

Confirmation Program Information Session

The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

October 2017

Welcome to confirmation instruction at LCGS! This is a two-year program, typically for students in 7th and 8th grades. Our hope is that all who participate will grow in faith, in faith practices, and in understanding the Bible and Lutheran theology.

Curriculum Overview

We are taking a new approach with the confirmation curriculum this year. Our primary texts are the Bible and *The Lutheran Handbook*, which contains Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*. Our study of the *Small Catechism* is aligned with the Narrative Lectionary, the order of Bible readings we use in our Sunday worship services. Gospel readings this academic year will come primarily from John. (Matthew's gospel will be primary for 2018-2019). In the *Small Catechism*, we will cover the Apostles' Creed and the Means of Grace (Baptism and Holy Communion) this year. In 2018-2019, we will study the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer (which 2nd-year students covered in 2016-2017).

Bibles

Students may bring their own Bibles or use the class set. If your family decides to purchase a Bible, please consider choosing an edition of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Some good study Bible options:

- *Lutheran Study Bible* from Augsburg Fortress
- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*
- *The Harper Collins Study Bible*

We use the NRSV translation in worship. There is another study Bible out there with a similar name, *The Lutheran Study Bible*, but this is a different translation, the English Standard Version (ESV). Please look for the NRSV *Lutheran Study Bible*.

There are several web sites and apps where the NRSV and good reference materials for understanding the Bible are available. Some resources you might explore with your student:

- bible.oremus.org – Easy to search for NRSV text by Bible passage reference or word/phrase. Note: default is Anglicized NRSV, but NRSV is second option on dropdown menu. Can display or omit verse numbers, footnotes, and section headings.

- www.biblegateway.com – Many different Bible translations are available, in English and other languages. Useful for comparing a verse across many translations.
- net.bible.org – Displays the New English Translation (NET), but has extensive notes on translating the Hebrew and Greek texts, cross references, and notes about the context. Can display Hebrew and Greek texts or link to various commentaries.
- http://www.workingpreacher.org/narrative_faqs.aspx - Narrative Lectionary FAQ helps explain the cycle of Bible readings we use in worship and in confirmation instruction.

The Lutheran Handbook

Each student receives a copy of *The Lutheran Handbook* to bring with them to class and to keep as a reference. Contributions may be made to defray the cost (about \$10 per book). Families are responsible for the cost of replacing their copy of *The Lutheran Handbook* if it is lost.

Lesson Handouts

A handout will be distributed during most class sessions. These are posted online as PDF files at www.lcgselca.org/confirmation.html. When a student misses a class session, please download a copy of the handout from the web site or pick up a hard copy the next week. Please read through the handout, the Bible passages, and the pages of *The Lutheran Handbook* referenced in the handout with your student, so they can follow along with what we are doing in class.

Class Sessions

Confirmation instruction takes place during the Sunday School hour each week: 9:30-10:30 a.m. During the first part of the class, we gather as a large group, with 1st- and 2nd-year classes together. Then, we break into small groups.

Teachers

Pastor Teal is taking the lead on teaching the class in the large group setting. Laura Runyeon, Tim Miller, and Monica Thayer have returned to serve as small group leaders for the 2nd-year class. Ruthann Sutherland and John Verbillis are serving as small group leaders for the 1st-year class.

Family and Faith Community Participation

Each student is invited to have a parent, guardian, grandparent, baptismal sponsor, or another significant adult in their life attend Confirmation instruction with them. Family participation enhances student learning, as discussions can continue through the week at home. You may know that Martin Luther wrote the *Small Catechism* as a guide for parents to teach the Christian faith to their children. Contemporary research shows that faith

“sticks” best when youth have at least five adults involved in their faith lives. Parents, guardians, grandparents, baptismal sponsors, pastors, and confirmation small group leaders can all be members of such teams.

Reading the Daily Lectionary readings together is another way for families to support student learning. They are printed in the bulletins and lesson handouts each Sunday.

Confirmation Retreat

We will continue to have an annual Confirmation Retreat for both 1st- and 2nd-year confirmation students at Mar-Lu-Ridge Camp & Retreat Center, in Jefferson, MD. The retreat is scheduled for the weekend of May 11-13, 2018. Please mark your calendars now. We will return in time for families to celebrate Mother’s Day in the afternoon.

Jo-Anne Toepfer and Lisa Koop are our retreat coordinators. The retreat theme will come from the main Narrative Lectionary reading for May 13, Philippians 2:1-13. We will need some parents to serve as chaperones.

Worship Notes

Each student is expected to complete 20 worship notes during each year of confirmation instruction. Families are invited to participate in worship notes discussion questions. Further reflection on the Bible stories we hear in worship and in class will help students make connections between the Bible and their lives.

Laura Runyeon keeps a spreadsheet to track worship note submission by 2nd-year students. Ruthann Sutherland will track worship notes submitted by 1st-year students. Once Laura and Ruthann sign and record submitted worship notes, they pass them along to Pastor Teal. Pastor Teal comments on them and returns them to students. It is helpful to Pastor Teal for students to submit worship notes through the year, rather than saving them up for the end of the school year. Thank you!

If students attend worship at another congregation, they may submit a bulletin and a written account of their experience in lieu of worship notes that Sunday.

If students are unable to attend worship on 20 Sundays per school year, worship notes may be completed by analyzing the Sunday’s texts (e.g. where are the law/trouble and gospel/good news in the texts?), rather than addressing the questions focused on other aspects of the worship service.

Portfolios

Students will work on periodic assignments and create their own portfolio documenting their faith journey. They will review their portfolio with Pastor Teal at the end of their second year of confirmation instruction. Laura and Ruthann will track these submissions via spreadsheet, as well.

Accommodations for Learning Needs

Confirmation instruction is meant to be faith formation, not school. We will not have tests. We will not emphasize memorization, although students will be invited to memorize the Apostles' Creed this year (and the Ten Commandments in 2018-2019), as the Sunday School "Building Blocks" that are an LCGS tradition. We do not want to add to the academic pressure that middle school students already face. We want confirmation to be about growing in faith, faith practices, and understanding of the Bible and Lutheran Christian theology in a community of peers and mentors.

We will do our best to accommodate the range of learning needs of confirmation students by adjusting expectations where necessary. For example, if writing is difficult, students may complete worship notes or portfolio pieces using dictation software or a parent scribe, or by submitting an audio recording of responses. We do not want parents to complete them for students without student involvement, but to engage with students in discussing the content of what we are learning. Alternative portfolio projects may be proposed to Pastor Teal and approved on a case-by-case basis.

Acolytes and Crucifers

Students are expected to serve as acolytes and crucifers during worship. A training session will be held after the 11:00 worship service on Sunday, October 15. Please check your family calendar and help your student(s) sign up to serve on Sundays that are convenient for your family: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0b4ca4ad23aafc1-worship>

Confirmation Day: Affirmation of Baptism

On Sunday, May 20, 2018, those who have completed two years of confirmation instruction will be invited to affirm their baptism at the 11:00 worship service, becoming confirmed members of LCGS. This will make them voting members of the congregation and eligible to serve as council members. The order for Affirmation of Baptism is printed on pp. 234-237 of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the cranberry hymnals in our pews. 2nd-year students will go over this material on the May 11-13 retreat. The celebration on May 20 will include a class photograph in robes and a cake reception after worship.

To participate in this service, 2nd-year confirmation students must have their portfolios and worship notes completed by May 11, including any that were not completed during the 2016-2017 school year. (Several students are currently getting caught up on these. Thank you!) Students who have not completed these by May 11 can affirm their baptism at a date in the future, when they have completed their portfolios and worship notes.

Students may choose not to affirm their baptism on May 20. They are still welcome to come to worship and take communion. They are welcome to come to the high school Sunday school class in the following school year, or to continue attending confirmation instruction on Sunday mornings, if they feel they need more time to deepen their understanding of the Bible and Lutheran Christian faith. The only things they would not be able to do is vote at congregational meetings or serve on council.

CIA Youth Group

While it is not a requirement of confirmation, we encourage all confirmation students to be involved in our youth group, Christians in Action (CIA). CIA usually meets on the 1st Sunday and 3rd Thursday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the Parsonage.

FreeRide Alternative

On Sunday, October 22, some confirmation students will be attending FreeRide, the Delaware-Maryland Synod's retreat for middle school youth. Those not attending are invited to come to the gym during the Sunday School hour. Rather than forge ahead with confirmation curriculum while several students are away, we will focus on illustrating upcoming Narrative Lectionary readings for use as artwork in the bulletin. We will read some of the stories, and students can choose which they would like to illustrate.