

East Side Lutheran Church

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Confirmation Ministry Description

In a little more than two years from the start of confirmation, those participating will stand before God and their congregation and accept responsibility for their faith by affirming that faith as it was confessed when they were baptized. They will renounce all the forces of evil, the devil and all his empty promises; they will confess faith in the one God whom we know as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Then they will be asked the following:

*“Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism:
to live among God’s faithful people;
to hear His Word and share in His Supper;
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed;
to serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”*

They will respond: **“I DO, AND I ASK GOD TO HELP AND GUIDE ME.”**

The confirmation program at the East Side Lutheran Church seeks to faithfully prepare people to seriously affirm their Holy Baptism. It is a program meant for people who desire to be active and worshipping members of this congregation -- now and in their future years.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America defines confirmation as:

“A pastoral and educational ministry of the church which helps the baptized individual through Word and Sacrament to identify more deeply with the Christian community and to participate more fully in its mission.”

“Ministry” is the key word in this definition. Confirmation ministry is really a life-long catechumenate, a life-long learning process. Confirmation is one of many events in the Christian’s life. It begins with Holy Baptism but it never ends. During the time a person is a direct part of our confirmation ministry the opportunity is provided for the baptized person to learn and continue to learn the essentials of the Lutheran Christian faith and to understand the Christian’s role in the world and how he/she should live.

When a person is baptized, parents/baptismal sponsors make certain vows that they promise to fulfill. Among these is the vow that they would provide instruction for their child in the Christian faith. The confirmation ministry is our way of **assisting parents** in fulfilling this vow. However, the ultimate responsibility remains with the parents; confirmation is but in part a means of fulfilling this vow. Our confirmation ministry will fail unless both child and pastor have the full and complete support of the parents.

It is important that everyone understand what confirmation is **not**:

1. **It is not** completing the work of Holy Baptism. Baptism makes one a full and complete Christian and a member of the Church. Confirmation helps us see and understand what that means.
2. **It is not** making “*a decision for Jesus Christ.*” To repeat what was said above, one is already a Christian when one begins confirmation! Confirmation will help us grow in God’s grace as well as grow in our faith. It will help us see what it means to be a baptized child of God.
3. **It is not** *graduation* from Church School and/or the Church. To repeat, confirmation is really the beginning of a process that will occupy our lives until we die.

In short, our confirmation ministry prepares the person to be an active and knowledgeable worshiping member of our congregation. If it is a person’s goal to simply get confirmed and then forget about the Church, then our advice is simply **not to participate in it**. It would be too much work for nothing, it would waste everyone’s time and energy, and it would make a **liar** out of the person being confirmed. If, however, the goal is to be a worshiping member of this church, then the confirmation ministry is important because it will educate, expose, challenge, and nurture the person in all aspects of the church’s life and teaching.

The confirmation ministry of our congregation revolves around weekly worship, Church School, adult classes, WELCA Bible study, personal and family devotions and study, and so on. For two years intensive study is given in the Lutheran Christian faith, at the end of which the person publicly affirms his/her Baptism.

The priorities of these two years of intensive learning are:

- 1) to know and understand the basic message and content of the Scriptures;
- 2) to know and understand the basic teachings of the Lutheran Church;
- 3) to receive a brief exposure to the history of the church;
- 4) to know and understand the role of the Christian in God’s world;

- 5) to grow in **faith** and **grace**.

The ultimate goal of the confirmation ministry is that those who publicly affirm their Baptism will know what they believe, why it is true, and how their faith relates to their every day lives.

Resources and Outline of the Confirmation Program

East Side Lutheran Church gives each person beginning confirmation a new **Study Bible** and a hard-cover edition of Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**. The Bible is used in confirmation and in Church School. There is no cost for these. The only current cost for confirmation is for the robe rental and class picture taken when they are confirmed.

Among the primary resources available to us for the two-year confirmation program are:

- 1) Weekly worship with the congregation;
- 2) Church School;
- 3) Confirmation Classes;
- 4) A week of Bible Camp;
- 5) The Holy Scriptures;
- 6) Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**.

Our confirmation ministry begins in the middle of the seventh grade (or later). During this time classes are held taught by the pastor. One week of Bible Camp (confirmation camp) is required following the first year of classes. Special topics are covered during this week. The topics explored in our two years of study include:

- 1) Worship
- 2) The Ten Commandments
- 3) The Apostles' Creed
- 4) The Lord's Prayer (and prayer in general)
- 5) Holy Baptism and Holy Communion – the Sacraments
- 6) The Bible

- 7) Money and Discipleship
- 8) Overview of Lutheran Teaching
- 9) Other topics added by Pastor or at the request of confirmands

The basic format of each class will be discussion led by the Pastor on the assigned readings and written work. There is a weekly quiz on the memory work assigned. The materials may change at any time but the topics covered will remain the same. The order by which they are covered may also vary from year to year.

EXPECTATIONS OF THOSE IN CONFIRMATION:

For both years of study, the following are expected:

- 1) Weekly attendance at **worship** and **Church School**. This applies to the nine-month Church School year. Attendance at worship during the summer months is expected and encouraged.
- 2) Completion of all assignments.
- 3) Memorization of Martin Luther's Small Catechism.
- 4) Attendance at Bible Camp following the first year of confirmation. The congregations will assist with financial support. No one will be denied the Bible Camp experience because of financial concerns.
- 5) Proper behavior at all classes is simply assumed. This includes refraining from chewing gum, candy and drinking pop. It assumes respect for Pastor and fellow confirmands.
- 6) The confirmands will bring to each class their Bible, class book, a writing instrument, and a good attitude. A three-ring binder will be provided for organizing the assignment sheets. All memory work quizzes will be done in a provided composition book.

WHAT IF . . .

The question is always asked: what happens if one or more of the expectations are not

met? It is difficult to answer this on a general basis. For instance, if after repeated attempts are made, a student simply is unable to memorize materials, then this requirement will be amended. Recognition is given to *effort* as well as *achievement!* We will spend some time learning how to memorize and all students will be expected to make serious efforts at this.

With regard to behavior problems, these will be noted to the **parents** for proper handling. The Pastor will not spend time being a disciplinarian. Parents will be expected to deal with any problems.

Attendance at worship and/or Church School will be excused if a student is sick. If he/she is out of town, then he/she should worship somewhere else. A note from parents or a bulletin from the church attended will excuse the student.

A more difficult item is unexcused absence, where a student may go to Church School or church but not the other, or may simply skip both. In this case, the following will apply: each student is permitted 4 unexcused absences per class year. Should that number be exceeded, then he/she will be confirmed that many weeks after the rest of the class. So if a confirmand has three unexcused absences above the limit he/she will be confirmed 3 weeks after the class has been confirmed.

With regard to attendance at confirmation classes, the following will apply. For each topic session, the student is permitted one absence. If there are more absences, either make-up work will be assigned or - if necessary - the session will be made up the following year.

A final point must be emphasized: it is assumed that the person who begins confirmation will finish the program and be confirmed. Nevertheless, simply “showing up” for confirmation class does not guarantee that the person will be confirmed. We take our confirmation ministry seriously and expect that student and parents will take it as seriously. No one will be confirmed until the expectations are completed.

Conferences between Pastor, parent, and child may be called at any time by anyone. We are all concerned that the confirmation experience will be a positive one.

*Without the active participation, support and interest of **parents**, our confirmation ministry will simply fail!*