



Guidelines for Confirmation Class

*„We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD
- his power, and the wonders he has done!“
Psalm 78:4*

1. Foundation and aim of confirmation class

One of the **basic principles** of the Protestant Reformation as initiated by Dr. Martin Luther in the 15th Century is the idea that you can trust people with God's Word! We believe that any Christian has the capacity to use God's Word wisely once they understand what God's Word is intended to do. We believe that the primary purpose of God's Word is to show us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died and rose again so that we could have forgiveness of our sins and eternal life with God. We use God's Word to learn how to live a good responsible life and how to express Christian love and compassion – all fed by the knowledge, that we are loved by God in the first place.

As Lutherans we are Christians that like everyone to know exactly what we teach and believe. By sharing this, we not only give others an opportunity to learn from us, but we also equip members of our congregations to understand their roles – their rights and responsibilities - within the Church. The **central areas of instruction** in the confirmation training scheme are i) young people's own questions about life, ii) the Christian faith as a whole, iii) Christian responsibility, iv) spirituality, v) worship, vi) the musical life of the church and familiarization with the parish and ELCSA as a whole.

Confirmation, then, is a **special opportunity for people to confess** that they have learned the basic teachings of God's Word and that they believe Jesus is their Lord and Saviour. At their confirmation, boys and girls/ men and women make a promise that they will live their lives according to what they have learned from God's Word and that they will participate in the life of the congregation and as active Christians in society at large on the basis of the Bible's teachings as they have learned them.

2. Who goes to confirmation class?

Weekly confirmation class is usually attended by children of our members. To be registered, boys and girls must be **at least 12 years old** on the 1st of January of the year, in which the class starts. The maximum age of pupils of this weekly class should be decided by the congregational council on an individual basis, depending on the scholars concerned and in a way as not to promote a helpful teaching environment. The class usually lasts for 10 months (February to November), but may be extended, if the curriculum has not been covered adequately.

Older youth and adults, who are members of our church, but not yet confirmed, will not attend the weekly class, but will be given material to read and learn from. They will meet with certain mature members of their congregation for discussion of the learning material. The parish pastor decides, if and when a confirmation service can be planned for these older confirmands, after meeting with everyone concerned.

If anyone wanting to be confirmed is not yet **baptised**, the Pastor will, after meeting them, decide on a date of baptism. This will be after the persons confirmed have received baptism instruction/ learning material on this topic as a part of the confirmation class learning material.

Adults, who were formerly full members of churches of a **different denomination** and want to join ELCSA, need not be confirmed, but should nevertheless undergo the same process as older youth and adult members of our church, who have not been confirmed (see above). The parish pastor decides, if and when these members will be officially accepted in a service.

3. What is important to note on the weekly confirmation class?

In order to teach our children in a helpful, creative and thorough way, **the class has to be handled professionally** and certain rules are necessary. Weekly lessons of 60 minutes duration will be held – the exact time will be decided upon in advance by the congregational council in consultation with the confirmation class teachers, and may be before, during or after the Sunday service, or on any other day, that is convenient.

Parents must **register** their children for confirmation class with the congregational secretary. They must be given these guidelines in order to play their role in the confirmation class process. Announcements of and registration for the following year's class will be done in October and November of the preceding year. Weekly confirmation class will start on the first Sunday in February of each year and will continue up to the Parish Confirmation Service, which is usually held end of November of every year. No registrations will be accepted after January of the year in which the classes start.

For registrations, parents need to know, whether the child concerned is baptised or not and if so, should bring the baptism certificate. Furthermore the registration fee of R120,- per child is payable on registration. This partly covers costs of teaching aids. There is no further fee payable for the confirmation service itself, but additional fees may be requested, if an outing is planned for the class. The congregation will provide the teachers with the Teachers Resource Book and the confirmands with exercise books. Furthermore the congregational council will decide on funding for further teaching material in consultation with the teachers.

Each confirmand must bring the following **material** to class: bible, Lutheran hymn book, catechism, pen. Each congregation should have two confirmation class teachers. The basis of confirmation instruction within our church is the LUCSA Confirmation Teachers' Resource Book 4 „Living Together In Christ“, as accepted and adopted by ELCSA. It provides a creative modern way of teaching and learning together with the confirmands. During the first two months of the class, a **meeting** between confirmation class teachers, congregational leader and **all parents of confirmands** should be organised, during which a short introduction of the teaching material as well as the road ahead towards the confirmation service and beyond should be presented and any questions answered.

As will be presented, the teachers material expects the **parents and the congregation as a whole to play a role in the confirmation class**. One by one they may be invited to witness and/or contribute to the content of a lesson, as provided for in the curriculum. Parents' assistance will also be appreciated in the preparation of a possible outing/fun day and of the parish confirmation service.

In the course of the year the confirmands will attend at least one special day (usually a Saturday) on which there might be an outing or other activities. It is recommended, that all confirmands get to know the Diocesan Centre in Umphumulo and get to meet our Bishop there.

At least once in the course of the year, a **test** will be conducted for all confirmands – in verbal or written form, coordinated by the Parish Pastor. It will be based on lessons as laid out in the Confirmation Teachers' Resource Book.

Regular attendance of confirmation class is very important. The lessons are linked. Confirmands who miss a lesson, will find it difficult to follow. Furthermore 42 lessons will have to be held in the 10 months. Therefore a few extra sessions over and above the weekly lessons might be scheduled by the confirmation class teachers in coordination with the congregational leader. An attendance register is kept by the teachers. Any confirmand missing more than five lessons in the whole year will not be confirmed in that year. The registration fee can not be refunded. The parents may register the child again in the following year. Apologies can only be accepted a day before the lesson and only for valid reasons (sickness etc.).

4. Confirmation service

The **confirmation service is the highlight** of the class. It is also an important day in the life of the confirmand, his family, his congregation and the parish as a whole. As such it will have the character of a church festival, at which the confirmands confess their faith and continue a life as an active christian. A festival without anybody attending is not a festival. Parents will be asked not only to help with the preparations of the day, but also to encourage other relatives and friends of the confirmands to attend this special day – of course they themselves will be there. The whole congregation is expected to attend. The ceremony is very important in the life of our congregation. Here our young people (usually age 13-14) give a testimony of their faith and are given new adult rights and responsibilities in the congregation. The Youth League Members will be attending, to welcome confirmands into membership. Confirmands will be handed their confirmation certificates as well as a membership card. Choirs will mark this special day by their presence. After the confirmation service, families of confirmands are encouraged to continue the festivities at their homes.

5. Is there a life after confirmation class?

The confirmation service is a **door towards a more mature membership** of the church, not a door leading out of the church. Now is the time to identify and use the God-given talents in God's service in his church. The process of learning will continue with sermons, bible studies and other speeches and group work –in the congregation and in one of the many groups and leagues. A lifelong journey with Jesus has just reached another level!

May God bless the teaching and learning, all activities and prayers and everybody involved in confirmation class work in Durban Central Parish.

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