BABY DEDICATION CEREMONY

INTRODUCTION
Dedicating a child acknowledges God's sovereignty not only over the child, but also the mother and father. Parents present their child before God and His people asking for grace and wisdom in carrying out their responsibilities. Parents also come praying with confidence that their child will one day trust Jesus Christ as Savior for the forgiveness of sin.

I. WHAT IS A BABY/CHILD DEDICATION?

A. Baby and child dedication are the act of giving back to God the gift He has given you as parents. It is an act of worship, thanksgiving, dependence, trust, and commitment. The practice of child dedication has been modelled throughout the Bible. The Israelites brought their 8-day-old children to the priest for blessing. Hannah (1 Samuel 1:24-28) brought her long-awaited son to Samuel to the priest Eli to dedicate him to the Lord. Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the temple for His dedication.

“Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, “O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord.” So they worshiped the Lord there.” 1 Samuel 1:24-28

B. Salvation only comes to a child through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not passed on to a child through dedication or water baptism. Parents covenant to raise their children by modelling their lives through Godly principles with the desire that one day, their children will receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
C. Dedication is NOT the same as infant baptism or christening. Child dedication is different from infant baptism or christening. While these rites are significant for a variety of faiths, it is the practice of FMA to dedicate children. We believe that all infants are destined for heaven should they die before they are old enough to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We also believe the Bible teaches that baptism should take place after a person has made a personal choice to follow Jesus Christ.

II. PREPARING FOR BABY DEDICATION

Dedicating a child acknowledges God's sovereignty not only over the child, but also the mother and father. Parents present their child before God and His people asking for grace and wisdom in carrying out their responsibilities. Parents also come praying that their child might one day trust Jesus Christ as Savior for the forgiveness of sin.

A. Before the actual ceremony, it is crucial that pastors counsel parents about the meaning of dedication. The best passage for discussion is Deuteronomy 6:4-7. First, it commands parents to love God; if they truly wish for their child to one day love and follow God; their lives must be an example. This is a good time to ask parents about their own personal relationship with Christ.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Deuteronomy 6:4-7

B. Second, Deuteronomy makes clear that the duty of teaching children belongs to parents; Sunday schools can provide weekly instruction, but parents must seize the teachable moments that arise throughout life. Explain the value of prayer at meal times and before bed. Urge them to read aloud Bible stories for devotions. Give them practical ideas they can implement into their daily family routines.
C. Sometimes it is custom for parents to choose god-parent(s). Often viewed simply as an honorary title, its value however can be greatly enhanced by defining how this role will be carried out. Many god-parents assume responsibility to provide cards and gifts of a Christian nature for the child on birthdays and holidays. Some periodically ask the parents how they are doing in training their child (Proverbs 22:6). Still others have arranged that in the event of the parents' unexpected death, the god-parents will take the child into their home (This of course requires legal documentation).

“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

III. CONDUCTING THE CEREMONY

A. On the day of dedication, meet with the parents a few minutes before the service in order to explain where they should stand.

B. The following advice is suggested. With the pastor standing front and center in the sanctuary, the father should stand near to the pastor, with the mother next to the father, accompanied by any other children.

C. God-parents and Grand-parents should stand behind the family.

D. Have the wife hold the baby as the family comes forward.

E. During the service, the wife will pass the child to the father for the prayer of dedication; the father holding the child during this time symbolizes that the husband is the family's spiritual head. (Afterwards, the father may pass the baby to the pastor for the prayer of dedication.)

F. You may choose to read a scripture to the family showing the spiritual significance of dedicating their child to The Lord.

G. Pray a prayer of blessing and dedication over the child, over the parents and over the extended family.