



**CONFIRM**  
NOT CONFORM  
EPISCOPAL

Mentor/Parent  
Handbook

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CONFIRM NOT CONFORM

# Mentor Handbook

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## Welcome

This handbook will help you understand what to expect when you make the commitment to be part of *Confirm not Conform*—and what is expected of you.

We believe that helping people—youth or adult—prepare to be confirmed is an important ministry. We ask those being confirmed, (confirmands) to “make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism,” as it says in the Confirmation Service in *The Book of Common Prayer*. That’s something to be taken seriously. When people make this commitment, and intend to act on it, the church is forever changed by their presence and their gifts. Your ministry as a mentor will help confirmands discern whether or not they wish to make that commitment—though ultimately the choice is theirs.

This handbook will give you an overview of the *Confirm not Conform* program, the various roles that you and others will play in it, further information on the mentor/youth relationship, and an appendix with additional information to help you in your ministry.

Thank you for being part of *Confirm not Conform*.

## **Introduction to *Confirm not Conform***

### **What is *Confirm not Conform*?**

*Confirm not Conform*, or *CnC*, is a youth confirmation program that takes confirmation seriously. It exposes youth to a wide range of topics, including Scripture, sacraments, creeds, heresy, prayer, other religions, and serving others, and asks them to think through what they believe and why.

It is also a philosophy. *Confirm not Conform* emphasizes finding one's own voice rather than simply conforming to an external standard. It is a program that respects the work youth and adults do as they explore their faith. We trust that when people put in the effort to articulate what they believe and why, they will make good choices about their next step in faith.

*CnC* is also a congregational development program. The entire church grows in faith by participating in *Confirm not Conform*, as mentors, parents, leaders, clergy, vestry, or supportive onlookers who all make the commitment to support participants in the program in their life in Christ.

## Program Overview

“But what exactly does *Confirm not Conform* include?” you’re asking yourself. “What do I actually have to do?” Though the list below may seem daunting, remember that this is spread out over the course of many months. (Try singing it to the tune of “The Twelve Days of Christmas” if that will help reduce any anxiety about fitting this all in.) Some background on these different elements follow.

- 1 Information Night
- 1 Mentor Training
- 20 Sessions
- 1 Retreat Weekend
- 2-4 Field Trips
- 3 Required Worship Services (Ash Wednesday, Easter Vigil (if offered) and one other Holy Week service)
- 2 Rehearsals for the iConfirm service
- 1 iConfirm service and celebration

### Information Night

Before *CnC* begins, we encourage parishes to host an Information Night where everyone can learn about *CnC*, review the schedule and ask questions. It’s very possible that you are having an information night right now, in which case you can already cross that one off of your list.

### Mentor Training

Or perhaps you are in the middle of Mentor Training. Mentor Training brings together potential mentors to discuss their role in *Confirm not Conform*, answer questions, and provide materials to make their work easier. If at all possible, the training should occur before the first class, but no later than the third session (since Mentors take part in Session 3).

### Sessions

There are 20 sessions, covering all sorts of topics, as you will see in the outline below, but overall they will take on three different tasks: Deconstruction, Design, and Construction

**Deconstruction:** Youth learn that it’s OK to challenge what they have always been told, to take apart the common beliefs and look at them in a fresh way.

**Design:** As youth decide what they do believe, it helps to see what other believe. Youth take a close look at other religions as well as their own.

**Construction:** As youth build their beliefs, it's important to put them into action. In this section, youth see how belief is more than words.

These tasks overlap and may not happen in a linear fashion; some sessions include two or even all three of these tasks.

**Mentors are present at four of the sessions: 3, 9, 12, and 18.** Check with your *CnC* Program Leader for the scheduled days and times of the sessions.

### **Retreat**

We believe a retreat helps build community within the group. It also provides a more intensive opportunity for discussing key issues. If at all possible, the retreat will be held fairly soon after the program begins. Because it helps to build community among the participating youth, having an early retreat builds that community sooner rather than later. The retreat should include at least one and preferably two nights away from home, since breaking normal routines is what makes bonding possible.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips allow youth to experience other traditions and different worship styles. These trips can take anywhere from 3 hours to half a day or more, depending on where you go and what you do. Special events (a local revival meeting, a Jewish temple service, etc.) may take place on days other than Sunday. Your *CnC* Program Leader will let you know well in advance when and where these trips will happen. **We strongly encourage mentors to participate in field trips.**

### **Worship Services**

Just as important as field trips is exposure to your own services in a new way. Lent and Holy Week are great opportunities not only for youth to explore liturgy but also to own it by taking on leadership roles. The multiple services of Holy Week offer special opportunities for including youth. Your *CnC* Program Leader will work with other church leadership to make these arrangements.

### **iConfirm service and rehearsals**

The *Confirm not Conform* program concludes with a special liturgy of celebration called *iConfirm*. During this service the congregation recognizes that the youth have taken responsibility for their own spiritual lives, and the youth, in turn, accept that responsibility. Youth share the Bible passages they have memorized and teach on them and, when possible, the bishop is in attendance to confirm those who choose to be confirmed and to bless those who have chosen not to be confirmed. It is a service of great emotion and power and, traditionally, a party for the youth follows the service—one to which they invite their friends and families.

## Outline of Sessions

While each congregation will use the *Confirm not Conform* program in its own unique way (perhaps focusing longer on certain topics, or alternating the order of the sessions), the outline is provided so that mentors may be aware, generally speaking, of what youth are learning and doing as the program progresses. Ask your mentor coordinator to give you a schedule with your congregation's specific plans and to keep you updated as it changes.

*Sessions that include the mentors are outlined with a box.*

### **Session 1: Introduction to Confirm not Conform**

Introduces the premises of the program and establishes expectations.

### **Session 2: Where Do You Stand: The Gospel According to Whom**

Explores where youth are starting from and what they currently believe.

### **Session 3: Where Do You Stand: Meet your Mentor**

Establishes the mentor/youth relationship. **Mentors attend this session.**

### **Session 4: Heretics R Us**

Discovers how heretics through the ages have shaped our faith today.

### **Session 5: Scripture: A Mad Dash Through a Good Book**

An overview of the Bible and how it is put together.

### **Session 6: Teach Us to Pray: The Lord's Prayer**

Closely examines several versions of the Lord's Prayer, followed by a Prayer Lab where youth can explore different ways to pray.

### **Session 7: Tradition: The Nicene Creed**

Presents the history of the church up through the writing of the Nicene Creed. Youth are invited to define the meanings of some basic concepts of faith.



### **Session 8: Tradition: Church History Continued**

Youth develop a creed through the Council of *CnC*. A very brief and sketchy presentation on the history of the church through the 1700s.

### **Session 9: Faith In Action: Pain Into Power**

Explores how God helps us transform the pain in our lives in to the very power we need to transform the world. **Mentors attend this session.**

### **Session 10: Faith In Action: How We Can Help**

Examines those things that can help others, those things that don't, and why we help others at all.

### **Session 11: Faith In Action: The Issue of Power**

Focuses on the role that power plays in living out our call to be Christ's body in the world.

### **Session 12: Scripture: The Bible By Heart**

Youth learn to use a concordance to help them select a passage of Scripture to memorize. **Mentors attend this session.**

### **Session 13: Teach Us To Pray: *The Book of Common Prayer***

An overview and exploration of the history and contents of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

### **Session 14: Teach Us to Pray: The Sacraments**

Discusses the meaning of the sacraments in the Episcopal tradition.

### **Session 15: Tradition: The Church Through the Year**

Explores the seasons of the church year and examines materials used in worship.

### **Session 16: Tradition: The Ministry of the Baptized**

Discusses how all who are baptized are ministers in the church, and how the church sometimes sends mixed messages about that.

### **Session 17: World Council of Religions**

Explores the basic tenets of other major world religions.

### **Session 18: Where Do You Stand: The Power to Choose**

Revisits the statements of faith they looked at in *Session 2* and explores how participants' positions have changed over the course of the program. **Mentors attend this session.**

### **Session 19: Faith in Action: May We Present**

Helps youth design a presentation for the Vestry about their service project. This session is held the week before the group meets with the Vestry.

### **Session 20: Where Do You Stand: Where Do You Go From Here?**

An evaluation of the *CnC* program and an opportunity for youth to brainstorm about their ongoing ministry in the church and the world.

## Making the Commitment

Sounds like a lot? We'll be honest with you: *Confirm not Conform* does require a commitment, but we believe it's worth it. We have seen over and over again that the youth who go through *Confirm not Conform* gain so much—and offer amazing gifts to the church and the world.

Youth will be asked to sign a *Confirm not Conform* Commitment Pledge, which is found on the next page. This pledge involves not just the youth making a commitment, but the community also making a pledge to youth.

When youth take part in CnC, the community promises to:

- Listen to youth's questions and concerns with open minds and hearts.
- Take youth's contributions seriously and treat them with respect.
- Expose youth to the fundamental questions of faith and explore them with the youth.
- Provide a mentor who will share their own faith experiences and questions.
- Offer help when youth need it.
- Keep the youth in their prayers.

Mentors: if you agree to take on the role of mentoring a young person, please do your utmost to honor that commitment. You will see more about what is expected of you in Section 2 of this handbook, the Mentor Guide.

Parents: if you and your child agree make the commitment, then we ask for *Confirm not Conform* to take precedence over other things that might demand your time. Maybe this year, other extracurricular activities need to take a back seat to the questions and challenges of a growing faith. You will see more about what is expected of you in Section 3 of this handbook, the Parent Guide.

So this is your chance to ask yourselves, as mentors and as families, what really matters. We hope you'll find choosing *Confirm not Conform*—the time it takes, the questions it asks and the issues it explores—to be the investment for a lifetime.

## CnC Commitment Pledge

*Signed by youth and parish representatives at the beginning of the Confirm not Conform program.*

I pledge to participate in the *Confirm not Conform* Program, to abide by its requirements, to bring an open mind and heart to all sessions and events, and to treat all those involved in the program with respect.

As part of the program, I also commit to:

- Attending all confirmation sessions. I am allowed to miss one session in both the Fall and Spring, but must make up those missed sessions.
- Participating in all field trips. I am allowed to miss one, if I make that one up on my own time.
- Attending Sunday School at least twice a month.
- Being involved with the services of Holy Week as much as possible, either at my church or with another congregation. At a minimum, I will attend or participate in two Holy Week services;
- Participating in the community service project that is part of *Confirm not Conform*.
- Memorizing a passage of scripture at least 10 verses in length.
- Attending the confirmation service, whether or not I choose to be confirmed, as a show of support for other members of the program.
- Participating in the iConfirm Service, at which I will recite the passage I have memorized and explain my reasons for choosing it and what it means to me.

In return, the community commits to:

- Listening to my questions and concerns with open minds and hearts.
- Taking my contributions seriously and treating them with respect.
- Exposing me to the fundamental questions of faith and exploring them with me.
- Providing a mentor who will share their own faith experiences and questions, and respond to mine.
- Offering help when I need it.
- Keeping me in their prayers.

Signed in the presence of my faith community on (date to be filled in).

“At the iConfirm service, we mentors sat in the choir stalls, the mentees at right facing the congregation. Proudly I watched as each mentee got up and recited his passage and spoke on it for a few minutes — offering a simple testimony of faith. I suddenly felt a new wave of respect for these youth — who had guts enough to stand up and share their hearts. It was powerful.”

~CnC mentor

## Mentor Guide

To begin with, let’s establish what a mentor is not. A mentor is neither parent nor peer, social worker nor savior. Rather, a mentor is a friend, a confidant, and a positive force in the life of a youth.

In serving as a mentor, the main thing you offer is a listening ear and an interest in your youth’s questions and explorations. You don’t have to have all the answers—in fact, one of the greatest gifts you can offer are your own honest questions. With humility, offer your youth the greatest gift you can give: yourself—warts and all.

You can read more about your role as a mentor in the supplemental resources at the end of this handbook.

## Expectations

There are four main expectations of CnC mentors:

- Get together with the youth you are mentoring often enough to build a relationship. How often is entirely up to you and the youth you are working with.
- Attend four sessions of the *CnC* program. These sessions include activities in which you and your youth work together. The sessions to which you are invited—sessions 3, 9, 12, and 18—are described in the outline of sessions on pages 7-9 of this document.
- Be present for at least one of the *iConfirm* rehearsals and the *iConfirm* service itself.
- Attend as many of scheduled *Confirm not Conform* events as is possible. Your presence for field trips and other special events can be quite meaningful. A schedule of events will be provided to you.

## Communicating with Teenagers

### *Modes of Communication*

You want to get together with your youth. You sent a nice card. You wrote an e-mail. You left messages on home and cell phones. And yet, it would seem as if youth are oblivious to your efforts to reach them. Actually, they probably are. It's a generational thing.

Just when you thought you were technologically up to speed, the technology morphed. Landlines are for parents. Email is so nineties. And snail mail! Why, that could take...days!

Moreover, expecting youth to be courteous and/or professional about returning calls—even if they get the message—is just going to be frustrating. So you may as well resign yourself, at least initially, to reaching out on their terms. This doesn't mean you can't insist that they, say, get back to you within two days, but it does mean making an effort to tap into their world.

Communicating effectively with teenagers requires entering into their frame of reference. We have found that the two best ways to reach youth (as of this writing) are via **text messages** (to their cell phones) or via **social networking sites** such as Facebook (though that too is becoming old fashioned).

At your first meeting with your youth (Session 3), we will ask you both to fill out a form that asks the best way to get in touch with each other. (These forms are also found in the resources at the end of this handbook.) Talk with youth about the best way(s) to reach them. Do they have a cell phone with text messaging? (And use it?) Do they have a Facebook (or other site) page, and how often do they visit it? Will they "friend" you?

Regarding Facebook and other social media: establish your terms. Your youth may resist "friending" you, especially if anything on their page might be off-color, but also if they don't trust you to maintain their privacy (see *Honoring Confidentiality*, below). Bear in mind that many parents do not allow their children to join Facebook, so check with parents before encouraging youth to create an account just to connect with you.

However you do it, the rule of thumb is find an avenue that works you both. And go with it!

## *Starting a Conversation*

So you're sitting there and you have this kid in front of you. Now what? You say, "How are you?" The answer is "Fine." You say, "Tell me about school," and you get a shrug. An awkward pause ensues and you wonder, "Will it always be like this?"

**"Do something active: batting cages, miniature golf, ball game, walk. Sitting in a bookstore or café can get slow real fast."**

*~CnC mentor*

Building a relationship with youth may take some time, but eventually you will most likely find that conversation flows easily. It will be easier when you know something about one another and have more shared experiences upon which to draw. But how to get there?

Start somewhere safe. Have a conversation about something neutral and fun, just to find a place to start. At the end of this handbook you will find a long list of Conversational Jump-Starters organized into categories for ease of reference. Take a look at them before your first meeting—or maybe for every meeting, making it a tradition. For fun, you might even jot a few down on slips of paper and have your youth pick one randomly, like cards in a deck.

Safety may also lie in posture. Many of you already know that youth who seem monosyllabic at best will chatter freely to you or to one another when they're sitting behind you in the car. You might find it easier to have a conversation if you are driving or walking somewhere or seated side by side rather than face to face. Youth may feel more comfortable walking around or doing something than sitting or being stationary.

Also, consider the venue; if you are in a building where adults tend to have more power than youth, youth may find it more difficult to speak freely. If you are in a place where youth outnumber adults – say a café near the high school – then you are on the youth's territory which may give the youth more confidence.

Know that you do not need to be cool. What you need to be is authentic. Do not try to make yourself into something you're not. Don't pretend to know all the answers. Youth can smell inauthenticity from a mile away. However, you will be amazed to find that even though you feel old, lost and flabby, youth will often refer to you as cool – not because you are so flashy and exciting, but because you care about them.

Ask clarifying questions if you don't understand something. In some ways you will be learning another language and another culture. You'll learn about peers and teachers, technology and television programs that you've never heard of before. You don't need to know it all before you start. You'll certainly know a lot more by the time you're through.

Finally, accept what they offer and do your best to reserve judgment. In one session, they will have a favorite song to share with you. You may think this song is the most inane piece of trash you have ever heard, but remember it is important to them. Clarifying questions are your friend. "Why do you like this song?" may only get you a shrug as youth may not yet be able to articulate why they feel the way they do, but simply asking the question makes it clear that you have accepted their offering without judgment. Knowing they will be heard, youth will be far more willing to share what else is important to them.

### *Listening to Youth*

**“Here you are sitting with an adult that’s not a parent, that’s not a relative, and she’s saying, OK, let’s talk about this. What do you want to do? That relationship that develops is a really crucial one. Teenagers, we get so wrapped up in our little world and our little bubble and having a mentor helps to pop that bubble.”**

*~CnC student*

Many youth do not have adults in their lives that truly listen to them. Usually, adults are busy telling youth how to act (or how not to) and what to think and do.

Therefore, listening is one of the most important gifts you will offer your youth. Resist the urge to give answers, even if you are prompted for them. While there may be an appropriate time to share your faith story or your perspective on a given topic, such sharing should always be in the context of drawing out the youth’s thoughts: helping youth tell their story and formulate their faith.

After all we said above about how to draw out youth in conversation, you may find yourself paired with a youth who won’t stop talking, who will want to go on at length about subjects far removed from your ostensible topic. It may be that there is something important going on and they do need you to listen at that time. Be flexible. Your topic or plan may not be the most important one. On the other hand, they may be talking out of nervousness, hyperactivity, excitement, or simply to avoid the topic at hand. In that case, you may need to lead the conversation back to what you intended to discuss. Use your best judgment about what is most important for your youth at the moment.

In the appendix, you will find an article on Active Listening that will give you thoughts and examples on engaging youth in conversation and hearing what they have to say.

### *Honoring Confidentiality*

The youth you mentor may wonder whether anything the two of you talk about goes straight back to a parent or pastor. It may be useful to discuss the subject of confidentiality early in your relationship to establish clear “rules of engagement.”

Consider what you think is most appropriate in terms of confidentiality. You might agree that all communication be held in strict confidence. On the other hand, you might agree not to share with a youth’s parents, while reserving the right to inform the pastor or youth leader if you think the youth or someone else is in danger (remembering that clergy are mandated reporters—by law, they must report suspected child abuse).

The important thing is to establish those boundaries so that trust can be built and lines of communication can be opened.

Confidentiality should extend to others as well. Mentors should take care to hold close any information shared with them by other mentors—and likewise be aware that other mentors might be parents—or good friends to parents—of their youth.

If something is said and you don’t know what to do, don’t panic. Talk with the youth leader or clergy person. They may already have some information about the situation or thoughts about how to proceed.



**“It was SO hard to find a time we could meet together, and then the coordinator set up the CnC Cafe on Sunday mornings. Meeting with my mentee between services was perfect for both of us.”**

*~CnC Mentor*

**“Kids these days do not get many chances to just hang out and be kids. Playing catch at the park sounds trite but it may be exactly right.”**

*~CnC Mentor*

## Meeting together

What to do, what to do? There are quite a number of things you can do with youth, but not all of them are the best fit for you both. Ask your youth what they would like to do. They might even tell you!

If you do intend to go on an outing, double-check with parents that youth actually have permission to go. Youth may readily agree to go out for ice cream on a Sunday night, completely forgetting (or “forgetting”) Aunt Sally’s birthday party. (“But I have to go out with my mentor!”)

For those who need a little extra help figuring out what to do or where to go, take a look at this list, perhaps together with your youth, and find some activities with mutual appeal. Then you’ll begin on shared territory.

Note that in our experience, the hardest part of meeting with youth is finding a time that works for you both to get together. One way to address this is by setting up what we called the Sunday morning *CnC Café* between or after services. You’re already there, you can grab a coffee and a corner, and you are meeting in a safe space.

### *Active Outings*

- Walk around some local landmark such as a lake or park.
- Go fly a kite or hang at a playground or skate park.
- Play catch (baseball, football).
- Play pick-up basketball.
- Shop for holiday gifts.
- Get your nails (or hair or makeup) done together.
- Face off playing a video game. (Kids are usually very good at it and love seeing adults make a pathetic attempt to play.)
- Go to a U-Pick-‘Em farm.

### *Food Outings*

- Head to a local café, juice bar, or coffee shop to hang and chat low-key and low-budget (e.g., Jamba Juice, Starbucks, etc.).
- Go for ice cream and split a Sundae.
- Go out to a restaurant for a more expensive option. Be sure to select one where it’s OK to linger over dessert.
- Try a new type of food together (e.g., Indian, Vietnamese, etc.)
- Make cookies in the church kitchen for Coffee Hour—or for yourselves.

### *CnC-Related Outings*

- Go on a *CnC* field trip together.
- Invite the youth to see you in your church ministry.
- Go to church together and have lunch afterward to talk about what church means and why we go (or don't).

### *Volunteer Activities*

- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or food pantry together.
- Invite the youth to join you in your own usual volunteer activity.
- Do a walk-a-thon for a cause you both care about.
- Adopt a family or kid for the holidays. Often the schools set these up so you can offer to help.
- Work on a community garden or compost project.

### *Cultural Outings*

- Go see a movie and then debrief at a café afterwards.
- Go to a museum together. (In some parts of the country, you can reserve and pick up free passes to go to certain museums for the day.)
- Catch a ballgame or other sporting event together.
- Share musical likes and dislikes: Introduce the student to the music you enjoyed as a kid and allow him to do the same. You might find some commonalities. Then again, maybe not.
- Go to a pet show or a fundraiser for homeless pets.
- With other mentors and mentees, have a movie night. Watch and discuss.

### *Support Outings*

- Find out what your youth's activities are, and ask if you can come watch them play or perform. This might include musical performances, athletic events, art shows, etc.

**“Try to support the kid in what-ever he or she regularly does. Go to her play, his concert or game, her poetry reading. It means a lot to them, even if they don't show it.”**

*~CnC Mentor*

## Giving Gifts

Mentors often wonder whether giving and receiving gifts is appropriate in the mentor relationship, and if so, to what extent. This is a topic that should be discussed with your mentor coordinator so that specific concerns and issues in your church culture may be considered. However, here are a few general remarks.

At their best, gifts can be wonderful expressions of heartfelt affection. Gifts can evoke powerful emotions. But gifts often imply expectations or convey confusing messages. It is important to recognize that the bearer of a gift is exercising a form of power: the power to shop for and buy a gift. Moreover, giving a gift to another often—although not always—places a burden upon the recipient to reciprocate. It is something to take into consideration when one thinks of giving any gift.

The mentor relationship is inherently characterized by an imbalance of power. The adult mentor does not approach the relationship in the same way or for the same reasons as the youth. In many ways, the mentor is the party with more responsibility and more authority. It is therefore incumbent upon the adult to establish a proper boundary with respect to gifts.

### *Gift-Giving Guidelines*

- It is not necessary to give birthday and/or Christmas gifts. A card or a note or, even better, an outing are preferable. You might give a card with a “coupon” to cash in for that special outing.
- The most appropriate time to consider giving a gift is for the confirmation ceremony itself. Your church may be presenting a *Book of Common Prayer* or a Bible and we encourage you *not* to give either of these. A cross, icon, CD, or book are all suitable confirmation gifts. Best, though, are those gifts that grow out of something you have shared in the course of your time together, something that comes from a significant conversation or event that shows you have been paying attention.
- Your gift does not have to be spiritual. What you are hoping to find is a gift that is *meaningful*. If your deepest conversations about Scripture happened while you were at a hamburger joint, it may be that youth will be more vividly reminded of Scripture by a hamburger-related gift than by an actual Bible.
- Gift cards, even though they may seem impersonal to us, are something kids thrive on. If you’re stumped, don’t be embarrassed simply to give a card with a personal message and a gift card enclosed.
- Don’t spend a lot of money. Discuss a limit with your mentor coordinator.
- Never expect or suggest that the youth reciprocate. If you receive a gift from the youth or his or her family, thank the youth or family and move on. If the gift seems inordinately valuable or otherwise unusual, confer with your mentor coordinator about what to do.

## Helping Youth Make a Confirmation Decision

So you've spent many months getting to know a person. You've been diligently listening actively—asking questions, repeating feelings back, providing a consistent, patient, and empathic sounding board. You've heard their serious doubts about the virgin birth, their anger about church politics, or their apathy about religion. Or perhaps, to your amazement, you've seen a teenager grow and change in front of your eyes from a monosyllabic shrugger to a theologian, an activist, or a saint.

When you arrive at Session 18, you will be asked to discuss the question of confirmation with your youth. Ideally, it will be an open question that will be subject to lively discussion. Remember that it is not your job to get youth to be confirmed. Rather, it is their job to make an independent decision. Your job is to help provide a safe space in which to explore the question.

There is an activity in Session 18 that opens up the question, but you may find that if the question is still unclear in the mind of your youth that it will be useful to take a step back and find out more about where they are now and what they want to do.

Below is a list of questions that might be helpful in getting such a conversation started, but feel free to use your own questions or just allow the conversation to flow naturally if conversation starters are unnecessary.

### *Conversation starters on the CnC Process and Confirmation*

- What did you learn about yourself this year?
- What do you see differently now from when you started the program?
- What would you say you believe about God now? About the church? How has that changed?
- How do you feel now about the Bible passage you picked to memorize? How has that changed from when you first picked it?
- What do you think you're going to remember about this 10 years from now?
- What does it mean to you to be a Christian? What does it mean to be an Episcopalian?
- What would you like to do next?

Another way to approach this is through the Baptismal Covenant (found in the appendix). Youth will have thought about the questions in the Baptismal Covenant in Session 16; taking a look at what they thought about those questions may be another way to get the conversation started.

## **Keeping Youth Safe**

It goes without saying that church should be a safe place. Adults who work with youth within a church setting are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationship that youth deserve in all settings. Safeguarding the youth in your care is one of the most important functions you have as a mentor.

Moreover, the ways in which you model good practices may well have repercussions beyond your relationship with the youth you are mentoring. By modeling safe ministry practices, you raise awareness in youth as to unsafe situations they may encounter elsewhere.

By your vigilance, you can tangibly demonstrate Christ's love and care and teach wisdom to youth who inhabit a world in which, unfortunately, predators and opportunists may seek to do them harm.

To that end, we strongly encourage each mentor to submit gladly to a background check and attend diocesan-approved training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. Churches should have in place a policy of safe ministry practices for programs and interactions with youth, and mentors should ask to see it. A policy of safe ministry practices might look like the one in the appendix.

## **Getting Support**

You don't need to be a mentor alone. In addition to the resources you will find here, we encourage you to meet with other mentors on occasion to check in, to share tips, or to vent. Be sure to ask for help or advice if you need it. Always remember that being a mentor doesn't mean you have to know it all.

## Parent Guide

You may be thinking, “Not another activity I have to schedule, plan, and manage!” You may not feel like it, but you are more than just a chauffeur. And so to begin, we want to say thank you for supporting your child in so many ways.

Your main role as a parent is to be a parent, as best you can be. But *Confirm not Conform* is also an opportunity for you to fulfill in a very visible way the promises you made when you presented your child for baptism:

*Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life?*

*Will you by your prayers and witness help this child grow into the full stature of Christ?*

At the time, you promised “I will with God’s help.” With God’s help, and the help of your community of faith, you can take advantage of this time to help your child prepare to take responsibility for her or his own life of faith.

## Expectations

One of the very difficult parts of your role is letting go of control. Please resist the temptation to require that your child be confirmed. Your child is more thoughtful than you might currently believe and will make this decision with due consideration. Don’t try to rig the outcome.

You help set the tone for your child by making *Confirm not Conform* a priority, not a burden. Do your best to see that your child makes it to classes and events on time. Your willingness to make the commitment makes a huge difference in your child’s experience.

You do have a formal role in the *Confirm not Conform* program: you and other parents are the hosts of the *iConfirm* celebration at the very end of the program. More information on this can be found later in this section.

Finally, your role is to pray for your child, your child’s mentor, and for the youth and leaders of the program.

"As a parent I appreciated this program because it gave the kids a chance to see other faiths. It also focused them on their faith during a time that other influences are so strong. My daughter seems stronger in her convictions and her faith after going through this program."

~Parent

## Reducing Stress

We don't want this program to add more stress to your life. Here are some strategies that will make *Confirm not Conform* a less stressful—perhaps even enjoyable—experience for you and your family.

### *Participation*

We know that getting youth to attend confirmation classes can become a battleground. If this is an issue for you, there are ways to reduce the contentiousness.

First, understand that confirmation is not the requirement it once was. It used to be that confirmation was understood as a completion of baptism. That is not our understanding in the church today. All who are baptized are considered full members of the church. Confirmation is an opportunity for those who were baptized as infants to affirm their faith. If your child has absolutely no interest in or is not ready to affirm his or her faith, then you might want to consider waiting until they are.

If, however, you believe that with some encouragement, your child will get a great deal out of an exploration of faith, you may want to set up a trial period after which your child has the option to withdraw. In our experience, we encourage youth to stay until the retreat, which happens towards the beginning of the program. At that time, youth are usually bonded to one another and no longer want to drop out.

However, if they do, don't do their dirty work for them – and communicating one's wishes and plans is not dirty work. Have your child call and talk with the program leader directly to explain why she or he does not want to continue in the program. At the very least, we urge you to have your child claim the right to drop out and to do so with dignity.

### *Conflicts with Extracurricular Activities*

You will receive the schedule for *Confirm not Conform* in the very near future. Look through it to determine now if there are any conflicts that you can see with other extracurricular activities and inform the other organization of the conflict as soon as you can. Remember that what you are asking for is time off for a religious observance! When you explain what you are doing in those terms, most people will be understanding.

Don't try to squeeze in every activity, rushing from one to the next and worrying about whether you'll make it. You are allowed to set limits and say that, for this year, your child's spiritual life has priority.

### *Transportation*

Consider different ways youth can get to church so you are not spending most of your time in the car. If at all possible, we always heartily encourage youth to be responsible for themselves. Look into public transportation or other forms of transport. Or arrange with other families to share the responsibility for transporting youth to and from sessions.

### *Down time*

If, due to your circumstances, you and other parents find yourselves driving your children to church at the same time, consider getting together for coffee or a meal to support one another.

If your parish is offering a *CnC Adult* class at the same time as the youth program, take advantage of the opportunity to explore your own faith. Or, if that's not a possibility, consult with the program leader to see if you can arrange for a room where you and other parents can relax while the session is meeting.

## **Working with Mentors**

Being the third wheel in the mentor/youth relationship can be tricky. While it can be very difficult to hand over your child into the care of another adult, trust the process. Obviously, if you sense that there is physical or emotional danger in this relationship, consult with the mentor coordinator or church leadership. But don't be afraid if your child bonds with the mentor or brings home new and strange ideas. Support and respect your child's relationship with his or her mentor.

Mentors are instructed to establish clear guidelines with their youth about what is to be held in confidence, so you may not always know what they discuss. Mentors are, however, asked to double-check with you when they take youth somewhere. You may not know what they say once they get there, but we think it's important for you to know where they are going.

You may wish to communicate with your child's mentor if there are any family rules that you need them to follow or particular concerns that you have.

You will find an article with more information on working with your child's mentor at the end of this handbook.

## ***iConfirm* celebration**

The *iConfirm* service and celebration are the very last things to happen in the *Confirm not Conform* program. At the service, youth recite a passage of scripture and share with the congregation a message about what that means to them. And afterwards, there's a party: the *iConfirm* celebration at which the parents of all the youth serve as hosts.

This does not mean (necessarily) that you will be passing around the trays of cheese snacks. However, it does require advance planning so that by the time you get to the celebration, you'll know everything is ready to go.

If you particularly enjoy planning parties, we encourage you to speak to the program leader about serving as the Celebration Prepster to help coordinate the celebration and serve as the point person on this particular project.

Further details on planning the *iConfirm* celebration are found in the *iConfirm Service and Celebration Handbook*.



## Section

# 4

## A note for youth

“CnC allowed me to question my beliefs and gave me a chance to realize what truly matters to me as a member of the Episcopal Church. I was able to do so with a group of people that did not try to control me in any way. I felt like everyone wanted to help me out.”

~CnC Student

If you have made a commitment to be part of the *Confirm not Conform* program, then your primary responsibility is...to participate in the *Confirm not Conform* program. That means attending every session (or making up for any you miss), taking part in field trips, going on retreat, meeting with your mentor, participating in the *iConfirm* service, and making the choice whether or not to be confirmed.

You are *not* required to be confirmed. In fact, it is very important to us that when you choose whether or not to be confirmed, you take that decision seriously. If by the end of the program you do not feel you are ready to be confirmed or do not want to be confirmed, then *we strongly urge you not to get confirmed*. Obviously, if you *want* to get confirmed, then we're all for that, too. But the choice of whether or not to get confirmed is yours to make and yours alone.

As the title of the program suggests, you will not be required to conform to a certain set of beliefs. Our hope is that through the *Confirm not Conform* program, you will be able to explore what you believe, ask honest questions, and share with your family, your mentor, and your congregation what is important to you.

Oh, and we want you to have a great time. We think you will.

## **Resources**

## What Is My Role as a Mentor?

It seems simple at first, the notion of being a mentor: someone who spends time with a young person. But once you are in the mentor role, you may find yourself in situations where you are uncertain about your part in the relationship. Is it appropriate to provide discipline when she's out of line? What if I suspect he is experiencing trouble at home—what is my responsibility? How can I have the most positive impact on my mentee?

There is no one answer concerning what your role is or is not. If you are involved in a formal mentoring program, the staff may be able to provide clearer direction for you based on the program's rules and expectations. In general, here are some basic guidelines to help you determine your role with your mentee.

### YOU ARE . . .

. . . **a friend.** Like peer friendships, mentors and mentees do things together that are fun and engaging. They support each other both in good times and in tough times. They teach each other. They help each other. They're honest with each other. And sometimes they have to have hard conversations about concerns they have, asking the right questions at the right time. By being a good listener and engaging in authentic conversations with your mentee, you are helping her develop important life skills.

. . . **a role model.** You are expected to set a good example to the mentee for how to live your life. This is not the same as being perfect. Rather, it is about acknowledging your imperfections and sharing your strengths. It is also about advocating for your mentee when dangers to his physical or emotional well-being are present.

. . . **a confidant.** Building a close relationship with your mentee will help her build better relationships with others in her life as well, such as parents and peers. In the process, your mentee may tell you things she does not feel comfortable telling anyone else. Sometimes she may tell you about her hopes, dreams, or insecurities. Other times she may reveal mistakes she has made. Unless your mentee is in trouble and needs outside help, try to keep her private comments between the two of you. Your role is to be supportive of your mentee as a person with potential, regardless of the kinds of actions or attitudes she confides in you.

. . . **a nurturer of possibilities.** Your role is to see the gifts and strengths of your mentee and help him flourish personally. You should help your mentee channel his gifts toward actions that make him a resource to others in his family, neighborhood, school, or community.

### YOU ARE NOT . . .

. . . **a mentor to the family.** In fact, some mentoring programs intentionally limit contact between mentors and parents. Your role is to provide special attention to your mentee. While getting acquainted with parents, caregivers, and siblings can be helpful

to understanding your mentee and her situation, your energy and attention should be focused on providing support to your mentee.

. . . **a social worker or doctor.** If your mentee tells you about experiences or health conditions that concern you, always turn to the mentoring program staff for help. Although arming yourself with information about, say, a learning disability or abuse may help you understand your mentee better, it is not your responsibility to try to address conditions or situations that require professional help. The staff at the mentoring program may be able to find additional help for the mentee, including local information and referral services.

. . . **a savior.** You should not see your role in this relationship as coming in to make a young person's life better or to fix his problems. Certainly your support can help your mentee overcome hurdles. But don't forget that every young person—regardless of his circumstances—has gifts and talents that make him more than a “recipient” of your support. Your mentee should be treated as having much to offer to the world, because he does.

These guidelines for mentoring are taken from Search Institute and Developmental Assets. Developmental Assets™ are positive factors within young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that research has found to be important in promoting young people's development. This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). From *Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults*. Copyright © 2006 by Search InstituteSM; 800-888-7828; [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).

## Supporting Your Child's Relationship with a Mentor

### *What Can I Do to Help Make This Work?*

By involving your son or daughter in a mentoring relationship, you have taken a very important step to making sure your child gets what he or she needs in life. Every young person benefits from having another caring adult in his life—someone who supports your child, believes in him, and can be another person your child turns to when he's having a tough time—so kudos to you for welcoming a mentor into your child's life!

A good mentor–mentee relationship takes time to develop. Just like the start of any friendship, the mentor and your child will need to spend some time getting to know each other. They may encounter difficulties or misunderstandings along the way. There will be ups and downs.

You as a parent or caregiver can play a very important role in helping their friendship grow and develop, regardless of whether or not you have much direct contact with the mentor. Here are some tips to help you support your child's new mentoring relationship:

- *Be positive.* Let your child see that you are happy she has a mentor in her life. When your child tells you about her visit with her mentor, listen for the positive experiences, even if your child doesn't seem very excited about the visit. (For example, you might point out, "Well, it sounds as if you two have some things in common. Getting to know someone isn't always easy, but give it time.")
- *Tell your child the positive skills and behaviors you see her developing as a result of having a mentor,* and let him know that you are pleased with those changes. ("I've noticed that since you started hanging out with Joe, you've gotten your homework done on time more often. I'm proud of you!")
- *Let the mentor know how much you appreciate* that she is a part of your child's life. An occasional card or just telling her "thank you" can do much to make the mentor feel she matters.
- *Encourage your child* to show his mentor that he appreciates him.
- If you are present when your child and mentor get together (for example, during pickup and drop-off), *be available but not overbearing.*
- *Show your interest* by asking some questions, but try not to make demands.

- *Share feedback* from your child with the mentoring program's staff. If you are allowed to talk with the mentor privately, check in occasionally and see how the relationship is going.
- *Help your child remember* when her next visit with her mentor is scheduled. Help her use a calendar or day planner to keep track of visits with her mentor, as well as other activities going on in her life. Try to be as flexible as possible with the scheduling of activities.
- *Give your child's mentor copies of school calendars* so that he knows about time off for holidays, opening and closing days of the school year, special events, and other considerations.
- The program may take care of this, but it's always a good idea to *provide your child's mentor with emergency contact information* for someone with a phone, just in case something happens and the mentor cannot reach you.
- *Let the mentoring program's staff or your child's mentor know if there has been a change or incident in your child's home life that the mentor should know about.* Did you two have a particularly bad fight recently? Has there been a death in the family? Are there financial stresses in the household right now? Is one of her siblings in need of extra attention right now? This kind of information will help the program and the mentor to more effectively support your child. You may also want to make some suggestions about how the mentor can be supportive in these situations.
- *Be prepared in the back of your mind for the inevitable end to the mentoring relationship.* Every mentoring relationship ends at some point. Some mentoring programs are designed so that the mentor and mentee are together for a limited time. If the relationship is strong and life remains relatively stable for the mentor and your child, it may not end until your child graduates from high school. The fact that your child's mentor has gone through a recruitment, training, and screening process is a good sign that she is committed to staying involved with your child over a significant period of time. Unfortunately, sometimes things change in either the mentor's or your child's life that are out of either one's control, and a relationship may need to end prematurely. Remember that sometimes a mentoring relationship ends in a healthy way for good reasons. For example, your child may get swamped with school activities like band and sports, or the mentor may be busy with a new baby. No matter what the reason, you can be ready to listen and provide extra support when the relationship ends.
- *Remember that the mentor is not going to replace you.* You are still your child's parent, and nothing will ever change that. The mentor can complement and reinforce what you are doing as a parent, helping you be even more effective.

From *Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults*. Copyright © 2006 by Search InstituteSM; 800-888-7828; [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).

## Conversational Jump-Starters

The following conversation starters are adapted from “101 Relational Discussion Starters” by Tony Akers in the Nov. 12, 2000, issue of Group Magazine. (Used by permission.) The first group of questions may be easier when you are first getting to know your mentee. After you’ve established trust, you may find the latter questions more effective. A few questions are given under more than one category.

### *Activities/Interests*

- What’s your favorite TV show? What do you like best about it?
- What’s your favorite movie? What do you like best about it?
- Who’s your favorite music artist or group? What makes you gravitate to him/her/them?
- What’s your favorite time of year — winter, spring, summer, or fall? Why?
- Who’s your favorite author? Describe the last book you read by that author.
- What’s your favorite day of the week? Why?
- Describe your favorite toy as a child.
- What’s your favorite Web site? Why?
- What’s your favorite ride at an amusement park? Why?
- What’s your favorite part of a newspaper? Why?
- What’s your favorite thing to wear? Why?
- What’s your favorite fast food restaurant? Why? What’s the most memorable thing that ever happened to you there?
- What’s your favorite time of day? Why?
- What’s your favorite food? Where’s your favorite place to eat it?
- What’s your favorite dessert? Describe a time when you had that dessert as a child.
- What’s your favorite thing to do on an unexpected day off from school?
- What’s your favorite holiday? Why?
- What’s your favorite candy? Why?
- What’s your favorite sport to watch? to play?
- What’s your favorite piece of jewelry? Why?
- What’s your favorite city? Why?
- What’s your favorite hobby? How does that hobby reflect your personality and passions?
- If you could choose a vacation spot anywhere in the world, where would it be, and why?
- If money and time were no object, what would you be doing right now?

- Have you ever caught a fish? If so, tell me about it. If not, would you like to? Why or why not?
- Do you like to cook? If so, what do you like to make? If not, what do you wish you could make for yourself?
- Do you have any musical ability? If so, what do you enjoy about it? If not, what skill would you love to learn?
- When and what have you collected during your life?
- Do you have a bike? If so, what do you like about it?
- Do you belong to any clubs? Why or why not?
- Have you ever grown anything? If so, what?
- Do you have a job? If so, what do you like and dislike about it?
- What makes you laugh? Why?
- Can you swim? If so, describe what it was like to learn how to swim. If not, have you ever been scared of the water? Why or why not?
- When you're alone, what's a song you like to sing or hum, and why?

### *Preferences/Heroes*

- What's the best and worst thing about your school?
- What's your best subject in school? Why are you so good at it?
- What's your school mascot? If you could change your mascot, what would you change it to?
- Tell me about the best teacher you ever had.
- What do you like best: rivers, lakes, ponds, or streams? Why?
- Which do you like better — sunrise or sunset? Why?
- What's the best gift you've ever received? Explain.
- What's the best gift you've ever given? Explain.
- Imagine a "best day ever." What kinds of things would you do?
- Do you like cats or dogs better? Explain.
- Do you have a hero? Describe him or her.
- Would you rather cut grass or rake leaves? Why?
- Would you rather go to the dentist or the doctor? Explain.
- Would you rather have many friends or one good friend? Explain.
- During your free time would you rather be alone or with a group?
- Do you make decisions slowly or quickly? Why?
- Would you rather lead or follow? Why?
- If you were hiking down a path and it came to a "Y," would you take the well-traveled path or the overgrown path?



- What adult, other than your parent(s), would you turn to if you needed help? Why?

*Personal History/Family*

- What's been the highlight of your day or week?
- What's been the low point of your day or week?
- What's the worst injury you ever sustained?
- When and how have you volunteered to help others? How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever been stung by a bee, wasp, or hornet? Tell me about it.
- Have you ever caught a fish? If so, tell me about it. If not, would you like to? Why or why not?
- What's the strangest thing you ever ate?
- Do you have family rules? What are they?
- When your family eats a meal together, what do you typically talk about?
- How does your family celebrate birthdays?
- What chores or responsibilities do you have at home?
- Are your grandparents still living? If so, what do you like best about them? If not, what's your favorite memory of them?
- Do you have brothers or sisters? If so, what do you like most and least about them? If not, what do you imagine would be the best thing about having siblings? the worst thing?
- Do you have extended family? If so, do they live close to you or far away? How often do you see them? What's the best time you ever spent with them?
- Do you have a pet? If so, describe one of your most memorable experiences with that pet. If not, what kind of pet would you like to have, and why?
- Have you had a pet that's died? If so, what was the experience like?
- Do you get an allowance? If so, how much, and what are you supposed to use it for?
- If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick? Why?
- What's something you've seen or done you wish you could get out of your mind?
- Have you ever built anything? What was it? How did you feel when you finished?
- Have you ever grown anything? If so, what?
- Describe the scariest experience of your life.
- Have you ever seen a sunrise? What were you doing, and how did it feel?
- When and what have you collected during your life?

- Have you ever received an award for anything? If so, what was it, and how did it feel to get it?
- Describe your favorite toy as a child.
- Describe a time you felt special.
- Have you ever been in a play? What part did you play?
- Have you ever ridden in a boat? What was it like?
- If you've ever flown in an airplane, describe what it was like the first time you took off and landed.
- Have you ever been to a concert? What did you like and dislike about it?
- Have you ever been "cut" from a team? How did you cope with that?
- What's your greatest achievement?

### *Dreams/Hypotheticals*

- Imagine a "best day ever." What kinds of things would you do?
- If you could choose a vacation spot anywhere in the world, where would it be, and why?
- What's your dream job? What might be your dream job 10 years from now?
- If you had to be allergic to something, what would it be?
- What would you do on an unexpected day off from school?
- If money and time were no object, what would you be doing right now?
- What would you do with \$1,000? Why? \$1 million? Why?
- If your house was on fire and you could choose only one thing to save (besides family members), what would it be? Why?
- Have you ever seen a falling star? Did you make a wish? What was it?
- Let's say you were sent to live on a space station for three months and you were allowed to bring only three personal items with you-what would they be?
- If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy? Why?
- If you could be any actor in the world, who would you be, and why?
- If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick? Why?

## *Values*

- What surprises you most about adults?
- What disappoints you most about adults?
- What's the best and worst thing about church?
- What makes you happy? Why?
- What makes you sad? Why?
- Do you recycle? Why or why not?
- Who's your "faith hero"? Explain.
- Would you tell someone the truth even if it hurt that person's feelings? Why or why not?
- Has someone close to you ever died? How did you handle that?
- If you sat down next to Jesus on a bus, what would you talk about?

## Active Listening

*Margaret Alter, PhD*

In my experience teaching communication skills to parents, teachers, seminarians, and other professionals, I have found that we are a talky culture, and that genuine empathic listening is a remarkably difficult skill to learn. Yet it is particularly Christ-like; Jesus demonstrates it frequently in gospel healing stories. In the story of Bartimaeus in Mark 10, for example, he does not assume he knows what Bartimaeus wants of him; he asks and then listens.

Attentive listening — focusing on the other, quietly listening and perhaps saying “Uh-huh” or “I see” — can be very soothing. Just the sense that someone is really trying to hear and understand one’s point of view is grace. For the listener, note that you do not have to agree or disagree. Your role is only to hear the speaker’s point of view. Listening is not about you.

Active (or reflective or participatory) listening deepens this graciousness and tends to be more soothing. Active listening can be done as either paraphrasing or reflecting the feeling you think you are hearing. You as listener use statements, not questions. The statements are tentatively offered.

Listeners should also be aware of what I call “body magic.” We do communicate through our use of space and posture and such. Some factors in “body magic” include: proximity (intimacy is fostered by physical nearness); height (height is equated with power. get to eye level to establish equality); posture (a relaxed, receptive posture is ideal); eye contact (important in euroamerican culture); pace (match the other’s pace or slower); and use of silence.

The intent of active listening is to encourage the person to keep on talking. For example, active listening in a conversation between you and your young friend might go as follows —

14-yr.-old: “I hate my math teacher — Mr. Davis. He is incredibly mean.”

You: (paraphrasing) “You have had it with your math teacher.” (stated tentatively, suggesting that the youth may confirm or deny)

14-yr.-old: “Yes! He is so mean, so mean! (close to tears) He is always embarrassing students who make mistakes in class.”

You: (trying to determine the feeling) “That sounds frightening. You must wonder when Mr. Davis is going to get you.” (or) “You sound worried.”

14-yr.-old: “I wouldn’t talk in class, but he calls on you!”

You: (feeling) “Scary.”

14-yr.-old: “Today he called on me just as the bell rang. I have to be first tomorrow.”

You: (feeling) “Big stressor.”

14-yr.-old: “I’m going to know that stuff so well! Mr. Davis really knows math. If you do well in his class, you really know your stuff. Will you quiz me?”

Another example, this time with a peer —

Peer: (grumbling) “Oh, brother! It’s Monday again.”

You: (paraphrasing) “Monday is not your day.” (stated tentatively – or –) “It’s hard to begin a new week.”

Peer: “Oh, not really. It’s just that single parenting is so complicated. Weekends are so busy; I never feel rested.”

You: (trying to determine the feeling) “You sound hassled.”

Peer: “That is certainly true. I need a 13th month to do all the things that don’t fit into 12.”

You: (paraphrasing) “Life is too complicated. Too much to do and too little time.”  
(trying for the feeling) “Sounds discouraging.”

Peer: “Well, perhaps it is sometimes. It helps to talk about it.”

Active listening is a gift to oneself as well as to one’s loved one. You do not need to agree or disagree. You do not need to know the answers. You do not need to have any clever advice. Listening does not change any of the facts at all. Your greatest task is to master your sense of powerlessness and stay graciously attuned to the speaker. Our task is tenderly to accompany our friend or loved one as God accompanies us.

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## The Baptismal Covenant

- Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?
- People I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.
- Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
- People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified,  
died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated  
at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
- Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
- People I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.
- Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the  
breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin,  
repent and return to the Lord.
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in  
Christ?
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as  
yourself?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God's help.

## Sample Safeguarding Policy

### *Safety in Numbers*

While there are times when it is appropriate or necessary for an adult to be alone with a young person (e.g, transportation), adults are encouraged to arrange meetings in public places such as restaurants or a corner away from the action but in full view.

One way to avoid even driving alone with a youth is to “double-date” on outings with another mentor and mentee. It is also advisable to inform another responsible adult about your plans as well. Spontaneous or secretive activity with a single young person may foster a high-risk situation.

While logistically challenging in the context of a mentoring relationship, this practice protects both the youth and the adult.

### *Adults Are Encouraged to—*

- spend time with and listen to youth, and advocate for their ministries; and
- offer appropriate physical expressions of affection, which may include:
  - high fives and hand slapping,
  - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer,
  - touching shoulders, hands, or arms,
  - group “huddle,” and
  - brief hugs and arms around shoulders.

### *Adults Should Not Under any Circumstances—*

- provide youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs (including cigarettes) or pornography;
- consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs in the presence of youth;
- be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or misused legal drugs in the presence of youth;
- engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
- engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any youth; or
- discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with youth.

### *Responding to Concerns*

Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place at church, or that a child from the church may have been abused in another setting, should inform his or



her rector or vicar immediately. Any mandated reporter (including the rector/vicar so informed) who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place shall report it to the appropriate civil authority.

*Adapted from *Called to Right Relationships: Policies, Standards and Resources for Ensuring that Our Congregations are Safe Places for All God's People*, published by the Diocese of California, San Francisco, 2008 (www.diocal.org). Used by permission.*