

## **Conformation** (Confirmation Sunday)

**Sunday, 9/15/19**

Confirmands, I have a confession to make. I'm not an especially great speller. It took me a long time to learn the correct number of s's and r's in resurrection! Thank God for spell-checkers! So it's with some humility when I say that spelling apparently isn't the strongest suit for many of you as well. But sometimes misspellings are an opportunity to learn, as is the case for my all-time favorite confirmation misspelling: conformation (with an "o") instead of confirmation (with an "i"). It's a funny misspelling to me because either way that you spell it actually makes a lot of sense. Let me explain.

To be confirmed (with an "i") means that we, the church, are recognizing, or confirming, that you have invested yourself in seeking Jesus and are ready to begin life as a member of the Christian Church. It also means that you are either confirming those promises that your parents made for you when you were baptized, or confirming the promises that you yourself made when you were baptized as a child, dying to your old way of living and being reborn to a new, Jesus-way of living. But you are no longer children, but young men and women who are choosing to walk the way of Jesus, and to do that with us, together, as the church.

In many ways, I actually prefer the misspelling with an "o", conformation. Why? Because what you're promising today is that you will yield your life to the will of God, allowing your life to be "conformed" into the likeness of Jesus, both in your attitudes and in your behaviors. The Apostle Paul said it so well in these first few verses from Romans 12. I'm reading from The Message. **{Read Romans 12:1-3, MSG}**

What do you suppose it might look like for you to be conformed into the likeness of Jesus? Paul claims that if you "fix your attention on God," "you'll be changed from the inside out." The problem most of us have is that even when we really are interested in changing, we want to jump to the results and skip the discipline that's required to get there. Fix your attention on God. That's where the discipline is needed. That means, at a minimum, reading your Bibles, talking to (and listening to) God in prayer, and

worshipping with other Christians. We are to fix our attention on God, not once a year, once a month, or even once a week, but with every waking moment of our lives. The goal is to let every thought, every spoken word, and every action be colored by a deep awareness of God presence and God's will.

It's entirely understandable that you might feel a bit as if you're graduating from Christianity today. There will be no more Confirmation Faith Nights, Confirmation Focus Nights, and Confirmation Retreats for you- that is, until you yourselves become Confirmation Teachers, Faith Partners, and parents! You won't have any more required worship notes to turn in or required service projects- but that doesn't mean you should stop worshipping and stop serving. Worship and humble service in love are core parts of the image of Jesus, and those things should become ever more present in your life as you are being changed from the inside out by the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. This is really just another beginning for you, not the end.

To be honest, you're at the age when many young would-be disciples of Jesus turn away from God and the church, choosing to be conformed by the world instead of Christ. I pray that isn't your choice. I ask you to continue to praise God by worshipping with us here and elsewhere. I challenge you to participate in the Senior High Youth Group here on Wednesday nights, at least to give it a try for a month. And God expects you to grow in your servanthood by serving the church and your neighbors. Being conformed to the image of Jesus is a way of life, not a graduation diploma. The promises you make today as you join the church are not just rules for membership, they're part of the disciplined way of life that lead all of us to grow into greater Christ-likeness. May it be so for us all, today and in all the days given to us in this life. Amen.



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