

# First Congregational Church of Darien

## Confirmation Overview

### 2015-16

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 discernible 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 designed to teach toward faith in rich and diverse ways—Class Meetings, Community Service Projects, Participation in the Life of the Church, Mentor Relationships, Interfaith Visits, and a culminating Faith Statement. 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.

The confirmation program spans one calendar year, beginning in May and ending with Confirmation Sunday, usually on the last Sunday in April. Scheduling is always a challenge—especially in our busy lives—with sports, arts, school, and everything else in between. As such, we have created a schedule that allows for flexibility while still being rich and reflective. Should you and your youth decide to embark on the confirmation journey, we ask you to make it a priority and create room in your life. We invite you to make the spiritual well-being of your youth as much a priority as his or her academic flourishing or success in team sports. If we do this right, your journey with us will give lifelong benefits by way of shaping a person of faith and character. We cannot imagine a more essential life-foundation than that.

#### **CLASS MEETINGS**

Class time is used to build relationships, 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.

We will have 12 classroom sessions (this works out to *approximately* two per month from September to April) and 80% attendance is required (about 10 sessions). Make up work is assigned for any missed sessions. We will keep close tabs on attendance and have high expectations that everyone will participate fully in the program.

#### **COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS**

Based on Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself” the second element of confirmation is service. Completion of at least 12 hours of community service project work will be required. 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). The Confirmation Coordinators will facilitate a number

of service projects and opportunities for community service from which the confirmand may choose to participate. 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. To this end:

- Students are to attend 24 church services over the course of the year—which is approximately two Sunday worship services per month (from May 2015-April 2016). As schedules change, it is permissible for a student to attend more during one month than another. Should this not always be possible, confirmands are able to obtain a CD, listen to, and do a take home lesson on each of the church worship services.
- There are a number of church service events within the church year that the confirmands will be encouraged to experience and attend. Completion of at least 12 hours of church service project work will be required. These include the Advent Workshop, Christmas Eve services, Lent, and Easter activities.
- Confirmands will be asked to serve as a greeter once during the year.
- Confirmands will be asked to attend one Church Board Meeting.
- Confirmands will have many opportunities to join in fellowship with other confirmands and the youth of the church at large. Each confirmand should plan on attending at least four youth group meetings or outings during the year. The Confirmation Coordinators will facilitate and inform the confirmands as to the various opportunities and hope that you take advantage of as many as you can.

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. 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.

### **INTERFAITH VISITS**

Part of the confirmation curriculum invites confirmands to experience diverse religious traditions. We will plan four outings (of which each confirmand should plan to attend three) at different locations, for example the Jewish Community Center, a Baptist church, a trip to a mosque, a Catholic service. These experiences are great to share with the entire family and/or a confirmand's mentor.

### **FAITH STATEMENT**

At the end of the confirmand's year, we ask each to write personal faith statement. This will be read to families and mentors at a small dessert party held at the church before Confirmation Sunday. Faith statements reflect an individual's thoughts about his/her relationship with God, church, and Jesus Christ. This is the first chance, not the last, to express one's faith in a full-fledged way. If a confirmand can make a start, we are happy. This is a beginning, not an end.

## Confirmation Class Requirement Record Sheet 2015-16

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTEND CHURCH SERVICES (approximately 2 per month):**

Goal should be two church services per month (with at least one parent—8:30 a.m. or 10:00 a.m.). After each sermon, complete a short write up (these will be collected throughout year). List dates of attendance here.

May 2015:		November 2015:	
June 2015:		December 2015:	
July 2015:		January 2016:	
August 2015:		February 2016:	
September 2015:		March 2016:	
October 2015:		April 2016:	

**ATTEND CONFIRMATION MEETINGS AFTER CHURCH (attend 10 meetings):**

Confirmants are encouraged to attend all classes, but 10 of the 12 are required. Reading assignments will be given prior to each class. Rev. Rosenberger will assign a special project to be presented in class should you miss the mandatory number of meetings.

9/20: _____	11/1: _____	1/10: _____	2/28: _____
10/4: _____	11/15: _____	1/24: _____	3/13: _____
10/18: _____	12/6: _____	2/7: _____	4/3: _____

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:**

Complete at least 12 hours of community service throughout the year; multiple opportunities will be provided.

Service Project	Hours

**CHURCH SERVICE PROJECTS:**

Complete at least 12 hours of church service throughout the year; multiple opportunities will be provided.

Service Project	Hours

**PARTICIPATION IN LIFE OF CHURCH:**

Attend a Board Meeting:                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Be a Greeter:                                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance at Four Youth Group Meetings and/or Fellowship Outings:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEETINGS WITH YOUR MENTOR:**

Attendance at Fall Potluck dinner with your mentor and meet two times throughout the year with your mentor (mentor can attend a board meeting with the confirmand, go along on an interfaith visit, etc.).

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERFAITH VISITS:**

Participate in a minimum of three field trips to other denomination worship services. The trips will be organized by parent volunteers.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**FAITH STATEMENT:**

Write and present an individual faith statement to the friends and mentors (presented at Spring Confirmation dessert—tentatively scheduled for April 24, 2016).

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