**Confirmation Process:**

*Description and Components*

Description: Strengthening Commitments, Developing Habits, and Growing Disciples

The church’s purpose is to “make disciples for Jesus Christ.” The Confirmation process at First Church plays an important role in fulfilling that purpose. Most youth who enter the Confirmation process were baptized as infants, thus are already part of the congregation and 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 and committed Disciples of Christ Jesus. Those who have not been baptized will receive baptism during their Confirmation experience.

The Confirmation process is just that, a process. A process of helping students often in middle school (6th-8th grade) grow as faithful followers of Jesus Christ so that on Confirmation Sunday students are proclaiming a belief that is real and alive in them. *Our Confirmation process is meant to help students* ***develop*** *the habit of regular involvement in a church community,* ***engage*** *their hearts towards service,* ***deepen*** *their connection to God,* ***equip*** *them with an understanding of the Bible,* ***encourage*** *their personal and unique expressions of faith, and to* ***instill*** *in them the commitment of living out their faith alongside a community of believers.* We believe strongly that Confirmation Sunday should not be preceded by a handful of classes, but by a dedicated season of time focused on discipleship – a time of habit forming and growth. Confirmation vows confirm the current and ongoing commitment of a student to their faith journey well beyond their confirmation years. We want to help develop them to be lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Confirmation process consists of several expectations where students should be locating themselves as they prepare for their Confirmation vows and to help grow them as disciples. ***Sunday school*** for middle school students is a crucial element of the process as the class follows a three year long curriculum called “Deep Discipleship”. Two times a year we ask students to attend a ***Confirmation retreat*** (not an overnight retreat) where Friday evening is dedicated to focusing on the elements of Confirmation and church life (Methodism, communion, the vows, etc) and Saturday morning is dedicated to a service project. Attendance in ***weekly worship*** is important and necessary in calling us from our individuality and practicing faith alongside other believers. Students are also asked (and parents are encouraged to participate) in a ***ministry opportunity*** – involvement somewhere in the life of the church, and a ***mission experience*** – involvement serving beyond the walls of the church. An additional teaching component is a spring ***Confirmation trip*** on a Saturday early in May where students get to learn about the church through an experiential trip. We try hard to design Confirmation not to be overwhelming or entirely instruction based, instead we strive to create it to be habit forming: helping students live out their faith in ways God asks of them even well beyond their middle school years.

We see ourselves as partnering with parents in the spiritual formation of their youth through the Confirmation process. 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 process. Adult support for Sunday school, retreats, and the trips are greatly appreciated and encouraged. Please make sure you have clearances on file with the church office. We also hope that you are helping your child work towards involving themselves in a ministry and mission project. Please encourage them to prayerfully consider what will be growth-filled opportunities and not see these projects as a “check list” item in order to be confirmed.

# **Components:** Connect, Learn, and Serve

* **Connection:** Participate regularly and consistently in **Sunday Morning Worship.** The habits of regular attendance and participation in the life of the community of faith are central to our discipleship as Christians.
* **Learning:** There are three main spaces for learning and instruction as part of the Confirmation Process:
	+ **Sunday School –** the focus of Sunday school is faith development and lesson aimed at growing deeper roots of discipleship in the life of a student.
	+ **Confirmation Retreats –** There are two retreats (totally 6 during the entirety of the Confirmation Process). Retreats are held on a Friday evening for a focus on learning more about church, sacraments, and the history of the UM church and again on Saturday morning for a chance to serve to experience a service project together.
	+ **Confirmation Trip –** A trip is offered each spring and allows our students to experientially learn more about church history (Baltimore), world impact (DC), service (Philly). Participation in at least two is required but participating in all three is highly encouraged as all trips offer very different experience related to the confirmation process.
* **Serving:** Service and attention towards the needs of others both inside the church and outside is a vital characteristic of a disciple of Christ.
	+ **Ministry Opportunity –** consists of involving oneself in a ministry of 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. (Projects are largely self driven and only occasional checking in will be done by the teachers/pastors. Parents, please support and make possible your student’s involvement in a ministry of their choosing.)
	+ **Mission Experience –** consists of involving oneself in a mission outside of First Church. It is important to develop the habit of serving the needs of others as an expression and outpouring of Christ’s love. 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 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. (Projects are largely self driven and only occasional checking in will be done by the teachers/pastors. Parents, please support and make possible your student’s involvement in a mission of their choosing.)

In addition to the main components:

* We greatly encourage confirmands to be involved in the **Youth Ministry** at First Church**.** 4G typically meet on Sunday evenings from 6:15-8:15. The growth alongside one’s peers is important to your faith growth.
* We highly encourage students to seek out a **mentor**. Someone who they and their parents believe can encourage and support them in their Christian journey.
* Confirmands in the process and their parents traditionally host a **breakfast** for the confirming students and their families on the day of the confirmation service.

When will I be confirmed?

* In the months preceding the confirmation service (the day of Pentecost on the church calendar) those in the confirmation process will receive a letter inquiring upon their intentions and sense of readiness in the process. While traditionally student feel ready as 8th graders to be confirmed we recognize that is not always the case. God’s grace meets us all at different stages along our journey and we want to honor the readiness of any student to live into the vows they make no matter when they make it. The confirmation process, no matter the length, is meant to help ready yourself (the student), not just in making a profession of faith, but for continuation in living a life of faith in a community of believers. In conversation with the student, parent(s), and pastors we will help a student in this decision.
* The confirmation process if engaged well should help a student strengthen their commitments (to God and to the church), developed habits that will aid in their continual faith development for years to come, and helped them grow as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

The confirmation vows:

1. To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of your sin;

2. To accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;

3. To confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord;

4. To remain faithful members of Christ’s holy church and serve as Christ’s representatives in the world;

5. To be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries;

6. To faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness;

7. To receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

***Remember:*** Confirmation is a part of a student’s faith journey towards readiness for a verbal acknowledgement of being a life transformed by Christ. Confirmation is not a check list to accomplish in order to participate in a religious expectation.