

BreakThru

From Catechism to *Christ*

Confirmation Ministry for Grades 6-9

CONFIRMATION PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2023-2024

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@ELCYOUTHDAYTON

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WELCOME

Welcome to a Confirmation program that will literally change your life! You are about to embark on YOUR personal faith journey to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ and with God's people. You may already have a head start if you have been coming to church for a number of years. You may have some knowledge of the Bible and the stories it contains. However, we also recognize that you may not know Jesus at all or may only be here because your parents are making you attend. Wherever you are in your faith life... it is OK! We are here to help you along your journey. There will be hard work, but there will be lots of fun along the way too! God promises us that he will always be with us no matter what, and we pray that while you are here you will find Him too.



WHAT IS CONFIRMATION?

ACCORDING TO THE ELCA...

"Confirmation ministry is a **pastoral** and **educational** ministry of the church that helps the baptized through Word and Sacrament to **identify more deeply with the Christian community** and **participate more fully in its mission**."

Outside of church walls, "confirmation" is a run-of-the-mill word typically associated with the idea of *verification* – we can choose to receive "confirmation" when a package we've shipped reaches its destination, for example. Inside church walls, however, the word "confirmation" is used quite differently, and often to mean slightly different things. So what *does* it mean, anyway?

WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CONFIRMATION

Most often, "confirmation" is used to describe the entire three and a half year educational program which serves to prepare students for the Affirmation of Baptism service and the life of discipleship that follows. During this time, a student is said to be *in* or *going to* confirmation. The Latin word *confirmare*, the earliest ancestor of "confirmation," literally means "to strengthen." Paired with the word "faith," this produces an appropriate definition of "confirmation" as used in this way – it's a time to *strengthen faith*.

"Confirmation" is also used to describe the special worship service that concludes this time of faith-strengthening. Therefore a student looks forward to being confirmed at his or her confirmation service. Liturgically speaking, this is called an *Affirmation of Baptism*, a rite of passage which reminds both individuals and the assembly of the covenant made at our baptism – both God's promise to us and our call to live out those promises.

Martin Luther, however, reminds us that the Christian life is one of *daily* dying and rising with Christ in the waters of baptism. In this sense "confirmation" is something that *never stops happening*. It all begins with the sacrament of baptism, in which we're washed with water, marked with the cross of Christ, and filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a public celebration. It's *confirmed* in the Affirmation of Baptism service, in which we say "Yes!" to our baptism. And it *continues* in the daily renewal of our commitment to the baptismal life.

In other words, confirmation is not an *end*, but a beginning. During the Affirmation of Baptism liturgy, candidates are asked to "profess faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church." Additionally – and perhaps more importantly – candidates are asked:

*"Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:
To live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?"*

This question from the heart of the Affirmation of Baptism liturgy paints a rather vivid picture of a life of faith, and as such it serves as the foundation of the confirmation program at Epiphany.

WHAT IS CONFIRMATION?

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Epiphany Lutheran Church seeks to provide a confirmation ministry that is relevant to the community in which we serve while building upon our rich Lutheran heritage. We aim to affirm the faith of our students and lead them towards a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We view confirmation ministry as a joint venture between the youth ministry of this church and the parents of every student. Recognizing that confirmation flows from baptism and is the responsibility of the entire congregation, we seek caring adults from among our members to act as guides to our students and facilitators of our program. We believe that discipleship goes hand in hand with authentic Christian fellowship and Biblical truth. One is just as important as the other. In fact, one can't exist without the other. Consequently, it is our goal that each of our youth experiences both Biblical truth and fellowship throughout the course of the program.

Our desire is to partner with families and the congregation in the task of training young people in the various practices that are essential for nurturing lifelong faith by:

- Presenting the core of the Christian faith through study of scripture and Luther's *Small Catechism*, and using these texts as the context for exploring current issues in confirmands' everyday lives.
- Promoting the development of faith practices – habits of Christian discipleship – in confirmands by providing opportunities for and encouraging reflection upon worship, prayer, services, study, fellowship, retreats, encouragement, etc.
- Strengthening confirmands' identification with the Church by facilitating relationship-building with other members of Epiphany through both small group and large group experiences guided by trained and caring adults.
- Preparing confirmands for the rite of Affirmation of Baptism and the life of discipleship which follows.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Students entering the confirmation program should be baptized in a Christian church and have taken, or be scheduled to take, First Communion instruction prior to the start of the confirmation program. This eligibility will be at the discretion of the Pastors and Director of Youth & Family Ministries. Students should also be enrolled in at least the 6th grade prior to beginning the program. The entire confirmation program is designed to be completed in October of the student's 9th grade year.



Baptized Christian



First Communion



At least 6th Grade

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Confirmation at Epiphany Lutheran Church begins at the start of 6th grade and culminates with the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism on Reformation Sunday of the student's 9th grade year.

BRIDGE YEAR (6TH GRADE)

Confirmation Orientation will be held in September for students 6th grade and older wishing to begin their confirmation journey. Students will participate in Learning Events as a whole confirmation class throughout their 6th grade year. During this year, there is also the expectation that students will begin working on the completion of additional program responsibilities in the areas of worship, service, and fellowship.

FIRST & SECOND YEAR (7TH & 8TH GRADE)

Over the course of these two years, students will study the Old and New Testament, Peer Ministry Leadership, and the basic parts of Luther's Small Catechism, including the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. During these two years, there is also the expectation that students will complete additional responsibilities in the areas of worship, service, and fellowship.

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION (9TH GRADE)

Students spend the summer and early fall of their 9th grade year doing final preparations for the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism. Students spend the summer completing a Discipleship Project, and then attend Learning Events in the fall in preparation for confirmation. There are no specific additional responsibilities during this part of the program. Students will use this time to work on their Discipleship Project, wrap up the season with their small group, and prepare for the Confirmation Celebration.



SMALL GROUPS

The confirmation journey includes both large group instruction and small group discussion. Students will participate in a small group led by adult small group guides during their first and second year of study. These groups are typically designed to be both class- and gender-specific so that youth are comfortable sharing with each other. Small groups meet during each Learning Event following the large group instruction, and materials are provided for small group discussions.

Our greatest desire for small groups is that they become a place where students can connect with one another and form meaningful relationships with significant adults: to know and be known. Additionally, we believe that for authentic fellowship to occur, it must be guided by Biblical truth. Each week we will study and discuss Biblical passages. A portion of the small group time will be devoted to the application of Biblical truths to our lives. Small groups are not designed for “classroom” study (all book knowledge, nor are they designed to be a giant party (all play). Instead, the small group is a place for students to form relationships with others and God so that they can grow in their faith. Small groups make each interaction and each moment a faith-life-learning moment.

WE BELIEVE IN SMALL GROUPS BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE FOR STUDENTS TO...

- ☒ ...be known and accepted.
- ☒ ... discuss important life issues.
- ☒ ...be accountable to a mentor.
- ☒ ...be challenged to grow spiritually



EXPECTATIONS

A SUCCESSFUL AND RELEVANT CONFIRMATION MINISTRY MUST BE A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND THE CONGREGATION. EXPECTATIONS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

AS A STUDENT...

- that you are a baptized member of the body of Christ
- that you have taken or are registered to take First Communion instruction
- that you study the materials, read the Bible, attend worship, and pray regularly
- that you become involved in our community of faith by attending class and youth activities
- that you take responsibility for and grow in your faith
- that you are prompt and prepared for Learning Events
- that you can communicate your needs for help with the material to your Small Group Guide
- that you will serve Epiphany Lutheran Church through the expectations of this program

AS A PARENT OR GUARDIAN...

- that you will be an example of Christian behavior and commitment to your child
- that you will read your Bible and pray regularly
- that you will encourage your child in their faith journey
- that you will lead by example by nurturing your own faith and commitment to Christ by being faithful in your participation in worship, education, service, and fellowship in the life of Epiphany Lutheran Church

AS THE CONGREGATION OF EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

- that we will expect our adult guides, teachers, and other facilitators of this program to lead by example by nurturing our own faith and commitment to Christ by being faithful in participating in worship, education, service, and fellowship in the life of Epiphany Lutheran Church
- that we will be creative in helping you grow in faith through this program
- that we will challenge and feed your faith
- that we will work with each student to the best of our abilities to meet the needs of the families that we serve

REALITY CHECK: WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US, AND IT WILL TAKE THE COOPERATION OF STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND THE CONGREGATION TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN IS IMPERATIVE TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS CONFIRMATION MINISTRY. WE EXPECT YOU TO KEEP US INFORMED OF ANYTHING THAT WILL AFFECT YOUR STUDENT'S ABILITY TO FULLY PARTICIPATE.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

BY ENTERING INTO THE CONFIRMATION PROGRAM AT EPIPHANY, STUDENTS PROMISE TO PARTICIPATE AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE AND TO MAKE AN HONEST EFFORT TO ENGAGE IN THE PROGRAM'S VARIOUS OFFERINGS AND COMMITMENTS. IT IS OUR BELIEVE THAT THIS PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT PREPARES STUDENTS FOR THE MOST FAITHFUL AND AUTHENTIC RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS POSED IN THE AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM LITURGY.

EDUCATION: WHAT'S A LEARNING EVENT?

The education portion of this ministry covers the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and teachings of Luther's Small Catechism and prepares youth for adult membership and participation at Epiphany Lutheran Church and in the Body of Christ. Our educational curriculum is taught during our BreakThru Learning Events, the wonderful times on Sundays when we gather together for music, games, learning, and time with our small groups. Learning Events are scheduled on select Sundays, and a schedule will be distributed well in advance at the beginning of each year.

What to Bring: Parents, since your students cannot drive, it is *your* responsibility to see that they arrive on time for every Learning Event. Please store coats and hats in the proper areas before coming in to the Learning Event.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend every Learning Event as part of the confirmation journey. We want to emphasize that **regular attendance is extremely important** not only for learning content, but for the small group discussion and conversation that accompanies the large group presentation and course material. **If a student cannot attend a particular event, then he or she is to inform his or her small group guide.**

WHAT TO BRING

- ☒ Bible
- ☒ The Lutheran Handbook
- ☒ Confirmation Binder
- ☒ Pen and Highlighter

PLEASE NOTE:

We understand that certain family circumstances could affect these attendance requirements. Please speak with the Director of Youth & Family Ministries about any specific circumstances so that reasonable arrangements can be made.



STUDENTS ARE ALLOWED ONE EXCUSED ABSENCE PER YEAR. AFTER ONE MISSED LEARNING EVENT, STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE AN AT-HOME ASSIGNMENT WITH A PARENT FOR ANY ADDITIONAL MISSED LEARNING EVENTS.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

PARTICIPANTS IN EPIPHANY'S CONFIRMATION MINISTRY ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOLLOWING FAITH GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES:



WORSHIP

To develop worship participation as a faith practice, we ask that confirmation students attempt to maintain at least a 50% record of attendance at weekly worship. Regular worship connects us with the body of Christ, but even more specifically to the faith community of our family, neighbors, and friends at Epiphany Lutheran Church. Students should submit a *Worship Reflection* online. Worship reflections are designed to facilitate engagement with the worship service and may be completed during any weekly worship service as well as Lenten, Advent, and other holiday services (e.g., Thanksgiving Eve). The *Worship Reflection* form can be accessed at epiphanydayton.org/breakthru-worship-reflection/

EACH STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO COMPLETE A MINIMUM OF 30 WORSHIP REFLECTIONS DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROGRAM (10 PER YEAR). ALL WORSHIP REFLECTIONS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE STUDENT'S 8TH GRADE YEAR. UPON COMPLETION, STUDENTS SHOULD RECORD THEIR PROGRESS ON THE FAMILY DIGEST.



FELLOWSHIP

To develop the faith practice of Christian community and fellowship, we ask that students participate in fellowship events offered throughout the year.



EACH STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO ATTEND A MINIMUM OF TWO FELLOWSHIP EVENTS PER PROGRAM YEAR. UPON COMPLETION, STUDENTS SHOULD RECORD THEIR PROGRESS ON THE FAMILY DIGEST.

RETREAT

During the confirmation journey, we seek to provide students with the opportunity to step back and take a long, loving look at life and faith. These are can't miss touch points in your confirmation journey, with costs and dates published well in advance so that families can plan their schedules accordingly. Scholarships are available if needed.

Each year, the best of the best among our high school student leaders plan, host and lead a fall retreat for our confirmation students during a weekend away at camp. Dates and information about the retreat are published well in advance each year so that you can plan your schedule accordingly.

ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND AT LEAST ONE RETREAT DURING THEIR CONFIRMATION JOURNEY. GOING TO CAMP MORE THAN ONCE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!



PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

PARTICIPANTS IN EPIPHANY'S CONFIRMATION MINISTRY ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOLLOWING FAITH GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES:

SERVICE: WE LOVE JESUS BY SERVING OTHERS

There is an important connection between faith and service, and at Epiphany Lutheran Church, our vision is to see our faith lived out in service: "*Epiphany Lutheran Church loves Jesus by serving others!*" We acknowledge and reflect the love of God by demonstrating a faith that is ALIVE by providing meaningful study and opportunities for service. To develop the faith practices of tending to the needs of the church and striving for justice and peace, we ask that students participate in accumulating service hours throughout each year.

Generally, students will earn one (1) service hour for each hour of service. The primary exception to this is that for **long-term service programs** (overnight or week-long events), the maximum number of hours that a student can accumulate is four (4). Students are encouraged to find opportunities for service in each three categories: Worship, Congregation Life, and Community Service. Different examples of opportunities for service are noted for each category as follows, but the possibilities are endless!

SERVICE [SUR-VIS]

noun

- 1. an act of helpful activity; help; aid*
- 2. time freely given to complete a task(s) for which the student does not receive a grade or payment.*

EACH STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO ACCUMULATE A MINIMUM OF 30 SERVICE HOURS DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROGRAM (10 PER YEAR). SERVICE HOURS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE STUDENT'S 8TH GRADE YEAR. UPON COMPLETION, STUDENTS SHOULD RECORD THEIR PROGRESS ON THE FAMILY DIGEST.



In order to receive credit for service hours, students should submit a *Service Hour Report online*; otherwise there is no record of the service performed. Submitted forms are tracked in the office. The *Service Hour Report* form can be accessed at: epiphanydayton.org/breakthru-service-hours/

WORSHIP

- Usher
- Greeter
- Communion Assistant
- Praise Band
- Sound/Slides/Streaming
- Epiphany Chorale
- Handbell Choir
- Drama Ministry
- ...and more!

IN-SERVICE

(CONGREGATIONAL LIFE)

- Preschool VBS
- Grounds Clean-Up
- Liturgical Arts
- Sunday School Helpers
- Children's Ministry
- Congregational Events
- ...and more!

OUT-SERVICE

(COMMUNITY SERVICE)

- Epiphany's Pantry
- Parents Night Out
- Rake & Run
- Matthew 25 Ministries
- Operation Prom Dress
- Service through Scouts
- School Service Clubs
- ...and more!

Students are urged to ask about or consider other service possibilities, too, where they are offering their time or talents at school, church, or in the community.

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

In preparation for the **Rite of Affirmation of Baptism** on Reformation Sunday of the student's freshman year, there will be some final program elements to help tie everything together and prepare students to transition into our High School Ministry (HSM). These responsibilities will be completed during the summer before and early fall of the student's confirmation year, and additional information will be given at the end of the 8th grade year. This time of preparation involves the completion of a *discipleship project*, final Learning Events in the fall, and the Faith Celebration. Students are also encouraged to connect with Epiphany's High School Ministry during this time.



Each student will complete a Discipleship Project to share his or her faith with the members of Epiphany through the use of their spiritual gifts, talents and interests. Students are asked to create a project that shares their faith and life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It can be anything of their choosing. A completed project will include both the project itself and a written description of the project and how it shares your faith.

CONFIRMATION CELEBRATION

The Rite of Affirmation of Baptism has long been a very special tradition of the Lutheran Church. We honor and celebrate the growth in faith of our youth with their parents, families, guides, and friends with a Faith Celebration and Affirmation of Baptism worship service.

Confirmation will be held on **Reformation Sunday** in October of each year. In the upcoming years, the celebration will be held on the following dates (please mark your calendars now!)

2026 (starting in 2023):	Sunday, October 25
2027 (starting in 2024):	Sunday, October 31
2028 (starting in 2025):	Sunday, October 29

Specific details about everything related to the Confirmation Celebration will be shared over the summer leading up to the students' freshman year. **Information about confirmation rehearsal will be published well in advance.**

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

CONFIRMATION LEADERS – PASTORS, CHURCH STAFF, SMALL GROUP GUIDES, AND VOLUNTEERS – WILL ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO FULFILL THEIR CONFIRMATION COMMITMENTS, BUT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO GROW, WORK, THINK, AND STRIVE LIES PRIMARILY WITH THE STUDENT AND HIS OR HER FAMILY. IT IS OUR MISSION TO EMPOWER PARENTS AS THE PRIMARY TEACHERS, MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS OF FAITH FOR THEIR CHILDREN, WITH THE CHURCH AS THE REINFORCEMENT–NOT THE REPLACEMENT–OF THE PARENT’S DUTIES.

“Hear, O [Parents]: 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.” Deuteronomy 6:4–7

Parents are, by far, the primary means by which children learn about life and God. This must be the bedrock of our youth ministry and confirmation program. Whether through love or indifference, involvement or absence, good example or poor, no relationship will impact children more than their relationship with their parents. Put simply, **church begins at home with the family**. That’s the way God designed it.

If confirmation instruction is important to you – and you demonstrate it through *your* active participation and encouragement – this experience will last far beyond your child’s Affirmation of Baptism. **As they say: Faith is caught, not taught.**

When children are baptized, parents make a promise to:

- *live with them among God’s faithful people,*
- *bring them to the word of God and the holy supper,*
- *teach them the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments,*
- *place in their hands the holy scriptures,*
- *and nurture them in faith and prayer, so that they might learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.*

The confirmation program at Epiphany is a ministry intended to help you fulfill these baptismal promises; but the responsibility ultimately rests with you.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

IT IS EXPECTED THAT PARENTS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING EPIPHANY'S CONFIRMATION MINISTRY IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- **Pray often** for your child(ren), as well as their small group guide, confirmation leaders, and the young people involved in this ministry.
- **Be involved** in your child's journey through the confirmation program, through caring conversations and weekly family devotions. Ask what they are learning and discuss with them your thoughts and views. Share and challenge each other.
- **Deepen communication** with your child by implementing a daily rhythm of practicing the FAITH5 in your home: SHARE highs and lows, READ scripture together, TALK about it, PRAY together, and BLESS one another.
- **Participate** with your child and other youth as an adult leader for a fellowship event, service event, or retreat. Take advantage of this opportunity to have fun, serve, and grow spiritually with your child. Be on the lookout for opportunities to volunteer.
- **Attend Parent Connection** Learning Events with your child as a way to experience what they are learning at confirmation classes and to connect with other middle school parents and families at Epiphany.
- **Worship regularly** with your child. This is an integral part of preparing for life as God's people. We also ask that parents review and sign their child's *Worship Reflections* before they are submitted.
- **Keep growing.** Model to your child what an active faith life means.
- **Stay informed** about the ministries and activities of the church by reading thoroughly all Epiphany communications, including the website, worship bulletins, youth ministry communications, and text messages. Please regularly check your email, as this is the primary form of communication throughout the year.
- **Contact** the Director of Youth & Family Ministries, one of the small group guides, pastors, or church staff if you have questions, comments, concerns, or ideas.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

To promote ongoing faith development in the home, we are encouraging families to use the ELCA's "Faith Lens" devotionals at home.

Consider setting aside 5-10 minutes each week to gather together and walk through the provided lectionary scripture texts, gospel reflections, discussion questions, and prayer. Devotions are available throughout the program year at blogs.elca.org/faithlens

FAITH 5

The FAITH5 (Faith Acts In The Home) is a simple, easy-to-implement faith practice, perfect for incorporating into your bedtime routine for five to fifteen minutes a night. When done over time, the FAITH5 carries the power to enrich communication, deepen understanding, aid sleep, and promote mental, physical, and spiritual health.

**SHARE highs and lows
READ scripture together
TALK about it
PRAY together
BLESS one another**

PARENT CONNECTIONS

Periodically throughout the year, parents will be asked to join us for a Learning Event.

During these events, there will be opportunities to connect with other parents who are in the trenches with you, to learn information and participate in discussions about issues teens and parents are facing. We hope that these connection times will be a resource and haven for you as parents.

PROGRAM FEE INFORMATION

A YEARLY FEE IS REQUIRED FROM ALL STUDENTS TO OFFSET THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CONFIRMATION. THIS FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE THE COST OF THE BREAKTHRU FALL RETREAT OR SPECIAL EVENTS. MONEY FOR SPECIAL EVENTS WILL BE COLLECTED AT THE TIME OF THE EVENT.

BRIDGE YEAR (6TH GRADE)

PROGRAM FEE: \$50

The program fee for 6th graders covers the following costs: *Here We Stand* Study Bible, *The Lutheran Handbook* (with Small Catechism), Binder, and snacks and supplies for all Learning Events. **This fee does not include the cost of the BreakThru Retreat.**

FIRST YEAR (7TH GRADE)

PROGRAM FEE: \$50

The program fee for the first and second year of study covers the following costs: background checks for small group guides, snacks and supplies for all Learning Events, and Guide appreciation. **This fee does not include the cost of a Bible or the BreakThru Retreat.**

SECOND YEAR (8TH GRADE)

PROGRAM FEE: \$50

The program fee for the first and second year of study covers the following costs: background checks for small group guides, snacks and supplies for all Learning Events, and Guide appreciation. **This fee does not include the cost of a Bible or the BreakThru Retreat.**

CONFIRMATION PREP (9TH GRADE)

PROGRAM FEE: \$25

The program fee for confirmation preparation covers the following costs: snacks and supplies for all learning events, some expenses related to the Confirmation Celebration, and guide appreciation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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TEXT UPDATES & REMINDERS**