

Start the Conversation: Confirmation

The subject of Confirmation has been a passionate issue for many in The Episcopal Church in recent years—for bishops, clergy, parents, and educators. The Standing Commission on Ministry Development has proposed the following resolution to the 78th General Convention (2015):

A080: Affirm Confirmation as Formation

Resolved, the House of ____ concurring, recognizing that confirmation offers a distinct and valuable opportunity for Christian formation, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$43,500 to the Office of Formation and Congregational Development to convene representatives from 10 dioceses, including a bishop and two appointed leaders, to engage in intentional conversation with the goal of strengthening and articulating best practices around confirmation; and be it further

Resolved, That these gatherings address the significance of confirmation as a creative opportunity for the reaffirmation of baptismal vows in the life of The Episcopal Church and report back to the 79th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That all dioceses engage in similar conversations on confirmation with attention to diverse cultures and their contexts, and report back to the Office of Formation and Congregational Development on their findings.

Explanation

As stated in the Book of Common Prayer [p.412], “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 public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop.”

Additionally, the second Mark of Mission calls us to teach, baptize, and nurture people in their journey of faith. Confirmation is an important step in that journey for youth and adults.

Among Christian traditions, the Episcopal Church recognizes a unique role of bishops in confirmation. The bishops on this Standing Commission have led us in deep conversation about confirmation and encourage the House of Bishops to continue the dialogue

The following resources are commended to promote conversation on confirmation, including *Signed, Sealed, Delivered: Theologies of Confirmation for the 21st Century* (Morehouse Publishing, 2014), which includes a process for congregational conversation about confirmation — the Lilly funded ecumenical study on youth confirmation called The Confirmation Project (<http://theconfirmationproject.com>), as well as Episcopal resources from dioceses, schools, and congregations.

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Church Publishing (www.churchpublishing.org) offers many resources for congregational study about the history and theology of confirmation as well as programs and books that can be used in the preparation of candidates for confirmation (youth and adults) and the renewal of baptismal vows.

Start the Conversation as a Church Community

Meyers, Ruth A. *Continuing the Reformation: Re-Visioning Baptism in the Episcopal Church* (2000) Documents the church's developing focus on baptism within the context of the liturgical movement, the emerging understanding of the Eucharist, prayer book revision, and the confirmation dilemma. Drawing on historical and contemporary sources, a baptismal ecclesiology emerges from these events that have enabled people to accept a radically different initiatory pattern in the church. ISBN-13: 978-0-89869-195-5

Pearson, Sharon Ely. *Signed, Sealed, Delivered: Theologies of Confirmation for the 21st Century* (2014) Offers an overview of the history of the rite of confirmation since the early church followed by essays in which bishops, clergy, and educators share their theologies and best practices. Included is a process for engaging small groups in a discussion about confirmation. ISBN: 9780819228918

Turrell, James F. *Celebrating the Rites of Initiation: A Practical Ceremonial Guide for Clergy and Other Liturgical Ministries* (2013) Includes history, theology and practical information around issues of baptism and confirmation. ISBN-13: 978-0-89869-875-6

Webber, Christopher L. *User's Guide to Baptism and Confirmation* (2006) This guide will help readers to understand and appreciate Baptism and Confirmation, and the central role they play in the lives of Christians. Provided here is an introduction to the Baptismal Covenant, as well as a step-by-step guide through the rites of both sacraments. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2214-5

For Youth (teen) Confirmation Preparation:

Gamber, Jenifer. *My Faith, My Life: A Teen's Guide to the Episcopal Church (revised edition)* (2014) For teen study and confirmation preparation, this book can serve as a curriculum for helping teens discover Scripture, church history, sacraments, the meaning and practice of prayer, and what ministry means in the lives of real teens today. A framework for small-group gatherings for each chapter is included. The Five Marks of Mission and what it means to be a disciple of Christ is a focus, which also models student-centered learning as opposed to teacher driven instruction. ISBN-13: 9780819229625 www.myfaithmylife.org

Gamber, Jenifer. *My Faith, My Life: Leader's Guide* (2014) Companion to the book, leaders can create short, intermediate, and longer programs, including confirmation sequences of six, nine, or twelve-sessions, a retreat or similar short program, or a longer study. Filled with prayers to begin and end each session, plus a variety of activities that tap into multiple learning styles and ways to interact with the congregation, and how to select, train, and support mentors, as well as how leaders can strengthen their own spiritual life. ISBN-13: 9780819229649

Gamber, Jenifer and Sharon Ely Pearson. *Call on Me: A Prayer Book for Young People* (2012) This prayer book designed for teens draws on the Book of Common Prayer, the Bible, and events that occur in their daily lives. This creative compilation of over 100 original prayers offers simple and insightful instruction about prayer. It offers a wealth of diverse prayers on all manner of topics from prayers for the days of the week, to seasons of the year. Youth will find prayers to celebrate personal achievements and to address obstacles to grace and faith. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2764-5 www.episcopalprayer.org

The Episcopal Handbook, revised edition (2015) Information about the Episcopal ethos with complete accessibility and a certain amount of whimsy, brief descriptions of worship, beliefs, sacraments, the bible, sections on church governance, the origins of religious belief, and a capsule summary of church history, glossary, and more. ISBN: 978-0-8192-2956-4

Packard, Brooke H. *When a Bishop Comes to Visit: An Activity Book for All Ages* (2014) With black and white illustrations, this interactive book for children and families describes the ministry of a bishop, including symbols and apparel, in preparation for the visit and worship. Confirmands will find this new book particularly helpful as it walks them through the liturgy of Confirmation. During the actual Confirmation rite, children will have a guide to follow along during the service, making this book serve multiple purposes for young and old alike. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2915-1

Pearson, Sharon Ely and Bronwyn Clark Skov editors. *Marked for Mission: Youth in Action* (2014) Youth seek ways to put their faith into action and claim their “power,” which is a hallmark of the millennial generation according to recent research. This book offers reflections and prayers to help young people do just that—to live out their faith at home, church, community, and beyond. It specifically addresses Episcopal identity for emerging adults, ages 15-25. ISBN-13: 9780819229366

Sidebotham, Jay. *The Old Testament from A-Z: A Spirited Romp through the Hebrew Scriptures* (2005) Have some fun and learn about the stories and characters of the Old Testament at the same time through a humorous approach to Hebrew Scripture that is as educational as it is entertaining. Cartoons, along with short and funny poems, plus references to relevant Bible passages. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2210-7 Also: *The New Testament from A-Z: A Spirited Romp through the Christian Scriptures* (2007) ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2274-9

Silcox, Felicia. *What Did Jesus DO All Day? Discovering the Teen Jesus* (2013) Like us, Jesus’ contemporaries worked and studied hard, worshipped in community, and observed holidays with family and friends. Like us, they struggled with temptation and sin, failure and loss, political upheaval and war, betrayal and violence, sickness and death. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2793-5

Wile, Mary Lee. *I Will, With God’s Help: Episcopal Confirmation for Youth and Adults* (2000) The easily-adapted format works for a traditional six- to twelve-week program, at a contemporary Confirmation retreat or conference, or as a sacramental supplement to other two- to three-year programs. Built entirely on the Baptismal Covenant from The Book of Common Prayer, it offers seekers a solid reflection on Episcopal heritage and belief, together with the riches of Episcopal liturgy and prayer. Accompanying books include a *Journal for Youth*, a *Journal for Adults*, and a *Mentor Guide* (by Linda Nichols) ISBN-13: 978-1-8891-0873-5

For Adult Confirmation, Reaffirmation, and Reception

Gamber, Jenifer with Bill Lewellis. *Your Faith, Your Life: An Invitation to the Episcopal Church* (2009) unpacks the Episcopal Church’s language of worship, theology, church structure, and sacraments, so that newcomers will have the vocabulary and framework to share their beliefs and practices, explore the Bible, understand prayer and discern their own ministry within the church. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2321-0 Study guide:

www.churchpublishing.org/media/custom/Study%20Guides/YFYL_Leader_Guide.pdf

Law, Eric H.F. and Stephanie Spellers. *The Episcopal Way: Church's Teachings for a Changing World, Volume 1* (2014) Calls for a return to Episcopal basics and how we can faithfully engage a changing world as Episcopalians following Jesus and being rooted in our Christian beliefs. ISBN-13: 9780819229601 Study Guide:

www.churchpublishing.org/media/custom/Study%20Guides/Episcopal%20Way%20Study%20Guide_final.pdf

Syndor, William. *Looking at the Episcopal Church* (1990) Topics covered include the church's symbols, customs, and practices, as well as its history, creeds, sacraments, and mission. The book also includes a leader's guide in the appendix to assist in conducting confirmation instruction. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-1279-5

Tammany, Klara. *Living Water: Baptism as a Way of Life*. (2002) Eight group sessions focus repeatedly on water, first as a natural element necessary to life, then as a symbolic element necessary to spirituality. Gradually, through prayer, song, scripture, silence, poetry, visual arts, storytelling, group discussion, and personal reflection, water (as baptismal element) gains ascendancy building upon the Baptismal promises. ISBN-13: 978-0-89869-362-1

Westerhoff, John H. with Sharon Ely Pearson. *A People Called Episcopalians: A Brief Introduction to Our Way of Life* (revised edition) (2014) This concise booklet explores five main areas of Episcopal life: identity, authority, spirituality, temperament, and polity. Offering a great introduction to the Episcopal way in readable prose for any newcomer or seeker in the Episcopal Church who may wonder what makes Episcopalians different than Roman Catholics or other Protestant denominations. ISBN-13: 9780819231888

Westerhoff, John H. *Living as a Prayer Book People* (2004) A brief history of the Book of Common Prayer and the ways in which it shapes us as pilgrim and prayerful people. How Episcopalians live into their baptism, live a Eucharistic and reconciling life, as well as a life of wholeness and health are explored in detail. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-1950-3

Episcopal 101 for Adults

Black, Vicki K. and Peter Wenner. *Welcome to the Bible* (2007) The texts and doctrines of the Bible are embedded in The Episcopal Church's prayers, liturgies, and creeds. Making that knowledge explicit and placing it in context can open the way for further study. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2236-7

Black, Vicki K. *Welcome to the Book of Common Prayer* (2005) Navigate the currents of Anglican liturgy and discover its richness and beauty using the Book of Common Prayer, from where to find the Sunday collect to how to pray the Daily Office. More than a how-to, it offers history and background that help make the prayer book a more meaningful part of the worship life of individuals and congregations. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2130-8 Study Guide:

www.churchpublishing.org/media/221309/WelcometotheBookofCommonPrayer-DiscussionQuestions.pdf

Black, Vicki K. *Welcome to the Church Year: An Introduction to the Seasons of the Episcopal Church* (2004) Introduces readers to the traditions of the Church seasons and explains why we do what we do. It does more than offer interesting trivia about church vestments and pageantry, but helps readers participate in the liturgies of the Church year in a deeper, more meaningful way. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-1966-4 Study guide: www.churchpublishing.org/media/WECHYE/WelcometotheChurchYear-DiscussionQuestions.pdf

Doyle, C. Andrew. *Unabashedly Episcopalian: Proclaiming the Good News of the Episcopal Church* (2012) Calls Episcopalians to wake up to the church's unique gifts and story, and equips them to share that witness in their neighborhoods and out in the world. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2808-6 Spanish edition (2015): ISBN-13: 9780819229861

Markham, Ian and C.K. Robertson. *Episcopal Questions, Episcopal Answers: Exploring Christian Faith* (2014) Sample questions explored: What do Episcopalians believe about the Bible? Why do Episcopalians practice infant baptism? Why does God permit evil and suffering? What are the sacraments of the Episcopal Church? Is it acceptable for a Bishop to question the Virgin Birth? Why is the Prayer Book so important to Episcopalians? What is the relationship between the Prayer Book and the Bible? What is the Anglican Communion? How did the Episcopal Church come to be? How are decisions made in the Episcopal Church? ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2309-8

Webber, Christopher L. *Welcome to the Episcopal Church: An Introduction to Its History, Faith, and Worship* (1999) An introduction to the history, polity, spirituality, worship, and outreach of the Episcopal Church written in an easy-to-read conversational tone. Includes study questions at the end of each chapter, making it a resource for adult study and inquirers' classes. ISBN-13: 978-08192-1820-9

Webber, Christopher L. *Welcome to Sunday: An Introduction to Worship in the Episcopal Church* (2002) Explains the postures, the Christian year, the colors we use during various seasons, and all the elements in the service of the Eucharist. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-1915-2

Wells, Samuel. *What Episcopalians Believe: An Introduction* (2011) Includes: The Faith—outlining notions of Trinity, Jesus, Israel, Holy Spirit, Church, Creation, Kingdom, and salvation. Sources of the Faith—Scripture, tradition, and reason. The Order of the Faith—Worship, Ministry, Mission. The Character of the Faith—English legacies, American dreams, Global dimensions. Study guide included by Sharon Ely Pearson ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2310-4

Zscheile, Dwight J. *People of the Way: Renewing Episcopal Identity* (2012) Draws on multiple streams of Anglican thought and practice, plus contemporary experience to craft a vision for mission that addresses the church's post-establishment, post-colonial context. With stories, practices and concrete illustrations, readers can re-envision what it means to be Anglican in America today. ISBN-13: 978-0-8192-2090-5 Study guide: www.churchpublishing.org/media/custom/Study%20Guides/People%20of%20the%20Way%20-%20Questions%20for%20Discussion.pdf