



INFANT DEDICATION INFORMATION

Dear Parents,

In order to help you understand what baby dedication is about, we have prepared the following statement:

Baby dedication is primarily a public declaration of responsibility by the baby's parents, involving desire and gratitude. They are showing gratitude to God for the gift of a child and for all hopes and possibilities this gift embodies. They are expressing their desire for the well being of the child in the years to come that he or she will prosper physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. They are also taking responsibility to work to make these things happen. The act of dedication is no magic ceremony, which insures the happiness of the participants. It is instead, more like the signing of a contract. The parents declare before God, and His people, that they will do all within their power to be the best parents possible for that child. In return, they ask God for strength and wisdom to carry out the task.

In this regard, "baby dedication" is almost a misnomer. The real dedication is of the parents to whom God has entrusted the child. If they are sincere and faithful in carrying out their responsibility, the child will prosper (Proverbs 22:6). **If they are not sincere, no matter how beautiful the prayer, how solemn the affirmations or how moving the moment, the child will in no way benefit from this act of dedication. The child is not saved as a result of this ceremony. He or she must decide later whether or not to walk with the Lord. The ceremony is of benefit for the child only to the degree that the parent fulfills their promises and demonstrates the love and grace of God in their actions and words at home as the child grows.**

Because many are unfamiliar with this way of understanding baby dedication, it may be helpful to set out clearly the differences between this kind of dedicatory act and rite of infant baptism as practiced by many churches. In the Roman Catholic Church infant baptism is intended to secure the salvation of the child. The Roman Catholic Church and some other churches believe that infants are born sinners (This is called "original sin") and are worthy of God's judgment simply because they are human, descendants of Adam. The Roman Catholic Church believes that an unbaptized infant will go to hell should it die, so it is imperative to counteract the child's sinfulness by the infusion of grace, which they believe occurs at baptism. Even though they believe in "original sin" the reformed churches (Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Methodist) believe that unbaptized infants will not go to hell if they die, but that parents should present them for baptism so that the infant can receive God's grace which will help them to place their faith in Jesus Christ at some latter time. In contrast, we do not baptize infants because our understanding of scripture is that people are not condemned to hell simply because they are born, but each person chooses wrongly for himself or herself and so encounters the judgment of God. Since infants cannot make those choices, it is mistaken to say they are responsible for their sin and it is unnecessary to try and remove their sins through some sacred rite. The real concern is to help children make the right choices as they grow - choices for God and his grace. Since this can happen most easily through the influence of godly parents, we ask the parents to dedicate themselves to a responsible, faithful lifestyle, and to dedicate children to the keeping grace of God.

If you are willing to bring your child to God in this way and so dedicate yourselves to Him, please complete the "Baby Dedication Information". Before your baby can be dedicated we ask that both parents (at least one parent if both cannot attend) attend a class which will prepare them not only for the dedication service but give them information on helping their child grow in their love for God. This class will be offered several times per year. Please read and sign the "Parent's Covenant". Return it and the "Baby Dedication Information" to the church office as soon as possible to reserve a place in the next class. After the class we can set the time for your child's dedication service.



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Parent's Covenant

As Parents of _____, we recognize this child is God's gift to our home. Returning this gift in dedication, we also dedicate ourselves before the Lord, accepting our responsibility for the life God has entrusted to our care. We earnestly seek God's help and protection in rearing this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As we present this child in dedication, we understand that our action declares we are willing to have God take full possession of our child, allowing Him to use this life to His glory.

Father's signature

Mother's signature

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

