

What is.....



DEDICATION OF CHILDREN

Harlow
Baptist
Church



www.harlowbaptist.org



Infant or Child Dedication, or to be correct “Presentation”, usually includes both parents, however it may be that only one is involved. Please read this leaflet as a parent or parents substituting parent for parents as appropriate .

Before we are able to answer the question ‘What is infant Presentation?’ Maybe we need to clear up any confusion over what it is not. It is not a Christening, it is not infant Baptism.



Baptism in the New Testament is better referred to as ‘Believer’s Baptism’ and is a response to ‘a belief’. In particular, the belief in the biblical assertion that we are all in need of God’s forgiveness. Also, that God paid the price for our disobedience at the cross, and that the only right response to that is to allow him to govern our lives (be Lord) from now on. Clearly a baby is not in a position to make any decisions for itself so cannot be a part of ‘believers baptism’. For a fuller explanation see our leaflet ‘What is Baptism?’

All we have said however does not mean that babies and children are not precious and special in God’s eyes. Nor that we do not have a very special love and care for babies and children here at Harlow Baptist Church. Children matter to God just as much as they matter to their parents - even more so. What then is Infant Presentation?

It is the time when parents bring their baby or child before God, in church, to give thanks for the gift of new life and to give thanks to God for the well being of the mother. But most importantly of all, it is the moment when, before witnesses, **the parents** dedicate themselves to bring up their child to know and respect God. This is sometimes called bringing your child up, “*in the fear and nurture of the Lord.*” This is so that, in the fullness of time, when they are old enough to make decisions for themselves, they can make an informed choice whether to follow Jesus Christ or not. A simple act of Infant Presentation would be similar to the one laid out below:-

Scripture:

Explanation:

Prayer:

Thanks for the baby

Thanks for the parents

Parent’s Promises:

God Parent’s promises (if any god parents are present)

Church members’ promises (if appropriate)

The Blessing:

Let's explain this in a little more detail.

Scripture: A scripture reading or two is read indicating the special place that children have in scripture in general and with God in particular.

Explanation: As indicated, a simple explanation is given to the church of the ceremony that is about to take place and why.

Prayer: We begin this act of Infant Presentation by speaking to God. Here we thankfully acknowledge God's part in bringing mother and baby to this moment, and for the gift of new life that God has blessed the parents with.



Parent's Promises: The parents are now asked to make promises before God and the church:-

- ② Do you promise to be good parents to (child's name)?
- ② Do you promise to bring up (child's name) to respect God, and to learn of God's ways?
- ② Do you promise to remain faithful to (child's name) whatever the future may hold?

The parents reply with the words, "***With God's help, we do***"

God Parent's promises. Some parents like to have God parents. These would be people who have a genuine Christian faith and are committed to supporting both the parents and the baby as it grows up. Where there are god-parents the following promises would be asked of them:-

- ② Do you promise to stand by (the parents) as they seek to bring up (child's name) to respect God, and to learn of God's ways?
- ② As god parents do you recognise your duty to pray for and support (child's name) in the months and years to come?

The god parents reply with the words:-

With God's help, we do

Church members' promises (if appropriate)

When the parents are members of the church family here at Harlow Baptist Church there is an added bonus. In these circumstances it is right that we ask the membership of the church to also make a promise to assist the parent in bring up the child in the "fear and nurture of the Lord." In this sense, the child is also 'presented' to the whole church family. In effect, the child inherits a whole church of god parents to help both the child and its parents in the upbringing and welfare of the child. The church members are asked to stand and make the following promises:-

- ② Do you promise to stand by (the parents) as they seek to be good and godly parents to (child's name) ?
- ② Do you promise to stand by (child's name) in friendship and love, and, with good witness, reflect the life of Jesus to (child's name)?

The congregation reply with the words, ***With God's help, we do***

The Blessing:

Lastly, it is also an opportunity for the child to be prayed for and blessed by God. In Christian families undoubtedly the parents pray for their children. But here at the service of Infant Dedication is an opportunity for the person leading the service to formally seeks God's blessing on the child on behalf of the whole church family.

"The Lord bless You and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

If you would like to consider you and your children taking part in a short service of Infant Presentation then please contact the Pastor (01279 442642 / thepastor@harlowbaptist.org). If no one answers please leave your details on the answer phone and the Pastor will get back to you.