

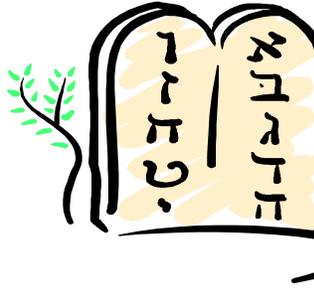
Confirmation Class Handbook

Temple Ahavat Shalom
Palm Harbor, Florida

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Rabbi

WHAT IS CONFIRMATION?

Confirmation is a ceremony created by our Reform movement to provide Jewish teens an opportunity to affirm their commitment to live their adult lives guided by the teachings of Judaism and proudly identified with the Jewish people.



WHAT DOES PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION ENTAIL?

Students meet with each other and a teacher once a week during the academic year while in the 8th and 9th grades. At our congregation, we strongly encourage this additional post Bar/Bat Mitzvah study and activity. This emphasis is based upon our awareness that while observing Jewish customs, celebrating Jewish holidays and interacting with Jewish peers and Jews of other ages certainly helps enhance a child's self-esteem, most young children are not able to fully grasp the significance of Judaism as a powerful force for good in their lives and in the world. By the time most children reach the 8th grade however, they are usually ready to engage in the critical thought that enables them to achieve this understanding. Therefore, the two years spent preparing for Confirmation are two of the most important years of a young Jewish person's education.

Confirmation Curriculum and Instruction

The Confirmands learn from their teachers and their classmates. Classes are taught utilizing innovative approaches to issues which involve critical thinking and personal decision-making.

The studies result in each Confirmand gaining an understanding of the beliefs and the conduct that is acceptable within the framework of living a Jewish life. Four areas of concentration are: Jewish dogma, Jewish values, Jewish views of God, and Jewish responses to the important events in life. At times, there are discussions which define the differences and similarities of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism. Comparisons and contrasts between Judaism and other religions are at times explained. However, the elevation of liberal Jewish ideas and ideals never involves the denigration of other belief systems.

Our 8th grade pre-Confirmation and 9th Grade Confirmation class is on Monday from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. Rabbi Klein is the teacher of our 9th grade Confirmation class. As we begin to prepare for the Confirmation ceremony, Cantor Jacobson and Barbara Smith join him. Cantor Jacobson teaches the students the cantillation of the Torah portion that is customarily associated with Confirmation as well as reviewing prayers or songs they are chanting or singing. That Torah portion, by the way, is the Ten Commandments from the Torah's Book of Exodus. Barbara rehearses the ceremony several times with the students.

The Retreat

A springtime highlight of the Confirmation experience is the retreat. All Confirmation candidates are required to participate in this fun filled weekend of learning, socialization and religious observance. Several hours of travel will bring the Confirmation class and chaperones to the east coast of Florida where many different types of activities will take place. Expressions by past Confirmands have led us to understand that this weekend can have a profound effect upon our Confirmands.

Confirmation Ceremony

All of the study, discussion and reflection reaches a climax with the Confirmation ceremony. Each student writes a part of the service which he or she reads. Parents are also invited to participate in the service.

The parents of the Confirmation class plan and host the reception that follows the ceremony. This provides an opportunity for family involvement which also reflects an important Jewish value.

Standards

The Confirmation course of study offers our young people an opportunity to be challenged by Judaism and to begin to articulate their own faith and Jewish identity. Confirmation represents an achievement which, like other important aspects of a young person's development, should reflect commitment and challenging work. The students are encouraged to continue this Jewish examination by going on to our monthly Senior Study program taught by Rabbi Klein and Anne-Marie Cumming for 10th 11th and 12th graders. In keeping with our approach to the Jewish development of our teens, the following standards for Confirmation have been developed:

1. A student should miss no more than six class sessions during the year.
2. Attend all rehearsals of the Confirmation service.
3. Have at least freshman status in high school (9th grade)
4. Participate in the Confirmation Retreat.
5. Attend a religious school for at least four consecutive years immediately preceding their Confirmation year.
6. Be given a special project or assignment to complete if they cannot fulfill the requirements or attend the Retreat.

Costs

At Temple Ahavat Shalom, each family is required to pay the Confirmation tuition fee at the time of registration. If you wish to make other payment arrangements, or if you are experiencing financial hardship and need to arrange a fee reduction, please do so immediately by contacting the Temple treasurer. The Confirmation tuition fee covers only the expenses for class work and the retreat. The Temple spends a great deal of money on the retreat. Retreat expenses include:

Hotel
Rental of vans and fuel
Food – five meals
Donations – Mikvah, Holocaust Museum visit and workshop with
another Reform Congregation.
Snacks
Social Activities

There are a number of additional expenses that are not included in the Confirmation tuition fee. These include:

- Food and drinks for the reception
- Flowers for the ceremony
- Photography – composites and individual
- Invitations – mailing and postage
- Confirmation teachers and students, personal gifts
- Decorations and centerpieces
- Printing the Confirmation service
- Paper goods
- Pianist
- Bagel sale supplies
- Robes
- Custodial help
- Small gift for Retreat chaperones

Confirmation Fundraiser

A fundraiser (often a bagel, pizza, car wash or other sale) is organized each year along with any other fundraiser which may be chosen by the Confirmation parents and the students. The proceeds from this event are used to purchase personal gifts for the Confirmation teachers and the Temple's gift. The parents are responsible to help organize and facilitate the project.

Date of Confirmation

The date for the Confirmation Ceremony is set by Rabbi Klein. Since the themes of Confirmation and the festival of Shavuot are very similar, Confirmation is usually celebrated as close as possible to Shavuot.

Chairpersons

Two (or more) chairpersons should be selected at the first parent Confirmation meeting to oversee the committees. It is recommended that at least two persons volunteer for each committee. The treasurer collects funds and receipts from the parents and turns them over to the Temple bookkeeper. The secretary records Confirmation meeting minutes and submits them to the Religious School office for mailing. Since the congregation seldom has extra cash available to lay out for advance payments, it is recommended that when you begin to plan for Confirmation each family contribute a set amount of money to help with contract deposits and special materials. This payment should be put into the Confirmation account, given to the Temple bookkeeper for the disbursing of checks to cover prepaid payments and deposits.

Reception Suggestions

It is recommended that each family be assessed a designated amount (refer to last year's budget) to cover the expenses for the Confirmation Reception and Ceremony (Confirmation tuition does not cover the cost of the reception). The budget for the Confirmation reception should allow for approximately 200 or more people depending on the size of the Confirmation class. Set the menu with maximum cost. If a family expresses the desire to do more they may underwrite the reception or a portion of it. (Allow at least ten persons per family for food and seating.)

A catered dairy meal in celebration of Shavuot is appropriate. This is because Shavuot celebrates God giving our ancestors the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The Torah expresses the hope that it's words will always be as sweet to us as milk and honey. Therefore, we eat dairy during Shavuot. However, the Confirmation parents may choose to select another menu as long as their selection embraces Temple Ahavat Shalom's Reform dietary requirements.

Three Confirmation parent meetings should be sufficient for planning this simcha (joyous milestone). Parents might also consider:

1. Organizing a Confirmation parent get-together to get acquainted.
2. Requiring attendance at all Confirmation meetings to assure that decisions are made in harmony.
3. Each family's financial resources when planning the celebration.
4. Developing additional means to help us recognize the personal and religious significance of Confirmation.
5. Submitting phone numbers and emails to committee chairperson to ensure that proper communication received.
6. Selection of parent volunteers for ceremony and retreat is necessary for a memorable experience.

If you have any questions, please contact the religious school office at 727-785-8811 ext. 4 or email: rssecretary@ahavatshalom.org

***Mazel Tov! We look forward
to celebrating this memorable tradition
with you and your family.***

NOTES: