

CONFIRMING AND COMMUNING THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- Although it may be a challenging task to bring a person with special needs to the point of being a properly prepared communicant, it is God's will that we do all we can to bring it about. With God's help and blessing, it can be done in many cases.
- However, let us not become upset if a person with special needs cannot be confirmed. Holy Communion is not necessary for salvation. A person is brought to faith through God's Word and through the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Through the study of God's Word at home, at church, and in Bible classes, the Christian will be preserved in saving faith and in the covenant of salvation established at his or her baptism.
- First of all, the length of instructional time needed may not be the same as it is in regular confirmation classes. Classes may take longer than usual to complete, depending on the person's abilities. The student's ability to concentrate will more than likely be limited. It is often good to schedule the classes so that the student comes early in the day, while he is still fresh and ready to learn. Meeting once a week for 30 to 40 minutes of actual instruction may be a good plan. The instruction could be followed by 10 to 20 minutes of singing Christian songs.
- The teacher needs to be a dedicated, patient, and innovative person. It is a challenge to present the abstract truths of Scripture in a concrete way for the person with special needs. The teacher can be a pastor, teacher, or layperson. Professional training is not necessary. The important thing is that the teacher strives to express God's truth in simple, everyday terms and use simple concepts the student can grasp.
- The teacher should be ready to show Christian love with both words and actions appropriate to the age of the student. The student can more easily understand God's love if the teacher readily smiles, shakes hands, or pats the student on the back occasionally. We all like to know that we are accepted just as we are - especially by God's representatives. The teacher should give praise and encouragement often. Since a person with special needs generally experiences failure more often than the average person of the same age, honest and generous praise for every bit of progress is both appreciated and beneficial.
- The teacher also needs to be flexible enough to set aside traditional methods of teaching when necessary and to simplify the truths of God's Word into their most fundamental components. Using object lessons, pictures, and concrete examples known to the student may help with explanations. It may take great patience and diligence to reach the student's level of understanding and touch his heart with a lesson from his Savior. Of course, no one should underestimate the power of God's Word. The teacher should, however, remove as many hindrances to learning as possible so that he or she can become a better tool for the Holy Spirit to use.

For the rest of this document and more on the process of confirmation of individuals with special needs and the curriculum for preparing them for receiving the Lord's Supper, please contact:

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