



Episcopal Diocese **of Albany, New York**

Confirmation Curriculum Guide

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Section 1

Introduction

Welcome to the Diocese of Albany Confirmation Curriculum. This curriculum is meant to guide parishes preparing young adults for the sacrament of Confirmation. In this introduction, two objectives are presented. First, we present the Diocesan goal for anyone who is preparing to be confirmed. Second, we present the content and structure of this specific curriculum.

The Diocese of Albany’s primary goal for those being confirmed is that they are able to make a mature profession of faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He, Jesus, came to this earth to make possible the restoration of our relationship with God through His life, death, resurrection and ascension. Beyond this essential goal, the Diocese of Albany seeks to equip people to be disciples, or said differently, to answer the question, “How then do we live?” This equipping is rooted in an understanding of God’s Word, God’s Church, God’s Sacraments, the foundations of our faith such as the Creed and finally, in our Anglican heritage. The curriculum has sought to present foundational truths over broad information. In fact, the design of this curriculum specifically provides an opportunity for “post-Confirmation” formation and discipleship. (Lessons and resources for continued formation will be added to the program over time.)

The content and structure of the curriculum is aimed at young adults. Each lesson will have:

- Scripture Verse (Memory verse)
- Lesson Goal and Objectives
- Materials Needed for Lesson
- Introduction and Teacher Background Information
- Opening Prayer
- Intro-Activity
- Lesson Details
- Reflection
- Take-home Activities
- Closing Prayer
- Scripture References

We have also tried to provide additional resources which will allow the teacher to tailor the lesson to their group based on age and other factors. (*See Planning and Preparation section of this guide. Other ideas are included within lessons.*)

Thank you for taking the time to read this section and for being willing to work with the young adults of our diocese. May God bless you and sustain you.

Section 2

Foundations of Faith

Foundations of Faith

The contents of this curriculum are rooted in these foundations:

1. That there is a God, and God has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through His Holy Word (The Holy Bible), most fully revealing Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.
2. That God's creative power acts in the universe. We acknowledge that God blessed humankind with an intimate relationship with Himself and with the responsibility for God's created order, but we have rebelled, and we continue to rebel, against God.
3. Therefore, God in His infinite mercy sent His only Son Jesus Christ to rescue us and save us by His death on the cross and His resurrection in order to restore our broken relationship with Him.
4. We know this through the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible, which contain all things necessary for salvation.
5. The Bible reveals that our way back to God is through a relationship with His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ.
6. This relationship is one that each person must choose, and as that decision is made, God sends His Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of those who are now his new creations, and through the sacrament of Baptism we are adopted into God's family as his children.
7. As a new creation, we each seek to follow the Risen Christ, to be His disciples, and to live as God has instructed us in His Holy Word. We do this not just as individuals, but as members of the Body of Christ which is His Church.
8. As members of the Body, we gather to devote ourselves to the Scriptures, to prayer, to fellowship, and to the celebration of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) together. (Acts 2:42-47) We recognize that to love Jesus is to obey Him (John 14).
9. We treasure our membership in his Body, which is the universal church that has guarded and passed on the faith through the ages. We understand the Apostle's Creed to be our Baptismal profession and the Nicene Creed to be a sufficient statement of our universal Christian faith.
10. We value that we are members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church that through the ages has sought to enable people to live out their faith. As such we value that godly Bishops have guarded this faith for centuries.
11. Finally, in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and in response to His Love, we proclaim Him to others, loving them and inviting them into a relationship with God through His Son.

Section 3

Confirmation Requirements

Minimum Requirements

To be confirmed in the Episcopal Diocese of Albany you must meet the following requirements.

- Must be a baptized Christian
- Must be at least 13 years old
- Must write a letter to the Bishop (see below)
- The Episcopal Diocese of Albany Confirmation Curriculum is highly recommended as the curriculum used to teach our young people. If a Rector/Vicar chooses not to use this curriculum then he/she will need to review with the Bishop the method of preparation and how the foundations of our faith were carried out with the confirmands.

Suggested Requirements

Every parish has different circumstances, so therefore we have a list of suggested requirements for each parish to add if they wish.

- Sponsors/mentors
- Community service
- Serve on the altar
- Learning about a ministry of your parish

Letter to the Bishop

The purpose of the letter to the Bishop is to help the Bishop get to know the confirmands before his arrival at the service. The letter also provides a way for the confirmands to show they have thought through their faith, and are able in their own words explain their faith and why they want to be confirmed.

The letters do not need to be long and they do not need to be typed, but Confirmands need to write about these things:

1. Write a little about your faith journey and about your faith in Jesus Christ as your savior.
2. Write about a mission trip you have taken or a ministry at your church in which you have been involved and why it has been meaningful to your life of faith.
3. Write about your on-going call to be a member of the Body of Christ—what new ministry will you do in your church, or what ongoing ministry will you continue?

Preferably, the Bishop should receive the letters ahead of time. They can be mailed to the Bishop at the diocesan office:

*The Right Reverend William H. Love
68 South Swan St.
Albany, NY 12210*

Section 4

Planning and Preparation

* Much of this section is borrowed from the Confirmation Handbook by the Church of Ireland

Leadership Considerations

The confirmation course should have **at least 2 leaders** involved, preferably **one male and one female**. This should not just be about keeping recommended leader - young people ratios but also about delivering the course more effectively. A lay leader will have certain strengths and advantages over a clergy person and vice-versa. Good leadership here is about utilizing the positives of having different leaders involved and showing the young people that there are other adults in the church that regard their preparation as important.

Safeguarding God's Children

Every confirmation leader must take the "Safeguarding God's Children" course offered by the Episcopal Diocese of Albany.

Duration of the Course

The Episcopal Diocese of Albany Confirmation Course is divided into **27 lessons**. If you do one lesson every week then it should span approximately **7 months**; if you do three lessons a month and use one Sunday for an activity or service project, it will take **9 months** or **one full academic year** from September through June.

Session Length

With busy family lives and parish schedules it can be tempting to run a confirmation course for a quick half an hour just before or after church. However it is extremely difficult for a young person to become engaged in learning in so short a time frame (even schools, which have the advantage of formalized structures, are starting to extend class length). To allow for a fuller learning experienced of fun, activity, teaching, discussion and questions you will need to have a session that lasts **in the region of 1 hour**.

Incorporating fun!

The course has to be enjoyable and engaging. However this doesn't mean that it is full of jokes and neither does it mean watering down the seriousness of the subject matter. Young people are looking for experiences that are real, relevant, interesting and joyful—a relationship with God certainly embodies all these things and more.

In addition you should consider fun activities and trips out with the group. These will really help the group to bond with each other and with the leaders. Get parents to help you with rides and chaperoning and arrange bowling, movies, ice-skating, food or whatever the group comes up with as long as it is affordable!

Communicating the material

Learning styles and how to meet them

Often it is assumed that the reason so much of youth work is about games, activities, and visuals is that young people have short attention spans and need to be ‘entertained’ as they are taught. While it is true that young people can have short attention spans (as can adults) the reason for presenting teaching in a variety of ways is that people learn in a variety of ways. Therefore a Confirmation Group that presents its teaching in the form of a sermon will only be effective with those young people that learn best through information that is spoken. There are many ways to describe learning styles but four of the main ones can be categorized under the acronym V.A.R.K. Bear in mind also that there is always some overlap between categories.

Visual (V): This is a learning preference for presenting information in the form of pictures, maps, diagrams, charts and other graphics. It does not include movies, DVD’s or PowerPoints. It could include a map of the Holy Land, a diagram of the Trinity, a date line of Bible history and so on.

Auditory (A): This is a preference for information that is ‘heard or spoken’. People with this style learn best from lectures, discussion, sermons, email and tutorials. It can also include talking out loud as well as talking to yourself. Often people with this preference want to sort things out by speaking, rather than sorting things out by seeing. It could include discussion groups, a main talk and a question time.

Read / Write (R): This is a preference for information displayed as words, reading and writing in all its forms. People with this style learn well from words displayed on PowerPoint, handouts, lists, quotations and the internet. It could also include reading from Bible passages, reading ‘homework’ and giving books.

Kinesthetic (K): This is a preference for information that helps the learner make a connection to reality through experience, examples, practice or stimulation. It includes demonstrations, simulations, videos and movies of ‘real’ things as well as case studies, practice and applications. These learners are always placing information into their own world and trying to make sense of it. It could include testimony, movie clips, a walk around the church and practice at saying the Creed.

Practical steps in running a class

Have your material prepared: Spend 10 -15 minutes ahead of time—preferably the day or week before--making sure that you know what lesson you are delivering at the session and check that you have all the suitable materials with you.

Meet early: Have a quick meeting with your other leader(s) 15 minutes before the students are due to arrive to be clear about jobs and roles and to pray for people before they arrive.

Room set up: Set the room up in an informal setting. A simple example is to have the chairs arranged in a circle or semi circle and not in rows. The leaders should be part of the circle or, if in a semi circle, one should be in the middle facing the candidates while the other leaders should be at the edge of the semi circle. You should not be sitting behind a desk. If you have any materials or books they can look at when they get there, it's helpful to begin engaging them as soon as they get there, especially if they arrive early and there is no other young person there.

Tips in getting young people to participate

Even if the course is well designed and you have prepared the session well there will be times when it is extremely hard to get the young people to participate (especially at the start). Below is a list of some suggestions that should help you get young people to participate more in the group.

Games and activities: The more games that you play the faster the group will start to get to know each other and you, and the more quickly they start to participate. It is especially important to make sure that games and activities make everyone feel included.

Split into groups: Young people will rarely talk in front of others that they don't know and especially in front of clergy. However if they are put into small groups of 2-4 and asked to get some answers and then report to the main group, it is much easier to get them to participate.

Section 5

Lesson Topics

1. Introduction: What is Confirmation and what does it mean to be confirmed?
2. God the Creator
3. God and His Holy Word
4. Trinity: Three Persons in One God
5. Jesus: Who does He say He is?
6. Jesus: God comes to earth
7. Jesus: Savior of the world
8. The Holy Spirit: The Person, the Gift and the Work of the Spirit in the World
9. Heart Transformation: Connected to God through the His Spirit
10. Origins of Sin
11. Sin in our Lives: Turning Away from God
12. Cross and Salvation
13. Choosing Jesus for Ourselves
14. The Church as the Body of Christ
15. Holy Scriptures: God Reveals Himself to His People
16. Digging into The Holy Scriptures to Mine God's Message
17. The Creeds: Apostle's and Nicene Creeds
18. The Book of Common Prayer: As we pray, so we believe
19. Sacraments: An Overview
20. Baptism and Confirmation
21. Holy Communion: Thanksgiving every Sunday
22. History of the Christian Church
23. The Episcopal and Anglican Communion: We are part of a worldwide family
24. Prayer
25. The Great Commission and Great Commandment
26. Evangelism: Taking Jesus on the Road
27. Living your Faith: What can I do to live a genuinely Christian life?

Section 6

Teacher Resources

Ministry and Media

<http://www.ministryandmedia.com/>

Reviews of movies and discussion starters for youth leaders.

EGAD! Ideas

<http://www.egadideas.com/>

Everything for youth ministry like games, bible study & prayer, children sermons, fundraising, mission events, retreats and programs.

Youth Ministry.com

<http://www.youthministry.com/>

From the makers of Group magazine and Simply Youth Ministry. A website full of articles for youth leaders and resources. Also some curriculum freebies.

Simply Youth Ministry

<http://www.simplyyouthministry.com/>

Purchase books and curriculums for youth ministry.

The Source for Youth Ministry

<http://www.thesource4ym.com/>

Thousands of online resources for youth ministers for free, yes I said free!

Youth Specialties

<http://www.youthspecialties.com/>

A good site with plenty of resources for those involved in Youth Ministry, statistics, interesting articles, and useful helps.

Pastor 2 Youth

<http://www.pastor2youth.com/index.php>

Bible Gateway

<http://www.biblegateway.com/>

Basically an online Bible in various translations and languages.

Center for Parent/Youth Understanding

<http://www.cpyu.org/>

An excellent website that provides all sorts of information about the current culture in which our teens live—music info, movie, advertising, television—it covers all the bases so you can see what your students live every day.

VIDEO/MEDIA RESOURCES:

Nooma videos with Rob Bell

<http://store.flannel.org/>

Short DVD videos geared specifically to young adults (although older adults LOVE them!) approximately 12-15 minutes in length. Discussion questions are included with each DVD. You can often buy them inexpensively through Christian Book Distributors (www.christianbook.com)

Free movie clips and discussion ideas:

www.wingclips.com

Now you can view inspirational movie clips from many of your favorite films. These WingClips™ can also be downloaded to use in your church, school or other non-profit organization for FREE. Movies are organized by theme as well as title. Lots of unusual, small-budget films and documentaries as well as popular movies.

Section 7

Bibliography