

CONFIRMATION

1. Confirmation shall continue to be a significant rite. Through the episcopal laying on of hands with prayer, a baptized person who has been catechised and nurtured at the Eucharist, is strengthened in making an affirmation of faith accompanied by a responsible commitment to discipleship.
2. Preparation for Confirmation should focus on the nature of one's relationship to God in Christ and on the Church as the Body of Christ at work in the world. The candidate should be challenged to commit his/her life to Christ and to make a decision about his/her active participation in that spiritual fellowship.
3. The rite itself presents the candidate with the opportunity to make their personal commitment to Christ and Christian service and to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for the ministry of the baptized.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

The Anglican Church practices infant baptism, but does so with an emphasis upon Christian nurture by parish and family. This involves a child from the beginning within Christ and His Church. The admittance of children to Communion encourages this.

Jesus' great commission says, preach, baptize and teach (Matt. 28:18-20). The promotion of Christian Education programmes for all ages is a diocesan goal. As baptized children become communicants, it will be especially important for the parish to promote programmes for young persons between the ages of 13 and 19. Care must be taken to help young people move towards an "adult owned faith" which can be expressed in a mature affirmation of faith and commitment to service in the Rite of Confirmation. There is a real need for continuing education of adults for growth in faith and ministry.

There are at least two periods of spiritual commitment. Historically Confirmation occurred at age 12, which at the time of Cranmer was considered to be an adult, or at the age of discretion. Today many more adults come for Confirmation. A greater emphasis should be made to encourage persons to reaffirm their vows. This could be celebrated at a bishop's visitation to a parish when parishioners come for a laying on of hands for blessing. Some persons may wish to express their reaffirmation of faith even though they may not have attended classes. They should be followed up for pastoral reasons. I would urge priests and parishes to develop and offer programmes for Christian formation in evangelism, discipleship, stewardship, Bible study, faith development and spiritual discipline.

Issued 15 March 1995