



THE EPISCOPAL  
DIOCESE OF OHIO

## Diocesan Confirmation Preparation

*Confirmation: The sacramental rite in which the candidates "express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop" (BCP, p. 860).*

Parish clergy and leaders are fully equipped to prepare confirmands to express a mature commitment to Christ in the ways that make sense to the individual and community context. This confirmation preparation program is a humble offering to parishes of the Diocese, and not at all a prerequisite for confirmation. We hope that these suggestions in part or whole will support the ministry that you and the Holy Spirit are already doing in your parish and region!

With fervent prayer and love for you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna Sutterisch" followed by a small cross symbol.

The Rev. Anna Sutterisch  
Canon for Christian Formation  
The Episcopal Diocese of Ohio

## Proposed Structure

Through a combination of parish-specific formation, mentorship, and inter-regional relationships, candidates for confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation will participate in spiritual and vocational discernment on an ongoing basis.

Synchronous formation will occur at an overnight retreat at Bellwether Farm. Youth (9th grade to 12 grade, roughly 14-17 year olds) and adults (18+) will separate by age for the teaching and discussion units. Worship, meals, and some structured conversation time will be intergenerational, following SafeChurch policies. The retreat in 2024 is scheduled for March 22-23.

Asynchronous formation will occur at the parish level through six mentorship sessions. The text “Walk In Love: Episcopal Beliefs and Practices” by Scott Gunn and Melody Wilson Shobe will provide structured topics, suggested discussion questions, and conversation starters. Each topic will be enlivened by the confirmand through suggested activities like service in the parish, prayer practices, or writing and artistic reflections.

Mentorship sessions can occur before or after the retreat, or a combination. Mentorship can occur 1-1 or in small groups, depending on the context and needs of the parish. We highly encourage cross-parish and regional confirmation mentorship groups! Confirmation will occur at regional combined confirmations, or at the Bishop's visitation to a parish.

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## Feedback

This is an experiment! We are trying to offer confirmation prep that balances the experience, perspectives, and capacities of local parishes and the Diocese at large. It would be helpful for us to know who is participating in this program, how you are structuring it, how it's going, and how we can support you.

Fill out this form to indicate your participation:

<https://form.jotform.com/232495028138155>

## FAQs

*Do I have to participate in this program to be confirmed?*

No! The BCP states that confirmands must be baptized, are sufficiently instructed in the Christian Faith, are penitent for their sins, and are ready to affirm their confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Book of Common Prayer, p. 860). Your preparedness can be determined by a conversation with your priest or spiritual leader.

*What if I can't come to the retreat?*

That's ok! Again, your preparedness for confirmation is determined by a conversation with your priest. We hope your mentorship sessions provide ample content and community. Our goal is to offer confirmation retreats at least annually.

*What if I want to be received or reaffirm my faith?*

Cool! This program is a great starter for anyone looking to be confirmed, received, reaffirmed, or deepen their faith. It is also a good discernment tool- participating in this prep doesn't mean you must be confirmed!

*Is there financial support available for materials?*

Yes! We will bulk order the book "Walk In Love" to get a discounted rate of \$16 per book (regular cost \$22.) If this is a hardship, we are happy to provide the books for less or no cost. There are also scholarships available for retreat fees. Financial stress will not preclude you from participating in confirmation preparation!

## Mentorship Sessions

Similar to pre-marital counseling, candidates for confirmation will meet at least 6 times with a spiritual mentor. This can be 1-1 (following Safe Church guidelines for minors) or in small groups, such as a regularly scheduled youth group meeting or Formation hour. We highly encourage parishes in proximity or mission areas to combine and share resources! Parish priests, retired clergy, lay leaders, or any combination of these are good ideas for confirmation mentors, although the mentors should be consistent throughout the sessions.

### *Recommended structure:*

The six sessions are organized around the themes outlined in the book “Walk in Love.” Both mentor and candidates should read this section before the session, and reflect on or write their answers to the discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

Alternatively, extra sessions can be scheduled to literally read the chapters out loud in a group and discuss as you go. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter can guide the discussion, and confirmands can also generate questions of their own.

Suggestions for “homework” to help confirmands get out of the page into the world are included below. Perhaps have your confirmands choose one to try before the next session.

## Sample Meeting Schedule:

### 1. Introduction, Chapters 1-3

#### *Homework Ideas:*

- Ask your parents why they chose to baptize you. If you are a parent with a baptized child, reflect on why you chose to have them baptized.
- Reflect on the journey or pilgrimage toward confirmation. What is stirring your heart? Giving you angst? Stirring up energy? Take a walk, phone a friend, or write it in a journal.

### 2. Sacraments, Chapters 4-8

#### *Homework Ideas:*

- Talk with members of your altar guild to learn more about the spiritual practices for preparing Communion.
- Visit or tune in to another church where they celebrate Eucharist (Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, etc.) Notice the similarities and differences in the liturgy
- Reflect on which of the seven sacraments you've witnessed or experienced. Try making confession with your priest.

### 3. Marking Time, Chapters 9-12

#### *Homework Ideas:*

- Pray the daily office for 21 days (or use a podcast!) and reflect on how this rhythm affects your daily life.
- Visit an Evensong service (virtually or in person)
- Bake your way through the liturgical calendar- King's Cake, Hot Cross Buns, St. Agatha cake, etc.

### 4. Basic Beliefs, Chapters 13-16

#### *Homework Ideas:*

- Choose a chapter or story from the Bible and memorize it, illuminate it, respond to it with poetry, or choose another way to digest it!
- Ask members of your community some of the ways they pray and try it out– walking a labyrinth, a prayer journal, rosary, etc.

## 5. The Church and the Trinity, Chapters 17-23

### *Homework Ideas:*

- Read through the Catechism and note which questions resonate with you, give you pause, or create more questions.
- Choose one way to volunteer or engage in the life of your home church in a new way.
- Take a spiritual gifts inventory, or read about spiritual gifts. Reflect on which gifts you have been given to provide delight, meaning, or service for others.

## 6. What's Next: Chapters 24-26

### *Homework Ideas:*

- Write a letter to yourself about what you've learned, explored, wrestled with, or realized during this season of confirmation prep. You'll read it either on your confirmation day, or a year later.
- Practice your response for when someone might ask "why are you a Christian?" Why do you believe in God?" or "What is an Episcopalian?" (a la an elevator speech)
- Reflect on intentions you'd like to set in your spiritual life, practices and community. Would you like to be more involved in the liturgy? Committees? Set a disciplined prayer practice?

## Retreat- What to Expect

One lay and one clergy leader will lead teaching units and discussions. Adults will form one group, and youth will form another group. Worship, meals, and some structured discussions will be intergenerational. Another leader will lead/coordinate worship and serve as chaplain for the weekend. Bishop Anne and Rev. Anna Sutterisch will be present to provide teaching and support.

### *Sample Retreat Schedule*

<b>Friday</b>		
4:30	Check in	
6:00	Dinner	Ice breakers
7:00	<u>Unit 1: Who Am I?</u> Who am I as a spiritual being? What has brought me to this place?	Age Groups
8:30	Share outcomes from Unit 1	Plenary
9:00	Compline	Plenary
<b>Saturday</b>		
8am	Breakfast	
9am	Morning Prayer	Plenary
9:30am	<u>Unit 2: Why Believe?</u> Why believe in anything? Why God?	Age Groups
11:00am	Free Time. Private Confession offered	
12:00pm	Lunch and Noonday	Sit in pairs youth/adult
1:00pm	<u>Unit 3: Faith Lab</u> How does faith impact my daily life? What tools can equip me to be grounded in my faith when things get hard?	Age Groups
3:00pm	Conversation with Bishop Anne	Plenary
4:00pm	Closing Eucharist	Plenary