

2017 Confirmation Message

There's a family picture gallery in my childhood home. Among them are many Confirmation Class photos.

The oldest one looks a lot like the picture on today's Sunday page. It's my great-grandmother's confirmation picture from the late 1800s. The confirmands in the picture range from about age 11 or 12 to about 17 or 18. There are even a couple of sibling pairs. 🌀 The story is that class rules were strict and the German pastor was severe in teaching method. Students attended class from 8 to noon every Saturday ... for three years ... around the pastor's dining room table. My grandma told me that most of the confirmands continued to be active members of St. Matthews Lutheran, LCMS, until they died.

My dad's confirmation picture shows a large class of robed-in-white 9th graders. He remembers that the content was mostly memory work and that they were all randomly questioned in front of the entire congregation on it as the final test. According to statistics a goodly share of dad's fellow confirmands don't participate in organized religion anymore.

My nephew's 1996 confirmation picture has nearly 50 confirmands in it. They stand three deep on the chancel steps of their suburban Lutheran megachurch. Students in his class could attend regular weekly class sessions ... which by then included snack and faith building activity time. Or, they could finish a do it yourself individual work packet at home. David is on the leading edge of the millennial generation. Like an ever growing number of his peers, he doesn't attend church and plans to do so even when he has children.

Those are the confirmation pictures in my family.

Phoebe, who will we confirm today, will have a confirmation picture of her own to add to her family's collection of precious photos. She will be the only one in it. There are a lot of good reasons for that but those good reasons **don't** include: There's a *problem with kids today* or a *problem with parents* today. It may just be time for a Confirmation Reformation.

In the words of our Faith Formation and Service Director, Allison Pate:

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation is a great time to consider how God is actively reforming our church today ... We know that students, parents, and leaders alike continue to want Confirmation to help young people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. The purpose of Confirmation remains unchanged, but **the shape of** it will continue to evolve to meet our young people on their own Emmaus Road and to accompany them on their journey of faith.

Allison, along with many others involved in the Confirmation Project, is working diligently and prayerfully to discern what the shape of Confirmation will be in the future. She and her colleagues are studying the effectiveness of confirmation practices across Mainline Protestant denominations. At some point they will have recommendations about what **confirmation shapes** to try out in the future. We look forward to that.

In the meantime ... today we are here ... here to we celebrate the work that Phoebe, her family, Allison and this congregation have done together to create what Allison calls, "Sticky Faith." We celebrate together this milestone on Phoebe's Faith Journey.

Phoebe, if you will, please come forward now and share your *Statement of Faith* project with us.