
Confirmation Information Packet

Our United Methodist Understanding of Confirmation

The Big Picture

Your child's confirmation year has the potential to be one of the most significant events in his or her life - and in the life of your family. It is also an experience that we will be asking your help with. For this reason we want to give you some additional information about what your child will be going through and what we will be asking you to help with.

There are a couple of reasons what some of us might find this information helpful:

1. **Many people who join our church were not raised in the United Methodist Church or in churches that practice confirmation.** This means that for some of us confirmation may be an entirely new idea. We may be more familiar with people making a decision for Christ through an altar call than through a class or program.
2. **Others of us may have been raised in churches that practice confirmation, but may not be familiar with how we do confirmation at Highland Park UMC.** Our church is nationally known for its confirmation program and it is the centerpiece of our youth ministry. Though the majority of Christian churches practice confirmation, in some ways we are unique in the way we approach confirmation. The degree of parent involvement, for example, is unparalleled anywhere in the country.

Before going into the details of our understanding of confirmation and how we do confirmation at our church, here is the big picture. What we know as confirmation today has existed in the church since the very beginning. And, from the beginning, what we call confirmation has always involve two distinctly different (but related) things:

1. **A Worship Service** – At the center of confirmation is a worship service. This service is an opportunity, at the appropriate age, to personally respond to God's call to be Christian and to openly affirm our faith. In other words, confirmation includes a rite or worship service. This is what we will do on Confirmation Sunday.
2. **A Class or Program** – Confirmation also involves a period of training that prepares the person to make their public profession of faith. This is what we do in the 12 months leading up to confirmation Sunday.

The Specific Components of Our Highland Park Confirmation Model

*In the model presented here, confirmation is seen as **a total youth program**, rather than as a class that just meets at a given hour for a set number of weeks. The goal is to **totally immerse the confirmation youth and their parents in a holistic and comprehensive program that is designed to foster spiritual formation**. Many of the goals of this program are accomplished outside the normal weekly meeting time. Many of the other goals require an extensive period of time.*

1. Our Summer Class

Highland Park UMC promotes the first Sunday in of June. We also know that the class members are in and out all summer on family vacations and going to camp. This means there is no consistent attendance. The result is that we have three months in the summer where the new 6th graders (our confirmation grade) are in our program, but in which we can't start our regular curriculum. Our solution is to include these three months in the confirmation program but to make this a "summer component". We chose to use adventure learning challenge initiatives originally designed for ropes challenge courses. The overall goal of these activities is *communication, cooperation, and team building* - what it means to be a faith community. Yet each week's session stands alone. We have discovered that these activities are a wonderful addition to our confirmation program and that they help us in our goals for the confirmation year.

2. Relationships

One of the most important things we do in confirmation is to build 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 during the year we try to fulfill this commandment. We intentionally spend a lot of time and effort building trust, building relationships, and building community.

3. Weekly Sunday School Class

Our main class runs concurrent with the academic school year. This gives us 41 weeks. At HPUMC the class meets during the Sunday school hour and is our sixth grade Sunday school class. If we have visitors who are sixth graders, they attend the confirmation class as their Sunday school. If sixth grade youth join the church during the middle of the year, they become a part of the confirmation class. These class sessions are based on a mixture of large group and small group experiences.

4. Retreats

We'll begin the year and end the year with a day retreat. The fall retreat is primarily for group building purposes. The spring retreat focuses on the confirmand's decision concerning confirmation and what follows that decision.

5. Worship Attendance

It is expected that families who are in the confirmation program will be regular in worship attendance. This is not seen as extra but as integral to the confirmation process itself. Students learn about worship by being in worship.

6. Missions

Mission is seen as an integral part of what it means to be Christian. Mission projects, trips, and opportunities provide chances to engage in “*service learning*”. The faith we profess is the faith we live. Each informs the other. We believe that it is important to provide the confirmation class with multiple opportunities to learn about mission and to be involved in mission - in a variety of settings. This also gives class members sensitivity to the problems we face in the world and lets them know that they can make a difference. The class will participate in “local missions” where they help within the church in a service capacity, in “community missions” in which they are involved in the large community, and in two mission trips to locations beyond our local community. One of these is at spring break and one is during the summer following confirmation.

7. Visiting Other Churches & Faiths (4)

As we explore our history and heritage, our class 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 understand better our own heritage).

8. Social Events

Another aspect of being a total youth program for the 6th grade is to provide social and recreational activities. A couple of times each semester the class will have an opportunity to be involved in a recreational or social activity. Among these are a Whirly Ball, the Main Event, Adventure Landing, bowling, roller skating, ice skating, a swimming party and miniature golf, and more.

9. Faith Mentors

At one time our church had the confirmation class members choose a “faith mentor” - an adult who would share the confirmation journey with them. However, we have realized that with over 50 adults working with our class in a teaching capacity, that we no longer need to do that. We have 50 plus faith mentors in the classroom working as teachers and small group leaders. If class members want to seek out another adult they know (a grand parent, etc.), we encourage them to do so.

10. Special Worship Services (2)

We begin the year and end the year with special worship services. In the fall we begin with a Covenant Service in which youth, parents & teachers all pledge to enter into the confirmation journey together. In the spring we will end the year with our Service of Baptism and Confirmation.

11. Participation in Youth Choir, Spring Break Mission Trip, and Summer Trips

Confirmation youth are also involved in some of the youth activities of our church. In particular they are able to be in our youth choir, the spring break mission trip with the 7th and 8th grades, and the three summer trips (choir tour, summer mission trip).

Our Confirmation Leadership Team

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Staff Liaison

Walt Marcum works directly with the volunteer team in administering and teaching Confirmation. Walt's job responsibilities include:

- + *The overall responsibility for the confirmation program*
- + *Recruit, train & support the volunteer team*
- + *Work with the lead teachers in revising the curriculum*
- + *Work with lead teachers as needed in doing the weekly class presentations*
- + *Serve as pastor to youth and families*
- + *Coordinate Youth Office support (mailings, phone class, etc.)*
- + *Trouble shoot and provide support for the volunteer team as needed*

Teaching Team

The teaching team consists of Walt, the *lead teachers*, the *small group leaders*, and the *small group floaters*. This group is collectively responsible for actually teaching the class on Sunday morning.

Confirmation Coordinators/Lead Teachers

The lead teachers work with the staff liaison in giving overall leadership to the class. The lead teachers responsibilities include:

- + *Serve as leaders for the team as a whole*
- + *Work with Walt in leading the total group sessions on Sunday morning*
- + *Alert Walt to any concerns with regard to the class or its members*
- + *Work directly with leaders of the administrative teams to make sure everything is working*
- + *Trouble shoot problems with Walt as they arise*
- + *Meet with Walt as needed to plan out the morning class sessions & events*
- + *Attend as many of the class events & activities as possible*

Small Group Leaders

The basic responsibility of the small group leader is to lead - with the assistance of a co-leader - the small group sessions, which should last about 30 minutes on average. To fulfill this task, small group leaders need to:

- + *Attend the class on a regular basis (average three out of four weeks)*
- + *Coordinate with the co-leader (notify them when they are unable to attend, etc.)*
- + *Read the material in advance and be prepared to facilitate the small group*
- + *Actually lead the small group sessions*
- + *Get to know small group members and build relationships with them*
- + *Work most directly with group members*
- + *Attend both confirmation retreats (Fall & Spring)*
- + *Phone chain responsibilities when needed*
- + *Write, with help of Hospitality Committee, personal notes to group members when needed*

Small Group Floaters

The basic responsibility of the small group leader is to be available to slot into small groups as needed to replace the regular small group leader who is gone for some reason. This will normally mean teaming with the other regular leader in that group and giving them support.

- + *Attend the class on a regular basis (no minimum requirement)*
- + *Attend both confirmation retreats if possible (Fall & Spring)*

Administration Teams

The administrative duties and functions of the class are performed by four teams that work in cooperation with the staff liaison and the lead teachers. Many of these teams have sub-teams doing specific duties.

Classroom Administration Team

The Classroom Administration Team will run the parts of the class on Sunday morning that do not directly relate to the actual teaching of the class. They will do the administration or the business of the class. This will include:

- + *Do advance set up each week of check in materials, name tags, rosters, etc.*
- + *Greet and welcome people as they come in*
- + *Greet, welcome, and resource new "first time" families*
- + *Register new members (return forms with attendance to youth office)*

- + *Sign in, take role*
- + *Double check sign-ins with actual number present. Account for any not signed in.*
- + *Keep and track attendance*
- + *Notify Walt Marcum & lead teachers when class members have stopped coming*
- + *Notify Walt Marcum of any needed materials (name tags, rosters, etc.)*
- + *Set up of refreshments (donut holes)*
- + *Turn in attendance to the youth office*
- + *Turn in offering to the business office*
- + *Assist in taking photographs of class members and teachers*

In addition, there are five (5) specialty teams that work under the Administrative Team umbrella. These are: Room Set-Up, Music, Tech, and Digital Photography

Room Set Up

The Room Set-Up Team will work with Walt and the Lead Teachers to make sure the room is set up so that it is usable for the day's activities. Specific duties include:

- + *Check with lead teacher to see if any special set up is required for the lesson*
- + *Come early and set up the room (newsprint, props, tables, etc.)*
- + *Summer: help set up the challenge activities for the 8 weeks we meet*
- + *School Year: help set up the dividers so that small groups have privacy and noise cushion*
- + *Return the dividers at the end of the class session.*
- + *Take down any special room set up.*

Music

Work with Walt and our part time staff in leading our singing each week. This includes:

- + *Playing guitar*
- + *Working with Walt to learn the youth songs*
- + *Play and help lead music at our two retreats*

Tech

This team will set up and run the tech in the confirmation room and on the retreats. This includes:

- + *Coming early to check out the sound system (all 4 mikes working?)*
- + *Bringing a laptop to run the PowerPoint presentations*
- + *Run the PowerPoint during the singing and the large group presentation.*
- + *Coordinate with Walt on the PowerPoint presentations (email)*
- + *Set up and run addition AV as needed (TV/VCR, music, etc.)*
- + *Coordinate with the Lead Teachers to see if any special tech is needed*
- + *Work with the Lead Teachers for any special lighting (needed a few Sundays)*

Digital Photography

The Photography Team will photograph the class and the confirmation events. This must be done with a high resolution digital camera. Specific duties include:

- + *Photograph the class members and leadership team on Sunday morning*
- + *We will use these school style pictures to help learn class members names and faces*
- + *This can start at the closing weeks of the 5th grade year.*
- + *Keep a record of who is photographed and who is not*
- + *Photograph and get the correct class members names for all new class members.*
- + *Coordinate with Walt our pectoral directory.*
- + *Make sure each event is documented and photograph.*
- + *Work with Walt on getting these event pictures on our Webpage in a timely manner*

Small Group Resource Team

The small group resource team will provide support for the small group leaders, providing them with any supplies the curriculum calls for. The idea is to free up the small group leader to actually be with the class members and to focus on them and their needs. Specific duties include:

- + *Help resource the small groups*
- + *Get and organize supplies called for in curriculum each week*
- + *Hand supplies to small group leaders each week (small group baskets)*
- + *Assist in room set up (if needed and requested by lead teacher)*
- + *Free the small group leaders up to actually teach & be with group members*

Hospitality/Shepherding Team

The Shepherding team will provide support by keeping track of needs of significant events in the lives of class members and seeing to it that the small group leaders write notes to the their group members about these issues.

- + *Send “we miss you” cards to those who miss so many times*
- + *Send cards to visitors and 1st time attendees (“Thank you for coming”)*
- + *Send other cards as needed:*
 - *Sympathy cards*
 - *Get well cards*
 - *Birthday cards*
 - *Congratulations cards (school awards, etc)*
 - *Other cards that seem appropriate*
- + *This means team member will need to be present in the class to hear concerns*

Special Event Team

The Event Team is responsible for the logistics associated with all of our “events”. These include any activities other than our normal Sunday morning class sessions held at the church. Our hope is to do an opening and closing retreat as well as special events and mission projects for our grade. These responsibilities include:

- + *Assign group members to the specific events*
- + *Work with staff liaison & Youth Office on advance publicity*
- + *Arrange transportation for each event*
- + *Recruit parents to go with youth on the events*
- + *Get & organized supplies needed for the events*
- + *Do check in and coordination transportation at the event*
- + *Be at the event and stay till all youth are picked up*

Event Team Sub-Committees

Due to the large number of special events (over 40), we have decided to break this committee into four sub committees. These sub-committees will have their own chairperson and group members who will actually lead the events. Our sub committees are:

Retreats

The Retreat Committee will work with the youth office on our two retreats. The retreats are already written and are in the curriculum. Duties of this committee include:

- + *Work with Walt on flyer and publicity*
- + *Work with Walt on recruiting youth*
- + *Work with Walt on recruiting adults*
- + *Work with Walt on office support (nametags, rosters, etc.)*
- + *Purchasing supplies*
- + *Getting additional supplies from the church attic.*
- + *Packing and cataloging the supplies in trunks*
- + *Arranging for supplies to be taken to and from the retreat center*
- + *Being at the retreat to set up and take down activities*
- + *Take care of snacks and refreshments on the retreat*
- + *Return trunks and supplies at the end of the trip*

Social Events

The Social Events is responsible for planning and leading our nine monthly social activities. These are already chosen and dates will be set. The committee needs to :

- + *Assign team members to take responsibility for specific events*

- + *Call months in advance and make the reservation for the event*
- + *Coordinate with the Youth Office for any needed deposits*
- + *Coordinate with the Youth Office on publicity*
- + *This includes:*
 - *Our Monthly News Flyer*
 - *Email reminders*
 - *Cards (if needed)*
- + *Do follow up communication with the event location*
- + *Be at the event to check people in, take money, pay the bill, coordinate food (if needed)*
- + *Trouble shoot any issues*
- + *Stay until the last child is picked up*

Mission

The Mission Committee will work on four local missions and one mission trip. This includes caroling shut ins, doing work at Wilkinson Center, doing work at Wesley-Rankin, leading a Bingo Party at Dickenson, place and helping the youth office involve class members in the Spring Break Mission Trip. Duties include:

- + *Calling to set up the project months in advance.*
- + *Coordinating publicity with Walt and the youth office*
- + *Arranging for transportation (parents)*
- + *Getting any needed tools and supplies*
- + *Going on the trip with the group to supervise the activity*
- + *Make sure everything is returned*

Worship

The Worship Committee with work on our **two worship services** at HPUMC - the fall **Covenant Service** and the spring **Confirmation Service**. Specific duties include:

- + *Working with Walt to reserve the Sanctuary*
- + *Work with Walt on the bulletin*
- + *Work with lead teachers & Walt on class members assisting in the service*
- + *Work with Walt on any needed supplies (communion, candles, crosses, etc)*

In addition, this committee is responsible for our **four visits to faith communities**. These are: A Jewish Synagogue, a Roman Catholic Church, an Episcopal Church, an African-American United Methodist Church). Specific duties include in this are include:

- + *Calling and setting up the visit on the calendared date and time*
- + *Working out conflicts and trouble shooting in case of a calendar conflict*

- + *Work with youth office on publicity.*
- + *Do follow up calls with the institution to make sure everything is ready for us*
- + *Be at the event to check in youth*
- + *Stay until everyone is picked up.*