



## CONFIRMATION FOR YOUTH, 2025-2026

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Instructor:* The Rev. John Kennedy ([jkennedy@stmarksnewcanaan.org](mailto:jkennedy@stmarksnewcanaan.org) / 203-966-4515 x105)

*Meetings:* Sundays, 11:30am-12:30pm, Youth Room

*"In the course of their Christian development, 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 and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop."*

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 412

This Confirmation class is designed to guide youth confirmands on a journey of exploring and practicing a Jesus-centered life. Its structure and content are inspired by the book *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* by the Anglican bishop and scholar N.T. Wright. There will be no assigned reading, but confirmands parents are invited to buy or borrow the book and read along with the class.

The class content will be divided into three parts, following Wright's structure:

### *Part One: Signs of God in the World ("Echoes of a Voice")*

We begin by exploring four universal human longings: the desire for justice, the quest for spirituality, the need for relationships, and the appreciation of beauty. These "echoes" suggest something greater beyond our immediate experience.

### *Part Two: Central Beliefs of Christianity ("Staring at the Sun")*

In this section, we delve into the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. We will spend time understanding the story of Israel, the life and mission of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

### *Part Three: Living the Christian Life ("Reflecting the Image")*

The final part focuses on what it means to live out the Christian faith. We will discuss the practices of worship, prayer, and engagement with scripture, leading into a broader conversation about the church—not as a building or institution, but as a community of believers following Jesus.

Throughout the year, patience and openness will be key as we explore these themes and see how they intertwine to form a coherent and compelling vision of Christian faith and practice.

*Class time will be structured as follows:*

- Attendance and icebreaker
- Prayer
- Short presentation of the day's topic
- Group discussion, prompted by discussion questions
- The final ten minutes of each class will be for journaling. Each confirmand will be given a journal at the first class which they are to keep track of and bring to each class.

The hope of this class (and its instructor) is that this exploration will equip confirmands to discern whether they truly wish to say "yes" to the sort of life that they are asked to recommit to in the rite of Confirmation.

The decision to be confirmed should rest with the confirmand, and they should not be made to feel pressure to do so to conform to social custom or to be confirmed during a particular stage of life or school year, as there is no such expectation in the Canons of the Episcopal Church or our Prayer Book. Full initiation into the Body of Christ is complete with baptism, and, prior to the last century or so, the typical age for Confirmation has been near the entrance to adulthood rather than the onset of puberty.

Accordingly, this confirmation class is a process of discernment in which confirmands are encouraged to ask questions, seek answers, and explore their spiritual depths both in community and in quiet reflection and prayer. There is no expectation that a confirmand be confirmed at the end of this process, and it is entirely acceptable for a confirmand to decide that they would like to explore Confirmation later.

Finally, it is hoped that this journey will be a joyful one for all who participate! The Gospel message is one of joy, a quality that is too often scarce in our world and, indeed, too many churches. Confirmands are invited and encouraged to come as they are, be honest and authentic, and have fun.

### **Requirements and Expectations**

1. Consistent and engaged attendance at both Sunday worship and Confirmation class.
  - a) Sunday worship is a principal and essential means by which Christians express and deepen their identity as disciples of Jesus and members of the body of Christ.

Therefore, in a Confirmation class that explores Christian practice, consistent participation in Sunday worship is of great importance. Please do not skip church and come only for Confirmation class, as this undermines the foundations of an authentic Confirmation experience.

- b) Confirmands must attend confirmation classes. It is understood that perfect attendance is not always possible given the incredible demands made on students' time by school, extracurricular activities, and sports. However, to properly discern whether to receive the sacrament of Confirmation in our tradition requires that one know something about it. There is no greater gift we can give our children than the knowledge that they are loved unconditionally by God and the life of grace and freedom that follows from it. Accordingly, attendance will be taken during Confirmation classes, and **students may be excused from four classes** for any reason. Additional absences will result in make-up work proportional in time and effort of the missed class.
2. Regular (at least monthly, or a total of **seven times** from October through May) participation in a liturgical ministry (i.e., serve as an **acolyte** and/or **lector**). Sign up sheets will be circulated via email.
  3. Attendance of at least one of the following Holy Week liturgies<sup>1</sup>:
    - Maundy Thursday
    - Good Friday
    - Easter Vigil (Saturday night before Easter Sunday)
  - Engage in a regular prayer or meditative practice at home. Resources will be provided during the second class. This component of the class will not be tested or examined; it is between each confirmand and God (and perhaps their parents).
  - Acts of charity, service, and outreach are essential to Christian living. Opportunities to serve will be provided through the St. Mark's Youth Group. Participation is encouraged but not required in acknowledgment that scheduling is sometimes a challenge.

If you foresee difficulty fulfilling these requirements this year, please keep in mind that confirmation classes are open to students in 8th grade *or older*. You may be confirmed any year in high school, or as an adult.

Confirmation Class culminates with the sacrament of Confirmation, which is administered by one of the bishops of Connecticut. This is scheduled for **May 16, 2026** at 10am at St. Mark's.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

## Class Schedule

(All classes meet from 11:30am-12:30pm in the Youth Room)

*Topics and content are based on the book Simply Christian by N.T. Wright.  
(Confirmands and parents are invited, but not required, to read along.)*

1. **October 5:** Parents' Meeting (*for parents only; attendance is encouraged but not required*)

*October 12: No class; Indigenous Peoples'/Columbus Day weekend  
October 19: No class; Fr. John will be away*

### PART ONE: ECHOES OF A VOICE

2. **October 26:** Putting the World to Rights (*Chapter 1*)

*November 2: No class; Fr. John will be away*

3. **November 9:** The Hidden Spring (*Chapter 2*)

4. **November 16:** Made for Each Other (*Chapter 3*)

5. **November 23:** For the Beauty of the Other (*Chapter 4*)

*November 30: No class; Thanksgiving weekend*

### PART 2: STARING AT THE SUN

6. **December 7:** God (*Chapter 5*)

7. **December 14:** Israel (*Chapter 6*)

8. **December 21:** Jesus and the Coming of God's Kingdom (*Chapter 7*)

*December 28, January 4: No class; Christmas break*

**9. January 11:** Jesus: Rescue and Renewal (*Chapter 8*)

*January 18: No class; Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend*

**10. January 25:** God's Breath of Life (*Chapter 9*)

*February 1: No class; Annual Parish Meeting*

**11. February 8:** Living by the Spirit (*Chapter 10*)

*February 15, 22: No class; NCPS break*

### PART 3: REFLECTING THE IMAGE

**12. March 1:** Worship (*Chapter 11*)

**13. March 8** Prayer (*Chapter 12*)

**14. March 15:** The Book God Breathed (*Chapter 13*)

**15. March 22:** The Story and the Task (*Chapter 14*)

**15. March 29 (Palm Sunday):** Believing and Belonging (*Chapter 15*)

*April 5, 12: No class; Easter and NCPS break*

**16. April 19:** New Creation, Starting Now (*Chapter 16*)

**17. April 26:** Introduction to the Book of Common Prayer

**18. May 3:** Confirmation Rehearsal

*May 10: No class; Mother's Day*

**Saturday, May 16: CONFIRMATION, 10AM at ST. MARK'S** (*arrive at 9:15*)