

## **Q. What is Confirmation?**

Originally, only adults were baptized into the Christian faith. When the church was first getting started, it was abundantly clear that this was an underground, highly-suspect, and eventually illegal, movement: Jesus was executed as an enemy of the Roman state, after all! Because being Christian was so risky, baptism was a courageous, life-and-death decision to which only a mature adult could reasonably sign on. It was later, when Christianity became first the *favoured* religion of the Roman empire, and then *the* religion governing the politics and power which would eventually spread across the globe, that the practice of baptism began to open up to include infants or small children.

Whereas the first few centuries of Christianity saw a long process of education and formation for adults prior to taking that dangerous baptismal step (the process is called Catechism), that component was understandably lost when babies were involved. Confirmation began as a rite separate from baptism, an opportunity for those baptized because their parents brought them forward and made those promises on their behalf, to take on the promises of baptism for themselves. This is meant to be a 'grown-up' decision, a sacrament which involves the recognition of will and desire for individuals to mature in the faith, to 'own' their own faith as a chosen part of their adult life.

Practically, however, in many of our denominations, Confirmation began to settle in to becoming a Rite of Passage for young people in the 12-16 year age range. For long-time Anglicans, there is an established expectation for children to participate in Confirmation classes and to be confirmed at somewhere around Grade 7 to 10. The problem with this system is that Confirmation can become just one more part of Christianity that is merely expected and therefore runs the risk of being meaningless, ie. not a choice at all. The great thing with this system is that it does tend to be a good time for young people to receive post-Sunday-school education in the faith and to begin to see themselves as able and capable of making the choice for the life of faith, to feel empowered in the difference that decision makes for them and for their actions in the world around them.

This year, we have had a number of people in a variety of circumstances participating in our Confirmation program. Linda Telega, Sheila Burgess, Ed Swartz and Lindsey Wilton are adults who have been taking classes with Reverend Scott and learning about our Christian faith and our Anglican expression of that faith. Linda, Sheila and Ed were confirmed by our Bishop at our Easter Vigil several weeks ago. Meanwhile, Mari Shantz has been offering classes since January for our young people also seeking confirmation. Andrea, Allan, Brynn, Cameryn and Mark will be confirmed at our cathedral this afternoon at 4pm.

We are grateful for the witness of all of these people over these past months at St. George's, reminding us all, at all ages, that our faith is a continual journey of learning. We pray that, as they have blessed us with this faithful choice and learning, so each of them will be blessed in his/her relationship with God and living out that relationship in service to our world.