

Wave One: Comments, Insights, Questions

Becky

- We need to make prayer important. Pray as a staff. Pray for knowing what your people need.
- We had a listening session with families with children age 9 and up. Started with a 20 minute Holy Hour first, then broke up into small groups, then came back together. Everything said went into a Google document that will be shared.
- We need to guide families to talk to their kids on the eagerness of preparing for the sacrament and not just doing it because their friends are.
- Formation calendars have to go out early – the same time as school and extra-curricular activities go out.
- A criteria for readiness for the sacraments needs to go out on social media and communicate by all means necessary. Clear communication

Regina

- You have to know who you are as a leader. Know your gifts. You need to know the gifts of your catechists and volunteers also.
- Use the wisdom and creativity of the Holy Spirit.
- Families are tired, don't burn them out.
- We gave a by-year for families with Faith Formation who were preparing for sacraments. We felt what was being offered for sacrament preparation was good.
- We received a lot of pushback on how Confirmation has always been "your decision" for teens and how nine year olds are not old enough to make that decision. We used resources from Rena and Stacey, articles, videos, etc. to answer this question.

Barbara

- We are having a discernment night for helping with next year.
- We need to keep in mind the mission of the Church, and that is parents.

Rachel

- We need to be intentional about our ministry and about what we are trying to accomplish – need to avoid fatigue.
- Hearing from other people and what they are doing is going to be helpful.
- How do we minister to families without fatiguing them? This question needs to be asked.
- Question** – When forming for the sacrament of Confirmation, do they need to be attending Faith Formation as well? **Regina responded with her comment on giving a by-year.**

-I like the language of scripture (about taking old wine and putting it into new wine skins). We need to pray to the Holy Spirit to come and speak for us and help us know what to say. We need to pray and hope that these experiences will change them.

-Next year we are going to combine grades 8, 9 and 10. We are going to have four “named houses” for pairing other families. Ex: If family has a 9th grader with a 9 year old and a 6 year old sibling, they would be put in the house that pairs this type of family.

Kelly

-We plan to meet with parents that are interested. We will listen to them and get their input.

Karen

-We are doing two semesters. The first semester, we will have a group preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation and another group attending Faith Formation. The second semester, the Faith Formation group will prepare for the sacrament and the sacrament preparation group will attend Faith Formation.

Jennifer

-Question – What are you hearing regarding the age of 9 and being too young to prepare for Confirmation? She is hearing from others that they are too young to do this. Also, what is being done after the 4th grade, when they leave?

Regina responded on her comment of receiving pushback on teens and always being “your decision.” Rachel’s response on praying to the Holy Spirit was a response to this as well.

Stephanie

-We held a listening session, took the feedback, and then sent a letter back to them addressing the concerns and questions.

-We are hearing from parents that they can’t do this, they are not equipped. We are letting them know that we will walk alongside of you and accompany you.

Kenn

-In the chat, He will share the link of the video of the speaker they had. The talk was very helpful for his parish’s parents. Confirmation is the most misunderstood sacrament.

Monica

-Our parish is in Wave 3, but I am attending this breakout session as a note taker. We are thinking of having a group of pilot families next year, with a 9 year old, begin this process and

work with us to help develop a process. We do Confirmation in the 10th grade. We will take the step of combining 9th and 10th grade next year.

Notes from Wave 2 breakout session.

Moderator: Marissa Paoletti

Note Taker: Clare Kinsey

What counties are represented? Frederick, Harford, and Anne Arundel counties mostly.

Not all Wave 2 parishes are waiting to begin "closing the cap". Some are already beginning to roll out information about a change in their program beginning in spring 2026. This is due to a variety of reasons, but mainly for parishes who are too big to wait the additional year (i.e. would have too many families involved in the program at one time).

Idea is to run 4th and 5th grade program in the fall and 6th and older program in the spring with one Confirmation Mass for all ages.

How are we approaching running an English/Spanish program? The two communities can often have very different approaches to their faith. How do parishes with a large African community play into this conversation? We need to consider all languages, cultures, and what parents may or may not be familiar with. Asking parents: How did *you* learn? Let the answers influence the building of the new program.

We need to consider how to effectively minister to families who have children who are more comfortable speaking English but their parents only speak another language. How do we best communicate this change to those families?

Hispanic families often have different (busier) work schedules. How do we focus on family involvement in Confirmation if the parents are working? Only require one parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, etc. to attend. Provide tools for parents to use at home!

How do we blend cultures and faith traditions?

Does anyone have ideas about how they want to close the gap? Some larger parishes will likely need more than three years to fully transition because it isn't possible to have hundreds of people (children, parents, sponsors, etc.) at each session. Running dual

programming for multiple years to help with this. This is an issue especially in parishes that have both an English speaking community and a Spanish speaking community (both of which are large).

What curriculum do you plan to use? Pulling different pieces from various programs and "piecing together" something unique based on the community.

Don't change who's running Confirmation just because the age is lowering (i.e taking the responsibility away from the youth minister and putting it on the DRE). We need to stop being so separated in our jobs based solely on age.

If we're aiming for spiritual growth, is a shortened timeframe really what we want? How have other parishes handled doing a program that's less than six months at the current age guideline? How does faith formation play into this?

Signs of Grace by Augustine Institute might be a good resource to use. Likely appropriate for grades 4-6.

Wave 1 and Wave 2 will likely have the most trouble with finding resources. By the time parishes in Wave 3 are looking for resources, publishers will probably have caught up.

How do we handle families who say they want their child to receive all of their sacraments at the same time? Do we allow them to delay First Reconciliation and First Eucharist?

How do we handle siblings? Can an older child be "delayed"? Yes, ultimately. Whether they can go through the same program depends on what each parish has built. Parents always have the option to determine what is best for their children and family.

What readiness are we looking for in terms of Confirmation? Will there be a "Criteria of Readiness" provided? Readiness has always been subjective.

Wave 3 Breakout - Moderated by Laura Weatherington

What are your hopes?

- Changes in high school youth ministry. Not have it connected to Confirmation. The teens willingly attend.
- The “wonder” that children experience will renew passion in families’ faith and re-energize the Church.
- Energize parents’ faith in the process.
- Make missionary disciples
- To eliminate the idea that the confirmed are “adults in the Church”.
- Parents are an integral part of their child’s faith formation
- Sending children into middle school with the Holy Spirit strengthened to protect them from the challenges that come with middle school.

How will we implement this change? (discussion on ways to begin)

- Run dual programs to catch everyone up?
- Have 6 sessions in the Fall and 6 sessions in the Spring
- Reach out to parents to help with catechesis. Work with parents to prepare them for the role.
- Do we continue with things as they are or begin the new plan?
- We need to discern our method of execution
- We should engage the parents during our discernment
- Where do the Sponsors fit in this change? We need to engage them in the process.
- Spend two years discerning a plan; survey families.
- Work with other parishes in the same Wave.

Concerns

- Implementation will be a challenge. Staffing, space.
- Defining Confirmation. How can the AoB help us explain what Confirmation is? It is not about becoming an “adult” in the Church. It is hard to get people away from that definition.
- Sense of readiness. Will we be able to offer options? Yes, confirmation will be at 9yo but families like options not every family/child is ready.
- Families’ commitment. 6-8 sessions is a lot for families who may have younger children preparing for 1st Communion.
- Parishes with schools have large number of children to prepare.
- What will retain them after receiving the sacrament?
- We aren’t having an honest conversation about the parents’ formation. It seems that we are using the children to address that issue.
- Staffing issues. Different skill sets are needed for elementary school kids versus middle school/high school.

- Plans for faith formation have been paused to deal with this change.
- Why choose the sacrament of Confirmation to try to improve family formation? Why not Baptism?
- The families who don't attend Mass will continue not attending Mass.