

First Congregational Church of Darien

Confirmation Overview

2009-2010

The confirmation process at the First Congregational Church of Darien is based on the idea that one cannot teach faith the way one teaches math, reading, or science; instead one teaches *toward* faith. Faith is cultivated and challenged both externally (by the world, society, religion, family, friends, etc.) and internally (the filters through which one sees and interprets the world, relationships, and personal experiences). There are some elements surrounding faith that can be taught (church doctrine, history, Bible, theology) but faith itself cannot be taught. That is the challenge before us as we begin the confirmation journey. There are no discernable measurements for achievement; even if there were an exam, it is impossible to test whether or not a person “has faith”.

The confirmation program is comprised of four parts specifically designed to teach toward faith in rich and diverse ways—Class Meetings, Service Projects, Participation in the Life of the Church, and Mentor Relationships. Recognizing that people have various learning styles, we strive to use a balanced mixture of teaching methods, keeping in mind that learning occurs in multiple settings and in thousands of different ways.

CLASS MEETINGS

Class time is used to build relationships (with the FCC staff and one another), participate in class activities, and begin to integrate faith-based learning into students’ lives. Each part of confirmation is important in its own right, so we hesitate to stress one over the other. However, class time is the foundation for everything else we do in confirmation. It builds the framework onto which everything else hangs.

Scheduling is always a challenge—especially in our busy lives—with sports and arts and school and everything else in between. Should you and your youth decide to embark on the confirmation journey, we ask that you make it a priority, as building relationships with the class is a fundamental element of this program. We will have 12 classroom sessions (this works out to *approximately* two per month from October to April) and 80% attendance is required (about 10 sessions). Make up work will be assigned for any missed sessions. We will keep close tabs on attendance and have high expectations that everyone will participate fully in the program.

SERVICE PROJECTS

Based on Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself” the second element of confirmation is completing a minimum of five service hours within the *community*. The principle behind this component of confirmation is to broaden the students’ understanding of “who is your neighbor?” with the answer being “everyone” (being a neighbor crosses race, gender, culture, economic, social, and geographic boundaries). Karen Brennan, Interim Christian Education and Youth Director, will coordinate a variety of service projects and opportunities for community service. Activities will include serving dinner at the New Covenant House in Stamford, making dinner in the FCC kitchen for the Norwalk Emergency Shelter, working with students at the George Washington Carver Center, and visiting seniors at Atria Darien. More information regarding service projects will come in future e-mails and mailings.

PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

We believe the best way to learn what it means to become a member of this church is to actively participate in the life of this church. Therefore, in addition to service within the community, we ask participation and service within the church community as well. Students are to attend two Sunday worship services per month and fulfill five service hours to the *church* through various activities and events throughout the church program year. Confirmands are also required to obtain a CD, listen to, and do a take home lesson on each of the church's worship services. Karen Brennan will be coordinating these activities and events and will be the contact person if any questions arise. These activities include, but are not limited to, helping with the Advent workshop and the Christmas Eve services, Lent and Easter activities, Antique Show help, as well as serving as a mentor to our Church School students and visiting our most senior congregants. Confirmands will also be asked to serve as a greeter once during the year and attend on Church Board Meeting. "Church service" is any service that directly benefits the church as opposed to the community. The implicit curriculum in this part of the confirmation process is: the students belong to something larger than they are, they are a valuable addition to a vibrant community of faith, God works through individuals and groups in many ways, and they learn how this church works through experience.

MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Confirmation requires students to ask some hard questions—of themselves, of God, and of others. *What does it mean to be a person of faith? Why this religion? Why this denomination? Why this church? Do I have to believe everything the church says to be a member?* These are difficult questions to ask, and even more difficult questions to answer. That is why every Confirmand is paired with a mentor: an adult who will walk the confirmation journey with their student. The mentor is not expected to have all the answers, rather, the courage to say, "I don't know—but we'll figure it out—together."

The mentor will play an important role in the life of the student. For that reason we have some criteria by which we choose mentors for the students. The mentor is someone who will grow and learn *with* their student—spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. Mentors must be *active* members who are involved in, and committed to, the life of the church.

The purpose of the mentoring process is for both the adult and the student to create a *new* relationship within the church community. A family friend, for example, would not be the best choice for a mentor simply because that person already knows the student in a different context. That is one reason we pair each student with a mentor. In addition, as clergy, we are privileged to be a part of people's lives in such a way as to receive confidences that may preclude some people from serving as mentors at the time.

We know most families have an idea of whom they would like to see paired with their youth; but please don't act on that by asking someone to be your youth's mentor. As you will see from the registration form, you will be asked for three suggestions for your youth's mentor. The suggestions are often helpful; however, also keep in mind that five other families may also have requested the very same people. We ask that you allow us to call the mentor candidates to not only avoid confusion but also to ensure that your youth is paired with the best possible mentor. As one mother said to us last year, "I would have never thought of that person—but he's a perfect match for my son!" We promise that we have your youth's best interest at heart and in mind when we approach this process and will do everything we can to make it a positive, enriching experience for all involved.

Confirmation Class Requirements 2009-2010

CLASS MEETINGS

- 80% class attendance
- Attendance and participation in Confirmation Sunday—Sunday, April 25, 2010
- Purchase of a student bible—Harper Collins Study Bible New Revised Standard Version in paperback (available at www.amazon.com)
- Homework assignments

SERVICE PROJECTS

- Five hours of community service as arranged for by the First Congregational Church

PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

- Two church services per month—either at 8:30 a.m. or 10:00 a.m.
- Lesson for all church services
- Being a greeter in the front of the church at least once during the year
- Five hours of service to the church
- Attendance at one Church Board Meeting

BUILDING MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

- Meeting 4-5 times throughout the year with your mentor

**AND MOST IMPORTANTLY ... HAVE A GREAT TIME, GROW IN FAITH,
SERVE OTHERS, AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS!!**

Confirmation Schedule 2009-2010

Tuesday, September 22	7:30 p.m.	Orientation Mtg./Youth Room
Sunday, October 4	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, November 1	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, November 15	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, December 6	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, December 13	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, January 10	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, January 24	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, February 7	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, February 28	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, March 14	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, March 28	11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Wednesday, April 7*	7:00-8:15 p.m.	Class Meeting/Youth Room
Sunday, April 25	10:00 a.m.	Confirmation Sunday

* Due to Easter and the Public School vacation, we will need to have one final class during the week at night before Confirmation Sunday.

Note: One or two of the class meetings may change to a field trip. We will likely attend one or two services of denominations other than our own.