The meeting place could be the student's home, or a public place

where the candidate feels safe. Journaling may be part of the programme as an aid to discussion.

Group activities also take place from time to time throughout the nine months. E.g. visits to a food bank, a community kitchen, a funeral home (discretion is advised), a seniors' home.

Visits to godparents or retreats could also be options.

Since confirmation is a community of faith project, it is appropriate that other members of the community assist in enabling some of these activities to take place.

Each parish should have a contingency plan prior to these sessions should a mentor become ill, or a relationship not work out.

Resources for Mentoring Programmes which are highly recommended by the Bishop's Task Force on Confirmation

1. "Keeping the Promise", Andrew Parker. A mentoring programme for Confirmation in the Episcopal Church. Morehouse Publishing.
2. "Making Disciples", William H. Willimon, Logos Publications.

Overview of Course

The course, "Unlocking the Promises," has a first session, followed by four sections, each one of which will comprise about one quarter of the course. They are:

1. Through Anglican Eyes and Ears - Learning the Basics about the Anglican Faith
2. How the Bible speaks to us.
3. Worship - Public and Private
4. Community Service.

These sections overlap to some extent, but this is seen as positive since it reinforces concepts and is helpful for the learner. The sections may run concurrently. Each section will be explained in more detail below.

First session

- * This should be attended by all candidates, their mentors and their parent(s).
- * A Declaration of Commitment should be signed by each candidate, his/her mentor and parent(s). (see Appendix C)
- * The Confirmation Requirements should be discussed. (see Appendix A)

Valedictorian

This is something to be considered for Confirmation Day. A sample Valedictorian address may be found in Appendix D.

SECTION 1

Through Anglican Eyes and Ears

Learning the Basics about the Anglican Faith from an Anglican perspective

Rationale:

In this our secular culture, Christian illiteracy is pervasive, so it is very important for us to equip our young people with an understanding of their Anglican Church. This includes Doctrine, Church History and the Sacraments.

Recommended Resources:

The standard/norm is the Book of Common Prayer Catechism. However, the following are highly recommended:

- * St. Mary's Sunday School Curriculum - The "Catechism" - the Rev. Dr. Barry Craig.
- * "This is our Faith" - Redemptorist Publications
- * "This is our Faith" (CDN) - the Ven. Ian Stuchbery, ABC, Toronto.
- * "I will with God's help" Teacher's guide and Student work book - the Rev. Mary Lee Wile, Living the Good News, Denver, Colorado.
- * "Your Confirmation" - John Stott
- * "Faith Confirmed" - Peter Jackson & Chris Wright, SPCK, London
- * The Creed - J.I. Packer.
- * Appropriate parts of the Episcopal Children's Sunday School programme (Intermediate level), Morehouse Group.

SECTION 2

How the Bible Speaks to Us

Rationale:

We need our young people to be informed and moulded by the Biblical text, knowing the great stories of our faith, and the lessons derived from them, and beginning to understand how to apply this to situations in their lives.

Recommended Resources:

A Biblical text easily understood by the young people (e.g. youth study bibles).

- * Youth alpha

- * "Abingdon's Bible Handbook for Young Readers" - Richard and Christine Deverell. This book is currently out of print, but it is worth trying to get hold of a copy or two.
- * "Covenant Time" - Episcopal Children's Programme.
- * "Cross Train" -Kevin Johnson, Bethany House Publishers, Bloomington, Min.
- * "Daily Life at the Time of Jesus" - Miriam Feinberg Vamosh
- * "Discovering the Bible" - Video kit by the Christian History Institute (Gateway Films) Available on loan from the Resource Centre.
- * "Get Acquainted with your Bible" - Gary L. Ball-Kilbourne, Abingdon Press.
- * "The Student Bible Atlas" - Tim Dowley
- * "The Student Guide to People of the Bible" - Robert Backhouse
- * "12 Stories You and Your Children Need to Know" - Bishop Hockin
- * Young Reader's Bible Dictionary, revised edition - 2000, Abingdon Press

Character studies of people in the Bible are also helpful, e.g. David, Moses, Mary and Martha - strengths and weaknesses. Are they "good role models" In what way?

The Appendix "My Model Adult" is provided so that young people may think of this in a modern context.

SECTION 3

Worship - Public and Private

This includes:

- * The Seasons (Church Calendar)
- * The Sacraments
- * The Offices
- * The Lord's Prayer
- * The Apostle's Creed (when used in worship as opposed to doctrine).

Rationale:

We need to cultivate young people who have a spiritual practice and are comfortable with it. They need to learn to talk to God and hear his word. They should experience the forms of worship to which God has called us, including corporate response and thanksgiving.

This section is an experiential component over the nine months of the programme.

Other elements of this section should include:

- * Attendance at, and involvement in, Sunday worship
- * The mentor's guidance and discipline in worship
- * The starting and ending of each session, whether with the mentor or in a group, with prayer.

- * Experience with other denominations and Anglican churches which are different from the one usually attended.
- * The opportunity to take leadership and develop aspects of a worship service, e.g. intercessions.

Further, the worshipping community should:

- * Pray for the candidates, e.g. there could be prayer sponsors from the congregation.
- * Support the candidates' activities
- * Provide them with refreshments as needed
- * Provide speakers, e.g. Altar Guild, Vestry, Music Ministry, and share stories of faith as members of the work place.

Music

This is an important aid to worship. Young people should experience different musical forms, e.g. orthodox, South African, Taize, modern as well as traditional. This can be accomplished through CDs and tapes, as well as by attending different worship events.

Private worship

The mentor should model and discuss with the candidate the value of a daily quiet time, and encourage daily reading of the Bible and meditation.

Candidates should also be taught that private prayer can happen anywhere and any time.

Recommended Resources:

- * "I will with God's help" - Mary Lee Wile, see above.
- * Episcopal Children's Curriculum
- * "Keeping the Promise" - Andrew Parker
- * Prayer Books, ours and others.
- * Examples of Aboriginal Christian worship.

SECTION 4

Community Service

Rationale:

We need to help young people to nurture thankful hearts and to become better ambassadors of the Gospel by learning to live out their Christian responsibilities. We would like them to discover the joy of giving and to see stewardship as gifts of time, talent and treasure in thanksgiving to God.

Examples of community service which might be employed:

- * Pairing up a candidate with a shut-in/senior

- * Working at a food bank
- * Helping with chores
- * Environmental activities
- * Making soup for a "soup kitchen"
- * Making Christmas "shoe boxes"
- * Learning about, and helping with, a PWRDF project
- * Reading to younger children
- * Sharing toys

Other activities

1. The newspaper might be used to discuss world events from a Christian perspective.
2. A visit to a funeral home might be made if the candidates are mature enough. This could lead to a discussion of our role as Christians in the sorrow of others, and a look at issues of death and resurrection.
3. Mentors should share life situations and social concerns which are raised by young people, especially if they are affecting them in a negative way, and try to teach them how a Christian might respond in a given situation.
4. A meaningful and productive "rule of life" should be developed.

Recommended Resources:

- * "Christians who changed the world" - Clare Richards. About 60 brief biographies, with illustrations, of Christians who are examples of faith in action. They are grouped under the headings prayer, poverty, teaching, healing, equality, justice, peace, take up your cross, forgiveness and leaders, and include such people as the apostles Peter and Paul, John Wesley, Mother Theresa, Julian of Norwich. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Brother Roger of Taize.
- * "I will with God's help" - Mary Lee Wyle, especially the course introduction.
- * A Volunteer Centre
- * Lutheran Confirmation programmes listed below.

General Resources

- * Intermediate level "Newspapers" from the Episcopal Sunday School Curriculum (e.g. Community Times).
- * "Keeping the Promise" - Andrew Parker
- * "Making Disciples" - William Willimon
- * Journey to Adulthood - a three year Episcopal programme - leaders must be trained to be a part of this programme.
- * Youth Emmaus - a 15 week programme similar in format to the nurture segment of the adult Emmaus series, but designed for 11 - 16 year olds. It is suggested that the course be taught in three 5 week sessions of 60 - 90 minutes each. The sessions are What Christians Believe, How Christians Grow and Living the Christian Life. There is a supplementary handout which ties

session 10 (Becoming a Christian - stand up and be counted) with Anglican confirmation.

Lutheran Resources

- * Creative Confirmation - Augsburg Fortress
- * MAP - Ministry to Adolescents Programme - Openbook Publishers
- * Living in Grace - Confirmation Series - Augsburg Fortress
- * Unpublished Programme:
MG - JAM (Millennium Generation - Jesus and Me), a 2-3 year programme piloted at St. James the Less which has all of these components, stressing community involvement and prayer (not only for the candidate but also as a means of the community supporting the candidates). In the Biblical section it develops character through analysis of people in the Bible (e.g. David). This could probably be replaced by a combination of the following: one of the mentoring programmes, Youth Alpha and "I Will with God's Help.

Appendix A Confirmation Requirements

Attendance at ALL group activities and outings (with parent's permission).

Attendance at all sessions with your Mentor

Attendance at ALL 11 a.m. Sunday Services starting with _____, 20__, and other "special" services as required.

Any "homework" which is given during the course must be completed.

Parents are asked to support their children by attending Sunday Services and any other activities in which your children are participating.

Our Bishop requires a letter addressed to him prior to Confirmation, stating why you feel called to Confirmation in the Anglican Church. This will be done in part with the help of your mentor.

Appendix B

My Model Adult

IDEAL AGE	ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS Fellowship Worship Discovery Service
IDEAL GENDER	
IDEAL BACKGROUND	
IDEAL PERSONAL QUALITIES	
HOBBIES/INTERESTS	
FREQUENCY OF MEETING	OTHER THOUGHTS OR IDEAS
	MY NAME

Appendix C
Declaration of Commitment

I promise to fulfil my responsibilities as part of this confirmation process. I promise to meet regularly with my mentor, and to complete, to the best of my ability, all the requirements in order that I may grow in the knowledge and love of God.

I am not committing to the rite of confirmation at this point. I will make this decision on the basis of prayer, my experience with the confirmation process, and discussion with my mentor, parents and clergy.

Signature of Confirmand

Parent or Guardian

Appendix D
Valedictorian Address

Your Grace Archbishop Hutchinson, Father Marc, Randy, invited guests, family members, members of the parish, and fellow confirmees,

Today I would like to speak to you about what this confirmation means to me and my fellow confirmees; as well as some of the preparation that we have gone through to reach this point today.

It was June, the Sunday of our outdoor service and the 11 of us wandered into the church for what would be the first of many Sunday meetings. We talked about confirmation, what we would be doing and ultimately that it was our choice to decide whether or not to be confirmed. Every Sunday from that week on we met and discussed many topics ranging from the sacraments to what it means to be an Anglican to being a follower of Christ. During the summer break we had a project to complete about how God is present in our lives. Through our pictures, our poems, our paintings and our collages, our heart felt words and passages from the Bible we did just that.

We also had two field trips throughout our confirmation classes. Our first one was to a cathedral. We attended a service there and many of us were in awe of their choir but amidst the beautiful stained glass windows and wooden carved ceilings there

was a homeless man sleeping in one of the pews. This made us think about what we were thankful for, about what God had given us: a home, a warm place to sleep at night, food, clothes on our back and so many other blessings.

Our second trip was to a funeral home. Many of us have lost a loved one, a family member, a friend and going to the funeral home was probably the most difficult part of our confirmation class. But we learned that amongst sorrow and pain and suffering, God will always be there for us.

And our final part of confirmation class took place yesterday at our vigil. We prayed, sang, reflected and prepared for today.

One thing I cannot emphasize enough is that each and every one of us who were confirmed here today was confirmed because they wanted to be. Not because we felt pressured by our family or by society. But because we wanted to strengthen our commitment to God and show our community we are proud to stand up for what we believe in.

I would like to thank on behalf of the entire confirmation class:

Firstly, the Archbishop who graciously came to confirm us today.

Father Marc and Randy for their time and patience with us while they lead our confirmation classes.

The Parish of St. Mike's for their continual prayer.

And a big thank you to our family and friends who came to share this special day with us and who have supported us throughout our journey to becoming closer to God.

And now, Ashley, Andrea, Michael, Jessica, Paul, Marc, James, Jeremy, Auleen and Scott, our journey has come to an end and yet it's only just the beginning. We have a long voyage ahead of us Be ambassadors of your faith, be proud to be who you are and to stand up for what you believe in and most importantly let Jesus guide you in all you do for He will always light your way.

As it says in first Timothy, 4: 12 & 13:

" Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love and in purity. Until I come, devout yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."

God Bless you all,

Thank you

Emma Ho-Wo-Cheong

Credits

The Confirmation Task Force was initiated by Bishop William Hockin following the Clergy Conference of August 2001, at which the Rev. Dr. James Houston spoke regarding Didache versus Catechesis. The following people accepted the challenge of working on the new format: the Rev. Robyn Cuming, the Rev. Capt. David Edwards, the Rev. Peter Gillies, the Rev. Don Hamilton, and the Ven. Douglas Patstone.

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