

Dear Parents,

Although your child may not yet be eligible for confirmation (the minimum age is 16), we're sending this letter to parents of children ages 12 and older, so that you'll have a clear idea of some key changes we're making at Galilee.

The change has to do with preparation for confirmation. In the past, we've offered a nine-month "confirmation class"—with about half the participants being teens who have been active at Galilee all their lives and, the other half, teens who rarely attend church and have little or no knowledge about the Christian faith or our Scriptures. This means confirmation classes tend to be a crash-course in the bible and core Christian beliefs.

To use a metaphor: Confirmation classes are similar to lining up 30 bottles and splashing a bucket full of water over the tops, hoping that a little water gets in.

But how much better if, instead of splashing a bucket of water over 30 bottles, we have a funnel through which we carefully pour the water and, over time, are able to fill each bottle to the rim?

That is our goal.

After 20 years of offering confirmation classes, I believe that the short-term confirmation class model is wrong, particularly at Galilee where we are fully staffed and equipped to offer a complete program of spiritual formation from toddlers to high school seniors. Confirmation is not a rite of passage that teens get 'done' after a class—confirmation has never been a rite of passage in Christianity. Rather, it is a mature and public declaration of faith—and it can *only* be that if the teens (and parents) have a long-standing commitment to their spiritual development.

Let me put this another way: For decades, research has shown that people who develop a faith that lasts *into and beyond* college have three habits in their teen years: a) regular church attendance, b) Christian service and c) ongoing spiritual growth.

With that in mind, I'm writing to share that we will no longer have a confirmation class at Galilee. Here, instead, are the new requirements for confirmation:

A regular habit of weekly attendance at Sunday worship at Galilee (for at least two years). We understand there may be times when sports, family vacations, sickness or other extraordinary commitments take youth away for short periods. (Of course, if a family with teens has just joined Galilee, we'll accept a letter from their previous parish, confirming that they were regularly involved in that church).

A regular habit of service within or through Galilee (for at least two years). This might mean being an acolyte, helper at Sunday School, serving as a reader, usher or greeter—or helping at the food pantry once a month, etc. Our Student Ministry Leader (Marty O'Rourke) can assist in identifying opportunities for your teen.

A regular habit of spiritual growth (for at least two years). This requirement can be met by attending Galilee's Sunday morning bible study led by our Student Ministry Leaders—or Sunday evening youth group. Regular attendance at Young Life would qualify—or parents could lead a weekly bible study with their child.

Additionally, we will ask those who choose confirmation to attend two evening programs with me, prior to confirmation, where I will discuss with them the historical reliability of the bible—and also the question of creation and science. They will also attend a four-week teaching series in Lent of the spring of confirmation, where they will learn about Passover and the Last Supper. Finally, we will ask students seeking confirmation to work with our Student Ministry Leaders on a personal faith statement.

If your child is already 16, and they wish to be confirmed this spring, I've included in this mailing a flow chart that outlines the steps he/she needs to take.

I'm quite excited about this change, because I believe it will result in a better life-long preparation for your children (and mine). It is very difficult to form a child's faith in nine-months—but give us a few years, and we can make a huge difference together.

Please be in touch with Marty O'Rourke if you have any questions.

Warmly,

Father Buchanan+

Meet with Director of Student Ministries

To discuss eligibility for Confirmation

September-November

Declaration of Desire to be Confirmed

At one of the three Sunday morning services
On the first Sunday of Advent in the year prior to confirmation



Clergy Meetings

Attend the two winter meetings where Fr. Buchanan will teach on Genesis 1-2
(science and religion) and the historical reliability of the Bible

February-March



Attend 4-week Sunday Morning series on the Passover and Last Supper

First four weeks of Lent



**Review Faith Statement with Dir. Of Student Ministries
and your sponsor**

April



Confirmation Sunday

Early May