Ways to Support Children and Families Dedicated Today

- Send a card or note welcoming the child to the church family. Children can send drawings of favorite church activities to the new “family member.”
- Keep a record of dedications and their dates. On anniversaries, send notes of affirmation and support to children and families.
- Offer support for parents and others raising children. Ask them: “How can we help you?”
- Look at your church and ask yourself, “Are we child-friendly?” Think about your building, worship, programs, values, and attitudes.
- Pray for children, parents, those who work with children, and for church leaders. Ask that all will have a vision of the Reign of God, informed by scripture.

Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it. (Luke 18:17)

Never forget these commands... teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. Tie them on your arms and on your foreheads as a reminder. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

A service of family dedication is a celebration of thanksgiving and a time for making and remembering covenants in the church family.
A Time for Thanksgiving

The birth of a baby reminds us that God continues as Creator each day, each minute. A birth in the family is often a powerful spiritual experience for parents and other family members. Birth allows us a glimpse of God’s mystery and grace. The dedication service affirms the family’s (and our) sense of wonder and awe.

Whether a child joins a family by birth or adoption, we thank God for the promise of new beginnings. Adopted children are welcomed to their families with the same sense of anticipation, joy, and grace as birth children.

Older children may be dedicated when their families who are new to the Christian experience join a church. In this dedication, the church is saying, “We are thankful for your children. They are as important a part of our church family as the children who were born into our congregation.”

In all these instances, the service of dedication recognizes those moments of grace when spiritual needs, family life, and congregational life intersect. What powerful moments for prayer and action!

Finally, in a global sense, a dedication service reminds us to be thankful for the potential and promise of all children – across town, over the border, beyond the ocean, and into the future.

A Time for Covenants

Parent/Family Promises

Another important element of the dedication service is the promise-making by the adults who will raise the child. Parents, or perhaps other family members, promise to teach the truths and responsibilities of the Christian faith to the child, and to lead him/her into a relationship with the living Christ. This is the time to share the wisdom that faith is caught by children, more than taught to them. Through words and actions, families are intimately involved in a child’s spiritual formation. Children learn to love, to share, and to reach out to others by observing the adults they love do these things. Children learn reverence and begin to develop a sense of spirituality from quiet time and prayer with loving adults. In enthusiastic moments of song and conversation, they experience the joy of the Christian way.

But all these efforts at home don’t happen in a vacuum - families need the support and help of the congregation.

Congregational Promises

During the service, the congregation usually stands, as a sign of solidarity with the family. People are asked to help teach the child about God’s love and the Christian life. This happens in two main ways: direct interaction with the child, such as in the nursery and church school; and support for the child’s parents/family as they guide the child. This is also a time to remember the responsibility of the church as a whole to set an example, with attitudes, behaviour, and actions that are shaped by knowledge that the church is the living body of Christ.