

# Confirmation Mentor Guide 2020-2021

*St. James's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA*

Dear Mentors,

Thank you for serving as a Confirmation Mentor for one of our youth or adult confirmands! Some of you may already know this person quite well, and for others this may be a new relationship. Regardless, we hope that these mentor-mentee relationships will be built upon the mutual exploration of faith and what it means to lead a Christian life.

Please carefully read this mentor guide and enclosed material about the Confirmation Process at St. James's, paying careful attention to dates when your presence is requested. We hope you find this information helpful, but should you have any questions or concerns along the way, please don't hesitate to contact any of us directly.

Thank you!

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## What is a Mentor?

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 this person'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 or adult mentee the greatest gift you can give: yourself—warts and all.

## Expectations of Mentors

We ask that mentors pray regularly for their confirmand (name of a person seeking confirmation). Make sure your mentee knows how to contact you and that you are an available resource, friend, and cheering squad throughout this year (and hopefully beyond). **We encourage mentors and confirmands get together in person or virtually at least 3 times between now and Confirmation Sunday May 16, 2021 (tentative).** These meetings/get-togethers can happen at any time, location, and setting that's convenient for you and your mentee. We've encouraged confirmands to initiate these meetings with you, but it may be helpful if you reach out to your confirmand if it's been a while since you've been in touch. During these meetings, please talk with students about their confirmation experience, and we encourage you to share about your own faith life/spiritual journey whatever it may look like. They will also have an assignment where they need to interview you about your faith journey. The two of you might enjoy an "active" meeting like a dog walk, trip to the driving range, or game night. Outings for food, coffee or ice cream are also popular. Going to church together is also encouraged and a great opportunity to do this is during Holy Week. Busy time of year? Perhaps it makes sense for one of your meetings to take place over the phone or via face time or Zoom - that's okay! Meetings need not be long or overly formal; we hope you enjoy your time together!

## Expectations of Confirmands

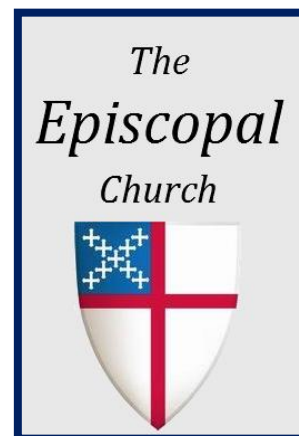
It's your responsibility, not your parents', to contact an adult you know and ask them to be your mentor. After all you're the one discerning confirmation. Once your mentor accepts, you need to complete the google form you received via email and provide their name and contact information to St. James's. **Arrange to meet in person with your mentor at least 3 times between now and Confirmation Sunday May 16, 2021 (tentative).** We hope this adult is someone who you feel or grow comfortable discussing matters of faith, school, and every day interests you both may have.

## Mentors' Presence Requested

Mentors, along with confirmands and their parents, are invited and expected to attend a Confirmation Rehearsal and Dinner Banquet the evening of **Sunday, May 2, 2021** at St. James's. Please also plan to be present on, **Sunday, May 16, 2021** for the morning service of Confirmation with the bishop and a reception to follow in Valentine Hall. Both these events are tentative depending on the status of the pandemic in spring 2021. During the confirmation worship service, mentors will be asked forward to "present" the confirmand to the bishop. Inability to attend either event does not exclude you from being a mentor, but that information should be shared with confirmands as early as possible. The St. James's confirmation leaders can gladly stand-in to present confirmands to the bishop in lieu of their mentor being present.

## Confirmation in the Episcopal Church

Confirmation is a sacrament, or a sacramental rite, in which the candidates "express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop" (BCP, p. 86o). A sacrament is an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace (the God-given desire and the power to do God's will). Episcopalians recognize seven sacraments: the two major ones being Holy Baptism and Eucharist. Individuals who were baptized at an early age are given the chance to make a mature public affirmation of their faith, recommit themselves to the responsibilities of their baptism, and receive laying on of hands by a bishop at confirmation (BCP, p. 412). Youth who have not been baptized can still participate in a confirmation preparation program and be baptized and/or confirmed when the bishop comes.



The Episcopal Church's theology of confirmation has continued to evolve along with its understanding of baptism. Confirmation is no longer seen as the completion of Christian initiation/membership, nor is confirmation your meal ticket or a prerequisite for receiving communion. Baptism is now understood as full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's body the Church (BCP, p. 298). Accordingly, confirmation has been increasingly understood in terms of a mature, public reaffirmation of the Christian faith and the baptismal promises. Confirmation is not graduation from faith formation, but rather marks the beginning of mature participation in the mission and ministries of the church. We speak of Confirmation being like a Base Camp; it's a stopping place to rest, plan the route ahead, get food and supplies, and coaching from those more familiar with the route ahead. Confirmation Mentors act like a Sherpa for a hiker on their way up Mt. Everest. Thank you for journeying with your mentee along this great adventure with God.

# The Importance of Mentoring

Shannon Kelly

(Vibrant Faith Ministries, Faith Formation Learning Exchange.net)

Our parents have a huge impact on our lives and the kind of person we grow into being. We know this from experience and we know this from studies that have been done that prove this. However, positive role models can also have a huge impact on us as we are growing up and discovering who we are and where our passions lie. When I was growing up, I had the advantage of having both. My parents were very supportive of all that I did and wanted to do. My mentors, both official and unofficial, those adults who cared about me and took an interest in what I was to become were the people who helped mold me and encouraged me into becoming the person I am today. Many of those mentors still play a role in my life even though I am now an adult. Mentors do not take the place of parents and parents do not take the place of mentors. Each has a unique job that can enhance a young person's life as they are discovering who they are and what life means to them.

There have been many studies on the power of mentoring. The Search Institute has research studies and resources on mentoring: <https://www.searchinstitute.org/category/s/183.htm>.

## Why is Mentoring Important?

When you are mentoring a young person, you are an adult in their life that is giving them your time and many young people do not have quality time with adults outside of their families. Whether you are a coach, youth minister, confirmation mentor, volunteer, or family friend, you are giving that young person another adult who they can turn to, who they can trust, and who they can look to for advice or support when they need it. You are giving them a great gift as you embody positive and authentic relationships. Young people need mentors so that they have many adults in their lives who care about them and who challenge them to do their best. As a mentor, you are given the privilege and responsibility of helping guide a particular young person along their journey.

## Chosen and Committed

As a mentor you have chosen (or been chosen by the young person) as someone who will walk with a young person for a period of time and maybe throughout his or her life. If you were chosen by the young person or if you chose to volunteer does not matter. What matters is that it was a choice and it is a commitment. Make sure when you say yes that you can really commit to what this means. Your time commitment might vary depending on the time of year, the kind of program it is, or the duration of the program. Be clear about how much time you can give to the relationship so that expectations are clear. Make sure you have carved out the time so you can faithfully walk with this young person on their journey.

## Being a Mentor

Depending on the program that you have signed up to mentor in, you will be given specific tasks or you will be given some basic guidelines (hopefully) so you know where to begin and so you know some of the best practices. Here are a few pointers for you and your mentee:

1. Be Consistent.
  - Make sure you show up to your meetings on time and ready to go.
  - Maintain healthy boundaries and be clear with them.
2. Be honest about who you are in order to gain mutual trust and respect and encourage them to do the same. There are so few places where youth can truly be themselves so this may be a challenge for them at first.
3. Let them lead the conversation with things they want to talk about rather than forcing a conversation.
4. Listen. Truly listen rather than thinking of what you are going to say back to them. Use active listening to help them hear what they are saying and so that you can be clear about what they are trying to tell you.
5. Ask questions and then listen some more. Ask questions to find out more about them and then listen again.
6. Challenge them to do hard things. Encourage them to go outside of their comfort zone just a little so they can learn and explore.
7. When they come to you with a problem, help them explore it but do not solve it (or try to solve it) for them. Remind them that they can do hard things.
8. Learn from one another. Youth and adults are different. Always have been, always will be because of our developmental stages, and that doesn't mean that we can't learn from one another. Share what makes life meaningful to you, ask them what makes life meaningful to them. What are they passionate about? Who do they admire? Where do they want to travel? What do they want to see or experience?
9. Show up to important events and support them.
10. It's not about you and how busy you are or what you are going through in your personal life. It is about the youth and walking with them.
11. Have fun together – most teenagers don't have an adult they can have fun with on a regular basis. Maybe their parents or extended family, but so much of family life is about doing homework, going to practices, going to events, etc. that simply having fun together will be new.

## The Foundation of Being a Mentor in a Christian Setting

There are many things that can be a foundation of mentoring, and depending on the organization in which you are becoming a mentor, you may be given guidelines as to what you are to accomplish. If you are functioning in a church or faith-based setting, you may want to explore how using the Vibrant Faith Frame can enhance your time together.

If you are able to frame your mentoring relationship on the Five Principles from Vibrant Faith Ministries, you will be giving that young person a gift of looking at their faith and life together. Let's look at each of these and mentoring.



1. *Faith is formed by trusted relationships.* Take a moment and think about the people who most influenced your faith life. What qualities did you look up to most? What did you value? You are being called upon to be in a trusted relationship with a young person. It is in these trusted relationships that young people can learn about faith not by your preaching, but by being who you truly are and learning from you through your relationship.
2. *The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and ministry of the home.* As a mentor you are a part of the partnership between your church and the home. You are a connection and a mentor as a young person walks their faith journey. You cannot take the place of the congregation nor can you take the place of the home. You CAN take your place, which is as someone who faithfully walks with a young person on their journey.
3. *Where Christ is present in faith, the home is church too.* As you walk this faith journey with a young person, you are called to point out where Christ is present and when you can call Christ into your midst. Some of the most powerful moments are not about formal prayer, but by experiencing a moment together and recognizing that God is already there in your midst. As a mentor you can point to where Christ is, you can encourage faith practices in the home, and you can equip the young person to explore their faith journey not just at church but also in the home.
4. *Faith is caught more than it is taught.* This might be a key one for mentors to remember. Many times when I have been recruiting mentors or preparing them for their new responsibilities, I get people saying, "but I don't know enough," or "what if I don't know the answers?" It is not about knowing the answers or knowing everything there is to know about Jesus and faith and the world (because then none of us would be qualified.) It is about being a person of faith, just as you are, doubts and all. It is about sharing your faith journey and not being afraid to talk about Jesus, the Bible, prayer, and where you experience God. It is not about teaching, but about being.
5. *If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults.* Every one of us has someone we look up to. It could be someone that we have met, it could be someone we dream of meeting. Regardless, we look up to that person for one reason or another. In being a faithful adult mentor to a young person, you are giving them a model of how to become a faithful adult. Again, you don't have to have all the answers. You need to be willing to share your faith journey with others and invite them to share theirs with you.

## Practical Way of Practicing Faith the Others

There are many ways to practice your faith. I want to offer some basic categories from the Vibrant Faith Frame as a way to invite you to think about how you might embrace each of these on a regular basis. If you are able to embrace each of these regularly with your mentee, you will be modeling for them a healthy faith life upon which to build as they continue to grow.

1. *Caring Conversations*: Invite ways to have caring conversations with your mentee. You can use Faith Talk Cards, you can talk about where you saw God today, you can invite conversation around what is important to them or troubling them. Check in with them and see where they are struggling and where they are celebrating.
2. *Devotions*. Sharing prayer with them before meals, before a meeting, praying for people that are sick or hurting, praying for one another, reading the Bible together, looking at the Sunday lesson together – these are all great ways of creating simple devotion time in your mentor relationship. It could be as simple as asking, “How might I pray for you today?”
3. *Service*. Talk to the young person about what they would want to do for service. What are opportunities in your area? What are things that would match with their passion and interests? Are there service needs in your own congregation? Can you choose something they can also invite their friends to do?
4. *Rituals and Traditions*. In your meeting times, in your gathering, as you spend time together, be mindful of creating ritual and traditions. Do you always open with prayer? Do you close with prayer? Do you light candles at given times of the year? How do you mark the church year together calling into mind Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost? Where are the places you can share in rituals and traditions to teach them and learn from them what is important and meaningful as they strive to connect with God in a deeper way?

The key is to be mindful and creative as you approach your new mentoring relationship. Show up and be yourself. Call God into your time together and if you are struggling with anything in the mentoring relationship, reach out to the leader of the program, to the church leaders, or to the other adults who are mentors. You are not in this alone and neither are the youth. We are a community, supporting one another as we walk our journey of faith.

### Resources on Mentoring

[http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_uo9.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_uo9.pdf)

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-moment-youth/201301/mentoring-youth-matters>

[http://www.megamentors.org/documents/VMP\\_Tools\\_for\\_Mentoring\\_Adolescents\\_Packet.pdf](http://www.megamentors.org/documents/VMP_Tools_for_Mentoring_Adolescents_Packet.pdf)