

9/1/08

Dear Parents,

We have already kicked-off our Confirmation Program at St. Paul's. Confirmation will be taught in the Fellowship Hall.

For some of you this may be the first time for you to participate in St. Paul's Confirmation Ministry. Let me share with you the history of Confirmation within the Lutheran Church. For Martin Luther, Confirmation was the responsibility of a child's parents as the fulfillment of the promises made at Baptism to "bring him/her to church, give him/her a copy of the scriptures, and teach him/her the ten commandments." For many reasons, the busy nature of raising a family not being the least, this responsibility became shared with the Church but still ultimately resides with the parents.

Confirmation is not an issue in the salvation of your child, it is not a mandatory program, there are no awards given (other than the goofy ones we make up in our program), and coercion and guilt are not recommended methods for getting your child involved. Talk to your daughter/son about why it is important to you that she/he participates in Confirmation, share your confirmation experience with them. We have found this to be the best and most motivational way to help students participate.

At St. Paul's our Confirmation program is a time and place to learn about God, ourselves, and our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is a time of study, questions, fellowship, service, and fun. Our Confirmation program is a ministry of our congregation offered to your child and your family.

The program is three years in length. Wow!, Why so long? The reasoning for this is that our program is more than just an academic endeavor. Confirmation is also a "youth group builder" for your child at this age. We focus upon building relationships (with retreats, fellowship events, skits, games, small group sharing), service (to collect food, participate in "Good Works" ministries, help at St. Paul's), and fun (ice skating, Halloween events, the wall of candy). After three years, they are ready to move on not only because they are so sick of seeing me but they are ready to stand, with their classmates, and claim their Baptismal vows for themselves.

As your child grows in years, she/he will also grow in relationships with peers, the Church, and God...growing and learning how to grow is our goal. We hope that after Confirmation your child continues to grow in faith for the rest of their days.

Some of the nuts and bolts of the program are as follows: This year our focus is the 10 Commandments. We meet on Sunday evenings at 6:15 to 8:00 pm. We hope to offer a retreat (Jan 9 & 10) and a variety of service opportunities and fellowship opportunities along with our teaching program. This means there will be additional time needed beyond Sunday evenings. Regular church attendance is highly encouraged as 18 sermon notes are to be taken and turned in so they can be read and counted. Also on Sundays, participation in worship as an acolyte, crucifier, or children's sermon assistant is a way we serve the congregation.

We begin in a large group with announcements, review games, and skits. There is a large group teaching before the kids break into their small groups for additional teaching and discussion. They then return for a large group closing and prayer.

As parents there will be many opportunities for you to be involved. The success of our program is directly related to your involvement. There are two ways which I need to bring to your attention now. We need several parents to serve as guides for their child's small group class. As guides your purpose is twofold, to build relationships with the kids and to organize and communicate their service and fellowship events. You will not "teach" the material, though your input and faith experience can greatly enhance you small group. Secondly, as parents you will be required (the only time I will use this word) to occasionally attend your child's class. St. Paul's is a "safe church". This means that all people who work with children on a regular basis (guides, teachers, me) will need to get a background check and to go through training. This also means that no one adult can be in a room by themselves with children, so as parents we will require you to attend your child small group class for safety. If there are seven children in your child's small group class and fifteen classes, the math results is roughly two times per family. Split that with a spouse and it is one time a year that you are "required" to be in a small group for the safety of your child. Its worth it.

There will be many other opportunities for you as parents to participate and support your child's confirmation and we hope you choose to do so. If you have interest in being a guide please let me know so I can get you ready for next year.

I hope our Confirmation program sounds exciting to you, we are excited about it. I hope you and your child choose to participate.

Sincerely,

Mark Sofio