

The Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut  
November 4, 2010

### **Confirmation - Personal and Public Affirmation of Faith**

*"Strengthen O Lord your servant with your Holy Spirit, empower her (empower him) for service and sustain him (sustain her) all the days of their life."*

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Confirmation is the Rite of the Church which recognizes a person's public and mature affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ and which, through the laying on of hands by a bishop, calls forth the strengthening and sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life.

Confirmation for teenagers and for adults is an intensely personal moment of prayer and commitment. It is neither the beginning of our life with Christ or some kind of statement of the completion of our formation as people of Christ. Holy Baptism, by water in the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the Sacrament of full membership in the Body of Christ, and each of us is called, throughout our lives, to grow deeper in love, commitment, and service of our Lord. In our Christian journey, Confirmation is a Rite of renewal and empowerment. Within the Anglican tradition, confirmation by a bishop in apostolic succession is a mark of our individual union with the Church catholic. The service of Confirmation gives each individual confirmand the opportunity to claim, within the midst of the gathered Church, his or her identity as a Christian who chooses to live out their faith within the Episcopal Church. Every Confirmation provides the opportunity for the whole gathered community to renew the faith and promises of the Baptismal Covenant.

Several years ago our diocese developed guidelines for the preparation of candidates for Confirmation, which include resources for study and the development of spiritual practices. (These guidelines are available on our diocesan website at <http://www.ctdiocese.org/images/customer-files/2005CTConfirmationGuidelines.pdf>.) We commend these guidelines to you. Confirmation is a serious undertaking for individual and community alike. We highly recommend that parishes engage in a two year cycle of preparation for Confirmation and provide significant opportunities for candidates to engage in mission in Christ's name.

### **Two Options for Confirmation**

Last spring, Bishop Douglas invited a conversation among clergy about the Rite of Confirmation and how we celebrate Confirmation in this diocese. These options reflect the both/and nature of that conversation.

Beginning with the Easter Vigil, April 23, 2011, the bishops will offer two options for services of Confirmation in the diocese. A parish may decide to celebrate Confirmation as a part of a bishop's scheduled visitation. Or a parish may decide to participate in regional festivals of Confirmation which will be scheduled on four Saturdays through the Church Year. As your bishops we can see advantages in each option.

## **Confirmations during scheduled Sunday Visitations**

When Confirmation is celebrated as part of a local parish's celebration of Eucharist, confirmands are surrounded by the community that has nourished them in faith and in which they will begin to live out their renewed promises of commitment to God and God's mission. Confirmation can highlight the connection that each parish has with the church universal through the person of the bishop. Confirmation during Sunday visitations will be celebrated within the principle liturgy of Word and Sacrament in the local Eucharistic community and will be integrated with the congregation's continuing development of its own participation in God's mission. A typical visitation will include prayer time with confirmands and sponsors, celebration of the Eucharist, a parish reception, meeting of the vestry, and the bishop's engagement in various ministries of the parish.

## **Regional Festivals of Confirmation**

Confirmation is a celebration of the renewal of the Church. The whole Episcopal Church is strengthened as each confirmand renews his or her Baptismal Vows. Regional services of Confirmation (and Reception) allow us to celebrate our participation in the Body of Christ beyond our own local Eucharistic community. Regional services can provide a glimpse into the richness of our diocese that is diverse in theological and liturgical traditions, language, race, and culture.

There will be four sets of regional confirmations marking the four great festivals of Baptism in the Church Year: the Eve of Easter, April 23 (the Great Vigil of Easter); the Saturday which is the Eve of the Day of Pentecost, June 11; the first Saturday of November, November 5 (All Saints); and the Saturday before the Baptism of Our Lord, January 7, 2012. These services will be held in parish churches large enough to hold confirmands and worshippers from multiple parishes. Participating parishes will have the opportunity to recognize confirmands the following day in their own festival celebrations.

## **Flexibility as we implement these options**

In the next few weeks the bishops will publish a customary (standardized outline) for Sunday visitations with Confirmation and without Confirmation. All parishes that are already scheduled for a visitation from the Second Sunday of Easter through the end of June, 2011 may choose to include Confirmation as part of the celebration of Eucharist. As we enter the visitation schedule for program year 2011-2012 all parishes will have that choice. We will also publish a list of sites for regional festivals which will include times of the services. Details on procedures for registration and participation will be forthcoming.

We pray that these options will increase the meaning of Services of Confirmation for individuals and parishes. May God strengthen in each of us our commitment to Jesus Christ and empower us for participation in God's mission to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Jesus Christ.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas  
The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens  
The Rt. Rev. James E. Curry