

**Discussion Questions For
“Claiming the Vision:
Baptismal Identity in the Episcopal Church”**

Video 4: The History of the Rite of Confirmation

Two Historical Meanings for Confirmation

1. Dr. Stevick identifies two historical meanings that have been attributed to confirmation. One is the post-baptismal laying on of hands by the bishop following baptism. The other is a rite in which one makes a mature affirmation of faith, owning for one’s self the Christian responsibilities articulated in baptism. Why do you believe the 1979 Prayer Book authors did not believe this should be understood as an adolescent rite?
2. Part of the work of the Prayer Book authors was to take elements of baptismal imagery that had been transferred to confirmation and return them to their place within baptism. Look at the seven fold gifts of the Spirit prayer on page 308 in the BCP. How does your own life reflect the lifelong process of growing in these gifts?

The History of Confirmation in the Episcopal Church

1. Dr. Mitchell makes it clear that the realities of life in the colonies did not allow for confirmations in the United States until after Bishop Seabury was ordained bishop in 1753. What does that say to you about our understandings of confirmation in this country? Can you remember a time when we understood confirmation as principally the rite that made one a member of the Episcopal Church?

Confirmation and Rites of Passage

1. The prayer book authors’ original plan had been to encourage development of a distinct rite of reaffirmation of faith that was clearly separate from the rite of Christian Initiation and did not bear the name of confirmation. How has the linking of baptism and confirmation within our prayer book baptismal liturgy confused our understandings of both rites?
2. Margaret Mead’s study group was made up of 16-25 year olds. Why might she have chosen this age group, and what does that say to those who are presently presenting youth for confirmation at the beginning of adolescence?
3. What might congregations do to ritually support the movement of young people from childhood to adolescence to adulthood? How important is it that faith communities help mark these maturation points? If confirmation is not the way to do this, what might be more appropriate?

Confirmation Symbols

1. Why is it important to have a bishop's laying on of hands at some point on one's faith journey? What does that signify?
2. What does it mean to bear the sign of the cross on one's forehead from baptism on and throughout one's whole life?
3. What do you believe it is important to see in one who is preparing to make a mature affirmation of faith? What does maturity in faith look like?

Reaffirming Our Faith

1. Discuss a time in your life when you might have been inspired to publically reaffirm your faith if you had been invited to do so.
2. Are there times when a whole community might benefit from the opportunity to reaffirm their communal faith before the bishop? When might they be?
3. What does making a public reaffirmation of faith do for us as individuals? What does it do for those in the community who witness and support us in this?
4. What has been the most faith affirming experience of your adult life?