Child Dedication at Cedar Ridge

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16 (NIV)

What is child dedication?

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, down through the centuries, parents have brought their children into their faith communities to be blessed. While still a young nation, Israel instituted rituals to serve as reminders that the children entrusted to their care belonged first and foremost to God (Exodus 22:29-30). As the child of devout Jews, Jesus was also taken to the temple to be blessed—and as a rabbi, he blessed the children who were brought to him.

Today, simple dedication ceremonies are practiced in many churches. They typically include some kind of statement of intent, a prayer of blessing, and the symbolic touch of a hand on the child's head.

Dedication is not a "sacrament" like baptism and communion. That means, not all churches practice it as a symbol of their faith. Here at Cedar Ridge, some—but not all—families chose to participate in a dedication ceremony. Whether or not they are dedicated, all children are a wonderful gift from God, and are a treasured part of our families and our community together.

What does dedication signify?

As anyone with children in their lives knows, raising children is both a tremendous joy and an awesome responsibility. Both of these aspects are reflected in child dedications at Cedar Ridge.

- **We thank God for our children**
  Each new life is a miracle, and we do not take it for granted. As parents, we thank God for entrusting a child—made in the image of God—into our care. Similarly, as a community, we celebrate together the precious gift of babies and children.

- **We commit ourselves to raising them in the way of love**
  Although generally termed "child dedication," it is parents who are consciously dedicating themselves to Jesus' way of love. Through the dedication ceremony we are expressing our intent to teach and encourage our children to live a life of love for God and others. We are asking for God's blessing on the lives of our children, and on us as we love and nurture them physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

- **We recognize we cannot do this alone**
  Parenting is hard work—and we all need the help, support, and encouragement of community members along the way. Through the dedication ceremony, the Cedar Ridge community as a whole expresses our intention to support parents and caregivers through practical help, prayer, and encouragement. We recognize our own role in being good and loving examples to children,

> and our partnership with parents and caregivers in teaching children about Jesus and his way of love.

Can children be baptized instead?

We do not generally practice infant baptism at Cedar Ridge, preferring to baptize people who are old enough to express their own desire and commitment to follow Jesus. However, we greatly respect the tradition of infant baptism, and if this is important to you and your family, we encourage you to discuss this with a member of the pastoral staff.

Older children who can give their own consent and are making a conscious decision are very welcome to be baptized. In such cases, we include parents and guardians in the discussion. We do not baptize anyone who expressly does not want to be baptized, even upon parental request.

How do I dedicate my child at Cedar Ridge?

Simply ask a member of pastoral staff or email us at info@crcc.org and we will arrange a meeting to discuss this with you. Two times a year we hold a "Community Sunday" service at which we do child dedications—as well as baptisms and new memberships. You will be scheduled for one of those dates that works for you. During the service, one of the pastors will invite you and any godparents or family members to the front, and you will have an opportunity to share some words with the congregation about why you want to dedicate your child (this is optional). Then you will be asked the following:

> With God's help, will you love and nurture your child, teach them about Jesus and his way of love, and seek to demonstrate this way of love in your own life?

After you respond "We will," the pastor will ask the community as whole to commit to pray for, encourage, and support your family, and to welcome your child into the life of our church. We will then pray for you and your family, and the pastor will place a hand on your child's head and ask God to bless them. People will applaud at this point, and you can go back to your seat.

You are warmly encouraged to invite family and friends to the service and join us afterwards as our whole community enjoys a potluck lunch to celebrate the commitments (including child dedications) from that day.