

Welcome to Confirmation Class!

Confirmation class at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church is typically a two-year journey. One year, we discuss the Book of Common Prayer and the history of the Church. The other year, we discuss the Bible. This is our “Bible Year.”

We are issuing you each a Student Bible, edited by Phillip Yancey and Tim Stafford. This version of the Bible includes notes, discussions of interesting points, and questions for you to think about. We think it’s a version you will find very useful.

Our Class

Your teachers this year are John Graham and Richard Gordon. Our goal is to get you thinking about your relationship with God, your relationships with other people, and your relationship with the church. We expect you to treat each other with respect and courtesy at all times—we’ll have fun, too, we promise!

Later this month, we will distribute a schedule of our class meetings and topics—as far we know them—and our class web address so you can download handouts and assignments for classes that you miss. (Speaking of which, you have homework due next time! [9/21]) Also, next week, we want to meet with all your parents at 7:00 p.m.—while you join John and Sarah Mester for St. Barnabas Youth Group. A letter to your parents will be mailed this week; but we attach a copy to this handout, too.

Warn your coaches, scout leaders and others clamoring for your time that you have a regular commitment to Confirmation Class 10:15 – 11:15 a.m. on Sundays! We think we will have Confirmation Class at 10:15 a.m. on the following Sundays:

- 2008: Sep 14, 21, 28; Oct 12, 19, 26; Nov 9, 16, 23, 30; Dec 14, 21.
- 2009: Jan 11, 18, 25; Feb 8, 15, 22; Mar 8, 15, 22, Apr 19, 26; May 10, 17, 31.

In addition you need to save these dates for special activities:

- March 27, 28, & 29, 2009: Confirmation Class Retreat (Rehoboth)
- April 5, 2009: Confirmation Class Reads Passion Gospel @ 9:00 a.m. Service
- June 7, 2009: Possible Rehearsal for Confirmation
- **June 14, 2009: Confirmation by Bishop Wright at 10:00 a.m. service.**

We’ll talk with you next week about “The Three C’s” that are an important part of Confirmation Class. In summary, they are as follows:

- **Content:** This year the “content” of the class is the Bible!
- **Community:** Our class is one of your communities; so is your family; so is your school; and so is your neighborhood, city, state, nation.
- **Commitment:** We expect you and your families to be committed to your participation in this class. We know that you’ll have to miss some classes; however, Confirmation is a process in which you declare your commitment to honor your baptismal vows—and, therefore, we do expect you to be committed to participate in our class.

The last two years, Confirmation Class has contributed Macaroni and Cheese Casserole to the Ronald McDonald House each month. This year, we’re going to ask you—and John and

Sarah Mester are going to ask you—what service project you would like to do. We'll talk about this with your parents on the 21st—and with you some more on the 28th.

This Year's Topic: The Bible

The Bible is an enormous "topic." We cannot hit every chapter and verse over the course of just one year. We will have to select issues and topics—and we hope that by so doing we will inspire you to explore more on your own!

As you mature, you will each draw your own conclusions about the Bible and its significance in your life and in our culture. Think about the antiquity of the Bible! Think of the languages it was written in (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). Think about how its stories still call out to us—even if our time is different from the times in which the different parts of the Bible were written.

The editors of the *Oxford Bible Commentary* have this to say about the nature of the Bible:

The Bible is a vast treasury of prose and poetry, of history and folklore, of spirituality and ethics; it has inspired great art and architecture, literature and music down through the centuries. It invites the reader into its own ancient and mysterious world, and yet at the same time can often surprise us by its contemporary relevance. It deserves and repays all the efforts of critical and attentive reading.

(*Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 5.)

In short, the Bible is a lot more than just The Book of Rules! Just as scientific inquiry can teach us about How God's Universe works, so studying the Bible can teach us about faith, ethics, our relationship with God, our relationship with other people—and so many other things!

How is the Bible structured?

There are many ways of dividing the Bible into parts.

One way is to just call it the Old Testament and the New Testament. What's the difference between them?

Another way says that Part I consists of the first 11 chapters of Genesis; Part II begins with the story of Abram/Abraham, focuses on the story of God's relationship with His people, and includes the rest of the Old Testament and most of the New Testament; and Part III consists of the Book of Revelations.

Pages xiv-xvii of the Yancey and Stafford Student Bible list a more detailed overview of the Bible.

Your Homework! (Due 9/21) Name: _____

1) What, in general, is the Bible about? If you had to tell someone that there's one lesson in the Bible that is the most important lesson, what would you pick?

Here are some readings that might help you answer that question:

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (703)

Micah 6:8 (963)

Matthew 7:12 (1013) 22:34-40 (1034)

Mark 12:28-31 (1069)

Luke 6:31 (1090)

2) How does the Bible talk to us? Besides listing rules for living a Good Life or going over the history of the Jewish people, the life of Jesus, and that of the early church, how does the Bible talk to us? What are some of the ways the Bible's authors used language to appeal to us—even though the "youngest" parts of the Bible are over 1,900 years old?

Here is a sample of some different kinds of language used in the Bible.

Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 (3)

Job 28:1-19 (557)

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (695-696)

Proverbs 26:11 (686), 26:17-19 (687)

Psalms 69: 1-5 (611)

Luke 18:9-14 (1108)

Matthew 23:23-28 (1035)

How to read a Bible reference in John and Richard's hand-outs:

Job 28:1-19 (557) Book of Job, Chapter 28, verses 1-19, found on page 557 in the Yancey & Stafford Student Bible