

Confirmation in the Diocese of Arkansas

Confirmation is a mature public affirmation that people make regarding their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their baptism, and it is done in the Episcopal Church in the context of the laying on of hands by a bishop.

Confirmation is one of the sacramental rites of the Episcopal Church, and it shares an ancient connection with baptism. Like baptism and ordination, we say that it makes such an indelible imprint on the person being confirmed that it is a rite that we do not repeat. Thus, we do not confirm for a second time people who have already been confirmed in another Christian tradition. Instead, we receive them into this tradition.

During most visits by the bishop to a congregation in the diocese of Arkansas there will be candidates for confirmation or reception. There may also be adults who wish to be baptized.

Confirmation is appropriate for anyone who is ready to make a “mature public affirmation.” In fact, the canons of the church state that it is expected that all adult members of this church will make this public affirmation. The canons also state that adult members are people who are sixteen years of age or older. For pastoral reasons, it is often necessary to present candidates who are less than sixteen. The bishop requests that people being presented be at least twelve years old, and preferably older.

The Episcopal Church realizes that there are people who have made mature affirmations of faith in other Christian traditions and who wonder if that affirmation is equivalent to confirmation. Thus, in deciding whom to present for confirmation and whom to present for reception, please let the candidate make the decision based on what the canons state: “Those who have previously made a mature public commitment in another Church may be received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop in this Church, rather than confirmed.”

The bishop will always lay hands on anyone being confirmed or received, and will use the appropriate prayer in the Book of Common Prayer for each.

If there is an adult who wishes to be baptized (and again, this applies to people who are twelve or older), the bishop will lay hands on that person in baptism, and this laying on of hands needs to be recorded in the congregation’s register as confirmation. This is in accordance with the rubrics for the rites of baptism and confirmation. Please present only people age twelve or older for these combined rites of baptism and confirmation.

As far as record keeping is concerned, it helps to have baptismal and confirmation certificates ready for the bishop to sign either before or after the service. If there are Prayer Books to be signed, have them ready as well. The bishop will sign the congregation’s register and the service register after the liturgy concludes.