

May 24, 2026  
The Day of Pentecost, Year A  
Confirmation Sunday  
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Norwood, MA  
Pastor Amanda L. Warner

### Unique

On the first day of Confirmation class, which is a Confirmation orientation for the students and their parents, we start the same way we start almost every Confirmation activity at Emmanuel, with prayer requests. I ask the group what they want us to pray for, and then we pray together. I think it makes sense for us to start the way that we're going to continue. It also helps the first-year students get the idea, that while there might be some things about their Confirmation experience that feel a little bit like school, it's not school, it's about being a faith community that prays for the world and prays for and with each other.

After prayer requests and prayers, we do one of two "getting to know you" activities. We do them every other year so that no one kid does the same activity twice.

Some years we play the "Getting to Know You" M&M Game. In this game the Confirmation students and parents are given ten M&Ms each. In addition to being a getting to know you activity this is also an exercise in self-control, since they're all given a small cup of M&Ms and then they're told, "Don't eat them!" They are also given a piece of paper that tells them what they are supposed to tell the group with each color of M&M. For example, if they have a green M&M they're supposed to tell us about a place they've traveled, if they have a blue M&M they're supposed to tell us about something they like to do for fun, if they have a red M&M they're supposed to tell us a high or a low from the previous week and so on. Each color M&M has a prompt, something they're supposed to share. Once they share for that color, they get to eat the M&M, since I'm not a monster.

Every other year we play “Getting to Know You Bingo”. Once again, there are M&Ms, but this time the M&Ms are used as the markers for the spaces on the Bingo cards. I read different statements that are pulled at random out of a bowl and if the statement is true about them and they have it on their Bingo card, they mark it with an M&M. Here are some examples of the kinds of statements I read:

You currently or have ever sung in a choir or chorus

You play a musical instrument

You have been in a wedding

You have studied French in school

You have been to Walt Disney World

I have whole Bingo cards of statements and you get Bingo the usual way—a line, across or up and down or diagonal. Sometimes we do four corners as well. If you get Bingo, you get to tell us the things about you that are true that are on the line where you got Bingo. When you get Bingo, as you tell us about how you got Bingo, you get to eat your M&M place holders as you tell us the things about you that are true.

The point of these games is so that we get to know each other better, find out interesting facts about each other, and also, possibly, find out things about each other that we have in common, places we’ve been, things we like to do, shared school and life experiences. These activities help build community and give us an excuse to eat M&Ms right out of the gate, which tends to reassure the kids that there will be some good snacks at Confirmation class.

After we do those “getting to know you” activities, we go over the schedule for Confirmation, so that everyone knows, at the very beginning of the year, what to expect out of the Confirmation experience, and can put things on their calendars.

The final thing we do is play a learning styles game of “Would You Rather?” “Would You Rather?” is a game people play in which they’re given a deep or thought-provoking choice and they have to move to one side of the room or the other based on their choice. Here’s an example of a traditional “Would You Rather?” question for teens:

Would you rather have the ability to fly or be invisible?

Would you rather time travel to the past or to the future?

Would you rather have a rewind button for your life or a pause button?

They’re really interesting and thought-provoking questions for people of any age.

My version of “Would You Rather?” for Confirmation Orientation is more focused on learning styles than thought provoking questions. As you probably know, there are lots of different ways people learn. Some are visual learners—they like to be shown a map, a chart, a graph, or a video. Some are auditory learners, some learn better in a group, some like to work alone, some like to learn by doing, some learn best by reading, some learn best by being active, doing something that gets them up and moving. So, I ask kids questions like this:

Would you rather have a group discussion or work on a crossword puzzle on your own?

Would you rather tell someone about yourself or write something about yourself?

Would you rather work on an art project about a topic or play a game based on the topic?

And then I have someone note their answers, how each kid in the group responds.

I've only been doing this part of the Confirmation orientation for a few years and when I started doing it, I thought it might help me tweak my Confirmation curriculum, based learning styles of the kids in the group. For example, if I have a group in which all of the kids like to do skits, rather than play games or vice versa, I might focus the curriculum toward drama rather than games or on games rather than drama. That's how I thought it might work, but it hasn't actually given me that kind of information.

Instead, this activity has mostly shown me how different the kids in the room are. Because it's pretty rare for the kids all to answer the learning styles questions the same way. This year, only five questions out of twelve had agreement between all of the Confirmation students.

They all preferred to read a book rather than listen to an audiobook.

They all preferred to have a group discussion instead of working on a crossword puzzle alone.

They all would rather watch a video on a topic than create a presentation on a topic.

They all would rather tell someone about themselves than write something about themselves.

This last one will probably come as no surprise to anyone who spends any time with teenagers. They all preferred to text instead of talking on the phone.

But having five things in common meant that they also had seven things that were different about them, seven different preferences about how to learn. So, it didn't really help me in terms of how I approached the curriculum. It was better than a few years ago, when I had only two students in the Confirmation class and

they answered all 12 questions differently. What I learned that year, was that, it was going to be an interesting and challenging year.

But still, this year's results weren't much better. What did I learn from this exercise? I learned that I had very different kinds of people, very different kinds of learners, in the classroom. The other "getting to know you" activities that we did taught us that we had some similar life experiences, but the "Would You Rather?" activities taught us that the kids were very different people. Unique.

Which brings me to Pentecost. Perhaps you came here, knowing that today was Confirmation Sunday. Which it is. But it's also Pentecost, the day when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to the church, the fulfillment of Jesus' pre-crucifixion promises in the gospel of John and pre-ascension promises in the gospel of Luke.

In the gospel of Luke, just before his ascension, Jesus says this: "And see, I am sending upon you what my father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)

Today we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, the power from on high who anointed the apostles with the ability to share the message of Jesus in languages all the people who were gathered could understand.

In the gospel of John when Jesus was eating his final meal with his disciples, after he had washed their feet, when he was giving them his final commandment, his final instructions, his final teachings and words of encouragement, before he suffered and died, he said this, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you." (John 14:16-17)

Today we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, who the resurrected Jesus breathed on his disciples, giving them, with the blessing of the Spirit, the gift of peace, the gift of forgiveness, a gift to receive and to give.

And today we celebrate the Holy Spirit, who gives us the gift of faith, who blesses each one of us and the Confirmands today with the ability to say, to believe, to cling to the truth, that “Jesus is Lord.” (1 Corinthians 12:3b)

We all have the gift of faith from the Spirit, even when that faith is filled with questions, filled with wonder, filled with mystery. And we all have other gifts as well, gifts given to us to build up the body of Christ.

That’s what I see when I play the “Would You Rather” game with the Confirmation class. It doesn’t get me much of anywhere in terms of curriculum development, but it helps me see the truth of our reading from 1 Corinthians for today.

Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

Over the past two years, I have gotten to see the gifts that Genevieve and Maddie have been given. I have gotten to see their different personalities and learning styles, interests and energies. I have gotten to see the way that the Holy Spirit is made manifest in their lives. Because their uniqueness, their styles, the ways they learn, their personalities, their interests, their activities, the things they’re good at are all ways that they have experienced the Spirit in their lives.

Just like for each one of us, the things that make us different from each other, the things that make us special are ways that the Holy Spirit is made known in our lives. And the Holy Spirit, moving in our lives is a gift and brings gifts, so that the church can be built up, so that the message of Jesus can be shared within these walls and outside of them. So that together, we can learn to follow the way of Jesus. So that we who are many, we who come from different life experiences, we who bring

different gifts and talents and skills to the table, can be one body, one community, called together by the one Spirit.

Today we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, in Genevieve's life, in Maddie's life, and in all of our lives. Today we celebrate, that through the power of the Holy Spirit we who are many, are one body in Christ. Thanks be to God. Amen.