

ABOUT CONFIRMATION

Although one can be baptized at any time of life, most baptisms in the Episcopal Church are when the candidates are babies and therefore not able to make the public declarations of faith for themselves.

So, over time, a sacramental rite grew out of this fact, which allowed (primarily) young adults to 'confirm' for themselves that the vows which were made by their godparents on their behalves.

In some denominations, the sacrament of confirmation is administered by the parish priest, but in the Episcopal Church it is administered by a bishop.

Most years, St. Stephen's has candidates for confirmation - some are youth, some are adults. Some adults who were confirmed as youth might choose to renew their confirmation vows before the bishop. Others might have been confirmed in a denomination other than the Episcopal Church and now want to publicly be identified with the Episcopal Church. This is called 'being received'. Again, this rite is administered by a bishop.

No one who has been baptized has to be confirmed - baptism is the one and only 'membership' requirement in order to become a Christian. However, confirmation is a very significant and meaningful way of declaring that you are committing yourself to the Christian journey throughout your life.

Because the Christian life is a journey, it means that the path is sometimes nicely paved, wide and flat and sometimes is rocky, steep and misty. We all have doubts from time to time, and that means that we may find some Christian doctrines harder than others to understand or to believe in. This is totally normal and natural - so that means we don't expect confirmation candidates to remember great long chunks of the catechism, or have to recite them. The catechism is, of course, a definitive text of what we corporately believe - but we're all at different stages of comfort and understanding with different parts of the catechism, and that's all part of the process of using Scripture, Tradition and Reason to make sense of the Christian faith in our own hearts and minds.