

Confirmation... WHAT?!

So, what exactly *is* Confirmation? Some of you may have been looking forward to it or maybe some of you may be here because your parents are making you “be confirmed” because it’s what you’re supposed to do. Others of you may just want to meet new friends, or stand up in front of church and look cool on Confirmation Sunday or are curious about the whole faith thing. Whatever your story, it’s a good one, and YOU are an important part of Confirmation. We are so glad you’re here and look forward to this time with you. Now, let’s get started!



“Sign me up!”



“Uhhh... what?”



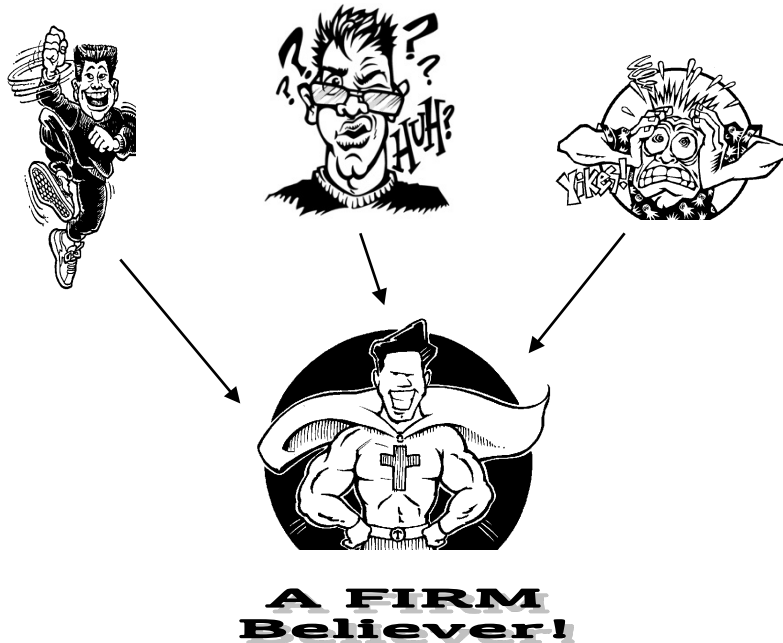
“NOOOOO!!!”

The word Confirmation means “**with firmness**” (“con”= with (as in *chili con queso* – *chili with cheese*); “firm-ation”= firmness). As we are in Confirmation, we are taking the things we’ve heard about God and “making them firm” for our lives. More than likely, though, when it comes to what each of us knows about God, we’re all a little different. You will probably fit into one of these categories. See which one best describes you:

- You know about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit because your parents, friends, pastors, teachers, etc. have told you about Him. Besides that, you’ve gone to church and/or a Christian school your entire life, so you’ve heard most of the big Bible stories and can tell others how they relate to your life.
- You’ve heard a lot about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit and have read a bunch of Bible stories, but it all seems like a bunch of baloney. This Confirmation thing is just silly, and you’re only doing it because your parents are making you.
- You don’t know much (or anything at all!) about God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. Either your parents haven’t made you come to church, or you haven’t had the opportunity to come to church. As you come into Confirmation, you don’t really know what to expect and may or may not be curious.

FYI - It doesn’t matter what category you fit into... what matters is what you make of this experience! **Confirmation is everyone’s chance to learn!** If you take these next few months seriously and keep an open mind and an open heart, you’ll be an expert when you finish. It won’t matter at all what you knew when you first started – what will matter is what you do with what you learn during

your experience. It is our hope that on your Confirmation Day you will like what you've learned and "make it firm" for your life!



What things do we "make firm" in Confirmation?

(Don't feel overwhelmed if you don't know what all this stuff means – you will!)

One thing we make firm in Confirmation is **God's grace**. The Greek word for grace in the New Testament is *charis*, which means "gift." God's grace is His gift of love, kindness, and forgiveness to us and the world, *just because*. Grace is not something we earn (like an A on a test after we study really hard) or something we're "good enough for" (like making the drill team or soccer team); it is something given to us by God through Jesus Christ. In Confirmation we learn about and experience grace, and then we decide what we're going to do with it!

Another thing we "make firm" in Confirmation is our **baptism**. Baptism, in one way or another, involves water as a symbol of God's gift of love and grace to us. God created us; God loves us. Baptism is a sacred thing, and we all have different experiences with it:

- Some of us were baptized as babies, before we were able to respond to God's love. If this is the case, we probably don't remember it. Our parents brought us in front of the church, and God did God's thing! God's love through the Holy Spirit was accepted for us by our parents until we were old enough to accept it for ourselves. If you were baptized as a child, Confirmation is your opportunity to "remember your baptism." It's your time to say, "I know accept God's love for myself. I choose to 'make firm' my baptism and continue to live my life in God's love."
- Some of us have not been baptized yet! Now don't worry - God loves us just as much as God does those who have been baptized; we just have not received the sacrament of the water on our heads. If you have not been baptized yet, Confirmation can be your time to be baptized.

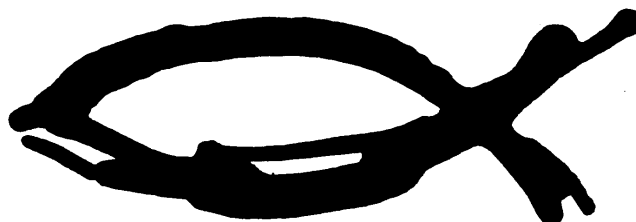
You can choose to accept God's love for you through the Holy Spirit and commit to a life in that love as you chose to be baptized.

Finally, in Confirmation, we "make firm" our commitment. This means that we take an honest look at the Christian faith and decide whether or not we want to claim it for ourselves. Do I believe that God created me and loves me? Do I want to admit that I'm not perfect, and I fall short of what God calls me to be? Do I accept that God forgives my sin through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? These are tough questions, but they are at the heart of Confirmation. If we do decide to "claim the name 'Christian,'" we commit to these beliefs and to making Jesus Christ #1 in our lives. That doesn't mean we live the perfect life – we can't! We can, though, (and should!) live our lives the best we can for Christ. As Confirmands, we are past the point of being children, and though we are not adults yet, we *are* old enough to make our own decisions concerning our faith.

The greatest part of Confirmation is that it gives us a chance to make our relationship with Jesus Christ a very real and personal thing in our lives. You'll learn all about what a relationship with Christ means in the next few weeks, but for now, here's a sneak peek:

- God as your *best friend*! Your #1 fan!
- choosing to go to church rather than your parents' "making" you go
- being *active* in the church (not just "going")
- reading the Bible to get to know God better
- talking and listening to God in prayer
- hanging out with Christian friends who love God and are cool like He is!
- doing God's work (loving and helping others and showing the world God's love and power!)
- making decisions that God is proud of
- telling others about Christ in your schools, families, sport teams, neighborhoods
- growing! Learning more about the Church, the Christian faith, yourself, and God
- having fun with the Spirit of God! The Holy Spirit is your way to enjoy God's presence, guidance, and blessings.

Whew! It seems like there's a lot to this process! Well, there is, and we hope you take it seriously. We also hope you have a lot of fun, too, though! It's going to be 3 months of learning, growing, praying, and playing that will change your life for the better. Know that as you "make firm your faith," God's Spirit – through the Church - will be with you and will guide you. ***Enjoy the journey!***



“The Basics” of Confirmation

GOD: This is kind of a given, but really and truly, we will learn all about God during Confirmation. We’ll learn who God is, what God has done and continues to do, and what God has to do with us.

RELATIONSHIPS: During Confirmation, one of the most important things we will do is build relationships with God and each other. The Great Commandment that Jesus gave us is to *love* – love God and love our neighbor. In all we do these next few months, we will be trying to live out this commandment. That means we will be getting to know others, sharing our faith with each other, and enjoying fellowship. We’re going to be all about relationships in Confirmation this year!

WEEKLY CLASSES: For the next few months, we will get together to talk about our faith. We’ll go over what it means to be a Christian and a United Methodist, how our faith came to be, and how to live our lives for Christ today. We’ll ask and answer questions, hang out, read Scripture, pray, and play together!

READING: As fun as weekly classes are, they are only part of Confirmation. The rest of the good times come in this handy-dandy Confirmation manual. Each week you’ll have a lesson of reading to do to prepare for your class time. Have no fear, though! Your reading is relatively short, and it is all VERY important. Trust us; you don’t want to miss out on what’s in here... it will make all the difference in your Confirmation experience! (P.S. An even cooler book than this one is your Bible; bring it to class with you!)

WORSHIP: Worship is an important part of the confirmation journey. Our expectation is that each family will be in worship each week. For right now, that means carving out time to worship together online, whether you do that as the services are livestreamed or at a different time is not important, but it is important that you do this together and talk about what you experience. We hope that as a family you will share what is meaningful to you in each service.

JOURNALING: There is a “Journal” page at the end of each of your lessons. We encourage you to use this space to write any thoughts, prayers, and/or questions you have as you read through the lesson each week. Journaling is a great spiritual discipline that can really help us grow in our faith and come to know God more!

FAITH PARTNERS: You will have several adult friends who will participate with you in your Confirmation: your teachers, your pastor, your parents, and your “Faith Partner.” Your Faith Partner will be your “special buddy” or “mentor” during Confirmation. He or she is there for you to talk to about your faith and Confirmation experience, support you in your Christian walk, and just hang out with you for fun!

YOUR PARENTS: Your parents are there for you to talk with at home as you go through Confirmation. Talk with them about your experience over meals, while you’re riding with them in the car, or at home after church or school so that they can share in your journey of faith.

YOUTH MINISTRY ACTIVITIES: Confirmation is not the only fun at First Methodist McKinney! You are transitioning into the larger youth ministries of our church. It can be a little confusing at times, but just remember that we will go out of our way to mark events you are invited to with the words Confirmation or 6th Grade. As soon as you are Confirmed, you will be invited to all youth ministry activities that we do (including all summer activities and summer camp). Confirmation is a focused time, and we want you to keep Confirmation activities the priority during this class. But once the class is over, we hope that you will make youth ministry activities a part of your life!

To Be Confirmed or Not to be Confirmed... **THAT IS THE QUESTION**

It's up to you! Read below about the decision to be confirmed. What does it mean? What if you're not ready? Is now your only chance?

If I am confirmed, what happens?

- We will either “remember your baptism” (if you have already been baptized) or baptize you. The United Methodist Church accepts all previous baptisms and gets excited about all *new* baptisms because baptism is a symbol of God’s unconditional love for each and every one of us, and it begins or continues a lifetime journey of faith!
- At your Confirmation, one of our pastors will direct hands to be placed on you. This is a sign from Scripture of begin “set apart.” Moses laid hands on Joshua when it was Joshua’s turn to lead and, in the New Testament, whenever people were sent out for ministry it was signified by the laying on of hands. You will be surrounded (either physically, virtually, or in spirit) by other Christians as we pray for you and set you apart for a life of following Jesus.
- You will join the church! Actually, you will join several churches! You will be a member of Christ’s universal Church (with a capital C - all Christians around the world), the United Methodist Church (our denomination), and First United Methodist Church of McKinney.
- You will be sent out into the world! As a Confirmation graduate, you will be a disciple of Jesus Christ – called to love and serve all those around you and be God’s light in the world.
- You will begin a lifetime journey! One of the best things about being a Christian is that you never stop growing. *Get excited* because as long as you live, you’ll be getting to know God better and experiencing His goodness in bigger and better ways!

Why now?

Well, obviously, now is a great time to be confirmed because you’re going through Confirmation! 😊 This year is your special opportunity to say “yes!” to Christ. As you grow into your teenage years and beyond, you are old enough to be responsible for your own faith. You no longer need to rely on what others tell you about being a Christian – you can “claim the name” *Christian* for yourself!

Now is also a good time to be confirmed because Confirmation teaches you a lot about the Christian faith that you may otherwise never know. It’s great preparation for taking the big step into the Christian faith. Plus, your Confirmation Day gives you the chance to be up at the front of the church and make a formal declaration of your decision. Yes, you can wait to be confirmed, but if you feel ready to respond to God’s love to you in Christ, now is the perfect time to commit!

What if I decide I don't want to be confirmed... at least not yet?

That's fine! *You do not have to be confirmed.* You can be confirmed later on in your life, or you don't ever have to be confirmed. What matters to God in your relationship with Him is your *heart*, not your Confirmation graduation certificate. If you choose not to be confirmed, you are still welcome to participate in any and all church or youth activities. What we ask of you as you go through Confirmation is that you take the experience seriously and keep an open mind and an open heart. Please be respectful of all who are enjoying Confirmation and never underestimate the ways God can touch your heart and change your mind during these next few months.

Our prayer for all of you – whether you say yes or no to being confirmed – is the same:

“... that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 3:17-19

