

## **DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS**

### **Statement on Confirmation**

#### **CONFIRMATION IS...**

1. Confirmation is the occasion for a mature affirmation of faith, an opportunity for a person to claim for oneself the promises made for him or her at Baptism (or reaffirm promises made earlier) in the context and presence of:

- + The local faith community (parish) that nurtures faith and sends forth disciples to serve the risen Christ.
- + The wider faith community (diocese/deanery) that is a broad and diverse sign of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church which joins God's mission in the world through partnerships and collaborative ministries.
- + The Bishop as apostle, theologian, visionary leader for mission, and pastor.

2. Confirmation stresses the mission part of Baptism and looks ahead to a life of witness and service. It reflects a personal sense of calling to glorify God, letting Christ's light shine.

3. Confirmation is a continuation of lifelong formation, a semi-colon, not a period.

4. Confirmation represents the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life and faith community (parish and diocese).

5. Confirmation is about the transformation of individuals, communities of faith and God's church. It entails openness to change, risk, and faith.

6. Confirmation strengthens, commissions, and sends forth candidates and faith communities to join God's mission of reconciling love in the world. The Great Commandment and Great Commission are at the heart of our understanding of Confirmation.

#### **DESIRED OUTCOMES**

- Candidates will experience love and yearning for God.
- Candidates will come to believe *in* Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection in addition to belief as an intellectual assent *that* Jesus lived as the Son of God, was crucified, and rose again. In other words, candidates deepen their relationship to Jesus, giving their hearts to him and trusting more and more in his love and call to discipleship, which will take them where they may never have imagined or willed to go.
- Candidates' prayer lives and their understanding of Scripture as God's Word, as a love story of God and God's people, will be deepened and reflected upon.
- Candidates will experience Christian community (the parish and beyond) as "communities" of conversion and transformation.
- Candidates will understand congregations as "missionary outposts" of the wider church with the diocese as the basic geographical unit for development and oversight of the church's response to God's call to mission. Congregations will be seen as the places for making disciples for the purpose of transforming lives and society for God's reign of justice and peace for all persons.

- Candidates will have a deeper appreciation for the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion's comprehensiveness and contribution to the Gospel in these times.
- Candidates will have opportunities to discern and discover their God-given gifts and apply them to ministry and mission opportunities in the life of their congregation and diocese.
- Candidates will have a deeper understanding of stewardship; as Christian disciples they will be expected to make a pledge and use their time and talents to further God's mission.
- Candidates will come to know and understand how their baptismal promises connect them to the mission goals of the diocese as well as their parish.
- Candidates will hear God's call to move from the familiar contexts of parish and community into new and unfamiliar opportunities for life and ministry for the sake of the Gospel and their own spiritual growth.

### **PRACTICAL GUIDELINES**

We expect that ordained and lay leaders in our congregations will expand upon the preceding theological, ecclesial, and missiological assumptions and offer teaching and support to meet the desired results for Confirmation. Your reflections, teaching and support will add to our deeper appreciation and understanding of Confirmation and its place in the deanery. This would include all of us exercising patience and prayer as we make these adjustments. The lay and ordained leaders play a key role in helping us learn from one another, in keeping open hearts and minds in the face of change. Together we can help people who see Confirmation in its current practice to imagine the benefit to God's mission, to the church, and indeed to the individuals themselves that deanery confirmations bring.

#### **Practically speaking this means:**

1. Understanding the normative age for Confirmation to be at least high school age.
2. Providing at least an academic year's formation process for both adults and youth (preferably two years for youth who have the option of combining the formation process with Journey to Adulthood).
3. Providing a comprehensive curriculum (see chart). This is not an ecclesiastical MCAS, but these are the areas that we expect will be covered in creative ways.
4. Establishing a mentor/co-journeyer program for youth and adult candidates.
5. Encouraging participation in youth and adult diocesan retreats with one of the bishops present, in addition to retreat opportunities offered in the parish (Not everyone will be able to attend the diocesan retreats so we encourage as an alternative joining with another congregation or two for a retreat.)
6. Including the expectation that a service project and/or mission trip is required of youth and adults.
7. Ensuring that leadership for Confirmation preparation is shared among a variety of congregational members for formation and in the planning and carrying out of liturgical events.

8. Having liturgical events in the congregation include an initial service of blessing and prayers for new candidates in the beginning of the formation process and one at the parish immediately following the confirmation service.
9. Making it a priority to seek out and encourage Confirmation/Reception for adults, young adults, and college-age populations.
10. Ensuring that support, leadership, and participation is forthcoming from each congregation in the planning and carrying out of retreats and worship services in the diocese and deanery.
11. Exploring the possibility of a deanery prayer vigil prior to the service.
12. Using the cathedral for some deanery confirmation services may be necessary in some cases; therefore, early commitments from parishes need to be established for scheduling purposes.
13. Planning of music at deanery confirmations will be done by the deanery with musicians from the deanery (If additional musicians are needed a list of folks who may be available will be provided.)
14. Music needs to be diverse and representative of the spectrum of musical resources and preferences in the diocese.