

# CHOOSE

## theme What Do I Choose

### Objectives

- The confirmation candidates will make a parallel between the creation of the world and their own coming to be.
- The confirmation candidates will appreciate their social bonds with family, parish, neighbors, and friends.
- The confirmation candidates will recognize the Christian purpose of freedom—to participate in the life of the Christian community, to respond to God and others with love.
- The confirmation candidates will explore their choices.

### Overview

Our capacities to think and choose define us as human beings. We can choose to create and choose to destroy, to love or to hate, to participate or to withdraw.

Christianity values freedom because this defining human characteristic empowers us to love freely. We can choose freely to love the Creator who lavishes us with life in the world. We can choose freely to return Jesus' wholehearted love for us with love for others. We can choose freely to respond to the Holy Spirit urging us toward communion with others. We can choose freely to love family, friends, neighbors, even enemies. The ideal use of freedom for Christians is to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

However, as the story of Adam and Eve tells us, human beings have a capacity to hurt and harm one another as well as a capacity to love. We have to learn what is good and what is evil from experience and from the traditions of our Christian community. Many early teens know well the cruelty of their peers, making fun of them, treating them as outsiders.

Advertising and media complicate teens' lives by training them to be consumers who can buy popularity, success, or a new self-image. Unlike a Christian who seeks to love God, neighbor, and self, a consumer seeks to buy all that he or she deserves and desires. Teens absorb the cultural message that they can buy the self they want to be rather than seek transformation into Christ throughout their lives.

Confirmation preparation during the teen years offers an excellent opportunity for teens to reflect on their human freedom—on its Christian purpose of choosing to love and on conflicts they may experience with its cultural purpose of choosing to do what they want. The *Giver of Life Confirmation Program* calls young people to recognize they have life from God and love from their families. They are not self-made but God-made and family-nurtured. Their families complete the work of loving them into full being.

The Christian view of freedom recognizes each of us stands on the shoulders of generations of our family members and Christians. What is the Christian response to the theme question—"What will I choose?" *Love others as God, Jesus, and my family have loved me.* The Christian response calls teens to take their turns doing the work of mercy and justice that holds the human community together.

# Opening Prayer

10 minutes

## Preparation

**Music** Have parish musicians lead a song teens know that expresses the meaning of confirmation or life in the Spirit. Or, use the song “Anointed and Sealed” from David Haas’s confirmation album *With You by My Side* (GIA Publications; available from Good Ground Press, 1-800-232-5533).

**1. Reproduce** Reproduce the *Opening Prayer*, page 60, and *Closing Prayer*, page 28. The *Opening Prayer* divides Genesis 1.1-2.3 into seven parts, one for each day of creation. You will need readers for each part, plus a reader for “Science.”

**2. Create a centering symbol** for your prayer time with a globe or plastic Earth ball. Have seven vigil lights to set around the globe, one for each day of creation. You will need seven teens to light and place the vigil lights around the globe.

**3. Select music** to accompany the reading, perhaps earth music or instrumental music such as:

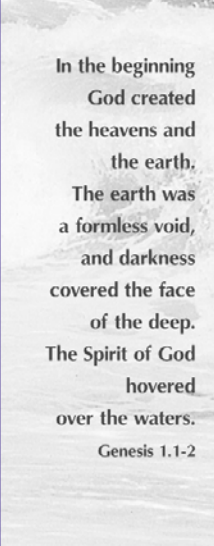
- Judy Collins’ *Whales and Nightingales*;
- Paul Winter’s *Earth Beat*;
- James Galway’s flute music.

Intersperse the music with the seven readings from scripture.

**4. A visual option.** If possible, put together a creation slide or video show. Add this visual dimension to your prayer by collecting slides and/or snapshots of beautiful sights in your area in all the seasons of the year.

**a. Include photos of past confirmation groups.**

**b. If possible, surprise the candidates** by including photos of themselves as infants or moments at play as little kids. You can put together a collection of slides or use a video camera to film snapshots.



In the beginning  
God created  
the heavens and  
the earth.  
The earth was  
a formless void,  
and darkness  
covered the face  
of the deep.  
The Spirit of God  
hovered  
over the waters.  
Genesis 1.1-2

# Giver of Life Confirmation Preparation 1 CHOOSE

## Who Are We?

Like most peoples, the people of Israel wondered who we humans are, where we come from, and where we are going. In the first book of the bible, called Genesis, the people of Israel express their faith that we come from God. The word *Genesis* means *origins*.

At our beginning Genesis pictures God as Spirit or wind, moving over the deep like a mother bird hovering over a nest.

“In the beginning when God made the heaven and the earth, the earth was formless and empty and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep” (Genesis 1.1-2).

The word *ruah* in Hebrew means both *spirit* and *wind*. Like wind, the Spirit is invisible, powerful, and free to move anywhere. Genesis pictures the Spirit of God moving like an invisible wind over the deep of chaos, stirring nothingness into being.

Then in the Genesis story God begins to speak. Creator God speaks each day for six days, calling light, sky, sea and dry land, plants, sun, moon, stars, birds, fish, animals, and lastly humans into being. Each day God declares these new creatures good. On the seventh day God rests from all the work of creation.



Ansgar Holmberg

Scientists today tell a creation story that begins with a big bang rather than the Spirit stirring the deep. Our cosmos unfolds over 13.8 billion years rather than six days. Our genes hold the memory of this whole, slow unfolding of life, in which we humans become conscious beings who ask, “Who are we?”

In both the biblical story and the scientific story, we live in a long, evolving history of God’s creative and sustaining love. The sacrament of confirmation seals us with the gift of the holy, creative Spirit of God.



Close your eyes, and feel your pulse beat. Breathe in deeply. Breathe out. Remember a time when you felt glad to live, move, and have being—glad to be alive. Describe it to a partner.

## Prayer

**1. Have your candidates form a prayer circle** or semi-circle around the globe. Set a mood by dimming the lights. Distribute copies of the *Opening Prayer*.

**2. The seven readers read their parts in turn.** After each, a candidate lights a vigil light and places it near the globe to encircle it.

**3. Listen to and sing along** with “Anointed and Sealed.”

## Who Are We?

Choose, page 1, 15 minutes.

**Objective** The confirmation candidates will make a parallel between the creation of the world and their own coming to be.

**1. Introduce your confirmation candidates** to the Holy Spirit by using page 1 of *Choose*, which explores two creation stories—Genesis 1 and the scientific creation story.

Look closely with your candidates at the detail in the art (top right). *It visualizes the scientific creation story with the risen Jesus as the heart of all that is, at the heart of the web of life and evolving cosmos.*

**2. Read slowly or talk through in your own words** the content of the six paragraphs on page 1, which introduce the concept of origins, describe the Holy Spirit as the wind and breath of God, and connect the Genesis creation story with the scientific creation story. These paragraphs build up toward the meditation on being alive at the end.

**3. Direct your candidates** to close their eyes and feel their pulses for a minute. Have them breath in and breath out deeply several times.

**4. Have them keep their eyes closed** as you invite them to remember a time when they felt amazed at a newborn brother or a newborn sister, or with newborn kitties or puppies, or watched a caterpillar spinning a chrysalis, or found new corn plants dotting a field.

**5. Have teens share a memory** that surfaces in this meditation with a partner.

## Life Is a Love Plan

Choose, page 2, 25 minutes.

**Objective** The confirmation candidates will appreciate their social bonds with family, parish, neighbors, and friends.

**1. Introduce the group task** with remarks that include the following:

**a. Memory is part of our spiritual being.** *The teen who skates junior-varsity hockey is the same person who fell over and over learning to skate. The self who is choosing where to go to high school is the same person who ate sand as a baby and made mud pies as a toddler.*

**b. Activities in your Candidate Journal** have asked your parents' help in remembering parts of your life you can't recall—the day they brought you home from the hospital, the welcoming plans they made for you before you were born, the day of your baptism when the priest held you high before the congregation so the people of the parish could clap and welcome you.



**At birth each of us breathes, cries, and takes a first cross-eyed stare at the world.**

The doctor cuts the umbilical cord, and from that moment we are on our own. No one will be just like us. Each of us is special. Each of us will be free to choose and act, to shape our lives, to go for the gold, to make a difference.

Life is more than an *I* plan. If, as infants, no one surrounds us with love and care, we will die. Parents or someone who chooses us specially must feed us, rock us, change and bathe us, call us by name, and sing us to sleep if we are to flourish. We learn to recognize the faces of those who keep coming to care for us. We smile at their smiles and respond to the name they call us.

# Life Is a Love Plan

The Lord God shaped a human from the earth and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living being.

Genesis 2:7

As parents, families, friends coax us to creep, crawl, walk, talk, tell stories, laugh, choose, think, we unfold day by day and year by year fully into ourselves. We live because of those who care for us. In our ability to love others, human beings share the Spirit's power to give life. Life is not an *I* plan. It is a *we* plan, a *love* plan.

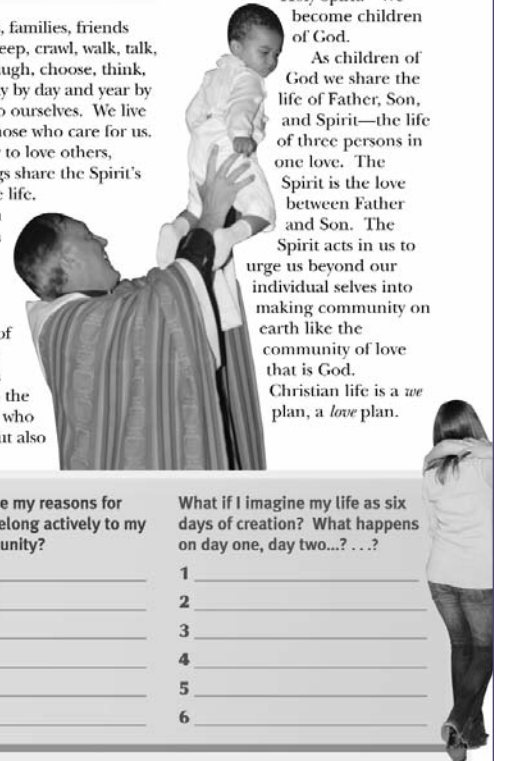
**E**ach of us is born not only into the love of those who care for us but also

into their faith. When parents ask the Church to baptize a child, they promise to share with this child the faith they share with the Christian community.

Just as families coax us to walk and talk, the Christian community with our parents awakens us to our existence in God. At baptism the community welcomes us as new members and professes its faith in God, the Source of all that is, the Son who becomes one of us, and the Spirit who gives us life in every breath.

At our baptism a priest or deacon calls us by name and baptizes us, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." We become children of God.

As children of God we share the life of Father, Son, and Spirit—the life of three persons in one love. The Spirit is the love between Father and Son. The Spirit acts in us to urge us beyond our individual selves into making community on earth like the community of love that is God. Christian life is a *we* plan, a *love* plan.



Who are the people who have called me forth to walk?  
talk?  
ride a bike?  
pray?  
participate in the life of my parish?

Who gives me my reasons for wanting to belong actively to my parish community?

What if I imagine my life as six days of creation? What happens on day one, day two...? . . . ?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6

**2. Read page 2 aloud** in small groups and invite teens to share their responses to the questions in the first two columns.

**3. Help the your candidates imagine their lives as six days of creation.**

Help them identify events, people, accomplishments, and crises that mark definite stages and changes in the journey they have made to becoming the persons they are today. Help them think of people and benchmark moments along the way.

**a. Have your candidates work individually** and identify six of the major causes of change or maturity in each of their lives. These will be the

"days" of their creation. Help them recognize the many people who surround each of them with love, care, faith, prayer, and examples of how to live as Christians.

**b. Have your candidates write, sketch, and color** these six scenes and present them to the group.

## Journal Activity

If your candidates are using the *Giver of Life Candidate Journal*, have them complete this activity on pages 8-9 and explain their six scenes to their group. Suggest to your teens that they talk about this activity with their parents.

*Plan a 10 minute mid-session break.*

# We Can Choose

Choose, page 3, 15 minutes.

**Objective** The confirmation candidates will recognize the Christian purpose of freedom—to participate in the life of the Christian community, to respond to God and others with love.

**1. Use the quotation from Genesis 2.7** on page 2 to invite your candidates to help you tell the bible’s second story of creation from Genesis 2.4-25 in summary form.

**a. Near a spring Creator God shapes a human** of mud and breathes life into it. The word we know as the name *Adam* means *earthling*. In Hebrew *Adamah* means *Earth*, much as in English *humus* refers to earth and *human* to people. This story tells us human are of the earth and of God’s Spirit. God’s breath makes the human a living being.

**b. The human helps God** name the animals.

**c. God makes the human a partner** who is of the same bone or essence.

**d. God gives them a garden to cultivate and one rule:** not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**e. This second creation story continues in Genesis 3** with an account of how the first man and woman discover they are free.

**2. Invite your teens to tell the story of the first man and woman discovering they are free.** Suggest they use the quotation and symbols at the top center of page 3 to prompt their memories or have a candidate read Genesis 3.1-7 from a bible. Ask candidates what happens to Adam and Eve.

**a. The art illustrates** Adam and Eve naked and innocent in the garden.

**b. The apple symbolizes** Adam and Eve’s act of breaking Creator God’s command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**3. Read aloud** or have a candidate read the first four paragraphs on page 3.

# We Can Choose

God makes us freely out of love and makes us free and able to love in return. We are made in God’s image. We can remember and think, speak and laugh, choose and plan, befriend and support. But we are also free. We can forget God. We can harm others and ourselves.

We can live off the air and water of Earth without sustaining it. We can live off the families who love us without returning their love.

Genesis 3 tells a story about how the first man and woman discover they are free. The man and woman live in a garden God has made for them to cultivate. God tells them not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden.

A sly serpent suggests to the woman that she sample the fruit on the tree. “The rule is to prevent you from becoming like God, knowing good and evil,” says the serpent. The fruit looks delicious. Becoming wise like God seems a good thing, so the woman and man eat the fruit.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired

to make one wise, she took its fruit and ate; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3.6



As their punishment for breaking God’s rule, they must leave the garden. They have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They must learn from experience what gives life and what destroys life. The story of the man and woman eating the fruit tells us everyone is free and must learn what is good and what is evil.

As a boy William Schultz got an amazing new dog. To welcome him home from school, the dog stood on its hind legs and danced in delight.

Schultz took the dog’s paws in his hands and danced with him, but he noticed the dog didn’t like to stay upright too long. It hurt its hind legs.

The next day Schultz couldn’t resist keeping the dog upright until it yelped. Day after day he kept the dog on its hind legs until finally it lay still and covered when he got home, hoping he would not hurt it.

William Schultz became executive director of Amnesty International, a human rights organization founded to protect prisoners from cruel and harsh punishments in prison. “It is impossible to separate good people from evil people,” he says. “The capacity for cruelty is in all of us. Why was I cruel to the dog for no reason?”

Human beings can choose. Each of us is free to be responsible and free to be foolish, free to hurt and free to heal, free to create and free to destroy.



Give your own examples of using your freedom to be cruel to an animal or mean to a person.

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Give your own examples of using your freedom to act with love toward an animal or toward another person.

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Field any questions candidates have. It is important to help early teens move beyond literal understandings of these stories to grasp the truth of human nature they express—we are free to choose, free to harm and free to love.

**4. Have candidates read silently the story about William Schultz** in the third column and write responses to the questions at the bottom. Direct them not to write anything that they don’t want to talk about with the group.

**a. Have them share their responses** with a partner.

**b. Give each partner one minute** to share with the other on each question. Time this sharing process.

# Free to Harm or to Love

Choose, page 4, 20 minutes.

**Objective** The confirmation candidates will explore their choices.

**1. Choices checklist.** Invite your teens to stand, stretch, and form groups of four to do the activities on page 4. This is a simple activity to build candidates' awareness of how many choices, significant and insignificant, they make each day. Note the six categories of daily choices the activity lists: eating, exercise, study, friends, family, fun.

**a. Have each candidate make an individual list** of recent choices. Brainstorm what they ate or wore, what chores they have done, what assignments, who they have hung out with, what they practiced. Direct them to go over the past day or two to identify choices they have in fact made.

**b. Have them work together in threes or fours to identify choices** that affect relationships positively or negatively. Adult leaders can help in the small groups.

**2. Ask three volunteers to read aloud** for the whole group one of the three why statements below the *Choices* checklist.

**3. Read aloud the two paragraphs at the top of column three.** Lead the candidates in listing the ten commandments:

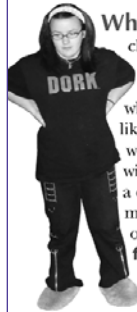
- You shall worship God alone.
- You shall not take God's name in vain.
- Keep the Sabbath.
- Honor your parents and elders.
- You shall not kill.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

# Free to harm or to love

## Choices

Describe choices you have made this week in each category. Write these choices on the arrows. Where do the choices take you?

- EATING \_\_\_\_\_
- EXERCISE \_\_\_\_\_
- STUDY \_\_\_\_\_
- FRIENDS \_\_\_\_\_
- FAMILY \_\_\_\_\_
- FUN \_\_\_\_\_



**Why** make fun of a classmate's clothes? Why drop a friend who doesn't dress like the cool kids we want to hang with? Why phone a classmate to make fun of him or her? **We are free to harm one another.**



**Why** talk to a classmate others don't bother with? Why organize a food drive? Why stand by a friend when others make fun of him or her? **We are free to love one another. We have a capacity for compassion, for putting ourselves in others' places.**



**Why** recycle? Why eat simply? Why learn about needs in our world? **We have a capacity to participate in God's work. We have a capacity to give life.**

Nihil Obstat: J. Michael Byron Imprimatur: +Harry J. Flynn, Archbishop of St. Paul-Minneapolis, April 10, 2007. Copyright © 2007, by Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, 1894 Randolign Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher. 1-885996-39-x

In confirmation the bishop extends his hands and prays that each Christian receive the gifts of the Spirit. The bishop marks each person on the forehead with holy oil to seal him or her with the Holy Spirit. This seal marks Christians as persons committed to use their freedom to love God, their neighbors, and themselves as Jesus taught.

In the ten commandments God calls the people of Israel to be a covenant community that worships God and respects one another. Jesus teaches both these commandments and his own. Read Jesus' teachings below.

**Love the Lord** your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Mark 12:29-31

**If I, your Lord** and master, have washed your feet, so you ought to wash one another's feet. John 13:14

**Love one another** as I have loved you. John 13:34

**Do unto others** as you would have them do unto you. Matthew 7:12

**What you do for** the least of my brethren, you do for me. Matthew 25:45

**Forgive** seventy times seven. Matthew 18:23

**Love your enemies;** do good to those who hate you. Luke 6:27

**Do**

**Don't**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**What does Jesus teach us about how to live in relationship with one another and with God? Write on the lines verbs that state do's and don'ts.**

**4. Direct the young people in their groups of four to each take a turn reading aloud one of Jesus' teachings.**

**5. Have teens work together to complete the do's and don'ts question at the bottom of the page.** Adult leaders can help them.

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Do</b>        | <b>Don't</b>    |
| Love God         | Swear           |
| Worship          | Kill            |
| Forgive          | Lie             |
| Honor parents    | Steal           |
| Help the least   | Envy            |
| Keep Sunday holy | Commit adultery |
| Wash feet/serve  | Ignore God      |

**6. Summarize** by asking candidates what kind of community results from living these teachings.

# Closing Prayer

10 minutes

## What Will I Choose?

### Preparation

1. Choose two leaders to lead the group in praying Psalm 8.
2. Provide each candidate with the *Closing Prayer* below.
3. Explain to the candidates that you will ask them as part of praying the psalm to respond to the question: Who are we in the whole scheme of creation?

4. As an option if time allows, find and read one of the following books to begin the closing prayer—*Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood; *On the Day You Were Born* by Deborah Frasier; or *O, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Suess.

5. **Optional Music** Close by listening to and singing along with “Anointed and Sealed.”

## Closing Prayer

**Read aloud** *Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood; *On the Day You Were Born* by Deborah Frasier; or *O, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Suess.

**LEADER 1:** O God, how awesome is your name.

**ALL:** O God, how awesome is your name.

**LEADER 2:** When I look at the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars that you have made, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

**LEADER 1:** What are our answers? Who are we in the whole scheme of creation? *Volunteers can contribute answers.*

**LEADER 2:** O God, you have made us a little lower than the angels and crowned us with glory and honor.

**ALL:** O God, how awesome is your name.

**LEADER 1:** You have given us dominion over the work of your hands.

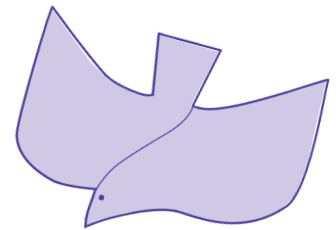
**ALL:** O God, how awesome is your name.

**LEADER 2:** You have put all things under our feet.

**ALL:** O God, how awesome is your name.

**LEADER 1:** You have given us freedom to choose.

**ALL:** O God, how awesome is your name.



**LEADER 2:** You have given us freedom to love.

**ALL:** O God, how awesome is your name.

**Optional Music** Listen to and sing along with “Anointed and Sealed.”

*Anointed and sealed,  
God, your love is revealed;  
Anointed and sealed,  
for the life of the world!  
Anointed and sealed,  
God, all darkness is healed;  
we are sent—called to serve.*

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