



Details on Our Youth Confirmation Process

St. John's is committed to the Lord's work of discipleship in as many places as possible, to include every member of the congregation. One very important celebration point in the life of a Christian is one's public confirmation of faith. St. John's is committed to helping both youth and adults reach a place in their faith where they are prepared and ready to speak vows of commitment to their Lord as a confirmation of all He has done and will continue to do in their lives.

One of the most common questions we receive regarding one's confirmation of faith is "How does it work?" This document is designed to bring clarity to the nuts and bolts of how this process works at St. John's.

When is confirmation of faith appropriate?

The simplest answer to this question is when a youth or an adult is *ready and prepared* to speak vows of commitment and belief to the Lord and His people.

Admittedly, coming to the decision of whether someone is ready and prepared is a highly subjective process, but it is not a decision made without guidance, conversation and multiple voices.

What if I believe I am ready and prepared to confirm my faith?

If you have a desire to confirm your faith and you are at least in the spring of your 7th grade year you should set up an appointment with a member of our pastoral team. During this meeting one of our pastors will help you discern whether you are ready to enter the confirmation of faith process.

What is the confirmation of faith process?

What follows are general guidelines for youth between the 7th and 12th grades. Our goal is to encourage a life of discipleship above and beyond the confirmation of faith. We call this a process because, like any conversation, one never really knows how long it will last, but it's usually pretty clear when it's over. St. John's commitment to the potential confirmands is to have as many conversations as needed to provide care and discipleship in preparing our youth for this step of faith.

St. John's has determined that readiness for confirmation is determined through conversations around three benchmarks: **knowledge, attitude, and behavior**.

These three benchmarks provide structure and guidance for the conversations leading to one making confirmation vows to the Lord. These benchmarks are designed to foster conversation regarding the life of discipleship.

Knowledge - Is there a sufficient knowledge of Scripture and the catechism?

Once youth have attained a reasonable knowledge of Scripture and Luther's Small Catechism (see the Knowledge Exam Study Guide), they are responsible for scheduling an appointment to take the knowledge exam. Appointments may be scheduled through the church office, and the exam is taken in the church office.

After the exam has been reviewed by a pastor, the family will be notified and a meeting will be scheduled with a pastor, the youth, and the parents. The purpose of this meeting is to discern whether the youth has demonstrated sufficient knowledge of Scripture and the catechism to continue the process. At the end of this review it usually becomes abundantly clear whether a youth is prepared in the area of knowledge and ready to step forward with conversations regarding **attitude and behavior**. If not, the youth will need to engage in additional study. *Please note this is not a failure but a valuable opportunity to evaluate and plan accordingly. Remember the goal here is discipleship first, confirmation of faith when appropriate.* If this is the case, then the confirmation conversations pause, and a plan of study is put in place for the family. Sometimes a youth is asked to review one of the chief parts of the catechism or a few of the Bible stories. Sometimes a youth knows very little about the Scriptures or the catechism and is given a plan to work through them both over a significant period of time. Once a youth completes the prescribed plan the process continues. It may include taking a different version of the exam or a conversation to demonstrate competency in the previously weak areas.

Regardless of whatever path these confirmation conversations take, once a youth confirmand demonstrates an appropriate level of knowledge with their parents and a pastor the conversation moves beyond knowledge to the less objective conversations regarding attitude and behavior. This is where the paths diverge based on every individual person.

Attitude and behavior - The only way to determine whether youth are ready and prepared to make confirmation vows in regards to attitude and behavior is to talk with them. Hopefully, these conversations of faith will have been taking place for years in the home, so the family meeting with a pastor to discuss the life of discipleship should not be awkward. Often though, these types of conversations are new to both parents and youth. No matter what the situation, parents are expected to join their children with a pastor for conversations about life in faith.

These confirmation interviews are not intended to be inquisitions. They are not designed to drill youth about their beliefs. This is a time for youth, parents, and pastors to discuss openly the life of discipleship. The paths of these conversations meant to be diverse as they are based on the individual needs of the youth. A few paths taken in the past have included meaningful conversations about things such as:

- Testimonies of faith and God's working in their lives
- The discovery that a youth doesn't want to confirm their faith and is only doing this to please their parents.
- Struggles with what it means to honor God when every other aspect of life is in conflict with His will.
- Not really interested in having conversations about faith or the life of discipleship.
- Conversations on dating, driving, working, going to church, stewardship, etc.

For help with these conversations see the document Family Faith Conversations – Discussion Starters. The goal of these interviews is to allow our youth opportunity to give witness to whom the Lord is in their lives, celebrate God's mercy and grace in Jesus Christ, and to help put in place a plan of discipleship for the years following one's confirmation of faith.

Again, our commitment is to discipleship. So we will have as many conversations regarding the life of discipleship as necessary to reach a place where the youth is ready and prepared for the life the Lord has provided. We want our youth to see confirmation of faith as an opportunity to celebrate with the Lord and His family the gift of faith He has given.

The pastor, parents and youth will all know when it's time for these conversations to come to an end and to move to the next step. This will be something to celebrate in prayer and praise as a family.

Attitudes spill over to behaviors. The youth should be able to describe personal behaviors that demonstrate a readiness for confirming the faith.

Promises of Grace

Once the parents, youth, and pastor agree that the three benchmarks have been demonstrated, the youth and parents are to enroll in the ten-session class called Promises of Grace.

This class is designed to help us understand who we are as a congregation and it gives our youth an opportunity to reflect on the membership covenant they will be asked to sign. Parents are expected to attend the class with their youth so they will be able to continue discipleship conversations in their homes. Promises of Grace classes are offered three times a year. It is important to remember that the Promises of Graces classes are not the beginning of the confirmation process for our youth. These classes

are to be taken after our youth have demonstrated mastery of our three benchmarks: knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

Confirmation Sunday – We celebrate confirmation Sunday three times a year. These Sunday's always follow a session of Promises of Grace and serve as the opportunity for adults and youth alike to give witness to God's work in their lives by confirming their faith.

How can I prepare for confirmation conversations?

This is a very common question among those who desire to confirm their faith but know they aren't ready or prepared and of parents who want their children to confirm their faith but aren't sure of how to prepare them.

St. John's is committed to partnering with you in this work. Here are some of the helps that are available.

- St. John's Early Childhood Center – children from birth to age 4 receive daily discipleship training through prayer, Bible stories, and Christian care givers.
- St. John's Lutheran School Discipleship Classes - the teachers at St. John's Lutheran School have been specifically equipped to lead their students in discipleship formation. Our pastoral team, our youth minister, and our director of stewardship and gifting assist the classroom teachers in this formation in grades 6, 7, and 8
- Faith in the Family – This family oriented class is designed to help families engage in discipleship and faith conversations within their family structures. The class also helps prepare our youth for future confirmation conversations by familiarizing them with major Bible stories and the Small Catechism. The class meets on Sunday mornings from 9:30 - 10:30 in lower fellowship hall of the church.
- Sunday Morning Discipleship Hour – Sunday mornings from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. in the school gymnasium. Programming available for youth and adults.
- St. John's School Ministries – Investing in a Christian education is beneficial for so many reasons, but one of the most incredible blessings is the partnership you will have with a commissioned minister of religion whose desire is to come alongside of you and help you raise your child in the way of the Lord. For more information about whether this is a possibility for you, please contact our school administrator.
- Youth Ministries- St. John's youth ministry is designed to provide relationships and experiences to supplement the life of faith. Study of God's Word, mission trips, fellowship opportunities are only some of what is provided to assist in the discipleship of your children.
- Weekly Worship- It is essential that a disciple of Christ worships regularly.

God's Word and His gifts are given to His people as we gather together in worship and this habitus must be central to the life of discipleship.

- Mission Trips - St. John's offers multiple short term mission trips both invaluable discipleship experiences because of the intense focus on the Lord's mission and work. They are also invaluable because of the many invaluable lessons that are taught about faith and God's world both formally and informally. Please consider this as part of your discipleship plan.
- Financial Peace – Stewardship is discipleship and discipleship is stewardship and we are created to be stewards. So obviously helping your children learn what it means to manage all that he has given to us to care for in our lives is an incredible important duty of the Christian parent.

As always, if you have any questions about anything pertaining to raising your children in the way of the Lord or the confirmation of faith process, please contact one of the pastors of St. John's through the church office. Also, please take a few minutes to watch the video posted on our website under Discipleship Central regarding our congregation's approach to discipleship and the confirmation of faith.