Confirmation:

Strengthening Commitments, Growing Disciples

The church’s purpose is to “make disciples for Jesus Christ.” The Confirmation program at First Church plays an important role in fulfilling that purpose. Most youth who enter the Confirmation program were baptized as infants, thus are already part of the congregation, members of the family of God. In Confirmation, they “make strong” their baptism—the promises their parents made on their behalf become their own promises at the time of Confirmation—and they become full participants in the life of the church.

Those who have not been baptized will receive baptism during their Confirmation experience.

For many years, First Church’s Confirmation program was focused almost entirely on instruction. We met in classes to make our way through a curriculum of important information. This process has three major weaknesses: First, it fails to take into account the excellent Sunday School, Bible School, Bible Study and Youth Fellowship programs which are in place at First Church providing children and youth with the important information about Christian faith and life which they need. Second, it places the youth and their leaders in a setting where productive learning cannot take place: after a full day in school it is difficult for youth to be engaged and attentive in another ninety minute instructional process. Finally, and most important, the instructional model is inadequate to shape youth for discipleship. A prominent experiential component is needed along with a more dialogical setting (i.e., smaller groups) for the necessary instruction and experience.

In other words, a Confirmation program needs to be more focused on spiritual formation, introducing confirmands to the life of the church, spiritually and temporally, so that they will be “formed” for discipleship and service by the Confirmation experience. Thus we designed and implemented a program that promises to be more effective in shaping youth for discipleship in the church.

We see ourselves as partnering with parents in the spiritual formation of their youth. The role that parents play in shaping their children as Christian disciples and equipping them for a life of service is both primary and essential. Parents are always welcomed and encouraged to participate and involve themselves in the Confirmation program. In particular, parent participation is needed in the Seventh and Eighth Grade Group Meetings which take place most Sunday evenings. Parents are invited to serve as chaperones on the retreats and the Spring historic tour.

# The Components

**One** Confirmands are involved in **regular Youth Fellowship groups** (3G), large and small, which typically meet on Sunday evenings. On occasion, the pastors will lead the seventh and eighth grade groups during the Youth Fellowship time on Sunday evenings.

**Two** Confirmands shall choose and be involved with at least one **ministry** within the church. It is important to develop the habit of giving oneself in supporting and sustaining the community of faith. Confirmands may choose to be part of a particular ministry team, a bell choir, choral or instrumental group, or initiate a new ministry within the congregation. In order to complete this component, the Confirmands must choose such a ministry(ies) and participate in it (them) at least until the service of Confirmation. Confirmands must submit a proposal for this ministry in October and a report of their work in early May.

**Three** Confirmands shall choose and be involved with at least one **mission** program/project. This may be an ongoing program—such as volunteering on a monthly basis at Mission Central-- or a time limited project—such as going on a work camp or mission trip. The Confirmand could also develop his/her own project in response to a particular need. The intent of this component is to move the Confirmand outside of the church into the broader community for service in the name of Christ. Confirmands must submit a proposal for this ministry in October and a report of their work in early May.

**Four** Confirmands will participate in **Sunday morning worship and Sunday School, the retreats and the Spring historic tour**. The habits of regular attendance and participation in the life of the community of faith are central to our discipleship as Christians.

**Five** Each participant in the Confirmation program will choose at least one of the traditional **Spiritual Disciplines** of the Christian faith, learn about it and practice it for the year. A journal will report their practice and discovery.