



EQUIPPING FOR... **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Produced by Canadian Ministries

Confirmation Programs in The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Mary and Joseph found 12 year-old Jesus in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. — Luke 2:46

We don't know how common it was in biblical times for a 12 year old – and a carpenter's son at that – to be sitting with priests in the temple, asking them questions and learning from them. Certainly Jesus' parents had not thought to look for him in the temple and were "astonished" when they saw the scene.

Many people might be similarly astonished to find pre-teens or teens spending time questioning and learning from church leaders. It is at this age that many youth withdraw from our congregations. Their absence, or at least their smaller numbers, have left many of us wondering what to do about confirmation.



Confirmation, June 2014,
Bethel Presbyterian Church, Scotsburn, NS

This issue of *Equipping for Christian Education* focuses on confirmation programs and the resources used in The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC). As you read these pages think about your own congregation:

- When was a confirmation program last offered?
- Who were the leaders?
- Who were the youth participants?
- What was the content and what resources supported it?
- How did the program impact the youth, their families, the rest of the congregation?

Reflection on Confirmation

Pray

God, in a world where we can feel lonely in a crowd:

We are not alone, you are with us.

In a world where it is hard to know who we are:

**You have created us in your image,
and called us by name.**

In a world where we are called to serve:

We have Christ to follow,

the Spirit to lead us,

and a community where we see God face to face. Amen

(From Canada Youth 2014 worship resources)

Read Luke 2:41-52

Discuss

1. How and where do you see youth today being engaged in the congregation and the life of the wider church?
2. What experiences have you had with confirmation programs – your own, family members or your observations of how such programs work?
3. What resources are you aware of and/or would recommend for such programs?
4. What topics do you think need to be included?
5. What approaches do you think might be more effective with youth today?

Confirmation programs today in the PCC

From September 8 through October 12, 2015 Canadian Ministries conducted a survey about confirmation and youth profession of faith programs coast to coast in our church. The main objective was to gather information from leaders, assistant leaders and youth that would help determine how to support this ministry.

The survey results indicated that the challenges we face are similar to those identified in Europe (i.e. in the International Study on Confirmation Work, 2007) and the U.S. (in the Confirmation Project of Princeton Theological Seminary, 2013). Confirmation in the PCC is no longer an every congregation ministry or an annual program. New clergy may not have confirmation programming on their “to do list” at all. Based on the survey results, in the PCC today confirmation programs will *most likely* “look” like this:

Programs will have fewer than 10 youth –

sometimes fewer than five – but

- occasionally group size would range from 10-14

Participants will be in Gr. 9-12 (Sr. High) –

occasionally into adulthood – and

- sometimes youth would be in the range of Gr. 6-8 (Jr High)
- sometimes participants would be a mix of both Sr. and Jr. High youth

Gatherings will be held weekly for a period from January to Easter – however,

- some programs would be offered: Sept-Dec or Sept-Easter and some might continue into June
- sometimes confirmation would be a one-off event – a workshop of several hours or a retreat

The minister alone will lead the program – but not always:

- sometimes Christian educators or youth staff might be the leaders; sometimes they will be leaders alongside the minister
- sometimes the minister and elders would be involved; sometimes both along with the youth staff
- sometimes leaders would be the minister and mentors, sometimes the minister, elders and mentors
- not very often would parents or youth volunteers be leaders or assistant leaders
- occasionally a congregation might not be able to identify anyone to lead confirmation

The leader will create and/or adapt resources used in the program –

- many leaders will use materials they have written and/or materials that they have put together from published resources that they have drawn on and modified over time

In the survey leaders were asked to indicate what resources they used. On pages 3 and 4 all the resources named have been listed, with a complete annotated list available on the PCC website at <http://presbyterian.ca/suggested-reading-lists/>

Resources used in confirmation programs in our church today

From The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The following resources can be ordered from the Resource Centre at 1-800-619-7301 or www.presbyterian.ca/resource-centre and sometimes downloaded from the church website as indicated.

A Catechism for Today

Adopted 2004; available at

<http://presbyterian.ca/resources-od/>

- Asks 141 questions about faith and the church dealing primarily with the Apostles' Creed, the 10 Commandments and the Lord's Prayer; provides answers that are more modern than previous catechisms as well as scripture references
- Includes a great introduction reminding leaders that it is not intended to be memorized or a source of indoctrination but a starting point for discussion

Living Faith Study Guide: An Interactive Study Guide to Living Faith

By Carolyn Boyer, 2004; available at

<http://presbyterian.ca/resources-od/>

- Includes a preface and introduction outlining the theories influencing the content of the book – specifically Gardner's multiple intelligence/learning style theory as well as a survey for participants/leaders identifying which is their favourite style
- Each learning style is described and assigned a symbol throughout the resource
- Supplies needed for the ten sessions are listed at the beginning of each chapter
- Whole group activities as well as follow up activities touching on different learning styles are included for each of the ten chapters which coincide with the chapters of *Living Faith*

Foundations of Christians Living

By David Sherbino, 1996; available from Tyndale University College & Seminary Bookstore

<http://www.tyndale.ca/bookstore> or 416-226-6620

Ext. 2188. While not published by the PCC, the author is a Presbyterian minister at Cornerstone Community Presbyterian Church in Kleinburg, Ontario.

- Designed to help Christians explore and understand some of the basic tenets of the faith
- 10 chapters covering topics such as understanding the nature of God, the Bible, the church, living the Christian life, what it means to be Presbyterian

Gifts of God: The Sacraments (Booklet)

By Heather Vais, Presbyterian Reformed Educational Partners, 2010; available for download at

<http://presbyterian.ca/worship/>

- About baptism and communion
- Includes brief introduction and a session to accompany each DVD segment with introductory notes, gathering activities, use of *Living Faith*, DVD viewing and questions for discussion, as well as other optional activities and a bibliography
- Includes different meanings and understandings of both sacraments as well as giving participants opportunity to discuss their own experiences

Gifts of God: The Sacraments (DVD)

Available for viewing at

<http://presbyterian.ca/worship/>

- DVD has two segments: baptism - 7 min. 34 sec.; communion - 5 min. 32 sec.
- DVD produced by the PCC, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Moravian Church in America, PCUSA and Reformed Church in America

Glorifying and Enjoying God: The People, Practice and Promise of the PCC

By Dorothy Henderson with content by Gordon Timbers and Karen Horst, 2011 Third Edition

- Includes brief chapters on Presbyterian history, the role of the Bible in our denomination's faith, the PCC's form of church government, baptism and communion, worship and serving others, stewardship and partnerships
- Each chapter includes beliefs and practices of the PCC, a story about this information, and suggestions for using the chapter with a group

Opening Doors to Discipleship

Sponsored by a partnership of the PCC and four reformed denominations in the U.S. This is a free online Christian education program available at www.odtd.net

- Four courses: A – Teaching skills; B – Bible background; C – Reformed faith; D – Discipleship

(Courses A and D are now in English, Spanish and Korean)

- Each course has 12 sessions packed with engaging life stories, solid biblical material, and opportunities for group and individual reflection
- More suitable for older youth; also could be used to equip elders, mentors, youth leaders and parents offering leadership in confirmation programs

This Presbyterian Church of Ours

By John Congram, 1995 (Wood Lake Books)

This was not published by the PCC but is sold by the Resource Centre. The author is a retired Presbytery minister and former Moderator of the PCC

- chapters cover such subjects as PCC's history, beliefs, government, its view of other denominations, the Bible, worship, the sacraments and social action
- includes a study guide written by Jim Taylor with suggestions for group leaders
- some humorous parts

From other sources

An annotated list that includes the following resources can be found in the Suggested Reading List:

Confirmation-related resources at

<http://presbyterian.ca/suggested-reading-lists/>

From Faith Alive Christian Resources

I Believe: Getting Ready to Profess My Faith Study Guide

by Jessie Schut, 2004 (there is a separate Mentor Guide)

Reformed: What it means, why it matters

by Robert De Moor, 2001

From Logos Productions Inc.

Making Disciples: Coordinator's Guide; Making

Disciples: Confirmand's Journal

by William H. Willimon 1990, 1997

From Sparkhouse/Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

re:form (2010)

re:form Traditions (2011)

re:form Ancestors (2012)

From the Presbyterian Church USA

We Believe - Professing our faith: A confirmation curriculum

by Meg Rift & Eunice McGarrahan, 2005

Belonging to God: A first catechism, 1998

From the United Church of Canada

Get real, get a life... get God? Exploration of faith/confirmation resource for youth

From the *Steps in a Journey* series, 1996

Jesus 24/7 Youth: A short course on faith for the questing youth

by David Bruce, 2007

Leap in Faith: A confirmation resource

by Leslee Alfano, Noelle Bowles and Rick Garland, 2004

From the Anglican Church

The Great Adventure: Exploring Christian faith with young people

by Patricia Bays, 1997

From Zondervan

Sticky Faith: Teen curriculum with DVD

by Dr. Kara E. Powell & Brad M. Griffin, 2011

From Mennonite Church Canada

Reaching Up to God our Creator

by church leaders with both Aboriginal and European roots, 2008

From Alpha

Alpha for Teens

Canadian Ministries wants to hear from YOU!

What parts of this resource are most useful? Share your experiences with confirmation-like programs. Recommend a resource! Make a suggestion or ask a question!

Contact us at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca or call 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 Ext. 271 or Facebook