Merry Christmas Confirmation Families,

Praying this finds each of you well. Thank you to those who have filled out the survey. From these survey’s Pastor Renee and I learned much. Two things stood out to us: first, that the hoped for outcomes of engagement with Confirmation vary greatly, and secondly, just like our previous system, this system is not working, more specifically the tracking and requirements.

**We hear you and wish to address your concerns.** Confirmation is a time of faith strengthening and development, but it is not a requirement named in Scripture or in the church. It is often portrayed to be, when in reality it is a cultural program within our Christian tradition. How we work towards the objectives a congregation lays out as outcomes for faith strengthening is specific to that congregation. Each of the expectations we have laid out in the past has been intent around building towards Shepherd’s objectives (i.e. Serving in worship is a way to practice our objective of living ones faith out in word and deed, etc.).

With that, we are going to throw much of what we are doing out the window and attempt to make it simpler. How much your child engages will be up to you and your child. Youth ministry research has shown that the greatest impact on a young person’s faith development is not dependent upon any church or programing but based on the engagement of their parents with their own faith. **With that, we are here to support you and are making these changes:**

* **Beginning Wednesday, January 8th we will be having a middle school youth group experience each week from 6:30-8pm.** They will be a mix of fellowship, service learning, and education times that are open to those in our Confirmation program and any friend they wish to invite for their faith straitening opportunities. Large group and small group like events will take place and a calendar Jan-May will be completed during the Christmas break.
* **Monthly Sunday Mentoring for all of our Confirmands will continue.**
* **Our March 27-28 Confirmation Retreat will remain scheduled as is.**
* Lutheran FAQs will continue and considered optional, though recommended, just as our Wednesday activities for the same reasons we previously made them expected.
* **All Worship hours, Service hours, Sermon notes, etc. will be considered optional, though recommended** for the same reasons we previously made them expected.

We are so grateful to be on this journey of accompanying your children through this faith development alongside you and are thankful for your support and patience as we continue prayerfully discerning how that can best be done through the congregational level. If you have any concerns or suggestions know that we are here to listen and engage, reach out at any time. Also know we are not alone, these issues are in congregations across the United States and we are all praying and working together to find solutions and meet the faith needs of our young people.

Merry Christmas to you all,

Tashina

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