ABSTRACT

CONFIRMATION AND MINISTRY PARTICIPATION

by

Jeffrey S. Harper

The purpose of this dissertation was to study the effect ministry participation plays on spiritual satisfaction in youth students involved in confirmation. The study was born out of a sense of urgency that young people are leaving the church upon high school graduation with the possibility of never returning. Most denominations are experiencing this phenomenon, so the church must address the issue before the young people are gone.

The literature review examines the biblical mandate to educate the young to follow the ways of the Lord, the history of confirmation from the early Church to today, developmental and psychological aspects that affect learning in youth, and the effects of ministry participation in other settings.

The findings suggest that a significant change in spiritual satisfaction takes place through the confirmation process. Two groups were formed to study the effect ministry participation plays on spiritual satisfaction. One group participated in ministry throughout the confirmation process while a second group received teaching without ministry participation. No significant difference in the level of growth was found between the two groups.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

CONFIRMATION AND

MINISTRY PARTICIPATION

presented by

Jeffrey S. Harper

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

_____   _____April 20, 2011_____
Mentor   Date

_____   _____April 20, 2011_____
Internal Reader   Date

_____   _____April 20, 2011_____
Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program   Date

_____   _____April 20, 2011_____
Dean of the Beeson Center   Date

CONFIRMATION AND

MINISTRY PARTICIPATION

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Jeffrey S. Harper

May 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

On a beautiful day, we stood in a circle on top of the hill overlooking the lake, sharing Holy Communion together for the last time as a confirmation class. Throughout the confirmation experience, the class lessons were meaningful and rich with important information that would assist the students in their lifelong quest as Christians. Various discussions and group activities helped cement the lesson topics and keep the teens' interest. As I looked around at the five youth left in my class, I wondered how many would continue as active members of the McComb United Methodist Church or, at best, as active members of the Church of Jesus Christ. The class began with nine participants, two of whom dropped out just before the retreat. I remembered over the fifteen years of teaching confirmation how many youth abandon their membership vows shortly after receiving them on Confirmation Sunday. My desire continues to grow concerning ways to encourage youth to live their vows in a world that competes for their souls.

The problem with youth withdrawal from the church is not unique to those who leave after successful completion of the confirmation process. According to an article written by Jon Walker, the Family Life Council of the Southern Baptist Convention claim "88 percent of the children raised in evangelical homes leave church at the age of 18, never to return." Though the results of this study are currently in question, undoubtedly a problem remains in the church concerning the loss of young people. Many answers may exist as to why such large groups of evangelical youth who profess faith in Jesus Christ do not continue active involvement in the church after leaving home. One answer may be

that they have not found a place in the church where they can serve according to their gifts, and experience growth in their faith. The church must work harder at identifying youths' spiritual gifts and graces while encouraging them to participate in specific ministry areas within the church. Active involvement in ministry will teach them how to serve the Lord outside the church in their everyday lives. If the church implemented a transition plan for youth when they leave the high school program to continue active involvement in ministry, the church may experience better retention. As youth remain active in other areas of the church, their faith will continue to grow.

Confirmation provides an excellent opportunity to introduce youth to active participation in the ministry life of the church. The expectation of the United Methodist Church is that upon completion of confirmation, students become active members, "participat[ing] in its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, and their service" (*Book of Discipline* 137). Studies show that community ministry participation positively impacts a life of faith, just as a life of faith positively impacts ministry participation (Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema 424). The confirmation setting can be an excellent place where the tools necessary to practice a life of faith are taught, furthering spiritual development and satisfaction in the future. Participation in ministry should be included in order to connect teens to other areas in the church and outside the church that will enhance spiritual satisfaction as they practice their faith. When teens participate in areas of ministry according to their gifts and graces, spiritual satisfaction will continue to grow (Struková 80).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of ministry participation on the spiritual satisfaction of teens who participated in a comparative study of a traditional versus a modified fifteen-week confirmation class offered at the Urbana United Methodist Church.

Research Questions

Three research questions evaluated the impact ministry participation has on spiritual satisfaction.

Research Question #1

What was the participants' level of spiritual satisfaction before participation in the traditional and modified fifteen-week confirmation classes?

Research Question #2

What was the participants' level of spiritual satisfaction after participation in the traditional and modified fifteen-week confirmation classes?

Research Question #3

What difference did ministry participation have on spiritual satisfaction for those who participated in the modified fifteen-week confirmation class versus those who participated in the traditional fifteen-week confirmation class?

Definition of Terms

In this study, the following terms have specific meanings.

Ministry participation involves areas within the church where students take part in fulfilling the mission of God in the church. Each student in the modified class served in at least two areas of ministry throughout the confirmation process. Possible ministry

areas in the church included helping in the elementary Sunday school program, serving in the food pantry, leading in worship, serving communion, or other areas of interest to the student.

Confirmation class is defined as specific Christian instruction given to young teens for the purpose of preparing them to make a public profession of faith and be baptized or confirmed into the local church.

Confirmation is the renewal of baptismal vows where youth profess their faith on their own account and commit themselves to a life of Christian discipleship (*Book of Discipline* 136). The un-baptized had the opportunity to participate in the sacrament at the completion of the class.

Spiritual satisfaction is defined as the participants' perceived well-being of their spiritual life expressed in relation to God (Boivin 382) as measured by the Religiosity Measurement tool and the Spiritual Well-Being scale.

Traditional includes the material and processes currently used to teach the confirmation class at the Urbana United Methodist Church. The curriculum included *We Believe: Basic Belief Studies for Youth* and *Claim the Name: Talk Points for Mentors & Youth*, a part of the curriculum series *Claim the Name*.

Modified includes the implementation of ministry participation to the traditional confirmation material and process.

Ministry Intervention

Participants in the fifteen-week study included students from the Urbana United Methodist Church in grades seven through twelve who still needed to complete confirmation. Two participant groups consisted of (the traditional and modified class)

eight boys and ten girls ranging in age between twelve and eighteen. Each group received

instruction together following the curriculum *We Believe*, published by Bristol House.

Mentors worked with every student through the book *Claim the Name: Talk Points for

Mentors & Youth*. The modified group participated in at least two ministries within the

church throughout the fifteen weeks. Each student served as a communion steward twice

and worked at our food pantry twice. Students completed a pretest using the Religiosity

Measurement tool and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale to determine their level of spiritual

satisfaction. On the confirmation retreat at the conclusion of the class, students completed

a posttest to measure the change in the level of spiritual satisfaction. Three months

following the study, students completed the same posttest to determine the continuing

impact ministry participation had on spiritual satisfaction. Students in both groups

participated in their respective focus group after each administration of the questionnaires

to help determine levels of spiritual satisfaction.

Context

The Urbana United Methodist Church is situated in the West Central region of

Ohio in a mid-sized town of roughly twelve thousand people. Urbana is a conservative

community surrounded by the farms of rural Ohio and is the county seat for Champaign

County. The church was founded in 1835 and currently has a membership of 499 people

with 255 in average worship attendance. The church was once known as *the wealthy

church* where business owners and professional people attended. Over the years the

church received a number of financial donations, that allowed them to add to their facility

and parking areas. They currently provide three worship experiences: two traditional and

one contemporary. The last two pastors encountered conflict with church members and community leaders, leaving them only five years each in Urbana.

The youth of the Urbana United Methodist Church (UMC) are very active in the community. A full-time youth pastor was hired in November 2009, just before this study began. The youth group grew quickly as the youth pastor invested himself in the lives of the youth. They participate in many outreach projects and fund-raisers as well as retreats and mission trips. The youth group consists of an equal number of members of the Urbana UMC and nonmembers.

In the past, confirmation was held every year and taught by different teachers. The average class consisted of nine students. Urbana UMC did not hold a confirmation class in 2009. Mentors were instituted as a normal part of confirmation years ago. The curriculum changed with each facilitator.

The confirmation class consisted of students from seventh through twelfth grade and met in the parsonage, fostering a more laid-back relaxed atmosphere (McNabb and Mabry 55). The two groups received instruction together. A retreat located at Wesley Retreat Center was offered at the conclusion of the class before confirmation Sunday, which each student was expected to attend. The purpose of the retreat was to leave familiar surroundings in order to focus better on the decision they would make before the entire congregation. One un-baptized student was baptized after confirmation Sunday during a church function at a private lake. Family and friends were invited to share in their baptismal experience, followed by a church picnic. The class was well represented at the event.

Methodology

This study was an explanatory mixed-methods design with a quantitative pretest, posttest, and posttest follow-up measurement tool and a qualitative follow-up measure using focus groups.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of seventh to twelfth grade students from families within the church and members of the youth group who had not yet completed confirmation. Each participant signed up for the class out of his or her own desire and was randomly chosen to participate in the class as a member of one of the two groups by drawing names from a container. Each group had a total of nine students.

Instrumentation

Each participant answered a pretest questionnaire using the Religiosity Measure developed by John Rohrbaugh and Richard Jessor and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale developed by Craig W. Ellison and Raymond Paloutzian to determine their level of spiritual satisfaction before participation in the confirmation class. Both scales existed as tests of measurement.

The first instrument students completed was the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS). "The Spiritual Well-Being Scale was developed as a general measure of the subjective quality of life. It serves as a global psychological measure of one's perception of spiritual well-being" (Boivin, Kirby, Underwood, and Silva 383). The scale consists of twenty questions rated on a six-point Likert scale with options ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The SWBS is intended to measure psychological dimensions through two senses: religious and existential. Half the questions deal with the

participants' perceived religious well-being, rating their relationship with God, while the other half deal with the participants' perceived existential well-being, rating their life purpose and satisfaction.

The second instrument students completed was the Religiosity Measure. "The Religiosity Measure was developed in an attempt to evaluate the impact of religion on the respondent's daily, secular life as well as to determine the extent of individual participation in ritual practices" (Boivin 307). High school and college students were the subjects of this study to determine whether religiosity impacted deviant behavior. The results of the study showed that religiosity impacts behavior in a positive manner. Those who scored higher in religiosity had greater control over deviant behavior (Rohrbaugh and Jessor 146).

Upon completion of the class, the same measurement tools were administered as a posttest to determine participants' level of spiritual satisfaction after the confirmation class. Students participated in the same measurement tools three months following the completion of the study to determine the lasting effect of ministry participation on spiritual satisfaction.

Focus groups were also assembled after the completion of the pretest, posttest, and posttest follow-up testing times. The traditional and modified groups met separately and answered four questions to describe their level of spiritual satisfaction at each phase of the study. The purpose of the focus group was to capture participants' thoughts and perceptions concerning their spiritual satisfaction through their words.

Variables

The independent variables included the traditional confirmation class, the modified confirmation class, and the ministry participation component used with the modified group. The dependent variable was the resulting change in spiritual satisfaction. The intervening variables were the dropping out of class by participants and the non-completion of the ministry participation component. The wide range of maturity between seventh graders and those ready to graduate high school was another intervening variable (Lambert 51).

Data Collection

Students completed the pretest questionnaire, consisting of the two measurement tools (i.e., Religiosity Measure and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale), at the first confirmation class. I administered the test to each participant in my dining room. Upon completion I placed them into an envelope and kept them sealed in my office. Students answered the same questionnaire during the retreat at the conclusion of the class as a posttest. I supervised the administration of the test taken on paper in the dining area. Upon completion, I collected the tests and placed them into an envelope. Students answered the questionnaire again three months following the completion of the class. I supervised the administration of the test taken on paper in the parsonage and collected and placed them in an envelope upon completion. A focus group for the traditional class and modified class was video recorded independently after the completion of each test for later analysis.

Data Analysis

The data compared among the three test periods and focus groups determined the change in spiritual satisfaction within both groups as a result of the confirmation study and ministry participation. Descriptive statistics analyzed the quantitative data and content analysis analyzed the qualitative data.

Generalizability

The results of this study could help other United Methodist churches who share similar contextual issues as Urbana UMC determine the importance of including ministry participation in their confirmation classes. Every congregation should desire to see their youth become active participants in the life and ministry of the church.

<div align="center">

Theological Foundation

</div>

The biblical foundation for this study begins in the Old Testament as Adam and Eve received instruction from God while living in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28-29). God instructed Adam and Eve concerning his desire that they fill and subdue the earth. God later imparted instruction from Mt. Sinai to the Hebrew people through Moses (Exod. 20:1-17). On the plains of Moab as the Hebrew people prepared to enter the Promised Land, they remembered everything the Lord did for them. They renewed their covenant with God and promised to remain faithful to all his commands. This remembrance was celebrated through a beautiful cultic ceremony, much like a confirmation ceremony today (Deut. 29:2-18). Throughout the rest of their existence in the Promised Land, the Hebrew people annually celebrated God's deliverance and taught their children to do the same (Deut. 6:4-9, 20-25). When they failed to teach their children, generations matured without knowing the Lord and experienced calamity (Judg.

2:10-12). The remainder of the Old Testament chronicles the Hebrew people's

relationship with God as they followed or neglected the covenant.

In the New Testament Gospels, Jesus instructed the Hebrew people, now called

Jews, to remember the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37-38). God sent Jesus to give a

refresher course. Before he returned to heaven, he commanded his disciples to continue

to teach his instructions (Matt. 28:19-20). The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples on

the day of Pentecost and commissioned them to continue the ministry of Christ as they

boldly preached the word of God. When three thousand people responded to their

message, the church was born (Acts 2:37-42).

The remainder of the New Testament contains letters written by Paul and the

Apostles to churches and individuals instructing them on how to live a Christian life. Paul

directs Timothy to instruct others to model their lives after his (1 Tim. 4:11-13). He also

encourages Titus to pass on the tradition through sound teaching (Tit. 2:1). Readers

experience a sense of urgency throughout the epistles as Paul and the other authors write

to instruct people in the truth of God so they can continue ministry in the name of Jesus

Christ.

In the United Methodist Church, confirmation class is the final place where youth

receive Christian instruction before officially joining the congregation through

confirmation. The process for this instruction is described in *The Book of Discipline of*

the United Methodist Church:

> Baptized infants and children are to be instructed and nurtured in the
> meaning of the faith, the rights and responsibilities of their baptism, and
> spiritual and moral formation using materials approved by The United
> Methodist Church. Using the services of the Baptismal Covenant, youth
> will profess their faith, commit themselves to a life of discipleship, and be
> confirmed. Confirmation is both a human act of commitment and the

gracious action of the Holy Spirit strengthening and empowering discipleship. (135)

The *Discipline* continues direction concerning un-baptized youth and adults, that they be instructed "in the meaning of baptism, in the meaning of the Christian faith, and in the history, organization, and teachings of The United Methodist Church" (136). The purpose of the confirmation class is instruction in the ways of Christian life. The purpose of confirmation is to encourage the one instructed who makes profession, to continue in Christian discipleship and fellowship, and to find a place to minister in mission to the entire world. The congregation, led by the pastor, is responsible to see that every person who wishes to identify with the local congregation be instructed in this manner. The new members' class is used to instruct adults who come to faith in the church. Confirmation class continues the spiritual development in young people and sets the foundation for future success in spiritual development and satisfaction as adults. Christian instruction continues in the life of every member of the congregation as they actively participate in the ministry life of the church.

<div align="center">**Overview**</div>

Chapter 2 reviews the literature associated with this study. Chapter 3 describes the design of the study. Chapter 4 details the findings of the study. Chapter 5 completes the study by summarizing the findings derived from the interpretation of the data and provides future study possibilities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

The membership of the United Methodist Church continues to decline every year.
"The number of professing adult United Methodist Church members has continued to
decline—now to 7.93 million—though the last tabulated drop was less than a percentage
point" ("UMC Membership" 15). As the United Methodist church continues to lose
members, it also loses influence in the community and the ability to make disciples for
Jesus Christ. Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr claim that the moral
influence Christianity once had on the culture is declining (xii). Only 25 percent of born-
again Christian adults use the Bible to help make moral and ethical decisions (Barna, 21).
These statistics suggest that the church is not preparing people well enough for Christian
life outside the church setting.

According to research done by the Barna Group, the greatest opportunity to reach
children with the message of Christ is before they turn fourteen years old ("What
Teenagers Look For"). The church must use this window of opportunity to create in
youth a biblical worldview so the church will continue to grow and future adults will
know how to use the Bible to make moral and ethical decisions. The most important part
of worship is to make a connection with God, according to 45 percent of young people
ages thirteen to eighteen ("What Teenagers Look For"). Teens crave a genuine encounter
with their Creator. If the church does not make their worship experience and learning
activities meaningful, it risks the chance that the youth will become like the adults,
according to the Barna Group.

A great way to teach teens how to connect with God is through the confirmation class. Making the class interesting and relevant is important because only about a quarter of teens polled consider learning about prayer, discovering the traditions of faith, and participating in study classes important ("What Teenagers"). In fact, most teens consider Christianity boring and out of touch with reality. The church must find exciting and creative ways to pass on the faith. Confirmation can be one of these ways.

In the United Methodist Church, confirmation may begin in the sixth grade when children are ages eleven to twelve. Confirmation can be one of the best tools to reach and teach United Methodist youth and possibly reach their friends as they share the joy they find in the process. The church must work hard to provide a wonderful experience through which these young people can learn the foundations of the faith, put them into practice, and increase their spiritual development and satisfaction in relationship with God. Too many young people in the Urbana United Methodist Church abandon what they learn in the traditional confirmation class and fail to participate actively in the ministry life of the church. Some receive the vows of confirmation never to fulfill them.

The purpose of the confirmation class is to instruct young people in the faith and prepare them for active participation in the full ministry of the church. Remaining faithful to the purpose of confirmation in this study, the traditional class added ministry participation (creating the modified class) in its curriculum in order to evaluate its impact on spiritual satisfaction in youth. As lifelong ministry participation is the desired result for every person who joins the fellowship, introducing it to confirmation students seems appropriate.

Confirmation is not new to the church, and it has experienced multiple changes over the centuries to become what it is today in the United Methodist Church. Christian instruction is a very important component of the confirmation process in the UMC. The following pages describe how the United Methodist understanding of confirmation came into existence through biblical and Christian history. Most of the focus of confirmation is on young people, so a working knowledge of how they think and experience life as adolescents is important. Such understanding begins with the process of instruction as found in the Bible.

Confirmation as Instruction in the Bible

Instruction is as old as time. The purpose of biblical instruction is to remind people about God and his desire to be in relationship with his creation. Confirmation is a means through which youth are taught how to remember what God did throughout history: "Remembering is the way that Israel recalled the historical events of its Exodus" (Jones-Wells 15). Israel was responsible for continuing to pass on the memories of God's great acts of love, especially to their youth. The Old Testament begins with the first person to instruct people—God.

Old Testament Survey

The first instruction given by God found in the Bible is located in Genesis 1:28-29. After God created the world and everything in it, he spoke instruction to the male and female:

> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (NIV)

The man and woman had never lived on the earth before, so God needed to instruct them concerning his expectations for their lives—their main duty to fill the earth and subdue it. In this passage, the Lord gave the man and woman five imperatives: (1) to be fruitful; (2) to multiply; (3) to fill; (4) to subdue; and (5) to rule. In Hebrew, the main use of an imperative is a direct command. The first three imperatives, *parah* (be fruitful), *ravah* (multiply), and *male* (fill), can be viewed as one command—to branch off, become numerous, and populate the world (Gilbrant and Lint 1: 22). God created the world to be filled with his crown jewel of creation—the offspring of the first man and woman.

The next set of imperatives is *kavash* (subdue) and *radhah* (rule; Gilbrant and Lint 1: 22). God commanded the man, woman, and their offspring to keep order in the created world and to lead in a manner that reflects his image. He expected humanity to follow through with these commands.

God gave further instruction in chapter two of Genesis, verses 16-17: "And the Lord God commanded the man,… 'you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" The Hebrew word *tsawah* (command) is first used in this Scripture. The man receives instruction concerning something he should not do.

Thus, the first classroom experience took place in the Garden of Eden as God instructed the man and woman to live a productive life, pleasing to the Lord. He taught them what they needed to do in order to live (fill the earth and subdue it) and how to avoid death (do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil). Readers learn from this passage that the purpose of instruction is to convey truth on the subjects of life and death.

After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, life became more complex as God

drove them from the protection the Garden offered. Life contained more hazards than just

the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Death could no longer be avoided, so God

chose a group of people through whom he would send the Messiah, the savior of the

world. God chose the Hebrews, the descendants of Abraham. God used the Hebrews to

develop a Law that provided further instruction on how to live a productive life, pleasing

to the Lord, in their fallen state of sin. The simple instructions he gave in the Garden no

longer provided the protection and guidance necessary for life. God summoned Moses to

Mount Sinai where he delivered the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus chapter 20.

For the remainder of the forty years the Hebrew people spent in the wilderness, Moses

and the leaders of Israel faithfully taught and lived the Law. As Moses prepared to lead

his people into the land promised to them through their father Abraham, he summoned

them to the plains of Moab and exhorted them once again to commit to the covenant God

made with them.

The purpose of the following Scripture is to show how God instructed the people

of Israel to remember his faithfulness, keep the covenant he made with them, and pledge

before the assembly to remain faithful to him:

> Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them: Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those signs and great wonders…. Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God… together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps…. You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God…. I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here

> today…. Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations. (Deut. 29:2-18)

This passage provides an excellent example of a service of confirmation. The people are summoned by the leader; the entire family is present as they make their oath; they receive instruction on how God worked among them in the past; they are charged to follow the terms of the covenant; and, they are encouraged to hold each other accountable as they live out their lives. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* defines confirmation: "to establish, ratify, or strengthen a covenant. In the Bible [confirmation is] used of a vow or binding oath, a transaction of redeeming or exchanging, a covenant or statute… promises… and salvation" (Youngblood 295). Deuteronomy 29:2-18 fits perfectly within this definition of confirmation.

The title of the book of Deuteronomy means, "second-law." The words Moses passes on in this book are not secondary to the Law received in Exodus. Rather, Deuteronomy contains the second time the Law is revealed and sealed. In actuality, Deuteronomy is a re-visitation of the Law as Moses prepares to turn leadership of the people over to Joshua. In this ceremony, the Hebrew people are provided with an opportunity to pledge their devotion to Joshua's leadership under the covenant of God.

Ceremonies held an important position in the ancient world, as they do today. "The structure of Deuteronomy reflects the procedures of a formal cultic ceremony" (Weinfeld 6). These types of ceremonies were widespread from the days of the Hittite Empire all the way to the Roman Empire. Examples of these loyalty oaths are found even in the Assyrian Empire (6). Deuteronomy is a covenant document. Confirmation

ceremonies celebrated in churches today resemble the cultic ceremonies of the past and the covenant process found in Deuteronomy.

The next Scripture to be considered in this biblical foundation is Deuteronomy 6:4-9, commonly known as the Shema:

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Moshe Weinfeld calls this passage one of two catechistic passages found in Deuteronomy 6 (328). He goes on to call this the birthplace of religious education. After the Hebrews crossed into the Promised Land, God instructed them to celebrate Passover (329). During this celebration, the children asked questions concerning their history. Those questions are still asked today during the Seder: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" (Shapiro 53). The answers to the questions teach the children about the history of God's salvation among the Jewish people and point to the coming of the Messiah.

The passage begins with a call to pay attention. The Hebrew word *shama* means "to hear, to listen to, to understand, or to obey" (Gilbrant and Lint 7: 329). In Judaism, the *Shema Yisrael* is the most important prayer and is recited twice a day. It reminds the Jewish person of the importance of God's law and his covenant with them. As in the case of the command found in Genesis, *shama* is written in the imperative, meaning Israel is commanded to pay attention to what comes next in the sentence.

The next section of the sentence is the most important part for the Jewish person: YHWH is God, and he is one. This sentence is the confirmation of their faith (Weinfeld

331). Israel was unlike the nations around them in the fact that they worshipped only one God. In his omniscience, the Lord knew the temptation Israel faced to worship other gods, as they inhabited the land of Canaan. In an attempt to keep Israel focused on God's exclusive claim to divinity, the leaders instructed the people to memorize and recite daily the *Shema Yisrael*.

Continuing to pay attention, the Jewish person learns to love God with full devotion. The Hebrew word used in this passage for *love* is *ahev*. "Unlike the English term, the Hebrew word has less to do with emotion and more to do with actions" (Gilbrant and Lint 16: 87). God calls Israel into a love relationship with him that involves their complete loyalty and obedience. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to this passage as the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36-38). The very essence of life involves a relationship with God. The Lord renews the relationship lost in the Garden, with Israel in the desert.

God calls Israel to love him with all their heart, soul, and strength. The Hebrew word for *heart* is *lev*. "The physical location of the heart in the midst of the thorax leads to the interpretation of the heart as being the very center of a person" (Gilbrant and Lint 19: 190). Undoubtedly God desires his people to love him with everything they have. An alternative translation of *lev* is *mind*. The Septuagint uses the Greek word *dianoia* (mind) instead of *kardia* (heart) in place of *lev,* using an idiom that expresses the idea of full devotion to God (Weinfeld 339). The Hebrew word used for *soul* is *nephesh*. This word describes the very life force God breathed into the human body he created, again strengthening the idea of full devotion to God. Thus, "[t]he call for obedience lays claim to all one's decisions, to one's whole life, and to one's determination" (Biddle 132).

Not only is Israel to love and worship the only true God, they are to teach their children to do the same. The commandments God gave through Moses are to be taught to their children so no one will forget what God did for them and of his desire to be in relationship with his people. The responsibility appears to lie upon the parents, as teaching takes place every day of their lives, wherever they find themselves. If parents fail to pass on their faith, generations will suffer.

The Hebrew word used for *impress* is *shanan*. The verb in the Qal stem means *to sharpen*. In this passage, *shanan* is used only here in the Piel stem, which expresses an intensive action. The meaning then is to teach incisively (Gilbrant and Lint 22: 374). Other translations are "teach them diligently" (Deut. 6:4-9, KJV) and "drill them into your children" (NCB). Sharpening describes a repetitive action. When a knife is sharpened, it is run across the sharpening stone over and over again until a sharp edge is produced. With this idea in mind, *shanan* in the Piel could mean a repeated action. In other words, the commandments are to be repeated to the children over and over again. The Lord wants to make sure his commandments are not forgotten and passed on to every generation that follows.

The Lord instructs parents to talk about the commands when sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down at night, and getting up in the morning. Communicating these commands at all times is very important. The Hebrew word for *talk* is *davar*. In this passage the word is used in the Piel stem, again signifying the intensive active voice. God desires that his people discuss his commands with great focus and attentiveness.

People are instructed to remember the Lord's commands. Tied upon the hands and forehead, they accompany a person everywhere they go. Written upon the doorframes of houses and gates, people recognize them as they come and go. God's plan is to saturate the lives of his people with his commands. David thought about God's commands when he penned the words in the first Psalm, verse 2: "[Blessed are those] who delight in the law of the LORD and meditate on his law day and night" (TNIV).

To summarize this passage of Scripture, the purposes of God's commandments are to draw people into relationship with him. Just as God related to Adam and Eve in the Garden, he desires to relate to people today in order to protect and provide for their well-being. If people are to succeed in life, they must acknowledge God as the one and only and dedicate their lives to serving him in complete obedience. People are then to institute a plan to pass on the commandments to their children, so they too can benefit from a relationship with God. This passage describes the beginning of Jewish catechism and confirmation.

The next passage of Scripture to note is a continuation of the last passage, Deuteronomy 6:20-25:

> In the future, when your children ask you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" tell them: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the LORD sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."

This passage describes God's saving action in the Exodus of his people. Their deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh is described as nothing less than a miracle. The message God desires to pass on to every generation is a message of his covenant relationship. Christians can easily look back and see God's plan for the Messiah interwoven within the Exodus experience.

Deuteronomy 6:20-25 clearly points out the idea of a Jewish catechism. Children ask questions of their parents concerning the laws instituted by the Lord and the parents repeatedly demonstrate them to their children in word and deed. Children receive instruction over and over again in order to memorize all the stories of their faith and the commandments of God. The same structure is used today in Martin Luther's *Catechism*. God's people memorize this material so when the Messiah appears, they will recognize him and introduce him to the rest of the world. Careful obedience to God's commandments produces righteousness.

One last Scripture in the Hebrew Bible helps lay a biblical foundation for confirmation before proceeding to the New Testament Scriptures. After the Israelites took possession of the land God promised them, they served the Lord for the remainder of their lives:

> After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. (Judg. 2:10-12)

At the end of the book of Joshua, the people of Israel make a solemn promise to serve the Lord. Joshua delivers a moving speech and the children of those who experienced the Exodus promised to serve the Lord who "brought us and our parents up out of Egypt"

(Josh. 24:16). After Joshua dies, they forget this promise and forsake the Lord. Maybe they tired from fighting for the land God promised them. Maybe their parents failed to pass on the faith in the manner Moses described. In any case, Scripture makes clear that they did not know the Lord.

The Hebrew word used for *know* is *yadha*. While the word can be simply translated as *know*, the idea that is conveyed is that the person is completely aware of something without question. When the word is used in reference to a person, it conveys the meaning of the deepest knowing of another. In Genesis 4:1 *yahda* is used to describe the relationship between Adam and Eve: "Adam made love to his wife, Eve." This Scripture describes the most intimate way to know another person.

Yahda is used in Judges 2:10-12 to describe the lack of relationship the next generation experienced with God. The giving of the commandments from God to Israel was a disclosure of God's love. The Lord desired a relationship with Israel lived out through the observation of his commandments. The children of Israel failed to continue or even seek such a relationship with God as they worshipped the foreign gods of the peoples around them. The Lord considers life outside of a relationship with him as evil in his sight.

This passage describes the great importance of the need to pass on one's faith. In Deuteronomy, Israel is commanded to teach the commandments of the Lord continually to their children. Deuteronomy was atrociously neglected as the entire next generation failed to follow the commandments of God. This passage must serve as an example to us as we determine to teach our children the ways of the Lord and lead them into relationship with him. Christian faith is only a generation away from extinction. The New

Testament describes how Jesus and his followers continued the practice of teaching the importance of religious education.

New Testament Survey

In Matthew 22, an expert in the law asks Jesus about the greatest commandment. Jesus reminds him and those who are listening of the Shema found in Deuteronomy 6 as he replies in Matthew 22:37-38:

> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.

In all the teachings of Jesus contained in the Gospels and the letters of the Apostles, the main message is to love God first, then others as one loves oneself. God himself came to the world in his son Jesus Christ in order to teach these commands personally. Love for God as well as love for others must be acted out as life is lived as an example to the children. Believers must continue to teach the precepts of God to children so they will grow in the knowledge and love of God. Jesus provided the perfect example, as he loved God and others. This passage of Scripture exemplifies the instruction given to the Hebrews in the Sinai desert as well as to the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden.

In Matthew 28:19-20, as Jesus prepares to return to heaven, he leaves one last command to all who would follow after him: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Jesus spent the last three years of his life investing in his disciples as he taught them the commands of God. Upon his ascension he deemed them ready to continue his teaching to all generations. The only imperative found in these two verses is "make disciples" (Gilbrant, Harris, and Horton 2:

657). Wherever followers of Jesus go, they are expected to make more disciples. The process of this discipleship involves baptizing and teaching.

The fact that the participle *baptizing* comes before the participle *teaching* implies that teaching lasts a lifetime. From the earliest age, the church taught that baptism occurs only once in a person's life. Baptism does not mark the end of discipleship; rather, the ongoing learning process that accompanies following Jesus' example. Once individuals are baptized they become members of Christ's Holy Church and profess to continue in a loving relationship with God. Apart from a work of grace, baptism identifies believers with Christ's suffering and death and "testifies to [their] own death to this world and its values" (Gilbrant, Harris, and Horton 11: 527). In Christian baptism, a commitment to follow God is made among the community of believers just as was done among the Hebrew people in Deuteronomy 29 as they all gathered to renew their covenant with God.

As followers of Christ, Christians are commanded to lead people to a place where they can stand before the assembly and commit their lives to following and loving God. Baptism represents the beginning of a love relationship with God where people are baptized into the name of the Triune God. *Into* denotes a type of possession—the baptized belong to God. It also implies that persons who are baptized "will be dedicated to and yielded to the control of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Gilbrant, Harris, and Horton 2: 657). Thus, new believers are lead before the congregation and baptized into a relationship with God where they dedicate the rest of their lives to his service.

The disciples are further commanded by Jesus to teach people to observe his commands. One of the primary characteristics of Jesus' ministry was teaching.

Everywhere he went he taught the people. Whether in the synagogue, at the temple

mount, or beside the sea, Jesus taught the people. His expectation for the church is to

continue this example. In Deuteronomy 6, God gave the same command to Israel. The

primary responsibility after dedication to God is to teach children his ways. Jesus reminds

his followers through his life example the teaching parts found in the Shema.

The disciples' commissioned ministry began on the day of Pentecost after the

Holy Spirit fell upon them and anointed them to teach and preach the message of the

kingdom boldly. When the crowds questioned what was happening, Peter preached his

first message after the resurrection of Christ. Acts 2:37-42 describes how the people

responded to his sermon:

> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter
> and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied,
> "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for
> the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy
> Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far
> off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he
> warned them…. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and
> about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted
> themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of
> bread and to prayer.

After the people heard the gospel, they were moved to action. Some of the meanings for

the Greek word *poieo* are "do, create, produce, perform, and act" (Gilbrant, Harris, and

Horton 15: 234). The crowd realizes that the truth of Peter's message requires action. As

Jews, they spent their whole lives performing the various religious rites required by the

Law. After hearing that the Messiah was indeed Jesus and that they were guilty of

crucifying him, they knew God required something new. Peter was asked to instruct them

on how they should respond to his message.

Peter's response is twofold. First, the crowd is told that they must repent. The Greek word used is *metanoeo*. This word describes a "thoroughgoing change in one's thinking, attitudes, and purpose" (Gilbrant, Harris, and Horton 14: 172). In other words, life is about to change. Up to this point, their entire religious life focused around the idea of a coming Messiah. Now that the Messiah had come, their minds and purpose in living would have to change. *Metanoeo* demands a complete turnaround.

The second part of Peter's response is that those who believe are to be baptized. They are to enter into a new covenant relationship with God. Their old lives will die in order to make way for a new life under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Peter remembered what Jesus told him and the other disciples about baptism before he ascended into heaven, and he put it to practice on the spot. The passage explains that Peter continued to warn and exhort them until three thousand people responded to the message through baptism.

An important reason for the response of so many at one time may be due to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, as all the disciples were filled with his presence, evidenced through their speaking in multiple languages. Even when Jesus ministered, signs and wonders accompanied his teaching and preaching. Before the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, the Bible makes no account of any persons being added to their number. Only after they received the power through the Holy Spirit were they able to testify in such a way that people responded. Christians must remember the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit as they instruct people in the ways of the Lord, even now in the present time.

The last sentence in Acts 2:37-42 describes the persistence the new believers displayed in their devotion to the life of the church. As baptized members of Christ's body on earth, their new way of life involved complete devotion to the ministry of the church. This Scripture lays an important foundation for catechism, or confirmation, as the educational process was part of this persistent devotion.

The important Greek word in this Scripture that describes the dedication of the new believers is *proskartereo*. The word describes the amount of time taken to be persistent (Gilbrant, Harris, and Horton 15: 335). The new believers did not just attend a few classes with the apostles. They dedicated their lives to learning about Jesus and his church. Other translations of this participle include the following: "And they continued steadfastly" (KJV); "And they went on to give constant attention, firmly adhering to" (Rotherham); "They were regularly present" (TCNT); and, "They were in constant attendance" (Weymouth).

The new believers dedicated themselves to the apostles' teaching. The apostles passed on what they received from Jesus to the new believers. The Greek word for *teaching* is *didache*. *Didache* can mean an act of teaching as well as a set of doctrines, truths, and practices that are learned and followed (Gilbrant, Harris, and Horton 12: 119). The new believers received training from the apostles after their baptism. The fact that training came after baptism may become an important issue later as the process of catechism throughout the history of the church is discussed.

Other areas of life in the church to which the new believers dedicated themselves were the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Each one of these areas received the same level of dedication, as did the teaching of the apostles. The indication in this

passage is that the new believers dedicated themselves to these things with joy in their hearts and a hunger to learn more. The fellowship they experienced was "more than just getting together. It was [a] partnership in the ministry of the Church" (Gilbrant, Harris, and Horton 6: 63). The breaking of bread could refer to the Lord's Supper but could also include table fellowship shared during meals. The new believers continued their daily prayers at the temple (Acts 3:1) as well as prayer meetings in their homes (Acts 4:31).

Acts 2:37-42 serves as an important biblical foundation for the concept of catechism and confirmation in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit grabbed the hearts of the people in Jerusalem as they heard Peter's witness of the gospel. They responded to the message through repentance and baptism. After they joined the fellowship of the apostles, they dedicated themselves to lifelong learning and service. The church used catechism and confirmation throughout the centuries to bring people into the church and teach them the ways of God.

The New Testament survey is not complete without the Epistles. They are full of instructions concerning Christian living. In 1 Timothy Paul addresses the young man, Timothy, concerning his authority in a church that questions the apostolic teachings (Towner 70). Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:3, "As I urged you,… command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer" (NIV). Paul continues in 1 Timothy 4:11-12, "Command and teach these things…. Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity." As is clearly seen in this letter, the teachings of the Apostles continue to be passed on through leaders in the church spread throughout the Roman province. "[I]nstruction intended for the believing community is often interlaced with refutation and correction of heretical notions" (313). That correct teachings were

passed on in the church was important to Paul. Timothy was charged with the mission to confront the false teachers and present the truth not only in word but also life, love, faith, and pure actions. Instruction is found through many forms.

Paul writes a similar letter to Titus instructing him to "straighten out what was left unfinished" (Tit. 1:5) as he instructs the believing community of Crete (Towner 76-77). Chapter 2, verse 1 informs him that he must "teach what is in accord with sound doctrine." Paul is probably referring to the teachings of the Apostles (719). Titus is to pass on what he learned from the Apostles' teachings as sound doctrine to the believers of Crete. His teachings are to be displayed through his daily life. Titus begins by teaching the older men (2:2), then the older women (2:3), who then are able to teach the younger women (2:4-5). He then is commanded to teach young men (2:6) and slaves (2:9-10). Paul informs Titus that instruction must also be taught through his life's example (2:7). This passage of Scripture corresponds with the goals of confirmation. Students receive sound instruction in the confirmation class and are expected to implement the instruction in their daily lives.

Two different passages of scripture refer to two different types of instruction. The first type of instruction is referred to as *milk*: "I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly" (1 Cor. 3:2-3). The second type of instruction is referred to as *solid food*:

> We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Heb. 5:11-14)

Milk refers to the very basics of Christianity (Bruce 109). Some of the basic instructions are mentioned in Hebrews 6:1-3: "elementary teachings about Christ,… repentance from acts that lead to death,… faith in God,… instruction about baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." Those who do not grow beyond these principles are considered infants. They are not yet ready for the *solid food*, which comes through the practice of righteousness.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning their immaturity in Christ. When he was with them, he fed them the *milk* they needed to grow into strong Christians. Paul was clearly disappointed with the Corinthians because they had not grown beyond the need for milk. He observes this fact through their actions—they are no different from the rest of society (1 Cor. 3:3).

The author of Hebrews shares the same disappointment Paul expresses to the Corinthians. The Hebrew Christians continued to live on *milk* when they should have been ready to consume *solid food*. According to Hebrews 5:14, the Christians continued to struggle discerning good from evil. Christians must grow to the place where *solid food* is consumed through a life of action and reaction. Only through living by the principles of faith does one build upon the foundation of scriptural truth and grow to maturity.

The Scriptures in 1 Corinthians and Hebrews speak to the importance of ministry participation in confirmation. Apparently, the Corinthians and Hebrews learned what they needed in order to grow in Christian faith but failed to grow because they did not put into practice what they learned. Young participants in confirmation must have the opportunity to practice what they learn so that through "constant use," they will be trained "to distinguish good from evil," and grow to maturity in Christ (Heb. 5:14).

The following discoveries summarize the biblical foundation for catechism and confirmation as found in these Scriptures. God created the man and woman to experience intimate relationship with him and each other. God then created instruction in order to teach truth on the subjects of life and death. The Garden of Eden served as the first classroom as God commanded the man and woman to fill and subdue the earth while avoiding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Through his instruction God provided protection for the man and woman and the possibility of a long and happy life in relationship with each other and him.

After the fall of humanity when death entered the picture, further instruction was necessary as the man and woman broke their relationship with God. Because they would some day die, God developed a process for the man and woman to pass on the instruction they received from him to their offspring, so they would know and remember how to experience a full, abundant life. The Shema communicated this process. God expected the Hebrew community to teach their children his Law. If they failed to pass on the instruction they received from God, their children would suffer. Multiple times the Hebrew people gathered to make their commitment to the Lord in public confession.

The New Testament continues this process of passing on the instruction of the Lord as Jesus came from the Father and taught the multitudes. Upon his return to heaven, he instructed his disciples to continue the teaching process, so people would remember what he taught and how he loved. Jesus instructed his disciples to invite people into a relationship with God in community through repentance and baptism. Believers spent the rest of their lives in service to the Lord as they continued to grow in knowledge and love

of him. They were expected to move from the *milk* of the gospel, to the *solid food*

through the practice of righteousness and acts of mercy.

Confirmation through History

In order to understand the meaning of confirmation completely, two terms need to

be defined. The first term is *catechism*: "A catechism is a popular manual of instruction

in Christian beliefs, normally in question and answer form" (Elwell 195). The most well-

known catechism is *Luther's Small Catechism.* Catholic children often refer to the

training they receive before first communion as *catechism*. Lutheran churches also use

this word when referring to the training they receive before confirmation.

The process of teaching this information is properly called, *catechesis*. The

Roman Catholic definition of catechesis is "an *education in the faith* [original emphasis]

of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian

doctrine imparted … with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian

life" (Catholic Church 8). This process ends in a formal ritual involving the laying on of

hands and unction.

Confirmation is a little more difficult to define because of the difference between

the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation, which will

later be discussed in detail. *Confirmation* is one of the seven sacraments found in both the

Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. As a sacrament it was seen as a means

through which God conveyed saving grace. Its purpose in the Roman and Eastern

churches is "to make those who have been baptized in the faith strong soldiers of Jesus

Christ" (Elwell 266). They believe "[c]onfirmation is necessary for the completion of

baptismal grace" (Turner). Confirmation was the act of the laying on of hands by the

Apostles for the impartation of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of confirmation was to strengthen the believer to profess Christ boldly and live the Christian life, even in the face of persecution (Marsh 13; Wood 240).

Confirmation in the Book of Acts

The meaning of confirmation is "to make one's faith firm and strong" (Krueger 28). As soon as people make a commitment to Christ, the church's obligation is to help them become firm in their beliefs. After three thousand people accepted Christ as Lord of their lives in Acts 2:41, the apostles kept busy teaching them the meaning of their conversion (Acts 2:42). From the very beginning of the church to the present day, the church continues this process, though it has gone through some changes over the centuries.

According to F. H. Chase, "the two great momenta of the whole Christian dispensation are 1) the Incarnation of the Son of God; 2) the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (3). Through the Incarnation God came to humanity in the form of the man Jesus. After returning to heaven, Jesus, with the Father, sent the Holy Spirit so the church might continue his ministry. Chase describes these two momenta as they are found in the baptism of believers and confirmation (4-5).

In baptism, believers profess Jesus Christ as their own Lord and Savior. Baptism becomes a sacrament of cleansing, regeneration, and incorporation into the body of believers. The new believer begins a new life in Christ (Chase 6-8). His or her sin is washed away with the old ways of life, and the new believer begins to learn the meaning of being a Christian in community with others.

The act of confirmation is the empowerment new believers receive from the Holy Spirit to live the believers' life. They actually become partakers, along with the Apostles, of the Holy Spirit as he makes his dwelling with them (Chase 8). The gift of the Holy Spirit is given through the laying on of hands (111). An example of the laying on of hands is found in Acts 8:14-17:

> When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Philip baptized the believers in Samaria upon their belief, but they did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John laid hands upon them (Chase 18-19).

Another example of the two separate actions of baptism and confirmation is found in Acts 19:1-6. On his way to Ephesus, Paul encountered some followers of Christ and asked them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They informed Paul that they received John's baptism but had never heard about the Holy Spirit. When Paul laid hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit (Chase 24).

Confirmation after the Book of Acts

Finding any information discussing confirmation during the first century and a half following New Testament times is impossible. Neither the Bible nor the Apostolic Fathers use the word *confirmation* in any of their writings (Mason 53; Krueger 28). Evidence for the practice of the laying on of hands or anointing with oil is also hard to find (Heugel 28-29). Tertullian is the first to discuss the relationship between baptism and confirmation in the second century (Mason 57). Up to his time, the initiation process for

Christians involved two parts—immersion in water and the imposition of hands, and they were administered one after the other (Marsh 17-18; O'Dwyer 6).

Writing around AD 198, Tertullian describes the rite of baptism. First, the new believer receives baptism by immersion. Immediately following the immersion, the new believer receives anointing with oil. The rite of anointing with oil is called *unction*. All believers share in the priesthood of Christ, so they received the same anointing as the Old Testament priests for service to God. After their anointing they received the laying on of hands for the presence of the Holy Spirit (Mason 59). These three actions were considered one rite. Each was completed immediately after the other. The new believer received the forgiveness of sins in baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit through unction and the laying on of hands (63).

Tertullian did not endorse the baptism of infants (chap. XVIII). He reserved baptism for adults convinced of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Cyprian, who followed Tertullian, was the first to condone the baptism of infants (Mason 64). Children of non-Christian parents were not baptized until they were old enough to be instructed in the faith (Krueger 33). Today, infants are baptized in the ministry of the United Methodist Church.

The rite of anointing with oil was added to the baptismal ceremony sometime during the second century, as mentioned in writings by Irenaeus and Tertullian (Marsh 19; Heugel 30). During the Old Testament period, anointing had cultic, social, and medical uses (Heugel 13). To anoint literally means "to rub oil on a person or thing" (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman, Duriez, Penney, Reid 33). The cultic use of anointing involved the process of setting a person apart from all the others to serve as a priest to

God. Instruments used in worship were also anointed. The anointed was considered

chosen by God and, therefore, holy.

Social uses for anointing existed as well. One social use was the anointing of

kings. In 1 Samuel 10:1 the prophet Samuel anointed Saul to become king over Israel.

The anointing by the prophet designated him as God's chosen leader. The Hebrews also

believed that anointing could be used to bring about healing (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman,

Duriez, Penney, Reid 34). If a person was ill or wounded, he or she was anointed with

olive oil.

The early Christians adopted the practice of anointing new believers according to

the cultic use of anointing oil. New believers were anointed and set apart as holy to serve

the Lord, just as the priest was in the Old Testament. The new believer was anointed once

before immersion and once following. During the third century, the anointing of the

forehead was reserved until the end of the ceremony and could only be administered by

the bishop (Marsh 19).

James R. Heugel believes that the Jewish understanding of anointing cannot be

connected with the confirmation rite (20). The Old Testament cultic use of anointing sets

a person or thing apart as a holy tool used for worship. The early understanding of

Christian anointing was the impartation of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament does not

describe an impartation of the Holy Spirit when priests and worship instruments received

anointing. It only describes them as set apart and holy unto the Lord.

One of the earliest liturgical manuals in existence is *Apostolic Tradition,* written

by Hippolytus in the third-century (12). He details the process of initiation for the

catechumen that corresponds with Tertullian and Cyprian and became the norm during

the eighth and ninth centuries (Heugel 43). He describes three stages every catechumen experienced in order to enter the church (44-47). Christians called the catechumen inquirers during these three stages.

The first stage involved the rite of separation. During this time the teachers thoroughly examined the inquirers. Teachers questioned them as to their way of life, what kind of work they did, their marital status, their living conditions, the reason for their faith, the existence of demons in their lives, and anything else they thought important (Heugel 44). The examination was complete and thorough. If the teachers deemed them ready, they entered the second stage through the rite of transition.

The second stage led catechumens through a three-year process of instruction and worship (Willimon, *Remember Who You Are* 16). During these three years, they were expected to comply with the teachings of the church. Primarily, their lives were evaluated in order to see that a true conversion took place. Catechumens were allowed to participate in the first part of Christian worship but dismissed before celebrating the Eucharist (17). The church wanted the catechumens to demonstrate their sincerity before joining and putting so many at risk (Krueger 31).

At the completion of three years, and after further examination, they became candidates for baptism. All baptisms occurred on Easter Sunday. Every day during Holy week the inquirers experienced a battery of exorcisms performed by the priest. On Holy Thursday they took a bath. The day before their baptism the bishop prayed over them and exorcised them. He blew in their faces and anointed their foreheads, ears, and noses with oil. They then spent the rest of the day fasting, and held a vigil that evening (Hippolytus 105-06; Heugel 44-46).

The day of baptism marked the third stage, the rite of incorporation. The bishop again prayed over the inquirers and exorcised them. As he anointed them with the oil of exorcism, all the enquirers renounced the power of Satan in their lives and entered the baptismal water, naked. The only thing they were asked to bring to this event was an offering. The baptizer dunked them three times in the water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. After each dunk they recited the appropriate part of the Apostles' Creed. When they came out of the water, a priest anointed them with the oil of thanksgiving. Once dressed they entered the church where the bishop anointed them with the sign of the cross and laid hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit. "In this rite, the second post-baptismal anointing, performed by the bishop, developed into modern confirmation" (Struková 75). The baptized then took part in the full worship service including the Eucharist (Hippolytus 110-14; Heugel 46-47). The exorcism of every inquirer from evil spirits was vitally important to the early Christians.

Because of the length of time to complete these three stages, Hippolytus comforted the inquirers in case they died before baptism and full incorporation into the church. Christians were routinely put to death for their beliefs, so inquirers worried about their eternal state if they died before baptism. Hippolytus assured them that if they died for their beliefs before baptism, they were actually baptized in their own blood, which would lead to their salvation (104-05). *Apostolic Tradition*, written by Hippolytus, is the earliest liturgical account of reception into the church.

As the church continued to grow, so did the definition of unction and the laying on of hands. Church leaders were forced to define further exactly when the Holy Spirit was given. They decided that the Holy Spirit was imparted through both avenues of

unction and the laying on of hands (Mason 105; Krueger 29). The Holy Spirit was indeed a baptismal gift but given through the last two parts of the rite (Mason 106).

As the church grew, much confusion emerged about how to administer baptism and how and when the Holy Spirit came upon believers (Lampe 193). G. W. H. Lampe believes the confusion arose because of the way people exegeted Scripture. After the first two centuries, biblical scholars began to exegete Scripture using allegorical and typological methods. These methods allowed for many different types of biblical interpretation. Disagreements arose concerning the use of water, oil, and the laying on of hands. During the time of Ambrose, believers in Milan even added foot washing as part of the baptismal ceremony, though it was never accepted as a common practice by Rome (Mason 148).

Bishop Ambrose believed that each of the three parts of the baptismal rite were grace-giving rites. Though all three were considered a part of baptism, immersion in water bestowed the grace necessary for the forgiveness of sins and a new life. Grace was given to the new believer to become royalty in the kingdom of God as priests through unction. Through the laying on of hands the new believer received grace through the giving of the sevenfold Spirit (Mason 152-53).

By the end of the fourth century, the church decided that the Holy Spirit was received only through the rite of confirmation (Mason 179). The means through which the Spirit was received was the laying on of hands. The Spirit did not come through the act of immersion. In order to receive the Holy Spirit, one had to be anointed by oil and receive the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands could not be performed by anyone other than the bishop and had to include the sign of the cross (Mason 181; Jungkuntz 30;

Lampe 215). Just as Peter and John were sent to the Samaritans (Acts 8) to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit, only the bishop could impart the Holy Spirit through the laying on of his hands. According to tradition, bishops were appointed by Christ to lead the church. Since the main leaders of the church were the only ones sent to Samaria to bring the Holy Spirit, the fourth century leaders decided that those chosen to follow them as bishops retained the sole right to impart the Holy Spirit.

As the church approached the year AD 500, baptism and confirmation began to be viewed as two separate rites (Mason 199). Baptism remained the cleansing part of the new believer's life as water washed away sin through immersion and a new life began. Confirmation became the process through which the new believer received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. The Holy Spirit gave strength to the believer to be a witness in the face of adversity. Confirmation prepared the new believer for spiritual warfare by confessing the name of Christ courageously (Marsh 13; Heugel 244).

Because the church viewed baptism and confirmation as two separate rites, the time between their administrations grew (Marsh 19). The bishop was the only one allowed to lay hands on the new believer after baptism. As the church grew larger, he was not always available to perform the task. Many baptized waited until the bishop was available for the imposition of hands. The separate rite of confirmation was born as a result of people having to wait for the imposition of hands by the bishop. The newly baptized were forced to wait for the bishop before they could receive the final prayer and the laying on of hands and full reception of the Holy Spirit (Heugel 59; Lampe 302).

The time for preparation was also reduced to an intense course during Lent. The normal areas the catechumen studied were the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments,

and the Lord's Prayer. The teaching on these subjects continued until the Middle Ages when other areas of instruction, such as the Hail Mary and the sacraments, were sometimes added.

The Eastern Church solved the problem of absent bishops by allowing priests to perform all the tasks of initiation. After the infant was baptized, the priest anointed him or her with oil. After the anointing he laid hands on him or her for the impartation of the Holy Spirit, then offered communion (Marsh 19; Jungkuntz 35-36; Krueger 29). Babies cannot consume solid food, so they did not participate with the bread until they were old enough to eat ("Confirmation"). At their confirmation, a small amount of wine was dabbed on their lips. The bishops of the Roman church, however, would not allow for this change.

After AD 500 confirmation and baptism became separate rites (Marsh 20). Baptism continued as the rite of initiation where believers received the gift of the Spirit as a principle of sanctification. The Holy Spirit was present in baptism as an indwelling to help the infant or child grow to the next stage in life. Confirmation came later and was associated with the public confession of Christ as a witness of the faith. The Holy Spirit was present at confirmation to continue the sanctification process and to strengthen the believer as a witness for Christ as a spiritual warrior.

In the Medieval church, confirmation continued to describe the reception of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the bishop's hands (Heugel 175). It also continued the spiritual meaning of the receiving of power to live as an effective witness of God's love (180). During this time the initiation process fragmented into three separate rites: baptism, anointing with oil, and first communion (215). Christians no longer waited until

Easter for baptism. Since confirmation was a later rite, people could be baptized as soon as they were ready (216). Grace was conferred in baptism and the new believer entered the spiritual life. When the new believer was confirmed, he or she received grace to empower confessing Christ more freely. In a way, confirmation ushered in a new spiritual maturity. What God began in baptism was continued and strengthened in confirmation (227-28). After baptism and anointing with oil, Christians received communion.

An interesting practice that developed during the Middle Ages and used during the confirmation rite was the slap in the face. After the Bishop prayed over the one receiving vows, he slapped him or her in the face (Heugel 240). The slap was added in response to the dubbing of a knight. The Lord slapped the knight with his hand or the sword after the knight swore his allegiance to the Lord. The slap was an essential act of knighthood.

Heugel presents four reasons why the slap was added to confirmation (240). First, anyone receiving the slap would remember the day of confirmation. The church did not want anyone to forget the vows made to Christ. Second, confirmation could not be repeated. The church believed the slap deterred people from seeking confirmation a second time. Third, the slap symbolized the laying on of hands by the apostles. Fourth, they believed anyone willing to receive the slap would be a stronger witness for Christ in the face of adversity. The slap helped make one strong in the faith.

In the thirteenth century, the child's age for communion and confirmation became an issue in the Roman church. They wanted to make sure a child understood the rites before they participated, so the Fourth Council of the Lateran encouraged leaders to

withhold confirmation and communion from children until the age of discernment, which

was determined to be around seven years old (Heugel 259; Moore 26; Krueger 29).

The age of confirmation continued to be pushed back. Today, young people in the

Roman Catholic Church are confirmed in the eighth grade. According to Geri Leibfarth,

the director of religious education at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Findlay, Ohio,

in the early twentieth century Pope Pius X decided that children who reach the age of

discernment should be allowed to participate in the Eucharist, even before receiving

confirmation. For the last one hundred years children received First Communion in the

first grade and were later confirmed in Junior High. A movement exists today in the

Roman Catholic Church to restore the practice of confirmation to a time before

communion.

One problem that occurred after Constantine legalized Christianity in the fourth

century and grew through the Middle Ages was the decrease in the number of adults who

received confirmation. Because of the influx of converts, bishops were unable to be

present at all the baptism celebrations, so many baptized were unable to receive

confirmation (Jungkuntz 25). People waited until the bishop was available. In the Middle

Ages, many adults never received confirmation, though they continued to participate in

the Eucharist (Heugel 304-05). At the Council of Florence in the fifteenth century,

leaders decided that bishops could grant priests the ability to perform the sacrament of

confirmation in their stead (O'Dwyer 162). When a bishop was unable to be present, the

priest with special permission could perform the rite.

The largest change with confirmation took place during the Protestant

Reformation. Luther, a former Catholic priest, believed that the apostles laid hands on

believers in order for them to receive spiritual gifts, not confirmation. According to

Luther, spiritual gifts were no longer available to Christians, so the laying on of hands

after baptism was no longer necessary. He considered the process of laying hands on

people a way for bishops to feel important (O'Dwyer 138). "Although he would allow the

practice of the Church in regard to other sacraments, he is careful to add that

confirmation should be relegated to the rank of a mere ceremony" (139). Luther did not

consider confirmation as a sacrament.

According to Luther, when people were baptized in the New Testament, they also

received "Spirit-baptism" (Girgensohn 53). Baptism and confirmation were not two

separate rites. The fact that the Holy Spirit came after baptism in Acts 8:17 and before

baptism in Acts 10 shows that "God is free to act any way he wishes" (54). Baptism is the

means through which a person joins the community of believers and the communion of

the Holy Spirit.

In 1529, Luther published *The Large Catechism*. This work instructed children

and uneducated people in the minimum amount of knowledge required to be a Christian.

He desired that people meditate on his catechism just as Deuteronomy 6:7,8 commanded

them to meditate on Scripture (4). In his introduction Luther writes, "[W]hoever does not

possess [this knowledge] should not be reckoned among Christians nor admitted to a

sacrament" (6). Luther was very serious when considering the education of Christians:

> These are the most necessary parts of Christian instruction. We should
> learn to repeat them word for word. Our children should be taught the
> habit of reciting them daily when they rise in the morning, when they go
> to their meals, and when they go to bed at night; until they repeat them
> they should not be given anything to eat or drink. (7)

The catechism included five areas of instruction: the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, baptism, and communion. Luther expected his congregation to memorize the five areas and recite them daily as these areas covered the entire Christian doctrine (8). According to many standards today, Luther appears very stringent. However, his statement indicates that he had the Shema in mind as he wrote his catechism.

Phillip Melanchthon, a follower of Luther, continued the fight against the sacrament of confirmation. He claimed that confirmation was merely a time when candidates were examined in Christian doctrine for initiation (O'Dwyer 139; Jungkuntz 50-52). Confirmation did not impart grace. John Calvin continued this thought and added that the early Church used confirmation as a time when those baptized as infants professed their faith (O'Dwyer 140). The laying on of hands made their profession more special and offered a blessing upon the one making the profession. He too believed the apostles laid hands upon people for the impartation of spiritual gifts, but the gifts were no longer available to the church, so the original meaning is gone. Calvin taught that the church added the sacrament of confirmation during a time of its corruption and was thus an empty sign.

Pope Paul III called a special council to deal with the assumingly erroneous teachings of the reformers in the sixteenth century. During a preliminary meeting of the Council of Trent, a list of errors extracted from the writings of the Protestants was read. Four of these errors pertained to confirmation:

> 1) Confirmation is not a sacrament; 2) It was instituted by the Fathers, and has no promise of grace; 3) It is now a useless ceremony, and was formerly nothing more than a statement of faith, made by children before

the Church; 4) A bishop is not the sole minister thereof; but any priest may confer it. (O'Dwyer 141)

This list of *errors* clearly defines what the Protestant Reformers thought about the sacrament of confirmation. The Council of Trent solidified the definition of the sacrament of confirmation (O'Dwyer 1; Marsh 13).

In 1468 the Bohemian Brethren describe a Protestant rite of confirmation. First, a leader introduces the child, along with his or her godparents, to the congregation. The godparents testify concerning the instruction they promised to give the child at his or her baptism. The leader examines the child in front of the congregation and asks if he or she wishes to continue in the Christian faith. Upon successful examination, the pastor lays hands on the child and prays for his or her spiritual strength. The church receives the child as a full member and communion is celebrated with the congregation (Jungkuntz 36-37).

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), the Swiss reformer, also proposed a period of instruction for baptized youth. He maintained that the rite of confirmation was merely a renewal of baptismal vows (Jungkuntz 52). The English Puritans used the confirmation ceremony as a service of membership (68). The Protestant Reformation strengthened the concept that youth and unchurched people needed to be instructed in the Christian faith before receiving vows of membership to the church and denied the Catholic belief that confirmation was a sacrament in which grace was bestowed.

The Church of England, founded by Henry VIII in 1533 ("Historical Foundations") continued the practice of baptism as defined by the Catholic Church. It did not, however, continue the practice of confirmation as a sacrament, though it was considered a means of grace (Borgen, "Baptism" 27.2 102). In some places strong

reactions arose against confirmation as a sacrament (Lampe 310). Confirmation became known only as the completion of the baptismal vows (Borgen, "Baptism" 27.2 101). Confirmation in the Protestant movement is a ceremony of public profession for those who were baptized as infants, where the vows spoken on their behalf are confirmed (Lampe 313).

Protestant Confirmation Today

Today, many views exist concerning the value and role of confirmation. The following material explores some of the contemporary voices in order to discern what role they believe confirmation plays in today's church.

Monkres and Ostermiller. Peter R. Monkres and R. Kenneth Ostermiller write about confirmation from the perspective of the United Church of Christ. They report, "[T]he practice of the rite of confirmation lacks clarity and impact" (1). They believe the traditional approach to confirmation has failed in the Catholic and Protestant churches. The traditional approach they describe consists of an educational program for junior and senior high students over a span of one to two years. At the conclusion of the program, the hope is that the students will become active members in the life of the church. They report that many baby boomers that completed this type of approach are no longer active in their faith (1). The program is not producing the desired effect of strengthening faith and commitment to Christian community; rather, confirmation serves as a type of graduation from church (2).

Monkres and Ostermiller identify three major approaches to confirmation found in mainline denominations (2). The first approach is the traditional confirmation class consisting of a formal type of schooling. The students learn about Christian history, the

Bible, church polity, and denominational doctrine. The structure is mostly lecture. The second approach involves a little more interaction with the students as the focus is on contemporary issues. The teacher leads discussions revolving around teen struggles and how faith can make a difference in all life's issues. The third approach involves action. Students are provided an opportunity to see their faith in action as they participate in mission projects in their community and abroad. Class time is spent debriefing these experiences and relating them to the social gospel.

Historically, confirmation was a one-time rite. The church took measures to make sure people did not repeat confirmation. Today in the church, children are baptized, receive communion, and then are confirmed. Monkres and Ostermiller believe the church should return to the historical method of initiation, where people, including infants, were baptized, confirmed, and then participated in communion (23-24). He believes confirmation should consist of repeatable rites offered in the lives of church members as they express their faith through times of trial and times of great joy. Confirmation would then become a "faith-forming" experience (25). It becomes the rite that celebrates major events in the lives of the faithful.

Monkres and Ostermiller offer five places where the rite of confirmation may take place throughout life (63). Children should experience times of confirmation as they learn about God. The most important thing a child learns is that God is love. When children express God's love, the expression should be confirmed through a celebration. Children also can experience confirmation as they prepare for communion. After they demonstrate their completion of a course and express their desire for communion with God, confirmation exists in the special act of first communion.

When children reach the difficult years of adolescence where they search for their identity, confirmation exists as their faith is tested and they respond faithfully. Confirmation rites affirming their baptism and receiving membership in the church will go a long way to strengthen their faith. As they become young adults and decide on a vocation, they should be confirmed.

Adults can be confirmed as they make lifestyle choices. The church should confirm them as they chose worthy lifelong mates. As they face physical changes in their bodies, retirement, and finally death, they should experience times of confirmation. Confirmation does not need to be a one-time event. If forming faith is the desired result of confirmation, it should be experienced throughout a lifetime.

Pfeiffer. Andrew K. Pfeiffer, from a Lutheran perspective, writes that confirmation is a great opportunity for faith formation. Pastors need to take advantage of this time to develop close relationships with the youth in their churches (34). When young people feel comfortable around their pastor, they open up more and are willing to share experiences and ask questions. Parents and adult mentors should also participate in the confirmation process (37).

Marsh. Thomas Marsh describes the Christian life as a journey of development. A person receives the Holy Spirit as soon as he or she is baptized, even as an infant. His or her spiritual life develops just as does his or her body and psyche. People experience confirmation when they are ready to make their own decision to follow Christ.

Marsh believes that baptism should occur in infancy, or as soon as possible for those who come to the church after infancy. Every child should experience first

communion around seven years old, the age of discretion. Confirmation should take place in their mid teens, as they are ready to make their own decisions (21).

Sawyer. Kieran Sawyer believes that confirmation should not take place until children become adolescents. During the rite of baptism, parents make a public commitment to raise their children in the life of the church and make sure they receive the necessary education to bring them to the next stage. Baptism marks the beginning of their faith formation (41). When children reach the age of discretion, their Christian education should bring them to the place where they are able to receive first communion (42). As they become more Christlike in their mid-teens, they are ready to complete the initiation process through confirmation (42).

These three steps are called the initiation process (26). Through this process a person reaches mature faith in the community of believers. Sawyer believes that people should decide for themselves whether or not to be confirmed. Through the education program and community life, they should be ready to make the decision on their own. Confirmation is not the end. Christian growth continues to take place in the community throughout the duration of life (35).

Confirmation in the United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church finds its roots in the work of John Wesley, an Anglican priest from the eighteenth century. The Methodist movement grew out of a renewal that took place in the Church of England and spread to America (*Book of Discipline* 10). Methodism was dominantly a lay movement in America until the country won its independence from England. Wesley sent Thomas Coke, who joined Francis Asbury as the first bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of

America. With Coke, Wesley sent a prayer book containing his revision of the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (11). In this revision, Wesley omitted the section concerning confirmation (Vogel 20; Jungkuntz 72).

Wesley did not view confirmation as a sacrament because Christ did not institute it (Borgen, "Baptism" 27.2 101). The vows taken on behalf of an infant at baptism belonged to the infant. As the child grew to the age of discretion, the vows grew, too, so confirmation became unnecessary (101). For Wesley, confirmation was the experience of Christian growth begun in baptism and lasting a lifetime (Jungkuntz 72; Moore 21). Baptized infants were given a promise from their parents and godparents that they would be taught the ways of Christ and the church as they grew (Borgen, "Baptism" 27.2 94). Confirmation was not necessary as children grew in the church.

Wesley's doctrine on entire sanctification took the place confirmation played in the Anglican Church. As noted earlier, the Anglican Church closely followed the Roman Catholic view of confirmation. Jeremy Taylor, an Anglican scholar Wesley respected, believed that through confirmation, the believer becomes perfect. Through confirmation the believer receives the power of the Holy Spirit, which makes the life of holiness possible (Wood 246). Confirmation empowers the "babe in Christ" to become mature in the Spirit (247). Wesley's views of conversion and entire sanctification match very closely to the Anglican rites of baptism and confirmation (248).

Laurence W. Wood notes three advantages of associating more closely confirmation with Wesley's concept of Christian perfection. Foremost among them is the idea that the association "would have served as a perpetual and public witness and reminder to the Church of God's sanctifying grace, even as baptism has so functioned as

a constant public reminder of God's justifying love and regenerating grace" (25).

Confirmation could strengthen Wesley's doctrine on Christian perfection as it connects

this second work of grace to the life of the church. Wood believes that "the rite of

confirmation could be a source for the revitalization of the corporate life of the Church as

the body of Christ, as well as a source of enrichment for the spiritual life of young

converts" (240). The idea of moving from "babes in Christ" to mature Christians,

empowered by the Holy Spirit, encourages young Christians to utilize God's power in

their everyday lives. Confirmation can serve this purpose as a beginning point for the rest

of the mature Christian life. Confirmation can be the catalyst towards entire

sanctification.

The earliest membership rite in the Methodist Episcopal church was declared at

the Methodist Conference of 1864. The only condition for membership up to this point

was "a desire to flee from the wrath to come and be saved from … sins" (Borgen,

"Baptism" 27.2 107). In order to join the church before 1864 one had to be baptized and

endure six months of probation where a class leader met with the probationer to prepare

them for membership. When they were ready, the class leader presented him or her to the

minister who accepted them as a member of the church. The new member received a

ticket, which would admit them to communion and class meetings. Membership was not

permanent as the ticket was renewable quarterly based upon the progress of the member

(108). Christian instruction and spiritual growth were considered a lifelong process of

sanctification. If either ceased to exist in a church member, its ticket was not renewed.

The first form of church membership in the Methodist Church was an *admission* ticket

issued by the minister.

After 1864 a formal membership rite was established (Borgen, "Baptism" 27.2 109). Baptism was no longer viewed as entrance into the church, though it remained a prerequisite. As Wesley desired, confirmation did not exist in the nineteenth century (109). Unlike the Church of England, the only requirement to receive communion was baptism (102).

The *Book of Discipline* records in 1908 that the imposition of hands in confirmation was still not a practice of the Methodist Episcopal Church. By 1939, however, many pastors incorporated the laying on of hands to their order for membership (Borgen, "Baptism" 27.3 172). People were received into the church by the pastor with a form that resembled the confirmation rite but with completely different philosophies (172). The procedure was completely changed in 1964 when the general conference approved "The Order of Confirmation and Reception into the Church" (172).

United Methodists now believe that confirmation is an act of the Holy Spirit that can be repeated (Vogel 21). Through confirmation the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to live the Christian life professed before the congregation. The laying on of hands symbolizes the continuing gift of the Holy Spirit first given at Pentecost, which continues throughout life.

With the change in 1964 came requirements for confirmation. Those who wished to be confirmed must have been baptized as an infant or child before the age of discretion. They also had to be instructed in Christian doctrine and the duties of the faithful. Upon completion of their instruction, they were required to stand before the congregation and renew their baptismal vows and profess Christ as their Lord and Savior, as well as faith in the Old and New Testaments. They also promised to live the Christian

life and remain a faithful member of the church, by God's grace (Borgen, "Baptism" 27.3

173). The pastor then laid hands on them and they were confirmed. Though membership

training has always been a part of the Methodist heritage, confirmation is a new

development in the history of Methodism (Krueger 36).

Today in the United Methodist Church, confirmation consists of a call to

Christian discipleship as people reach the age of accountability. Baptized young people

are called to make a public profession of their faith before the congregation (*Claim the

Name* 4; Krueger 42). The goal of confirmation is to train youth to become more like

Jesus. They should already know enough about Christ; they now need to know Christ

more (Willimon, "Taking Confirmation" 271). Confirmation is used in the United

Methodist Church to affirm one's faith, be strengthened by the Spirit, and be

commissioned for mission (Krueger 42). It is a divine work of the Holy Spirit,

empowering the person to live faithfully as a disciple of Christ ("Vogel" 20).

The *Book of Discipline* states that youth in the sixth grade are appropriate

candidates for confirmation instruction (136). Krueger agrees because youth who are

younger than sixth grade may be unable to understand some of the abstract ideas found in

the curriculum. Youth in the midst of adolescence may struggle with identity issues, so a

solid foundation in their beliefs will help them through this time (41). Confirmation can

provide the necessary foundation.

According to William H. Willimon the church needs to do a better job at retaining

youth. "Protestant churches have become the last stop for youth on their way *out* [original

emphasis] of church" ("Taking Confirmation" 272). The church needs to make sure

confirmation involves what it should to train youth for Christian witness in the world, not to be used as a graduation ceremony (Krueger 42).

The typical confirmation curriculum provides the necessary information for youth to be able to proclaim Christ by the end of their instruction. "Deliberate preparation for this event focuses on the young person's self-understanding and appropriation of Christian doctrines, spiritual disciplines, and life of discipleship" (Vogel 21). Youth are led through an overview of the Christian faith. Classes discuss such things as one's identity in Christ, the place Scripture plays in one's faith, the history and heritage of the church, and practices, beliefs, and commitment expected of United Methodists (*Claim the Name* 4).

United Methodist Confirmation Materials

I identified three major curriculums used for confirmation in the United Methodist Church. Other curriculums used in the past still exist, and some churches even develop their own. The following three are the major curriculums used in the church today.

Journey to Discipleship

The first curriculum is called *Journey to Discipleship: Confirmation Curriculum for United Methodists* authored by Keith Cupples and Harvey G. Throop. It is a very in-depth study written at the junior high level consisting of twenty-six lessons in five units. "The contents provide a basic understanding of our Christian heritage and faith" (T-1). Every lesson is filled with pertinent information concerning the topic with discussion questions throughout the text. At the end of every lesson is a creative assignment with the purpose to reflect upon the material in creative ways. Many of the assignments involve searching outside the classroom.

The curriculum is structured into five units. The first asks, "What is the church?" (Cupples and Throop 3-14) This unit discusses the church as a building, an organization, and a people. The second covers, "God calls a People." (15-46) The instruction begins in lesson four with creation and ends in lesson eleven with the return of the Babylonian exiles. The third unit is, "God sends a Savior." (47-70) Lesson twelve begins the unit with the birth of Jesus and leads the students through his ministry, death, and resurrection. The fourth unit covers, "God empowers the church" (71-82). This unit begins with lesson eighteen where the church is born on the day of Pentecost and leads the students through the New Testament church, the Reformation, and Methodism. The fifth unit is, "God's people live the faith" (83-105). The instruction begins with understanding United Methodist worship and discusses such topics as the sacraments, prayer, the Bible, service for Christ, and, in lesson twenty-six, the decision to commit to following Christ.

This curriculum is an excellent resource. It provides solid foundational teaching that is easy to understand by junior high students. It also emphasizes the use of mentors that enhances the program. The assignments at the end of each lesson provide the means for hands-on learning.

Claim the Name

Claim the Name is an eight-week United Methodist curriculum created for youth in grades six through eight published by Cokesbury. The authors of the curriculum created the lessons in a way that they are open for modification by the teacher. Each lesson provides handouts to be used during the teaching time and corresponds with certain activities in the student's book. The lesson plans include the goals of each lesson,

the core teaching value, the Scriptures used throughout the lesson, supplies and preparation needed before the class, and a script with which to lead discussion. The lessons also provide excellent ideas for class activities.

The curriculum strongly encourages participants to attend Sunday worship services regularly and be involved in serving others (*Claim the Name* 14). Retreats are also an excellent way to build relationships and deepen discussions. Among churches that offer confirmation, fifty-one percent provide at least one retreat experience (14). Visiting other places of worship will also add to the confirmation experience as a way to expand the participants' awareness of the differences between God's people (12). The curriculum encourages everyone in the church to participate in the formation experience by signing up as a prayer partner for one of the youth, purchasing gifts to distribute throughout the experience, or one of many other creative ways to be involved (6-7).

The curriculum includes the basic teachings of the church. The first chapter talks about God, sin, and grace. The second chapter discusses who Jesus is and his relationship to individuals. The third chapter teaches about the gift of the Holy Spirit. The fourth chapter details United Methodist worship and the use of the Bible. The fifth chapter talks about the many ways individuals can experience ministry in the church, community, and world. The sixth chapter details the United Methodist heritage. The seventh chapter talks about Wesley's general rules and going on to perfection. The last chapter encourages participants to claim the name of Jesus and describes the confirmation ceremony (*Claim the Name*).

Claim the Name curriculum comes complete with all kinds of supporting material. One support resource for teachers is *Claiming the Name: A Theological and Practical*

Overview of Confirmation. This resource is intended to prepare the teacher to become more comfortable with the theological information in order to teach the course. In addition to the *Claim the Name Student Book*, the curriculum also provides five keepsake books to be distributed at strategic moments during the course (*Claim the Name)*. The *Student Book* is used along with the curriculum while the keepsake books reinforce what is experienced in class. Also existing is *A Visual Treasury of United Methodism* containing posters that can be hung to help create a learning environment (*Claim the Name*). The curriculum also provides a mentor's book and a parent's book, *Claim the Name: Talk Points for Mentors and Youth,* and *Claim the Name: Talk Points for Parents and Youth*. A resource that helps prepare retreats is called *Claim the Name: Retreats for Continuing the Journey*.

Two more curriculum books (teaching plans for six through fifteen weeks and thirty-nine weeks) are available for those who wish to provide a longer learning experience. After youth are confirmed, they continue to grow so the curriculum provides lesson plans for those who graduate from high school, found in *Faith Exploration for Older Youth and Young Adults*. As youth grow through adolescence and forget some of the lessons they have learned, returning to the key elements will strengthen their faith. Last, the curriculum provides a Web site with more ideas, which can be found in the teaching plans (*Claim the Name)*.

Claim the Name provides a wonderful arsenal of information, activities, and ideas to use when teaching confirmation. The lesson plans are not as easy to use as those found in *Journey to Discipleship* and *We Believe*. The author's intention was that teachers

would modify the lesson to meet their particular situations, so more preparatory work is involved. Overall, it is an excellent resource tool for the United Methodist Church.

We Believe

We Believe is a thirteen-week United Methodist curriculum developed for those in junior high. It is very easy to understand and includes detailed information in the areas to be studied. The purpose of this curriculum is "to help the young people in your congregation understand what it means to be a Christian and a member of The United Methodist Church" (*We Believe, Teacher* 3).

The teacher's guide is very easy to use and details necessary preparation for every lesson. Each session is related to one of the vows the participants will take on confirmation Sunday. Objectives clearly outline learning expectations. The lessons involve ways for participants to experience learning objectives as well as discussion starters. Handouts are available to distribute during certain lessons, and every lesson ends with homework assignments ranging from writing in their journals and memorizing Scripture, to activities to complete for discussion during the next class.

Lesson topics during the thirteen weeks include an introduction to the course, the church, the Bible, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the history of the Christian church, United Methodist worship, the sacraments, the meaning of being a Christian, how to be faithful disciples in the church, how to live your faith in the world, and the meaning of being a Christian. The curriculum encourages every participant in the class to meet with an adult mentor throughout the course of study.

We Believe is an excellent resource for confirmation studies. The lessons pertain to the basics of the Christian faith and offer hands-on experiences to enhance learning.

Thirteen weeks provide enough time to develop relationships among the participants, the

teacher, and the mentors. *We Believe* is the study used in the ministry intervention of this

dissertation.

Ministry Participation and Spiritual Development

James 2:14-17 describes faith and works:

> What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no
> deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without
> clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well;
> keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what
> good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by
> action, is dead.

James teaches Christians that in order for faith to be alive, it must be accompanied by

good works. This section discusses the importance of ministry participation on the

spiritual development of Christians.

Serving others has always been at the heart of God. Jesus demonstrates service as

he washed his disciples' feet (John 13:3-17) and laid down his life for the world (John

10:14-18). With this example in mind, followers of Christ are called to the same. Craig

Dykstra offers a list of the practices of faith that constitute a Christian's life found in

Beryl Hugen, Terry A. Wolfer, and Jennifer Ubels Renkema's "Service and Faith."

Number seven of that list of fourteen is, "Carrying out specific faithful acts of service and

witness together" (412). Part of faith includes acts of service. Faith cannot be thoroughly

formed without acts of service.

Phillip A. Amerson and Earl D. C. Brewer write that from the very beginning the

Methodist movement cared socially for people (80). In 1739 Wesley purchased a

munitions factory and turned it into a medical clinic with a book room and preaching

center. The purpose was to care for those who could not care for themselves. Wesley took care of widows and orphans by offering literacy and food distribution programs (81).

Personal holiness was the starting point in Wesley's Methodism, but the practice of human love, which could only be expressed to another, was the desired end (Amerson and Brewer 81). Class members made covenant with each other to act in charity toward the prisoner, widow, and impoverished. "The Methodist approach to faith … was centered in … the experience of the heart and the experience of the street" (83). Throughout their history Methodists have been active in such social reforms as slavery, suffrage, peace, child labor, and alcohol abuse (87). According to Wesley, the gospel of Christ is a social gospel.

Randolph A. Nelson describes how faith and social ministry go hand in hand (221-41). Most people assume that faith leads to social ministry, but social ministry also has great influence on faith (222; Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema 410). The relationship between them is reciprocal. "Faith gives to social ministry motivation, impetus, direction and goal. Social ministry gives to faith expression, embodiment, and nourishment" (Nelson 226). Faith and ministry are both shaped through the relationship they share. Not only does community ministry develop faith through serving others, it also helps meet the needs of the community (Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema 410).

Faith is created through an encounter with God (Nelson 224). Sometimes people first encounter God through an act of ministry, such as serving in a soup kitchen. Encountering God through the act of ministry serves as a transforming experience, and faith is born (226). At other times people perform an act of service because of their faith convictions (Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema 410). The Christian community is called to

serve the will of God, which involves serving others (Webber 104). The act of service strengthens and nurtures their faith as they respond to God's call upon their lives (Nelson 240).

Participation in ministry provides opportunity for Christians to exercise faith. When a person experiences another's needs being met through the work of their own hands, their faith increases. Community ministry is scriptural and needed. Carl S. Dudley says, "[T]ouching the lives of others is spiritually satisfying in ways that are different from worship and prayer, different from fellowship and study. Social ministries carry their own uniquely transforming power to all who participate" (169). Faith is exercised through ministry participation causing substantial growth.

Faith is desperately needed in today's world. When people see others volunteering their time and giving their resources, faith is given a place in the world: "Involvement in social ministry refuses any suggestion that God is limited to specific segments or dimensions of life. Rather, God is found where men and women struggle with the unjust realities of life" (Nelson 241). Faith is needed because the world will never be perfect (240).

In *Christian Spiritual Formation*, Susanne Johnson talks about how Christians are instructed through God's word to participate in the same activities Jesus demonstrated. Every Christian's duty includes involvement in the "realm of God, [which] refers to God's presence and activity in human affairs" (44). She describes how baptism is a type of Christian ordination to ministry participation (53). James White supports this claim with two of his five images central to the early Christian's view of baptism. First, through baptism Christians are united to Christ and his work (36). Every believer is called to

share in his ministry of reconciliation and redemption. Second, the Holy Spirit is given to empower Christians for participation in ministry (38). The early Christians took seriously what James instructed and passed it on through the centuries. Baptism calls Christians to ministry participation.

God is actively at work in the lives of every person on earth. The spiritual life involves individuals' participation with God. The purpose of the church is to educate people to the point where they can see where God is already at work in order to be able to join him, empowered through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Johnson 54). Henry T. and Richard Blackaby say, "It is not enough for leaders to hear from God and then relay the message to the people. Each believer must learn to recognize God's voice and understand what he saying" (129). The purpose for this recognition is so that they will be able to participate with God and grow spiritually. The confirmation class is a perfect place to help youth identify their spiritual gifts, learn how to recognize God's voice, and put into practice what they learn (Webber 106).

Johnson discusses the meaning of having a human vocation (60-61). Baptism is the means through which people are introduced to it as they participate in the work of God. Vocation does not describe one's job, career, or volunteer work. It involves participation in what God is doing wherever one finds oneself. It involves everyday life under the direction of the Holy Spirit, not pursuing individual desires, but the desires of God as he ministers to all his children.

Johnson believes that spiritual disciplines are an essential component leading to ministry participation:

> [They] authenticate the Christian life when they evoke compassion in us, sensitize us to what God is doing in the world, prompt us to embrace the

stranger, inspire in us heartfelt affection for God and neighbor, create in us the capacity for self-giving love, and lead us to authentic self-love. (69)

Spiritual disciplines lead people as they fulfill the greatest commandment to love God with all their hearts, souls, and minds, and the second commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matt. 22:36-39). If people are unable to practice what Johnson describes, all that is left is "bogus spirituality" (69).

As young people learn how to live out their vocation, experience plays a very important role. Johnson provides a process for vocation formation (149). The first step is to become a Christian and submit oneself to biblical and spiritual instruction. Through instruction the new believer will (1) become acquainted with Jesus, (2) learn about the message of Christ and the apostolic church, (3) help the new believer interpret and live the message, (4) learn discipleship skills (5) learn how to engage the culture with the purpose to shape the public, (6) learn how to reflect upon their experience of grace, and (7) learn how to use their own witness instead of relying on others'.

The church is the means through which one learns and lives out faith. As God's word is learned through instruction, it must be experienced through application. Confirmation should not only be instructional but also include hands-on experiences (Moore 38; Willimon, "Taking Confirmation" 271; Krueger 40).

Jana Struková writes about a vocational approach to confirmation from the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran understanding. The Slovaks also experience a problem with young people leaving the church after confirmation (69). Like all other denominations that use confirmation, they believe it should represent the entry point to the practices of active Christian faith. Strukova thinks that the vocational approach will shape the young person to accept a lifelong practice of living the Word (70). The vocational model challenges

youth to understand and profess their baptismal faith and live it through a profession of

active witness both in the church and the world (70). Implementing a vocational model

would train youth to use the spiritual gifts available to them to meet people's needs (78).

The vocational model of confirmation prepares young people for ministry as they

are given opportunities to act upon their faith and spiritual gifts in the life of the local

church. As they participate in the ministry of the church, they are nurtured into owning

their faith (Struková 80). Many opportunities for participation exist in the church for

young people. They can read scripture during the worship service, usher, share testimony,

serve in children's church, visit the elderly, or serve in the helping ministries. Ministry

practice in their home church prepares them for ministry outside the church. It also

allows them to experience their importance in the body of Christ and teaches leadership

skills (81).

The confirmation rite becomes a public witness of vocation as young persons live

out their faith in their everyday lives (Struková 75). The transforming power of the Holy

Spirit becomes a witness to the world around them. Vocational ministry may help young

people remain active in the life of the church as they are called to consistency between

their faith and deeds.

In his book John Dettoni writes about service activities and maturation:

> Service activities are central to a youth program because for learning to be
> effective, one must be actively involved in the process of acquiring and
> using data.… As members internalize the data and begin to see how it
> works out in practical ways, they continue in the maturing process. (105-
> 06)

The best way to grow and learn is through active involvement. Walt Marcum discusses

how powerful mission trips and service projects are in the spiritual lives of youth (104).

Many times after a mission trip, I heard the youth talk about the impact the trip played on their lives. They could not wait until the next trip. They were excited because they experienced their faith in action.

Dettoni offers six reasons youth ministry should include service projects (106-09). The first reason is that service projects provide an opportunity for youth to express what they learn in the classroom setting. Youth need to be active, which leads to the second reason: If the program does not allow room for activity, the youth will become bored and will not return. Service projects are the best setting for experience-oriented learning.

Third, service projects fulfill the mission of the church. In order to be Christlike, people must serve each other, especially those in need. Christ demonstrated service to his followers and God equips his people with the necessary spiritual gifts. Service is a Christian obligation.

Fourth, service projects meet the needs of youth. Young people spend years in the classroom learning everything they need to become a productive part of society. Service projects meet their need as they are able to put what they learn to practice. Everyone experiences times of weakness in life and service projects teach youth how to trust God.

Fifth, youth mature at a rapid rate while serving. Inward change is experienced as they see God at work through them, helping others in need. Service projects produce a spiral effect as youth continue to need more of God's self-revelation. They will never exhaust their need of God's presence in their lives working through them. When youth are given responsibility, they grow through their successes and failures. They have opportunity to live up to the great expectations service projects create. Through service

projects youth develop leadership qualities that will benefit them and the church in the future.

Sixth, service projects create a sense of unity among the group. Every mission team I brought home in the past grew closer because of their work together. Through their work together, they actually become "the fellowship of believers" as they share more of themselves (Dettoni 109). More ministry takes place among the group than outside the group.

Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema tested the impact ministry participation plays on Christian formation. Their study included thirty-five Protestant Christian congregations from urban and suburban locations with at least one community ministry. The congregations came from six states and represented mainline and evangelical denominations with ethnic diversity (415).

The research team developed a scale on which to measure how often participants participated in certain practices of faith. The study showed a positive correlation between community ministry involvement and faith; however, it did not show which one influenced the other. The scale measured a significant increase on every item for those who participated in community ministry (Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema 417). It also showed an increased motivation to serve in the participants (420). Community ministry increases participants' practices of faith and impacts positive changes in values and attitudes (423). Their conclusion is that learning occurs best when accompanied with service along with religious reflection (424). Churches must incorporate ministry participation in their learning activities in order to increase faith in participants.

With all the evidence concerning the effects and advantages of ministry participation on faith, the church must include it in the instruction of young people. When they are allowed to practice their faith through ministry participation it will be strengthened and spiritual growth will occur. As young people learn about their spiritual heritage and faith and the meaning of Christian living in the confirmation program, ministry participation must be part of the curriculum.

Youth Development

Every person follows a basic pattern of human development. Knowing these developmental patterns is helpful when teaching confirmation. Some of the most dramatic changes in a person's life take place during early adolescence, which occurs while one is involved in the confirmation process. Knowing these patterns may help give insight into the spiritual development of youth and increase their spiritual satisfaction. Developmental psychological theories strive to explain these patterns, as do moral developmental theories and religious developmental theories. This section focuses on the three areas of developmental theories: cognitive, moral, and spiritual.

An important fact to know before studying these theories is that adolescence is a new phenomenon in American society (Lambert 36-37; Hymans 196). In the past children assumed adult responsibilities around the age of twelve. All cultures had a way to move their children into adulthood, and many still do today. In the United States, as boys reached age twelve, they learned a trade, usually with their fathers, and girls married. This practice began to change, however, with the industrial revolution as children began to work in factories.

The most significant change took place after World War II when soldiers returned to their civilian jobs. In order to open jobs at the factories, the government enforced compulsory education for all children up to the age of sixteen. The education process moved forward the normal age for marriage. Slowly, it continued to be pushed further ahead as children graduated from high school at the age of eighteen, and even further as children attended college.

According to Dan Lambert, American "society has created a developmental stage that is not biologically necessary" (37). Adolescence is the new span between childhood and adulthood. Biologically, people in this category are ready to begin a family, but this process has been put on hold as they are required to finish their schooling and secure a good job. Because of this delay, negative consequences are inevitable (37). The negative consequences are mostly a result of more freetime, frustrated hormones, and confused family and social roles (38). Confirmation may be used as a type of rite of passage to help adolescents grow into adulthood. Involving adolescents in ministry gives them the sense of industry they once experienced before the Industrial Revolution. Young teens are ready to begin contributing to the society in which they live.

Cognitive and Psychosocial Development

Many psychological developmental theories are available today. This section focuses on the main two theories from which most other theories come. Cognitive theories focus on how the human mind changes over the course of a lifetime (Kagan and Gall 215). Psychosocial theories focus on how personalities develop. Included in the discussion of these theories is their connection to ministry participation in the learning process.

Jean Piaget. Piaget believes that every human is born with two tendencies. The first is what he calls organizational tendency, which involves the need to organize all the words, ideas, and experiences encountered into some type of mental structure (Steele 70). The second is the adaptation tendency, which refers to the tendency to adapt to one's environment (70). People organize and adapt in two ways: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation involves the way people fit new information into existing categories. Accommodation involves creating new categories for information that does not fit into existing categories.

Based on this information Piaget created four stages of cognitive development. Cognitive development does not occur at specific ages but as people engage their environment. If the environment does not provide the stimulus needed, development will not occur (Steele 71). Also, people are not able to skip stages. Every stage must be experienced in the order in which it comes.

Piaget's first stage is called sensorimotor cognition, which is found in infants to 2 ½ years old. Through sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste, infants make sense out of the world around them. The second stage is pre-operational thinking and occurs in children age two to seven. Thinking in this stage is not logical but intuitive and magical. Children often attribute life to inanimate objects (Steele 71). The third stage is concrete operations, found in children from seven to eleven. During this stage logical operations begin to take place and "new experiences are assessed in relation to prior experiences" (72). During this stage hypothetical thinking is still not possible. Children are only able to think about concrete objects rather than ideas (Kagan and Gall 164; Boshers and Anderson 85). The final stage is called formal operations and begins at age eleven or twelve. At this stage

people are able to "apply logical operations to hypothetical situations" (Steele 72). They can begin to speculate about what can happen in the future, reason, and argue (Kagan and Gall 164; Boshers and Anderson 85).

The formal operation stage begins just before the student starts confirmation. One reason confirmation does not begin until junior high is because before this time students are unable to work with hypothetical situations. Students must ask pertinent questions before committing to the vows of membership, which take place after the confirmation class. Formal operations will help the students connect the material they learn in class with the work they do through ministry participation, which should affect their spiritual satisfaction as they come to understand answers to the question, "Why?"

Erik Erikson. Erikson developed eight psychosocial stages that cover the entire life span. Each stage involves a central conflict, which may or may not be overcome. Positive outcome produces positive development.

Erikson's eight stages including the conflicts are (1) infancy with trust versus mistrust, (2) toddlerhood with autonomy versus shame & doubt, (3) preschool with initiative versus guilt, (4) schoolage with industry versus inferiority, (5) adolescence with identity versus identity confusion, (6) young adulthood with intimacy versus isolation, (7) middle adulthood with generativity versus self-absorption, and (8), later adulthood with integrity versus despair (Steele 79). As confirmation deals mainly with the adolescent stage, I discuss this stage only.

Erikson believes that the "central task of adolescence is carving out a new identity amidst the physical and emotional upheavals of this period" (Kagan and Gall 267). As children reach this stage, they are biologically ready to begin their own families yet are

not ready socially or emotionally. Children find difficulty establishing their new adult

identity while still living with their parents who may or may not allow them opportunity

to *grow up*. Because of this difficulty they look for ways to deal with their insecurities

(267).

Personal identity is the most important developmental task for adolescents.

Identity is defined as the "internal, self-constructed structure of abilities, beliefs,

attitudes, and individual history that provides young people with a sense of both their

own uniqueness and their similarity to others" (Hymans 198). In other words, personal

identity answers the question, "Who am I?" If adolescents are unable to achieve their

own identities in this stage, they will experience identity confusion, which will affect

development in future stages. Without strong personal identities, they will be unable to

achieve intimacy in young adulthood.

Diane J. Hymans suggests this quest for identity focuses on three areas of life:

"(1) becoming comfortable with one's sexuality, (2) finding a vocation, and (3)

constructing an ideology, a system of beliefs and values that will provide direction in

life" (201). The church can be a great help in each of these areas as youth leaders and

teachers pay special attention and allow youth to talk about what is on their mind without

judging them. The ministry participation component of confirmation should help them

answer the question, "Who am I?" as they practice their faith and discern their abilities as

they serve.

Peers become an important sounding board in identity development—even above

the advice parents might give (Hymans 200). In fact, adolescents tend to question some

of what their parents taught them to believe as they search for their own identity (201).

An interesting phenomenon occurs in early adolescence that some refer to as the

"imaginary audience" (Hymans 201; Lambert 40). Young adolescents sometimes feel

like they are on a stage where everyone is watching them and evaluating their appearance

and behavior. Ministry participation may help them become more comfortable with who

they are as their contribution to others partially constructs their identity. Confirmation

can be a great help for teens as they struggle to define their identity.

Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg was interested in how people make moral decisions and the

development of moral reasoning. He developed a six-stage theory based on John

Dewey's three levels of morality (Steele 72-73; Lambert 48). He calls the first level

preconventional. "At this level, moral reasoning revolves around questions of good and

bad or right and wrong … understood in terms of physical consequences" (Steele 73).

The first stage defines what is right or wrong based on consequences. The more

punishment one receives, the more wrong the action. The individual focus is on self. In

the second stage, right behavior is defined by self-interest. Individuals make decisions

based on the rewards of that decision. They think more about others, but the focus is still

on the self.

Kohlberg calls the second level conventional. At this level desires of the group

become more important to maintain (73). Loyalty has greater impact than possible

consequences. At stage three, pleasing relationships becomes important. The individual

does what is necessary to support personal roles. Individuals act a certain way because

they want to be liked. Most youth are found at this level as they declare, "Everybody's

doing it" (Lambert 48; Boshers and Anderson 89). At stage four laws become important.

One behaves a certain way because it is the law. Individual approval is not as important as society's needs. At this stage rules and laws dictate morality. Most people remain at this stage.

Kohlberg calls the third level postconventional. At this level people make judgments based neither on self-interest nor social needs. Judgments are more autonomous. Individuals are separate from society, so decisions should be made based on what is best for the individual, regardless of whether it is self or another. Stage five is social contract driven. Laws are followed as long as they meet the needs of society. When they no longer seem to meet the needs, they should be changed. Stage six is a type of principled morality. Decisions are based on justice. If a law is unjust, it should not be followed. People make decisions based on their own situation apart from laws and rights. According to Kohlberg every human can be placed in one of these six stages.

Most of the students in junior high and many in high school are found at the third stage of level two. Identifying where each individual is in the confirmation class in regard to these stages is helpful with class discussions and preparing them for the next stage. The ministry participation component of confirmation will help students to begin to realize the many reasons to help others and serve God than just because everyone else is doing it.

Cycles of Christian Formation

Les L. Steele composed seven cycles of Christian formation based upon Erikson's approach. The cycles are (1) infancy—nurturing versus neglecting, (2) childhood—enculturating and training versus ignoring, (3) early adolescence—belonging versus alienating, (4) adolescence—searching versus entrenching, (5) young adulthood—

consolidating versus fragmenting, (6) middle adulthood—re-appraising versus re-entrenching; and, (7) later adulthood—anticipating versus dreading (132). He divides adolescence into three stages: early (ages 11-14), middle (ages 15-17), and late (ages 18-25; 141).

In early adolescence the desire to belong is at its peak. Young people at this stage need others who will affirm them and create a place for them in the group. As discussed earlier, this age is where they feel like everyone is watching them. The church must create a safe place where early adolescents can belong. Erikson talks about the need to be industrious at this age. If early adolescents believe they have something to offer the group, they will have a stronger sense of belonging (Steele 142). If what they offer the group is accepted and used, it will lead to a sense of competency and worth (143). Ministry participation in the confirmation class will help students develop this stage in their lives, as the work they do will give them a stronger sense of belonging to the church and should be affirmed.

Early adolescents are at the stage where they are learning how to think formally. They are beginning to build their own reflections and theories. Steele points out four results of this new ability: (1) They think deeper than what they need to; (2) they exhibit a sense of hypocrisy—their behaviors often do not line up with their ideals; (3) they believe that no one feels the way they do—nobody could possibly understand what they are going through; and, (4), they become aware of others' thoughts, including the idea of the imaginary audience spoken about by Hymans and Lambert (144).

Concerning Christian formation, early adolescents finally see themselves as participants in the story of faith rather than just knowing the story (Steele 145). Now that

they have reached the point where they realize they have a part to play, the church must

create that place of involvement. As they participate in ministry, they will experience a

sense of fulfillment and belonging that should help keep them involved in the life of the

church even after they move away. In their new location, they will remember their

experience in the life of the church and seek a similar experience in another church.

Once young persons reach high school, they begin to search for their Christian

identity and faith (Steele 146). During this time they may seem very argumentative as

they flesh out their beliefs. They might begin to question the faith of their parents and the

teachings of the church (Boshers and Anderson 92). Questioning is an important part of

their formation, so adults need to listen without expressing shock at what they hear

(Hymans 205). This period is also a time of strong emotions because of their urge to

belong. An example of this emotional state is clearly seen at the end of a week of camp

where new relationships were established and old deepened. Youth find difficulty in

leaving a place where they belong. Youth leaders need to create ways teens can share

their feelings while being unconditionally accepted (Boshers and Anderson 88).

A virtue of this period in their lives is fidelity. Youth are very committed to the

group. Their commitment is seen most vividly through sporting events. Youth are proud

to wear their school colors and pep rallies are well attended. In the church youth are more

apt to commit their lives to Christ during this time (Steele 148).

The purpose of the church during this period of adolescence is to create

experiences and environments that facilitate Christian formation. The church must create

an atmosphere where youth can make sense out of life in the light of the gospel (Steele

176). Confirmation classes provide excellent opportunities where youth can belong, ask questions concerning their faith, and offer their gifts as service to the church.

Teaching Youth

The United Methodist Church must find ways to teach confirmation so youth catch their faith through different gifts and ways of learning. Creativity, wonder, and excitement in the class help youth learn best (Anderman 6). Teaching youth involves a nurturing process. The Bible is very important for the spiritual growth of teens, so leaders must strive to make it meaningful (Marcum 19). Richard R. Dunn offers five principles that help guide youth leaders as they minister to students in early adolescence (176-80). These principles should be considered when constructing a confirmation experience.

The first principle is to "[a]ssist [youth] in building supportive peer group friendships" (Dunn 176). As discussed earlier, the need to belong is very strong in adolescents, creating more opportunities to get caught in the wrong group. Caring adults can help guide youth as they make decisions concerning friendships. Adults need to be sure youth feel like they are making the decisions for themselves. They do not like adults telling them how to act or what to believe (Hymans 203).

The second principle is to "[c]reate learning experiences that emphasize 'doing the faith' in response to God's love" (Dunn 177). Youth love to be active. Mixing activity with expressions of faith only helps to solidify belief. Truth becomes real to youth when they are able to act upon their beliefs. An exciting part of teaching youth at this age level is that they are just beginning to develop the ability to think abstractly (Moore 31). With a deeper level of thought, ministry participation will help youth think more seriously about their beliefs. Donald M. Joy writes that "action learning [is] a highly effective

means of teaching" (86-87). Joy believes that the best way to learn is in a group of various ages (84). The confirmation class will involve youth of various ages as it spans grades eight through twelve.

The third principle is to "provide them with meaningful adult interaction in their daily lives" (Dunn 178). Early adolescent youth are still at an age where they depend on adults for many things in their lives. The church must use this opportunity to provide investments of quality adult interaction. Parents also need to be involved in helpful ways (Hymans 217). Excellent adult interaction will take place as the youth in the modified group work with the leaders of the ministries in which they participate. This interaction should help increase their spiritual satisfaction.

The fourth principle is to "create opportunities for them to make contributions that highlight their individual value to others" (Dunn 178). Youth crave healthy team experiences that help take the attention off themselves. Friends are very important so leaders should offer opportunities to allow them to work together. Youth will also experience a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment as they contribute to a group effort. Leaders need to make sure, though, not to put them on the spot against their wishes, as this time in their lives is very tender as they experience the many changes in their body; they may be extremely self-conscious (Boshers and Anderson 84).

The fifth principle is to "communicate clear moral boundaries and behavioral expectations" (Dunn 179). As youth search for their identity, adult leaders need to provide strong teaching on biblical truths. At this age many youth can be found at Kohlberg's third stage, where they act a certain way because they want to be liked. The desire to be liked could get them into trouble as they make wrong moral decisions. Youth

need strong biblical direction concerning sex, truthfulness, responsibility for sin, and ethics with schoolwork (179). These are all areas where they will be tempted to go along with the crowd.

Dunn also provides four principles that help guide youth leaders as they minister to middle adolescents. The first principle is to "mentor the middle adolescent toward authenticity and depth in his or her close relationships" (194). As adolescents grow toward Erikson's stage of young adulthood, intimacy will become very important. In an age where marriages do not last, the church needs to help youth learn how to experience depth in relationships. Teaching is especially needed in the area relating to opposite sex relationships. As youth reach their sophomore year in high school, they spend more time with others of the opposite sex, usually one-on-one without adult interaction (195). Adult guidance is necessary to help youth navigate the complex issues of relationships.

The second principle is to "assist [youth] in learning to own, experience and appropriately express their emotions" (Dunn 195). Middle adolescent students handle their emotions better than early adolescents, but they still need help managing them. Youth need to know that they are allowed to experience their emotions (196). Youth need to know that what they feel is normal before they can accept their emotions and grow through them. If they are unable to accept their emotions, they may act them out in unhealthy ways (197).

The third principle is to "model moral maturity, teach moral skills, and nurture maturing moral reasoning" (Dunn 197). Youth learn best through relationships. When they spend time with morally strong adults, they learn the importance of these traits in one's life. Early adolescents can handle the truths about what is right and wrong where

middle adolescents need more interaction in the thinking process (197). Middle adolescents need to be reminded about what they learned while in early adolescence, and allowed the opportunity to process it by asking questions.

The fourth principle is to "provide feedback, support and challenge as [youth] establish their unique identities as men and women of God" (Dunn 198). Feedback is the best tool to use in building quality character in youth. Everybody needs to hear what he or she does well and where he or she needs improvement. Sharing feedback in a positive way encourages youth to become who God made them to be. Pointing out the excellent qualities youth exhibit will encourage them to practice it more. Challenging feedback given in a loving relationship will also encourage youth to change in a positive way.

The ministry participation component uses these principles as youth in early adolescence build friendships, remain active in the church, interact with adults, see their value as they contribute to others' lives, and experience the same expectations as adults in ministry. In middle adolescence, ministry participation will help as students in the modified group learn to maintain deeper relationships where they serve, have opportunity to learn through the various emotions they will experience, learn through relationships with other mature adults in the area they serve, and receive feedback for the work they do. Ministry participation will help to increase their spiritual satisfaction in life.

In their book, Bill McNabb and Steven Mabry discuss Edgar Dale's cone of learning (42). The smallest part of the cone represents the least effective teaching method—verbal activities. People remember only 10 percent of what they learn through verbal methods such as lecture, discussion, sermons, stories, and reading. Verbal methods

are the most popular. In order to make learning more effective, verbal methods must be accompanied by other kinds of learning experiences (43).

The next teaching method in the cone is visual. Visual involves the use of movies, videos, television, maps, and charts (McNabb and Mabry 45). When visual methods are added to verbal methods, they produce greater results in learning. Even greater results are produced when simulated activities are added to the mix. Simulations involve acting out what was learned through role-play, dramas, games, field trips, or creative writing (46). These types of activities also make learning fun.

The best results are found in direct experiences. When teaching about love, youth might practice it by visiting a nursing home. When teaching about the poor, youth might distribute soup at a homeless shelter. People experience 90 percent retention through direct learning experiences (McNabb and Mabry 42). When all these methods are used together, the learning experience is enjoyable by everyone and the message is remembered. Using multiple senses enhances learning (Lambert 75). The ministry participation component of the modified class will provide the best learning situation that, in turn, should have a positive impact on the level of spiritual satisfaction.

Research Design

Three research methods were used to measure the impact ministry participation had on spiritual satisfaction. The first two were quantitative and last was qualitative. A quantitative design is used to determine the relationship between variables (Hopkins). In this study the quantitative design determined the relationship ministry participation had on spiritual satisfaction. In my dissertation I assumed that ministry participation had a positive impact on spiritual satisfaction. In order to measure the success of ministry

participation, the level of spiritual satisfaction prior to the introduction of ministry participation had to be measured using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale developed by Craig Ellison and Raymond Paloutzian, and the Religiosity Measure developed by Rohrbaugh and Jessor.

Spiritual well-being is defined as "the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness" (Ellison 331). A higher spiritual well-being is measured in people who have a more intimate relationship with God (336). Spiritual well-being is something that continues to deepen in people as they mature over time (Butman 24). Richard E. Butman believes that "This instrument is probably one of the most extensively studied measures of religiosity" (24). Since 1976, many various groups, including universities, hospitals, ski clubs, and prisons, have used this questionnaire (Ellison and Smith 39). The scale consists of twenty questions rated on a six-point Likert scale with options ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. This scale was chosen so that confirmation participants could rate their relationship with God as well as their satisfaction with life. Both group's spiritual well-being was measured at the beginning of the confirmation class, at the end, and three months following in order to determine a change.

The Religiosity Measure is an important tool used in research today. "[It] was developed … to evaluate the impact of religion on the respondent's daily, secular life as well as to determine the extent of individual participation in ritual practices" (Boivin 307). Initially, the Religiosity Measure was developed to study the impact religiosity played on deviant behavior in high school and college students. The results showed that religiosity impacted behavior in a positive manner. Those who scored higher in

religiosity had greater control over deviant behavior (Rohrbaugh and Jessor 146). Both

confirmation groups used this measurement as a second evaluative tool for the pretest,

posttest, and posttest follow-up in order to determine participation change in ritual

practices.

This study also includes the use of qualitative research. "The overall purpose of

qualitative research is to uncover in depth knowledge that comes from a study of

participant's perceptions of the world" (Centennial). Researchers study a small number of

participants in order to capture their thoughts and perceptions accurately through their

words. A number of methods can be used to capture their thoughts. For this dissertation I

used focus groups where the participants answered four questions concerning their

participation in ministry and how it affected their spiritual growth. Focus groups were

assembled for each of the two confirmation groups after the completion of the

quantitative questionnaires.

The design used in this dissertation is a mixed methods design. The data from the

quantitative and qualitative tools were mixed to gain a better understanding of the

research (Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick 3). "When used in combination, quantitative and

qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more robust analysis, taking

advantage of the strengths of each" (3). The "Spiritual Well-Being Scale," the

"Religiosity Measure," and the focus group questions were compared against each other

to determine the impact ministry participation had on spiritual satisfaction.

Summary

The research review in this chapter described how instruction was an important

part of God's relationship with humanity through the Old and New Testaments. The

purpose of God's instruction is to remind people that God desires relationship with his creation. The first classroom setting was the Garden of Eden as God commanded the first couple to fill and subdue the earth. After the fall of humanity, God developed a system for people to pass on the instruction he gave from the beginning of time in order to protect and provide for his creation. Jesus was a further expression of God's instruction.

When the church was born in the Book of Acts, new believers received instruction from the apostles. The apostles passed on what they learned from Christ as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. The form of Holy Spirit empowerment that followed the apostolic tradition is known as confirmation. It was the final act of initiation as the bishop laid hands on the new believers and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This process evolved through time as unction was added and eventually confirmation became a separate rite. During the Protestant Reformation confirmation was defined as a sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent. For Protestants, confirmation becomes a time of intense instruction before joining the church.

Historically, confirmation was not a part of the Methodist movement. Wesley believed that a fear of the wrath to come and baptism was all one needed to become a full member of the church. Eventually confirmation crept its way back into the ministry of the church as a form of membership instruction. The United Methodist Church chooses from three major curricula.

Ministry participation is described in the Bible as a necessary practice of the Christian life. It has shown to have positive effects on spiritual development and satisfaction. Successful youth ministries implement active participation on behalf of the

youth in their programs. It proves to be a positive experience in the spiritual lives of the youth.

A number of developmental theories exist today that describe the cognitive development, moral development, and Christian formation in youth. Though adolescence is a new phenomenon in society, it is here to stay. Understanding the development processes in youth helps in the education process. Youth need adult mentoring as they grow through the adolescent stage. Education that involves participation and direct experiences produces the best effects. These findings support my assumption that ministry participation positively impacts spiritual satisfaction.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

Large groups of evangelical youth are leaving their churches to attend college, never to return. The Assemblies of God denomination reports that 66 percent of their youth "turn their backs on Christ and their faith" after leaving high school ("Youth Transition Network"). A better number than the one quoted in Chapter 1 concerning the Southern Baptists, it is still a high figure. My experience in youth ministry has shown some of the same results. Many, after attending fifteen weeks of confirmation class and being confirmed before the church, do not enter it again until Christmas and Easter, or until they are married. The church must address this problem and do what it can to build solid foundations of faith in youth.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of ministry participation on the spiritual satisfaction of teens who participated in a comparative study of a traditional versus a modified fifteen-week confirmation class offered at the Urbana United Methodist Church.

Research Questions and/or Hypotheses

The following three research questions determined the impact ministry participation had on spiritual satisfaction in youth.

Research Question #1

What was the participants' level of spiritual satisfaction before participation in the traditional and modified fifteen-week confirmation classes?

In order to determine whether a change occurred in spiritual satisfaction, a baseline was established. The participants completed the Religiosity Measure questionnaire consisting of eight easy-to-understand questions that "evaluate[d] the impact of religion on [their] daily, secular life as well as determine[d] the extent of [their] individual participation in ritual practices" (Hill and Hood 307). The Spiritual Well-Being Scale consisting of twenty easy-to-understand questions was also administered. The questions, rated on a six-point Likert scale, measured the spiritual well-being of each participant according to their perception. After the administration of the questionnaires, both groups participated in their own focus group where they answered a series of questions concerning their spiritual satisfaction.

Research Question #2

What was the participants' level of spiritual satisfaction after participation in the traditional and modified fifteen-week confirmation classes?

I administered the two instruments and conducted the focus groups at the conclusion of the fifteen-week study. The traditional group and the modified group received the same instruction using the same curriculum. The change that occurred between the two testing results determined whether or not the participants grew in spiritual satisfaction. The tests were administered and focus groups facilitated again after three months to determine whether sustainable difference was noticeable.

Research Question #3

What difference did ministry participation have on spiritual satisfaction for those who participated in the modified fifteen-week confirmation class versus those who participated in the traditional fifteen-week confirmation class?

The two instruments were administered and focus groups facilitated at the conclusion of the fifteen-week study. The change that occurred between the two testing results determined whether or not the participants grew in spiritual satisfaction. Added to the modified group course of study was the ministry participation component. Two focus groups consisting of the traditional and modified group participants assembled, and I asked four open-ended questions to determine the impact ministry participation had on their spiritual satisfaction. I asked other follow-up questions in order to define the intention of the first question and exhaust any trails better. I compared the results from the modified group against the results from the traditional group to determine whether greater change occurred in either of the groups. I administered the tests and facilitated the focus group again after three months to determine whether ministry participation made a sustainable difference. I compared the results from the modified group again against the results of the traditional group to determine whether a substantial difference of change could be measured between the two groups.

Population and Participants

Those who participated in this study were the youth students at the Urbana United Methodist Church. Urbana is a mid-sized town in the West Central region of Ohio with a population of twelve thousand. The participants were youth in grades seven through twelve and their ages ranged from 13 to 18. Seventeen participants were preparatory members of the church, meaning they were all baptized members. One participant was not baptized. The traditional group had nine participants, consisting of five boys and four girls. Two boys were 13 and three were 14. Two girls were 13, one was 14, and one was

17. The modified group also had nine participants with three boys and six girls. One boy was 14 and two were 15. Two girls were 13, three were 14, and one was 18.

The participants consisted of preparatory members and constituents of the church. A sign-up sheet was posted for youth to sign if they were interested in taking the class. The parents of those who signed up received a letter describing the confirmation process and this study and signed a permission statement indicating their agreement for their children to participate. Eighteen youth signed up, and their names were placed in a hat and drawn at random to determine in which group they would participate. The first name drawn from the hat participated in the traditional group. The second name drawn from the hat participated in the modified group, and so on, until both groups received an equal number of students. The eighteen students completed the confirmation class. Sixteen of the students joined the church and only fourteen completed the last questionnaire.

Design of the Study

I led instruction for the class that consisted of the traditional and the modified groups, which met together at the same time and the same place. The class met in the parsonage every Sunday evening from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Participants met with their appointed mentors at their own convenience.

Instrumentation

At the first confirmation meeting, the participants completed two pretest questionnaires in my dining room under my supervision. After the completion of the questionnaires, students answered four focus questions in their respected groups. The pretest and focus group determined their level of spiritual satisfaction before the confirmation class.

The first pretest was the Spiritual Well-Being Scale developed by Ellison and Paloutzian. The test consisted of twenty easy-to-understand questions rated on a six-point Likert scale. Participants answered the questions with options ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Various groups have used the SWBS since 1976, including universities, hospitals, ski clubs, and prisons (Ellison and Smith 39). This test measured the perceived spiritual well-being of the participants. Participants rate their relationship with God as well as their overall satisfaction with life. I instructed the confirmation participants on how to complete the tests before administration. Participants completed the test again at the end of the ministry intervention in order to determine their level of spiritual satisfaction after the intervention, and one more time three months following to determine the lasting effect of ministry participation on spiritual satisfaction.

The second pretest questionnaire administered to each participant at the first meeting was the Religiosity Measure developed by Rohrbaugh and Jessor. This test measured the impact religious beliefs played on participants' everyday life and the amount of their participation in religious activities. Rohrbaugh and Jessor originally developed the test to determine whether religiosity impacted deviant behavior in high school and college students in 1969 (140). The results of the study showed that religiosity impacts behavior in a positive manner. Those who scored higher in religiosity had greater control over deviant behavior (146). Participants in my study completed this test again at the end of the class and three months following.

The two pretest questionnaires provided a baseline upon which to measure any change occurring after the ministry implementation. The posttest and posttest follow-up

questionnaires measured change in spiritual satisfaction and participation in religious activities after the ministry implementation.

After the completion of each set of questionnaires, students participated in a focus group where they answered four questions. Their answers helped determine the impact ministry participation played on their spiritual satisfaction during the confirmation process. Three months following, students answered the same focus questions to determine the lasting impact ministry participation played on their spiritual satisfaction.

Variables

The independent variables included the traditional class, the modified class, and the ministry participation component. Students in the modified group participated in a church ministry during the fifteen-week class.

The dependent variable was the possible change in spiritual satisfaction in both groups. The study tested the impact ministry participation had on spiritual satisfaction.

An intervening variable included participants who might drop out of the class for various reasons and those who might not complete the ministry participation component. Another intervening variable is the age range between seventh graders and twelfth graders. The younger participants are at a different developmental stage than the older participants.

Reliability and Validity

Both instruments passed measurement for reliability. For the Religiosity Measure, "Cronbach coefficient alphas were over .90, indicating high internal consistency" (Hill and Hood 308). For the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the reliability coefficients "ranged from .89 to .94" (383), indicating high internal consistency and reliability.

The Religiosity Measure tests valid. "Females were consistently more religious than males and high school-age students were more religious than college age, indicating good construct validity with other consistent findings in the field" (Hill and Hood 308). The Spiritual Well-Being Scale also tests valid (383).

Data Collection

Students provided data for the pretest during the first confirmation class. After a brief introduction to the confirmation process and instruction on how to answer the questionnaires, the participants gathered in my dining room under my supervision. I distributed the questionnaires along with a pencil or pen. After the participants completed the two questionnaires, they handed them to me and I placed them in an envelope labeled *pretest*. Upon completion of the pretest, the traditional and modified groups met independently for their focus group. After all the students finished, they enjoyed their first class.

Students provided data for the posttest during the confirmation retreat. During the afternoon on the second day of the retreat, the participants gathered in the retreat house where I handed them the posttest and a pencil or pen. They completed the test at the dining table and returned it to me. I put the completed tests in another envelope labeled *posttest*. Upon completion of the posttest, the traditional and modified groups met independently for their focus groups.

Students provided data for the posttest follow-up during a meeting with all the participants three months after the ministry intervention. The participants gathered in the parsonage where I distributed the posttest follow-up questionnaires and pencils or pens. After participants completed the posttest, they turned them in to me, and I placed them in

an envelope labeled *posttest follow-up*. After all the participants completed the posttest

follow-up, the traditional group and modified group met separately for the focus

questions.

      The students answered the focus questions in the living room after each test. A

video camera captured each group on tape. I asked the four focus questions one at a time,

with other questions that helped follow up on some of their responses. Participants

responded when they were ready. I allowed forty-five minutes for the focus groups. I

checked the tape and dismissed the class upon completion of the questions. I placed the

videotape with all the previous data.

Data Analysis

      I tabulated the pretest, posttest, and posttest follow-up questionnaires after the

collection of all the data. I compared the posttest and pretest to determine any change in

spiritual satisfaction and religious activity through descriptive statistics. I then compared

and analyzed the posttest follow-up with the pretest and posttest, using content analysis to

determine sustained change.

      After the analysis, I compared the modified group against the traditional group to

determine any effect ministry participation might play upon spiritual satisfaction.

Ethical Procedures

      After the youth signed up for the confirmation class, parents of every eligible

student received a letter (see Appendix A). The letter described the program and

instructed the parents to sign a permission statement (see Appendix B) for their youth in

order to participate in the study.

At the first confirmation class, the participants chose a personal code to protect their identity during data collection. They marked their papers with the last four of their social security number or phone number prefixed with the first initial of their mother's maiden name. They used the same identification for the posttest and posttest follow up.

I collected the questionnaires and placed them in an envelope, not to be opened until completion of all the tests. I was the only person to see the questionnaires. During the writing of the final chapters of this dissertation, I stored the data in my office file cabinet. After successful defense of the dissertation, I will store the questionnaires in my home file cabinet for seven years. After seven years I will destroy them by fire.

This chapter detailed the methodology used to determine the impact ministry participation has on the spiritual satisfaction in the participants. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings of the study organized around my three research questions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

According to a study completed by LifeWay Research, young people across America tend to leave their church after high school graduation. Completed in 2007, the study found that "70 percent of young adults ages 23-30 stopped attending church regularly for at least a year between ages 18-22" ("LifeWay Research"). This finding suggests a serious problem for the future of the church. The Church must find ways to decrease this statistic.

Eight months following the completion of our confirmation class, two students have not returned to worship. Three are very sporadic in attendance while twelve continue with regular attendance. One student, a senior in high school during the confirmation class, though active until she left for college away from Urbana, does not attend worship when visiting home. This real-life situation sounds much like the LifeWay study. Hopefully, the remaining students from the Urbana confirmation class will continue to attend church regularly after they graduate from high school.

Evidence exists that ministry participation influences a young person's commitment to the church. LifeWay's study found that 42 percent of those who remained in the church did so because they were "committed to the purpose and work of the church" ("LifeWay Research"). My study evaluated the impact ministry participation played on the spiritual satisfaction of teens in a comparative study of a traditional and modified fifteen-week confirmation class at the Urbana United Methodist Church.

Participants

The class consisted of eighteen students with an equal number in the non-ministry and ministry groups. One female from the non-ministry group did not complete the instruments. The sample for the current study consisted of eight males and nine females ($n = 17$) whose average age was 13.94 ($SD = 1.03$). Five males and three females participated in the non-ministry group with an average age of 13.63 ($SD = .74$). Three males and six females participated in the ministry group with an average age of 14.22 ($SD = 1.20$). The two groups had no significant difference in age ($t[15] = -1.212$).

One participant in the non-ministry group volunteered in ministry before and during the confirmation class and six participants in the ministry group volunteered in ministry before and during the class. Those in the ministry group (67 percent) volunteered at significantly higher rates than those in the non-ministry group (11 percent; $\chi^2 [1] = 5.130; p = .024$).

Research Question #1

What was the participants' level of spiritual satisfaction before participation in the traditional and modified fifteen-week confirmation classes?

I administered two instruments before the class began to determine a baseline from which to measure change in satisfaction. The first instrument was the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Ellison and Paloutzian) consisting of twenty questions measuring spiritual well-being (SWB), religious well-being (RWB), and existential well-being (EWB; see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Means and Standard Deviations for SWBS Pretest (N=17)

Factor	Ministry		No Ministry	
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
SWB	99.33	11.62	95.63	9.37
RWB	50.11	9.71	48.38	8.14
EWB	49.22	3.31	47.25	4.95

Both the ministry and non-ministry groups reported moderate levels of SWB with no significant difference between the two groups ($t[15] = -0.72$; $p = .484$). The two RWB groups had no significant difference between them ($t[15] = -0.40$; $p = .697$). Both groups reported moderate levels of EWB with no significant difference between the two ($t[15] = 0.98$; $p = .344$).

The second instrument was the Religiosity Measure (RM; Rohrbaugh and Jessor), which evaluated the impact of religion on students' daily lives as well as the extent of their participation in ritual practices. A series of independent samples *t*-tests reported no significant difference between the two groups for all eight questions in the RM (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Means, Standard Deviations, and *T*-Tests for RM Pretest (N=17)

Questions	Ministry		No Ministry		*t*(15)	*p*
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**		
Attendance	38.33	17.146	28.75	21.312	1.03	.321
Prayer	2.33	.500	2.50	.535	0.66	.517
Advice and teaching	1.22	.833	1.38	.916	0.36	.724
Religious influence	2.11	.782	2.25	1.035	0.32	.757
Belief about God	3.11	.928	3.50	5.35	1.04	.315
Life after death	3.00	1.00	3.25	1.035	0.51	.620
Religious reverence	1.89	.928	2.13	.991	0.51	.619
Comfort and security	2.89	1.269	3.00	1.069	0.19	.849

Research Question #2

What was the participants' level of spiritual satisfaction after participation in the traditional and modified fifteen-week confirmation classes?

The findings for this question will be discussed along with the findings for research question three as the groups were tested using a 2x3 repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). This test was chosen to explore the changes in spiritual well-being over time between the two groups.

Research Question #3

What difference did ministry participation have on spiritual satisfaction for those who participated in the modified fifteen-week confirmation class versus those who participated in the traditional fifteen-week confirmation class?

Results of Spiritual Well-Being Scale

To explore the changes in spiritual well-being over time between the ministry and non-ministry groups, I conducted a 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA. The ministry group

did not report significantly different levels of SWB than did the non-ministry group (F[1, 12] = 2.13; p = .17). However, main effect existed for time of testing (F[2, 24] = 6.11; p = .007) with scores improving from the pretest to the posttests. Finally, no interaction effect existed between group condition and time of testing (F[2, 24] = .444; p = .647; see Table 4.3). Both groups increased in SWB scores over time, but no difference existed between the two groups.

I conducted another 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA to explore the changes in religious well-being over time between the two groups. The ministry group did not report significantly different levels of RWB than did the non-ministry group, (F[1,12] = 1.39; p = .261). In addition, main effect existed for time of testing, (F[2,24] = 4.54; p = .021) with scores improving from the pretest to the posttests. Finally, no interaction effect existed between group condition and time of testing (F[2,24] = 0.30; p = .747; see Table 4.3). While both groups increased in RWB scores over time, no statistically significant difference existed between groups.

To explore changes in existential well-being, I conducted another repeated measures 2x3 ANOVA. The ministry group did not report significantly different levels of EWB than did the non-ministry group (F[1, 12] = 2.22; p = .162). Yet again, a main effect existed for time of testing (F[2, 24] = 4.24; p = .026) with scores improving from the pretest to the posttests. Finally, no interaction effect existed between group condition and time of testing (F[2, 24] = .38; p = .691; see Table 4.3). Both groups increased in EWB scores over time, but no difference existed between groups.

Table 4.3. Means and Standard Deviations for SWBS (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
SWB non-ministry	97.33	10.42	105.67	9.56	107.17	10.69
SWB ministry	102.88	5.03	111. 88	5.87	108.63	7.19
RWB non-ministry	51.17	7.20	55.17	5.12	56.33	4.76
RWB ministry	53.13	3.80	58.00	2.39	56.63	3.29
EWB non-ministry	46.17	4.88	50.50	5.13	50.83	6.77
EWB ministry	49.75	3.11	53.88	3.87	52.00	4.63

The repeated measures 2x3 ANOVA showed increase in spiritual satisfaction for both the ministry and non-ministry groups from the pretest to posttest to posttest follow-up in all three well-being categories. The level of increase was about the same for both groups. Both groups started at relatively the same level of satisfaction.

Results of the Religiosity Measure

The RM findings are reported according to question number. The test composed of only eight questions, so the two groups are compared against each other by question. The purpose of the RM was to determine the impact religion played on students' daily lives and the extent of their participation in ritual practices. The results are better understood when taken question by question. The RM questions are handled differently than the SWBS because the two tests used different response scales and each test represented a different construct of religiosity.

The first question defined how many religious services the students attended during the past year. I ran a 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA. No main effect for attendance existed between the ministry and non-ministry group ($F[1,12] = 1.30$; $p = .277$). Main effect existed for time of testing ($F[2,24] = 4.86$; $p = .017$) with church

attendance increasing from before the class to after the class. No interaction effect existed

between group and time ($F[2,24] = 0.77$; $p = .473$). That is, both groups reported more

frequent attendance over time, but no statistically significant difference existed between

groups in attendance. Both groups increased at the same level (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Means and Standard Deviations for Religious Service Attendance (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	32.33	21.42	37.33	18.45	38.83	12.53
Ministry	38.50	18.32	50.75	24.66	53.25	20.65

The second question asked students to describe the frequency of their prayer

practices. A 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA found no main effect between the ministry

and non-ministry group ($F[1,12] = 2.35$; $p = .151$). No main effect existed for time of

testing ($F[2,24] = 2.54$; $p = .100$) with scores at pretest being similar to scores at posttest.

No interaction effect between group and time was found ($F[2,24] = .89$; $p = .423$).

Neither group reported more frequent prayer over time, and no statistically significant

difference occured in increase between the two groups (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Means and Standard Deviations for Practice of Prayer (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	2.67	.52	2.83	.41	3.00	0
Ministry	2.38	.52	2.62	.52	2.50	.54

The third question asked how often the students followed religious advice or teaching when dealing with a serious personal problem. The 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA showed no main effect between the ministry and non-ministry groups (F[1,12] = .04; p = .845); and no main effect among the pretest, posttest, and posttest follow-up (F[2,24] = 3.09; p = .064); and no interaction effect between group and time of testing, (F[2,24] = .05; p = .954). Neither group reported more frequent religious advice-taking over time, and no statistically significant difference occurred between groups (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Means and Standard Deviations for Taking Advice (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	1.33	1.03	1.83	.98	2.00	.63
Ministry	1.37	.74	2.00	.76	2.00	1.07

The fourth question asked students how much influence their religion played on the way they chose to spend their time. The 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA showed no main effect between the ministry and non-ministry groups (F[1,12] = 0.04; p = .845). However, main effect existed for time of testing (F[2,24] = 9.17; p = .001) with scores at the posttest and posttest follow-up being greater than those at the pretest. No interaction effect occurred between group and time (F[2,24] = 0.06; p = .819). Both groups reported more frequent influence on behavior over time, but no difference of increase between groups occurred (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Means and Standard Deviations for Behavior (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	2.33	1.21	3.33	.52	3.17	.75
Ministry	2.25	.71	3.25	.46	3.13	.84

The fifth question asked students about their belief in the existence of God. The 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA showed no main effect between the ministry and non-ministry groups ($F[1,12] = 0.37$; $p = .556$). However, main effect existed for time of testing with scores at the posttest and posttest follow-up again greater than those at the pretest ($F[2,24] = 7.02$; $p = .004$). No interaction effect between group and time occurred ($F[2,24] = 1.71$; $p = .201$). These results show that both groups reported increased belief in the existence of God over time, but no difference occurred in the rate of increase between groups (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Means and Standard Deviations for Belief in God (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	3.67	.52	3.83	.41	4.00	0
Ministry	3.38	.52	4.00	0	3.87	.35

Students were asked in the sixth question whether they believed in life after death. According to the 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA, no main effect occurred between the ministry and non-ministry groups ($F[1,12] = 1.42$; $p = .256$) and no main effect for time of testing ($F[2,24] = 2.61$; $p = .094$) with pretest, posttest, and posttest follow-up scores

being similar. Also, no interaction effect occurred between group and time ($F[2,24] =$ 0.30; $p = .740$). Neither group reported increased belief in life after death over time, and no statistically significant difference existed in the change of this belief between the groups (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Means and Standard Deviations for Belief in Life after Death (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	3.33	1.03	4.00	0	4.00	0
Ministry	3.13	.99	3.62	1.06	3.38	.92

Question seven asked students how often they experienced a feeling of religious reverence or devotion. The 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA showed no main effect between the non-ministry and ministry groups ($F[1,12] = 1.42$; $p = .256$) and no main effect for time of testing ($F[2,24] = 3.36$; $p = .578$) with pretest, posttest, and posttest follow-up scores being similar. Also, no interaction effect occurred between group and time ($F[2,24] = 0.95$; $p = .349$). Neither group reported increased reverence over time, and no statistically significant differential changes occurred in reverence between the groups (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Means and Standard Deviations for Religious Reverence (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	2.33	1.03	3.00	.63	2.83	.75
Ministry	2.13	.64	2.75	.71	2.38	.92

The last question in the RM asked students about how their religion provides comfort and security in their lives. The 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA showed that main effect occurred between the ministry and non-ministry groups ($F[1,12] = 5.06$; $p = .044$) with the ministry group reporting a greater sense of comfort and security from their religion than did the non-ministry group. No main effect occurred for time of testing ($F[2,24] = 0.24$; $p = .787$) with pretest, posttest, and posttest follow-up scores being similar. Also, no interaction effect occurred between group and time ($F[2,24] = 1.99$; $p = .158$). Neither group reported increased comfort over time, and no difference existed between groups (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Means and Standard Deviations for Religious Comfort (N=14)

Groups	Pretest		Posttest		Posttest Follow-Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Non-ministry	3.17	1.17	2.33	1.86	2.17	1.72
Ministry	3.25	.71	3.63	.92	3.75	.46

Spiritual Well-Being and Religiosity Correlations

A series of Pearson product moment bivariate correlations of scores at the posttest follow-up were run to assess the relationships among the measured components of spiritual well-being and religiosity. The SWB total score was found to be positively correlated with RWB ($r = .884$; $p < .001$) and EWB ($r = .944$; $p < .001$) and RWB and EWB are correlated with each other ($r = .681$; $p = .007$). None of the religiosity measures are correlated with SWB, RWB, or EWB, nor were most of the religiosity measures correlated with each other. The second question in the religiosity measure was positively

correlated with the sixth religiosity measure question ($r = .787$; $p = .001$), suggesting that as the answer to the second question increases, so does the sixth. Also, the fourth question in the religiosity measure was positively correlated with the seventh question in the religiosity measure ($r = .687$; $p = .007$), suggesting that the answer to the seventh question increases along with the answer to the fourth question (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12. Correlation Coefficients for SWB and RM (N=14)

	SWB Total	RWB	EWB	3RM1	3RM2	3RM3	3RM4	3RM5	3RM6	3RM7	3RM8
SWB Total	1	.884**	.944**	-.127	-.212	.330	.235	.372	-.061	.457	-.059
RWB Total		1	.681**	-.108	-.086	.368	.235	.415	.014	.520	-.196
EWB Total			1	-.122	-.272	.258	.202	.291	.105	.349	.046
3RM1				1	.020	-.009	.182	-.014	-.070	-.149	.185
3RM2					1	.374	.335	-.175	.787**	.440	-.322
3RM3						1	.342	.000	.118	.515	.063
3RM4							1	.427	.364	.687**	.350
3RM5								1	-.138	.193	-.193
3RM6									1	.468	-.197
3RM7										1	.158
3RM8											1

** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed).

Summary of Major Findings

The tests confirm an overall increase in satisfaction for both groups through the confirmation process at basically the same rate. The only area where the ministry group increased over the non-ministry group was on the eighth question in the RM, dealing with comfort and security through religion. Following are the major findings in this research project.

1. Apparently, significant growth in spiritual satisfaction occurred as measured with the SWBS from the pretest to the posttest to the posttest follow-up. Students'

spiritual satisfaction seemed to peak during the time of the confirmation class and remained relatively close to that level at the posttest follow-up.

2. No significant differences in spiritual satisfaction occurred between the two classes over the time of training and follow-up. The non-ministry group and the ministry group appeared to grow in satisfaction at the same rate.

3. Although not significant, the ministry group's spiritual satisfaction tended to be higher than the non-ministry group at each testing time.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

This project originated out of a desire to see young people grow in their

relationship with God, join the church, and remain faithful members throughout their

lives. Discipleship is a process that spans an entire lifetime, not an incident that occurs

only once. Part of the confirmation process in the United Methodist Church involves

instruction in the ways of God with the desired result for young people to embrace what

they learn through Christian living in fellowship with the church. Too often though,

students who receive vows of membership upon the completion of the class become

absent in the life of the church. I observe many students every year make vows to

participate faithfully with their time, their gifts, their service, and their presence, only to

fill their lives with everything else except participation in the church.

This problem is not contained only within the United Methodist Church. The

Southern Baptists and the Assemblies of God report a large number of youth who leave

the church upon completion of high school (Walker; "Youth Transition Network"). As a

community of faith, the Church must find ways to encourage youth to continue to live

their vows.

The literature review in Chapter 2 suggests that ministry participation fosters a

greater sense of spiritual satisfaction over those who do not participate in ministry. I

created a project at the Urbana United Methodist Church where the confirmation process

included ministry participation. Half of the students in the study participated in the

confirmation class by not only studying the confirmation materials but also engaging in a

ministry of the church. The other half of the class concentrated only on studying the material and did not participate in a ministry of the church. Both groups received instruction together. I collected three measurements using two scales to help determine change in spiritual satisfaction throughout the process: The Spiritual Well-Being Scale and the Religiosity Measure. Students completed the instruments before confirmation began (pretest), at the completion of confirmation (posttest), and three months following (posttest follow-up).

Significant Growth in Spiritual Satisfaction for Time of Testing

The findings from the Spiritual Well-Being Scale appear to reveal a significant growth in spiritual satisfaction in both groups (ministry and non-ministry) from the pretest to the posttest to the posttest follow-up (see Table 4.3, p. 102). To gain a better understanding of students' spiritual satisfaction, both groups participated in separate focus groups upon completion of each test period. Following are some of the observations from those focus groups.

When students were asked how satisfied they were with their spiritual lives at the pretest, both groups reported a low level. The majority of the students in the non-ministry group reported that their spiritual lives could use improvement. One student even admitted to no spiritual life at all. Only two of the six questioned in the non-ministry group had any kind of satisfaction with their spiritual lives.

Only three students out of seven in the ministry group answered the question concerning their spiritual lives. Two of those students said that their spiritual lives needed improvement, and one said that she did not believe in the Christian faith at all. The remaining students in the ministry group were not eager to answer the question, so I can

only assume that they placed themselves with those who felt a low level of spiritual satisfaction.

I asked both groups what they thought they could do to increase their spiritual satisfaction. One student in the non-ministry group mentioned that participation in mission projects would increase his satisfaction. The others in the non-ministry group talked about material they could learn through the confirmation process, such as more information concerning the Bible stories and learning more about prayer. When asked what they hoped to learn through confirmation, answers from students in the non-ministry group focused primarily around learning about spiritual techniques, learning how to follow God's laws better, and understanding more in-depth the Bible stories they learned as children.

Answers from the ministry group were very similar to answers from the non-ministry group. One person believed that if he devoted more of his time to the Lord he would have greater spiritual satisfaction, including attending worship services and reading the Bible every day. Another student mentioned that helping others would lead to greater spiritual satisfaction. When students were asked what they hoped to learn, they talked about how to focus on their relationship with God and how they might better understand their purpose in life.

Because of the students' low sense of spiritual satisfaction, growth was the obvious direction for both groups. Students' answers from the posttest and posttest follow-up focus groups support the statistics that spiritual satisfaction grew from the time of the pretest. While both the ministry and non-ministry groups grew significantly in spiritual satisfaction, the answers from the non-ministry group at the posttest focus group

affirm the growth with stronger language than the ministry group. Two of the seven stated that they were "a lot more satisfied." Two others stated that they were "very satisfied" and "extremely satisfied."

According to the Barna Research Group, young people desire a genuine encounter with God ("What Teenagers"). The results from my project support these findings. Students from both groups at the pretest revealed their desire to grow closer to God and believed that more time spent with him would increase their spiritual satisfaction. The majority of the students believed that if they were taught more about God, they would be better able to encounter him genuinely. All but one student proclaimed their belief in God; they just needed someone to direct them in their relationship with him.

As noted earlier, three months following the project, six participants became sporadic in their worship attendance or chose not to attend at all. The reason for the change in their religious behavior is unknown. The two who never returned to worship did not participate on a regular basis before the class began. They were also participants in the non-ministry group. Two of the three who became sporadic in worship attendance after confirmation were also participants in the non-ministry group and all of them were sporadic at worship services before the class began. None of the parents of all the participants in question attend worship services, which may contribute to their children's sporadic attendance. The focus groups clearly showed that spiritual satisfaction did, in fact, increase, but for reasons unknown they did not continue with regular worship attendance.

The posttest and focus group took place on the confirmation retreat. The night before testing, we experienced a bonfire together as a group where I taught them how to

practice *lectio divina*. That experience proved to be a great success as students shared

how close they felt to God while taking time to listen for his voice in the Scripture. It was

so effective that it was mentioned in both focus groups the next day as something

meaningful they learned while on the confirmation retreat. Three months following the

retreat, one student in the non-ministry focus group said that *lectio divina* was one of the

most important things he learned through confirmation.

Adolescents desire a real connection with God. Hebrews 5:11-14 reminds

individuals that they will fail to grow in relationship with God when they fail to put into

practice what they learn. As the class practiced *lectio divina* together on the retreat

instead of just talking about it, spiritual satisfaction increased. The students felt a

connection to God, which increased their satisfaction.

Another reason the participants' spiritual satisfaction may have increased is

because of the information they learned through the class. A majority of the participants

indicated in the focus groups at the pretest a desire to learn more. They believed that

more education about God and how to reach him would increase their satisfaction.

Howard W. Krueger believes that solid foundations in spiritual beliefs help adolescents

as they struggle with identity issues (41). Erikson teaches that finding one's identity is the

most important developmental task and is central to every adolescent (Kagan and Gall

267). When students receive answers to their questions concerning their faith, a

foundation is formed upon which they can build their identities, and spiritual satisfaction

increases.

In my experience, young people are full of questions concerning their faith.

According to the answers given in the focus groups at the posttest and posttest follow-up,

students received answers to many of their questions. Five of the participants in the ministry group reported at the follow-up focus group that they learned how to read Scripture effectively and pray during the confirmation class. Five participants in the non-ministry group also reported at the post follow-up focus group that through the confirmation process they learned more about the Ten Commandments, the different books of the Bible, church doctrines such as the Trinity, and how to pray and follow God. They learned that they needed to be engaged in their relationship with God without just going through the motions. These educational understandings increased their spiritual satisfaction because they served a dual purpose as they were able to develop a faith foundation that supported them as they began to find answers to the question, "Who am I?"

The fact that students were part of a group may have added to their increase in spiritual satisfaction as well. Steele describes the desire to belong as being at its peak during adolescence (142). He further states that adolescent students finally see themselves as participants in the faith rather than people who just know the story (145). We were able to create an atmosphere in the class where every student felt like he or she belonged. The class took place in my living room, and every student was offered the opportunity to have input. Students mentioned in the posttest focus group that they would miss attending confirmation class. Even the student who did not believe in God stated her dissatisfaction that the class was coming to an end. However, in the end, she chose not to join the church. The students' desires to learn the deeper understandings of Bible stories support the need that adolescents have to move from knowing to being.

An intervening variable that may have played a role in the increase of spiritual satisfaction was the fact that each student in both groups was assigned an adult mentor who met with them twice each month outside of class. Dunn describes a principle where early adolescent youth continue to depend upon the interaction of adults in their lives (178). Early adolescent youth rely upon adults to transport them to school and extracurricular activities, provide food, clothing, and a roof over their heads, and answer some of life's difficult questions. When students encounter meaningful interaction with adults in their daily lives, growth of all types takes place. Dunn continues to suggest that positive feedback encourages youth to become all God made them to be (198). Receiving positive feedback from an adult who cares will increase spiritual satisfaction. Conversation with the students in my class as well as with the adult mentors assigned to them suggested to me that the interaction between student and mentor might have contributed to the increase in spiritual satisfaction.

No Significant Difference between the Two Groups

The results of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale and Religiosity Measure report that spiritual satisfaction in the ministry group did not grow at a significantly higher rate than spiritual satisfaction in the non-ministry group. Both groups grew in satisfaction at relatively the same rate. Some factors may exist that play a role in this major finding.

The first factor that may contribute to the apparent parallel growth in satisfaction was the limited opportunity for ministry participation within the ministry group. As I sought opportunities for students to participate in ministry during the months of confirmation, I secured only two ministry options. Students were able to participate in our church's food pantry, called the Wherehouse, and serve communion to the

congregation on communion Sundays. Because one student was already active serving as a sound technician and cashier in our ministry called Connect, and two students participated with our youth praise team, with two other students participating in the children's ministry every Sunday, I wanted to find something different they could do together. The only options available were the Wherehouse and serving communion.

I recognize in hindsight that the failure to secure more ministry opportunities may have contributed to the fact that significant difference did not occur in spiritual satisfaction between the two groups. It would have benefited the study to secure opportunities even outside the boundaries of the church where participants could engage in ministry more often. More time should have been devoted to finding these opportunities.

Another factor that may have contributedd to the parallel growth is the limited opportunities the Wherehouse and serving communion offered for ministry. The Wherehouse opens only one week each month. The week is busy with over four hundred people served. My students participated by distributing food and clothing items to individuals as they passed through a line on Tuesday night. They served at the Wherehouse for four months. Volunteering as a communion server also offered limited opportunity. My church celebrates communion the first Sunday of each month. My students participated by offering either the bread or the cup to parishioners as they came forward to worship through intinction. Students participated twice each month in these two ministries over the course of four months. The frequency of their ministry may not have been often enough to affect spiritual satisfaction.

A last factor that may have influenced the growth of spiritual satisfaction in both groups was the hiring of a new youth pastor one month before the class began. Before the youth pastor arrived, the church did not have a very effective youth ministry with limited adult involvement. The group consisted of roughly six to eight youth members. Within three months after hiring the youth pastor, the group grew to over thirty. Because students from both the ministry and non-ministry groups attended the youth group, spiritual satisfaction may have grown at roughly the same rate in both groups. The hiring of the youth pastor was an intervening variable as his arrival was unknown before the study began. Students need a place to belong, and peers play an important role in their identity development. The youth of our church were excited that we hired a youth pastor who would minister primarily to them. Due to the ministry of the youth pastor, students possibly experienced growth in their spiritual satisfaction because of their participation in the youth ministry program instead of only their participation in the confirmation class.

Ministry Groups' Satisfaction Higher than Non-Ministry Group

At each testing time, the ministry group appeared to score higher in spiritual satisfaction than the non-ministry group. Although not significant, the difference draws attention because it became the norm for each testing time. The reason may be because five of the six students in the ministry group were already active in ministry participation before the confirmation class began. Only one student from the non-ministry group was active in ministry. Faith is formed in part due to acts of service (Nelson 222; Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema 410). The five students in the ministry group may have had higher spiritual satisfaction because of the way they were touched through serving others in

ministry (Dudley 169). Spiritual satisfaction increases when people see the impact their service produces in other people.

James 2:14-17 describes faith as dead when it is not accompanied with works. For Christians, actions point back to faith. In order for faith to be alive, Christians must be actively serving others. In fact, at its inception the Methodist movement was largely involved in serving others (Amerson and Brewer 81). The growth of the Methodist movement may be due, in large part, to the increase in spiritual satisfaction, possibly resulting from ministry participation through serving others. The ministry groups' apparent higher level of spiritual satisfaction may be attributable to the fact that students were already involved in ministry.

The study completed by Hugen, Wolfer, and Renkema provides understanding to describe the seemingly higher level of spiritual satisfaction in the ministry group at each testing time (417). The authors found a positive correlation between community ministry involvement and faith. My ministry group appeared to score higher because five of the eight were already involved in ministry. As an interesting note, the students from both groups talked about ministry participation as a means to increase their spiritual satisfaction in the first focus group. They seemed to know what they needed in order to gain higher spiritual satisfaction.

Implications of the Findings

Young people from every denomination are leaving the church in high numbers upon high school graduation. This study provides findings that seem to suggest that a confirmation class, or a similar time of concentrated study accomplished in a productive learning environment, might increase students' spiritual satisfaction, which offers hope

that students will continue to participate in the life of the church even after high school. The students in my study expressed a desire to learn more about living a deeper relationship with God, learning how to pray effectively, and learning how to make reading the Bible more meaningful (as discussed in the focus groups). Since satisfaction grew in all my students, caring adults who are active in their lives might increase spiritual satisfaction.

Limitations of the Study

This study was completed in a midwestern Ohio county seat at a midsized United Methodist church with a limited number of students. We chose one curriculum from a group of possible United Methodist confirmation materials. The results found in this study may differ from results found in a different type of church.

The size of the class is another limitation. My class was not large enough to observe adequate change in spiritual satisfaction between the ministry and non-ministry groups. Though at a glance there seemed to be a trend that the ministry group grew in satisfaction at a greater level, the numbers were not large enough to provide significant differences.

One event that may have affected the spiritual satisfaction in my class was a youth retreat that took place during the second month of confirmation. The new youth pastor took the youth group, which included a small number of my students, on a two-day retreat to Columbus, Ohio. The retreat had a large impact upon every student who attended. Students returned with a stronger sense of their identity in Christ and a stronger drive to serve him more. The excitement students brought back with them overflowed even to those who did not attend the retreat. The retreat was an intervening variable

providing a life-changing experience that may have affected my confirmation class. I noticed that students who attended the retreat began to ask deeper questions concerning their spirituality and Christian witness during our class times. The retreat created an obvious increase in spiritual satisfaction and may have affected the results of my study.

Another limitation was the lack of ministry opportunities offered to the ministry group. If the ministry group was able to participate in a weekly ministry, spiritual satisfaction may have increased at a greater rate. Participating twice each month in two different ministries may not have been enough to produce a noticeable change.

Since most of the ministry group was already active in ministry, a distinction in spiritual satisfaction growth between the ministry and non-ministry groups may not be able to be established. In other words, the ministry group was already finding spiritual satisfaction within the ministry in which they currently participated, so participating in another ministry did not prove effective enough to show a significant change. Though not significant, the higher sense of satisfaction in the ministry group may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the group was already participating in ministry.

By the end of the confirmation class, a number of the students in the non-ministry group also became active in ministry outside the boundaries of the study. Preventing them from participating in ministry because of my study is unethical. The involvement in ministry of the non-ministry group was an intervening variable that may have attributed to the apparent equal growth pattern in spiritual satisfaction between the ministry and non-ministry group.

Unexpected Observations

Even though ministry and non-ministry group participants were chosen randomly, a much larger number of students who currently participated in ministry were chosen to take part in the ministry group. The non-ministry group had only one student currently involved in ministry. Though not significant, a gap was created between the two groups at each testing time with the ministry group reporting a higher level of spiritual satisfaction. Dudley emphasizes that lives are touched through ministry participation, which increases satisfaction in those who reach out (169). The students who were involved in ministry at the outset of the confirmation class experienced the transforming power of ministry participation, which showed up in the results of the measurement tools as a higher (though not significant) score than those who were not participating in ministry.

When looking at the results of the Religiosity Measure, questions 2 and 6, as well as questions 4 and 7, were positively correlated with each other (see Table 4.11, p. 107). As students reported change in question 2, change in question 6 appeared to grow at the same rate.

The second question in the RM asked students to describe their practices of prayer and meditation, and the sixth question asked students to describe their belief in life after death. As the students' prayer lives became a more regular part of their daily lives, their belief in life after death also increased. This result may indicate that when a young person develops a stronger prayer life their sense of purpose in life also increases. In the same way, as their sense of purpose increases, so does a stronger prayer life.

The fourth question asks students how much influence religion has on the way they choose to act and spend their time. The seventh question asks students how often they experienced a feeling of religious reverence or devotion. As religious influence had more impact on students' decisions, their feelings of religious reverence or devotion increased. God created the world and all live within and the fact that he created it to work a certain way plays a heavy role in our lives. When one chooses to live the way he established life to be lived, he or she finds satisfaction. Students rightly feel stronger religious devotion as they make choices based on Christian teaching because they experience God through their obedience. The Lord demands that followers continue to teach children the way they should live (Deut. 6:4-9).

A final unexpected observation was the high standard deviation found in the RM results concerning religious service attendance (see Table 4.4, p. 103). Students reported the number of times they attended religious services during the past year. Since some of the students attended youth group meetings, they added the number of those meetings to their Sunday worship attendance. Students who did not attend youth group reported only the number of times they attended Sunday worship services. Their reports caused a larger gap in the standard deviation.

Recommendations

Since the sample size was too low to notice significant change in spiritual satisfaction between the ministry and non-ministry group, expanding the study to include other United Methodist churches may improve findings. In expanding the study, one might also be able to note differences between church size, ethnic groups, age spans, and

other demographics. The study could also measure the difference in confirmation material and how it affects spiritual satisfaction.

Lectio divina proved to be a positive experience for the majority of the participants. This type of prayer was not introduced until the bonfire experience at the retreat. If introduced during one of the first confirmation classes and practiced a few times in class, *lectio divina* might prove to be more effective in producing lasting spiritual satisfaction. The climax of *lectio divina* could possibly be the bonfire experience as participants are already familiar with the practice. Other forms of prayer could be introduced and practiced throughout the confirmation process as well to increase spiritual satisfaction.

Another recommendation is the provision of more opportunities for ministry participation. This study provided two opportunities. If students were involved in more ministry opportunities during the confirmation process, a better chance that significant change in spiritual satisfaction might occur. More time would also be provided for ministry leaders to work with students from the ministry group, providing more guidance and education in the ministry opportunity. Students might gain more ownership of the ministry, which might increase their satisfaction and improve their chance of remaining active members of the church, even after high school graduation. A best-case scenario for further study might be for the ministry leaders to serve as mentors for the students involved in their ministry. More interaction would occur among the student, the mentor, and the ministry with which they are involved.

Dunn instructs adults in his fourth principle to provide opportunities for youth to learn their value through their contribution to society (178). Ministry participation

provides a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment as students experience the effect their contributions make on those to whom they minister. As students learn how others value their input in ministry, spiritual satisfaction should increase and students might be more apt to continue contributing to the ministry instead of leaving the church.

Discussing Dale's cone of learning, McNabb and Mabry share that the best learning results are found through direct experiences (42). As students learn a principle in class and then practice it outside of class, they experience 90 percent retention. Even though this study did not produce the expected results of a greater growth of spiritual satisfaction in the ministry group over the non-ministry group, the literature suggests otherwise.

One last recommendation is to offer a posttest follow-up one year following the class to determine sustainable growth in spiritual satisfaction. Though not significant, some numbers decreased from the posttest to the posttest follow-up. Studying the long-range effects of ministry participation upon the confirmation class might prove interesting.

Postscript

I would love to say that the significant increase in spiritual satisfaction in both groups was due to my dynamic teaching style. The results could be flattering, but the literature makes clear the needs of adolescent students. They need a place to belong where they will be respected, listened to, and loved. They are eager to learn the deeper truths of their faith and how to put them into practice in their lives. Adolescents need to be appreciated for who they are and what they contribute to society. The confirmation

class provided the foundation upon which students were able to experience these needs met.

A wonderful result of this study is that the youth continue to participate as servers on communion Sundays. The students in the modified group enjoyed this part of their ministry participation so much that they asked if they could continue to serve in this capacity. Other youth group members joined them as well by becoming communion stewards.

An interesting observation to me was hearing the sound of my middle son's voice change in the focus group videos from the pretest to the posttest follow-up. His voice change validated the fact that every student in class was going through significant changes in their lives during the course of the confirmation class. Adolescence is an important time to invest in a person's life.

Though significant change in spiritual satisfaction was not found between the two groups, both groups did have a positive increase through the duration of the class. If the church can find ways to keep students involved in groups within the church, students might be less inclined to leave upon high school graduation. Meaningful relationships with adults are crucial for adolescents as they grow into adulthood. Understanding the truths of Scripture and applying it to life play a key role in the spiritual development of youth.

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS

December 3, 2009

Dear Parents of the 2010 Confirmation Class;

I am excited about teaching this year's confirmation class! The classes will begin on the first Sunday of January and meet weekly at my house from 6:30pm-8:00pm. As many of you know, I am currently working on a Doctor of Ministry degree through Asbury Theological Seminary. The main part of my dissertation involves teaching one confirmation class consisting of two groups. My plan is to study the impact ministry participation plays on the spiritual satisfaction of the youth involved.

Both groups will be using the United Methodist curriculum titled, *We Believe*, and every student will have a mentor to work with them over the fifteen weeks of confirmation. The difference will be that one group will be required to be actively involved in a ministry area of the church through the fifteen week class. The students will be chosen randomly.

Both classes will learn the same material and receive the same instruction. Every participant will be completing two questionnaires and those who participate in a ministry area of the church will answer three focus questions. The questionnaires will be given at the parents' meeting, on the confirmation retreat in April, and at a meeting held after the first week of the new school year. All the gathered information will be confidential—students will choose a code known only to them. After seven years I will destroy the questionnaires along with any other information gathered from your youth.

In order for your youth to participate in this study I need you to sign the enclosed permission slip and bring it with you to the parents' meeting on Sunday, December 13th at 6:30pm in the sanctuary. If you are unable to attend, please let me know so I can order the necessary curriculum. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 937-653-3741.

Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Rev. Jeffrey S. Harper
Senior Pastor

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION FORM

I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in Rev. Jeff Harper's doctoral research project confirmation class through the Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. This will include attending all the class meetings and extracurricular activities dealing with the class as well as the two pretest questionnaires, the two posttest questionnaires, the two posttest follow-up questionnaires, and the three focus groups. I also understand that the testing material is confidential.

Student's Name (Please Print)

Parent's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING SCALE

For each of the following statements, circle the choice that best indicates the extent of your agreement or disagreement as it describes your personal experience:

SA = Strongly Agree   D = Disagree
MA = Moderately Agree   MD = Moderately Disagree
A = Agree   SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer
    with God.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

2. I don't know who I am, where I came from,
    or where I'm going.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

3. I believe that God loves me and cares about me.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

4. I feel that life is a positive experience.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

5. I believe that God is impersonal and not interested
    in my daily situations.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

6. I feel unsettled about my future.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

7. I have a personally meaningful relationship
    with God.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

8. I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

9. I don't get much personal strength and support
    from my God.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

10. I feel a sense of well-being about the direction
    my life is headed in.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

11. I believe that God is concerned about my
    problems.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

12. I don't enjoy much about life.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

13. I don't have a personally satisfying relationship
    with God.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

14. I feel good about my future.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

15. My relationship with God helps me not to
    feel lonely.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

16. I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

17. I feel most fulfilled when I'm in close
    communion with God.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

18. Life doesn't have much meaning.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

19. My relation with God contributes to my sense
    of well-being.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

20. I believe there is some real purpose for my life.   SA   MA   A   D   MD   SD

APPENDIX D

RELIGIOSITY MEASURE

Instructions: The following questionnaire consists of seven multiple-choice items with one fill-in-the-blank item. Please answer the following questions by *circling* the appropriate letter for the multiple-choice items and providing the most accurate number for the fill-in-the-blank question.

Ritual Religiosity

1. How many times have you attended religious services during the past year? ___ times.

2. Which of the following best describes your practices of prayer or religious meditation?

    a. Prayer is a regular part of my daily life.
    b. I usually pray in times of stress or need but rarely at any other time.
    c. I pray only during formal ceremonies.
    d. I never pray.

Consequential Religiosity

3. When you have a serious personal problem, how often do you take religious advice or teaching into consideration?

    a. Almost always
    b. Usually
    c. Sometimes
    d. Never.

4. How much influence would you say that religion has on the way that you choose to act and the way that you choose to spend your time each day?

    a. No influence
    b. A small influence
    c. Some influence
    d. A fair amount of influence
    e. A large influence

Theological Religiosity

5. Which of the following statements comes closest to your belief about God?

    a. I am sure that God really exists and that He is active in my life.
    b. Although I sometimes question His existence, I do believe in God and believe He knows of me as a person.
    c. I don't know if there is a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind.
    d. I don't know if there is a personal God or a higher power of some kind, and I don't know if I ever will.
    e. I don't believe in a personal God or in a higher power.

6. Which one of the following statements comes closest to your belief about life after death (immortality)?

   a. I believe in a personal life after death, a soul existing as a specific individual spirit.
   b. I believe in a soul existing after death as a part of a universal spirit.
   c. I believe in a life after death of some kind, but I really don't know what it will be like.
   d. I don't know whether there is any kind of life after death, and I don't know if I will ever know.
   e. I don't believe in any kind of life after death.

Experiential Religiosity

7. During the past year, how often have you experienced a feeling of religious reverence or devotion?

   a. Almost daily
   b. Frequently
   c. Sometimes
   d. Rarely
   e. Never

8. Do you agree with the following statement? "Religion gives me a great amount of comfort and security in life."

   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

APPENDIX E

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. In what ways have you participated in ministry over the last month?

2. Share with me what you learned from participating in ministry.

3. Talk to me about how satisfied you are with your spiritual life. What would make it

   better?

4. What do you hope to learn from the confirmation class?

WORKS CITED

Amerson, Phillip A., and Earl D. C. Brewer. "Faith and Social Ministry: United

Methodism." *Faith and Social Ministry: Ten Christian Perspectives*. Ed. James D.

Davidson. Values & Ethics series. Vol. 1. Chicago: Loyola UP, 1990. 79-95.

Anderman, Alice Zimmerman. "Confirmation Education for a Post Modern Church:

Using Multiple Intelligence Theory in Confirmation Education." Diss. Lancaster

Theological Seminary, 2000.

Barna, George. *Think Like Jesus: Make the Right Decision Every Time*. Nashville:

Integrity, 2003.

Biddle, Mark E. *Deuteronomy*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA:

Smyth and Helwys, 2003.

Blackaby, Henry T., and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to

God's Agenda*. Nashville: Broadman, 2001.

Boivin, Michael J. "Religiosity Measure (Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975)." Hill and Hood.

Boivin, Michael J., Allison L. Kirby, Laura K. Underwood, and Heather Silva. "Spiritual

Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982; Ellison, 1983)." Hill and Hood

307-09.

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004. Nashville: United

Methodist Pub. House, 2004.

Borgen, Ole E. "Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership in the Methodist

Church before the Union of 1968, 2 pts." *Methodist History* 27.2 (Jan. 1989): 89-

109. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*. 16 Mar. 2009

<http://search.ebscohost.com/

login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=
rfh&AN=ATLA0000813315&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

---. "Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership in the Methodist Church Before
the Union of 1968, 2 pts." *Methodist History* 27.3 (Apr. 1989): 163-81. *ATLA
Religion Database with ATLASerials*. 31 Mar. 2009 <http://search.ebscohost.com/
login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=rfh&AN=
ATLA0000813316&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

Boshers, Bo, and Kim Anderson. *Student Ministry for the 21st Century: Transforming
Your Youth Group into a Vital Student Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

Bruce, F. F. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews: The English Text with
Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. New International Commentary on the New
Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.

Butman, Richard E. "The Assessment of Religious Development: Some Possible
Options." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 9.2 (Summer 1990): 14-26.
ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials. 13 May 2009
<http://search.ebscohost.com/
login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=rfh&AN=
ATLA0000827424&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications,
1994.

Centennial, Lynda. "Qualitative Research Design." YouTube lecture. 2 Apr. 2009
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CVNOFPxfBY>.

Chase, F. H. *Confirmation in the Apostolic Age*. London: Macmillan, 1909.

Claim the Name: Confirmation: 8 Week Step-by-Step Teaching Plans. Nashville:

    Cokesbury, 2005.

Claim the Name. Nashville: Cokesbury, 2000.

"Confirmation." *Classic Encyclopedia: Based on the 11th Edition of the Encyclopaedia*

    Britannica (pub. 1911). 2 Sept. 2006. 24 Nov. 2008

    <http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Confirmation>.

Cupples, Keith, and Harvey G. Throop. *Journey to Discipleship: Confirmation*

    Curriculum for United Methodists, Teacher's Guide. San Diego: Dimensions,

    1989.

Dettoni, John. *Introduction to Youth Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Dudley, Carl S. *Next Steps in Community Ministry: Hands-On Leadership*. Bethesda,

    MD: Alban Institute, 1996.

Dunn, Richard R. *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students: A Guide for Youth Workers,*

    Pastors, Teachers & Campus Ministers. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.

Ellison, Craig W. "Spiritual Well-Being: Conceptualization and Measurement." *Journal*

    of Psychology and Theology. 11.4 (1983): 330-40.

Ellison, Craig W., and Joel Smith. "Toward an Integrative Measure of Health and Well-

    Being." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 19.1 (Spring 1991): 35-48.

Elwell, Walter A. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.

Gilbrant, Thoralf, Ralph W. Harris, and Stanley M. Horton, eds. *The Complete Biblical*

    Library. New Testament. Springfield, MO: World Library, 1986-91. 17 vols.

Gilbrant, Thoralf, and Gregory A. Lint, eds. *The Complete Biblical Library. Old*

    Testament. Springfield, MO: World Library, 1994-2000. 22 vols.

Girgensohn, Herbert. *Teaching Luther's Catechism II; Baptism—Confession—the Lord's Supper*. Trans. John W. Doberstein. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960.

Gooch, John O. *Claiming the Name: A Theological and Practical Overview of Confirmation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

Herrington, Jim, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr. *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Heugel, James R. *"Graunted of the Bysshop Honde": The Meaning and Uses of the Sacrament of Confirmation from its Inception through the Middle Ages*. Diss. U of Washington, 2003. Ann Arbor: MI, 2004.

Hill, Peter C., and Ralph W. Hood. *Measures of Religiosity*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education, 1999.

Hippolytus. *On the Apostolic Tradition: An English Version*. Trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2001.

"The Historical Foundations of the Church of England." *Chris' Considerations*. 21 May 2007. 30 Mar. 2009 <http://chriswatsonlee.wordpress.com/2007/05/21/the-historical-foundations-of-the-church-of-england>.

Hopkins, Will G. "Quantitative Research Design." *Sportscience*. 2 Apr. 2009 <http://www.sportsci.org/jour/0001/wghdesign.html#types>.

Hugen, Beryl, Terry A. Wolfer, and Jennifer Ubels Renkema. "Service and Faith: The Impact on Christian Faith of Community Ministry Participation." *Review of Religious Research* 47.4 (June 2006): 409-26. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*. 21 Feb. 2009 <http://search.ebscohost.com/

login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=rfh&AN=
ATLA0001522054&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

Hymans, Diane J. "Adolescent Development." *Confirmation*. Minneapolis: Fortress,

1999. 194-224. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*. 1 Apr. 2009

<http://search.ebscohost.com/

login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=rfh&AN=

ATLA0001232067&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

Ivankova, Nataliya V., John W. Creswell, and Sheldon L. Stick. "Using Mixed-Methods

Sequential Explanatory Design: From Theory to Practice." *Field Methods* 18.3

(2006): 1-20. 2 Apr. 2009 <http://fmx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/18/1/3>.

Johnson, Susanne. *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom*.

Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

Jones-Wells, Orea. "A Ritual of Confirmation in the A.M.E. Church: Re-Discovering

Decision Day." Diss. Drew U, 2000.

Joy, Donald M. *Meaningful Learning in the Church*. Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life,

1969.

Jungkuntz, Theodore R. *Confirmation and the Charismata*. Lanham, MD: UP of

America, 1983.

Kagan, Jerome, and Susan B. Gall. *The Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood & Adolescence*.

Detroit: Gale, 1998.

Krueger, Howard W. "The Practice of Confirmation in the United Methodist Church."

Diss. United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, 1977.

Lambert, Dan. *Teaching That Makes a Difference: How to Teach for Holistic Impact*. El

    Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2004.

Lampe, G. W. H. *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and*

    Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers. London: S.P.C.K., 1967.

Leibfarth, Geri. Personal interview. 30 Mar. 2009.

"LifeWay Research Uncovers Reasons 18 to 22 Year Olds Drop Out of Church."

    LifeWay Bible Solutions for Life. 10 Aug. 2007. 3 Jan. 2011.

    <http://www.lifeway.com/article/165949>.

Luther, Martin. *The Large Catechism of Martin Luther*. Trans. Robert H. Fischer.

    Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959.

---. *Luther's Small Catechism: A Contemporary Translation*. Milwaukee: Northwestern,

    1979.

Marcum, Walt. *Deepening Youth Spirituality: The Youth Worker's Guide.* Nashville:

    Abingdon, 2001.

Marsh, Thomas. "Christian Initiation: Practice & Theology." *Confirming the Faith of*

    Adolescents: An Alternative Future for Confirmation. Ed. Arthur J. Kubick. New

    York: Paulist, 1991. 13-24.

Mason, Arthur James. *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism, as Taught in Holy*

    Scripture and the Fathers. London: Longmans, Green, 1891.

McNabb, Bill, and Steven Mabry. *Teaching the Bible Creatively: How to Awaken Your*

    Kids to Scripture. Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties, 1990.

Monkres, Peter R., and R. Kenneth Ostermiller. *The Rite of Confirmation: Moments*

    When Faith Is Strengthened. Cleveland, OH: United Church, 1995.

Moore, Lance Wayne. "Confirmation in the Rural United Methodist Church: A New

  Manual." Diss. Emory U, 1995.

Nelson, Randolph A. "Facilitating Growth in Faith through Social Ministry." *Handbook

  of Faith*. Ed. James Michael Lee. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education, 1990.

  221-41.

O'Dwyer, Michael. *Confirmation: A Study in the Development of Sacramental Theology*.

  New York: Benziger Brothers, 1915.

Pfeiffer, Andrew K. "Confirmation: An Opportunity for Faith Formation." *Lutheran

  Theological Journal* 42.1 (May 2008): 30-40.

Rohrbaugh John, and Richard Jessor. "Religiosity in Youth: A Personal Control against

  Deviant Behavior." *Journal of Personality* 43.1 (1975): 136-55.

Rotherham, Joseph B. *The Emphasized Bible: A New Translation*. Cincinnati: Standard,

  1902.

Ryken, Leland, Jim Wilhoit, Tremper Longman, Colin Duriez, Douglas Penney, and

  Daniel G. Reid. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

  1998.

Sawyer, Kieran. "A Case for Adolescent Confirmation." *Confirming the Faith of

  Adolescents: An Alternative Future for Confirmation.* Ed. Arthur J. Kubick. New

  York: Paulist, 1991. 25-45.

Shapiro, Zvi. "Children and the Seder." *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological

  Center* 30.1-2 (2003): 39-61. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*. 23 Feb.

  2009 <http://search.ebscohost.com/

  login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=rfh&AN=

ATLA0001498511&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

Steele, Les L. *On the Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation*. Grand Rapids:

Baker, 1990.

Struková, Jana. "The Vocational Model of Confirmation." *Journal of Youth Ministry* 6.2

(Spring 2008): 69-84.

Tertullian. "On Baptism." Trans. Rev. S. Thelwall. *Early Christian Writings*. Peter Kirby.

25 Mar. 2009 <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/

text/tertullian21.html>.

Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. The New International Commentary

on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Turner, Paul. "Confirmation in the Catechism of the Catholic Church." *Paul Turner*. 24

Nov. 2008 <http://www.paulturner.org/confirmation.htm>.

"UMC Membership Down, but Constituency Expands." *Christian Century* 125.8 (22

Apr. 2008): 15. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*. 23 Feb. 2009

<http://search.ebscohost.com/

login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=rfh&AN=

ATLA0001649638&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

Vogel, Dwight. *By Water & the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism*.

Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996.

Walker, Jon. "Family Life Council Says It's Time to Bring Family Back to Life." 12 June

2002. 29 July 2008 <http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc02/newsroom/

printfriendly.asp?ID=261>.

Webber, Robert. *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

We Believe: Basic Belief Studies for Youth, Student Guide. Anderson, IN: Bristol House, 2002.

We Believe: Basic Belief Studies for Youth, Teacher Guide. Anderson, IN: Bristol House, 1996.

Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy 1-11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1991.

Weymouth, Richard F. *Weymouth New Testament in Modern Speech, Acts*. S.l.: General Books, 2010.

"What Teenagers Look For in a Church." *Barna Group*. 8 Oct. 2007. 25 Mar. 2009 <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/ 93-what-teenagers-look-for-in-a-church>.

White, James. *Sacraments as God's Self Giving: Sacramental Practice and Faith*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1983.

Willimon, William H. *Remember Who You Are: Baptism, a Model for Christian Life*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1980.

---. "Taking Confirmation Out of the Classroom." *Christian Century* 105.9 (16 Mar. 1988): 271-72.

Wood, Laurence W. *Pentecostal Grace*. Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury, 1980.

Youngblood, Ronald F., gen. ed. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville: Nelson, 1995.

"Youth Transition Network Launched." *General Council of the Assemblies of God.*

Assemblies of God, USA. 21 Mar. 2009 <www.ag.org/top/Events/

General_Council_2007/News/20070810/20070810_18_youth.cfm>.

WORKS CONSULTED

Atha, Matthew Christopher. "Tell Me the Stories: A Curriculum for Confirmation." Diss.

 Asbury Theological Seminary, 1999.

Ellard, S. J. "How Fifth-Century Rome Administered Sacraments." *Theological Studies*

 9.1 (Mar. 2008): 3-19.

Fee, Gordon, D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary

 on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

Genia, Vicky. "Evaluation of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale in a Sample of College

 Students." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11.1 (2001):

 25-33. *ATLA Religion Database*. 16 Mar. 2009 <http://search.ebscohost.com/

 login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=url,cookie,ip,uid&db=rfh&AN=

 ATLA0000027107&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live>.

Kinnaman, David, and Gabe Lyons. *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks*

 about Christianity and Why It Matters. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.