

Diocesan Confirmation Guidelines **Through June 2009**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

January 9, 2009

Confirmation services are an integral and important part of our diocesan life together. The persons you present bring an exciting energy, faith and love to our church. The service gathers family and friends from all generations to witness an individual's mature, adult commitment to their faith and to the promises made for them at baptism. The ceremony and presence of the bishop accentuate the gifts and importance of our Episcopal tradition and faith. It is in that spirit that we have established diocesan standards for confirmation and offer support and resources for your confirmation programs.

Important announcement! After much discernment and discussions with many clergy and congregations, Bishops Sutton and Rabb are pleased to announce that they will be doing parish confirmations as part of the Episcopal visitations beginning in September of this year. We will issue new guidelines later this spring to cover fall 2009 and beyond.

For now we continue to emphasize confirmations and receptions during the Easter season. The great fifty days of Easter are a wonderful time to be confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church. Not only is this true from an historical perspective, but it is also true from a theological and practical one. The themes of resurrection and of preparing ourselves for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost are especially fitting as preludes to Confirmation and Reception.

We wish to reinforce here that Confirmation is an adult rite of discipleship. To that end, to receive the sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Maryland, **we do expect that each candidate will have received quality instruction in the parish** as described in the Customary, and that each person presented:

- **will have attended one of the four Bishops' Teaching Days.**
- **should be 15 or older.**
- **is a regular participant in the life, worship, education and outreach of the congregation presenting them.**
- **will gather to meet with the Bishop one hour before the service.**

We, your bishops and the diocesan staff, firmly believe these to be important ingredients for confirmation and have dedicated the time and energy to support these expectations.

Enclosed with this letter is the 2009 *Guidelines for Confirmation* which clarifies the differences between Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation and identify specifics regarding the liturgy, scheduling and general instructions. Also enclosed are the schedule for diocesan confirmations and information on the four Bishops' Teaching Days.

Please review ALL the information in the attached documents and the supportive materials on the web site! See www.ang-md.org and click on "Christian Formation." You will find resources to support your programs of preparation. You may also call on our Missioner for Lifelong Christian Formation and our Youth Missioner for assistance.

Our church is in the midst of an evolving understanding of Confirmation. We, as Bishops, acknowledge the resulting tension this brings, while remaining committed to making the most of the sacrament as we celebrate it together in our diocese. May it be a memorable and transformational time for all involved. We look forward to working with you in planning and celebrating these special services!

Faithfully Yours,

The Rt. Rev. Eugene Sutton
Bishop of Maryland

The Rt. Rev. John L. Rabb
Bishop Suffragan

The Rev. Amy Richter
Missioner for Lifelong Christian Formation

The Rev. Wes Wubbenhorst
Youth Missioner

enclosures

January – June 2009 Guidelines for Confirmation
In the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Regarding Confirmation, Reception, Baptism, and Reaffirmation:

- Candidates who have been baptized in any denominational background and who wish to affirm their faith as adults shall be presented for **Confirmation**. Candidates who have been confirmed previously by a bishop in the historic succession (Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or Eastern Orthodox) or have made an adult affirmation of faith (baptized as adults) may be presented for **Reception** into the Episcopal Church during a service of Confirmation.
- **Baptisms will not be part of Diocesan Confirmations.** Candidates who have not been baptized and are desirous of Confirmation first will be baptized in their parish church. Please note: an adult previously baptized by a bishop is both baptized and confirmed.
- **Reaffirmation** will normally **not** be part of Diocesan Confirmations.

Regarding Preparation:

- A period of preparation should take place in the parish which includes the basics of the Christian Faith and the Anglican expression of it as described in the *Customary on Confirmation*, and each candidate should be of such maturity as to be able to make meaningful vows that impact their lives. Therefore, the **age recommended by the Diocese of Maryland is 15**. Requests for exceptions should be directed to the Missioner for Youth.
- All candidates are asked to participate in one of the four **Bishops' Teaching Days**. Please see the enclosed information sheet.
- On our web site (www.ang-md.org) click "Christian Formation" and you will find a thorough collection of resources to assist in preparing candidates for this important affirmation of faith. The Diocesan Missioners for Lifelong Christian Formation and Youth Ministry are available to help you select, design and deliver appropriate programs for preparation.

Regarding Scheduling and Logistics:

- Services this spring will be scheduled during the Great Fifty Days of Easter. There are four dates set aside for diocesan confirmations at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, in addition to the Easter Vigil. Several other diocesan regional confirmations are arranged in various locations around the diocese. In order to accommodate all congregations, we will have services into the season of Pentecost and will have some Fall confirmations as well.

- Confirmations are to be celebrated as **Diocesan or Regional Confirmations**, not as special events highlighting a particular church. Therefore, confirmations are **never** held on Sunday morning, or in the context of any parish visitation, and should **not** be scheduled in conjunction with another parish event. Individual parish confirmations *may* be deemed appropriate only after a conversation with the Bishop. For example, a request might be made in order to accommodate candidates who participate in the *Journey to Adulthood*[®] program in their parish.
 - As soon as possible, each rector is asked to please **contact Ashby Thompson** in the Office of the Bishop to reserve all dates and times. It is a good idea to have alternate dates in mind in case your first choice is taken.
 - Whether celebrating at the Cathedral or at a church within your region, confirmation services are **not to exceed 75 persons**. Any church within the region may be used for the service, so long as it is large enough to accommodate the expected numbers. **When you register for a particular service, please include the number of candidates that you anticipate presenting.**
 - Approximately six weeks before each service, a coordinator (Minister of Ceremonies), whose job it is to coordinate the service, will be appointed by the Bishop from one of the parishes participating in the service. Complete instructions will be sent to each coordinator. The Coordinator will work closely with the Office of the Bishop and be responsible for attending to the details, such as:
 - be in touch with the Cathedral or host parish about the details of planning and use of the space,
 - coordinate the service (altar guild, organist, choir, etc.),
 - be sure bulletins are prepared, copied, and distributed (a template will be provided),
 - recruit volunteers as needed to be ushers, Eucharistic ministers, oblationers, etc.,
 - be sure that arrangements are in place for a reception following the service
 - serve as Minister of Ceremonies during the service, and
 - be in touch with the Office of the Bishop and provide the officiating Bishop with copies of the order of service well in advance of the service.
- The Office of the Bishop will:
- coordinate the schedule,
 - provide Confirmation Certificates and registration sheets, and
 - other tasks as assigned / requested by the Bishops.

Regarding the Liturgy:

- **One full hour** before the scheduled time for the service, all candidates and sponsors are asked to meet with the Bishop to reflect upon the Baptismal Covenant vows which they are about to affirm. It is expected that **all participants**, including their sponsors, will attend this hour. This time will **not** be

used for rehearsal; each presenting priest is expected to rehearse members of his/her congregation prior to coming for the Diocesan Confirmation.

- All services will be in the context of Holy Eucharist Rite II.
- Normally, Eucharistic Prayers A, B, or C are used. Special permission may be given by the Bishop to use Eucharistic Prayer D or Alternative Consecration prayers.
- Please **NOTE** that this year, the following **Propers for Confirmation** will be used at every diocesan confirmation service:

Ezekiel 37:1 – 10 **Galatians 5:16 - 25** **Matthew 16:24 - 27**

- Liturgical color is to be that of the season or festival.
- Clergy will normally stand at the altar during the celebration of Eucharist. The Coordinator will arrange for a Deacon to read the Gospel, set the table, and give the dismissal. Laity from participating churches will be asked by the Coordinator to read lessons and lead the Baptismal Litany.

Other Related Items:

- Candidates for Confirmation and Reception will **sit together by parish**; they need not be in alphabetical order.
- At the Presentation (BCP page 415), each Rector/Vicar and the Sponsors will stand in the order listed in the Bulletin and introduce his/her people using the appropriate words, first saying, “On behalf of ___ Church, I present...”
- Those presented stand and continue to stand until **all** Confirmands and those being received have been presented.
- Those standing will be asked two questions (BCP page 415) and are expected to answer **clearly and loudly**.
- Both Bishops prefer to **sit** for Confirmations. There will be a kneeling cushion placed before the seated Bishop on which Confirmands will kneel.
- At the time of Confirmation, the Sponsor(s) will come forward from the congregation sequentially as their turn comes. Individually, Confirmands and those being received come forward. Confirmands **kneel** before the Bishop; those being received **remain standing**. Family and friends are invited to stand behind and around the candidate. The candidate says in a loud and clear voice: “My name is ____ and I want to be Confirmed / Received.”
- The full baptismal name is to be given (omitting the last name); the Bishop uses this name to confirm or receive the candidate. The candidate then returns to his/her pew, entering if possible from the side aisle thus allowing the next candidate to enter the center aisle.
- There is to be **no grouping** of candidates – two or more kneeling together. The exception to this is when more than one member of a family (husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, etc.) is being presented. The Sponsor(s) will

stand beside the Bishop and return to his/her place when the last of his/her candidates has been Confirmed or Received.

- In serious conversation with the Committee on Liturgy and Music and with the desire **not** to crowd the sanctuary and afford all adequate visibility, we will **not** have persons, other than the sponsor(s), stand with those being confirmed or received.