

Confirmation Lesson #1 – Overview of Confirmation

Lesson Preparation

Topic: Orientation to the components of our Confirmation program

Theme: “What do these stones mean to you?” (Joshua 4:6)

Core Teaching: By the end of this session, class members should have a basic idea of what confirmation means, how it relates to baptism and church membership and have a grasp of the basic building blocks of this year’s confirmation program.

Scripture: **Joshua 4:1-6**

When the entire nation had finished crossing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua: "Select twelve men from the people, one from each tribe, and command them, 'Take twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood, carry them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you camp tonight.'" Then Joshua summoned the twelve men from the Israelites, whom he had appointed, one from each tribe. Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, ne for each of the tribes of the Israelites, so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?'

Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus said: ²⁴"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

Room Preparation: 12 cinder blocks for opening presentation

Small Group Resources:

- River rocks and Sharpies for each class member.
- Small gift wrapped boxes for each small group.
- One set of “The Meaning Of Confirmation” slips, cut and in a envelope for each small group (from the curriculum).
- One set of “The Stones or Building Blocks of Confirmation” cut and in an envelope for each small group (from the curriculum).
- Power ball for each group (small ball).
- Bible (for each small group)

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Large Group Time

Singing: Music team sings 2-3 high-energy songs.

Welcome and Introductions:

- Officially welcome them to the confirmation class.
- Introduce leaders (small group leaders, lead teachers, others).
- Have small group leaders identify their small group symbols by locations.

Offering: Two students bring the offering collection box to the leader.

Doxology: Sing Doxology

Affirmation of Faith: Share with the class that the Apostle's Creed is an ancient and historical affirmation of the faith we hold in common with all Christians in all centuries. Have the class join together in reciting the "Apostle's Creed".

Introduction to the Lesson: Tell the group that today we will be talking about what we build our faith and our confirmation year on. Have the stack of cinder blocks available up front. Ask the group

How many of you have ever seen a stone wall or a stone structure?

Talk to the group about what it takes to build something using stones or blocks - a structure, a room, a wall. As you share this with them, start stacking the bricks on top of each other. Point out how important it is that they fit together, that they are lined up correctly. Then ask the group: "Which brick is the wall?" Have some fun with this. But the point is that all of the bricks (or "stones" - as in a stone wall) - *taken together* - constitute the wall. No one brick is complete by itself.

Use this as a lead in to today's lesson on the "*building blocks*" or "stones" of confirmation. Let them know that today we will be looking at and examining the building blocks we will use to "*build*" this year's confirmation program. And - just as it was true with the physical wall - each of the blocks is important and plays a role - but it is all of the blocks - taken together - that make a wall or our program. Have them repeat today's theme after you: "What do these stones mean to you?" Share with them that this is the question we will be answering today.

Prayer: Large group leader closes with a prayer.

Dismiss to small groups: Students follow small group leaders with identified symbols.

Small Group Time

Opening Prayer: Begin the small group session with a prayer. You may want to do a sentence completion prayer, a "build a prayer", or ask for a volunteer to pray. The main idea is for the youth themselves to pray. This is how they learn and how they become comfortable with prayer.

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Small Group Time

Stump the Preacher: Introduce the “Stump the Preacher” to the group, explaining its purpose and tell them we will do this the first Sunday of every month. Remind them that any question they have (*that relates to our class and our faith*) can be put in the box and we will answer it to the best of our ability. Read a couple of the questions that have already been put in the box as examples. Then pass out note cards and pencils and give group members a chance to write down any questions they may have.

Exercise: “The Gift”: Hold up the “gift” that has been given to your group. Pass the gift around the circle and have each member briefly say what they think of when they think of a gift. Share with the group that God’s love for us is a “gift”. God loves us, accepts us, and forgives us. And all of this is free. It is a gift. If we have been baptized, this was also a gift. The issue for us at this point in the year is whether or not we want to accept the gift. That’s what confirmation is about.

Have volunteers read the following passages: **Joshua 4:1-6**
When the entire nation had finished crossing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua: "Select twelve men from the people, one from each tribe, and command them, 'Take twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood, carry them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you camp tonight.'" Then Joshua summoned the twelve men from the Israelites, whom he had appointed, one from each tribe. Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, one for each of the tribes of the Israelites, so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?'

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Share with the group: We will be looking at the “stones” we will be using to build our confirmation program and asking the same question: “*What do these stones mean to you?*”

Then tell them that in the passage from Matthew Jesus tells his own version of ‘*The Three Little Pigs*’ story.

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Small Group Time

- Ask the group:**
1. *What is the “house” that Jesus is inviting us to build? (Hint: it’s not a physical one!)*
 2. *What is the “rock” that we are invited to build our faith on?*
 3. *What are some other possibilities for building your life and your faith on (sand)?*

- Ask the group:**
1. *What does the word “confirmation” mean? (to make something formally valid, to establish more firmly)*
 2. *Why do we do it? (to make the decision for ourselves, to become members of the church)*
 3. *How does it relate to baptism? (baptism is a promise by our parents and the church to raise us in the Christian tradition, confirmation is our decision to take responsibility for our faith)*
 4. *How does it relate to church membership?(it’s our decision to become members of the church)*

Explain to the group: We are going to briefly explore the answers to these questions.

Exercise: The Meaning of Confirmation

Use the following information to give an overview of the theological meaning of confirmation. Hand out the strips in the envelope to different members and have them read the statements out loud to the group in numerical order.

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Small Group Time



The word “confirmation” literally means “with *firm* - ness” (con = “with” as in Chili con carne; “firm-ation = firm-ness). Confirmation means to make firm or solid that which has gone before or what was done earlier. Thanks mom! Thanks dad!



The “before” refers to our baptism and - in a broader sense - to all our faith journey up to this point. Many of us were baptized as babies, though some of us were not. If we were baptized, we didn’t choose it. It was done for us. It was God’s gift to us. Baptism reminds us that God accepts us and loves us even before we can respond. Our parents pledged to raise us in the faith. And the church pledged to help them. We just laid there and received baptism as a gift - and probably cried. Thanks God. Thanks mom and dad. Thanks church!



That brings us back to “the gift”. In the United Methodist Church we believe that baptism is a sign or symbol of God’s love for us, God’s grace. The New Testament word for grace is “charis” (literally “gift”). Baptism is a gift from God.



Confirmation is about the gift God has given us in Jesus Christ. It is about how God has loved us. It is about what we do to receive the gift and make it our own.



Baptism is the gift. Our parents accepted the gift for us, either by having us baptized or by bringing us to church. Now it is our turn. It is our turn to decide if we want to accept the gift for ourselves. It’s our turn to decide if we want to “make firm” what our God and our parents have done for us.



We are no longer children. We are youth. We are making a passage to being adults. When we enter the confirmation program we leave the children’s department and enter the youth department. Yea!



We no longer have to depend solely on our parents decision in matters of faith. We are old enough to make some decisions for ourselves. We have reached “the age of accountability” (Sounds heavy!) Sure, our parents still help us. But more responsibility passes to us. It’s now our journey.



We are ready to know about what it means to be Christian; what we believe as a church, how we are to live our lives, our history and heritage. Wow! That sounds like enough to fill the whole year - and it will!



We are old enough to profess our own faith, to say what we believe. It doesn’t mean we know all the answers (who does?), but we can learn enough to begin the journey for ourselves.



We are old enough to be “professing” members of the church, not just baptized members. We are now old enough to contribute to the life of our congregation. Sure we were members since we were baptized. But now we can be members because of what we decide or what we “profess”.

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Small Group Time

Power Ball Discussion: After reading the statements, lead the group in a Power Ball Discussion.
Hold up a small ball (or wad of paper with tape on it) and say:

This is the Power Ball. Whoever has the ball has “the Power” - the power to speak and the power to decide who speaks next. When the ball comes to you, you must speak - you cannot pass. You must speak to the question or topic I give you. What you say is up to you. When you are finished and have answered the question, you may decide who speaks next by tossing the ball to them. Group members may indicate that they want the ball so that they can speak - but you have “the Power”. You decide.

Toss the ball to a member of your group and then give them one of the questions below (or others that you think of). After several members of the group have answered the question and you feel it has been adequately covered, announce: *“Change of topic!”* And then give the next question.

- 1) *What stood out and got your attention as the statements about confirmation were read?*
- 2) *What surprised you or was new information to you?*
- 3) *What excites you most as you think about our year together?*
- 4) *What concerns or worries do you have?*
- 5) *Are you ready to take responsibility for your own faith journey?*
- 6) *In your own words, what is confirmation?*

Engage the group in a discussion of the material that was shared, what it means to them, and any questions they may have. Begin with the teachers in the group. Share your reactions first. This will help open up the group. See if your group has any questions.

The “Building Blocks” Of Confirmation: Explain to your group that we are going to be looking at the basic components or building blocks of this year’s confirmation program. A copy of these building blocks is found at the end of this curriculum (in the form of 10 bricks).

Share with the group that there are 10 major building blocks that you will be sharing with the group. Have group members divide up the numbers so that each of the 10 is covered. Members of your group may be getting one or two blocks. Send them to the *“brick pile”* on the floor in the center of the group to get their brick descriptions of the components of confirmation. *(If you are feeling really creative and have access to real bricks, you might want to attach each of the descriptions to real bricks using rubber bands.)*

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Begin with number one. The group member is to read the brick and then place the brick back on the floor to begin building a structure.

- 1) *Why is this piece important?*
- 2) *Will it be fun?*
- 3) *Will it help us learn?*
- 4) *What will this help us learn?*

Repeat the process until all 10 blocks are in place in a structure. Share with the group that in the Joshua passage the people of Israel were using the stones to build an altar to God. In the same way we will be using the parts of confirmation to build our confirmation experience. Point to the bricks you have arranged on the floor and ask:

“What do these stones mean to you?”

Discuss with the group: Have group members briefly discuss how they feel about the confirmation structure as a whole. Hand out stones. Give group members Sharpies and have them draw a symbol of our faith on the stone - a cross, a fish sign, whatever means something to them. Ask them to keep the stone in a safe place this year to remember how they will answer the question *“What do these stones mean to you?”* **Hint: we might ask for the stones at our spring retreat to help close out the year.**

Joys & Concerns: Ask students to share any Joys & Concerns for the week.

Close with a prayer: Lead the small group in the Lord’s Prayer.

Large Group Closing: *Confirmation and Your Decision*

Our lead teacher will briefly go over the following material with the class as they are in the closing circle. The idea is to help the class realize the importance of their own decision concerning confirmation and, therefore, the need to learn as much as we can this year.

Announcements/Birthdays:

Sing “Sanctuary”: Have the class form a circle and link arms (right over left) before singing.

UMYF Benediction: Lead the group in the UMYF Benediction.

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Confirmation and Your Decision:

1. This year we are going to give you *the opportunity to respond to God's call to be a disciple*. You are being invited to be confirmed on Confirmation Sunday. You do not have to be confirmed. You may choose to wait until later. Or, you may choose not to be confirmed at all. That will be *your choice*.
2. If you have been baptized, *we affirm your baptism*. In the United Methodist Church we do not re-baptize. We believe that baptism is a symbol of God's gift to us. God's gift does not have to be repeated. No matter what church you were baptized in, no matter how you were baptized (emersion, pouring, or sprinkling), whether you remember being baptized or not, we affirm the baptism you have had as God's gift to you.
3. If you have not been baptized, you will be given *an opportunity to be baptized* as a part of the Confirmation service. Baptism is into the Christian faith, a particular denomination, and a local church. Confirmation is done with the laying on of hands and a prayer that the Holy Spirit would work in your life.
4. If you choose to be confirmed, you will become a *professing member of the United Methodist Church and our congregation*.
5. If you choose not to be confirmed, that choice will still be open to you at any later date you choose. Choosing not to be confirmed does not affect your ability to participate in any youth activities that our church offers.
6. *Confirmation is not the end*. It is a part of a much larger process called Christian discipleship. Confirmation will build on all that has "gone before" - what your parents have taught you, what you have learned in church. And it will open the door to much more as you continue your journey of faith through the 7th grade, the 8th grade, and beyond - a life of growing in Christian education.
7. We ask that you take this year seriously. What is important in confirmation? Everything! Everything we will do - classes, retreats, trips, mission projects, parties, choir - all of it is important. No part is optional. We know that no one can be here for everything. But it is all important. We ask that you enter into this year by making it one of the biggest priorities in your life. Make it your plan to be here for everything. Then, when you have to miss something, it will be the exception.

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The “Building Blocks Of Confirmation **Our Pre-Confirmation “Adventure Learning” Summer Class**

Been there; done that! Many of us have already experienced one of the building blocks of confirmation - our summer class. It was designed to be fun, active, and help us to get to know each other better. We hope it did what it was supposed to do. Did it?

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation **Relationships**

This year one of the most important things we will be doing is building relationships – with God, with each other, with the adults who lead the class. The great commandment that Jesus gave us is to love - to love God and to love each other. In all we do this year we will be trying to fulfill this commandment. That means we will be getting to know each other better, building trust, building relationships, building community - this will be a part of everything we do. Cool!

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation **Weekly Class Sessions**

On Sunday mornings for the next nine months, confirmation will be our Sunday school. That gives us 41 weeks together. We'll be able to explore a lot of topics - what we believe, how God wants us to live, our history and heritage as Christians, our history and heritage as United Methodists, and much more.

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation **Retreats**

We'll begin the year and end the year with a retreat. We have a two night retreat at the beginning of the year and a two night retreat at the end of the year. At the retreats we will have a lot of fun, get to know each other better, and explore aspects of our faith in ways that we cannot do on Sunday morning.

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation **Regular Worship Attendance**

Some of us already attend worship with our families. If we don't, plan to start a new lifetime habit this year. We can go with our family or go with our friends, but regular worship attendance is very important. We encourage you and your family to attend worship on a regular basis. This will help us to learn more about worship - which is one of the things we are learning about this year.

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The Building Blocks Of Confirmation

Missions

Christians don't just believe certain things. We do certain things. We are called to make a difference in the world and in the lives of others around us. And we will. During the spring, we'll have 5 opportunities as a confirmation class to make a difference. Some of these will be "local missions" where we will help others in our church. Some will be "away missions" where we will go somewhere else and make a difference in our community. And, during our Spring Break, we will have the chance for a week-long mission trip and actually roof houses. And next summer we will have an opportunity to go on another week long mission trip. Much fun to be had!

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation

Visiting Other Churches and Faiths

During the Fall we will explore our history and heritage. We will visit four other churches and faiths: A **Jewish synagogue** (to understand our Jewish heritage), a **Roman Catholic church** (to understand our Catholic heritage), an **Episcopal church** (to understand our Protestant and Episcopal heritage), and **another United Methodist church** (to better understand our own heritage).

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation

Parties and Social Events

Yes! We will have several parties and receptions during the year. These are as important as anything else we do. We may go on a bike hike, go bowling, go play miniature golf, have a swimming party, a roller skating party, an ice skating party, and much more. We usually have one of these each month.

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation

Faith Mentors

In the past, we had confirmation class members choose a "faith mentor" - an adult from whom who you can learn. However, we realized that with over 40 adults working with our class in small groups, we no longer need to do that. You will have 40 plus faith mentors right here in the room with you. If you would like to seek out another adult you know (a grandparent, etc.), we encourage you to do so.

The Building Blocks Of Confirmation

Participation in Youth Choir, Bible Studies, Link 5/6, Spring Break Mission Trips & Events

This year, in addition to our confirmation activities, you will be in some of the youth activities of our church. In particular you will be able to be in our youth choir which will be going on tour next summer. You will also be able to participate in and Bible studies and our mission trips. And we will have a mid-week special event called "Link 5/6"