

Dear Baptismal sponsor,

As a part of our confirmation process, we are attempting to be intentional in connecting the youth to adults in a way that helps deepen spiritual formation. We are utilizing the youth's baptismal sponsors since there is already some type of connection and it ties in with the promises the sponsors made during the baptism where you were asked: 'do you promise to nurture this person in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help them live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?' We are asking you to help nurture the faith development of the youth and explore with them a little of what it means to be a confirmed member of the church. {NOTE: some youth do not have baptismal sponsors or are unable to be a part of this process, thus other adults have been asked to assist in this role—however for the sake of simplicity the material uses baptismal sponsors to include others that may not be a 'sponsor' but have been asked to partake in this faith formation role}

Below is information related to what we are asking and why:

Why use a process like this? Numerous studies have shown that the more trusted, caring adults a young adult has in his or her life above and beyond the parents, the better. This initiative is an attempt to help expand and deepen the youth's circle of trusted adults. The hope is that this will provide youth an opportunity to explore and make sense of their faith.

What do I need in order to accomplish this? We are not looking for a perfect person or a 'know-it-all' about faith. The reality is that youth need people who they can be honest with and are honest with them. Faith is not a one size fits all. Part of faith formation is hearing from others, their struggles and how they strive to live out their faith. The gifts that are needed can be captured in three words: available, authentic and affirming. Being available—making time (one if not the most precious resource we have). Authentic—be who you are and honest with the youth. Affirming—everybody needs and longs for others to affirm their life.

What are we asking you to do? During the youth's 2nd & 3rd year of confirmation, we are asking you to meet with the youth at least once a year for a time of discussion related to faith formation. There are different questions for the youth to ask you based upon if they are a 2nd or 3rd year confirmation student (since this is the first year, those who will be confirmed can if they choose to ask questions for both years—but not required). The student will video the conversation and send it directly to me. Also, by videoing it provides accountability that these conversations occurred.

My hope is that these conversations take in person, but may take place in a variety of ways (phone, skype, etc). Please feel free to expand in whatever way you may be comfortable (e.g. take the youth out for a meal and have the discussion, go for coffee (beverage) and talk, go someplace and hike and have the discussion. Be creative. Connect with the youth.

While, the focus is upon the youth asking you some questions, please engage in further discussions by asking them the same or similar questions. Allow the Spirit to guide the discussion. Sometimes tangents can be wonderful.

Questions for 2nd Year Confirmation Students:

1. *What is your favorite Bible verse or story? Why?*
2. *What is your favorite hymn, church song, or piece of music that reminds you of God? Why?*
3. *How do you experience Jesus in your daily life?*
4. *How do you feed your soul?*
5. *What does it mean to be a Christian?*

Questions for 3rd Year Confirmation Students:

1. *Describe a time when you felt personal close to Jesus?*
2. *What gifts do you think God has bestowed upon you? How do you use them?*
3. *For me, to be a follower of Christ means...*
4. *How do you serve God?*
5. *Talk about two people that have had a profound impact on your faith.*

Closing thoughts: Thank you for your willingness to be a part of this young person's life and help nurture their faith. The mission statement of the congregation is 'Walking in faith. Sowing Christ's love.' Throughout the confirmation process, I hope that the young adults will begin to understand how they are walking in faith and will seek to sow God's love in the world. This initiative will help them to see how others are doing this same thing and see in real, concrete ways others who are striving to follow Jesus and be the baptized, confirmed body of Christ in our community and in the world.

In some way, I also pray that this may be a beginning step to deeper relationships. Please be encouraged to understand what I am asking as the baseline, and feel free to continue to support and nurture this young adult in all kinds of ways and in particular their faith journey.

Any questions or if you would like additional resources related to conversations with youth or how to mentor youth, please reach out to me and I can provide those resources.

Again, thank you for your involvement with this young adult's faith formation process.

In God's Radical Grace,

Stephen M. Wood