



INFORMATION BOOKLET

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, the Episcopal Church, and other religions, and asks them to think through what they believe and why.

It is also a philosophy. It's about finding one's own voice rather than simply conforming to an external standard. It is a program that respects the work youth do and trusts that if youth 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, we have come to find, a congregational development program. The entire parish grows in faith by participating in Confirm not Conform, as mentors, parents, chaperones, or supportive onlookers who all make the commitment to support the youth in their life in Christ.

We developed the program because we found that most confirmation programs were designed to have the youth sit quietly for however many sessions and then nod politely and say the right things when presented to the bishop for confirmation. These programs assumed every youth would be confirmed – would go along with the program – and didn't seem to allow any room for youth to claim their faith for themselves. They were being asked to conform rather than truly wrestle with and articulate their beliefs and confirm them. In developing Confirm not Conform, we created a program we felt would allow youth to be honest in their expression of faith, to gain skills in leadership and in articulating their beliefs, and to make a genuine decision and true affirmation of faith if and when they chose to be confirmed.

To help you learn more about CnC, this booklet contains:

- A program overview
- A course outline
- A sample lesson
- A sample yearly schedule
- Confirm not Conform FAQs

We hope you find these materials helpful in giving you a deeper understanding of the strength and uniqueness of CnC



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Between soccer practice, flute lessons, driver's ed, play rehearsal and the other 1,001 things young people are involved in these days, it's no wonder many of them are forced to carry long-term schedules that fill up fast. One of your first steps should be building a CnC Calendar so that youth and their families can set aside the time needed for the class. Included in this booklet is an example calendar for a typical Confirm not Conform program year.

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 12 days of Christmas if that will help reduce any anxiety about fitting this all in.)

- 16 class sessions
- 4 field trips
- 3 required worship services (Ash Wednesday, Easter Vigil and one other Holy Week service)
- 2 rehearsals for the iConfirm service at the conclusion of the class
- 1 iConfirm service and celebration
- 1 retreat weekend
- 1 Information Night

CAST OF CHARACTERS

While CnC is a youth confirmation program, it is also a tool for congregational development. By getting the larger congregation involved in the program, it sparks questions, brings new energy and builds relationships across the traditional boundaries of age and family.

SO WHO'S INVOLVED?

- Participants
- Parents
- Mentors
- Class leaders: teachers, teaching assistants, logistics coordinator
- Congregation

The materials you'll need to conduct an information night for parents and youth, mentor training materials, and everything class leaders need to run a successful program are part of the CnC material.



COURSE OUTLINE

While each church can use the CnC program in its own unique way (perhaps focusing longer on certain lessons, or alternating the order), this outline gives the general framework and flow of *Confirm not Conform*.

LESSON 1: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WHOM?

Students are asked to consider what they actually believe compared to what they have been told to believe. *Homework*: Pick your favorite heretic.

LESSON 2: HERETICS 'R US

Students are asked to choose what values they want to carry with them into adulthood in an exercise called "What to pack." *Homework*: Pick a meaningful song (this will be shared with mentors).

LESSON 3: MEET YOUR MATCH

Mentors attend this session. Students and mentors get to know one another. Discussion of various versions of the Lord's Prayer. *Homework*: Write the Nicene Creed in your own words.

LESSON 4: SELFISHNESS, SELFLESSNESS, OR SELF-INTEREST

Students learn to negotiate with one another for the mutual benefit of both sides. A brief history of the Nicene Creed. *Homework*: Define terms of faith (creation, salvation, etc.).

LESSON 5: THE COUNCIL OF CNC

Students work together to create a creed that will be used by the parish in a worship service. *Homework*: Learn about a different religion.

LESSON 6: WORLD COUNCIL OF RELIGIONS

Students share what they have learned about different religions of the world. *Homework*: Come up with a story from your personal experience.



LESSON 7: WHAT A REVELATION

A brief but thorough overview of the Bible. *Homework:* Consider the issues you care about.

LESSON 8: SO WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Mentors attend this session. Mentors and students go over previous sessions' homework. Students and mentors work together to select a possible Bible passage for memorization. *Homework:* Select four possible passages for memorization.

LESSON 9: SO WHAT'S OUR STORY?

A rough overview of Anglican church history and elements of Anglicanism. *Homework:* Create an ad for the Episcopal Church.

LESSON 10: IT'S A MYSTERY

A consideration of the sacraments. *Homework:* Choose and practice a spiritual discipline.

LESSON 11: LICENSE TO DRIVE

An overview of *The Book of Common Prayer*. *Homework:* Consider what the Baptismal Covenant means to you.

LESSON 12: ACTING OUT

Students explore where they stand now in terms of what they believe and why. *Homework:* Take home exam—a review of what has been covered so far. (*Mentors may want a copy of the exam to review with your student.*)

LESSON 13: PAIN INTO POWER

Mentors attend this session. Students hear examples of how what causes pain can be transformed into power. *Homework:* Learn about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).



LESSON 14: POWER UP

A consideration of power and how it is used. Students choose which MDG they would like to focus on for a service project. *Homework:* Research the project for a vestry presentation.

LESSON 15: MAY WE PRESENT...

Students work on their presentation for the vestry. *Homework:* Continue with needed preparation for the vestry presentation.

LESSON 16: WITH GOD'S HELP

Students make their presentation to the vestry. *Homework:* Explain what it is you want to confirm at the iConfirm service.



CONFIRM NOT CONFORM FAQs

When I purchase Confirm not Conform, what will I receive?

With your purchase of the CnC curriculum, you will receive the following:

1. Getting Started guide and appendices, including promotional materials
2. Mentor recruitment and training materials
3. Mentor/Parent handbook
4. CnC Curriculum lessons 1-16
5. DVDs to use with corresponding lessons (1, 4, 6, 16)
6. CnC Weekend Retreat document
7. CnC commitment pledge document
8. iConfirm service and celebration materials
9. Access to web-based support site
10. Users' License Agreement

We also feel that when you purchase CnC, you are not simply buying a product. We take seriously our commitment to supporting churches that use Confirm not Conform. We are here to help, to give our advice or support, to incorporate your suggestions, and to be available when you need us. You can call on us for support more tangibly at any time. Feel free to contact us by email at info@confirmnotconform.com or by phone at (510) 384-3223. Any of us here will be glad to offer you what we can. And we will be glad of your feedback to help us make CnC an even better program for our youth, for the church, and for the Christ we are called to seek and to serve.

In CnC, do youth learn about the Christian faith and the Episcopal Church?

Absolutely. Confirm not Conform is firmly grounded in Scripture, the Christian tradition, Anglican history, and the Episcopal Church. These facets of faith are approached in a state of exploration, not memorization – though we also ask youth to memorize a sizeable passage of Scripture and to be able to articulate for themselves and for the congregation why they chose that passage and what it means to them.

We believe youth genuinely confirm their faith when they are able to open their hearts and minds to understand what it is they really believe. We ask students to write their gospel and to re-write the Creed not to supersede either the Gospels or the Creeds, but as a means to help youth explore what it is they actually believe;



to go beneath the surface of the words they say on a weekly basis and describe in their own words what those historic phrases mean to them.

In describing CnC, we say that youth will take on three different tasks: Deconstruction, Design, and Construction.

1. *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.
2. *Design*: as youth decide what they do believe, it helps to see what other believe. They take a close look at other religions and a close look at their own.
3. *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 lessons include two or even all three of these tasks. But the goal is not *destruction* of faith, but *construction*. It may not look exactly like the tradition as we currently know it, but it will neither be a mindless parroting of or (negative) reaction to tradition.

How many youth can participate in a Confirm not Conform program? Is there a minimum or maximum number?

Parishes have varied in class size from three students to over 50. There's no established minimum or maximum number; we leave it to parishes to decide for themselves when a class size becomes unproductive or unwieldy. Certainly with larger groups, parishes may decide to break up into 2 or more smaller classes. As with all of our materials, you do not need to conform to our expectations; use the materials as may be best for you.

What age should students be who participate in Confirm not Conform? What age is CnC aimed at?

The #1 question to ask when deciding if youth are of an appropriate age to participate in CnC is, "Do the youth have the capacity to say no"? In other words, are they able to make the decision whether or not they want to be confirmed and are they able to articulate why?

Many 8th graders have gone through the program, but it does vary from person



to person. Some 7th or even 6th graders may well have the maturity they need to make an informed decision; some 16 year olds may not be ready. By and large, though, the program works well with 8th and 9th graders and older.

CnC seems to require a high level of commitment. How do I encourage families to make the commitment to participate in CnC?

A course that focuses on a major rite of passage in students' lives needs to be taken seriously and entered with great commitment. Because CnC focuses on empowering youth and opening them up to see God within them and challenging them to discover their voice, it equips them for the tough times ahead in a way that soccer, or baseball etc. will not.

One place to start is with your own awareness of how important faith is for everyone. Sometimes what we end up facing is not so much a few complaints, but an entire culture that looks at faith as a kind of dessert topping rather than the main meal.

CnC was carefully crafted so all the pieces fit together and every class is crucial to moving the students forward. The program doesn't provide work for the sake of work. Some of this will be a leap of faith for you if you are using the program for the first time, but we believe you will find that youth (and families) will be energized by this program if they are willing to make the commitment to take it seriously.

In what way is CnC a congregational development program?

In many confirmation programs, no one outside of the teacher and the youth in the confirmation class are involved in the confirmation process. With CnC, the entire congregation is involved to a greater or lesser extent. Youth are paired with congregational mentors who meet with students and with one another and attend several classes as well as meeting individually with students. The Vestry becomes involved as youth present an action proposal for a project that addresses one of the Millennium Development Goals. All the members of the parish are invited to write messages of encouragement on the stoles presented to students at the iConfirm service. And the congregation sees and hears from the youth as they take leadership roles in Holy Week services and share with the congregation their faith as expressed in a Creed they write together.



How is Confirm not Conform different from Journey to Adulthood (J2A)?

Confirm not Conform and Journey to Adulthood were both developed by Episcopal parishes to address felt needs in providing appropriate and engaging programs for youth. The primary difference between the two programs is that CnC is specifically a confirmation program while J2A is an ongoing youth program for ages 12-18. Rite 13 is a rite of passage into young adulthood rather than a confirmation service.

Is Confirm not Conform only for Episcopal Churches?

CnC was developed with Episcopal Churches in mind because it began in an Episcopal Church. Although currently the curriculum is clearly written with an Episcopal bias, we hope to offer a more ecumenical version in the future. Certainly we welcome those from other denominations or nationalities using CnC as it stands if they feel that it can be useful to them.

Can I print out extra copies of materials for different leaders of the CnC program?

Absolutely. You can print out whatever copies are needed within your parish. We only ask that you abide by the Users' License Agreement not to share the materials with other churches or congregations. If the CnC leader moves to another parish, the CnC program needs to stay with the parish that purchased the program.

The confirmation program we had been using was set up another way. Can we adapt CnC to local usage?

Absolutely. CnC is a tool for you to use however it works best for you. Parishes have spent more than nine months, more than 16 sessions, changed lessons around, added new material, etc. The key here is to confirm not conform! The same thing we are trying to convey to the youth is what we are trying to convey to the church as a whole: that your honest exploration of faith is more important than external expectations for you to conform.



CONCLUSION

We believe in CnC.

We have seen the faces of our young people as they recite scripture and tell their community what it means to them.

We have seen the white hair of one of our senior mentors close against the bright blue Mohawk of a student, their bent heads sharing conversation, laughter and relationship.

We have heard the voices of a congregation reciting a creed written by teenagers and then applauding its words and faith.

We have listened to questions, debate and passion from a generation that many claim is uninterested in church.

We believe in CnC because we know it and are witnesses to how it has changed families and congregations.

And so we thank you for choosing CnC.



