

What is Confirmation?

Confirmation is sometimes called “the ordination of the laity,” because it is here that all members are commissioned for service in the Church.

It is the laying on of hands by a bishop accompanied by a prayer that the Holy Spirit will equip the confirmand with all the gifts necessary for mature service in the Church.

This service is typically used as a rite of passage from childhood into early adulthood, where it marks the fulfillment of vows made on the behalf of a baptized infant as that infant, now maturing, confesses the faith and commits to following Christ.

Confirmation is also the normal means by which we receive and commission new adult members of the Church. It is not a necessary rite, but it is helpful for the good order of the church and the spiritual encouragement of those who participate.

The idea for Confirmation comes from the ministry of the Apostles in the book of Acts, where they lay hands on new believers, pray for the Spirit’s empowering, and commission them to ministry (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6).

Confirmation contains three central elements:

- *Confession.* A public statement of faith.
 - This is what I believe. This is who I am.
- *Commitment.* A commitment to the responsibilities of baptism:
 - Study, prayer and fellowship.
 - Resisting evil, confession and repentance.
 - Proclaiming the gospel. ○ Serving others.
 - Seeking justice.
- *Commission.* A commissioning by the bishop of the adult believer to a life of service and mission.

The Anglican Catechism states,

Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop. It is required of those to be confirmed that they have been baptized, are sufficiently instructed in the Christian faith, are penitent for their sins, and are ready to affirm their confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. (From the Anglican Catechism, p.860).

Some may ask: Why do we have to have a bishop for Confirmation?

- Confirmation is something done by a bishop for the sake of good order, continuity with tradition and accountability. The bishop is the chief leader of the church in the diocese (geographic region) and it is, therefore, he who receives a new member into the church.

What does it mean to be confirmed or received as an Anglican?

- When someone is baptized he or she is baptized for the universal Church. Baptism is, therefore, not tied to a specific denomination. Confirmation, however, is.
- When a person is confirmed their confession and commitment take place in a particular church community and reflect a commitment to that community. Ours is Anglican.
- An Anglican confirmation is an expression of commitment to the theology and practice of the Anglican Church as exemplified in the 39 Articles, to the Anglican Church in North America, and the global communion of which we are a part.

What are Reception and Reaffirmation? Whenever a Bishop confirms a group of believers there are two other ways in which adult believers can be recognized. These are called Reception and Reaffirmation.

- *Reception* is when an adult believer who has already been confirmed in another church tradition chooses to affiliate with the Anglican Church and with a local parish. In this situation reception is akin to the transfer of denominational membership.
- *Reaffirmation* is when an adult believer who has been confirmed chooses to publicly reaffirm his/her faith. This often happens after a time of rebellion or spiritual wandering and is a powerful, public way to declare one's allegiance to Christ and his Church.