

Confirmation Orientation 2017-2018



Welcome to another great year of Confirmation at St. John's. I am looking forward to working with the students once again, and I pray that our time together will be a blessing to them. I invite you to speak with me at any time about questions or concerns you may have about the program, or any other spiritual matter that may arise over the course of the year. I will do my best to keep you informed and updated on everything as we go through the time of instruction.

Confirmation is a blessing and a gift, given by God to his church for the purposes of educating his people in the primary and foundational doctrines. It is a blessing in the sense that it is something that is received, which is to say, it is an opportunity to confess one's faith in the one true God, his only Son and our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It is a gift in the sense that it is not earned by work or merit, but is purely grace on God's part. In the Lutheran church, Confirmation is not a sacrament, but a reminder of one's baptism into Christ and a public profession of one's faith, that they "intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it (*from the Rite of Confirmation, LSB Agenda pg. 30*)." As such, Confirmation is not a right that one has to lay claim to the church, it is not a requirement, and it is not a work that one does to be accepted by God or others. It is one of the opportunities that we have been given to grow in our faith, to grow in the relationship that we have with the church, and to grow in the fellowship of the believers.

With this in mind, there are certain expectations of the Confirmation program. The expectations for confirmands are the same as the expectations of those already confirmed, and of all Christians. When we are called to faith, and as we live in that faith, it is important to feed that faith first by being in the gifts of God (*see Acts 2:42*), then by seeking ways in which we might serve our Lord through the church and in the community with the special gifts and blessings he has given to us (*see James 2:14-19*). Simply put, the expectations of this class are:

Regular attendance at Divine Services: This is really what this class is about, finding the joy and peace that comes in being in God's presence, receiving his forgiveness, and departing in his peace. It is expected that students and their families will be in church on a regular basis, not because it is a requirement, but because they desire to be there. If you are away and cannot attend St. John's, you may attend another church and receive "credit" for going. Simply bring in a copy of the bulletin from that church as a sign of your presence there. Please keep attendance at other churches to no more than 2 as it pertains to the requirements for the class. It is hoped that students and families would make an effort to be at church every weekend, and requiring a certain number of services would be to make a law of that which is intended to be pure Gospel. However, if the student is not engaged in Divine Service attendance at least 50% of the time, it will be seen as an indication that the student is not ready to be confirmed at this time. Attendance will be tracked as they sign in on the clipboard at the services they attend. For 8 of their total 16 services the need to attend, a Divine Service Report will need to be filled out and handed in at the next class (see attached). In addition to merely attending, a discussion of the service with the family is a helpful thing to reinforce the Word and teach how to listen and receive in the church. A monthly tracking of attendance will be made available to the students at the end of each month. Please remind them to check the list and keep you informed about their progress. If by Christmas it appears that the student is falling behind in this area, contact will be made with the family to discuss the future of the student in the program. By the end of April, the student should have attended at least 16 Divine Services.

Serving the church: Students are expected to serve in one of the roles offered on the registration form. When you are scheduled to serve as an acolyte or cross-bearer, it is expected that you will be there on your assigned date and at your assigned time. If you cannot make it on your scheduled date, it is up to

you to find a replacement by swapping with someone in the class (or convincing them to just take your day!). If you choose another area to serve, it is expected that you will fulfill the requirements for participation in that area (If you are in one of choirs, you must attend rehearsals and performances, Sunday School assistants must help at least twice per month, etc.) A list of students and their phone numbers will be given to you in the mail with the schedule, so if you need to switch, you may do so with other students on the list. Please do not call the church office to tell us you can't do it until you have tried to call and find a replacement. If an emergency arises at the last minute, that is understandable, and if possible, please call the office, or the person responsible for your service area, and let us know so that we can be prepared to try and find someone.

Attendance in Class: It is expected that the student will be in class each week, and may not miss more than 5 classes (this requires attendance at 75% of the classes) otherwise it will be assumed the student is not ready to be confirmed at this time. Attendance is taken each week. Due to the short time period for the class, if the student is late by more than 15 minutes or must leave more than 15 minutes before class is completed, they will be considered absent that day. If you know you are going to be absent, please let the office know so that materials may be set aside for you. If no one answers, please leave a message for Pastor Noack at extension 104, or you may email me. If you miss a class, a makeup is available the following week, 30 minutes before class for first-year students (5:30-6pm), or 30 minutes after class for second-year students (8-8:30pm).

Be on time, and prepared: *Both classes meet on Wednesdays, downstairs by the kitchen.* The 1st-year class will meet from 6-7pm, and the 2nd-year class will meet from 7-8pm. Please make every effort to be on time for the classes, and to make arrangements to stay for the whole time in which the class meets. All students should bring a writing instrument, a Bible, a copy of Luther's Small Catechism, and a folder to hold the handouts and use as a writing surface. If you need either a Bible or a Catechism, please visit www.cph.org or call 1-800-325-3040 for Concordia Publishing House and you may purchase them there. We will be using the English Standard Version of the Bible for class, but a New International Version is also acceptable.

Homework: Each week, there will be a handout that will be gone over in class. These handouts will then serve as the necessary notes the students will need to study for the final exam. In addition, each week, there will be 2-3 reflection questions which will correspond to the material gone over in class. These should be done by the student at home during the week. There will be two checks of the progress on these, one done in November, and the other in April. If the student does not have all the work done by these two checks, contact will be made with the family to discuss this. Therefore it is important that any missed classes should be made up the following week, and the student should not fall more than two weeks behind on their work.

Advent & Lenten Suppers & Services: Midweek Advent and Lenten services will be held on Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm. During these times, no official class will be held for either grade. However, each of the students will be divided up into teams and assigned one of the weeks of either Advent or Lent to come down and help with setup, preparation, cooking, and cleanup of the soup/sandwich suppers to be held prior to the service. The student should plan to be here by 6pm to assist on the day they are assigned, and plan to stay until about 8:30pm after the service to help with cleanup. This is part of the requirement of the class as a service to the church, and service hours credit can be given if requested. If you cannot make the week you are assigned, it is up to you to switch with someone else. If you are not assigned to assist on a given week, it is desired that you would still come and attend the supper and the service. These are separate services from our weekend services, and can be used as part of your service attendance requirement.

One-day retreat: Our annual one-day retreat will be held on Saturday, March 10 from 9am-2pm at St. Luke – Dix Hills, NY. In conjunction with other local Lutheran churches, all confirmation students will be gathering for a day of learning, fellowship, fun, and spiritual growth. This too is part of the curriculum, and attendance is expected. More information will be forthcoming as the date gets closer, but please set aside the day for this event. There is no cost, and lunch is included.

Class List: A complete list of students with phone numbers will be distributed to you which will also indicate what area of service the student has chosen, and what week they have been assigned to serve at the Advent or Lenten supper. Please use this list to switch with other students when conflicts arise for you. Please make an effort on your end to make the changes, and let the church office know if you think of it (631-589-3202; stjohns11782@aol.com).

Work together: There is only so much that can be taught in the hour we are together each week over the year. This is why being in church is so vital...it reinforces what is taught in class. In addition, at the beginning of each subject in the Small Catechism, Martin Luther reminds the reader that these subjects are for instruction in the home, “as the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his family.” It has always been the intention, then, that the pastor of the church support and reinforce what is already being taught within the family unit. I can only do so much. It will be helpful if you, as a family, help to teach these things and encourage one another in growing in the faith. If you need help in how to go about this, please ask, I would be happy to offer suggestions. In the very least, discuss things that are discussed in class, and offer your own insights. If, as a family, you have questions, I would be happy to entertain them along the way.

Some final thoughts: We will follow the Sayville school calendar in regard to breaks and scheduled times to meet. There are students from many districts so we had to pick one to base things upon. If Sayville schools are closed for weather on a Wednesday, or have early dismissal or cancellation of after-school programs, then class is cancelled for the day. If it is known in advance of the weekend that class will be cancelled, it will be announced at all services. However, please consider giving us an email address that you check regularly so that if a last minute emergency arises we can let you know more quickly that class has been cancelled. I will not inundate you with emails, but will remind or announce important things from time to time.

It is expected that students will behave in a manner that is appropriate and respectful to both the Pastor and fellow students. If this becomes an issue at any point, a parent may be asked to accompany their child to class to help them with this. I will, of course, treat all students with courtesy and respect. I value their insights and opinions and views of the world and desire to hear their input. Over the course of the year, I often find that I learn as much as they do.

Finally, please keep the lines of communication open between us. If there is something going on in your family or home life that is affecting things at school or church, please speak to me. If your child has any special needs or issues I need to be aware of, please speak to me as soon as possible. If I don't know about it, I can't help to find a solution to it and I will assume that everything is fine. If I know, I can try to help as I am able and time permits.

Thank you for participating in the Confirmation Program here at St. John's. Once again, I look forward to growing with you and your families, and I pray that the students will grow together in Christian friendship and in a lively and active faith.

Lord God, heavenly Father, in Holy Baptism You began Your good work in our catechumens, and You have blessed their instruction and training in Your Word. We implore You to pour out Your Holy Spirit on their hearts and minds so that they will truly love and revere You, confess the faith with joy and boldness, endeavor to live according to Your commandments, and praise and glorify You as their faithful God and Lord, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (from Lutheran Service Book, pg. 310)

Contact Information

Pastor Brian Noack
631-589-3202 – office
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stbnoack@aol.com

Service Times

Saturday – 6:30pm
Sunday – 7:45am, 9:00am, 11am
Wednesdays – noon, 7:30pm (Advent & Lent seasons only)