

**CnC:
Confirm
not
Conform**

Mentor/Parent Handbook

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
2010 – 2011 CnC Class

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CNC: CONFIRM NOT CONFORM

Mentor/Parent Handbook

**For St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Winston-Salem, NC**

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An Overview

If you are reading this handbook, you are either a mentor, a parent, or even a CnC student. (If the latter, don't expect to find any cheat sheets in here!)

This handbook was developed out of a perceived need to provide some guidance and help to mentors as they seek to be faithful to the youth with whom they are paired. It is therefore directed to mentors' needs and questions. However, we realize that parents might find this information useful as well.

The handbook is divided into several sections, each of which treats an aspect of mentoring. First is a description of roles, followed by an overview of the entire program. After that are sections on working with youth, including keeping kids safe, communicating with teens, planning outings and activities, giving gifts, and helping students decide whether or not to be confirmed. The appendix includes a variety of resources to help you in your role.

As far as how to use this handbook, you might do an initial read-through and be done with it. You might want to keep it as a resource to consult as needs arise. It's entirely up to you. We simply hope that you will find it useful as you do the often challenging but incredibly important work of being with youth.

NOTE: Portions of this handbook have been modified to include information specific to St. Paul's CnC program.

For updated and specific information about the St. Paul's CnC program, see our website at:

<http://www.stpauls-ws.org/confirmation>

Introduction

From St. John's, Oakland, CA (CnC Writers and Developers)

Confirm not Conform, or *CnC*, is a different kind of confirmation program: one that doesn't guarantee that youth will be confirmed. Perhaps that makes you wonder why your church got this program in the first place, but there's a reason that we believe makes all the difference for youth – and for the church – in the long run.

At St. John's, Oakland, the initial problem we found with most confirmation programs is that, from the moment a youth signs up, it is presumed that they will be confirmed. It's a done deal. But how can you confirm your faith without opening your heart and mind to ask what it is you really believe? The process is meant to be about exploration, not memorization.

CnC: Confirm not Conform is focused on helping young people ask the tough questions and search out the answers. Through innovative classroom work, field trips, mentor relationships and the challenge to do a whole lot more than just learn a few facts, *CnC* lets kids take real responsibility for understanding their faith and its power.

When they do – when they see the church and faith as something that truly belongs to them, rather than something they're forced to accept – it builds a bond that lasts. We've seen it happen.

We have seen the faces of our young people as they recite scripture and tell their community what it means to them.

We have seen the white hair of one of our senior mentors close against the bright blue Mohawk of a student, their bent heads sharing conversation, laughter and relationship.

We have heard the voices of a congregation reciting a creed written by teenagers and then applauding its words and faith.

We have listened to questions, debate and passion from a generation that many claim is uninterested in church.

We believe in *CnC*.

We believe in *CnC* because we know it and are witnesses to how it has changed families and congregations.

And so we thank you for choosing *CnC*. We are honored by your trust in us and pledge that we will do everything we can to help *CnC* succeed with your congregation.

Thanks.

Roles and Responsibilities

Making the Commitment

The issue of commitment will come up early and often during the CnC process. Every year parents or students or mentors complain about the commitment required – and at some CnC parishes, even rectors have been known to grouse.

The fact of the matter is that CnC does require a commitment, but it's worth it. When parents say that soccer practice is more important for their child than a class that explores their deepest questions, it's important to remember that one day their child will face a crisis, because it's a part of life. They will face a crisis that will challenge them to the depths of their being and, when that day comes, they will not be turning to soccer for answers.

Yes, CnC is demanding. So is a faithful life. And both provide a foundation built on rock, for the days when the storms come.

So this is your chance to ask yourselves, as mentors and as families, what really matters. We hope you'll find choosing CnC -- the time it takes, the questions it asks and the issues it explores -- to be the investment for a lifetime.

What's my role?

Mentors

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.

There are four main expectations of CnC mentors:

- Get together with your student often enough to build a relationship. This will require contacting them – which can be challenging! We will address this in the section on Communicating with Teenagers.
- Attend some scheduled class sessions. These sessions begin with a brunch to which mentors are invited, and include activities for you and your student to work together. It is important to attend each of these sessions. The classes to which you are invited are listed in the course information provided by the teaching team.
- Be present for Confirmation
- Attend as many of scheduled CnC events as is possible. Your presence for field trips and other special events can be quite meaningful. A schedule of events will be provided to you.

In serving as a mentor, the main thing you offer is a listening ear and an interest in your student's questions and explorations. You don't have to have all the answers – in fact, one of the greatest gifts you can offer a student are your own honest questions. With humility, offer your students the greatest gift you can give: yourself – warts and all.

You will find an article on the role of the mentor in the appendix of this handbook.

"As a parent I appreciated this program because it gave the kids a chance to see other faiths. It also focused them on their faith during a time that other influences are so strong. My daughter seems stronger in her convictions and her faith after going through this program."

~Parent

"CnC allowed me to question my beliefs and gave me a chance to realize what truly matters to me as a member of the Episcopal Church. I was able to do so with a group of people that did not try to control me in any way. I felt like everyone wanted to help me out."

~CnC Student

Parents

You may not feel like it, but you are more than just a chauffeur. You help set the tone for your child by making CnC a priority, not a burden. Do your best to see that your child makes it to classes and events on time. Help ensure that vacations, extracurricular activities and family time don't clash with the CnC schedule. Your willingness to make the commitment makes a huge difference in your child's experience.

One of the very difficult parts of your role is letting go of control. Please resist the temptation to require that your child be confirmed. Your child is more thoughtful than you might currently believe and will make this decision with due consideration. Don't try to rig the outcome.

Support and respect your child's relationship with his or her mentor. While it can be very difficult to hand over your child into the care of another adult, trust the process. Obviously, if you sense that there is physical or emotional danger in this relationship, consult with the mentor coordinator or church leadership. But don't be afraid if your child bonds with the mentor or brings home new and strange ideas. You will find an article on working with your child's mentor in the appendix of this handbook.

Finally, do pray for your child, your child's mentor, and for the youth and leaders of the program.

Students

See the following page for information about the class. The most important thing for you to know right now (and that we hope the parents and mentors are reading) is that a commitment to CnC goes both ways. You are committing yourself to participate fully in the class, but the community also makes promises to you. That's on the next page, too, but to make sure they read it, it's copied here.

When you take part in CnC, the community promises to:

- Listen to questions and concerns with open minds and hearts.
- Take contributions seriously and treating them with respect.
- Expose students to fundamental questions of faith and exploring those questions with students.
- Help students work with a mentor who will share their own faith experiences and questions, and respond to students' questions.
- Offer help when students need it.
- Keep students in their prayers.

CnC Commitments

Presented to youth at the beginning of the program.

Students...

- Participate in a class discussion to create a “Rules of the Road” covenant, and abide by the covenant to the best of your ability.
- Ask a trusted adult to serve as your mentor this year.
- Complete at-home reflection assignments. These are short assignments designed to help students reflect on the content of class, and prepare for upcoming classes. Assignments will be collected, and some assignments will be reviewed with mentors, but none will be evaluated in any way. Students’ thoughts and beliefs are their own.
- Attend one Diocesan event. Many of our students will attend Fall Happening (Nov 12 - 14, 2010) or the Spring Happening (March 24-27, 2011). There may be other opportunities to connect with the Diocese, as well.
- Attend St. Paul’s church services regularly.
- Commit to attending the services of Holy Week as much as possible, either at St. Paul’s or at another Episcopal church.
- Memorize a passage of scripture about 10 verses long and teach your fellow students, mentors, and parents about the scripture you choose.

The St. Paul’s community supports students by...

- Listening to questions and concerns with open minds and hearts.
- Taking contributions seriously and treating them with respect.
- Exposing them to fundamental questions of faith and exploring those questions with students.
- Helping students work with a mentor who will share their own faith experiences and questions, and respond to students’ questions.
- Offering help when students need it.
- Keeping students in their prayers.

Program overview

“What exactly have I gotten myself into?” you’re asking yourself. Though the list below may seem daunting, remember that this is spread out over the course of many months. (Try singing it to the tune of the 12 days of Christmas if that will help reduce any anxiety about fitting this all in.) Some background on these different elements follow.

- 1 Parent Information Meeting
- 1 Mentor training
- Class sessions September through May
- 1 Diocesan event
- Worship services during Lent and Holy Week (Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Easter)
- Confirmation Rehearsal
- Confirmation Service & Reception on Sunday, May 22

Information Meeting

Before CnC begins, it is helpful to have an Information Meeting where everyone can learn about CnC, review the schedule and ask questions. It’s very possible that you are having an information meeting right now, in which case you can already cross that one off of your list.

Mentor Training

Or perhaps you are in the middle of Mentor Training. Mentor Training brings together potential mentors to discuss their role in CnC, answer questions and provide materials to make their work easier.

Class Sessions

There are around 20 Sunday morning class sessions, some of which involve at-home reflection assignments. Classes begin at 10:10 a.m. and dismiss at 11:15, although some class sessions are extended when we can't do what we need to do in an hour. These classes cover all sorts of topics as you will see in the outline, below.

Mentors are present at four (or more) of the sessions. A schedule will be provided.

Diocesan Connections

We ask our students to attend one diocesan event (or in lieu of an event, to schedule an interview with one of our Bishops and present the results). Many of our students enjoy a weekend retreat called "Happening." Information about Happening can be found at the NC Diocese Youth Ministries website at <http://www.episdioncyouth.org/>

Worship Services

Just as important as activities and classes is exposure to your own services in a new way. Lent and Holy Week are great opportunities not only for youth to explore liturgy but also to own it by taking on leadership roles. We encourage parents, mentors, and students to attend as many of these services as possible.

Confirmation and Blessings

The Bishop will confirm students at St. Paul's in our traditional Sunday morning service. Everyone's spiritual journey is celebrated: those who wish to be confirmed will be confirmed, and those who have chosen not to be confirmed will be blessed.

Course Topics

Here is an outline provided so that mentors may be aware, generally speaking of what students are learning and doing in their classes and homework. Many of these topics will be taught over the course of two weeks. A schedule with St. Paul's specific plans will be provided, and these topics may be modified somewhat as the year progresses.

Topic 1: The Gospel According to Whom?

Students are asked to consider what they actually believe compared to what they have been told to believe. **At-Home Reflection:** Pick your favorite heretic.

Topic 2: Heretics 'r Us

Students are asked to choose what values they want to carry with them into adulthood in an exercise called "What to pack." **At-Home Reflection:** Pick a meaningful song (*this will be shared with mentors*).

Topic 3: Meet your Match

Mentors attend this session. Students and mentors get to know one another. Discussion of various versions of the Lord's Prayer. **At-Home Reflection:** Write the Nicene Creed in your own words.

Topic 4: Selfishness, Selflessness, or Self-Interest

Students learn to negotiate with one another for the mutual benefit of both sides. A brief history of the Nicene Creed. **At-Home Reflection:** Define terms of faith (creation, salvation, etc.).

Topic 5: The Council of CrC

Students work together to create a creed that will be used by the parish in a worship service.

Topic 6: What a Revelation

A brief but thorough overview of the Bible. **At-Home Reflection:** Consider the issues you care about.

Topic 7: So what's your story?

Mentors attend this session. Mentors and students go over previous sessions' homework. Students and mentors work together to select a possible Bible passage for

memorization. **At-Home Reflection:** Select four possible passages for memorization.

Topic 8: So what's our story?

Mentors attend this session. A rough overview of Anglican church history and elements of Anglicanism. **At-Home Reflection:** Create an ad for the Episcopal Church.

Topic 9: It's a mystery

A consideration of the sacraments. **At-Home Reflection:** Choose and practice a spiritual discipline.

Topic 10: License to Drive

An overview of the Book of Common Prayer. **At-Home Reflection:** Consider what the Baptismal Covenant means to you.

Topic 11: Acting Out

Students explore where they stand now in terms of what they believe and why.

Topic 12: Pain into Power

Mentors attend this session. Students hear examples of how what causes pain can be transformed into power. **At-Home Reflection:** Learn about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A copy of the MDGs are in the appendix of this handbook.

Topic 13: Power Up

A consideration of power and how it is used. Students choose which MDG they would like to focus on for a service project.

Topic 14: May we present...

Students work on their presentation for the vestry.

Topic 15: With God's Help

Students make their presentation to the vestry.

Section

4

Working With Youth

Working with youth is a very different proposition from parenting youth. Remember what we said at the outset: 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. But how to do that? The following section will give you some suggestions on ways to connect with youth that are appropriate, fun, and hopefully fulfilling for both you and the youth with whom you are paired.

Communicating with Teenagers

Starting a Conversation

“Here you are sitting with an adult that’s not a parent, that’s not a relative, and she’s saying, OK, let’s talk about this. What do you want to do? That relationship that develops is a really crucial one.

Teenagers, we get so wrapped up in our little world and our little bubble and having a mentor helps to pop that bubble .”

~CnC student

So you’re sitting there and you have this kid in front of you. Now what? You say, “How are you?” The answer is “Fine.” You say, “Tell me about school,” and you get a shrug. An awkward pause ensues and you wonder, “Will it always be like this?”

Building a relationship with youth will take some time, but eventually you will most likely find that conversation flows easily. It will be easier when you know something about one another and have more shared experiences upon which to draw. But how to get there?

Start somewhere safe. Have a conversation about something neutral and fun, just to find a place to start. In the appendix of this Handbook you will find a long list of Conversational Jump-Starters organized into categories for ease of reference. Take a look at them before your first meeting – or maybe for every meeting, making it a tradition. For fun you might even jot a few down on slips of paper and have your youth pick one randomly, like cards in a deck.

Safety may also lie in posture. Many of you already know that youth who seem monosyllabic at best will chatter freely to you or to one another when they’re sitting behind you in the car. You might find it easier to have a conversation if you are driving or walking somewhere or seated side by side rather than face to face. Youth may feel

“Do something active: batting cages, miniature golf, ball game, walk. Sitting in a bookstore or cafe can get slow real fast.”

~CnC mentor

more comfortable walking around or doing something than sitting or static. Consider the venue; if you are in a building where adults tend to have more power than youth, youth may find it more difficult to speak freely. If you are in a place where youth outnumber adults – say a café near the high school – then you are on the youth’s territory which may give the youth more confidence.

Know that you do not need to be cool. What you need to be is authentic. Do not try to make yourself into something you’re not. Don’t pretend to know all the answers. Youth can smell inauthenticity from a mile away. However, you will be amazed to find that even though you feel old, lost and flabby, youth will often refer to you as cool – not because you are so flashy and exciting, but because you care about them.

Ask clarifying questions if you don’t understand something. In some ways you will be learning another language and another culture. You’ll learn about peers and teachers, technology and television programs that you’ve never heard of before. You don’t need to know it all before you start. You’ll certainly know a lot more by the time you’re through.

Finally, accept what they offer and do your best to reserve judgment. In one lesson, they will have a favorite song to share with you. You may think it is the most inane piece of trash you have ever heard, but remember this is important to them. Clarifying questions are your friend. “Why do you like this song?” may only get you a shrug as youth may not yet be able to articulate why they feel the way they do, but simply asking the question makes it clear that you have accepted their offering without judgment. Knowing they will be heard, youth will be far more willing to share what else is important to them.

Listening to Youth

Many kids do not have adults in their lives that truly listen to them. Usually, adults are busy telling youth how to act (or how not to!) and what to think and do.

Therefore, listening is one of the most important gifts you will offer your youth. Resist the urge to give answers, even if you are prompted for them! While there may be an appropriate time to share your faith story or your perspective on a given topic, such sharing should always be in the context of drawing out the youth’s thoughts: helping youth tell their story and formulate their faith.

After all we said above about how to draw out youth in conversation, you may find yourself paired with a youth who won’t stop talking, who will want to go on at length about subjects far removed from your ostensible topic. It may be that there is something important going on and they do need you to listen at that time. Be flexible. Your topic or plan may not be the most important one. On the other hand, they may be talking out of nervousness, hyperactivity, excitement, or simply to avoid the topic at hand. In that case, you may need to lead the conversation back to what you intended

to discuss. Use your best judgment about what is most important for your youth at the moment.

In the appendix, you will find an article on Active Listening that will give you thoughts and examples on engaging youth in conversation and hearing what they have to say.

Modes of Communication

You wrote a letter. You sent a nice card. You dispatched an e-mail. You left messages on home and cell phones. And yet, it would seem as if youth are oblivious to your efforts to reach them. Actually, they probably are. It's a generational thing.

Just when you thought you were technologically up to speed, the technology morphed. Land lines are for parents. E-mail is so nineties. And snail mail! — why, that could take...days!

Moreover, expecting youth to be courteous and/or professional about returning calls -- even if they get the message -- is just going to be frustrating. So you may as well resign yourself, at least initially, to reaching out on their terms. This doesn't mean you can't insist that they, say, get back to you within two days, but it does mean making an effort to tap into their world.

Communicating effectively with teenagers requires entering into their frame of reference. We have found that the two best ways to reach youth are via **text messages** (to their cell phones) or via **social networking sites** such as MySpace or Facebook.

The first thing to do is talk with youth about the best way(s) to reach them. Do they have a cell phone with text messaging? (And use it?) Do they have a Facebook (or other site) page, and how often do they visit it? Will they "friend" you? Establish your terms. Your youth may resist "friending" you, especially if anything on their page might be off-color, but also if they don't trust you to maintain their privacy (see *Honoring Confidentiality*, below).

Bear in mind that many parents do not allow their children to join MySpace or Facebook, please do not encourage youth to create an account just to connect with you. Please use discretion about communicating privately with youth via social networking sites or email.

However you do it, the rule of thumb is find an avenue that works you both. And go with it!

Honoring Confidentiality

The youth you mentor may wonder whether anything they share may go straight back to a parent or pastor. It may be useful to discuss the subject of confidentiality early in your relationship to establish clear "rules of engagement."

Consider what you think is most appropriate in terms of confidentiality. You might agree that all communication be held in strict confidence. On the other hand, you might agree not to share with a youth's parents, while reserving the right to inform the pastor or youth leader if you think the youth or someone else is in danger (remembering that clergy are mandated reporters — by law, they must report suspected child abuse).

The important thing is to establish those boundaries so that trust can be built and lines of communication can be opened.

Confidentiality should extend to others as well. Mentors should take care to hold close any information shared with them by other mentors — and likewise be aware that other mentors might be parents — or good friends to parents — of their youth.

If something is said and you don't know what to do, before you panic, go to the youth leader or clergy person. They may already have some information about the situation or thoughts about how to proceed.

Meeting together

“It was SO hard to find a time we could meet together, and then the coordinator set up the CnC Cafe on Sunday mornings. Meeting with my mentee between services was perfect for both of us.”

~CnC Mentor

What to do, what to do? There are quite a number of things you can do with youth, but not all of them are the best fit for you both. Ask your youth what they would like to do. They might even tell you!

If you do intend to go on an outing, double-check with parents that youth actually have permission to go! Youth may readily agree to go out for ice cream on a Sunday night, completely forgetting (or “forgetting”) Aunt Sally's birthday party. (“But I have to go out with my mentor!”)

For those who need a little extra help figuring out what to do or where to go, take a look at this list, perhaps together with your youth, and find some activities with mutual appeal. Then you'll begin on shared territory.

Note that in our experience, the hardest part of meeting with youth is finding a time that works for you both to get together. We solved this problem in part last year by setting up what we called the Sunday morning CnC Cafe between services. You're already there, you can grab a coffee and a corner, and you are meeting in a safe space.

“Kids these days do not get many chances to just hang out and be kids. Playing catch at the park sounds trite but it may be exactly right.”

~CnC Mentor

Active Outings

- Walk around or at some local landmark such as a lake or park.
- Go fly a kite or hang at a playground or skate park.
- Play catch (baseball, football).
- Play pick-up basketball.
- Shop for holiday gifts.
- Get your nails (or hair or makeup) done together.
- Face off playing Guitar Hero. (Kids are usually very good at it and love seeing us make a pathetic attempt to play.)
- Go to a U-Pick-'Em farm.

Food Outings

- Head to a local cafe, juice or coffee shop to hang and chat low-key and low-budget (e.g., Jamba Juice, Starbucks, etc.).
- Go for ice cream and split a crazy Sundae.
- Go out to a restaurant for a more expensive option. Be sure to select one where it's OK to linger over dessert.
- Try a new type of food together (e.g., Indian, Vietnamese, etc.)
- Make cookies in the church kitchen for Coffee Hour – or for yourselves.

CnC-Related Outings

- Go on a CnC field trip together.
- Ask about upcoming homework for CnC: help brainstorm topics.
- Go to church together and have lunch afterwards to talk about what church means and why we go (or don't).

Volunteer Activities

- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or food pantry together. Most need help on Saturday mornings but you can call ahead.
- Volunteer with Habitat for Humanity or some other building ministry.
- Adopt a family or kid for the holidays. Often the schools set these up so you can offer to help.
- Work on a community garden or compost project.

“Try to support the kid in whatever he or she regularly does. Go to her play, his concert or game, her poetry reading. It means a lot to them, even if they don’t show it.”

~CnC Mentor

Cultural Outings

- Go see a movie and then debrief at a cafe afterwards.
- Go to a museum together. (In some parts of the country, you can reserve and pick up free passes to go to certain museums for the day.)
- Catch a ballgame or other sporting event together.
- Share musical likes and dislikes: Introduce the student to the music you enjoyed as a kid and allow him to do the same. You might find some commonalities. Then again, maybe not.
- Go to a pet show or a fundraiser for homeless pets.
- With other mentors and mentees, have a movie night. Watch and discuss.

Support Outings

- Find out what your youth’s activities are, and ask if you can come watch them play or perform. This might include musical performances, athletic events, art shows, etc.

Giving Gifts

Mentors often wonder whether gift-giving and -receiving is appropriate in the student–mentor relationship, and if so, to what extent. This is a topic that should be discussed with your mentor coordinator so that specific concerns and issues in your church culture may be considered. However, here are a few general remarks.

At their best, gifts can be wonderful expressions of heartfelt affection. Gifts can evoke powerful emotions. But gifts often imply expectations or convey confusing messages. It is important to recognize that the bearer of a gift is exercising a form of power: the power to shop for and buy a gift. Moreover, giving a gift to another often — although not always — places a burden upon the recipient to reciprocate. It is something to take into consideration when one thinks of giving any gift.

The mentor–student relationship is inherently characterized by an imbalance of power. The adult mentor does not approach the relationship in the same way or for the same reasons as the student. In many ways, the mentor is the party with more responsibility and more authority. It is therefore incumbent upon the adult to establish a proper boundary with respect to gifts.

Gift-Giving Guidelines

- It is not necessary to give birthday and/or Christmas gifts. A card or a note or, even better, an outing are preferable. You might give a card with a coupon to cash in for that special outing.
- The most appropriate time to consider giving a gift is for the confirmation ceremony itself. Your church may be presenting a Book of Common Prayer or a Bible and we encourage you *not* to give either of these. A cross, icon, CD, or book are all suitable confirmation gifts. Best, though, are those gifts that grow out of something you have shared in the course of your time together, something that came from a significant conversation or event that shows you have been paying attention.
- Your gift does not have to be spiritual. What you are hoping to find is a gift that is *meaningful*. If your deepest conversations about Scripture happened while you were at a hamburger joint, it may be that youth will be more vividly reminded of Scripture by a hamburger-related gift than by an actual Bible.
- Gift cards, even though they may seem impersonal to us, are something kids thrive on. If you're stumped, don't be embarrassed simply to give a card with a personal message and a gift card enclosed.
- Don't spend a lot of money. Discuss a limit with your mentor coordinator.
- Never expect or suggest that the student reciprocate. If you receive a gift from your mentee or his or her family, thank the student or family and move on. If the gift seems inordinately valuable or otherwise unusual, confer with your mentor coordinator about what to do.

Helping Students Make a Confirmation Decision

So you've spent many months getting to know a person. You've been diligently listening actively — asking questions, repeating feelings back, providing a consistent, patient, and empathic sounding board. You've heard their serious doubts about the virgin birth, their anger about church politics, or their apathy about religion. Or perhaps, to your amazement, you've seen a teenager grow and change in front of your eyes from a monosyllabic shrugger to a theologian, an activist, or a saint.

At some point in the CnC process, you will be asked to discuss the question of confirmation with your youth. Ideally, it will be an open question that will be subject to lively discussion. Remember that it is not your job to get youth to be confirmed. Rather, it is their job to make an independent decision. Your job is to help provide a safe space in which to explore the question.

Below is a list of questions that might be helpful in getting such a conversation started, but feel free to use your own questions or just allow the conversation to flow naturally if conversation starters are unnecessary.

Conversation starters on the CrC Process and Confirmation

- What did you learn about yourself this year?
- What do you see differently now from when you started the program?
- What would you say you believe about God now? About the church? How has that changed?
- How do you feel now about the Bible passage you picked to memorize? How has that changed from when you first picked it?
- What do you think you're going to remember about this 10 years from now?
- What does it mean to you to be a Christian? What does it mean to be an Episcopalian?
- What would you like to do next?

Another way to approach this is through the Baptismal Covenant (found in the appendix). In their homework for Topic 10, youth are asked to answer the questions of the Baptismal Covenant in their own words, so these questions will probably still be fairly fresh in their minds. You might ask the youth for permission to go over this homework assignment with them as a way to review the question of confirmation.

Keeping Kids Safe

It goes without saying that church should be a safe place. Adults who work with youth within a church setting are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationship that youth deserve in all settings. Safeguarding the youth in your care is one of the most important functions you have as a mentor.

Moreover, the ways in which you model good practices may well have repercussions beyond your relationship with the youth you are mentoring. By modeling safe ministry practices, you raise awareness in youth as to unsafe situations they may encounter elsewhere.

By your vigilance, you can tangibly demonstrate Christ's love and care and teach wisdom to youth who inhabit a world in which, unfortunately, predators and opportunists may seek to do them harm.

To that end, we encourage each mentor to attend diocesan-approved training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. At St. Paul's, these training sessions are called "Safe Church Training" and are offered periodically.

St. Paul's and the NC Diocese also require that two unrelated adults be present when working with children and youth. While there are times when it is appropriate or necessary for an adult to be alone with a young person (e.g., transportation), adults are encouraged to arrange meetings in public places such as restaurants or in a corner away from the action but in full view.

One way to avoid even driving alone with a youth is to "double-date" on outings with another mentor and mentee. It is also advisable to inform another responsible adult about your plans as well. Spontaneous or secretive activity with a single young person may foster a high-risk situation.

While this is logistically challenging in the context of a mentoring relationship, this practice protects both the youth and the adult.

Adults Are Encouraged to—

- spend time with and listen to youth, and advocate for their ministries; and
- offer appropriate physical expressions of affection, which may include:
 - high fives and hand slapping,
 - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer,
 - touching shoulders, hands, or arms,
 - group "huddle," and
 - brief hugs and arms around shoulders.

Adults Should Not Under any Circumstances—

- provide youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs (including cigarettes) or pornography;
- consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs in the presence of youth;
- be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or misused legal drugs in the presence of youth;
- engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or youth to engage in illegal behavior;

- engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any youth; or
- discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with youth.

Responding to Concerns

Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place at church, or that a child from the church may have been abused in another setting, should inform his or her rector or vicar immediately. Any mandated reporter (including the rector so informed) who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place shall report it to the appropriate civil authority.

Parishioners may also call the NC Diocese Pastoral Response Team at 1-877-332-3394. This team is made up of women and men, lay and ordained, appointed by the Bishop, and trained to assist in allegations of sexual misconduct. Confidential messages may be left on this toll-free line and calls will be returned promptly.

*Adapted from *Called to Right Relationships: Policies, Standards and Resources for Ensuring that Our Congregations are Safe Places for All God's People*, published by the Diocese of California, San Francisco, 2008 (www.diocal.org). Used by permission.*

Section

5

Appendix

What Is My Role as a Mentor?

It seems simple at first, the notion of being a mentor: someone who spends time with a young person. But once you are in the mentor role, you may find yourself in situations where you are uncertain about your part in the relationship. Is it appropriate to provide discipline when she's out of line? What if I suspect he is experiencing trouble at home—what is my responsibility? How can I have the most positive impact on my mentee?

There is no one answer concerning what your role is or is not. If you are involved in a formal mentoring program, the staff may be able to provide clearer direction for you based on the program's rules and expectations. In general, here are some basic guidelines to help you determine your role with your mentee.

YOU ARE . . .

. . . **a friend.** Like peer friendships, mentors and mentees do things together that are fun and engaging. They support each other both in good times and in tough times. They teach each other. They help each other. They're honest with each other. And sometimes they have to have hard conversations about concerns they have, asking the right questions at the right time. By being a good listener and engaging in authentic conversations with your mentee, you are helping her develop important life skills.

. . . **a role model.** You are expected to set a good example to the mentee for how to live your life. This is not the same as being perfect. Rather, it is about acknowledging your imperfections and sharing your strengths. It is also about advocating for your mentee when dangers to his physical or emotional well-being are present.

. . . **a confidant.** Building a close relationship with your mentee will help her build better relationships with others in her life as well, such as parents and peers. In the process, your mentee may tell you things she does not feel comfortable telling anyone else. Sometimes she may tell you about her hopes, dreams, or insecurities. Other times she may reveal mistakes she has made. Unless your mentee is in trouble and needs outside help, try to keep her private comments between the two of you. Your role is to be supportive of your mentee as a person with potential, regardless of the kinds of actions or attitudes she confides in you.

. . . **a nurturer of possibilities.** Your role is to see the gifts and strengths of your mentee and help him flourish personally. You should help your mentee channel his gifts toward actions that make him a resource to others in his family, neighborhood, school, or community.

YOU ARE NOT . . .

. . . a mentor to the family. In fact, some mentoring programs intentionally limit contact between mentors and parents. Your role is to provide special attention to your mentee. While getting acquainted with parents, caregivers, and siblings can be helpful to understanding your mentee and her situation, your energy and attention should be focused on providing support to your mentee.

. . . a social worker or doctor. If your mentee tells you about experiences or health conditions that concern you, always turn to the mentoring program staff for help. Although arming yourself with information about, say, a learning disability or abuse may help you understand your mentee better, it is not your responsibility to try to address conditions or situations that require professional help. The staff at the mentoring program may be able to find additional help for the mentee, including local information and referral services.

. . . a savior. You should not see your role in this relationship as coming in to make a young person's life better or to fix his problems. Certainly your support can help your mentee overcome hurdles. But don't forget that every young person—regardless of his circumstances—has gifts and talents that make him more than a “recipient” of your support. Your mentee should be treated as having much to offer to the world, because he does.

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Supporting Your Child's Relationship with a Mentor

What Can I Do to Help Make This Work?

By involving your son or daughter in a mentoring relationship, you have taken a very important step to making sure your child gets what he or she needs in life. Every young person benefits from having another caring adult in his life—someone who supports your child, believes in him, and can be another person your child turns to when he's having a tough time—so kudos to you for welcoming a mentor into your child's life!

A good mentor–mentee relationship takes time to develop. Just like the start of any friendship, the mentor and your child will need to spend some time getting to know each other. They may encounter difficulties or misunderstandings along the way. There will be ups and downs.

You as a parent or caregiver can play a very important role in helping their friendship grow and develop, regardless of whether or not you have much direct contact with the mentor. Here are some tips to help you support your child's new mentoring relationship:

- *Be positive.* Let your child see that you are happy she has a mentor in her life. When your child tells you about her visit with her mentor, listen for the positive experiences, even if your child doesn't seem very excited about the visit. (For example, you might point out, "Well, it sounds as if you two have some things in common. Getting to know someone isn't always easy, but give it time.")
- *Tell your child the positive skills and behaviors you see her developing as a result of having a mentor,* and let him know that you are pleased with those changes. ("I've noticed that since you started hanging out with Joe, you've gotten your homework done on time more often. I'm proud of you!")
- *Let the mentor know how much you appreciate* that she is a part of your child's life. An occasional card or just telling her "thank you" can do much to make the mentor feel she matters.
- *Encourage your child* to show his mentor that he appreciates him.
- If you are present when your child and mentor get together (for example, during pickup and drop-off), *be available but not overbearing.*
- *Show your interest* by asking some questions, but try not to make demands.

- *Share feedback* from your child with the mentoring program's staff. If you are allowed to talk with the mentor privately, check in occasionally and see how the relationship is going.
- *Help your child remember* when her next visit with her mentor is scheduled. Help her use a calendar or day planner to keep track of visits with her mentor, as well as other activities going on in her life. Try to be as flexible as possible with the scheduling of activities.
- *Give your child's mentor copies of school calendars* so that he knows about time off for holidays, opening and closing days of the school year, special events, and other considerations.
- The program may take care of this, but it's always a good idea to *provide your child's mentor with emergency contact information* for someone with a phone, just in case something happens and the mentor cannot reach you.
- *Let the mentoring program's staff or your child's mentor know if there has been a change or incident in your child's home life that the mentor should know about.* Did you two have a particularly bad fight recently? Has there been a death in the family? Are there financial stresses in the household right now? Is one of her siblings in need of extra attention right now? This kind of information will help the program and the mentor to more effectively support your child. You may also want to make some suggestions about how the mentor can be supportive in these situations.
- *Be prepared in the back of your mind for the inevitable end to the mentoring relationship.* Every mentoring relationship ends at some point. Some mentoring programs are designed so that the mentor and mentee are together for a limited time. If the relationship is strong and life remains relatively stable for the mentor and your child, it may not end until your child graduates from high school. The fact that your child's mentor has gone through a recruitment, training, and screening process is a good sign that she is committed to staying involved with your child over a significant period of time. Unfortunately, sometimes things change in either the mentor's or your child's life that are out of either one's control, and a relationship may need to end prematurely. Remember that sometimes a mentoring relationship ends in a healthy way for good reasons. For example, your child may get swamped with school activities like band and sports, or the mentor may be busy with a new baby. No matter what the reason, you can be ready to listen and provide extra support when the relationship ends.
- *Remember that the mentor is not going to replace you.* You are still your child's parent, and nothing will ever change that. The mentor can complement and reinforce what you are doing as a parent, helping you be even more effective.

From *Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults*. Copyright © 2006 by Search InstituteSM; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org.

Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations — and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000.

In 2003, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church “RESOLVED, That the 74th General Convention endorse and embrace the achievement of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that pledge to:

1. eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. achieve universal primary education;
3. promote gender equality and empower women;
4. reduce child mortality;
5. improve maternal health;
6. combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. ensure environmental stability; and
8. develop a global partnership for development.”

More information on the MDGs can be found at the United Nations website:
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Or at Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation: <http://www.e4gr.org/>

Conversational Jump-Starters

The following conversation starters are adapted from “101 Relational Discussion Starters” by Tony Akers in the Nov. 12, 2000, issue of Group Magazine. (Used by permission.) The first group of questions may be easier when you are first getting to know your mentee. After you’ve established trust, you may find the latter questions more effective. A few questions are given under more than one category.

Activities/Interests

- What’s your favorite TV show? What do you like best about it?
- What’s your favorite movie? What do you like best about it?
- Who’s your favorite music artist or group? What makes you gravitate to him/her/them?
- What’s your favorite time of year — winter, spring, summer, or fall? Why?
- Who’s your favorite author? Describe the last book you read by that author.
- What’s your favorite day of the week? Why?
- Describe your favorite toy as a child.
- What’s your favorite Web site? Why?
- What’s your favorite ride at an amusement park? Why?
- What’s your favorite part of a newspaper? Why?
- What’s your favorite thing to wear? Why?
- What’s your favorite fast food restaurant? Why? What’s the most memorable thing that ever happened to you there?
- What’s your favorite time of day? Why?
- What’s your favorite food? Where’s your favorite place to eat it?
- What’s your favorite dessert? Describe a time when you had that dessert as a child.
- What’s your favorite thing to do on an unexpected day off from school?
- What’s your favorite holiday? Why?
- What’s your favorite candy? Why?
- What’s your favorite sport to watch? to play?
- What’s your favorite piece of jewelry? Why?
- What’s your favorite city? Why?
- What’s your favorite hobby? How does that hobby reflect your personality and passions?

- If you could choose a vacation spot anywhere in the world, where would it be, and why?
- If money and time were no object, what would you be doing right now?
- Have you ever caught a fish? If so, tell me about it. If not, would you like to? Why or why not?
- Do you like to cook? If so, what do you like to make? If not, what do you wish you could make for yourself?
- Do you have any musical ability? If so, what do you enjoy about it? If not, what skill would you love to learn?
- When and what have you collected during your life?
- Do you have a bike? If so, what do you like about it?
- Do you belong to any clubs? Why or why not?
- Have you ever grown anything? If so, what?
- Do you have a job? If so, what do you like and dislike about it?
- What makes you laugh? Why?
- Can you swim? If so, describe what it was like to learn how to swim. If not, have you ever been scared of the water? Why or why not?
- When you're alone, what's a song you like to sing or hum, and why?

Preferences/Heroes

- What's the best and worst thing about your school?
- What's your best subject in school? Why are you so good at it?
- What's your school mascot? If you could change your mascot, what would you change it to?
- Tell me about the best teacher you ever had.
- What do you like best: rivers, lakes, ponds, or streams? Why?
- Which do you like better — sunrise or sunset? Why?
- What's the best gift you've ever received? Explain.
- What's the best gift you've ever given? Explain.
- Imagine a "best day ever." What kinds of things would you do?
- Do you like cats or dogs better? Explain.
- Do you have a hero? Describe him or her.
- Would you rather cut grass or rake leaves? Why?
- Would you rather go to the dentist or the doctor? Explain.
- Would you rather have many friends or one good friend? Explain.
- During your free time would you rather be alone or with a group?
- Do you make decisions slowly or quickly? Why?

- Would you rather lead or follow? Why?
- If you were hiking down a path and it came to a “Y,” would you take the well-traveled path or the overgrown path?
- What adult, other than your parent(s), would you turn to if you needed help? Why?

Personal History/Family

- What’s been the highlight of your day or week?
- What’s been the low point of your day or week?
- What’s the worst injury you ever sustained?
- When and how have you volunteered to help others? How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever been stung by a bee, wasp, or hornet? Tell me about it.
- Have you ever caught a fish? If so, tell me about it. If not, would you like to? Why or why not?
- What’s the strangest thing you ever ate?
- Do you have family rules? What are they?
- When your family eats a meal together, what do you typically talk about?
- How does your family celebrate birthdays?
- What chores or responsibilities do you have at home?
- Are your grandparents still living? If so, what do you like best about them? If not, what’s your favorite memory of them?
- Do you have brothers or sisters? If so, what do you like most and least about them? If not, what do you imagine would be the best thing about having siblings? the worst thing?
- Do you have extended family? If so, do they live close to you or far away? How often do you see them? What’s the best time you ever spent with them?
- Do you have a pet? If so, describe one of your most memorable experiences with that pet. If not, what kind of pet would you like to have, and why?
- Have you had a pet that’s died? If so, what was the experience like?
- Do you get an allowance? If so, how much, and what are you supposed to use it for?
- If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick? Why?
- What’s something you’ve seen or done you wish you could get out of your mind?
- Have you ever built anything? What was it? How did you feel when you finished?
- Have you ever grown anything? If so, what?
- Describe the scariest experience of your life.

- Have you ever seen a sunrise? What were you doing, and how did it feel?
- When and what have you collected during your life?
- Have you ever received an award for anything? If so, what was it, and how did it feel to get it?
- Describe your favorite toy as a child.
- Describe a time you felt special.
- Have you ever been in a play? What part did you play?
- Have you ever ridden in a boat? What was it like?
- If you've ever flown in an airplane, describe what it was like the first time you took off and landed.
- Have you ever been to a concert? What did you like and dislike about it?
- Have you ever been "cut" from a team? How did you cope with that?
- What's your greatest achievement?

Dreams/Hypotheticals

- Imagine a "best day ever." What kinds of things would you do?
- If you could choose a vacation spot anywhere in the world, where would it be, and why?
- What's your dream job? What might be your dream job 10 years from now?
- If you had to be allergic to something, what would it be?
- What would you do on an unexpected day off from school?
- If money and time were no object, what would you be doing right now?
- What would you do with \$1,000? Why? \$1 million? Why?
- If your house was on fire and you could choose only one thing to save (besides family members), what would it be? Why?
- Have you ever seen a falling star? Did you make a wish? What was it?
- Let's say you were sent to live on a space station for three months and you were allowed to bring only three personal items with you-what would they be?
- If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy? Why?
- If you could be any actor in the world, who would you be, and why?
- If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick? Why?

Values

- What surprises you most about adults?
- What disappoints you most about adults?
- What's the best and worst thing about church?
- What makes you happy? Why?
- What makes you sad? Why?
- Do you recycle? Why or why not?
- Who's your "faith hero"? Explain.
- Would you tell someone the truth even if it hurt that person's feelings? Why or why not?
- Has someone close to you ever died? How did you handle that?
- If you sat down next to Jesus on a bus, what would you talk about?

Active Listening

Margaret Alter, PhD

In my experience teaching communication skills to parents, teachers, seminarians, and other professionals, I have found that we are a talky culture, and that genuine empathic listening is a remarkably difficult skill to learn. Yet it is particularly Christ-like; Jesus demonstrates it frequently in gospel healing stories. In the story of Bartimaeus in Mark 10, for example, he does not assume he knows what Bartimaeus wants of him; he asks and then listens.

Attentive listening — focusing on the other, quietly listening and perhaps saying “Uh-huh” or “I see” — can be very soothing. Just the sense that someone is really trying to hear and understand one’s point of view is grace. For the listener, note that you do not have to agree or disagree. Your role is only to hear the speaker’s point of view. Listening is not about you.

Active (or reflective or participatory) listening deepens this graciousness and tends to be more soothing. Active listening can be done as either paraphrasing or reflecting the feeling you think you are hearing. You as listener use statements, not questions. The statements are tentatively offered.

Listeners should also be aware of what I call “body magic.” We do communicate through our use of space and posture and such. Some factors in “body magic” include: proximity (intimacy is fostered by physical nearness); height (height is equated with power. get to eye level to establish equality); posture (a relaxed, receptive posture is ideal); eye contact (important in euroamerican culture); pace (match the other’s pace or slower); and use of silence.

The intent of active listening is to encourage the person to keep on talking. For example, active listening in a conversation between you and your young friend might go as follows —

14-yr.-old: “I hate my math teacher — Mr. Davis. He is incredibly mean.”

You: (paraphrasing) “You have had it with your math teacher.” (stated tentatively, suggesting that the youth may confirm or deny)

14-yr.-old: “Yes! He is so mean, so mean! (close to tears) He is always embarrassing students who make mistakes in class.”

You: (trying to determine the feeling) “That sounds frightening. You must wonder when Mr. Davis is going to get you.” (or) “You sound worried.”

14-yr.-old: "I wouldn't talk in class, but he calls on you!"

You: (feeling) "Scary."

14-yr.-old: "Today he called on me just as the bell rang. I have to be first tomorrow."

You: (feeling) "Big stressor."

14-yr.-old: "I'm going to know that stuff so well! Mr. Davis really knows math. If you do well in his class, you really know your stuff. Will you quiz me?"

Another example, this time with a peer —

Peer: (grumbling) "Oh, brother! It's Monday again."

You: (paraphrasing) "Monday is not your day." (stated tentatively – or –) "It's hard to begin a new week."

Peer: "Oh, not really. It's just that single parenting is so complicated. Weekends are so busy; I never feel rested."

You: (trying to determine the feeling) "You sound hassled."

Peer: "That is certainly true. I need a 13th month to do all the things that don't fit into 12."

You: (paraphrasing) "Life is too complicated. Too much to do and too little time." (trying for the feeling) "Sounds discouraging."

Peer: "Well, perhaps it is sometimes. It helps to talk about it."

Active listening is a gift to oneself as well as to one's loved one. You do not need to agree or disagree. You do not need to know the answers. You do not need to have any clever advice. Listening does not change any of the facts at all. Your greatest task is to master your sense of powerlessness and stay graciously attuned to the speaker. Our task is tenderly to accompany our friend or loved one as God accompanies us.

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The Baptismal Covenant

- Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?
- People I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
- Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
- People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified,
died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated
at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
- Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
- People I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
- Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the
breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin,
repent and return to the Lord.
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in
Christ?
- People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God's help.

Resources

Building Relationships: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities: A Guide for New Mentors (Hamilton-Fish Inst. on School & Community Violence & the Nat'l. Mentoring Center at NW Regional Ed. Lab., 2007). “A mentor training supplement providing mentors with ten simple tips for effective relationship development.” Free PDF available at http://gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/merlin-cgi/p/downloadFile/d/20698/n/off/other/1/name/building_relationshipspdf.

Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians by Patricia Hendricks (Morehouse, 2006). A collection of ideas, stories, and practical suggestions on how to be a spiritual companion to young people.

The Liturgy Explained by Thomas Howard (Morehouse, 1981). This little booklet is a wonderful primer to the use and meaning of liturgy in the Episcopal tradition. Might make a nice gift or discussion starter, or both! Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership — <http://apps.mentoring.org/training/TMT/index.adp>

Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults by Kristie Probst (Search Institute, 2006). “A mentoring program leader’s complete “start-up kit” that provides mentors, mentees and parents or caregivers everything they need to establish and maintain a successful mentoring relationship.” Available from the Search Institute Web site: <http://www.searchinstitute.org>

Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota — <http://www.mentoringworks.org/>

My Faith, My Life: A Teen’s Guide the Episcopal Church by Jennifer Gamber (Morehouse, 2006). “A guide to the Christian faith and the Episcopal Church, covering everything from scripture, church history, and sacraments, to the meaning of prayer and ministry in the lives of real teens today.” A leader’s guide is available. The Web site is useful in and of itself: <http://www.myfaithmylife.org>.

If you have other resources you think would be helpful to mentors, parents, or the CnC program, or would like to give us feedback on this handbook, please contact us at (510) 339-2200 ext. 318, or by email at info@confirmnotconform.com.