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CONFIRMATION

THE DIOCESE OF NOVA SCOTIA AND PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

PREAMBLE

In recent years, a great deal of emphasis has been given to renewing the Church's understanding of the Christian Rites of Initiation. Central to this endeavour has been a re-emphasis on Baptism as the Sacrament which gives expression to the Christian vocation itself. Contemporary baptismal rites have sought not only to emphasize the gift which is conferred by God through baptism, but also the response of the baptized to this gift. These rites have stressed the covenantal relationship established in baptism between God and God's people.

CONFIRMATION

Precisely because baptism gives expression to the whole of the Christian vocation and precisely because it concerns a covenant which is lived out over the course of one's life, there are numerous opportunities to renew this covenant. Traditionally, the Church has understood Confirmation as one such opportunity. But there are other opportunities, among them, the renewal of the baptismal covenant at every celebration of baptism, the renewal of baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil, and the rites of reception and Re-affirmation.

Each of these rites, in its own way, is a renewal of the essential commitment made by the believer at baptism. At the same time, these rites give expression to different moments in the faith journey of the believer and the community.

When a person is prepared for and desirous of renewing the vows made at Baptism on his or her own, there should be an opportunity to do so at a public service of Confirmation. These vows will be made before the Bishop, who, while laying on hands, prays that in this sacramental act the Spirit given in Baptism will continue to provide strength for Christian witness and service. The Sacrament of Confirmation also enables the confirmands and the congregation to see their connection to the wider church.

Before Confirmation proceeds, the candidate must provide verification of Baptism.

The Bishop recommends that the age of Confirmation will normally be 15 or higher. It is recognized that the age of confirmands will sometimes vary from this norm. Those who have been admitted to Communion by right of their Baptism shall be provided an opportunity for Confirmation in late teenage years and emphasize the concept of strengthening for Christian service. The tendency to reduce the age of Confirmation as a way of keeping young people in Church or to avoid admitting children to Communion before Confirmation is discouraged strongly. Confirmation is a life commitment for which one should be well and carefully prepared. There are good arguments for the age of such an important undertaking being raised rather than reduced.

Confirmation will continue to provide a significant opportunity for teaching. Great care should be taken in the preparation of candidates for Confirmation. Parishes should aim for a year's preparation; three months is a required minimum. This time of preparation should be shared by laity and priest. This will give both an opportunity to work with, and get to know, the confirmands in the parish, and vice versa. Both the confirmands and the Parish benefit if the group is kept together as a study group after Confirmation.

Confirmation should in no sense be understood or referred to as "completing Baptism", "fuller membership", "joining the Church" or a requirement for the reception of Holy Communion.

Parishes are responsible for providing instruction to all ages in Christian education and living, beginning with parents who bring infants to Baptism, and continuing on through the whole of life. The emphasis should be on formation of Christian character and identity, of coming to know and love God. It should be more than just the giving of information and data. Confirmation readiness should be seen as part of a whole, on-going, life-long process of Christian education and nurture. Confirmation is in no way a "graduation" or simply an unthinking rite of passage, but is offered with the hope that those who share in it "may become more truly what they already are: the People of God, that New Creation in Christ which finds its joy in adoration of the Creator and Redeemer of all." (Preface of BCP, page vii)

Confirmation preparation should involve the use of a sponsor or spiritual director, guide or soul-friend to help the individual explore his or her faith and what is happening in it and to it at that particular period of life. Readiness should be interpreted in an experiential and relational approach rather than a solely intellectual one. Preparation should be part of an on-going educational process in the parish, but the decision to be confirmed rests with the individual who wishes to take this step.

The Bishop encourages all Confirmation candidates to write a letter to the Bishop prior to the date of their Confirmation indicating why they wish to be confirmed. These can be collected by the priest and forwarded to the Bishop. Opportunity for the candidates to meet personally with the Bishop prior to the Confirmation in a social setting is encouraged.

Confirmation shall normally take place during the annual Episcopal visit to the parish according to the regional itinerary schedule for the year.

The Bishop welcomes the practice of neighbouring parishes having combined Confirmation services and of some being held on weekday evenings. Some regions may wish to explore the possibility of a regional Confirmation service for a time of great celebration in the life of the Diocese.

SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

The Liturgy

Confirmation shall normally be in the context of a celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

The liturgy shall be from the *Book of Alternative Services* or the *Book of Common Prayer* following prior consultation between the Bishop and the Rector.

If the *Book of Alternative Services* is being used and baptisms are taking place within the same service, the liturgy shall begin on page 151 and proceed as ordered.

If there are no baptisms, the liturgy shall begin on page 623 and proceed as ordered.

If the liturgy is to be according to the *Book of Common Prayer*, the order shall be as follows:

The Lord's Prayer, Collect for Purity and Summary of the Law	p. 67-69
The Collect	
The Propers for the Day	
(The Nicene Creed)	p. 71
The Sermon	
<u>Confirmation</u>	
The Presentation	p. 556
The Preface (please note the Lessons shall be omitted)	p. 556
The Renewal of Baptismal Vows.	p. 559
The Confirmation with Laying on of Hands.	p. 559
<i>Immediately following the Laying on of Hands the service shall proceed to the Offertory.</i>	
The Offertory	pp. 72-78
Thanksgiving and Consecration	pp. 78-84
The Communion	p. 84
The Prayer of Thanksgiving	p. 85
(The Gloria)	(p. 86)
The Blessing	p. 86

The Liturgical Colour shall be *red*, representing the gift of the Holy Spirit, empowering us for ministry.

The Readings

If the service is the main liturgy of the day, the Propers for the Day shall be used.

If it is an additional service for the day or a mid-week service, the readings may be selected from among those listed on page 630 in the *Book of Alternative Services*.

The Candidates

it is desirable that the candidates sit with their families and sponsors in the congregation, thus emphasizing their place in the community.

They shall be invited to come forward at the time of the Presentation, and shall remain at the front of the Church for the Renewal of Baptismal Vows and for the Laying on of Hands with Prayer.

The use of a card bearing the name of the candidate should be discouraged. The rector, those responsible for their preparation and/or parents and sponsors should name the person as he/she kneels for the Laying on of Hands with Prayer.

After the Laying on of Hands with Prayer, the newly confirmed should return to their places with family and sponsors in the congregation, thus again emphasizing their place in the community.

Certificates of Confirmation should be presented, and photographs should be taken as expeditiously as possible after the service so as to maximize the time the congregation has to

celebrate with the newly confirmed at the reception following the service, and to provide ample opportunity for the Bishop to enjoy that time of fellowship with the parish family as well.

GUIDELINES OF A PRACTICAL NATURE

Adequate instruction shall be given to the candidates regarding the various parts of the service so that they will know when to stand, sit and kneel.

Clergy are encouraged to communicate to candidates (and parents) that dress should be simple and not extravagant in cost.

The naming of each candidate individually gives continuity with Baptism.

The Rector of the Parish will provide a list for the Synod Office which may be given to the Bishop prior to the service. This list will show the full names of the candidates, ages, and in the case of candidates to be received from other denominations, the information as to their prior Episcopal confirmation and the Christian body from which they come. These forms are available from the Synod Office.

Proper Confirmation registers shall be kept in every parish.

The Godparents of the candidates should be notified of the impending Confirmation of their Godchildren and encouraged to pray for them and support them with their presence at the service.

Prayers for the candidates (including their names near the date of Confirmation) should be included in the Prayers of the People/Intercessions during the period of their preparation for Confirmation.

RECEPTION OF CHRISTIANS FROM OTHER ECCLESIAL TRADITIONS

Reception of Christians from other Ecclesial Traditions into Full Communion within the churches of the Anglican tradition is normally reserved for those who have been confirmed in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, where there is a similar understanding of the catholic nature of Church and Sacraments. Reception into Full Communion is preceded by a period of preparation, which should include study of the distinctive characteristics of the Anglican tradition, along with other appropriate catechesis on the vocation of Christians. Baptized Christians of Protestant traditions would normally enter the Anglican Church through Confirmation.

RE-AFFIRMATION

The rite of Re-affirmation which, like Confirmation and Reception, is accompanied by the laying on of hands by the Bishop, is a public renewal of one's commitment to Christ and, like Confirmation, an expression of prayer for strengthening in living out the Christian life. The rite should be preceded, like Confirmation and Reception, with a period of preparation. The nature of the preparation should be tailored to the spiritual needs of those who intend to receive the rite.

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL COVENANT AT BAPTISMS AND THE EASTER VIGIL

Within the Anglican tradition, baptized persons are given the opportunity to renew their baptismal covenant at every public administration of the Sacrament which they attend. These are important occasions which remind us that our baptism is far more than a ritual that took place in the past but concerns our ongoing Christian vocation. It is the essence of who we are as a people marked as Christ's own. The Easter Vigil also provides an opportunity to renew our baptismal covenant as we prepare to celebrate the Pascal Mystery at that most holy time in the Christian Year. It is entirely appropriate that emphasis be given to private or corporate preparation for this renewal during the Lenten Season.

