

First United Methodist Church Plano

Confirmation Program

6th grade

Background and Philosophy:

In the early church, baptism and confirmation were one rite. In the Middle Ages, confirmation was separated from baptism for reasons having to do with the government of the church. Parish priests baptized infants, but only bishops had the right to confirm. Because there were long periods of time when bishops were not available to parishes, confirmation was postponed and often done en masse when the bishop was available. When the rite was divided, the church came to understand that confirmation somehow completed baptism.

The reformers, led by Martin Luther, rejected confirmation as a sacrament. Luther believed that baptism was the sacrament of initiation and was horrified by the idea that confirmation would somehow complete baptism. The Reformers emphasized both the sacrament of baptism as initiation and the importance of learning and professing the faith.

Today, we understand confirmation to be one of the significant moments in which we affirm the faith into which we were baptized. The words are important. We affirm our faith, but it is the faith into which we were baptized--it is the faith of the church. In confirmation we affirm the Scriptures, the creeds, the apostolic teaching, and the heritage of the church. Confirmation ties together God's act in Christ with our response in faith. In confirmation, we affirm our content of faith, as well as our response to it.

At FUMC Plano it is our hope that the youth who participate in confirmation will develop a deeper connection to Jesus Christ as they grow in their faith life. We intentionally work to develop a significant peer group experience so they will have friends to journey with them in their faith. We hope they will begin to ask questions about their faith and find a safe group with which to explore those questions and answers.

We do confirmation during early middle school because we believe that is the point when youth can begin to consider this commitment for their own lives. Developmentally, pre-teens are experiencing major changes in their ability to think and reason. Before then, children think in concrete terms. Adolescents begin to think abstractly. Pre-teens are able to begin reflecting on the faith that has been given to them and to begin grappling with the meaning of faith for themselves. It is our hope that this process will begin in confirmation and continue throughout their whole lives. This is also a time socially when they are acclimating into middle school and beginning to participate in new school activities. It is our hope that confirmation will help connect these youth with their peers in the church as they begin to make decisions about how to spend their time in adolescence.

Content

Retreats and fellowship events to build relationships
Significant experiences with a pastor, mentor, parents, and teachers
Class learning sessions to grow in knowledge and relationship with peers
Significant memory created in Confirmation Worship Service

"Claim the Name"

United Methodist Confirmation Curriculum

Topics covered: Prepare for the Journey, Celebrate the Birth, Grow Toward Faith, Commit to Living, Prepare for New Life, Celebrate New Life, Grow in Resurrection Faith, Commit to a Life of Service, Prepare for the Spirit, Celebrate the Body, Grow in the Body, Commitment of the United Methodist Church, I Belong to Jesus Christ!, I Belong to the Church!, We Celebrate the Journey

"Claim the Name" uses the framework of the Christian Year to help us think about the doctrines of our faith, including incarnation, baptism, sin, repentance, salvation, discipleship, and ministry. The annual traditions help youth experience both the richness of the seasons and a sense of belonging to the church. "Claim the Name" speaks from the United Methodist tradition, The Bible, The Book of Discipline, The United Methodist Hymnal, and The Book of Worship. It uses the language and teaches the understandings we have inherited from John Wesley, such as prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. These concepts help young persons have a deeper knowledge of God who loves them and who also calls them to respond. This resource recognizes that understandings are important, but they need to be brought to life in relationships and community. If we are to talk about Christ's community, we must also embody it. Part of our task as parents, teachers, and leaders of confirmation is to create a community of faith with our youth built on love, respect, and challenge.