

AFFIRMATION HANDBOOK

FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, GUIDES



HOLY CROSS
LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

In everything we do in Growth Ministry, we want to develop life-long followers of Christ by nourishing and arming homes to be places of launching, nurturing, and living faith.

WHAT IS AFFIRMATION? WHY ISN'T IT CALLED CONFIRMATION ?

Affirmation is part of the faith journey in developing life-long Christians at Holy Cross. The term 'affirmation' refers to encouraging students to learn how to affirm their faith verbally through their words and actions.

"Confirmation" is the act of the confirmand, the pastor, and the church during a specific worship service "confirming" the work and development of faith in these students.

WHY DOES IT TAKE THREE YEARS+?

Each year has a specific focus to help the individual learner comprehend and understand the truth of God's Word as they continue their life-long journey of faith.

- **Year 1** – focuses on the question: "Is there a God?"
- **Year 2** – focuses on 'catechesis' or the specific study of the Six Chief Doctrines (or beliefs) of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as contained in Martin Luther's Small Catechism.
- **Year 3 and 3+** - focuses on how we live our key doctrines out in daily life and reviews the questions students will be asked on Confirmation Sunday. Year 3 also continues into the fall of the next year. During this time, we focus on preparing and mentoring these students for life in high school as well as developing

their statements of faith that are shared with the congregation.

When should a student start affirmation?

While the “norm” will be for the program to involve 6th-8th graders, parents/guardians have the option to go against the norm. The process can begin at any age. For example, a 5th grader may have the biblical basics they need to understand the catechism and the maturity to apply the sound doctrine to their daily life. Therefore, they should begin the catechetical instruction and be confirmed upon completion. Or, perhaps someone is not ready to confirm his/her faith at 8th grade; they should wait until they are ready to make an affirmation of their faith.

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM PARENTS/GUARDIANS?

‘GUIDE’ - Small Group Leaders

One of the foundational blocks of our style of catechetical instruction is small group leader. The leaders have a small group of 5-8 students whom they lead through discussion during the lesson time each week. This enables the students the opportunity to inwardly digest or process the topic given to them each session. To be a leader requires you to be at each meeting. If you are unable to be at a meeting please inform the DCE or class leader and then find a possible substitute. Regular training and support meetings are scheduled throughout the year and are also an important part of this role to encourage and equip you for this ministry to students.

Memory Work

For each session, the students will be given memory work and it is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure he/she is studying and memorizing. There is a page you sign once the student has memorized the verse that should be returned to the church at the end of the school year.

At-Home Study

Take time and sit as a family to discuss lesson themes and topics and how they have influenced your own life experiences in five simple steps:

1. Share,
2. Read,
3. Talk,
4. Pray,
5. Bless.

Also, any missed lessons must be made up at home with your child using Right Now Media for 1st and 2nd Year students and in your student's workbook for 3rd Year students. Links for each classroom can be found on our website.

WHAT ARE STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR?

Attendance

As you attend, we expect you to be both physically and mentally present. The more effort you put into studying and learning, the more that you will gain from these lessons. It is expected that all students attend classes as often as possible. However, when not able to be present for our scheduled class time, the student should complete the coursework at home with parents/guardians and submit any questions/work on RightNowMedia. You may not have more than 5 absences without making up coursework. Otherwise, the student will need to make up the year.

Worship Attendance

Our weekly worship is where God feeds us with His precious Word and Sacraments (see Matthew 4:4). We set a standard of attending 75% of worship as a way of getting into the routine of consistent worship attendance. Midweek services are extra credit.

Memory Work

Peter encourages all Christians, "Always be prepared to answer everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). Memorizing scripture

and its meaning is one way to prepare yourself to always be ready to state what you believe and why.

Memory work is recited at home and during our Affirmation lesson time. Memory work may serve as a “verse of the week” for the entire family, or family devotions may revolve around the part of the catechism that is being memorized.

We will ask parents to sign off on each memory assignment. You will find the memorization outline on our website.

Service Hours

We do not want service hours to be a “have to.” However, you need to participate in service hours to gain experience serving the Lord. Monthly our students will have an opportunity to serve with their small groups. Other areas to serve include assisting on Sundays with our Kids Ministry, being a part of the worship team, volunteering to help in our food pantry, etc. You can also serve with organizations outside of Holy Cross.

Sermon Summaries

Sermon Summaries are used as a tool to enable families the opportunity to discuss our worship services throughout the following week.

- Year 1 students need to complete 6,
- Year 2 students need to complete 10,
- Year 3 students need to complete 15.

After jotting down notes during the message/sermon, take the yellow form home with you and fill it out as you discuss as a family the points raised. This form is also available online on our website.

Statement of Faith & Conversations

Year 3 students who have completed all responsibilities will write a personal statement of their faith that he or she will share with the congregation during a special event the Friday before Confirmation Sunday. Each of these will focus on how God has influenced his or her faith development and what they have learned through their affirmation experience. Also, during the sharing night, students will be asked a series of questions about key doctrines.

Acolyting

All students will be put on a schedule to serve as acolytes. You will have the opportunity to 'block out' certain dates that you know you will be gone for. If you are unable to make your assigned serve, you are responsible for finding a substitute and letting church staff know who that is. The list of acolytes and family contact information is also included in the weekly acolyte email.

When scheduled to acolyte please be in the vestry (robe room) 10 minutes before the start of the service to find a robe. Sign your name to the acolyte schedule on the robe cabinet to show you were present. Dress appropriately! Dress pants or skirts with dress shoes are preferred.

Completion

The process of affirming your faith is more than just going through the motions. As a way to standardize the process as we look at what your child has completed, we will be keeping track of the following through a point system

- Attendance- Each session attended is worth 5 points. If you make up a lesson, those 5 points will be added back into your total. (Total- 150 points)
- Memory Work- Keep track of the memory work you are learning at home on the sheet that was given to you at orientation. It is found on our website. One point is given for turning in your sheet and 1 point is given for every memory verse that has been signed off on. (Total- 30 points)
- Service hours are not required but can serve as extra credit. You must fill out an attached form if you do any service hours, either here at Holy Cross or somewhere else and get a non-parent signature. (Earn 10 points per service opportunity you do)

- Sermon Summaries- Earn 3 points per sermon note you complete. Can earn extra points for additional sermon notes that are above the requirement. (Earn 18 points for 1st Year, 30 points for 2nd Year, and 45 points for 3rd Year)
- Statement of Faith and Conversations- 3rd Year Students Only- Turn in your rough draft and earn 20 points
- Acolyting- Make sure you sign in on the posted acolyte schedule in the vestry in order to get credit for the times you acolyte. If you fill in for someone, please sign in as well. (1 point per time you acolyte or fill in for someone)

You must get at least 75% of the points available to move onto the next grade.

- 1st Year- at least 150 out of a possible 200 points
- 2nd Year- at least 162 out of a possible 215 points
- 3rd Year- at least 188 out of a possible 250 points.