

# CHANGING THE WORLD

CONFIRMATION FOR THE MISSIONAL CHURCH



Revised and Updated

**MARK D. HINDS**

# Contents

Introduction and Rationale .....	3
Retreat To-Do List .....	5
Mentor Guide .....	6
Retreat Schedule and Supplies .....	8
Retreat Friday .....	11
Session 1. Who Am I? Why Am I Here?	
Retreat Saturday .....	15
Session 2: I Belong: Laying on of Hands	
Session 3: I Am Gifted for Service: Strengthened in the Holy Spirit	
Session 4. I Am Called to Change the World: Anointed with Oil	
Liturgy .....	30
Sermon Ideas .....	32
Post-Retreat To-Do List .....	34
Post-Retreat Check-Ins .....	35
1. Wisdom	
2. Justice	
3. Hospitality	
4. Compassion	
5. Unity	
6. Humility	
7. Grace	
8. Gratitude	

## Writer

Mark D. Hinds, Ed.D., ([mdhedd94@gmail.com](mailto:mdhedd94@gmail.com)) is a retired writer, editor and publisher for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) curriculum development. He has degrees from Trinity University, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education (now Union Presbyterian Seminary). His 1994 dissertation was titled *The Book of Proverbs: Toward Alternative Pedagogical Principles for Confirmation in the PC(USA)*. He was the primary writer and project leader for the *Big God Big Questions* confirmation curriculum. In retirement, he enjoys writing for the church. Mark lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with his partner and spouse, the Rev. Dr. Peggy C. Hinds.

# Introduction and Rationale

Jesus called the disciples to walk with him, learn from him, emulate him, and meet and minister to strangers, aliens, impoverished or ritually unclean people. The disciples belonged to Jesus by answering his call, following and observing him, and making mistakes along the way. The disciples were Jesus' apprentices in the ways of God.

While Jesus called his followers to missional engagement with the world, learning along the way, the church persists in calling people to membership in an institution, drawing people to itself to perpetuate its own institutional life.

Adolescent confirmation is a relic of the Christendom church, a church concerned for its own power and survival. The post-Christendom church requires a different way, one that empowers and sends disciples into the world.

Even though the church treats them as synonyms, confirmation is different from the profession of faith; they are separate and distinct liturgical events.

The profession of faith (“membership confirmation”) activates full membership.

Confirmation (“missional confirmation”) inspires a missional identity and commissions to a missional vocation.

*Membership confirmation teaches young people that it's okay to leave the church.*

Membership confirmation is confirmation as we have practiced it for years. It centers on preparing young people to make a public profession of faith, thereby activating full membership in the church. It's a residue of Christendom, the church calling people to membership, attracting people to perpetuate its own institutional life. Ironically, most teenagers discontinue active membership after making their profession.

Nothing in heaven or on earth stipulates the preparation of all 12- or 13-year-olds to make a profession of faith *en masse*. A young person's readiness determines when the profession will be offered. How do we know when a teenager is ready to profess faith? Not through a compulsory program that attempts to imprint all of Christendom onto their souls. No, it takes knowing each youth, talking with and listening to them. It takes making a space for them in our lives and the church's life. If you know your young people, really know them, you'll know when they are ready to make their profession of faith.

So, if the profession of faith no longer happens automatically, what do you offer the youth in early adolescence? Parents will still expect the church to gather their children for age-appropriate instruction in the faith. So why not

transform the rite into something that will inspire young people to follow Jesus?

Young people want to be inspired. Missional confirmation inspires teenagers to change the world, in big and small ways, in service to Jesus Christ. Membership confirmation fails to inspire young people to do great things, which may be why many leave active membership during adolescence.

Missional confirmation is confirmation as the ancient church practiced it: preparing young people for the laying on of hands, for the prayer for strengthening the Spirit's gifts, and for anointing into the priesthood of all believers. It's not about joining the church; it's about joining the missional project initiated by Jesus and entrusted to the church.

Missional confirmation strengthens confirmands:

*Latin confirmatio means "to encourage, strengthen."*

- in their identities as God's image-bearing stewards of the goodness and beauty of creation.
- in the Spirit's gifts of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord, and joy in God's presence.
- In their vocations as members of the priesthood of all believers, commissioned for missional engagement in the world.

Missional confirmation can be a seedbed for developing a new generation of disciples committed to the way of Christ. Adolescence is the perfect time to challenge teenage church members to a compelling vision of compassion and generosity, a time to take healthy risks in reflective conversations with trusted adults.

*Stop confirming teens to the church's membership!*

*Start confirming them to the church's mission!*