

THE PRESENTATION OF CHILDREN FOR THE LORD'S BLESSING

We believe in the presentation of children for the Lord's blessing.

In this service, children are set apart for the Lord. The congregation joins with the parents in pledging themselves to the Christian nurture of those children.

We believe children are a gift of God.

We read in Genesis 33:5 NIV, "Esau looked up and saw the women and children. 'Who are these with you?' he asked. Jacob answered, 'They are the children God has graciously given your servant.'" The great judge and prophet Samuel was dedicated to the Lord even before birth. After Samuel had been weaned, Hannah said, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:27 -28 NIV).

We believe children are a part of the covenant community.

Children born to parents who are in the household of faith experience God's love through the care and loving concern of their Christian parents and the Church. This service of dedication recognizes their participation in the life of the family of God.

We believe parents are responsible for the spiritual nurture of their children.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6 NIV). The New Testament directs parents to raise their children with Christian discipline and instruction (Ephesians 6:4). Throughout the Scriptures God's people are urged to teach and nurture children by word and example. "Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" (Deuteronomy 4:9 NIV; see also Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

We believe the congregation is responsible for the spiritual nurture of children presented for the Lord's blessing.

As children need warm relationships in their families, so they need warm relationships in the family of God. Such nurture is needed for both parents and children. This calls for a variety of educational opportunities and constant encouragement. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another as a fellowship of God's people" (Hebrews 10:25 NIV). Members of the congregation serve as models for parents and children, demonstrating what it means to be a Christian.

We believe we ought to follow Jesus in Ministering to children.

"Little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:13 -14NIV). Jesus showed deep appreciation and concern for children. So should the Church.