

Introduction:

Over the past two years I have had the honor of working with the confirmation ministry at Peace Lutheran Church. It has been exciting as I have been a part of teaching students what it means to follow Christ. I believe that in the past two year God has done some amazing work through the confirmation ministry here. However, I do not believe that we have the perfect plan and thus I am always praying and looking for ways to improve confirmation and other aspects of the youth ministry.

During our May Youth Council meeting, I posed the question, “How should we update the confirmation requirements?” I was expecting for us to make a few minor changes to the list of requirements. Thankfully, the rest of the Youth Council was willing to ask the tough question: “Why are we doing any of confirmation the way we are doing it?” They challenged the idea of confirmation being a three year program, and they questioned why confirmation took place on Wednesday nights during “youth group.”

Before making any radical changes, we decided to spend the next month in earnest prayer and seeking God’s will for the confirmation ministry here. In addition, we received input from Pastor Erik and Bishop Schoenhals to make sure we weren’t crossing any lines. We also tried to consider how to best help students grow in faith as Lutherans and more importantly as followers of Jesus Christ. After a month of prayer, thought, and discussion the Youth Council met again in June to draw up a proposal for confirmation. What follows is an explanation of the Youth Council’s proposal.

Class Content:

The content that should be covered in confirmation is fairly similar to what is currently covered. The five main parts of the Small Catechism (Ten Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, & Communion) have been and will continue to be taught and discussed. In addition to the Small Catechism, we believe it is important for students to have an understanding of the parts of scripture as well as how to read and study scripture so they may apply it to their lives. We also believe that the Faith Statement should be a much larger part of the entire process of confirmation.

Class Format:

The new format proposed for confirmation is a 30 week class completed in one year on Sunday afternoons or evenings (time of day TBD). This move shortens the amount of time to go through confirmation, from 3 years to 1 year, while still allow more than enough time to discuss and learn the content discussed above.

We believe the move to a one year program is beneficial for a couple reasons. First, we believe a one year program will help keep students focused and engaged in the ministry. Currently, the three year program begins to drag on. Second, the move will help when students come to Peace during their early teen years, but after the traditional confirmation has already begun. With a three year program, it is difficult for these students to enter the ministry as they have already missed important parts of the confirmation curriculum. With a one year program, students are able to wait until the next class begins and participate in the class from start to finish. It would also allow older students who have not been confirmed the opportunity to enroll in confirmation.

Moving the class from Wednesday nights to Sunday afternoons also allows confirmation to be more focused. Instead of trying to jam confirmation in the middle of youth group, confirmation will have its own time and space. We also believe this will also strengthen our Wednesday evening ministry by encouraging our students to invite their friends more often. (In the past, some students or parents who did not grow up in the Lutheran tradition have been leery

about going to “confirmation” on Wednesday evenings. Wednesdays would be designed to be even more welcoming to new visitors than the current format.) It also frees up Wednesday to spend time discussing other ideas, such as media, parents, alcohol, sex, etc..., from a biblical perspective.

To transition to the new format, the Youth Council proposes that both the upcoming 8th and 9th grade students start the new format this fall. We recognize that the upcoming 9th graders have already spent two years in confirmation and the upcoming 8th graders have completed one year of confirmation. Even so, we believe it is valuable for them to complete the new one year program. After this first year, our recommendation is that confirmation be open to all students who will be going into at least eighth grade at the beginning of confirmation. By waiting until students are in at least eighth grade, confirmands are better able to understand some of the concepts and ideas often beyond the cognitive ability of most sixth and seventh graders.

Memory Work:

Memory work was also discussed by the Youth Council as an important aspect of confirmation. Students would be expected to memorize such things as the 10 Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, occasional Bible verses, the books of the Bible, and the Small Catechism.

Use of Mentors:

Through our discussions, the Youth Council also considered the best way to implement the use of mentors. We recognized that spiritual growth often occurs when people are engaged in relationships with others who have gone before them. With this in mind, we believe each confirmand should have an adult mentor to walk beside them through confirmation.

Mentors was also the number one recommendation from Bishop Schoenhals when asked what he had seen or heard that was working really well for other congregations. His recommendation was for mentors to attend the class with the confirmands so they are able to discuss the topics and ideas one-on-one, something we would make sure we set aside time for each week.

Parents would work with their child in the process of selecting a mentor. Ideally, a confirmand would make a list of people with which they would feel comfortable and then give the list to a parent. That parent would follow up with the people on the list until a suitable mentor was found.

Proposed Minimum Commitments:

Attached to this explanation is a table which shows the new proposed minimum commitment guidelines. The Youth Council desired for the requirements to be simpler while holding confirmands to a higher level of accountability than they are presently being held. The major changes from past years are the dropping of Sunday School, Worship Responses, and Fellowship Events as requirements. We also discussed the idea that confirmands would be responsible for keeping track of their own progress.

Conclusion:

The Youth Council and I believe that the proposed changes for confirmation will be a much needed breath of fresh air when it comes to the confirmation ministry at Peace Lutheran Church. Our hope is that the changes help students view confirmation as a step in their lifelong process of following Christ instead a graduation in their faith. We recognize that there will be some things we have not thought about, and we enter into this change with a willingness to adapt when necessary so we may always strive for excellence.

Proposed Minimum Commitments:

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| Confirmation Classes | 80% attendance (24 out of 30) | Students must show up on time with their Bible, notebook, and any worksheets completed to be counted as present. |
| Confirmation Notebook | 100% Complete | All lessons, notes, handouts, etc... |
| Service Projects | 6 projects with a minimum of 12 hours | At least four projects must be completed with the group. The other two may be individual or with another group such as a school service project. Request for approval for outside projects must be submitted prior to the project taking place. |
| Worship Services | 75% Participation (40 out of 52+) | Lenten and other special services are included in this count. |
| Acolyte | 6 times a year | |
| Faith Statement | 4 drafts | Minimum of four drafts turned in at scheduled intervals. |
| Wednesday Youth Group | 50% Attendance (18 out of 36+) | |
| Mentor | | Mentors need to be fully committed for the year. |
| Memorize Small Catechism | 100% | Evaluated by parents & mentor. |

Tracking of requirements will be done by students in their notebooks. These numbers will periodically be checked against the official records to maintain accuracy.