

# Middle School Youth/Confirmation Parent Guide

## What is Confirmation?

*Confirmation is a human-made practice or "rite" in which a person publicly confirms his/her faith in Jesus. In the Lutheran Church, Confirmation is also sometimes known as "Affirmation of Baptism"... which is exactly what we seek to celebrate on Confirmation Sunday! We affirm our faith that God comes to us in Baptism and names us and claims us as God's own beloved.*

The Lutheran Church practices infant baptism because Lutherans believe that God's Holy Spirit gives faith to all, even to infants. Confirmation is an opportunity for a person who may have been baptized as a baby (and thus, had no say in the process!) to learn about the Christian Tradition in order that they might stand up on their own and publically affirm that faith. They are "confirming" the gift that they receive in Baptism.

## Does My Youth Have To Be Confirmed?

Youth are inundated with messages about Christianity in our culture, many of which have nothing to do with grace, love, and compassion – The Confirmation process is a wonderful way to give youth good information and experience about what it means to live Christian life. Does your youth *have* to be confirmed? No. They don't have to be confirmed- but the opportunity for this rite of faithful observance exists and is one we want to equip our families to celebrate with their youth.

The rite of confirmation, sometimes referred to as "Affirmation of Baptism", is part of our heritage and tradition as Lutherans. This heritage brings a central focus to God's **grace**: a focus not on anything that we do to deserve God's love- but a focus on what God has done for us through Jesus. In addition, our Lutheran tradition is rebellious and intellectual. We seek to create opportunities for folks to engage with the truly revolutionary message of the Gospel. We want our youth to explore, wrestle, and struggle with their gift of baptism. The rite of Confirmation is one way our tradition makes space for those questions to be stirred up and for our youth and families to walk the alongside one another in affirming the truth proclaimed at our baptisms: that we are God's beloved, joyful recipients of God's gift of grace.

**What steps lead to a person getting confirmed?** A person becomes confirmed by:

1. Indicating that they wish to make this public statement of faith.
2. Studying and learning about Scripture.
3. Demonstrating their beliefs through their lifestyle and expressing a desire for their life to show forth a measure of Jesus' love, compassion and service.

### **What is the confirmation process at West Linn Lutheran Church?**

The middle school youth time Sunday afternoons is the starting point for our relationships and faith formation during the middle school years. All youth in grades 6 through 8 meet on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5th Sunday afternoons during the school year from 4-5:30pm.

We spend time together with games, conversations, engaging tough issues of the day, prayer and, of course, cracking open our bibles!

In addition to these Sunday afternoon activities, middle school youth are encouraged to participate in the life of the congregation through Sunday morning opportunities in worship leadership (reading, prayers, ushering, slides, and the coffee cart) and service activities as they arise.

### **But what about \*actual\* Confirmation?**

Right... that comes at the end of middle school. For now, our focus is on building relationships with one another and forming faith alongside each other through all the twists and turns that come!

But... if you're curious: Beginning in the spring of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, middle schoolers are asked to select an adult mentor in the community to accompany them in the process of developing their faith statement and preparing for confirmation. Over the summer between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade years, youth and their mentors spend time walking in faith together. In the fall of 9<sup>th</sup> grade year, confirmands meet separately from middle school youth, attend a retreat and work towards preparing a statement of faith to share with the community... declaring their faith and affirming their baptism in the public rite of Confirmation on All Saints Sunday each fall!

## **The Family and Faith Formation**

WLLC firmly believes that parents and adult mentors are the primary faith teachers. Our responsibility as the church is to support you as you raise your children. We say that faith is "caught, not taught" and this requires time and mindfulness for all involved. In terms of faith, as well as other life concerns: it takes a village to raise a child!

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And... Sometimes raising a child can feel just as overwhelming as it is joyous... neither of us (church or parents) has all the answers, but we as church leaders are committed to being in this together. We hope you will be too. Ultimately, we expect that you will be an active part of the Faith Formation *and* Confirmation process- because you are the one with the most intimate and consistent relationship with your teens!

### Our Partnership with Your Family

#### What you can expect from us

- You can count on us to present the Biblical narrative to your child in ways that are engaging, honest, and relevant.
- You can count on us to **keep you informed** of your child's progress, behavior, growing edges and affirmations as well as if your child voices anything that causes us concern.
- You can count on us to **support YOU** as the PARENT! If you make a decision that your child doesn't agree with (and you will!), if we hear about it (and we might!), you can trust that we will support your decision as what is in your child's best interest, regardless of what their friends might be doing.
- You can count on us to be there for you! If you ever have questions or concerns about your child's instruction, faith development, or anything else, please contact us so that we can **work together with you** for the best for your child.
- **Clear Scheduling and Calendars** we will do everything in our power to let you know what's going on well in advance of when it actually happens. For the most part, things happen on Sundays and retreats and camps are announced as far in advance as we are able to book/commit. (Confirmation Camp is typically schedule 9 months in advance).

#### What we expect from you

- We expect that you will **participate in worship** alongside your teen. For some families, that means coming when there's no soccer. For others, a different story. We totally understand. The hope is that your worship life as a

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family is a clear expectation to your teen, whatever that iteration looks like for you.

- We expect that you would **encourage your teen as a Sunday Servant** (lector, usher, greeter, computer slide operator, coffee cart barista etc.) This is their way of already being and becoming a leader in their church community and making this space their own.
- We expect that you will be **asking your child** about what they are wondering about God and themselves.
- We expect that if you have questions, comments, or concerns, you would **contact us so we can have a discussion.**

## Putting it Together: ALL the Things for middle schoolers

### Middle School Youth Nights

**As described above.** It's our best entry point for building relationship and community with one another. The best opportunity for inviting friends. The best way to connect and be apart of one another's lives on a regular basis. Again, see above for more information....

### Sunday Mornings

**Youth are already leaders in the church.** Sunday mornings are an opportunity for all members of the WLLC community to engage in creating community together. This is true of our middle school youth as well!

Youth are invited and encouraged to be trained and lead in several ways on Sunday mornings: in worship as lectors, ushers, slide operators and greeters etc. Between services as baristas at Liquid Love or doorkeepers and helpers with our Godly Play program. Or as learners and participants in Faith Enrichment hour. Have a musical talent? What to be on worship team? There's no age limit for that! Sunday mornings are a time for everyone.... Seriously... EVERYONE to be involved in our community.

We also have a Youth Bible Study from 9:30-10:00. We gather in the Faith Formation room to spend some time discussing the bible verses of the weekend.

### Confirmation Camp

**What is Confirmation Camp?** Camp is a chance for youth to explore faith and spirituality out of the context of normal life.

Every summer confirmation students travel down to rural Cheshire Oregon (approximately 40 minutes outside of Eugene) to Camp Lutherwood Oregon for a opportunity for dedicated study and fun. Lutherwood provides interesting and dynamic programming (swimming, rock climbing, canoeing, games, hiking, campfires, community building and much more) in concert with individual churches own confirmation teaching process. Youth are expected to attend camp three times.

Registration information about camp will go out to families in the Spring. We now typically go to Confirmation Camp with other churches from our cluster during the last week of June. For more information about Camp Lutherwood visit [www.lutherwoodoregon.com](http://www.lutherwoodoregon.com)

### Day Camp Helpers

**Our busiest week of the summer at WLLC is Day Camp!** Youth that have completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to sign up as teen volunteers to help with our annual week of Day Camp in the summer. Your leadership is essential to making this week run smoothly!

## **The ACTUAL Confirmation Process... beginning in the spring of your 8<sup>th</sup> grade year**

**The Rite of Confirmation/Affirmation of Baptism takes place** on All Saint's Sunday during your 9<sup>th</sup> grade year, typically at the late worship service. All Saint's Sunday usually falls on the first Sunday in November.

**Faith Statements** are prepared as a part of this more intensive process and are opportunities for youth to make a public statement of where they are at in their faith life. Because we are a community that recognizes we are always forming our faith, this is simply a way for us to connect the rich heritage of our past with the growing faith of our future. Sometimes our faith statements can look very much like different sections of the Bible: declarative. Proud. Strong. OR lamenting, questioning, wondering. All are valid. All are true. And we use this sacred time together in confirmation to collect a snapshot of where we are at in our journey together.

**Sponsors** The summer before heading into 9<sup>th</sup> grade parents/guardians in concert with the pastors help the youth choose a sponsor from the congregation. These sponsors do various activities with the youth and help them as they begin to construct their faith statements.

**A Confirmation Festive Meal** takes place the Saturday before Confirmation Sunday. At this time youth will read their faith statements/questions to family and friends. Parents are asked to help with the financial cost of this event and are responsible for the selection of the meal and invitations to personal friends and families.

**Robes** are worn on this day. You will need to be fitted for the appropriate sized robe 2 weeks before the Confirmation Day.

**Reception** Typically a reception for all of you and your families will take place between worship services and the congregation is also invited. Often there is cake.