



Diocese of the

MID-ATLANTIC

Anglican Church in North America

Diocesan Policy on Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation

February 20, 2023

The *Book of Common Prayer (2019)* includes this “Preface to Confirmation:”

The Anglican Church requires a public and personal profession of the Faith from every adult believer in Jesus Christ. Confirmation or Reception by a Bishop is its liturgical expression. Confirmation is clearly grounded in Scripture: the Apostles prayed for, and laid their hands on those who had already been baptized (2 timothy 1:6-7; acts 8:14-17; 19:6).

In Confirmation, through the Bishop’s laying on of hands and prayer for daily increase in the Holy Spirit, God strengthens the believer for Christian life in the service of Christ and his kingdom. Grace is God’s gift, and we pray that he will pour out his Holy Spirit on those who have already been made his children by adoption and grace in Baptism.

At the direction of the Bishop, and after public reaffirmation of their baptismal promises, those having made adult professions of faith in other Christian traditions (including those confirmed in other traditions) are *received* into the Anglican Church with prayer and the laying on of hands by a Bishop.

Confirmed believers who are already members of this Church (including those received from other traditions as above, those returning to active Christian discipleship after lapsing, and those experiencing a renewal of Christian commitment or significant life transition) may also *reaffirm* the pledges made to Christ and his Church with prayer and the laying on of hands by a Bishop.

Note especially 2 Timothy 1:5-7, which shows the laying on of hands upon the believer by the apostle/bishop:

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

This laying on of hands by Paul is what we would call Timothy’s “confirmation.” 1 Timothy 4:14, which refers to the laying on of hands by “the council of elders,” is a reference to Timothy’s ordination. And Acts 16:1 indicates that Timothy was apparently already a disciple, a

committed believer, when Paul first met him. Yet Paul, as the apostle, laid hands on him for the strengthening of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life.

The above Preface makes clear a number of key points:

1. All persons in our Church are expected to make a mature (adult) affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ and receive the laying on of hands by a bishop of our Church.
2. The laying on of hands by the bishop is done in “Confirmation,” “Reception,” or “Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows,” as follows:
 - “Confirmation” is for those who are making a mature (adult) affirmation of their faith in Jesus Christ for the first time in a service of public worship of any Christian denomination.
 - “Reception” or “being received” is for those who have previously made a mature (adult) affirmation of their faith in Jesus Christ in another Christian denomination and who are now being received into the Anglican Church. Reception is not limited to those who come from the Roman Catholic or other churches with the historic episcopate, because the bishop will lay hands on those being received. Those coming into the Anglican Church in North America who have previously been confirmed in The Episcopal Church should be received.
 - “Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows” is for those who have previously been confirmed in the Anglican Church or received into the Anglican Church and who now wish to reaffirm their faith. This is a repeatable experience. In addition to the examples offered in the Preface, above, spouses of those being Confirmed or Received often wish to reaffirm their faith at the same time.
3. There is no minimum or standard age for Confirmation. However, it marks a mature commitment to Christ. Young people should not be confirmed because the parents want them to be or because it is expected that all children of a certain grade will be confirmed. An appropriate level of maturity is not normally reached until high school.
4. If adults are baptized when the bishop is *not* present, they should be presented to the bishop for the laying on of hands in Confirmation at a later time.
5. If adults are baptized when the bishop *is* present, the bishop will mark the newly baptized adult with oil and the sign of the Cross and lay hands upon him or her. Such persons are considered to be both baptized and confirmed. They are not to be presented for Confirmation at a subsequent time.

Notes on the Confirmation liturgy:

The Confirmation rite of the Anglican Church in North America should be used. It can be downloaded here: bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net. There are a number of important changes in this

final BCP version from previous drafts. Be sure your church is using the BCP version throughout the service.

The liturgy begins on page 175 of the *Book of Common Prayer 2019* and follows this order:

1. Opening sentences for Confirmation (drawn from Acts 2, quoting Joel 2), leading directly to...
2. The Collect of the Day

There is no Gloria in Excelsis or Song of Praise in order to avoid extending the length of the service. If desired, additional songs might be sung prior to the opening sentences. If local custom calls for additional songs after the opening sentences, they should be sung after the congregation's response, "and everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved," and before "The Lord be with you" leading to the Collect of the Day. The Collect of the Day introduces the themes of the readings and is intended to be offered immediately before the first reading.

Note also this paragraph in the Additional Directions:

If desired, the Collect for Purity, the Summary of the Law (or the Decalogue), the *Kyrie* (or the *Trisagion*), and the *Gloria in excelsis* may be inserted immediately after the opening versicles and before the salutation, "The Lord be with you." If a Confession of Sin is desired, it may be inserted after the Summary of the Law (or the Decalogue).

In the ACNA liturgies, wherever the greeting "The Lord be with you" is used, the response, "And also with you," may be used in place of "And with your spirit." It would be appropriate to conform the liturgy to local custom here, at the Peace, and at the Sursum Corda.

3. Scripture Readings
4. Sermon
5. Nicene Creed. Note that the text of the Nicene Creeds is not printed in the Confirmation liturgy, but it is to be recited by all after the sermon and before the Presentation of the Candidates.
6. The Confirmation liturgy, beginning with "The Presentation, Exhortation and Examination."

At the laying on of hands, the Bishop uses this option for Confirmation:

Strengthen, O Lord, with your Holy Spirit your servant *N.*; empower *him* for your service; and sustain *him* all the days of *his* life.

If the liturgy is printed for the congregation, the options for Confirmation, Reception or Reaffirmation that are not being used on this occasion may be omitted. Be sure to include the two prayers offered by the Bishop before and after the laying on of hands.

The Bishop does not customarily anoint with oil at this service unless requested by the Rector.

7. The Peace follows the concluding prayer. Out of concern for the length of the service, the liturgy does not call for the Prayers of the People or the Confession of Sin. See the Additional Directions, cited above in #2. If the Confession of Sin is desired, the Prayer Book directs it to be said before the Collect of the Day rather than between Confirmation and the Peace.

8. Holy Communion follows, using one of the ACNA Holy Communion liturgies or other authorized Communion liturgy the church customarily uses.

If the Rector wishes to make other adaptations of the liturgy, please ask the Bishop well in advance.

• • •

Appendix

Below are pertinent questions and answers from the ACNA Catechism, *To Be A Christian*.

Excerpts from
To Be a Christian, An Anglican Catechism
 The Anglican Church in North America

CONCERNING SACRAMENTS

121. What is a sacrament?

A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. God gives us the sign as a means by which we receive that grace and as a tangible assurance that we do in fact receive it. (*Genesis 17:1–21; John 6:53–58; Romans 2:25–29; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1662 Catechism*)

122. How should you receive the sacraments?

I should receive the sacraments by faith in Christ, with repentance and thanksgiving. Faith in Christ is necessary to receive the grace of the sacraments, and obedience to Christ is necessary for the benefits of the sacraments to bear fruit in my life. (*Mark 16:16; John 6:52–58; Acts 2:38–47; 1 Corinthians 11:27–32; 1662 Catechism; Articles of Religion, 28*)

123. What sacraments were ordained by Christ?

The two sacraments ordained by Christ that are “generally necessary to salvation” (*1662 Catechism*) are Baptism and Holy Communion (also called the Lord’s Supper or the Holy Eucharist). These are sometimes called “sacraments of the Gospel.” (*Articles of Religion, 25; see also Matthew 28:19–20; Luke 22:14–20; John 6:52–58; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; 2 Corinthians 1:21–22*)

124. Are there other sacraments?

Other rites and institutions commonly called sacraments include confirmation (*2 Timothy 1:6–7; Hebrews 6:1–2*), ordination (*Numbers 8:9–14; 27:18–23; 1 Timothy 4:14*), marriage (*Genesis 2:18–24; Matthew 19:4–6; John 2:1–11*), absolution (*John 20:21–23; Acts 2:37–41*), and the anointing of the sick (*James 5:14*). These are some- times called “sacraments of the Church.”

125. How do these differ from the sacraments of the Gospel?

They were not ordained by Christ as necessary to salvation, but arose from the practices of the apostles and the Early Church, or were blessed by God in Scripture. God clearly uses them as means of grace. (*Articles of Religion, 25*)

BAPTISM

126. What is the outward and visible sign in Baptism?

The outward and visible sign is water, in which candidates are baptized “in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (*Book of Common Prayer 2019; see also Genesis 9:8–17; Matthew 28:19–20; 1 Peter 3:18–22*)

127. What is the inward and spiritual grace given in Baptism?

The inward and spiritual grace is death to sin and new birth to righteousness, through union with Christ in his death and resurrection. I am born a sinner by nature, separated from God. But in Baptism, through faith in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, I am made a member of Christ's Body and adopted as God's child and heir. (*Psalm 51:1-2, 7-10; Ezekiel 36:25-26; John 3:3-5; Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:9-14*)

128. What is required of you when you come to be baptized?

Two things are required: repentance, in which I turn away from sin; and faith, in which I turn to Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord and trust the promises that God makes to me in this sacrament. (*Psalm 51:3-6, 13-17; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:37-38*)

129. Why is it appropriate to baptize infants?

Because it is a sign of God's promise that they are embraced in the covenant community of Christ's Church. Those who in faith and repentance present infants to be baptized vow to raise them in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, with the expectation that they will one day profess full Christian faith as their own. (*Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Proverbs 22:6; Mark 2:3-5; Acts 2:39; 16:25-34*)

130. What signs of the Holy Spirit's work should you hope and pray to see as a result of your Baptism?

I should hope and pray that the Holy Spirit, who indwells me, will help me to be an active member of my Christian community, participate in worship, continually repent and return to God, proclaim the faith, love and serve God and my neighbor, and seek justice and peace. (*Matthew 22:35-40; Hebrews 10:19-28; 12:14; 1 Peter 3:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:1*)

CONFIRMATION

137. What is confirmation?

Confirmation is the laying on of the bishop's hands with prayer for strengthening by the Holy Spirit, following a period of catechetical formation. In confirmation, I make a mature confession of faith, publicly renewing the vows and promises made at my Baptism. (*Deuteronomy 6:4-25; Psalm 119:33-40; Acts 8:14-17; 2 Timothy 1:6-7*)

138. What grace does God give you in confirmation?

In confirmation, I am further empowered and gifted by the Holy Spirit for daily growth in wisdom, courage, and humility before God in every aspect of my life and work. (*Psalms 37:3-31; 71:17-18; Isaiah 11:2-5; Acts 19:6; Jude 3, 17-25; "Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation," Book of Common Prayer 2019*)

139. What is the work of all Christians?

All Christians are to bear witness to Christ in their lives; to care for the poor, strangers, widows, and orphans; and, according to their gifts, to serve Christ in the world and in the Church. (*Zechariah 7:9-10; Psalms 1; 15; Micah 6:6-8; Colossians 3:1-17; James 1:27; 1 Peter 4:8-11*)