

# Frequently Asked Questions: PreConfirmation Retreats!

## The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

### Office of Youth Ministries

#### What is the purpose of a PreConfirmation retreat?

We offer PreConfirmation retreats as a chance for young people to meet other young people discerning their call to Confirmation, or even just the faith journey in general. The retreats do NOT try to sum up a year's worth of classes in one overnight, but we DO try to give all who come a feeling for how making a commitment to one's faith can be lived out not only in church, but in every part of our day.

#### What happens at a PreConfirmation retreat?

Registration begins Friday night at 7:00 p.m. and we will be all wrapped up by 4:00 p.m. Saturday afternoon. Because these are one night retreats, we do pack a lot into 20 hours!

Here is a sample schedule for a weekend retreat:

<b><u>Friday:</u></b>	Arrive	<b><u>Saturday:</u></b>	Breakfast
	Norms, gathering		Worship/ Small Groups/ Music
	Worship/ Small		Bible Study/ Meet the Bishop
	Groups/ Music		Spiritual Practice Workshop Time
	Presentation		Lunch
	Snack		Clean up/ Pack
	Bed		Games
			Spiritual Practice Workshops Time
			Closing Eucharist

#### Do you encourage kids to get confirmed at the retreat?

We encourage kids to think creatively about their faith, and to see it as a lifelong journey rather than a one-time moment when one must make a commitment or 'lose out.' Oftentimes kids who have already decided not to be confirmed come and get a lot out of hearing other youth talk about their own faith journeys when it comes to Confirmation. We try to hold everyone in gentle hands, and do not assume that every youth has made up their mind yet. We simply try to model what a life lived in faith might look like.

#### What do the Bishops do when they visit on Saturday morning?

Our bishops join the kids and often offer a reflection on their faith, and join us for the morning worship. We also have a great portion of our morning program where the youth can ask any question (well—within reason ☺) of our bishops. Questions have ranged from "If you had a super power, what would it be?" to "How many times do you sin a day?" The point is to demonstrate that there is no question or worry or topic that is outside the realm of our faith.

#### Where do I stay?

Everyone stays in cabins which house up to 10 or 12 people. Parish groups are separated by gender. Chaperones stay in the cabin of the same gender youth. Sometimes two parishes will be in the same

cabin—sometimes more! Cabins have bunk beds, two sinks, two toilets, two showers, and of course, outlets. You will need to bring your own sleeping bag/ pillow and towel.

### **What and where do I eat?**

We have several meals while we are at the retreat. We also have an extensive salad bar, and often in the winter, soup! During the retreat, we will have breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and a late night snack on Friday night after you arrive. No dinner is served on Friday night.

### **What should I bring?**

Sleeping bag, pillow, towel, toiletries, warm clothes (layers are good!), sneakers if it's spring or fall, winter boots in the winter, homework/ book, clearly labeled medications, flashlight, coat/ scarf/ gloves. **DO NOT BRING:** anything that if lost or broken would break your heart; food or soda.

### **What if I have dietary needs or physical challenges?**

We ask that you let us know in advance of any special needs as part of the registration process, so that we can know in advance and be better prepared to serve you.

### **You mention small groups a lot. Who will be in my small group?**

We randomly assign small groups. We make an effort to put youth from parishes into different small groups—so that everyone is on the same footing! We also try to make sure that there is a diversity of gender in each group.

### **Who leads the retreats?**

We have a group of 10th to 12th graders, all Episcopalians from Eastern Massachusetts, who applied in the late summer to be on the Diocesan Youth Council. Part of their ministry is to welcome all the youth attending retreats, to lead small groups, to give reflections on their own spiritual journey, to organize the workshops and Bible Study, and to get to know YOU! They spend several weekends preparing for each retreat.

If you are interested in applying for the Diocesan Youth Council, please check out the Youth Ministry website [Diocesan Youth Programs page](#) for more details, or ask a current member of the DYC at the retreat.

### **What happens if someone gets sick?**

We almost always have a doctor on staff, who helps us with treating any injuries or illnesses that may come up during the weekend. In an emergency, we will take you to the closest hospital. You and your chaperone are responsible for monitoring and remembering your own personal medications (unlike the summer camp program).

### **How many people come to a retreat?**

Usually we have about 130-150 total. Some of those are adults, some are DYCs, and the rest, YOUTH!

### **Do I need to have a chaperone?**

We make sure that we operate by Safe Church regulations where there is at least a 1:8 adult to youth ratio, of the same gender. That means that in general, if a group of 8 kids come and all of them are girls, then only one female chaperone has to be present (though we encourage more!). If a group of 8 kids is comprised of 4 boys and 4 girls, then two chaperones—one male, one female—should come. If you are having trouble finding a chaperone (or enough chaperones of the same gender), then we may be able to connect you with another parish's chaperones (with permission of the parents of the kids). However, please do not rely on this and encourage your adults to join in!

### **Can I send a youth from my church, even if no other kids are going and they don't have a chaperone?**

We will never say no to a youth who wants to come to a retreat! If this is the case, please be in touch with H. Mark Smith, and we will make some arrangements with nearby parishes that may be able to cover chaperone duties.

### **What do adult mentors do during retreats?**

First of all, our adult mentors are present in case of emergency and to provide Safe Church presence for all the youth. We will have some short periods where mentors can connect, exchange ideas and reflections on their experience of teaching or being a part of the Confirmation program at their parish. From time to time we will ask interested mentors and clergy to lead or help with workshops with the youth. Let Mark know if you have a special skill you would like to share.

### **Are there scholarships?**

Yes, we have scholarships. Our usual schedule of scholarships is a 1/3 parish, 1/3 diocese and 1/3 family split. We are happy to talk to clergy about scholarships for youth and youth mentors. Please be in touch with us in advance.

### **What is your refund policy?**

- Full refund: If a participant cancels more than two weeks before the retreat OR if we are able to fill the spot within one week of the retreat.
- Half refund: If a participant cancels within one and two weeks of the retreat.
- No refund: If a participant cancels within the week before the retreat.
- Illness and Cancellation: if the participant is ill and is not able to attend the retreat because of that illness, we will refund half of the registration fee.

### **Can I come late/ leave early/ etc?**

This is best answered on a case by case basis. It is sometimes difficult to have a functioning small group when people regularly go in and out. However, we wish to make this accessible for all! Please be in touch with Mark if this is the case.

**All other questions, please be in touch with H. Mark Smith ([hmsmith@diomass.org](mailto:hmsmith@diomass.org))!**