

CONFIRMING FAITH

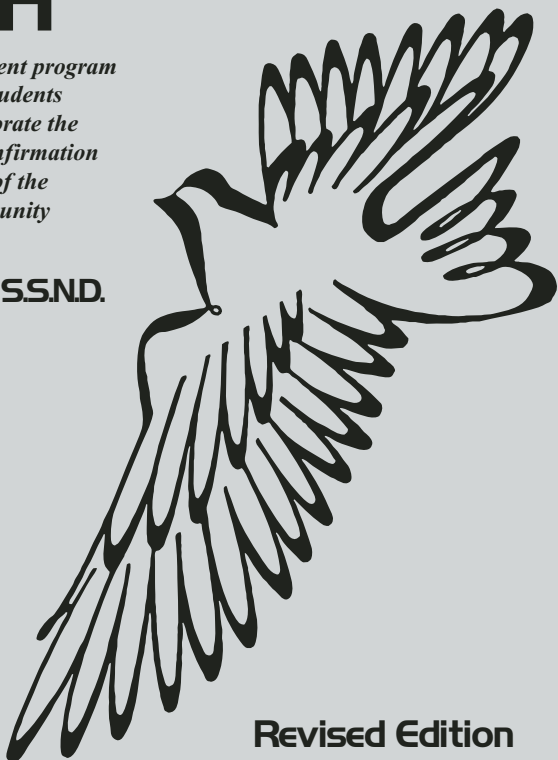


Mentor Manual

CONFIRMING FAITH

*A faith development program
for high school students
preparing to celebrate the
Sacrament of Confirmation
with the support of the
entire faith community*

**KIERAN
SAWYER, S.S.N.D.**



Revised Edition

NOTE:

The material in this *Mentor Handbook* may be used interchangeably with the *Confirming Faith* confirmation program and the *Developing Faith* mini-course series, each by Sr. Kieran Sawyer.

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Introduction

The purpose of this little book is to acquaint you with the ministry of *mentoring* and to show you how you can participate in this important ministry to and with young Christians.

The mentoring concept is at once very old and very new, in some ways familiar, in others untried. The term “mentor” originates in Greek mythology: Mentor was the loyal friend and adviser of Odysseus and the teacher of his son, Telemachus. Thus the word has come to mean a wise and loyal adviser and teacher.

When you were a teenager, you may have known several adults who played the role of mentor in your life:

- Your mentor might have been a classroom teacher who was influential in your teen years, one who took special interests in you and seemed to understand you better than most other adults. With his or her support and help, you were encouraged to build on your interests and develop your talents.
- Your mentor may have been an athletic coach, drama teacher, or band leader. This special person may have taught you the lessons of self-discipline and perseverance, instilled in you an appreciation of teamwork, and helped you experience the spirit of camaraderie that comes with working for a common goal.

- Your mentor may have been an older relative, other than your parents, who lent an ear to the difficulties and joys of the teen years. You may have had an aunt, uncle, grandparent, or older cousin whom you sought out for advice and whom you could count on as a wise but non-judgmental friend.

If you become a mentor in this adolescent faith development program, you will function informally in any or all of the roles mentioned above. Like the beloved teacher, you may be asked to review and discuss the lessons of faith your teen partner learns in his or her large group sessions. Like the coach who prods the team to work together, you will be asked to explore with your teen activities that serve the larger community. And like the beloved relative you sought out as a teen, you will certainly be called on to be a good listener and trusted friend, one who offers advice without passing judgment.

The role of mentor is a central component of the faith development program for adolescents that is outlined in the *Confirming Faith* confirmation program and *Developing Faith* mini-course series. The vision of this comprehensive program is that each young person have a personal mentor—an adviser, friend, and spiritual companion who will accompany the teenager on the journey of faith.

Reflection Questions

1. Who was a classroom teacher influential to you in your teen years?
2. Who was an athletic coach, drama teacher, band leader, scout master, or other who encouraged you to perfect an individual talent?
3. Who was an older relative or other adult you could count on for advice and to be a wise but nonjudgmental friend when you were a teen?
4. Who are teens you have mentored for in each of the roles described above?

Christian Roots of Spiritual Mentoring

It is important to understand the connection as well as the distinction between the role of the mentor in this program and the official role of the sacramental sponsor.

In the early days of Christianity, when most of those who joined the church were adults, each initiate was brought into the church under the guidance and care of an individual sponsor. The sponsor would be a “faithful” member of the Christian community who would accompany the initiate during the many months of the catechumenate, demonstrating on a day-to-day basis how to live, pray, and minister as a Christian.

When the preparation period was completed, the sponsors presented the initiates to the community, vouched for their readiness to receive the sacraments,

and stood with them as they celebrated their baptism, confirmation, and first eucharist. Their sponsoring task was not finished with the initiation rituals, however; the sponsors continued to companion the new Christians after the ceremony, helping them to become more fully integrated into the life, prayer, and ministry of the church.

Over the centuries the role of the sponsor came to be mostly symbolic. The relative or family friend who was chosen to be sponsor or godparent for a child had little to do with the actual faith life of the one sponsored other than being present at the sacramental celebration.

Since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, there has been a revival of the role of the sponsor in the initiation of new Christians. This is especially evident in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and in the confirmation of those who were baptized as infants. The revised initiation rites pre-suppose that the person being initiated will be accompanied on the faith journey by a true sponsor.

The mentoring role, as it is used in this program, is an effort to return to the original notion of sponsorship. Ideally, the teen in this program will select an adult for this role, perhaps his or her baptismal sponsor. When this is not possible, another person, preferably a member of the parish community, will be chosen in consultation with the program coordinator.

In a confirmation preparation program, if the baptismal sponsor is able to be present only for the confir-

mation ceremony, both sponsor and mentor will accompany the candidate and present him or her to the bishop.

Program Context

The teens in a faith development program are generally enrolled in an eight-week mini-course. The older teens may also be candidates in a confirmation preparation program. Your relationship with a teen will begin in conjunction with the courses they are taking. You meet regularly with your teen while he or she is in the course. The program coordinator will provide you with the titles and schedules of the sessions your teen is attending.

The mini-courses and confirmation preparation are part of a comprehensive faith development program for high-school aged students that also includes retreats, social events, workshops, and service projects. Make sure to check with the program coordinator to find out how you might continue in the role of mentor (either with the same teen or another) after this particular course concludes.

Who Are the Teens?

As you are certainly aware, the mentoring of an adolescent is no easy task. Adolescence is by definition a time of transition, a time filled with much excitement

and wonder, but also with many problems and stumbling blocks. Most adolescents are also in the midst of a faith transition, moving out of the passive, receptive faith of childhood into the active, personally committed faith of adulthood.

Developmentalists often distinguish between early adolescence (ages 13 to 15) and later adolescence (ages 16 to 18). *Early adolescence* is a time of peer-orientation and self-doubt. It is also the beginning of independent thinking and introspection. Though at times teens at this age may seem unresponsive to adult direction and uninterested in exploring topics of faith, they are likely to be in the process of developing an entirely new spiritual outlook. They are forming, and sometimes asking, some of life's deeper questions.

Remember, also, that they are good observers. They will be very aware of your demeanor, actions, availability, personal prayer life, and relationships with others. Especially for teens of this age, actions do speak louder than words.

Later adolescence is marked by questioning and searching—in faith as in all other aspects of life. Teens at this age need to articulate their questions and doubts as well as their convictions and commitments. They are eager to have their say, especially in issues that affect their own lives, for example, dating, drugs, sexuality, and morality. Discussions with older teens may be very lively. In this case it is important for the adult to listen

well and to contribute sound personal and Christian values and teachings when appropriate.

Older adolescents are also very willing to serve others. Projects and service events designed to help those in need work well with teens of this age.

Working with both early and later adolescents in the area of faith development can be challenging and difficult. However, it can also be most rewarding. Adults who become involved in the mentoring ministry find that their own faith life is enhanced by the experience. And all adolescents benefit from adult mentors who respect their current beliefs and practices and at the same time model the Christian story in all areas of life: in family life and social relationships, at the work place, and in private and community prayer.

Qualifications and Requirements for a Mentor

The qualifications for a mentor are similar to those for a traditional sacramental sponsor. The mentor

- should be a mature person of faith, a Catholic in good standing, and, preferably, a member of the local faith community;
- should reflect Catholic Christian values in word, worship, and service;
- may be either male or female;
- may be (and ideally would be) the baptismal sponsor, but may not be the parent of the teen

participant. (However, a parent may be the mentor for another teen in the program.)

In addition to the above, there are certain requirements for the person who accepts the role of mentor.

A mentor is expected to

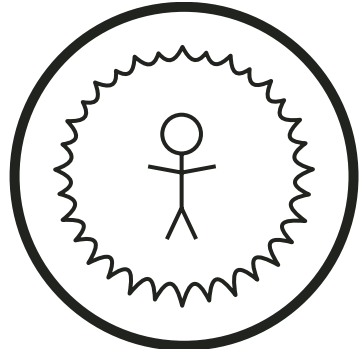
- be orientated to the program through a formal or informal meeting;
- be interviewed by the program leaders and accepted by them as a mentor in the program;
- be formally introduced to the young person and to his or her parents;
- meet with the teen on a regular basis, as specified by the program coordinator and to complete the activities outlined on the teen-mentor meeting pages of the teen's book;
- engage with the teen in at least one additional faith-related activity in conjunction with each meeting;
- participate in other liturgical events, program sessions, service experiences, social outings, and retreats as requested.

Model of Faith

The *Confirming Faith* program and *Developing Faith* mini-course series are rooted in a model of faith designed by the author, Sister Kieran Sawyer. The model, expressed in the accompanying diagram, presents faith as a complex mystery that includes three

distinct but closely related aspects: personal faith, shared faith, and formal faith.

Personal faith (represented by the stick person) is the deeply mysterious relationship between each individual person and God. It is God's love for each person as a unique individual, and each person's stumbling efforts to come to know God and to respond to God's love with gratitude and commitment.



Shared faith (represented by the wavy line) is the total system of meanings and values that guides the lives of a community of people. It is the way a group of people makes sense out of life—the system that holds them together as a family, as a friendship group, as a church. It is the unwritten set of attitudes, goals, and expectations that identifies the group and differentiates those who belong from those who don't.

Formal faith (the outside circle) is the formal system of beliefs, laws, writings, and roles that we call church. It includes the scriptures and the creed, the commandments of God and of the church, the Mass and the sacraments, and the organized collected wisdom of the ages, the tradition of the church. It is the personal faith and shared faith of earlier generations, codified in forms that can be preserved from age to age.

Each of these aspects of faith is in a continual process of change and development throughout the life of a Christian. Each aspect develops separately, according to its own developmental processes, yet each is affected by the growth, or lack of growth, of the others. This faith development program is designed to further the growth of all three aspects of faith in the lives of adolescents.

To enhance the growth of *personal faith*, the program focuses on ways to help the young people come to a deepened awareness of and sensitivity to God's presence in their lives, and a growing willingness to respond to that presence with love and commitment.

To enhance the growth of *shared faith*, the program offers many opportunities for the young people to come to a deepened sense of belonging to a faith community where real Christian values are lived and shared.

To enhance the growth of *formal faith*, the program helps the teens come to understand the church's symbols, rituals, doctrines, and laws, and encourages them to become active members of the church, with all that such membership implies.

The *mentor* plays a unique and important role in the development of each aspect of faith. The one-on-one relationship of teen to mentor becomes an ideal opportunity for faith-sharing, prayer, and spiritual discussion, all of which deepen personal faith. The teen-mentor partnership becomes a lived example of the kind of bonding and belonging that characterize shared

communal faith. And the mentor's own commitment and loyalty to the institutional church, exemplified particularly in his or her willingness to be involved in the mentoring ministry, become for the teen a model of church membership.

The Teen-Mentor Meeting

Your basic task as a mentor in this program will be to participate in a series of informal one-on-one meetings with the teenager who has been partnered with you. You and the teen will arrange the time and place of the meetings, which usually will last about one hour. You will want to select a place where you can both feel comfortable and relaxed, and where you will not be distracted or disturbed. It is important to establish just the right balance of informality and serious discussion.

At the meeting, you will discuss with your teen partner some of the content of his or her previous class session. You will share with one another your personal experience of faith as related to the session. You will select an activity to work on together. And, finally, you will spend a few minutes praying together.

The mentor pages in the teen's book offer you step-by-step plans to take you through each of the individual meetings. It is recommended that you have your own copy of the teen book so that you can peruse the material before your meeting time. (You may also wish to study the detailed lesson plans found in the director's

manual for a particular course; the program coordinator can inform you how to check out a parish library copy.)

Each mentor page in the teen book includes the following sections:

Overview This is a short paragraph which summarizes the content and activities that were covered in the most recent session.

Opener This is a simple ice-breaker designed to help you get the meeting off to a good start.

Dialogue Since conversation is the heart of what you and your teen “do” together, the meeting plan offers three discussions starters based on the material covered in the class session. These may suggest that you review together the material that was taught, talk about how the content relates to something in your own faith history, or apply the session content to everyday life and decision-making.

Activity Suggestions You and your teen partner are invited to choose at least one of the three suggested activities. Many of these are service oriented. Many will require some advance thought and planning. Some will lend themselves to teaming up with another teen-mentor pair or a larger group.

Mentor Memo Space is provided for the teen to record messages to you from the program coordinator. You will want to get in the habit of checking the Mentor Memo for upcoming events that might involve you.

Prayer Each plan closes with either a formal prayer to be recited together or a suggestion for spontaneous prayer.

Meeting Summary Space is provided for the teen to write a short summary of your time together. You will want to allow time for this at the close of each meeting.

Meeting Verification You are asked to sign and date the appropriate lines at the conclusion of each meeting. Your signature and the meeting summary will be checked by an adult leader at the next class session.

Effective Communication

The success of the faith development program, both in the large-group setting and in the teen-mentor meetings, depends to a great degree on the effectiveness and sincerity of the communication between teens and adults and among the teens themselves. Serious dialogue is at the heart of the teen-mentor relationship. As a mentor, you will want to keep in mind the following faith-sharing principles, which are the foundation of the dialogue process:

- Faith is already present in the heart of each person; authentic dialogue helps to surface, affirm, and strengthen that faith.
- Each person is a unique source of truth and wisdom; the truth and wisdom of each individual is meant for and needed by the entire community.
- All people, especially teens, want and need to

open their hearts and share their deepest beliefs; what makes this happen is a listener who respects and cares.

- Talking about the depth values in a person's life helps to clarify and strengthen them for the speaker; a person understands better what he or she has tried to articulate.
- The faith of the listener is also strengthened by the faith-sharing process; hearing about God's action in the heart of another alerts a person to how God is acting in his or her own life.
- Dialogue and faith-sharing create the common meanings and values that enable those who participate to become a community of faith.

The type of dialogue that leads to true faith-sharing can only happen in an atmosphere of openness and trust. One key to creating this spirit of trust is through listening well. You will want to give your teen partner your full attention when he or she is speaking, to ask clarifying questions without probing or invading his or her privacy, and to learn to read the messages conveyed by facial expression and body language. Good listening skills will bring about more effective communication, which in turn will lead to a more trusting relationship.

Mentoring More Than One Teen

Ideally there should be one adult for every teen in the program. When this is not possible, it may be nec-

essary for one adult to mentor a group of up to three teens. If you are mentoring more than one teen, please note the following suggestions:

1. Determine each meeting date, time, and place well in advance. Notify the teens and expect them to adjust their schedules in order to attend the meetings. Insist on some form of make-up activity if any session is missed.

2. Lead the discussions with the entire group. Make it easy to get the dialogue started by designating the first speaker; for example, the person wearing the most red. Move the dialogue gradually from light topics to more serious ones. Stress with the teens that they all need to be good listeners and that the discussions are more likely to flourish if everyone has a sense that the others really care.

3. Plan to spend some time with each teen individually during the allotted course time. If you sense that any of the teens needs to talk with you on a one-to-one basis, schedule a meeting privately by phone after the group meeting.

4. Plan your activities together, making sure that everyone has an important role in the process. For example, if the activity is a car wash, one teen may be in charge of arranging the site, another of selling tickets, a third of contacting the organizations that will benefit from the profits. All the teens will help to wash the cars!

5. Remember to sign and date each person's book at the conclusion of each meeting.

Group Events

Though your primary duty as a mentor will be to participate in the one-on-one meetings with your teen partner, the program coordinator may occasionally need your help with some of the other aspects of the faith development program. These occasions generally fall under the following categories:

Group sessions (classes)

The faith development program requires the participation of at least one adult for every six to eight teens at all class sessions. Occasionally, you may be asked to fill the role of adult participant. You do not need to prepare for these sessions; you simply will be present as a participant, doing whatever the director asks. Check the Mentor Memo panels for an invitation (or reminder) to attend a particular session.

Liturgies

The total faith development program will include special liturgies for the candidates which you should attend. The teen-mentor page will sometimes offer as an activity suggestion attending Mass or other parish devotion with your teen partner. You may wish to use the Sunday liturgy as the meeting point for your teen-mentor meeting.

Service projects

Learning to live the Christian faith includes becoming involved in activities and projects that benefit others. You are expected to plan at least one or two service-oriented activities with your teen partner, and you may be invited to participate in larger projects planned by the program coordinator for the entire group.

Retreat

A youth retreat is a concentrated experience that incorporates many of the basic elements of the faith development process: a deepening of personal prayer, a sense of belonging in a community of faith, faith-filled interaction with peers and with adult Christians, and meaningful celebrations of the sacraments of reconciliation and eucharist. You may be invited to participate as a group moderator and/or chaperon on the youth retreats or days of reflection that are part of the total faith development program.

Peer Support for Mentors

Once you become involved in the mentoring ministry, you may find yourself interested in meeting with other mentors in the program. A peer support group of adult mentors could be the base for communal prayer and support, for delving more deeply into the faith topics covered in the youth program, and for discussing the

mentoring process and sharing with one another helpful hints on dealing with teen issues. Contact the program coordinator if you are interested in joining (or creating) such a group.

Prayer

Serving as a mentor for a young Christian must be seen as a spiritual ministry. Daily personal prayer, shared prayer with your teen partner, communal prayer with the larger group, and formal eucharistic liturgy with the parish community are all essential elements of the mentoring ministry. Continue to ask for God's help and blessing as you take on this important role. There is an old saying directed to parents and teachers: Speak more frequently to God about the children than to the children about God. This could well be the guiding maxim for the person who agrees to mentor the faith development of an adolescent.

Teen Information

Use this page to record information about the person you are mentoring.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

School _____

Grade _____

Birth date _____

Parent(s) _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

Traditional Prayers

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning
is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, mother of God,
pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy
Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the
right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and
the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I
have sinned against you whom I should love above
all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do
penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever
leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered
and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.
Amen.

Grace Before Meals

Bless us, O Lord,
and these your gifts,
which we are about to receive from your bounty,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grace After Meals

We give you thanks, almighty God,
for these and all the gifts
which we have received
from your goodness
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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