

Confirmation in the Diocese of Arkansas

Those baptized at an early age are expected, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism by the laying on of hands by the bishop (BCP, p. 412).

Those baptized as adults, unless baptized with laying on of hands by a bishop, are also expected to make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism in the presence of a bishop and to receive the laying on of hands (BCP, p.412).

The age of Confirmation for young people is left up to the discretion of the presenting member of the clergy. In that Confirmation is a “mature affirmation,” it is preferable that Confirmation not occur before a person becomes a teenager.

Confirmation is closely connected to Baptism, and thus we do not confirm a person more than once. 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.” (Canon I.17.1)

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. Normally, people who are being confirmed kneel, while people being received or reaffirming their baptismal vows stand. If there are those people who cannot kneel, it is of course satisfactory for them to stand.

Any person who is baptized as an adult while the bishop is present and receives the laying on of hands by the bishop is to have that person’s Confirmation recorded in the parish register and to receive a Confirmation certificate. Normally, an adult is someone who is at least thirteen years old.

If there are baptisms when the bishop is present, ask the person being baptized (or a parent) whether he or she wishes for the bishop to do the baptism itself or another member of the clergy.

It is helpful to disclose to the bishop any possible gender identity issues before the liturgy. It is also helpful to have Baptism and Confirmation certificates ready for the bishop to sign either before the liturgy. If there are Prayer Books to be signed, have them ready as well. The bishop will sign the congregation’s register after the liturgy concludes.